

SECOND EDITION
MONDAY 1ST MARCH 2021
ISSUED
FEBRUARY 26TH 2021



The Kinnelogue

The Newsletter Of The Friends Of Kinnel Hall

No.2 Vol.1

MARCH 2021

. . Contents . .

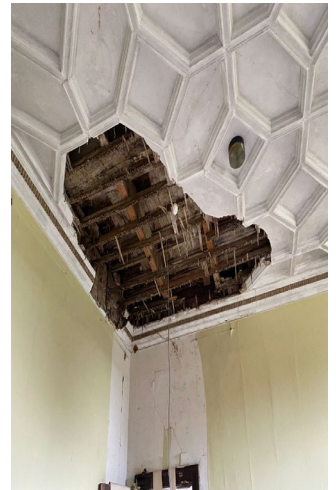
	PAGE
ROLL OF HONOUR	4
NEWSFLASH #1	4
HAMPTON IN ARDEN	5
MEDIA CAMPAIGN	5
BEST LAID PLANS	6
MARCUS BINNEY	6
SAVE WELSH VERSAILLES	7
FLASHBACK	10
TWITTER ACCOUNT LAUNCH	10
MAJESTY OF MANSION	12
WITHOUT STRUCTURE	19
PLEAS TO SAVE	21
FRIENDS OF KINMEL HALL	23



**FRIENDS OF KINMEL HALL
NEWSLETTER
2ND EDITION
1ST MARCH 2021**



**TRAGEDY
2011 + 2021
TRIUMPH**



Greetings To All
THE FRIENDS OF KINMEL HALL
To The Second Edition Of Your Newsletter
In This Of The Newsletter Alongside The History of the hall
We have some News For You that we hope will be as surprising to
our readers as it was to us

Do You Have Any Questions About The Hall, Her History,
Her Owners?

Let Us Know By

[EMAIL](#)

The Friends of Kinmel Hall are
Proud to announce its latest member -
[**Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates**](#)

ROLL OF HONOUR

We Have some new names
that have agreed to join us in
our campaign to rescue.
‘The Crown of Nesfield’s
Career
These include,

Michael Fitt

Dr Harry Fleming

Dr Shirley Evans

Michael Tree



NEWSFLASH

Michael Fitt has sent us the following
quote.

‘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 Nesfield’s 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.’

HAMPTON IN ARDEN

It has been discovered that the Kinmel Estate is one of only two Estates that William Eden

Nesfield designed.

The other is

Hampton In Arden



‘OPERATION RESURRECTION’ MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The Friends Of Kinmel Hall are pleased to announce the launch of its first media campaign to draw Conwy borough council’s attention to the total lack of interest of the owner in comparison to the work being done elsewhere in the borough such as Gwiryg castle near Llanrwst.

The schedule was to be: -

The Observer - Sunday 28th February 2021.

BBC WALES News – Week commencing 1st March 2021.

Country Life Article – March 2021.

As with many such campaigns
not everything goes according to plan!

NEWSFLASH

The Friends of Kinmel Hall Media Campaign had an unexpected boost last week (Monday 14th February 2021) when a Four Page Letter landed in the Chief Executive Officer of Conwy Borough Council INBOX.

In brief this letter outlined the writers horrified feelings as to the state this Grade 1 Listed Building has been ALLOWED to get into by its owners.

And what the writer wanted to see the Council do about it

The Author of the Letter was
Marcus Hugh Crofton Binney CBE FRIBA
Executive President,
SAVE Britain's Heritage

Followed on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st
on Twitter & Facebook by
<https://twitter.com/SAVEBrit/status/1362788524316127237?s=20>



This unexpected start to our campaign led to additional coverage from the media in advance of our scheduled start.

***Campaigners fight to save.
'Welsh Versailles'
from further ruin***

Friends of Kinmel Hall want Conwy Council to step in to help preserve the historic building

By David Powell
05:00, 25 FEB 2021
NEWS



Kinmel Hall near St George, Abergele. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

Campaigners are calling for a property once dubbed the "Welsh Versailles" to be saved from further ruin.

Kinmel Hall in St George near Abergele, which was visited by Queen Victoria, has more than 200 rooms but has fallen into disrepair.

Now campaigners at The Friends of Kinmel Hall and pressure group Save Britain's Heritage are calling on Conwy County Borough Council to step in to protect the former home, school and military hospital.

Save Britain's Heritage members have also called on the local authority "to ensure emergency repairs begin urgently at Kimmel Hall".

