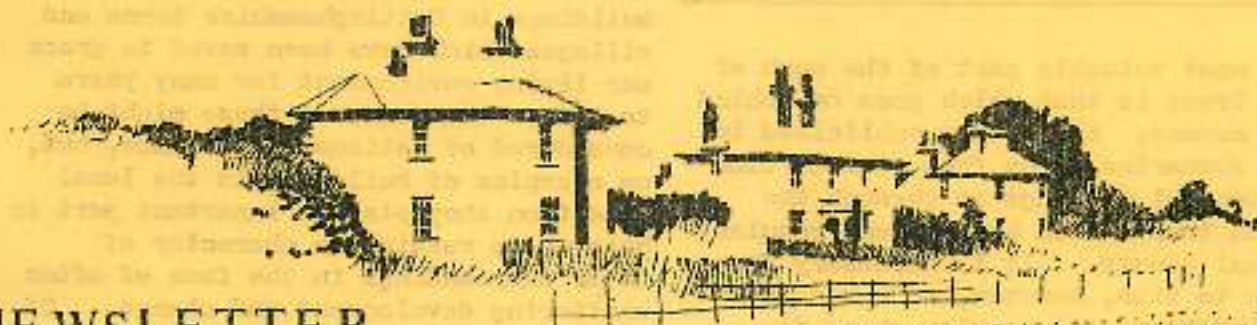


Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1978.

PUNCH AND PATE AT LANGAR HALL

It was cold and dark and there was a hint of snow in the air. Those stalwart members of the Trust who braved the merciless elements were soon to be rewarded by the welcoming lights of Langar Hall streaming out into the night. Once inside the warm aroma of a steaming punch, lovingly prepared by the host Mrs. Skirving (she trod all the lemons herself!) quickly dispelled the chill.

Around a hundred guests were present to enjoy the pate, wander round an exhibition of the Trust's work or watch the Civic Trust film "A Future for the Past". All in all it was a very happy and pleasant occasion and it is hoped to build on this success with similar events in the future.

Thanks are due to the many people who contributed goods and services which made the evening the success it was. Particular mention must be made of Mrs. Skirving who had to bear the brunt of the hustle and bustle, which she did cheerfully and efficiently. I am sure that I may express to her grateful thanks on behalf of all those who attended.

Bob Middleton.

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MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The work that the Trust undertakes is largely dependent upon subscriptions from its members. If you would like to make a positive gesture in support of this work we should be happy to welcome you into membership. The current rates are : Ordinary Membership £2.00 : Corporate Membership £2.50 : Life Membership £20.00. Cheques to be made payable to Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust Ltd., and forwarded to the address below.

Reg. Office: 110 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HL.

THE TRUST - WHERE DO WE GO NEXT ?

... A PERSONAL VIEW

by Norman Summers

The most valuable part of the work of the Trust is that which goes on behind the scenes; it is only publicised in the summaries given from time to time at General Meetings or through the coach tours which have become regular annual events. It is necessary from time to time, however, to review our achievements and to plan ahead for changing situations.

The Trust operates mainly through its General Purposes Sub-Committee, with Technical Advisers backed by a Technical Panel. The Committee in turn is responsible to the Council of Management which meets quarterly. A steady flow of requests for advice and practical help in the work of building restoration is received in the Trust offices, but sometimes Advisers are approached direct by people who are familiar with the work. Advisers carry out site inspections, and prepare brief reports for study by the Technical Panel which makes recommendations to put before the Committee.

The majority of these cases result in applications for grant-aid towards the cost of restoration, but a large number come up solely for advice concerning craftsmen and builders sympathetic to work on traditional buildings, on suitable materials, on procedures for town planning and building regulation approvals, or even just for encouragement from time to time as work proceeds. The Trust has built up a reputation as a public body capable of giving informed and measured comment. As a result, planning authorities frequently consult the Trust, or at least are willing to take its comments into consideration when making decisions, particularly on listed buildings and in designated conservation areas. Many private individuals depend on us to provide an expression of public opinion on planning proposals.

