

UNITED KINGDOM

Wetlands Initiative

The most significant new archaeological initiative to identify buried monuments at risk in England has been the commissioning by English Heritage of a project titled 'Monuments at Risk in England's wetlands'. This initiative follows the inaugural meeting of the European Archaeological Council in 1999, which is made up of heritage managers; their initial focus has been the heritage management of wetlands. Wetland habitats are important for both the excellently preserved archaeological and palaeoenvironmental record that they contain. The English project is collating data on the destruction of wetlands over the last 50 years, and with it the rate of destruction or damage to archaeological sites in wetlands. The site density in England's wetlands is estimated at least 1 for every 100 hectares (or 220 acres). An estimated 1.1 million hectares of wetlands have been destroyed, which means that at least 13,000 archaeological sites will have been destroyed, mostly in the last 50 years. Future management will concentrate on preserving the hydrology of whole wetland areas, rather than protecting 'monument islands'. This will involve combining different interests in specific areas and co-operating with nature conservation organisations and landowners and managers.

English Heritage Register of Buildings at Risk

The fourth edition of the *English Heritage Register of Buildings at Risk* has been published. It brings together information on all the Grade I and II* buildings, and scheduled monuments (structures rather than earthworks or buried sites), known to be 'at risk' through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so. 1999 is the year taken as the baseline against which change is measured for the statistical purposes of the Register. England has 30,270 buildings or groups of buildings listed I and II*, an increase of 1.3% since 1999. Nationally 3.8% of these listed entries (1 in 25) remain at risk. A total of 109 entries were removed from the Register, as their future has been secured; a further 11 have been removed following reassessment and 4 have been lost, but 102 entries have been added.

English Heritage Grant Aid

English Heritage offered grant aid towards 98 buildings at risk, totalling £5.7million. Concrete progress is being made towards securing the future of more than one in four of buildings on the Register. Overall, almost half the items on the Register are capable of beneficial use sufficient to justify their maintenance once repaired. The remainder need long-term stewardship. Almost one in eight are economic to repair and bring back into use without subsidy. In about one in five cases, the owner is all or part of the problem, making coercive action a necessary part of the solution. The restoration and re-use of listed buildings at risk has been central to the renewal of many run-down areas in towns and cities throughout the country. It is clear that conservation-led regeneration is working and enjoys enormous public support (demonstrated in a recently commissioned public opinion survey). The approach taken by English Heritage in dealing with buildings at risk shows how a strategic approach can achieve real benefits for the historic environment, improve quality of life and help support sustainable economic development.

Initiatives in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

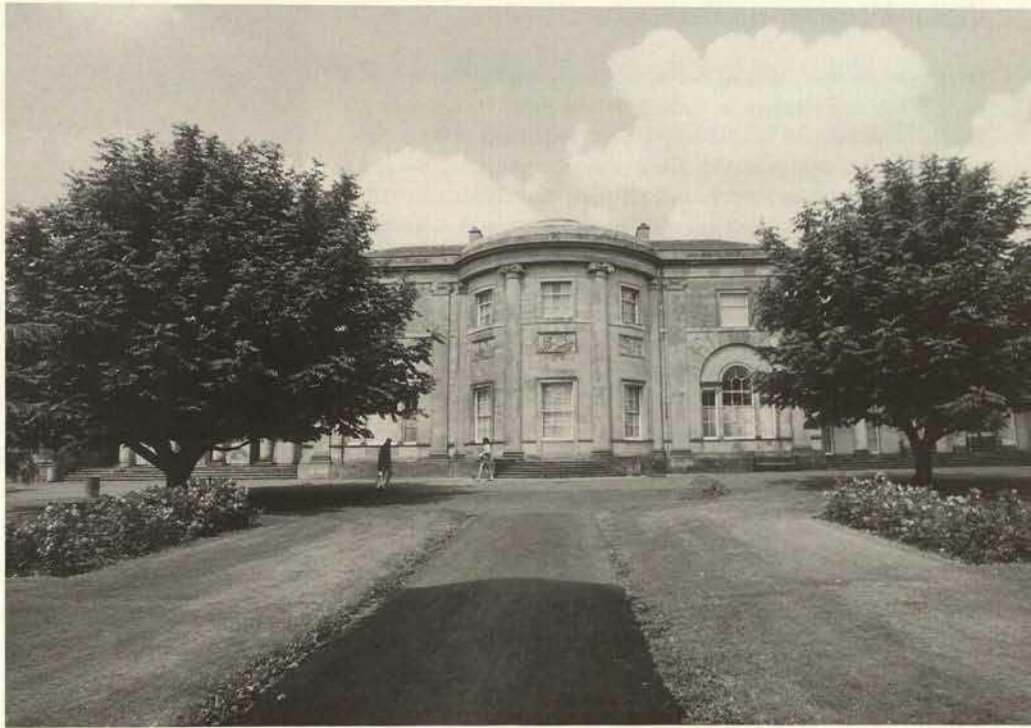
SAVE Britain's Heritage continued to maintain an online register of Grade II buildings at risk in England and Wales and published *Sleeping Beauties*, its twelfth annual catalogue of a selection of such buildings. In 2001 the SAVE register features many nonconformist chapels in Wales. Although some will be retained intact, many will find new uses if they are to survive. A Welsh Chapels Trust has been formed to safeguard the future of the most outstanding redundant chapels. The fate of these buildings is a serious conservation issue. Even those more modest buildings have played an enormous role in shaping both the social and physical character of Wales.

