





TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

BY ELAINE BOXHALL

FEBRUARY 1982

"FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH"
***a brief account of the re-building of Kinmel Hall
formerly Clarendon School, Abergele, N. Wales***

FOREWORD

By

THE MARQUESS OF ANGLESEY

DL FSA FRHistS Hon FRIBA FRSL.

When I first heard that a Mr. Vince was going to restore Kinmel Hall I thought that he must be a madman. Soon, though, I realised, particularly after first meeting him, that he was not only very sane indeed, but that he was also well named. The dictionary definition of invincible is "incapable of being conquered, overcome, or subdued; insuperable". character of my friend Eddy.

This sums up a vital part of the I soon discovered that the sure foundation of his invincibility is his unshakeable belief in the Christian God and in the efficacy of prayer.

The Historic Buildings Council for Wales, of which I have the honour to be chairman, has the statutory duty, amongst others, of advising the Secretary of State on the giving of grants for structural repairs to owners of outstanding historic buildings.

After the awful fire at Kinmel we were all in despair. Here was one of Britain's not just Wales's greatest and largest Victorian country houses - a veritable palace and an architectural gem in real danger of decay and demolition. the lack of an owner with a potential use in mind, and, just as vital, the means to effect the extensive and expensive repairs which were essential, seemed as inevitable as anything in this world.

I recollect that before the fire Clarendon School had applied for grant-aid towards the repairs necessary to just some of William Eden Nesfield's splendid chimneys.

The sums required for these alone were enormous. How much vaster, then, was to be the cost of the post-fire structural costs! On top of these, of course, was the expense of interior decoration and all the large variety of works which, under the Historic Buildings Act of 1953, would not qualify for grant. The amount of taxpayers money available for assistance to all the eligible historic buildings in the Principality is, naturally, limited.

Never the less the tremendous importance of Kinmel architecturally and the wonderful enthusiasm and competence of its new owner, ensured that something approaching 40% of all structural repairs would be made available over the years. Not only is a very important part of Britain's heritage saved from extinction, but its new uses are eminently excellent both from a spiritual and a social point of view.

In all my thirty years of service on the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, I can honestly say that none of our numerous tasks of rescue and revival, repair and restitution has given me such profound satisfaction and joy. Working in close partnership with Eddy Vince on his great project has been a prodigious privilege for all the Council's members and for the Welsh Office staff - especially the architectural assessor, Douglas Hogg. To have been participants in a miracle of this nature makes one at once humble and proud.

Mrs. Boxhall's excellent and telling account of the way in which things proceeded is indeed worthy of the subject. Praise cannot be given Higher

To the Glory of God and His use as a conference centre.
The phone rang on September 30th 1975. It was a friend giving the sad news that at lunch-time the previous day, a large part of the main building of beautiful Kinmel Ball had been destroyed by fire, praise God without loss of life and with only slight injury to one or two firemen. It took time to realise that the place so many of us loved for its architectural beauty, for its memories either as staff or as girls and above all for the very presence of Jesus Christ which we had known when it housed Clarendon School, had ended that phase of its life. The Lord's miraculous, immediate and excellent provision of a new home for Clarendon School is another story to His praise.

For the next few years, fragments of news filtered through of a scene of derelictions charred remains of what we knew as the school 'San', Miss Swain's flat and the Mezzanine floor, including the library once a chapel when Kinmel was a private residence, windows swinging loosely on the odd hinge attempts by vandals to cause further destruction; water-damage both from rescue attempts and from rain, in areas unaffected directly by the fire, overgrown and untended bushes in the Venetian Garden and sports facilities unused and unusable.

Suggestions circulated of the possible future of that lovely place, the most horrific being that it might be razed to the ground. Then in January 1979 came the wonderful news from Miss Sheila Haughton, Head Mistress at the time of the fire, that "KINMEL HALL IS BEING RESTORED" (her capitals!).

That was indeed cause for praise! There was even mention of the possibility of a conference being held later in the year. In answer to Sheila's

"Wouldn't you love to be there?",

I wrote on my copy of her letter, a firm

"Yes!".

Reference was made to one Mr. Edmund Vince, a Christian who has property interests and had two daughters, Hannah and Naomi at Clarendon" and that he "has started work on the building•••• Since November a temporary roof has been almost completed, electricity wired to every room, the water turned on and central heating too.

This has proved to be in the nick of time for, Mr. Vince tells me, in another few months rising dry rot would have rendered the whole project impossible."

Whoever this Mr. Edmund Vince was, it was cause for tremendous praise to God that someone was prepared to undertake a task of such magnitude, estimated at a cost of up to £2 million at the time of the fire•••• and all in the faith that the Lord would provide everything needed in terms of finance and the personnel both to carry out the reconstruction and to form a team which would run Kinmel Hall as a Christian Conference Centre. It would be for His glory alone.

Earnest praise and prayer were sought from friends of Kinmel and soon the 1979 Old Clarendonians' Association Association Prayer Circular was in use with an additional heading, "Kinmel Hall". Prayer was asked for Eddy Vince and all the needs of such a courageous project. Weekly he was prayed for until at last we met when the Inaugural Conference materialised in the August. My husband and I left home wondering just what and who we might find at the familiar Kinmel Hall where I had spent five wonderful years on the staff.

So far, Sheila Haughton had remained the one link between members of the O.C.A. and Kinmel.

Words are inadequate to describe the sheer joy of coming face-to-face again with that lovely building, albeit with a sadly depleted sky-line, as we turned into the last stretch of the long drive, and as of old, rumbled over the cattle-grid.

Equally difficult is it to describe our amazement at all that the Lord had enabled Eddy and his team to accomplish in less than a year.

Willing hands of both the team and local friends had spent many hours cleaning, polishing and re-furbishing the fine entrance hall, main dining-room, inner hall, drawing-room, assembly room, V1th form room and main kitchen. We could hardly believe that they had been so neglected until quite recently. Above, bedrooms and bathrooms had been prepared and it was joy indeed to spend a week-end in such surroundings, amid warm Christian love and fellowship, as we rejoiced together in God's goodness and faithfulness. We heard from Eddy the story of his initial enquiry of Sheila as to the state of the "old" Clarendon buildings; of his first visit with an apprehensive Marie, his loyal wife, and of the vision which the Lord gave him as he cast his experienced eye over a building which he, too, had admired architecturally, a member of a China Inland Mission now O.M.F. prayer conference held there some years previously after he was converted in Egypt.

He shared with us, for prayer, the huge financial undertaking this was and his absolute confidence that the Lord would provide all that was needed, as the vision and work were His. A seemingly fair description of Eddy was 'a man of big heart, big vision and big faith in our Great God'.

At this stage, the team consisted of Ken and Betty Ogden, C.M.S. missionaries recently returned from the Sudan where Ken had been responsible for re-building churches badly damaged through fighting.

The Lord had prepared him for Kinmel "for such a time as this". Later, Ken and Betty were to become Wardens, fulfilling a vital function of generally overseeing the work and preparing each of the four emerging conference areas for Christian groups booking them. Welcoming each group, answering innumerable questions and coping with equally innumerable emergencies have all been part of the job for Ken and Betty. From the start, John Alderson has been a loyal member of the team, taking a large share in all the heavy, practical work of such a project, never missing an opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus in the midst of it all. In fact, ministry, whether to non-Christians or to believers in particular need, has been a feature of the work, running parallel with restoration of the actual buildings.

The six Vince sons have all contributed to a greater or lesser extent, the younger ones in the school holidays and the older ones, Nat and Ben, in a full-time capacity and Jake when in England. Others have joined the team more recently.

Adequate tribute can never be paid to these, who with Eddy and Marie have borne? The burden of the huge amount of physical work in these early years.

We salute their magnificent, persistent hard work, often pressed for time, and praise God for each of them.

November 1979 saw the Lord giving a burden for the launching, a couple of months later, of the Kinmel Hall Praise and Prayer Fellowship, enlisting the prayer support of several hundred friends. The quarterly Prayer Cycle has brought exciting items of praise and prayer, together with some more persistent problems to be overcome in the Lord's own time. Many appreciative letters were received from ex-members of staff and Old Clarendonians, thrilled that out of the ruins was rising another work of God, so manifestly to His glory and being richly blessed by Him.

Maybe the timing of this was not unconnected with the Lord's mercy the previous September in bringing Eddy safely through a serious heart attack and restoring him to lead the work again from the front, apparently with his former vigour.

That, at least, features in the first item of the original Prayer Cycle. As the months have gone by, much praise to the Lord have been recorded for the magnificent work done by the team and by outside craftsmen, as the buildings have begun to look more like their old selves, with almost unbelievable speed but not without problems. One Prayer Cycle entry ran, "Praise God for extensive progress on all fronts despite almost overwhelming problems". These included temporary roofing inadequately sealed, with resultant, discouraging leaks at the weak spots every time it rained, with damage to temporary, suspended ceilings, carpeting and more permanent work; a fire- alarm and smoke-detector system requiring much extra work in such extensive buildings; misunderstandings; criticisms; and the and the huge matter of financial provision to meet hefty bills, during years of economic recession in the country.

However, the Welsh Office promised to cover a proportion of the cost of work completed to a satisfactory standard on inspection. We praise God that He has provided the needed finance, not without considerable testing of faith, but always when most needed. Through it all, the Lord has been victorious and characters have been moulded by Him, as the team has lived and worked at close quarters, often under great pressure.

God has graciously answered prayer for safety for all those working on the buildings and many miracles have been recorded when injury might have been worse.

By summer 1980 the 2nd Kinmel Conference was delighted to use the newly-completed Kinmel Close, accommodating up to 85, depending on how well-filled the dormitories are, in addition to single and double bedrooms.

Out of the 'San' bedrooms and adjacent corridor had been built a most attractive meeting-room, overlooking the Venetian Garden and grazing land beyond. Two floors below Kinmel Close has its own dining room, kitchen and sitting-room.

The middle floor and parts of the other two floors provide bedrooms and bathrooms for that area. This had been the most badly damaged part of Kinmel but that was a thing of the past. It now had a new future with God and was fast becoming a place of meeting with Him, individually or as a conference group.

