

Summary Annual Report and Accounts 2002



From the Chairman

Debenham House (1905–7) is a magnificent Grade I-listed house in Kensington, London, designed by Halsey Ricardo, and famous for its glazed polychromatic exterior in green, turquoise and white. Inside the leading art workers of the day, men such as William De Morgan, George Jack and Ernest Gimson, contributed to its decoration. The house had been occupied for many years by an institution which, as recently as the mid-1980s, applied to build a large rear extension for offices, student accommodation and a conference hall. Of course the Victorian Society objected vigorously, arguing that this development would destroy forever the possibility that the building might once again be used for its original purpose and thankfully consent was refused.

Were we right to object? At the time people questioned whether the building really did have any future as a private house. But now it is back in single family occupation after a painstaking restoration and looks so much better for it. Thanks to the generosity of the present owners,



members of the Society were able to inspect the interior at a special fundraising reception held to mark our 45th birthday on 27 February 2003.

The point is that economic cycles move quickly, and are mere blips in the life of historic buildings. Circumstances which may seem insurmountable at one time can be completely different within ten years, so decisions about buildings must always be taken with a long-term view. Our role is to provide a counterweight to the claims of developers and many owners whose concerns are, not surprisingly, much more short-term.

That is why the demolition last year of Durnford Street School, Rochdale, (1908–10) a major work of the Manchester architect Edgar Wood, was so shameful. Its Grade II* listing



was no protection as even English Heritage agreed in principle it could go as re-use of the building was not considered economically viable. Yet school buildings are generally eminently adaptable, as they offer spacious well-lit accommodation, and it is quite likely that had Durnford Street School survived long enough an appropriate use would have been found. Unfortunately we will never know.

DR GEOFF BRANDWOOD

Conservation

In 2002 the Government's planning green paper threatened to remove the Victorian Society's role, along with that of the other national amenity societies, as statutory consultees. Consultation, it appeared to them, got in the way of the speedy working of

the planning process. Yet clearly this was a case of amnesia on their part: there is no obligation on planning authorities to wait for our responses to their notifications of applications for listed building consent. Usually we have 28 days to respond, after which any comments we make can be safely ignored. So even if we wanted to cause a delay, we couldn't.

There was great public support for our cause, and in the Lords, Lord Crathorne spoke eloquently in defence of the amenity societies. The *Sunday Telegraph* published an important feature article and our Director was interviewed for West Country television and Radio 4's *Today* programme. Soon the proposal was dropped, and Lord Falconer wrote that 'the National Amenity Societies do an excellent job on a largely voluntary basis, watching over our built heritage' and that he had no intention to remove our right of notification. So after much campaigning, we were reprieved.

But the Government still does not appear to be much interested in the historic environment. While CABE, the 'champion for architecture in England' enjoys increasing levels of funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the share of the champions for the historic environment, English Heritage, has been steadily declining. And with the present international situation, its earned income from properties is down too. Now its financial problems have hit us: the grant we receive for our Churches Officer is to be phased out over the next three years. This comes at a time when threats to churches are growing, whether through redundancies brought on by the anticipated decline in congregations, or the extra facilities that many parishes seek to include in their buildings as a means of

Top Debenham House, London
Centre Durnford Street School, Rochdale, being demolished, 2002.
Photo © Mark Watson by kind permission.
Bottom Durnford Street School

facilitating extended uses and earning extra income.

We simply cannot do without a Churches Officer and ideally we would have at least two. Parishes demand our advice and guidance, and we want to help them look after their precious church buildings. We don't oppose change in principle, but we advise how change can be accommodated with a minimum of damage to the historic and architectural interest of a building. At present we are the only formal consultees for the vast majority of listed building consent applications: those which deal with Grade II-listed buildings. English Heritage concentrate on Grade I and Grade II* buildings, and usually see Grade II buildings only when the proposals are for total demolition, the removal of a principal external wall or the demolition of a substantial part of the interior.

This presents us with a great fundraising challenge. By 2007 we will have to raise at least an additional £17,000 a year just to provide our current level of services. Appeals, grants and legacies are going to be crucial to our work.

