



# Newsletter No. 7

## Q4 2009

The start of the New Year coincides with the third anniversary of the Trust. We enter it in anticipation of good things to come and look forward to bringing them to your notice in 2010. At the same time it seems appropriate to review the successes and failures of the last three years.

### Successes and Failures 2007-09

We have summarised these below, with successes in blue and failures in red:

- Associated Press, which leases the Interchange Warehouse from British Waterways, has removed many of the early 1990s additions (such as the porch) both internally and externally to reveal more of its original structure.
- Development of the Horse Tunnel Market has destroyed much of what remained of the 1839 vaults supporting the original Camden Goods Yard.
- Camden Catacombs, although restored during recent work, have been replaced by linear retail outlets and obscured by the new steel and glass building in Stables Yard.
- Primrose Hill Tunnel East Portals have been upgraded to Grade II\*. Vegetation and graffiti were removed and drainage of the retaining walls reinstated by Network Rail in March 2009.
- Network Rail demolished the 1870s platform architecture at Primrose Hill Station, and we have so far failed to place the reopening of the station on TfL's planning agenda.
- Development of 30 Oval Road, alongside the Regent's Canal, has resulted in the loss of most of the façade and structure of the mid 19 C rail offices and much of the vaulted basement, as well as denying the public future access to the Eastern Horse Tunnel.
- The reincarnation of the upper floor of the Horse Hospital as Proud Camden has revealed more of the character of the building, the outstanding architectural survival in a rare complex of industrial stabling (photograph courtesy of Alex Proud).
- The true spirit of place associated with the Victorian heritage of the former Goods Yard has been assailed by inappropriate glass and steel buildings, by ersatz copies of Victorian features, and by development of an equine theme park that may attract tourists but confuses and obscures this heritage.



The short period the Trust has existed has not allowed us to exert the influence we would have wished, but has made us increasingly aware of the importance of the heritage we serve.

## Importance of Railway Heritage in Camden and Primrose Hill

We are awaiting English Heritage's decision on upgrading the Stationary Winding Engine Vaults to Grade II\* (picture courtesy of Dan Cruikshank). We have based our application on their history, location and state of preservation. What has since become clear is the lack of comparable heritage around the country, despite the important role that stationary engines played in the early stages of railway development.



We are currently conducting research on the Stables Complex in support of a future application to upgrade this to Grade II\*. We discuss this in the next section. We also hope to define what still remains of the 1839 Goods Yard. This will be the subject of a future newsletter.

Together with the Grade II\* listed Roundhouse and Primrose Hill Tunnel East Portals, the success of these applications would create four Grade II\* listed structures or groups of structures, as well as a host of Grade II structures. The extraordinary heritage in and around the former Goods Yard may then finally come to the attention of those primarily responsible for its protection. Indeed this is, sadly, the primary purpose of seeking these listing upgrades.

### Threats to the Heritage

The threats to our heritage could not be better expressed than by Sean Murphy, writing about the loss of heritage in Temple Bar, Dublin:

*"Experience shows us that there is a deadly linkage between acts of planning vandalism and historical ignorance or apathy".*

We are not opposed to development - far from it - but believe strongly that any development should understand, respect, cherish and celebrate the unique heritage that exists. Indeed we believe that this will result in greater long-term gain both to developers and the community.

We bear a responsibility here in our failure to bring the unique nature of the heritage to the attention of those primarily responsible for its protection. While individual local councillors have been very supportive, and English Heritage has played its role, we have at no time received any help or support from Camden Council's executive arm.

The Council's apathy is matched by the ignorance of both developers and their professional advisors, which has undermined the proper understanding of the heritage. Consider the following statement made by Heritage Architecture (October 2004) as part of the PPG 15 Statement for the planning application for Building D (part of Horse Tunnel Market):

*"...it is clear that the subject horse tunnel, although not individually listed, is of some intrinsic architectural and historic interest, but this is largely local. As a form of structure and construction it is far from rare, and there are many similar structures throughout the country associated with similar uses"*

At least the horse tunnel was referred to, which is more than can be said for the PPG 15 statement (Jeffery W George and Associates, June 2006) in support of the planning application for 30 Oval Road, whereby part of the horse tunnel was to be demolished.