That was the last of the four conference areas to be brought in to use, each functioning independently of the others and primarily as self-catering units, although local caterers are available if preferred. Each has similar facilities to Kinmel Close but shares outdoor sports areas for tennis, squash, swimming and the lovely grounds. The Main Hall area comprises those rooms used by the Inaugural Conference, accommodation up to 270 people.

The "Stable Block", identified by its fine Clock Tower and renamed Kinmel Court, provides mostly dormitory accommodation and is therefore popular with young people's groups of up to 100. The old "South Wing", with a mixture of single and larger bedrooms for up to 38, is re-named Kinmel Link, connecting the main building with Kinmel Court. The four areas are mostly booked separately but can be booked in toto.

At the time of writing, work is being carried out to bring the gym and adjacent large garage into use as a meeting-room for a conference of that size.

The upper floors of the Main Hall area and Kinmel Close can be reached by the re-built lift as well as by the stairs. All areas have been heavily booked in the summer months and more lightly at weekends throughout the rest of the year. Many conference organisers and individuals have testified to great

blessing among their groups whilst at Kinmel. That makes the project very worthwhile. Beautiful buildings without the Lord's known blessing would be hollow satisfaction and no reward.

Many have been blessed too as they have come into the Kinmel "family" to cook a week-day, mid-day meal for the team, to clean or to join the team on a voluntary basis between periods of training, sharing the practical work.

The staff kitchen/Dining-room and Kinmel Office are often scenes of the "family" at its beat, either in praise and prayer or enjoying life with fun and laughter, alongside the serious business of life. One of the happiest by-products of Kinmel's new life has been its first marriage of two members of the "family". Don originally came to Kinmel with an American group and remained to give voluntary help. Largely through him Wendy was brought to faith in Jesus Christ and joined the office staff. Some months later the Lord brought them together in marriage and they have now joined the team. Praise Be!

The outstanding achievement of 1981 was the re-building of the dormer windows and the chapel roof, followed by the re-slating of the whole of the destroyed roof. Thousands of slates were painstakingly fixed in place. The cupola and Pavilion Tower, once such distinctive features of the sky-line, were also re-built. Work has gone ahead on the rooms inside the Tower and the battle with dry rot in the Main Hall area continues.

*At the end of the year Eddy wrote
"Despite monumental obstacles the Lord has blessed,
answered prayer and responded to the exercise of faith in the
Name of Jesus". It could be added that "If Eddy and Marie had
needed to know where all the resources, financial and human,
would come from before they took that step of faith, Kinmel
would still be derelict"..*

ELAINE H. BOXHALL
24.2.82



SUPPORTING INFORMATION



Peter Hare Independent Consultants

Friday 7th May 2021

An open letter of serious historic, architectural and cultural concern.

To Conwy council, the friends of Kinmel Hall and the people of Wales,

I would like to thank the auctioneers and caretaker for escorting my walkthrough with the Chairman Paul Hughes and key members of the Friends of Kinmel on Tuesday 4th May 2021.

I feel the need to share what I witnessed on Tuesday, plus a little of what I have learned in my years of working for private and state clients within some of the finest buildings of national importance.

Driving the half mile through the oak tree track and pastoral meadow fields, the grounds themselves seem to hide the hall until the last moment. Almost shyly the building keeps you waiting for your first glimpse. Some chimneys and a fleeting side section glance before a right turn brought me to face directly onto Nesfield's crown, the stunning French Renaissance architectural masterpiece built as Kinmel Hall.

The impact of its prominence and location are beautiful. Somewhat less in proportion, the hall's Versailles chateau style reminded me of my many arrivals at Waddesdon Manor in Bucks. Sadly the similarities of these creative architects and their impressive contributions ended abruptly as I neared the building. The differences in the care and attention between the two properties is stark. The understanding that such landmark estates have a cultural importance to the nation, stretches way beyond simple private ownership. If partnered (as Waddesdon is with the National Trust) the estate becomes more than brick, stone, tall trees and fountains. It can provide great joy for many and will contribute to inspire our society for future generations. The contrast is there for all to see. Whilst the lawns of Waddesdon are manicured and the carefully managed public access, exhibitions, weddings and merchandise contribute immensely to its up keep and future security, Kinmel Hall has fallen on its knees and into a state of dereliction.

The way forward

Major detailed inspections and thorough professional surveys are required to develop schedules of the full extent of works required. A grade-1 listed property in this condition is not for the property developer, nor the country home speculator or those dreaming of moving into the perfect country estate within the next year or two. To fulfil the requirements that this conservation and restoration project requires will take significant time in pre-planning and coordinating. It requires carefully selected architects and experienced professional teams and tradesmen. It will cost more than double that allowed by building surveyors and will likely create a programme phased over several years.

External

- As a quick guide the roof which is hanging by a thread in some areas will require a major overhaul. Inappropriate repairs are visible as are the areas of vandalism and theft to the rear and sides. However the disgraceful lack of maintenance appears to be the main issue creating the majority of the advanced decay. The remaining slates should be salvageable but roof timbers will need assessing for structural reliability and ridges, valleys, dormer casings and hips all need major works. I would hazard a +/- 50% replacement.
- The brick and stone shell fares better, and generally speaking the front elevation is very encouraging with much of the fine ornamentation in acceptable condition.. However replacement sections, repairs and interventions are required at the rear followed by a structural stability check over followed by conservation cleaning and a major re-pointing phase to all elevations and levels.

- The majority of the original lead and ornamental iron downpipe, hoppers and guttering remain, but missing and broken sections need attending to as a matter of urgency to reduce the structural and cosmetic damage being caused.
- The woodwork including glazed windows and doors are in mixed condition varying from potentially salvageable to in need of replacement. It is likely that to salvage any parts they will require removing for extensive repair.
- The stable and outer living quarters are in dangerous condition, some with roof collapse and others in an advance state of decay.

Interior

- The upper floors were restricted in access with some impossible to inspect. Major water ingress has penetrated several floors through principle areas causing timber joists and lathes to fail and the ornamental historic plaster ceilings to collapse in places.
- Several areas that remain are in imminent danger of collapse due to the prevailing conditions they are exposed to. Immediate protection and shoring up is required to prevent further major loss of historic fabric. Areas of major efflorescence and widespread fungicidal growth are also of major concern for the fabric of the building and specialist approved H&S action is also required on these elements.
- The heating, electrical, plumbing and general M&E services were not checked. However considering the current condition one would assume these to need complete replacement.
- In decorative terms, following all major trades the property requires full refurbishment.

Summary

What has happened at Kinmel Hall is unacceptable on many levels. The architectural damage caused by neglect to one of Wales's finest architectural buildings should have been prevented long before reaching this stage. The process of saving our heritage must be very carefully assessed if we are to prevent repetition and full-scale loss at Kinmel. I have been engaged on many of our nation's finest conservation and restoration projects and I have witnessed buildings of the highest national importance return from the brink. It will take vision, planning, patience and a great deal of money. Kinmel Hall hasn't gone past the point of repair, but I use the next word very carefully indeed – "yet".

The condition of the building is changing rapidly. If left to deteriorate for another year greater areas of historic fabric will be lost and questions of the realistic feasibility of returning the building to any form of past glory are increasing by the day. Without question it is currently salvageable and worthy of the major efforts required, but it must be acted upon now.

The next custodian.

To save Kinmel Hall the commitment of those overseeing the sale, purchase and restoration project must be brought together as-one, hand-in hand and assessed rigorously to avoid short-term profiteering to the further detriment of the estate. Offer's should be overseen and tested by 3rd parties including the council, its professional advisors and the friends of Kinmel Hall. The transfer of ownership and responsibilities should not be completed until assurances and guarantees are received and checked for compliance and due diligence by all parties.

Failure to ensure all aspects of the next custodians integrity is the responsibility of the council. Errors at this stage could tip the fine estate towards its final days.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Hare

www.peterhare.com

info@peterhare.com

<https://twitter.com/peterjohnhare>

Wednesday 5th May 2021

Dear Paul,

My initial thoughts of the buildings condition as some preliminary comments based upon or cursory viewing is as follows (obviously we have not inspected the building sufficiently to report on the building formally and this would be a far more involved as an inspection to report on the building):

- a. The external walls generally appeared structurally to be in reasonable order considering the buildings age and lack of evident maintenance, however extensive areas of masonry repairs and repointing required
- b. Windows where in poor condition and in need of extensive repairs
- c. The roof was in poor order with extensive areas of lead missing, slipped or dislodged areas of slate work and all the roofs will require full recovering, no doubt the roof frame when exposed would require repairs and the extent of repairs will be extensive, this is hard to assess without high level access/inspection to the extent.
- d. Chimneys whilst many appear at 1st glance reasonable structurally their stability will deteriorate whilst the detailing related to weather detailing is left to deteriorate, and extensive repairs to such detailing and at chimney tops and generally and in regards to pointing etc is required.
- e. The roof gutters, downpipes are in poor order and again all require extensive repairs
- f. Internally there is evidently some dry rot and many areas of the lath and plaster ceilings and ornate ceilings are being affected by the extent of water penetration; as will be the internal floor structures, walls and all other finishes and requires extensive works internally to repair and the M&E installations would need full renewal.
- g. The external works associated to the grounds and outbuildings is again extensive.

The buildings will continue to deteriorate until the weathertightness of the structure and fabric is addressed and overall the buildings are in very poor order.

Hope this helps as some initial comments for assistance.

Kind Regards

Llion Scott BSc (Hons) MRICS CHBP | Certified Historic Building Professional

Technical Director | Chartered Surveyor

SMITHERS PURSLOW





LETTERS OF SUPPORT



CYNGOR TREF Y
RHYLL
TOWN COUNCIL

Our Ref / Ein Cyf:
HUG/GO1/151122

Your Ref / Eich Cyf:

Date / Dyddiad: 15/11/2022

Town Mayor / Maer y Dref: Councillor / Cynghorydd Mrs

Diane L. King Town Clerk / Clerc y Dref: Mr

Gareth J. Nickels

Mr Paul Hughes
Chairman
The Friends of Kinmel Hall
Nesfieldscrown@outlook.com

Dear Mr Hughes

Kinmel Hall

Further to your correspondence addressed to the Town Mayor may I first apologise for the delay in responding. However I can now advise that at a recent meeting of the Town Council your letter was circulated.