Commenting on applications for listed building consent kept our three full-time caseworkers and regional groups very busy in 2002. Mere counting of cases does not reveal the true extent of our work, as some cases can be dealt with quickly while others require many meetings and site visits to be resolved. We received 6,419 notifications of proposals for works to listed buildings. Of these, 1,966 related to Victorian or Edwardian buildings, and we gave responses to 601. Reports on current cases are published in each issue of the *Victorian*. A detailed list of selected cases undertaken is available on our website or on request from the Society. A donation is requested to cover costs of postage and administration.

In addition to the formal process, many members of the public contacted us about buildings under threat near them. We press for buildings of listable quality to be spot-listed and do what we can but, frustratingly, lack of resources prevents us from taking up many other cases. Instead, we provide advice and support to residents mounting their own campaigns.

Education

The Victorian Society seeks to develop public knowledge and understanding of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and related arts through its educational programme, which includes walks, visits, lectures, conferences and publications.

The Victorian Society Book of the Victorian House by Kit Wedd

Increasingly owners and occupiers of Victorian houses have become interested in preserving them, both for their own enjoyment and that of future generations, and in restoring features or decorative styles that earlier owners had destroyed in misguided attempts to 'modernize' their properties. We believe that many of the damaging things that people do to their houses are the result simply of ignorance, and this book aims to help owners to make the right decisions. Thanks to a generous grant from the Jonathan Vickers Trust, this book was published by Aurum Press in September 2002. Already over 4300 copies have been sold worldwide. You can order your copy by calling 020 8747 5890 or by sending us a cheque for £34.95 (including postage in the UK).

The Victorian

We published three issues of the *Victorian* in 2002. In March the theme was Catholic architects to mark the centenary of JF Bentley and the publication of a book on George Gilbert Scott Junior by Gavin Stamp. In July, the theme was Liverpool, the venue for our 2002 AGM and in November we celebrated the publication of the *Victorian Society Book of the Victorian House* with an issue focusing on domestic architecture and design. This issue was Highly Commended in the 2003 'Golden Banana' Awards, presented at the Advice for Printers and Editors exhibition (APE) each year at the Business Design Centre, London. Though it sounds like a booby prize, the award in fact recognises the innovative and progressive approach of small independent publishers in making use of available technology.

Website

Our website continued to grow in popularity, attracting around 70,000 hits per month. Sales of our series of nine booklets on aspects of *Care for Victorian Houses* continued to

increase in 2002 despite publication of our new book. We attribute this to the growing use of the internet, which provides us with easy publicity for the series.

Birmingham Architects

The Mary Heath Trustees made a grant towards the editorial costs of a book on Birmingham architects, to be produced by the Birmingham Group of the Victorian Society.

Lectures, conferences and study days

Our winter lecture series was on *The Grand Manner: The Classical Tradition in Edwardian Architecture* organised by Richard Holder, and the autumn lecture series on *The Victorian House and its Interiors*, organised by Michael Hall to coincide with the launch of the *Victorian Society Book of the Victorian House*. We held study days on Victorian art and the middle ages in association with the Tate Gallery, on Edwardian London in association with the Museum of London, and on Victorian narrative painting, as well as a special evening to mark the sesquicentenary of the death of AWN Pugin.

Visits

There were weekend visits to Bournemouth and Swanage and to examine Bodley and Anglo-Catholic patronage in West Yorkshire, as well as our Annual General Meeting weekend in Liverpool. Our day visits included one looking at the work of Henry Woodyer, and others to Waddesdon Manor and other Rothschild houses, to churches in east Essex, and to Chatham Historic Dockyard. We visited many other buildings during the year including Lancaster House, London, Blackwell in the Lake District and the church of the Holy Rood, Watford.

Supporters

Volunteers continue to be central to the work of the Society. They contribute their expertise by assessing applications for listed building consent in our two buildings subcommittees, they organise our educational programme and as trustees they oversee the strategic direction and day-to-day operation of the Society. Our committee members alone contribute well over 900 hours of free advice a year.

As well as our trustees, officers and committee members, many contribute much more to the Society

than just their annual subscription. Thanks to Jane Wainwright and Bernard Harrison the cataloguing of our library is now complete, and work has begun on our collection of walk notes. Another team including Giles Dimock, Anne Dixon, Jean Fryer, Bryan Polley, Mary Prance and Elizabeth Stamp are weeding and sorting our casework archive. This work, and that of those organising activities for us, comes to many more hundred hours a year.