Rosie Burton, Friends' spokeswoman, told North Wales Live: "We are asking them (the council) to proceed with an Urgent Works Notice, which will at least protect the hall from any further damage and make it secure, and proceed with a compulsory purchase."



Kimmel Hall near St George, Abergele. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)
The Friends believe that there are potential buyers in the market.

Ms Burton, who is also the chairman of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation for Wales, said: "I understand there are a number of potential purchasers so the council would not be at much risk of funding repairs to the damage as they could do a 'back-to-back' agreement, which means they compulsorily purchase it and sell it on the same day."

The Friends estimate that the price of Kimmel Hall in its present, dilapidated state is still into seven figures.

Grade I-listed Kimmel Hall is understood to be owned by Acer Properties which is registered in the British Virgin Islands.

The Daily Post/North Wales Live have been unable to contact Acer Properties.

Today Conwy County Borough Council said the owners do have plans to work on Kimmel Hall.

A Conwy CB Council spokesman said: "We are in regular discussions with the owners and they are in the process of making arrangements to carry out repairs."

But the authority said it will not be pursuing a Compulsory Purchase Order at present.

The Conwy Council spokesman added: "At the moment, the owners are taking positive steps and are in the process of making arrangements to carry out repairs to the property.

"And although the matter is under review we do not consider that enforcement action is necessary at the present time."

Parts of Kimmel Hall have fallen into disrepair over the years



Kimmel Hall near St George, Abergele. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

Marcus Binney, Executive President of Save Britain's Heritage, welcomed news of the works at Kimmel Hall. He said: "It's an absolutely magnificent building of immense splendour and grandeur. "We feel that the building is in need of repairs. If the owners are going to do serious repairs which will stop the rot then we would welcome that."

Six years ago, a Georgian heritage group warned that the future of Kimmel Hall was in great jeopardy without investment

**THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED UP WITH ANOTHER ARTICLE
ONLINE ON SUNDAY 28TH FEBRUARY FEATURING
ELAINE BOXHALL!**

FLASHBACK

Griff Rhys Jones, Victorian Society Vice President, launching the Top Ten, said "These are buildings that need help, and we need your help." The national exposure from inclusion in the Society's Top Ten often leads to new interest in the buildings which can help save them.

It is understandable why Kinmel Hall, with a façade around 500ft long, has been called the 'Welsh Versailles' or 'discount Downton'. In fact, Kinmel Hall is said to have been inspired by Wren's Hampton Court and the 17th century Chateau de Balleroy. The present house was paid for by Hugh Robert Hughes, heir of a huge copper mining fortune. Country Life noted in 1969 that 'Kinmel is an amazingly palatial house for a commoner to build himself, even a Victorian commoner and a very rich one.' Queen Victoria herself is believed to have stayed at Kinmel in 1870 when she presented carved wooden panels. Sadly, these were stolen in 2013. The owner, British Virgin Islands registered Acer Properties Limited, is since said to have stepped up security but the house remains unused and neglected with plans for a hotel seemingly no closer to implementation

Griff Rhys Jones 2015!

<https://twitter.com/nescrowncrown>





Majesty of mansion linked with Beckhams captured in these glorious images

Pictures show decline of Kinnel Hall once dubbed the 'Welsh Versailles'



A promotional photograph at the entrance gates to Kinnel Hall near St George, Abergele from 2011. Ten years on, the building has now fallen into disrepair. Image: UGC

These remarkable hint at the heyday and sad decline of one of North Wales' most stunning properties.

Built on [a truly jaw-dropping scale](#), the 122-room Kinnel Hall near St George, [Abergele](#), has been a home, a military hospital and Clarendon School for Girls among other things.

Past pupils include the granddaughters of the former Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie, and, in more recent years, there were even rumours that the Beckhams might buy it, but they proved groundless.

Visitors approaching up the drive would see a facade spanning about 500 ft.

It's a few hundred yards from the site of the original "Old Kinmael Hall" from the 18th Century, which was funded by Parys copper mining in Amlwch, [Anglesey](#) where conditions for workers were harsh.

The present building was designed by Victorian architect William Eden Nesfield in the 1870s for copper heir Hugh Robert Hughes, whose royal sounding initials could be found about the place.

One room was given over for servants to iron newspapers.

Later, from 1936 to 1940 Kimmel Hall was used as The Rheuma Spa of Wales.

In 1940, Kimmel Hall was requisitioned as a military hospital until July, 1944. From 1946-47 it was a hotel and osteopathic clinic.

And it became Clarendon School for Girls from 1948 until 1975.



The grounds of Kimmel Hall near St George, Abergele used to look stunning. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

That year, a fire partly damaged the building.