The Town Council were very supportive of the ambition of the Friends to restore the Kinmel Hall building and to prevent further decay to its infrastructure. While the building is outside of the administrative area of this authority, it nonetheless represents a major structure in the North Wales landscape and if sympathetically restored could potentially represent a significant attraction for visitors and residents along the coastline.

From your correspondence the Town Council is obviously aware and disappointed at the current condition of the building and shares the hope of the Friends that a positive level of restoration can ultimately be achieved.

Yours sincerely

Town Mayor

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Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg

Correspondence is welcome in either Welsh or
Mae croeso i chi gysylltu â'r Cyngor yn

Monday 4th July 2022

To All Whom It Concerns

Kinmel Hall

Despite the valiant efforts of the Local Authority and its many friends, Wales's astonishing architectural showpiece at Kinmel Hall has proved unable to attract any practical saviour, and too costly a nut to crack.

If this extraordinary example of Victorian domestic architecture is ever to be rescued and restored to living use and active continuity, now must surely be the last opportunity to assess its remarkable merits, together with its detractions and their realistic remedies, and to arrive at a radical and realistic management plan.

But Time is the enemy!

I do wish Every Success to this admirable Campaign.

Sincerely

(Sir) Donald Insall CBE



BODRHYDDAN -HALL-

8 July 2022

To whom it may concern

I am writing to offer my support, and ask for yours, to the project to restore Kinmel Hall to its former glory. I have a personal interest in this matter since my own house, Bodrhyddan, was designed by the same architect as Kinmel, William Eden Nesfield. Nesfield was a most significant designer, working largely in the Queen Anne revival style which is evident at both Kinmel and Bodrhyddan.

Kinmel ranks amongst the most important pieces of architecture in Conwy and would indeed be ranked highly wherever in the world she stood. It is a tragedy that the hall has been reduced to its current state through a combination of neglect and vandalism.

Set as it is in the carefully created parkland, the building has enormous potential for a whole variety of purposes which Mr Hughes will no doubt bring to your attention.

Restoration will be a major and expensive undertaking, even given that substantial grant aid would no doubt be available from heritage bodies. Set against this it would generate significant employment of every type, from general labourer's to craftsmen of the very highest order. It would also attract national and quite possibly, international attention to Conwy.

I hope the Country Council can find it in themselves to support this initiative. If work does not begin soon the Hall will pass into a state where it is beyond repair.

Yours faithfully

Thursday 2nd December 2021

Dear Councillor Davies,

I am not sure you will be pleased to hear that I am writing about the present state of Kinmel Hall, of which I am one of the patrons. As you will be aware, this sad, dilapidated, near-ruin is not much more than a blot on the landscape where it was built to shine. It is a sorry story and the area is the poorer for it.

Wales does not have many houses on the scale, or with the importance, of Kinmel Hall, as I am sure you know, and, to be honest, the seeming indifference of the authorities to its condition is very hard to understand if they have any interest in the history of their own country.

Once again, not for the first time, the house seems to have fallen into the hands of someone who either had no idea what he was taking on, or, if he did understand the enormity of the task, had no intention of seeing it through. But every year that the building is neglected only compounds the difficulty when nothing substantial is done to rectify the situation. And even when someone does speak up, to try to take some responsibility, no action is taken and there are apparently no consequences for this neglect. For example, I understand that clear instructions from the Council, forbidding the use of pods, and about work to make the house weather-proof if nothing else, has been consistently ignored, but there does not seem to have been any counter response from those in charge.

Nor are things much better with the gardens and park. I am told there has been an attempt to deny that the Council is responsible for the ancient woodlands (they are), and an absolutely supine response to the despoliation of the potentially marvellous gardens.

Of course it is unlikely that Kinmel will ever be a private house again. But there is no reason why it could not be restored as a hotel and conference centre, on a scale that would do credit to the surrounding area, creating job opportunities in plenty, as well as a hub of social activity in what could be a very flexible space, that would enhance the lives of the local community, and be a beneficial, and splendid, landmark in Welsh life, generally.

Obviously I know that none of this dismal tale has been your fault personally, but the place does need a champion on the Council, to make them see the potential of what could be one of the great houses of Britain. It only takes an act of will to start the ball rolling, and it would be wonderful if you could be part of that.

Yours ever, Fellowes

The Lord Fellowes of West Stafford, D. L.,

Councillor Davies' response to this email can be found in the Appendix – he did not reply himself despite it being a formal complaint

From: Isherwood, Mark (Aelod o'r Senedd | Member of the Senedd)
Sent: 29 October 2021 17:43
To: Iwan.Davies@conwy.gov.uk
Cc: Cllr Charlie McCoubrey <cllr.charlie.mccoubrey@conwy.gov.uk>
Subject: KINMEL HALL 'THE WELSH VERSAILLES'

Dear Iwan,

I am pleased to add my name to those calling for urgent action to save Kinmel Hall, Abergele, a Grade 1 Listed Building, from being lost.

Concern has been expressed to me that Kinmel Hall's current owners do not "have any intention of doing or do not have the funds or understanding to do anything with her".

And that, the Hall is therefore in need of urgent work to save it.

I have also been copied on several letters of support from people far more expert in this area than myself, and the following quotes are taken from these which include:

"I am pleased to support the campaign to save Nesfield's Kinmel Hall, a nationally – indeed internationally – important historic building, among the most significant Victorian buildings in Wales of the nineteenth century" – Jeremy Musson, LLB Hons, M Phil, FSA.

"I was appalled to see the neglect of a building of such historic importance, especially bearing in mind its unique association with the Nesfields" - Michael Fitt OBE FCIHort FCMI, Chairman, The Royal Parks Guild.

"It is a great shame to see a building of such significance as Kinmel Hall falling into a state of disrepair and dereliction. I was further distressed to hear that the property had been broken into and vandalised on more than one occasion" – Lord Langford, Bodrhyddan Hall.

"The buildings will continue to deteriorate until the weathertightness of the structure and fabric is addressed and overall the buildings are in

very poor order.

Hope this helps as some initial comments for assistance” – Smithers Purslow.

“Major detailed inspections and thorough professional surveys are required to develop schedules of the full extent of works required. A grade-1 listed property in this condition is not for the property developer, nor the country home speculator or those dreaming of moving into the perfect country estate within the next year or two” – Peter Hare Independent Consultants.

“I hope my few words highlight the importance of cation at Kinmel Hall and leads to some prompt and meaningful steps taken to save this beautiful building and her grounds” – Peter Hare – Private Clients.

“Kinmel forms one in a series of major estates along the north coast of Wales and is one of W E Nesfield’s major country houses. The house (Listed Building Grade 1); the list description states it is listed Grade 1 ‘because it is a building of major national importance for it’s innovative style, by a leading British architect of the mid-late Victorian period.’ It is also important for it’s accompanying landscape and garden (Register of Landscapes, Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales, Grade 2*) with a formal garden by W A Nesfield (known as the Venetian Garden), including the fountain and summer house and a good collection of trees reflecting the various stages of development of Kinmel Hall and now I understand for it’s Ancient Woodland.

I congratulate on your continuing fight to save this very important historic country house and it’s accompanying garden” - Caroline Kernan MA (Conservation Studies, Historic Landscapes) Dip Hort (Kew).

I also understand that many other prominent supporters include the Lord Lieutenant of Clwyd.

I would therefore be grateful if you could give this your attention and provide a response accordingly.

Thank you.

Regards

Mark

Councillor Davies' response to this email can be found in the Appendix – he did not reply himself despite it being a formal complaint



Mr Iwan Davies CEO
Conwy County Borough Council, Coed Pella,
Conwy Road, Colwyn Bay, LL29 7AZ

By Email to: iwan.davies@conwy.gov.uk

cc Councillor Sam Rowland cllr.sam.rowlands@conwy.gov.uk Councillor Mark Baker cllr.mark.baker@conwy.gov.uk

Our reference: 21043

16th February 2021 Dear Mr Davies, **KINMEL HALL**

Following the successful rescue of Gwrych Castle I am writing to express our concern with another most important historic house in the County of Conwy, Kinmel Hall. This is a building of outstanding architectural quality and was one of a series of major 19th century houses featured by Mark Girouard in a pioneering series of articles in the magazine Country Life on Victorian country houses.

Subsequently it has appeared in several SAVE publications (including Tomorrow's Ruins (1978) and Up My Street (2017-18)) and is a longstanding entry on our Buildings at Risk Register.

I have visited the house on several occasions over the last 30 years and have been alarmed at its increasingly rapid deterioration.

Kinmel Hall is one of the largest country houses in Wales and is now one of a number of fine country houses left to rot by absentee owners. We have pursued a great number of such cases in the past and have finally succeeded in securing emergency repairs and then full repairs. There are numerous examples of such houses brought back from the brink.

We have been very alarmed at the state of the roof as documented [by drone photography](#) which I understand has been sent to your Council.

In these photographs, almost all the skylights appear broken and there are substantial lengths of hip and ridge flashings missing. The lead valleys are choked in places and the flashings to the dormers and chimneys look suspect. There is a lot of flat roof in the centre of the complex and whole sections of bitumen coverings appear to have been ripped off.

The stables range is also in a bad way, with holes evident in its roof and whole sections of roof missing in the rear ranges. The essential first step as you will be aware is a resolution by the local authority to take

initial steps to prompt the owners to carry out specific emergency repairs to the roof, and if they do not do this, for the Council to instruct builders to carry out repairs.

Whilst we welcome the Council's decision to place an injunction on the site in February 2020, SAVE takes the view that further urgent action is required, and an Urgent Works Notice must be drawn up and served.

