

BRADFORD BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER ~2009~

Website: www.bbpt.org.uk



Completion of the Restoration of the Ilkley Cemetery Chapels

The Trust is happy to report that its work of restoration on the chapels and the installation of services to them have largely been completed. Both (North and South) chapels have been sold giving the Trust, in accordance with its status as a Revolving Fund Trust, some £95,000 to invest in future projects.

With regard to the Cemetery itself, it is a matter of great importance that the presence of tenants and the benign uses to which the chapels will be put – offices and showrooms – has not only substantially reduced the vandalism but has arrested the ‘spiral of decline’ in the cemetery and ensures that it remains a pleasant, safe and peaceful place to visit. Moreover, the colony of bats which was discovered in the North chapel as been made safe – something which would not have been the case if the vandalism had been allowed to continue unchecked. The Trust acknowledges the support of Ilkley Civic Society (which will include the cemetery and chapels in its programme of walks) and also hopes that the objections of some members of the public, surely based on misconceptions of what the Trust was trying to achieve, will now be laid to rest.

It has however been a long and uphill struggle. Much of the Trust’s energy has been taken up in dealing with the bureaucracy and lack of coordination between different Departments of Bradford Metropolitan Council regarding questions of ownership and also in obtaining the relevant permissions for the installation of services. The work of restoration itself, carried out by the architectural practice of Acanthus WSM has been relatively straightforward. The interior fabric of these Grade II listed buildings has been maintained and the installation of fittings and furnishings required for the new uses is reversible.

Throughout the country, cemetery chapels figure prominently as ‘buildings at risk’. The almost complete cessation of their original use and their relative isolation in the urban landscape have made them, as at Ilkley, targets for vandalism as well as suffering the natural processes of decay. As such, many have simply been demolished (as for example at Undercliffe). Yet many are buildings of considerable architectural interest, and moreover as relatively small buildings, they lend themselves well as ‘start up premises’ for new businesses and throughout the country there are several chapels which have been thus restored. The successful restoration and re-use of the Ilkley chapels and the earlier restoration of the Lodge at Cliffe Castle, Keighley, can now be seen as ‘flagship’ projects for the Trust.

Future Projects

There are within the Bradford Metropolitan district council area several more cemetery chapels which are suffering the downwards spiral of decay and vandalism. Two such are at Utley and Charlestown. The Trust is actively negotiating with Bradford MDC with a view of acquiring these chapels and in raising the necessary funding.

There are of course many other 'buildings at risk' listed in the Council's website, including nearly 200 listed buildings. Regrettably, the vast majority of these are either on a scale which require levels of funding way beyond the resources of the Trust or where the transfer of ownership is likely to be beset with difficulties. Of the latter, one such case is the Manor House in Rosebery Road just off Oak Lane – the oldest building in Manningham which could be readily converted to residential accommodation. Other possible buildings are Waterloo Mill at Silsden, Low Mills, Keighley, the former Reform Synagogue in Bowland Street, Manningham and the former Lodging House, situated on the Bradford canal link at Junction Bridge near Dock Lane, Shipley, which was constructed for workers on the Bradford Canal.

In this situation the Trust would welcome suggestions from Bradford MDC, its own Membership or Members of the Bradford Civic Society, or indeed any interested individuals, concerning properties which may be within the resources of the Trust to acquire and restore.

The Gateway to Bradford

Since the demolition of 1960s Broadway Development and Central House, the 'Gateway to Bradford' from the Leeds Road has consisted of an expanse of rubble, steadily encroached upon by weeds. As long as this unhappy situation continues, the Trust's booklet 'The Good, The Bad and the Ugly' will not become out of date.

We are now able to solve the 'mystery' of the sculpture at the top of No. 8 Piccadilly (p18) in the booklet. It shows the arms of the Scriveners' Company, an association of early type of lawyer, and represents an eagle with an inkwell held in its beak. The inscription 'Scribite Scientes Litera Scripta Manet' is incomplete and continues 'Verbum at Inane Perit'. The whole may be translated 'Skilled in the art of writing, the written word remains (but) that which is spoken perishes in the air'.