It is difficult to quantify the success of this work. As a result of

our efforts, we can point to a steadily increasing number of cottages, farmhouses, and even whole groups of buildings in Nottinghamshire towns and villages which have been saved to grace our living environment for many years to come. Very few of these might be considered of national importance, but, as examples of buildings in the local tradition they play an important part in helping to retain the character of their surroundings in the face of often shattering development and change. Of course there are failures. Some buildings are changed out of all recognition in the name of restoration; some are lost altogether; but very often, even in those circumstances it is possible to see that our efforts have at least resulted in a better solution than if the Trust had not been concerned at all.

We cannot afford, however, to take a static position, or the Trust will degenerate into simply being a grant-aiding body. Looking ahead, several necessary lines of action are apparent:

There is still a great deal of work to do in getting the message across that preservation does not mean a blind resistance to all forms of change, i.e. the fossilisation of buildings as museum pieces. It is a selective procedure to retain the human quality of our visual environment, by the restoration and modernisation of buildings of architectural and historic interest to a new and useful life, blending essential development in traditional settings. Every member of the Trust has a part to play in making our aims and achievements known as widely as possible. Can more events be programmed as publicity, and for the recruitment of new members?

Then there are the problems in our links with Local Authorities. Much of the policy as well as the day-to-day running of town and country planning now rests with the District Councils. It is much more difficult to maintain good liaison with the larger numbers of these than it was in the days when matters were centralised more at County Hall.

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TREE - RING DATING
AT
NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY

The University of Nottingham has recently set up a Tree-Ring Study Group which is a joint venture by members of the Department of Archaeology, Botany and Mathematics, sponsored by generous grants from the Nottinghamshire County Council and the Science Research Council.

One of the principal interests of the Group is tree-ring dating and it is hoped to establish a master chronology for oak for the East Midlands over the last thousand years. The principle and method of tree-ring dating is quite simple. The basis is that a living tree adds a single growth-ring to trunk and branches each year. The thickness of the rings is dependent on environmental factors, for example, the density of the forest, the type of soil and the character of the climate. The regional variability of climate from year to year is primarily responsible for the differing thickness of the tree-rings. Periods of drought or prolonged rainfall should be clearly marked in the tree-ring record but more moderate changes of climate are also recorded.

Anyone willing to assist please contact:

W.G. Simpson
Department of
 Archaeology,
The University,
NOTTINGHAM,
NG7 2RD.

Telephone:
Nottingham 56101
Extension: 3370.

Our work has started with the sampling of large oaks, mostly from Sherwood Forest, which were felled in or about 1977. Most of them proved to have started life between 1750-1800 but one giant began c.1460. The tree-ring sequences of all these trees have been computerized and plotted graphically. We are currently analysing the ring-sequences of oak beams taken from historic buildings of the 15th-18th centuries. It is hoped that when these are computer-matched with those of the living trees from Sherwood it will be possible to determine the growth-span of each beam and have a tree-ring reference sequence, or master chronology, extending from the present to before 1400 AD. Eventually we would hope to be able to give the felling-date of any substantial piece of oakwood after c.900 AD.

Once established the oakwood master chronology can be applied to study of problems of dating and architectural development of historic buildings. It is necessary simply to sample the main structural timbers, either by boring or preferably by cutting a thin slice off one end and matching the ring-sequence with the master chronology. Obviously it is important to be able to relate these to a plan and elevation of the building in order to determine correctly its historical development.

I should very much like to hear from members of the NBPT who might be able to assist with the fieldwork aspects of our project. It would be particularly valuable to have help with the planning and recording of historic buildings which are either in course of alteration or renovation or are under imminent threat of demolition. It would also be valuable to have local 'correspondents' in the county who could keep an eye on such buildings and inform us as and when suitable timbers in them become available for sampling in the course of such constructional work.