Your Council has a legal duty to consider using its urgent repairs powers when a situation arises in which they are intended to be used. We believe that this situation has existed for some considerable time at Kinnel Hall and that given the advanced stage of neglect, there must be overwhelming grounds for not proceeding to serve the notice.

All that appears to be on offer from the owners is further prevarication, on an uncertain timescale. This is unacceptable for a building of such national significance.

The intention of the repairs powers is to bring pressure to bear on the owners to carry out the specified repairs within a specified timescale, thereby bringing about complete certainty that the works will be done, either by the owners (within the specified timescale) or by your authority.

The history of this matter is that again and again the owners have failed to action any repairs, and that what patching has been done has lasted only months.

Your authority can cover itself against financial risk by placing a charge on the property, so that rate payers are not at risk. I set out the legal powers I refer to in the notes following this letter.

You will no doubt be aware of the IHBC's manual on the use of repairs powers – "[Stopping the Rot](#)", which offer detailed guidance and includes sample letters and urgent works notices if required.

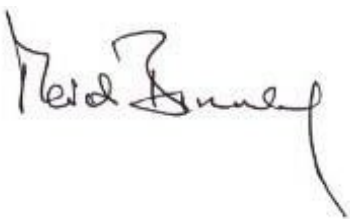
Please note the sections on Untraceable Owners (p30) and the recovery of costs which cites a Welsh Case in Swansea (p34).

We believe your Council has sufficient information to pass a resolution to serve an Urgent Works

Notice. We can also recommend an architect and/or contractors to carry out an inspection, specify urgent works and provide prices.

SAVE knows Conwy Council has an active concern for its many fine listed buildings and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Marcus Binney CBE FRIBA

Executive President, SAVE Britain's Heritage

70 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6EJ
T: 020 7253 3500 E: ben.oakley@savebritainsheritage.org www.savebritainsheritage.org
Registered Charity 269129

Notes – Legal Powers at the disposal of the council

The governing legislation for both Wales and England is still the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Various amendments have been made that apply only in Wales, including the power for Welsh local authorities to serve urgent works notices on unoccupied listed buildings – subject to conditions – which English local authorities cannot.

Rights of Entry

Section 88(2) of the 1990 Act says:

“Any person duly authorised in writing by the Secretary of State, a local planning authority or, where the authorisation relates to a building situated in Greater London, the Commission may at any reasonable time enter any land for any of the following purposes—

1. surveying it or any other land in connection with any proposal by the authority or the Secretary of State to make, issue or serve any order or notice under any of the provisions of sections 1 to 26, 38, 40, 46, 54**, 55, 60, 68, 75 or 76 or under any order or regulations made under any of them, or any notice under section 48;
2. ascertaining whether any such order or notice has been complied with in relation to the land or any other land;
3. ascertaining whether an offence has been, or is being, committed with respect to any building on the land or any other land, under section 9, 11, 26J or 43;
4. ascertaining whether any building on the land or any other land is being maintained in a proper state of repair.”

(**Section 54 is the “urgent works notice” procedure).

Warrants to enter land

There is a further provision in case of refusal of entry, under section 88A of the 1990 Act:

- 1) “If it is shown to the satisfaction of a justice of the peace on sworn information in writing—
 - a) that there are reasonable grounds for entering any land for any of the purposes mentioned in section 88; and
 - b) that—
 - i. admission to the land has been refused, or a refusal is reasonably apprehended; or
 - ii. the case is one of urgency,the justice may issue a warrant authorising any person duly authorised in writing by the appropriate authority to enter the land.
- 2) In subsection (1) “the appropriate authority” means the person who may authorise entry on the land under section 88 for the purpose in question.
- 3) For the purposes of subsection (1)(b)(i) admission to land shall be regarded as having been refused if no reply is received to a request for admission within a reasonable period.
- 4) A warrant authorises entry on one occasion only and that entry must be—
 - a) within one month from the date of the issue of the warrant; and
 - b) at a reasonable hour, unless the case is one of urgency.”

Section 88(B)(2) says:

- 1) "A person authorised under section 88 to enter any land shall not demand admission as of right to any land which is occupied unless twenty-four hours' notice of the intended entry has been given to the occupier.
- 2) A person authorised to enter land in pursuance of a right of entry conferred under or by virtue of section 88 or 88A (referred to in this section as "a right of entry")—
 - a) shall, if so required, produce evidence of his authority and state the purpose of his entry before so entering;
 - b) may take with him such other persons as may be necessary; and
 - c) on leaving the land shall, if the owner or occupier is not then present, leave it as effectively secured against trespassers as he found it.
- 3) Any person who wilfully obstructs a person acting in the exercise of a right of entry shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale."

So:

- 1) the local planning authority can authorise anyone it likes to enter the land etc in the exercise of its statutory powers in relation to the state of repair of a listed building;
- 2) if it does so it can also take with it anyone else it likes, who presumably do not have to be individually authorised by name; and
- 3) there are penalties for obstruction etc.

Jeremy Musson

Wed 27/01/2021 10:27

Dear Paul

I am pleased to support the campaign to save Nesfield's Kinmel Hall, a nationally – indeed internationally – important historic building, among the most significant Victorian buildings in Wales of the nineteenth century.

I have known about Kinmel for over thirty years, during which time my work has always been in the field of architectural history and conservation (Victorian Society, National Trust, Country Life, heritage consultant).

That a building of this importance should be left in such an endangered state is a blot on the nation's conscience. Action must be taken to ensure proper repairs and a plan for its future use, and as things stand it would seem that state intervention is the only course.

Buildings which seemed hopeless cases can be transformed, Tate Modern in the disused power station, for instance, or rescued and found new owners, such as Apethorpe, which also served as a skills training exercise for the heritage sector, as happened also with the rescue of Uppark. There are many different possible future uses, and the task is challenging, the glory of the architecture and the setting, set the highest bar, but will present the highest rewards when back in repair and use.

Please keep me posted.

All good wishes

Jeremy
Jeremy Musson, LLB Hons, M Phil, FSA

Nant-Iago,
Llanfair Waterdine
Knighton,
Powys
LD7 1TS

21st June 2022

Dear

I believe I am right in claiming it is universally accepted that Kinmel Hall is a vital and irreplaceable part of the Welsh national heritage as a Grade 1 listed building, yet it is now in quite deplorable condition following thirty years or so of profound neglect by a string of deluded owners who have never come up with a feasible use that could safeguard the building's long term future. At present therefore we are simply witnessing the building slowly dying, and the longer this goes on the less chance there is for it to be saved as a part of our common architectural heritage.

I therefore implore the local authority, Conwy Council to take a lead on a rescue initiative by bringing the matter forcefully to the attention of the Welsh National Assembly with a view to identifying a practical and economical way forward, and to avoid further drift. It certainly needs the concerted effort of Councillors, M.P's, and A.M's with the determination to find a solution. Maybe a working party of such people is needed to consider options in detail and then to come up with practical solutions. For example I know that WAG has a number of office buildings seemingly located at random generally over North Wales; could such disparate uses be consolidated at Kinmel? If so could part of the building perhaps be used as an art gallery for the mass of paintings owned by various public authorities, but which never see the light of day on account of the lack of display space. I mention these in passing to illustrate that there **are** possible alternatives, but what currently is lacking is the drive and determination to identify and operate a worthwhile future for Kinmel.

I know that this can be done, having myself in a personal capacity rescued two large, wrecked listed buildings in North Wales. All that is needed is the drive, determination and commitment by those in authority over us: surely this must be achieved for the sake of future generations.

Yours sincerely
Michael Tree,

Hi Friends of Kinmel Hall,

As an introduction to the name, we were the Architects appointed by the University of Derby to convert and restore the Grade 1 Dome at Buxton from a NHS hospital to a University learning centre, a building successfully restored to its former glory and formally opened on completion by His Highness the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. We may therefore claim to have some knowledge and experience in justifying our commentating on the current state of Kinmel Hall.

We were the Architects appointed by Mr David Gill to act for him on his development proposals for Kinmel Hall, and as part of our initial service we undertook a substantial measured survey of the buildings that comprise Kinmel Hall, together with analysis of other aspects of the location. Some of these drawings we have made available to assist the Friends of Kinmel Hall in their cause to save the Hughes family home. Due to his then financial difficulties Mr Gill had to surrender his ownership to his bankers who subsequently sold the building on.

Because I had an interest in sailing I moored a boat at Conwy for a number of years so I am familiar with the area and had known about Kinmel Hall prior to our appointment.

The shock I had when I saw photographs of the current state of Kinmel Hall cannot be over stated. It has been allowed to deteriorate to an appalling state to a level where it requires urgent measures to halt the rot. A first step will be to carry out a structural analysis of the buildings to ensure the safety of anyone on the site, including third parties, but to also hi-light areas to be actioned quickly to prevent any further structural collapse. This must be followed by a detailed survey of condition and preparation of a schedule of repair, fully costed and those works carried out with urgency.

It is difficult to understand why CADW and the local authority seem to have failed in their statutory duties to protect this important building and hope that by the actions of the Friends of Kinmel Hall in bringing the current situation to their notice, these authorities will take the immediate steps within their powers but also their statutory responsibilities to bring an immediate halt to the deterioration of Kinmel Hall by whatever they must do to ensure this.

I look forward to what I hope will be a positive response from the Council.

Yours sincerely,

David Hall B Sc., Dip. Arch., RIBA

Chartered Architect (retired)

2nd July 2022

FAO Mr. Paul Hughes – Chairman Friends of Kinmel Hall.

Letter of Support – Friends of Kinmel Hall.

As the regional body for tourism in North Wales, we are delighted to support your efforts and passion to see Kinmel Hall renovated.

Conwy County's thriving tourism offer is an extremely important part of our economy in North Wales. Preserving our heritage assets must be a priority within any community and council strategy.

With the right leadership and support, I am convinced that places like Kinmel Hall can be transformed, adding to the already rich tapestry of historic buildings throughout Conwy and playing an important role in our North Wales Tourism offer.