A third report, that prepared by AOC Archaeology (October 2007) as part of the planning application and listed building consent for Buildings A, B and D in Stables Yard refers to:

*"...removing some underground arched brickwork that supported a Goods Yard."*

The report fails to identify with any historical accuracy the features it describes. It refers obscurely to a "Tripartite Tunnel", in fact the vaults supporting the original 1839 Goods Yard below one of the main rail sidings. The document essentially chronicles the destruction of much of the remaining vaulted basement of 1839, shown in the photograph from 1987 (courtesy Nick Catford), demolished to make way for Horse Tunnel Market.



## Stables Complex

CRHT has approached English Heritage regarding extending and upgrading the listing of the Stables Complex to Grade II\* on the basis of the quality, coherence, completeness and nature of the facilities. Taken together these provide an exceptional, possibly unique, example of the role played by the working horse in Victorian Britain and particularly in the interchange between canal, railway and road transport (contrast this with the statement about the Eastern Horse Tunnel above).

The London and North Western Railway/London Midland and Scottish (LMS) Railway had 400-500 horses stabled here. and in the early 20 C was the largest owner of horses in the UK with the largest stud. Other stables in the Victorian complex probably added at least another 200 horses (Pickfords, Allsopps, etc). Camden Goods Yard certainly did not contain London's largest stables complex, but others that were comparable when in operation are now incomplete and have lost the context that complements and explains their existence.

We have proposed that English Heritage:

- i. Treat buildings and other features associated with horses and their movement between stables and workplace as a group.
- ii. Include both the Western and Eastern Horse Tunnels from the 1850s.
- iii. Include the most complete complex of 19 C stables in London, comprising The Stables, Long Stable, Provender Store, Tack Room (see photo of the last three) and Horse Hospital.
- iv. Include Stables Yard with its granite sett pavements.
- v. Include the former single entrance to Stables Yard from Chalk Farm Road.
- vi. Include railway arches, where horses were also stabled.
- vii. Possibly include the massive retaining wall along Chalk Farm Road.



English Heritage has requested help in exploring the local, regional and national context for similar heritage that relates to the use of the horse in the 19C. In response CRHT has

made enquiries regarding what similar facilities exist around the country, and in what state of repair. This has generated considerable interest, and we look forward to writing up the results and presenting them to English Heritage. So far we have had responses from experts covering the northwest, northeast, Midlands, Wales and Scotland. It is already apparent that the Stables Complex is a very rare survivor, the more so when its size, complexity and integrated nature are taken into account.

We would like to hear from anyone with information on important heritage facilities involving the Victorian working horse, whether local, regional or national ([crht@aol.com](mailto:crht@aol.com)).

English Heritage also needs a description of the architectural and structural fabric of the Stables Complex and its industrial archaeological setting. We hope that Malcolm Tucker, Industrial Archaeologist, who has been closely involved with the site since the 1970s, will undertake this work, starting in Spring 2010.

## Hawley Wharf

The proposed redevelopment of this area was discussed in the last newsletter. The developer, who has several guises, is the same as that which developed Buildings A, B, C and D in Stables Yard.

Although the railway viaducts that traverse the site may not have the same importance in terms of the national context as features in Camden Lock or Stables Yard, we believe the development should nevertheless celebrate this heritage and respect its integrity, not seek to obscure it or demean it through over-sized imitation.

We are also concerned to limit the potential conflict between users of the canal towpath and those that will be attracted to the new development. Ideally towpath users should be provided with a route from Hawley Lock through to the towpath west of Hampstead Road Lock without having to traverse crowded market sites. The current arrangement (see photo) is far from ideal.



## Educational Resource

The Heritage Trail represents a major potential educational resource for school history projects, linking classroom study with fieldwork, and involving transport, housing, industry, energy, horses, living conditions and the wider economy. Elements of Victorian industry that flourished locally include the ice and wine trades, and piano manufacturing.

CRHT is exploring with Primrose Hill School how such an educational resource would fit with the national curriculum and what form it should take in order to have the widest appeal. Primrose Hill School has many associations with the local heritage. It is Grade II listed, lies on the canal, and educated railway children. Its caretaker lives next door, in the house once occupied by the manager of the LMS railway stables at Waterside Place.

## Walks and Trail Guides

All interested in guided walks over Camden Railway Heritage Trail this coming spring and/or in copies of the Trail guide (£2.95 incl.) should contact the Secretary ([crht@aol.com](mailto:crht@aol.com)).