It was restored and turned into a Christian conference centre by Eddy Vince in 1979.

North Wales Live has been passed the promotional photographs, taken in 2011 for a sale.



A marble wall and archways at the top of a staircase at Kinmel Hall near St George, Abergele as seen in this promotional picture from 2011. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

Visitors would have passed through the well-tended grounds with a fountain and fabulous gardens.

Once inside, they would have admired the sweeping staircases, marble walls, towering archways and a mantelpiece donated by Queen Victoria.



But the [current Kinmel Hall](#), which can be seen from higher ground from a distance, is in decay.

These more recent photographs show ceilings falling to pieces, rising damp and boarded up windows.



This fireplace, believed to have been donated by Queen Victoria to Kinmel Hall near St George, Abergale is pictured in 2011 but is now a faded treasure. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

Observers can still see the Palladian stable block, to the left of the main building, where horses were once brought from around the UK to drink its famed spa water.

But drone footage now shows it looking overgrown and forlorn.

You can also still make out the Venetian gardens which once had an ornamental fountain. The architect rigged up an ingenious scheme so its water ran along a pipe to the servants' quarters to power a luggage lift.



There was intricate carving on this mantelpiece at Kinmel Hall near St George, Abergele. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

Again, that's all in the past. A statue of Neptune in the fountain was sadly stolen in 1995.

The happier history of Kinmel Hall has been chronicled by Elaine Boxhall in several publications including *The Seven Lives of Kinmel Hall*.

She was a PE teacher there at Clarendon School for Girls in the 1950s. She lived on site in term time but would return home to Bedford in the holidays.

But the contrast between living in a stately home and her own four-bedroom semi-detached house was stark.

“I just wanted to push the walls back because the house was so small,” she told North Wales Live.

Mrs Boxhall worked at Clarendon for five happy years then, as Miss Southon, she left in 1955 to get married.



Rooms like this are now in a poor condition at Kinmel Hall near St George. Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

In the early 1980s, she was asked to write a history of Kinmel Hall by its restorer Edmund Vince, despite not being a writer.

She wrote about the uses made of Kinmel Hall and its great characters. For example Miss E.G.R. Swain was Clarendon School for Girls headmistress from 1930 to 1965, despite being deaf since early adulthood.



Many windows are boarded up at Kinmel Hall near St George.

Image: UGC (Image: UGC)

Mrs Boxhall wrote: "Miss Swain is warmly remembered by all... holding the school enthralled as she read aloud from books ranging from *Wind in the Willows* to great works of prose and poetry, challenging all to fight for the best in life."

Now aged 91, Mrs Boxhall says: "It was a sheer privilege to teach, to research and write the books."



An old fireplace at Kinmel Hall near St George. Image:

UGC (Image: UGC)

Meanwhile, campaigners have renewed their efforts to try to stave off further damage at Kinmel Hall, which is surrounded by the privately-owned Kinmel Estate and not open to the public.

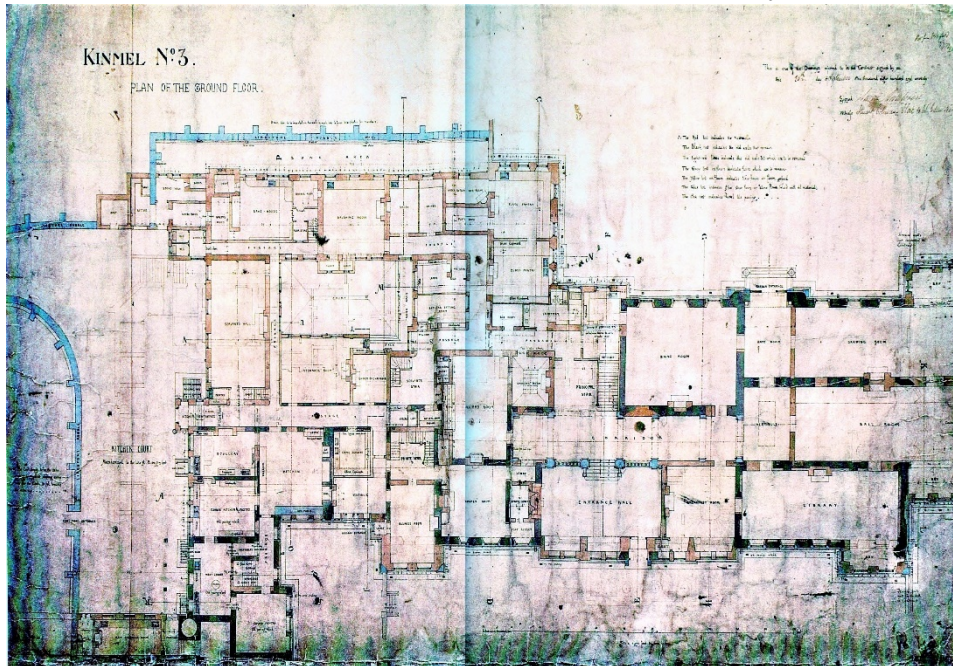
The Friends of Kinmel Hall and Save Britain's Heritage have asked [Conwy](#) County Borough Council to undertake urgent works and to carry out a Compulsory Purchase Order.