From our discussions with Mr Paul Hughes, Chairman of The Friends of Kinmel Hall, we believe the future for the hall lies in the aspirations that the friends of Kinmel Hall have for this site.

Please advise if there is anything we can do to support your endeavour's.

Yours sincerely



JIM JONES
Chief Executive

North Wales Tourism
9 Wynnstay Road | Colwyn Bay | Conwy | LL29 8NB Twristiaeth Gogledd Cymru
9 Ffordd Wynnstay | Bae Colwyn | Conwy | LL29 8NB
Phone | Ffôn 01492 531731
E-mail | E-bost croeso@nwt.co.uk

Visitor Website | Gwefan Ymwelwyr www.gonorthwales.co.uk
Trade Website | Gwefan Diwydiant www.northwalestourism.co.uk
Distribution Website | Gwefan Dosbarthu www.northwalesdistribution.co.uk



CHESHIRE HISTORIC BUILDINGS PRESERVATION TRUST

Bishop Lloyd's Palace
51-53 Watergate Street Row
CHESTER
CH1 2LE

5th July 2022

Friends of Kinmel Hall
c/o Paul Hughes

Dear Friends,

We send you our support and best wishes in your valiant efforts to rescue and find a new life for the marvellous Kinmel Hall, one of Wales' most beautiful and important buildings at risk.

CHBPT looks forward to you becoming a Building Preservation Trust and offering you any help and assistance that we can from our side of the border.

Keep up the good fight.

With best wishes,

Tony Barton
Chair

5 March 2021

**BY EMAIL iwan.davies@conwy.gov.uk
AND BY POST**

Mr Iwan Davies
Chief Executive
Conwy County Borough Council
Coed Pella
Conwy Road
COLWYN BAY LL29 7AZ


Dear Mr Davies

My company recently completed the restoration of the Grade I Buxton Crescent which is repurposed to be a luxury hotel with a wonderful contemporary design spa with three pools within the historic walls. The completed building is considered by the Chief Executive of Historic England to be "the most important restoration project of the decade". Its achievement has spanned 20 years with the building standing derelict and vacant for a decade prior to that. I attach a copy of the article in the Sunday Telegraph. I mention this project as the most recent amongst many others which commenced with the courageous involvement of local authorities.

In Buxton, Derbyshire County Council and High Peak Borough Council took ownership of the building. They did not have a solution in sight or in mind but they were encouraged by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage and inspired Officers to take the plunge and to seek a partnership with others beyond their own teams. I recall that the immensity of the challenge deterred even experienced advocates of preservation and conservation from being enthusiastic. The project was brought to my attention and I felt able to enthuse the authorities with an early assessment of uses which would be beneficial to the Town's economy and sufficient to justify the support of grant bodies alongside my company's substantial investment of risk capital to take matters forward.

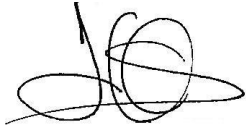
All of this and a good deal more of my 20 years' involvement is not necessary for the clear message to be grasped, namely - and as has been the case in many similar opportunities – the Local Authority is the appropriate organisation to boldly take the initiative and ownership of the building notwithstanding the onerous risk that its stewardship involves and I urge you to come forward as the first of the white knights who will attract money and resources once encouraged by your civic initiative.

I hope I may be forgiven for expressing my encouragement at length when I explain that Kinmel Hall will not be restored overnight and, despite the attractiveness of the challenge, I must accept that, given my age, it would be reckless to offer my company in a permanent role as suggested by Paul Smith. However, I confirm that I shall be pleased to be consulted on a pro bono basis if my long experience is considered helpful.



Please do all you can to save Kinmel Hall for future generations. It is another building of unique significance.

Yours sincerely



TREVOR OSBORNE FRICS

Encl

Dear Paul,

12.02.2021

Kinmel Hall

Thank you for the information on the sorry state of Kinmel Hall. I was appalled to see the neglect of a building of such historic importance, especially bearing in mind its unique association with the Nesfields.

Sadly, it is not an unfamiliar tale with regard to heritage buildings and a lack of action by those who have a responsibility for such places. However, this is no excuse for allowing the building to fall into ruin and it's clear that urgent action must be taken to reverse the decline in the state of the building's fabric, both externally and internally. To learn that items of historical interest have been damaged and some removed, is beyond belief for a place that has a Grade 1 listing.

Having been the Deputy CEO and Director of Parks for London's Royal Parks (now retired) I was not only shocked to see the state of the house but also to be made aware of the lack of commitment/action in maintaining and conserving Kinmel Hall's once magnificent gardens, originally landscaped by William Andrew Nesfield's sons, William Jnr and second son, Arthur Markham Nesfield.

It is mentioned in your text that Kinmel Hall is the only place that the three Nesfields worked together, you will be interested to know that they also worked together in one of the Royal Parks – The Regents Park.

I include a reference to this for interest (below) and add my personal belief that the gardens at Kinmel and The Regents Park are of equal significance. This leads me to wonder if you have been in touch with the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust to make them aware of the condition of Kinmel's gardens? They are a conservation charity with the aim to 'save historic gardens and parks from neglect, indifference, insensitive planning and planting'. If you have not been in touch with them I think it worthwhile that you alert them to the garden's dereliction.

Reference to The Regents Park. 'In 1861 the landscape designer William Andrews Nesfield, 1794–1881, received one of his most important public commissions; not only because the scheme is still in situ, impressively restored in 1996, but also because it is one in which all three Nesfields were involved and it was adjacent to the family home at 3 York Terrace. Apart from Nesfield Snr's contribution, his eldest son the architect William Eden Nesfield (1835–88), designed a Lodge House to accompany the gardens and his second son Arthur Markham Nesfield (1842–74) was, after the first year, to provide the planting plans for the Avenue Gardens and also design an adjacent Picturesque Shrubbery.'

Please do keep in touch, as you will understand, my time is limited due to the various projects and initiatives that I am already involved in and suspect that any help I can give is minor but you have my admiration and full support for your determination and effort to save Kinmel Hall and its gardens.

I hope you find the above helpful and supportive.

Best wishes, Mike.

Michael Fitt OBE FCIHort FCMH
Chairman,
The Royal Parks Guild,
14 Nelson Place,
Ryde,
Isle of Wight, PO33 2ET

5th January 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

The 'Friends of Kinnel Hall' Group

Today, I have heard from Paul Hughes, my only current link with Kinnel Hall, of the proposal to form the above group which I would be extremely happy to join.

My love of 'The Beautiful Place', as I call it, goes back to when it housed Clarendon School. There I taught PE from 1950-55, only leaving for marriage. I considered it a sheer privilege to spend those years in such an impressive stately home which the school maintained with the greatest care. The devastating fire in 1975, left Kinnel Hall a ruin until 1978, when builder and former parent, Eddy Vince, had the 'vision' to restore the buildings for use as a Christian Conference Centre. My late husband and I had the joy of joining others for the Inaugural Conference in summer 1979 and for several subsequent conferences, a couple of which I ran as holiday reunions for Old Clarendonians.

In the early 1980s, Eddy asked me to 'put something on paper for me about the restoration.' Until then, no writer, I agreed, resulting in an A5 typed booklet, entitled, 'From Tragedy To Triumph'. A further request produced the glossy, illustrated booklet, 'The Seven Lives of Kinnel Hall'. Then came the proposal that I write the history of Kinnel, something I had wanted to know for 30 years. I accepted the challenge and at the end of 7 years' research, including the study, under supervision, of W E Nesfield's original plans, finally in 1990, came the 224 page hardback, 'Kinnel Characters 12th - 20th Century'.

For many years, Paul Hughes has been my only contact with Kinnel, faithfully keeping me updated with developments: tragically, mainly the work of vandals while the property remains empty and unused.

It is my greatest longing that Kinnel should be brought back to something of its former glory and a worthy purpose found for its eighth life.

Yours truly,

Elaine Boxhall, Mrs

30th January 2021

Dear Sir,

I am delighted to name myself as one of the 'Friends of Kinmel Hall' and I am writing to you in support of the tremendous work you are doing in order to save this historic building from complete dereliction.

It is astonishing that Conwy Borough Council and the successive owners of the Hall have not taken responsibility for the Hall and acted to secure the building against trespass, vandalism, and further decay on account of being exposed to the elements. You, however, have made every possible effort to make those who should be taking action, aware of the present situation. The photographs you have supplied show the present sorry state of this wonderful building which should be exalted as one of the most important historic buildings in North Wales, as well as being 'the Jewel in Nesfield's Crown'.

I have been involved in knowing Kinmel since 1957, when I spent two weeks there at a 'Girl Crusaders' Camp'. Even as a teenager, I was aware of the magnificence of the building and its interior and exterior decoration, and I took away with me many photographs as well as happy memories.

When, nine years later, as a recent graduate and with teaching qualifications, I was offered a post in Clarendon School, I jumped at the offer, and from 1966 to 1969, I was a member of the teaching staff, and resident in Kinmel Hall. During these three years, I explored every corner of the building, inside, and outside in the extensive grounds, the latter aided by my keeping a horse there, and exercising him daily, and joining the Flint and Denby Hunt whenever possible! They, too, appreciated the magnificent surroundings.

I left Clarendon at the end of my third year, in order to seek experience elsewhere, but after two years, I returned again, this time as Head of the English Department, for the year 1971-1972. I had intended to stay longer but felt it right to accept the Principalship of a Girls' Boarding and Day School in my native Dublin.

I did, however, keep in touch with Clarendon, and planned with them for my 1st Eleven Hockey Team to play Clarendon's equivalent. It was at this stage that the disastrous fire took place, but the school moved its boarders to the Holiday Camp chalets at the coast, and we joined them

there, and on the hockey field at Kinmel. At this stage, I was shown around the complete Hall, and saw the devastation that had taken place, and how much had been destroyed. Like all who saw it then, dismay was matched with a determination that it **must** be restored to its former glory.

I returned again, when Kinmel was being run as a Christian Holiday Centre, and again, I saw what had been done to make it habitable and also I saw some of the on-going restoration work. Unfortunately, this did not seem to be of a very high standard, and subsequent visits have left me extremely worried about the neglect and deterioration of this beautiful building.