There was a report in the Times' newspaper for 3rd February last, of uproar and objection expressed at the meeting held on the previous day, when the Government made known its proposals to expand Lord Burlington's Palladian Villa at Chiswick, built in 1725-29, by the addition of a one-storey Exhibition Centre on the east side of Chiswick House. Whether or not this would incur the destruction of the link building and Summer Parlour built by Burlington before the villa, is not clear from the report.

The villa was intended to be a statement from Lord Burlington and his circle of their belief in the Palladian movement as a true path to a Renaissance course in British Architecture. The prime movers on this structure were Lord Burlington and William Kent, aided by Colin Campbell, with Sebastian Ricci on paintings and ceiling decorations jointly with Kent. A brilliant team who produced a near perfect building. Near perfect because Kent's detail in ceilings here, as at Holkham in Norfolk, is of impeccable Roman design, but too low in height.

Before Chiswick was built, Colin Campbell had already given his version

THE PARISH ROOM, UPTON
by John Gillespie

Members will be pleased to hear that, after much discussion in the village and not a little lobbying, a Parish Meeting recommended by a small majority that the Parish Room, at present Church property, should be bought by the Parish Council to become a Village Hall. The Room is of interest as it is the old Tithe Barn and substantial traces of its timber-framing are evident.

The favourable report by G. Beaumont was one factor which contributed to the Parish Council's decision, in December 1977, to go ahead with the project. Some doubt had been cast on the stability of the structure and there was no lack of dire predictions as to the consequences of repairs to an unstable building. Had it not been for the Technical Report, it is quite possible that a new hall would have been built and the existing one allowed to decay.

Members who were on the NEPT coach tour last Autumn to the W. Midlands will remember the interesting way in which the inside of the roof at Chester House Library was renovated. Mrs. Charles has been kind enough to forward details of the insulation arrangements and it is hoped that a similar arrangement can be employed at Upton enabling the pegged rafters to be seen clearly from the inside. The local Fire Officer has already given his outline approval to the scheme, though Parish Council agreement is still required.

The Architect for the renovation work is Mr. K.A. Smith of Newark D.C., and it is hoped that repairs can start immediately after completion of the sale, expected in April 1978.

CHISWICK HOUSE AND THE NUTHALL TEMPLE,
NOTTINGHAM by H.A. Johnson

of Palladio's Villa Rotonda, near Vicenza, at Meresworth in Kent, but so popular was this model that there were eventually four examples in England, until Nuthall Temple in Nottingham was destroyed in 1929 and Foolsclay in Kent burnt down since the end of the last war.

Nuthall Temple of 1757, of which full photographs remain in copies of the Country Life paper for 18th May, 1923, was of much earlier date than the other versions and more Rococco in the interior decoration. The domed Octagonal Hall had a fine wrought-iron balcony, and on the walls festoons of flowers and trophies framing medallions from Aesop's Fables. The Master Plasterer was Thomas Roberts of Oxford; the builder a Thomas Wright. The writer has studied the photographs at length and as a personal opinion thinks it must have been as good in design as Chiswick. Also, its destruction must have created the greatest loss to the heritage of Nottinghamshire buildings. The lesson learnt from this is to support, in any way, any measure that will protect Chiswick House from defacement or damage. How to do this is not yet known, but it may become apparent if a Public Inquiry ensues.

Continued from page 2 ...

There is every sign, however, that there is a great deal of useful work we could do, once our willingness to become involved in local problems is understood, and the quality of our comment appreciated. Getting this message across is another major hurdle; a series of one-day, or even half-day conferences set up by the Trust could be valuable for the exchange of ideas and problems with planning authorities and other bodies, and for the promotion of better understanding. If a measure of social activity could be included in the programme, both sides would view the situation at a more personal level.