The Scottish Civic Trust's *Buildings at Risk Bulletin 2001-2*, compiled on behalf of Historic Scotland, contains a selection of some of Scotland's endangered historic buildings urgently in need of rescue. This bulletin includes a special feature on agricultural/croft buildings. There are 1331 buildings currently classified as at risk. Mansion houses and churches are the greatest types of building at risk and the highest concentration of urban buildings at risk is in Glasgow.

The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society's six-volume report 'Buildings at Risk', completed in 2000 in association with the government's Environmental and Heritage Service, remains the reference work for Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, there are no further plans to fund a post to keep the database up to date or to initiate rescues schemes.

Historic Parks

The National Heritage Lottery Fund continues to fund conservation throughout the UK, partly to stimulate regeneration in both urban and rural environments. Grants of £16.3 million in 1999/2000 were awarded through the Urban Parks Programme, launched in 1996. Total expenditure to date on this programme has been £178.3 million. The need for these grants was highlighted in a report by the Urban Parks Forum, titled *Public Park Assessment, A survey of local authority owned parks focusing on parks of historic interest* and published in 2001. There are 27,000 urban parks in the UK. But in spite of their importance to the quality of life and vitality of their local communities, there have been dramatic cuts in revenue expenditure. Historic parks, of which more than 2,500 are of historic interest, have in general fared worse than recreational open spaces with significant loss of features and disproportionate reduction in revenue expenditure. Despite the recognition of national status conferred by inclusion on registers of parks and historic gardens, registered parks have also suffered significantly with only Grade I designations offering any perceivable protection. Over half of all the historic parks are located in the most deprived local authorities and it is these that are most neglected due to lack of funding to cope with backlogs of major repairs and maintenance. Historic country parks fare marginally better than other historic parks.



Heaton Hall at Heaton Park, Manchester



West Wemyss village, Scotland, during restoration

Visitor-Management Research

Over the last year, ICOMOS-UK has been engaged in research into visitor management in cathedrals and great churches in the UK. The findings of the 200-site survey, published in June, indicated that although generally fabric was in good heart, the sheer volume of visitors in some cathedrals presented risks to the fabric and to monuments, as well as intentional damage such as theft and vandalism. In addition, damage inflicted by regular use of the buildings included those caused by public functions, by television crews, by the installation of services, by the use of heavy trolleys for moving furniture and by inappropriate cleaning materials and equipment. A conference was held in London on 20 June 2001 to report on the results of the research. One of the principal aims of the conference was to highlight 'best practice' in co-ordinating the needs of visitors with the preservation of the building and 'sense of place'. The proceedings of the conference will be published in September 2001. It was encouraging that the Conference Key-Speaker, Simon Jenkins, author of *England's Thousand Best Churches*, commented that no more than six out of the thousand he described were in a state of disrepair.



Croft Cottage, Blaragie, Highland region, Scotland

The restoration of this key part of the townscape has brought new vigour to the area. The new housing has been fully let and the area has taken on a new lease of life. It is hoped that the improvements funded by the Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme will act as a catalyst for change within the area generally.

Case Study 1: Heaton Park, Manchester, England

Heaton Park is the former country house estate of the Earl of Wilton. It became a public park in 1902 and represents 25% of the total green space in the city of Manchester. Over the years it had declined through lack of investment and increased vandalism. A National Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £3.4 million was awarded in 1997 towards boundary and security works. This phase restored and regenerated the historic core of the park, including repairing historic buildings and features, reinstating original planting and improving facilities for visitors to the park.

The link between building preservation and encouraging urban regeneration is also central to the National Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative. This scheme is based on establishing working partnerships between public funding bodies and the business community. It aims to achieve its restoration and regeneration objectives through a shared strategy, drawing on a 'common fund' set up by the project partners. Grants have been awarded to 50 schemes totalling £33 million. Work has begun in earnest on the first schemes. Examples include: restoration and re-use of vacant and disused houses and industrial buildings in Frome, England, which are being restored for residential and commercial use; and the restoration of derelict warehouses in the former dock area at Lower Duke Street and Henry Street, Liverpool, England. The scheme is to be extended at least until 2002.

Case Study 2: West Wemyss, Fife, Scotland

West Wemyss was an area in physical decline. The lack of investment in property reflected the lack of confidence in the area generally. The National Heritage Lottery Fund provided funding of £750,000 in 1999 for repairs to the main street for social housing.

Case Study 3: Croft Cottage, Blaragie, nr Kingussie, Highland Region

The Scottish Civic Trust's bulletin of 2001 has a special feature on threatened agricultural/croft buildings. In Scotland, agricultural production accounts for around 75% of land use. Agricultural dwellings such as Croft Cottage, Blaragie, nr Kingussie and associated steadings are numerous and should be regarded as a valuable resource reflecting the social and economic life of rural communities. Elsewhere in the UK, successive impacts of recent agricultural crises will undoubtedly affect the cultural landscapes created by traditional farming methods. It is expected that the rate at which farm buildings go out of traditional use will increase, bringing with it the challenge of developing sympathetic planning and regeneration policies.

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