I thoroughly support your efforts, to make the relevant authorities aware of the current state of the Hall, and to ensure that they take action NOW, before it becomes too late. Have they no pride in this historic masterpiece of a unique building in North Wales?

Please keep me updated as to anything I can do to support your efforts to save Kinmel Hall.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Stella G. Mew



YFR
c/o 92 Seymour Drive,
Ancaster, Ontario,
Canada
L9G 4N4

January 28, 2021

Dear Paul,

Re: Restoration of Kinmel Hall

As you'll be aware, Youth Fellowship Rally (YFR) held two Bible teaching events at Kinmel Hall in the summers of 1992 and 1996, attended by upwards of 350 people. Central to their success was the uniqueness and splendour of the venue, which has never been forgotten by the participants.

As a Committee, we were very sorry to learn about the current poor condition of the property, and we would be absolutely delighted to see this wonderful and listed building be restored to its former glories so that more events and functions can be held there in the future, and its wonderful heritage preserved.

We hope that you will receive both a sympathetic ear and prompt action from stakeholders who have the ability to effect the necessary work.

Yours on behalf of the YFR Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Jones'.

Martin Jones

29th January 2020

To whom it may concern,

I am dismayed by the neglect and decay of Kinmel Hall.

There is water ingression evident in key areas of the hall and the stable block is ruined and open to the elements.

Urgent action must be taken before the roof of the hall is in the same state as the parts of the stable block.

I understand that there is no one living on sight so the building is vulnerable to vandalism which could be extremely serious in the case of fire.

Kinmel Hall was identified by the [Victorian Society](#) as one of the top ten at-risk Victorian and Edwardian buildings in 2015. It is a grade 1 listed.

During the last 5 years the building has deteriorated further. I understand no effort has been made by '...the current owners ...masked by a company registered in an offshore tax haven.' (Independent [@MrNickClark](#) Wednesday 16 September 2015) to save the building from the ravages of the wind and rain.

We are now at the dawn of 2021. Please renew your efforts and use all your powers to save Kinmel Hall from becoming derelict to the point of no return.

Regards,

Alison Richards (nee White) pupil at Clarendon School (Kinmel Hall) '65 -'73.



Images of Kinmel Hall taken 2019.



WHAT
KINNMEL
WAS
LIKE

CAPTAIN CYRIL BLAKEMAN

1 FIELD HOSPITAL. R.A.M.C.

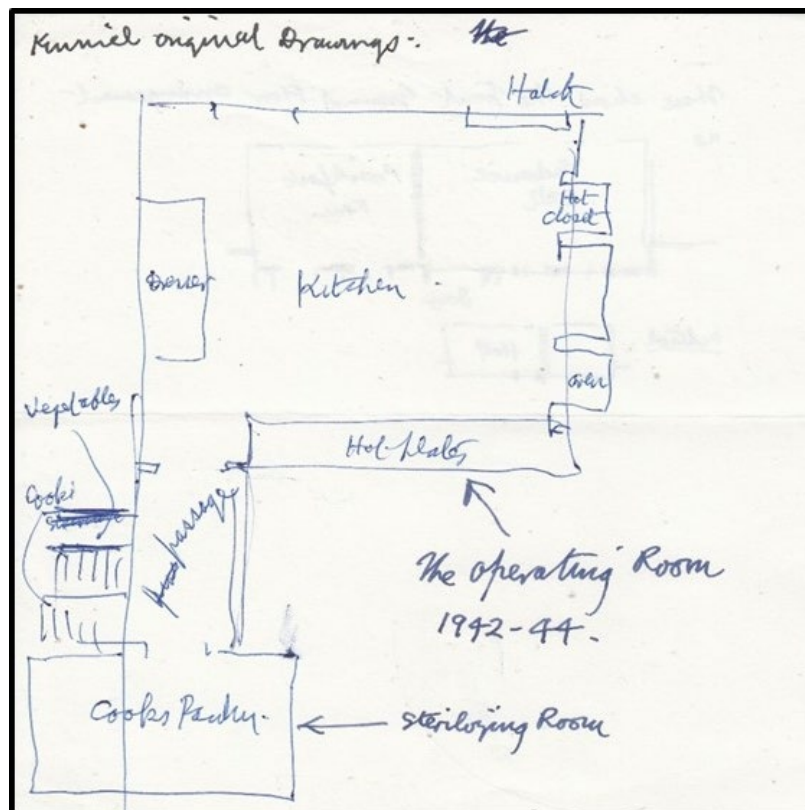
1940-1945

the four wards in the large reception rooms the original dining room drawing room ballroom and library. Two wards were surgical one of them the ballroom and two were medical (I think that the drawing room was the 2nd surgical ward).

There was also small isolation ward somewhere at the back of the house on upper floor. Smaller wards for officers and for ATS were on the 1st floor which also provided accommodation for officers, sisters and nurses, the Chapel was the dining room of the officers and sisters mess. The second floors the accommodation for other ranks of the units at the back of the house that is the Southend where the operating theatre occupied the original kitchen with its considerable heights, tiled lower walls and panelled windows so that it was always in artificial light.

Were X-Ray linen store, stewards store, quartermaster store, dispensary, laboratory, and medical store. I cannot now identify these rooms but they were all near the theatre. In fact, the steriliser room had to be approached through the theatre as did several other rooms.

Originally scullery and cooks kitchen and larder. this was not ideal for the steriliser room as the staff of the wards had to come to get their drums of sterilised dressings.



.....36 Casualty Clearing Station left us on Wednesday and we were fully involved. We also forsook our palliasses and the top floor of the stables and moved to the upper floor of kinmel seeking rooms for ourselves.



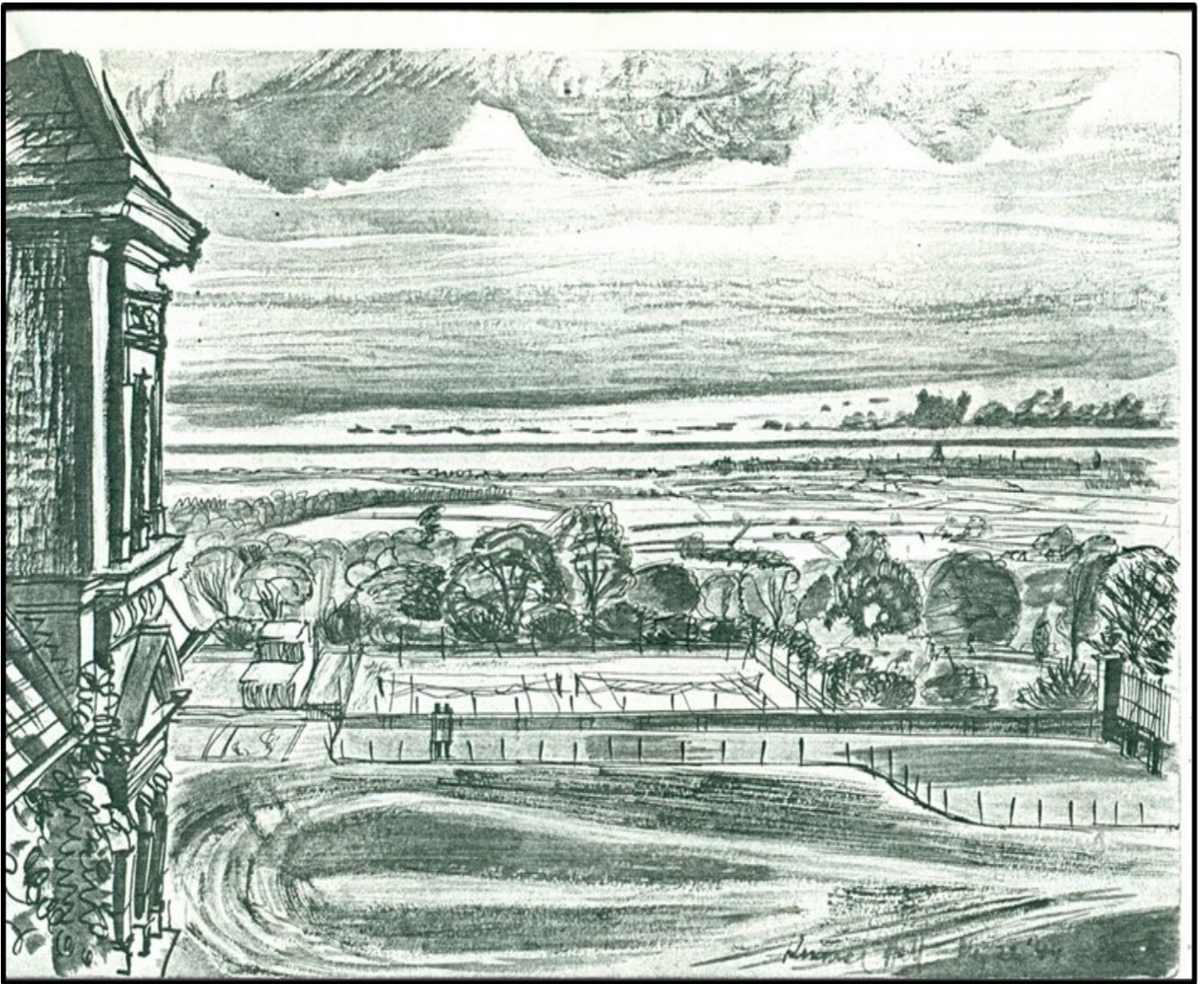
Kinmel Hall June 1944

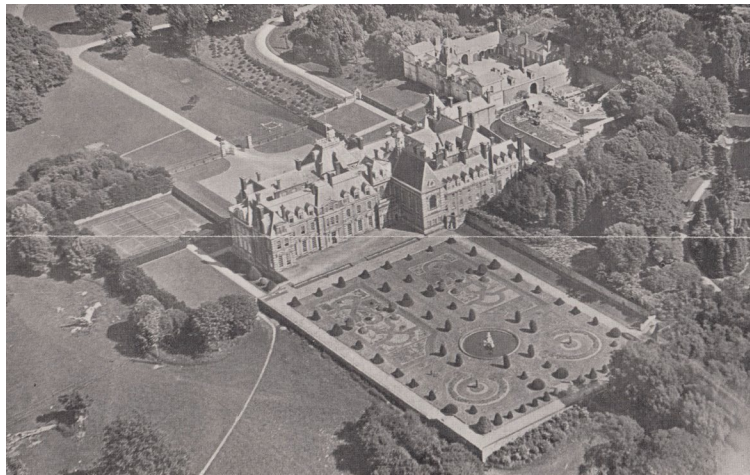
*View from Room shared By L.Cpl. R Blakeman, Cpl. Unwin,
and Pte. C. C. Blakeman*

This is something of a moral raiser. Ron and our close friend Cpl Cyril (Joe) Unwin laboratory assistant and I set ourselves up in room 215 the dormer window of which, the first to the right of the central pavilion as you look up from the forecourts commanded the magnificent view over the park and across the Vale of Clwyd to the hills with Bodelwyddan Church and Rhuddlan Castle.