Finally, more opportunities for direct action should be sought. Let us not only wait for projects of

restoration and village improvement to be brought to us, but seek them out and take the initiative. As prime movers in the restoration of the cottages at Windles Square, Calverton, the Trust demonstrated the feasibility of restoration coupled with modernisation to sound habitable standards at a lower cost than that of building the same accommodation as new; a valuable piece of village heritage was preserved in the process. In the right financial climate it should be possible to repeat this exercise again and again but, even if we lack the means at the moment, there are local authorities and private landlords who, with better understanding, could be persuaded to include this work more often as an inherent part of a housing programme.

Perhaps 'Information', and 'Communication' should be key words built into a study of future policy.

THE MALTHOUSE, ASLOCKTON
by Graham Beaumont

The Trust would like to draw Members' attention to the special architectural and historic interest of this building. There are few rural maltheuses left in Nottinghamshire and the one at Aslockton is a comparatively complete and unspoilt example.

The building is three-storeyed, of red brick, with a low pitch roof of very large Welsh slates. There is a datestone inscribed 1870 above the second floor loading door. The walls have brick pillasters and corbelled eaves. The distinctive small, square, windows have segmental brick arches and splayed brick sills externally and sliding shutters inside. The main internal features are the large timber beams and cast iron columns on the ground floor and exposed king-post roof trusses on the second floor.

Originally there were two maltheuses in Aslockton, but the earlier one was demolished some time ago.

As well as having special interest, the building is also capable of future beneficial use and the Trust feels that the best way to preserve it would be to convert it sympathetically to residential or other suitable use.

S N I P P E T S

SHELL BETTER BRITAIN

Shell, with the Civic Trust and the Nature Conservancy Council, are issuing a further challenge to young people. The 1977/78 Shell Better Britain Competition is the fifth in this successful series in which groups of people aged between 10 and 20 undertake practical schemes of environmental rescue or enhancement. 4,000 people from all over the United Kingdom took part in the last competition.

£3,000 in prizes will be awarded in the next competition being launched this autumn. A brief description of the project should be submitted as soon as possible and a detailed description of the progress of the work would be required by 31st July, 1978 (by which time at least a significant phase of the project should have been finished). The Trust hopes that local amenity societies will draw the attention of young people to the competition and encourage those undertaking projects in their areas. Details, entry forms, and the useful booklet "Tips for Triers" available from The Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AW.

Last year a Leicestershire group were runners-up in the Area Final. The 1st Lutterworth Range Group converted a derelict corner site into a town garden, including seating and a scent garden for the blind.

STATE AID FOR CHURCHES

Ecclesiastical buildings in use are now eligible for grants from the Historic Buildings Council. Hitherto only redundant churches have been assisted (HBC have recommended repair grants to 19 redundant churches amounting to £248,000 since 1973).

Grants will be restricted to buildings of outstanding quality (though excluding cathedrals) and proven financial need. Most will be for urgent structural repair. The partial exemption of listed ecclesiastical buildings from listed building control remains but the scheme agreed between the DoE and the

churches provides for consultation with the Secretary of State before a listed church is demolished.

HELP WITH COMPETITIONS

Local societies and others thinking of organising an architectural competition can get help from the Royal Institute of British Architects including model rules, suggested assessors, and advice on organisation and costs. The RIBA Competition Secretary, Judith Strong, can be contacted at 66 Portland Place, London, W1 (01-580 5533).

VILLAGE VENTURE COMPETITION

Shell U.K. are sponsoring a Village Venture Competition, through the Community Council for Nottinghamshire, the aim of which is to encourage environmental and social projects of benefit to the local communities. An oak and silver trophy and cash prize will be awarded annually to the winner entry, and further cash prizes and certificates to the runners-up. Further details can be obtained from The Secretary, C.C.N., 110 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HL.

For Your Diary...

SPRING MEETING

Wednesday, 19th April, 1978

7.30 p.m.

Alfreton Adult Education Centre,
Church Street, Alfreton, Derby.

Speaker: MR. DEREK LATNAM

"THE PRESERVATION OF
DERBYSHIRE'S HERITAGE"

Full details available from the
Secretary.