The writer, Christopher Hammond (c.hammond@leeds.ac.uk), would be pleased to receive any further corrections/suggestions for a future edition of 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'.

How Does a Building Preservation Trust Operate?

Building Preservation Trusts are voluntary, non-profit-making organisations with a charitable status, set up by people with an interest in the architecture and history of the area.

Restoration work is costly and requires Trusts to raise large sums of money. Building Preservation Trusts have access to grants from English Heritage, low-interest loans from the Architectural Heritage Fund (set up for this purpose) and possible National Lottery Funding. However, in recent years, these sources of funding have diminished and it is increasingly necessary to raise funds locally to bridge the gap between the cost of the restoration scheme and its value.

Bradford Building Preservation Trust which was established in 1995 is a Revolving Trust Fund. This means that buildings at risk are restored and any receipts from rents or sales are reinvested, enabling the Trust to undertake further restoration and conservation projects.

Within the Bradford district there are 59 conservation areas and more than 5,500 listed buildings which contribute significantly to the area's special character. Unfortunately many of these buildings are now caught in a spiral of decline and their original use is no longer necessary or viable. Most crucially, the cost of restoring them is often too great to provide a commercial rate of return.

When the private sector cannot afford repair costs and the public sector does not have the money, a Building Preservation Trust may be the only way of saving the building. Rescuing one ruin and providing it with a new life can inspire the care and restoration of other historic buildings in the area, triggering a dramatic upturn in its fortunes and future.

Bradford Building Preservation Trust aims to buy, conserve and restore such buildings and provide them with appropriate viable new functions. In this way Bradford's historic buildings can continue to make a vital contribution to the future of the district.

Chairman: Derek O'Hearne
Bradford Building Preservation Trust
c/o Commerce Court, Challenge Way, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD4 8NW
Website: www.bbpt.org.uk

Bradford Civic Society

The Trust welcomes the establishment, in 2006, of the Bradford Civic Society and is pleased to include here a summary of its aims and objectives – which are of course not wholly identical with those of the Trust itself.

“To promote, stimulate interest, preserve and develop the built environment of the city of Bradford MDC and neighbouring environs;
to interact, work together and foster partnerships with local community groups throughout the City of Bradford MDC and neighbouring environs;
to safeguard develop and comment on any proposed public planning change in Bradford MDC and neighbouring environs built-up area;
to provide a regular programme of events from lectures, visits, newsletters to general information.”

“To this end, the Society has recently (July 2009) published a series of proposals entitled ‘Common Sense Regeneration’. This publication seeks to persuade Bradford Council to replace its current regeneration strategy of ‘demolish and rebuild’ with a policy of refurbishing for new purposes the city’s fine heritage of Victorian and Edwardian buildings. The publication also details proposals for such things as developing the Broadway/Forster Square site (currently a hole in the ground) into an open piazza with gardens, for revisiting the concept of a crossrail link between Bradford’s two stations; for retaining the Odeon building and turning it into a world-class concert and conference venue and for rebuilding the Bradford Canal. In total there are over a dozen proposals, all of which are aimed at reviving the centre of Bradford and thus the fortunes of the city as a whole. The Society hopes that ‘Common Sense Regeneration’ will provoke a lot of interest and that Bradford Council will see fit, in the near future, to meet with members of the Society to discuss its proposals. Copies of ‘Common Sense Regeneration’ can be obtained from Bradford Civic Society by e-mailing info@bradfordcivicsociety.co.uk or via our website www.bradfordcivicsociety.co.uk.”

For further information, please contact:

Bradford Civic Society
Sunbridge House
Bradford
BD1 1TH
Tel: 01274 392929

A Homeowner’s Guide to Preserving and Enhancing the Character of Your Conservation Area

This 42 page booklet which is published by Bradford MDC (www.bradford.gov.uk) and which may be downloaded from the web, gives excellent advice to help people understand how to repair, maintain and restore historic features in their property. It gives examples of ‘best practice’, a list of contacts in the Council’s Conservation and Design Team and building contractors.