Just down the corridor at the seaward end of the house we had the balcony commanding a view of the coast from Rhyl towards Pensarn in those days undeveloped and the beach strewn with anti-invasion concrete blocks. The several houses and the tower of Towyn church were almost the only buildings in sight, Plas Kinmel being lost in the trees. From this height the horizon must be a little more than 20 miles away and convoys of ships sailed into or out of the Mersey or rode at anchor to catch the tides. With wash basins and bathrooms, we felt ourselves to be in Clover.





AERIAL VIEW OF KINMEL HALL

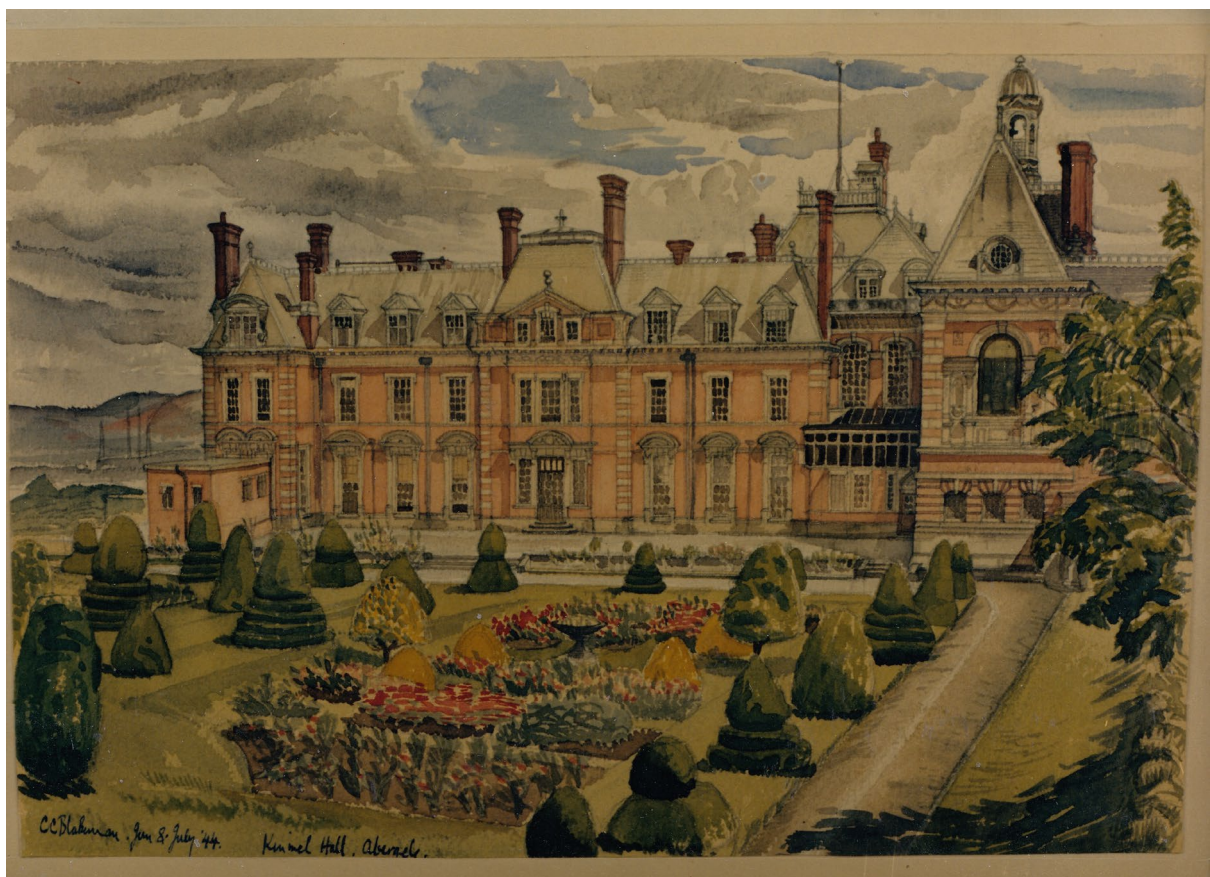


KINMEL HALL - EAST FRONT

Cyril Blakeman '44



THE OPERATING THEATRE & STAFF



THE VENETIAN GARDENS

Cyril Blakeman '44

MISS. SOUTHON P.E. MISTRESS CLARENDON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS 1950—1955



My First view of beautiful Kinmel Hall was in the late 1940's in a photo on a Christmas Card sent to friends by a member of staff at Clarendon School then housed at Kinmel.

I was a P.E. student and my thought was how wonderful it would be to teach there. I never gave it another thought until, during my final year at college, I received a much treasured letter from Miss Swain, the headmistress, inviting me to an interview.

For the next five years, 1950—55, I was Clarendon's P.E. teacher. To spend all those years in magnificent, erstwhile stately home was such a privilege. The rooms were so large, that on my return to my suburban home for the holidays, I wanted to push the walls out to make more space.

Young and busy with a full time teaching programme as the only member of the P.E. teaching staff of 200 girls I never gave much thought to the architectural merit of Kinmel. I just knew that it was sumptuous. I gave scant thought to all of the details of the plaster work ceilings and stone both inside and outside the main building.

I knew nothing of the variations of Hugh Hobert Hughes' monogram and the ornate letter '**H**' until 30 years later I was asked by the late Eddy Vince—Kinmel's post-fire restorer of 1978 — to write Kinmel's history.

Only then through 7 years of research and writing did I discover the full glory of William Eden Nesfield's Kinmel Hall

*Eddy Vince, Susan Bitterling, Elaine Boxhall, Cyril Blakeman - Outside Kinmel Hall



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EDWARD BLAKEMAN

APPENDIX

Subject: FW: Kinmel Hall
Date: Mon, 6 Dec 2021 10:29:54 +0000
From: Peter Brown (Reg Services) <peter.brown2@conwy.gov.uk>

To: julian@postpp.co.uk <julian@postpp.co.uk>

CC: Jaci Doran <Jaci.Doran@conwy.gov.uk>, Peter J. Wood
<Peter.Wood@conwy.gov.uk>, Paula Jones
<Paula.Jones@conwy.gov.uk>

Dear Lord Fellowes

\A0

Thank you for your email below. A general update was sent to interested parties at the beginning of October outlining concerns expressed at that time and I have copied that below for your information and for completeness and to provide you with some reassurance that officers are fully engaged with the owners and the Council is doing what it can within its powers and resources which are of course limited. Since the update below, I can confirm that a Tree Preservation Order has been served which will provide some protection to the woodland and gardens. Officers attended on site with the owners recently and their own heritage consultants where I am told positive discussions took place. It was noted that significant progress had been made on a third section of roof, which has also included the restoration of decorative railings which edge the roof top to match the existing. Officers will continue to monitor these works, and will continue discussions regarding further works to the roof as a priority.

I can also confirm that the planning application for 16 pods within the grounds of the hall was submitted recently but we are awaiting further information from the applicants before the application can be registered.

Clearly there is a lot of interest in this important building and I hope that this and the information below gives some reassurance that officers from the Council will continue to engage with the owners who at this moment in time, as you can see, are being proactive with regard to the urgent works which are required to the roof in the first instance.

\201C I write further to the latest visit to Kinmel Hall by my officer, Peter

Wood, on Wednesday. Since then we have been in dialogue with the owners as well as their agent, and have further considered the matter. I have blind copied this email to all parties known to have an interest in the site, and have tried to cover all the issues various people have raised, for everyone's information.

With regards to concerns in relation to damage to trees, loss of trees and general clearance of vegetation, including by way of burning, no evidence of damage/loss of trees was noted on site. There has been clearance of undergrowth but this does not require any form of planning consent in this instance, even given the fact that the area is a designated Historic Park and Garden (different to the Listing of structures). In general terms the only current protection to trees is by way of a limit, which if exceeded, results in a need for a licence application to NRW, though even this doesn't apply in gardens, which arguably most of the land comprises. However we are considering the imposition of a new Tree Preservation Order across the wider site in order to exercise control over any removals. This process may take some weeks and there is a right of appeal. I would however advise that the owner has confirmed they have no intention of removing any trees at this time, it is in fact their wish to retain them all if possible.

With regards to the Hall itself, my officer inspected the new fibreglass lead effect roofing that has been carried out on one section as a trial. This appears to have been carried out to a reasonable standard on that very small area, hence we have requested that they move onto a larger section on the upper flat bitumen felted roof, to include for lead covered new railings where missing. The owner's intention is to progress this when weather allows, but hopefully in the next few weeks. My officer will then visit again to inspect the works. In general terms we would have preferred to see an introduction of lead across all of the flat roofs areas, but given the presence of bitumen felt that has been in place for many years, we consider the fibreglass approach is an improvement, but certainly welcome in terms of providing a roof covering which will help stop water ingress.

