

C20 South West Region AGM Chair's Report August 2020 – by Zoom invitation

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many events and casework have been either postponed or put on hold, meaning there is much less to report this year. However we hope that some sort of 'normal service' will be resumed early in 2021.

CASEWORK AND LISTINGS

Plymouth

High Street Heritage Action Zones

Plymouth City Council has been granted almost £2m from Historic England as part of the High Street HAZ project. This is great news and another step towards the recognition of Twentieth Century Plymouth. We noted that Plymouth was included in 'The Top 10 walks in 20th-Century Landscapes this Summer'. The inspiration behind this is the Society publication '100 20th Century Gardens and Landscapes'. The Plymouth walk takes in the Civic Centre and many other C20 buildings.

Plymouth Civic Centre

The plans for the Civic Centre by developers Urban Splash remain unrealised, with a recent change in their proposals. Urban Splash in conjunction with the University of Plymouth has asked for a variation to the planning consent, by abandoning the use of the lower floors as retail space in favour of creating an "international conference centre" to seat up to 700 people. The upper floors would accommodate apartments which could be rented by the day. The declining fortunes of high street retail and leisure are being seen as a reason for the change, with other ways of enticing people into the city centre being explored.

We will continue to monitor the plans and proposals in Plymouth.

Newquay

A response to pre-application planning advice for the redevelopment of the Art Deco former **Hawkey's Garage** site on Henvor Road is still awaiting a decision.

There is a planning application in for the demolition and replacement of the **Fistral Bay Hotel**. Businessman Andrew Walker wants to buy it and has gone to great lengths to research its history, establishing that it was built in 1931 with further floor added in 1937. The planning application was due to be decided on 2 July but at the time of writing is still awaiting a decision. An application to List the building was recently turned down by Historic England.

High Cross House

The Dartington Estate has posted images of High Cross House to show recent conservation work. We are encouraged by this and to see the building back in use. The Dartington Trust had consulted restoration specialists Purcell and we would like to establish that the work carried out follows their guidelines.

Other cases

Other cases we have been monitoring over the last twelve months include the Jubilee Pool Penzance (unsympathetic additions to the café and entrance), the Isles of Scilly Museum (the council plan demolition of this unlisted building) and the ongoing threat to the Reel Cinema Plymouth.

If you know of any building or artwork of our period that you think is under threat of inappropriate alteration or demolition please let me or one of our committee know about it.

Palais de Danse, St Ives

The Palais de Danse in St Ives has C18 origins and was used from 1910 as a cinema, and from 1925 as a dancehall and for concerts. The sculptor Dame Barbara Hepworth bought the Palais in 1961 and the prototypes for her large-scale bronzes were made there. The Palais de Danse was listed at Grade II in May 2020. The listing news attracted lots of press attention. On Radio Cornwall C20 South West committee member and listing adviser Sam Barnes was interviewed and as part of our Zoom AGM Sam will make a presentation about the building.

EVENTS

In August 2019 Robert Drake was our expert guide for churches' tour, which included work by N.F. Cachemaille-Day and Sir Edward Maufe, important church architects, both featured in the recent Society publication '100 Churches 100 Years'. We started our day at St Luke, Newton Abbot, (Arthur Martin begun 1936 and completed 1963, listed Grade II), freshly restored and with a fascinating 'saltire' or diagonal cross plan. We then moved on to Central Church, Torquay (Narracott, Tanner and Andre 1970), a landmark in central Torquay thanks to the dramatic pierced concrete screen rising to a triple cross above the entrance. Inside it is virtually windowless but flooded with light from a series of geometric roof lights. Surely a contender for listing we thought.

After a walk around Torquay town centre taking in various buildings of our period our group moved on to what is regarded as the best inter-war church in Torbay, St Martin of Tours, by Cachemaille-Day (1938-61 Grade II listed), another example of the war years delaying completion and also reducing the scale of the original plans. After a quick look at the exterior of St Paul, Preston, also by Cachemaille-Day, but a complete contrast to St Martin, we finished our day in Goodrington. Here we looked at St George (Sir Edward Maufe 1938-9), a typical Maufe church with many of his characteristic features and with echoes of his work at Guildford cathedral.

Our big event of the year was a weekend in Plymouth. This was a great success despite indifferent weather – something of a C20 SW tradition. On the Saturday Simon Hickman, Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas, Historic England South West, gave us an illustrated talk before a walk around the highlights of central post-war Plymouth. On the Sunday we boarded a period coach for a tour of the suburbs of Plymouth. We finished at the Ernesettle Estate, one of seven suburban estates built as part of Plymouth's programme of reconstruction after WW2. In the Community Hall, Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser from Plymouth Architectural Trust gave us a talk about these estates and the conceptual blueprint laid out in 1943 in the 'Plan for Plymouth' by town planner Patrick Abercrombie and city engineer James Paton-Watson.

For our first event in 2020, we organised a presentation in January by local author and historian, Peter D. Thomas, on the theme of 'Exeter, let's pull it down'. Held in Exeter Library, Peter used images from the ISCA Collection, an extensive photographic archive of Exeter that he curated, to illustrate the extent of loss of buildings of our period due to redevelopment, road schemes and council initiatives. It was a very well attended meeting and made for compelling and rather alarming viewing! Very sadly, Peter died in March due to the impact of Coronavirus on an underlying condition. He will be greatly missed. He did outstanding work to preserve the heritage of Exeter.

Looking forward to 2021, when events have been resumed, we now plan to make our visit to Redruth in Spring 2021. We will tour the Cornish archive and studies centre at Kresen Kernow, housed in the former Redruth Brewery, recently opened following dramatic remodelling by Purcell. As previous billed we will also visit the splendid Art Deco Regal cinema (1935 by W.H Watkins). More details to follow via our social media pages and in a future ebulletin.

We welcome ideas for visits, talks and. Please do get in touch if you would like to contribute.

C20 South West Committee

The committee for 2019-20 comprises Tony Stokoe (Chair) Geoff Stow (Treasurer) and members Sam Barnes, Nick Cahill, Tanya Griffiths and Robert Dowden.

Our group was devastated by the unexpected death of Nick Cahill in March this year. Nick was an expert in the history and architecture of Cornwall, working as the Historic Strategy officer for Cornwall Council. He was a key member of the Cornish Buildings Group and brought great wit and wisdom to the C20 South West as a member of our committee. He greatly missed, a tragic loss.

For 2020-21 I am happy to stand for another, final, year as Chair. Geoff, Sam, Tanya and Robert are also happy to stand again and I would personally like to thank them for all their work. We are also pleased to welcome a new face, Sally Sutton. Sally is a Doctoral Researcher in the Architecture Department at the University of Plymouth. She is investigating the relationship between architecture and water, with the intention of contributing new understandings of community and creativity along, and on, the banks of selected rivers. I'm sure she can bring fresh perspective to our group and I hope that the membership will agree to her addition to our team and also to the re-election of the current committee en-mass.

TONY STOKOE