Many members generously give us additional donations during the year (in 2002 we received £15,371), and sign Gift Aid declarations to maximize the value of their donations and membership subscriptions. We hope to be left legacies, too: in 2002 we received the second instalment of a legacy worth in total about £78,000 from the Reverend Mr Schofield. So far in 2003 we have received a legacy of just over £5,000 from Mrs MFEG Christiansen, a founder member, and we are expecting the final distribution from the Schofield Bequest.

And still we maintain our loyal base of over 3,300 members who support us by happily paying annual subscriptions in support of our conservation and educational work. Thank you! If you would like to support our work, please telephone 020 8747 5890.

Report of the Main Committee

The trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act, submit their annual report and the summary financial statement for the year ended 31 December 2002.

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

The Victorian Society is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a memorandum and articles of association.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Income and expenditure

Total income for the year amounted to £305,420, in comparison with £295,136 for last year. Excluding legacy income, other one-off factors and the income from the Summer School, run for the last time in its present form in 2001, total income amounted to £264,195, an increase of 9.7% over the previous year on a comparable basis. The increase is primarily due to donations to our Christmas Appeal, the generous

donation of desks and furniture and to a most welcome claim of Gift Aid which had a catch-up element to it.

Total costs for the year amounted to £237,434, in comparison with £256,338 for the previous year. Excluding one-off factors and the expenditure on the Summer School in 2001, expenditure amounted to £234,940, an increase of 5.1% over the previous year on a comparable basis. A number of factors attributed to the increase including an increase in caseworker resources. Other factors were greater investment in publications (especially by the Mary Heath trust), the cost of sales of the *Victorian Society Book of the Victorian House* sold by the Society, additional essential casework expenses and higher depreciation of fixed assets.

The net movement of funds for the year, after unrealised losses on the investment portfolio is a surplus of £56,292 in comparison with a surplus of £29,726 for last year. Excluding legacy income and other one-off factors, the surplus amounts to £29,255 in comparison with a surplus of £17,256 for 2001.

All in all, this was a very satisfactory result but the Society's plans continue to be constrained by its lack of additional sources of income. The legacy income received was most welcome and will be spent on projects that would otherwise be unaffordable. The Society greatly appreciates the thoughtfulness of those who remember the Society in their wills and members who are making or revising their wills are encouraged to consider leaving a legacy to the Society. After the success of its Christmas Appeal, further fundraising initiatives are under consideration.

Balance sheet

The Society's balance sheet comprises endowment, restricted and unrestricted funds. The endowment and the restricted funds are invested so as to fulfil the undertakings the Society took on in receiving those funds. The endowment funds are invested in a balanced managed fund of equities, bonds and properties which should not only generate an inflation-protected income but should over time also generate capital growth, despite the continued poor performance of the stock market. The restricted funds are invested in cash deposits, which has proved to be a wise decision with the

benefit of hindsight, bearing in mind the performance of the stock market. Unrestricted funds finance the Society's general operations including the majority of its fixed assets and its stock and debtors (less creditors). Any surplus funds are invested in cash deposits pending their expenditure.

The Society's total assets during the year increased by 9.9%. This reflects a 33.9% increase in unrestricted funds, largely due to the receipt of legacy income. Restricted funds were broadly flat reflecting the net income received on the Mary Heath fund outweighing the net expenditure from the Jonathan Vickers fund. The endowment fund fell by 20.9% as a result of a fall in the value of the underlying investments. This fall is less than the fall in the benchmark index used by the fund managers to monitor their performance.

For the Society to function successfully, it must maintain an adequate level of unrestricted reserves that can be used to finance its day to day operations. The trustees are satisfied with the Society's present position.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the trustees, have been reviewed during the year and the trustees are satisfied that systems have been established to mitigate those risks.

The Main Committee approved this report on 26 April 2003.

Dr Geoff Brandwood
Chair

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park,
London W4 1TT

Telephone 020 8994 1019

Facsimile 020 8747 5899

Web www.victoriansociety.org.uk

Email admin@victoriansociety.org.uk

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