In terms of a general work programme moving forward, the roof works are the priority, but we have requested confirmation of future proposals and a timetable. Although we haven't had this information yet, we do know that the current proposals are to complete the roof works, including repointing of chimneys, new lead work, new timber to replicate etc, then to move inside to start repairing the water damage, including replication and repair of the ornate plaster ceilings. Once the property is habitable the owners wish to approach us with a proposal for potential development.

With regards to the pods, these have now been moved from the highly inappropriate location in formal gardens, where the fountain and other listed structures are located. Some have been sited in the woodland, with a few to the rear year area of the hall, there are 16 in total and no more are proposed we are informed. These are in temporary positions, to be rearranged into a configuration to be looked at as part of the application. The owners are aware that these pods are sited at their own risk and we have made it clear that the bright colours currently used are not appropriate, muted colours or cladding has been suggested as an improvement. We have also given advice, including in relation to the need to ensure that the pods are properly justified in the context of policy, i.e. linking the income stream to repairing the Hall. I do however understand that the pods are proposed for 5 years on a temporary basis. We will need to give detailed consideration to all relevant policies, and planning considerations as part of the application, including the impact on the heritage assets such as the designated Park and Garden, the Listed buildings including the Hall, visual amenity, neighbours amenity, impact of physical works, infrastructure and so on.

In terms of recent use of the pods, we are advised that the season has now wound down, and that the pods have not been extensively used recently, with just some bookings at weekends. In terms of a concern that the pods were to be used for volunteers at the hall, the owners advise this is not proposed. I make no comment on the veracity of what has been said, but we have made it clear that our expectation is that the use should cease until such time as consent is approved. We intend to keep this under review, but at present, if the use does cease and the impact is otherwise simply the temporary siting of the pods pending the outcome of the application, we do not consider that emergency type enforcement action is justified. We will keep this under review, including in respect of any continued use and in light of the impact this may cause.

With regards to general security of the site, the owners advise that they often spend days and evenings at the hall, for project management and site security purposes. They also were on site to help manage the pods I believe. I am also aware that there are a number of volunteers on site in the day undertaking works to generally tidy and carry out general repairs and maintenance. We are informed that the owners are aware of no further trespass which is welcome.

With regards to the mains water supply, discussions are ongoing with Welsh Water to enable this to happen. Understandably the owners are keen for this to happen as soon as possible.

I hope this update is informative to you, and as I have said we will keep

the matter under close consideration.

In terms of further queries you may have, we will do our best to answer them, but please be aware that this may well take several working days. Our focus at present is giving the owners support in taking forward the emergency works to the roof, and to continue dialogue with them regarding future proposals. I acknowledge that the siting of the pods has been a far from ideal complication, but this is a situation which can very easily be reversed by service of notice if necessary. If you can please bear with us, we will update you once we have more to report back, but that hopefully will be to advise further on the roof repairs progressing and in terms of an application submission.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require any further information

\A0

Kind regards

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\A0

Peter Brown

Pennaeth Gwasanaeth / Head of\A0 Service

Gwasanaethau Rheoleiddio a Thai\A0 / Regulatory and Housing Services

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol CONWY County Borough Council

Email / Epost:\A0 peter.brown2@conwy.gov.uk\A0

(01492 575230)

From: Peter Brown (Reg Services) <peter.brown2@conwy.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 November 2021 10:00
To: Isherwood, Mark (Aelod o'r Senedd | Member of the Senedd)
<Mark.Isherwood@senedd.wales>
Cc: Jaci Doran <Jaci.Doran@conwy.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: : KINMEL HALL 'THE WELSH VERSAILLES'

Dear Mark

Further to you email below, a full update on the current position was sent out to interested parties on 4th October 2021 as follows:

I write further to the latest visit to Kinmel Hall by my officer, Peter Wood, on Wednesday. Since then we have been in dialogue with the owners as well as their agent, and have further considered the matter. I have blind copied this email to all parties known to have an interest in the site, and have tried to cover all the issues various people have raised, for everyone's information.

With regards to concerns in relation to damage to trees, loss of trees and general clearance of vegetation, including by way of burning, no evidence of damage/loss of trees was noted on site. There has been clearance of undergrowth but this does not require any form of planning consent in this instance, even given the fact that the area is a designated Historic Park and Garden (different to the Listing of structures). In general terms the only current protection to trees is by way of a limit, which if exceeded, results in a need for a licence application to NRW, though even this doesn't apply in gardens, which arguably most of the land comprises. However we are considering the imposition of a new Tree Preservation Order across the wider site in order to exercise control over any removals. This process may take some weeks and there is a right of appeal. I would however advise that the owner has confirmed they have no intention of removing any trees at this time, it is in fact their wish to retain them all if possible.

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In terms of a general work programme moving forward, the roof works are the priority, but we have requested confirmation of future proposals and a timetable. Although we haven't had this information yet, we do know that the current proposals are to complete the roof works, including repointing of chimneys, new lead work, new timber to replicate etc, then to move inside to start repairing the water damage, including replication and repair of the ornate plaster ceilings. Once the property is habitable the owners wish to approach us with a proposal for potential development.

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now wound down, and that the pods have not been extensively used recently, with just some bookings at weekends. In terms of a concern that the pods were to be used for volunteers at the hall, the owners advise this is not proposed. I make no comment on the veracity of what has been said, but we have made it clear that our expectation is that the use should cease until such time as consent is approved. We intend to keep this under review, but at present, if the use does cease and the impact is otherwise simply the temporary siting of the pods pending the outcome of the application, we do not consider that emergency type enforcement action is justified. We will keep this under review, including in respect of any continued use and in light of the impact this may cause.

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With regards to the mains water supply, discussions are ongoing with Welsh Water to enable this to happen. Understandably the owners are keen for this to happen as soon as possible.

I hope this update is informative to you, and as I have said we will keep the matter under close consideration.

In terms of further queries you may have, we will do our best to answer them, but please be aware that this may well take several working days. Our focus at present is giving the owners support in taking forward the emergency works to the roof, and to continue dialogue with them regarding future proposals. I acknowledge that the siting of the pods has been a far from ideal complication, but this is a situation which can very easily be reversed by service of notice if necessary. If you can please bear with us, we will update you once we have more to report back, but that hopefully will be to advise further on the roof repairs progressing and in terms of an application submission.

If you have any questions, myself or the case officer Peter Wood are

happy to assist.

At present we are awaiting the application, but the use of the pods has ceased. In terms of the roof works, they hope to undertake some further works on the main roof when the weather allows but before Christmas and we remain in touch with them about this. We will advise everyone once the application is made and in the meantime officer will keep in touch with the owner about the roof works to inspect once they progress.

I hope this assists but please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need any further information.

Kind regards

Peter

Peter Brown

Pennaeth Gwasanaeth / Head of Service

Gwasanaethau Rheoleiddio a Thai / Regulatory and Housing Services

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol CONWY County Borough Council

Email / Epost: peter.brown2@conwy.gov.uk

(01492 575230)



Pennaeth Gwasanaeth / Head Of Service – Peter Brown

Adain Rheoli Datblygu ac Adeiladu / Development & Building Control Section

Rheolwr Rheoli Datblygu ac Adeiladu / Development & Building Control Manager – Paula Jones

Cyfeiriad Post / Postal Address: Blwch Post 1, CONWY / PO Box 1, CONWY, LL30 9GN;

Ymwelwch â ni / Visit us at: Coed Pella, Ffordd Conwy, Bae Colwyn / Coed Pella, Conway Road, Colwyn Bay, LL29 7AZ

By email:

ben.oakley@savebritainsheritage.org

FAO Marcus Binney
SAVE Britain's Heritage

Gofynnwch am / **Peter Brown**
Please ask for:

☐ **01492575214**

☐ **Peter.brown1@conwy.gov.uk**

Ein Cyf / Our Ref:

ENF/

Dyddiad / Date: 5th March 2021

Dear Sir,

Re: Kinmel Hall

Thank you for your letter dated 16th February, 2021 in connection with the above, I have been asked by Iwan Davies, Chief Executive to respond to your concerns as Head of Service for Regulatory and Housing which covers the Planning Enforcement function.

I have noted your concerns regarding the deteriorating condition of this important building and I know that my officers and our legal team have been considering various options to stop any further deterioration and to establish dialogue with the owners.

Although we are mindful of the variety of enforcement options available, in recent months dialogue with the owners' representative has been restored and it appears that my officers have made some progress with encouraging them to carry out the much needed repairs.

The owners maintain that they did not fully appreciate how much the building has deteriorated and they have now taken positive steps to respond to our concerns and have recently appointed a heritage

consultant who has recently surveyed the building. It is my understanding that they will be initially focusing on providing a covering for the roof of the hall to stop the water ingress and the consultant is in the process of compiling a schedule for works/fee estimates for the owners to consider.

Although this has taken longer than is ideal, progress has been slow due to work demands of the consultants and their advisors and is further complicated by the current lockdown restrictions. However officers are in regular communication with the owners and they are content that appropriate steps are currently being taken.

With regard to any enforcement action which the Council could take i.e. an Urgent Works Notice under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Section 54), if the owners did not comply with any Notice, as you are aware, the only available option would be for the Council to carry out works in default at a very considerable cost and although I am mindful that the costs of carrying out works in default can be registered as a land charge, this is no guarantee that the Authority would in reality be able to recover the costs for a property of this kind. This would depend on a sale and there being sufficient value in the property at the point of sale to recover the charge other charges which might take precedence and so on. The fact that the owner is an off shore company would also likely to considerably increase costs to the Council with no guarantee of those being recovered. Further, the Council has not accounted for any such expenditure in its budget.

I am aware that there is a great deal of concern around the deterioration of this property, and it is a great shame that there is no additional funding available to assist the situation.

In any event, at this present time I am satisfied that the owners appear to be taking reasonable steps to carry out the repairs to the property.

I would like to reassure you however that we will be keeping this matter under review. I would also like to add that Council is proactively looking to see if we can facilitate the purchase of the building by a developer/third parties who would be in a position to bring the building back into use.

Yours faithfully,
Peter Brown,
Head of Regulatory and Housing Services