The Friends believe that the Nesfield family, who designed Kinmel Hall and gardens, also helped design part of Regent's Park in London.

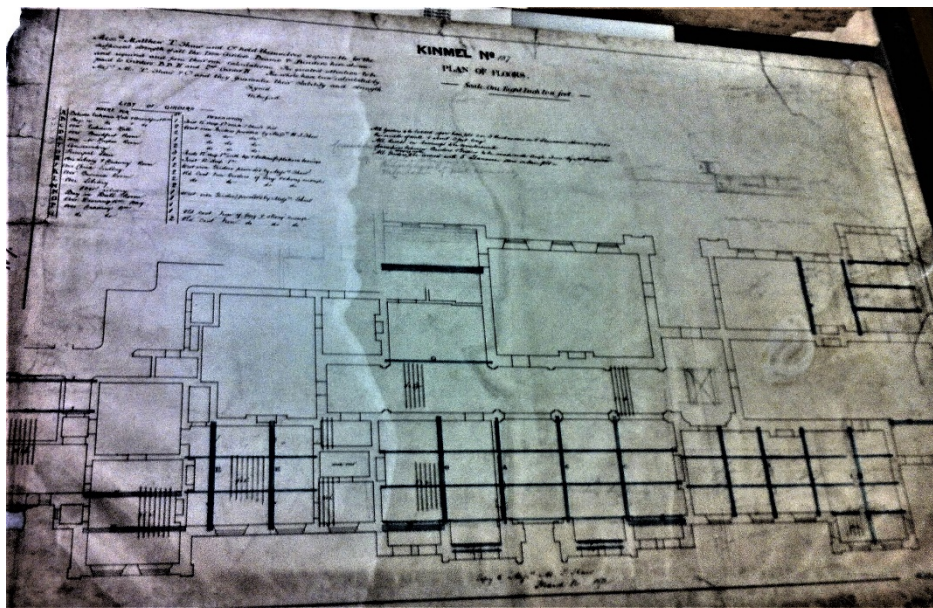
The council says it understands that Kinmel Hall's owners are planning to do repairs.

*‘THE FRIENDS OF KINMEL HALL’
NEEDS TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP
TOWARDS BECOMING A
FORMAL STRUCTURE’*

*‘Without order there is chaos,
without structure there is instability’*



This is a plan of Kinmel you may recognise



This is a plan of Kinmel you may NOT recognise.

When William Eden Nesfield ‘wrapped’ his Hall around the existing ‘Hopper Building’ he added an anomaly that very few people may be aware of.

He built the NEW Hall with a steel skeleton inside the masonry of the Hall. The second plan on the previous page shows the location of the ‘skeleton’ that undoubtably saved the hall after the fire in 1975.

‘The Friends of Kinmel Hall’ need to copy its namesakes model and get itself on a more secure footing with the way things are starting to snowball, with the letter and online posts on Twitter and Facebook.

With this in mind we are looking for some volunteers to take up posts within The Friends of Kinmel Hall Steering Committee.

Some posts have already been allocated due to need.

The current posts that are available and filled are: -

President/Public Figure	To Be Appointed
Chairman	Paul Hughes
Treasurer/Membership Secretary	To Be Appointed
Government Liaison	Judi Greenwood
Press Officer	Rosie Burton – Chair I.H.C.B.
Minutes Secretary	To Be Appointed
Welsh Liaison Officer	Menna Thomas
Gardens/Landscape Liaison	To Be Appointed

As things are moving quickly now and are likely to speed up even more once the papers hit the streets we need to get these posts filled in time to identify and appoint volunteers to the vacant posts.

Pleas to save historic ‘Versailles of Wales’ before it falls into ruin

Campaigners will ‘shame’ mansion’s offshore owners into fully restoring national treasure or selling it on

Vanessa Thorpe

Sun 28 Feb 2021 08.30 GMT



Kinmel Hall in Conwy has served as a spa, hospital and school. Photograph: Victorian Society

A vast architectural gem, often nicknamed “the Welsh Versailles”, is crumbling into ruin, despite its Grade-I heritage status and several unique claims to fame, much to the distress of the building’s many fans.

Now the sad state of [Kinmel Hall](#), a mansion near Rhyl in Conwy and the largest surviving country house in Wales, has prompted the launch of a campaign to shame its owners, a property company based in the British Virgin Islands, into either explaining their intentions, fully restoring it or selling it on.

But to begin with the “Kinmel Resurrection” campaign is targeting Conwy Council and the Welsh government, who members believe both have a duty to help to preserve the mansion, now neglected for a decade. Originally built in 1876 by a rich copper mining family named Hughes, Kinmel Hall has been on the Victorian Society’s annual list of [top 10 endangered buildings](#).

It has been owned for 10 years by Acer Properties Ltd BVI. During this time, campaigners argue, little maintenance work has been carried out and many of the most striking features of the grand mansion, constructed in the glamorous chateau style fashionable in the late 19th century, are now disintegrating or have been damaged by leaks.

It was designed by William Eden Nesfield and the layout of its unusual 18 acres of walled gardens was drawn up by his father, William Andrews Nesfield, and his brother Arthur Markham Nesfield, the man behind much of the design of Regent’s Park.

“We would really like to know what the owner’s plan is and what the point of owning it is? When do they intend to do something?,” said Rosie Burton of The Friends of Kinnel Hall. Burton, who is also chair of the [Institute of Historic Building Conservation](#) in Wales, added that just leaving gutters blocked can have a serious effect. “A building of this importance cannot be left to rot.”

With 12 entrances and 365 windows, the hall is a spectacular example of what is known as a “calendar house” and as such is not easy to maintain. Aside from clever mechanical innovations that once powered both a lift and a fountain, the fittings were also thought remarkable in their day because of an ornate oak fireplace in the library, damaged during a break-in eight years ago.



[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Pinterest](#)

The main corridor of Kinnel Hall’s ground floor east front, with Sicilian marble balustrade. Photograph: Mike Simmonds

It was believed to have been presented to the Hughes family by Queen Victoria. Kinnel Hall remained a residential seat for the Hugheses and their wider relatives until 1929. It then went on to become a boys’ school, a health spa for the treatment of rheumatism, a military hospital, and then, after the second world war, a girls’ school until a fire forced its closure.

The wider estate surrounding the hall has been owned by the same family, the Fetherstonhaughs, since 1786. They sold on the freehold to the house in 2001, since when it has passed through several owners before being bought in 2011 for £1.45m by the present owners, who have not made their intentions for the site known. The Friends organisation is now working together with The North [Wales](#) Development Trust to find a solution. Conwy Council has placed an injunction to prevent “unauthorised” work on the site and is exploring further action. Earlier this month a council spokesman said: “Due to the lack of any recent progress, we’re exploring other enforcement options to seek further repairs. We aren’t currently considering powers that might result in compulsory purchase. The building remains a high priority concern.”

The owners’ solicitor was contacted for comment but did not respond.

1	ELAINE BOXHALL	23	DOROTHY AGNEW
2	PHIL VINCE	24	LISA TASTEVIN
3	MARQUIS OF ANGLESEY	25	ANDY MCKINNEY
4	LORD LIEUTENANT OF CLWYD	26	JOY CRANSTON
5	LORD LANGFORD	27	KENNETH MOORE
6	MARK GIROUARD	28	REVERAND JOHN ALDERSON
7	PETER HARE	29	MARIAN MARTIN
8	MARCUS BINNEY	30	DIANA MALSHER
9	ROSIE BURTON	31	PAMELA TOWILL
10	TOM TAYLOR	32	DEBBIE VINCE
11	MICHAEL TREE	33	JOY SCOTT
12	DR HARRY WILLIS FLEMING	34	KEN R WARD
13	CHRISTINE ORME	35	ELIZABETH WARD
14	MARGARET ALFORD	36	MIRIAM HAGEN-WEVERS
15	VALERIE PALMER	37	GWEN STAVELEY
16	MARY SOLDAN	38	ELGAN JONES
17	ALISON RICHARDS	39	BEN OAKLEY
18	MICHAEL FITT,OBE	40	BRUCE BICKERTON
19	LIL TWIST	41	ANDREW HODSON
20	JONATHAN FENTON-VINCE	42	PETER CORBETT
21	JEREMY MUSSON	43	ANDREW WILLIAMS
22	TIMOTHY VINCE	44	ANDREW DAVIDSON

‘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.’

Jeremy Musson