

From: Coward, Matthew (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw)
Sent: 14 November 2016 12:46
To: Alfrey, Judith (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw)
Cc: Osmond, Julie (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw); Hughes, Gwilym (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw); Lewis, Robin (OFMCO - Legal Services Department); Kelly, Rhodri (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw)
Subject: Grove Park School - Wrexham (SOH.Wales)
Importance: High

Judith,

Could you please provide an urgent assessment of the additional information that we have today received from Lynne Williams in support of listing the former Grove Park School, Wrexham. The email also contained an attachment which we could not open so we are asking for it to be resent. Please give me a ring if you have any questions. Thanks.

Matthew

From: Kelly, Rhodri (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw)
Sent: 14 November 2016 12:25
To: Coward, Matthew (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw)
Subject: FW: Grove Park School - Wrexham (SOH.Wales)

To see.

From: Lynne
Sent: 14 November 2016 12:07
To: Kelly, Rhodri (ESNR-Tourism, Heritage & Sport-Cadw)
Subject: Grove Park School - Wrexham (SOH.Wales)

Dear Rhodri,

I have just received an out of office reply from Mr. Hobson. So, I am sending you urgent information regarding the Groves School in Wrexham. If you could please pass it along to your colleagues who are working on this listing issue I would be grateful.

Also, can you confirm that the email message has been sent along and to whom it was sent to.

Kind Regards,
Lynne Williams

Philip Hobson

Cadw
Welsh Government
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14 December 2016

Dear Mr. Hobson,

I am writing to you and your colleagues on behalf of Save Our Heritage (Wrexham) with regards to the current re-assessment of the former Groves Grammar School for Girls in Wrexham.

We have been in dialog with a built environmental professional who has expressed an interest in the architectural history of the building. It is our understanding that some things may have been overlooked in your assessment of the building. The fact that the school was "purpose built" as a place of higher learning for young women is a key point that needs to be addressed. The element of the "cloister" within the school itself is an architectural statement regarding the stature of higher learning for girls in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

We are very excited about the prospect of examining the architectural history of the building from a feminist perspective. Much of our efforts have been diverted from this part of our campaign because we wanted to have the former Groves Girl School viewed as an important institution for all of the residents of Wrexham. However, we know that without schools like the Groves, one of the earliest purpose built girls school in Wales (if not the first), the evolution that resulted in girls gaining greater equality in education, perhaps particularly during that era.

At present our focus stems from the theorem that the "cloister [was used] as part of this buildings architecture; the cloister being an architectural instrument to denote, firstly monastic and then scholarly and academic pursuit. So we are interested in the implementation of this type of space in purpose built girls schools, of that era, especially in Wales. We hope that this line of thinking will be given consideration by your organisation.

In regards to the cloisters, one question that I keep thinking about is "why build a cloister at all?". Our research has enabled us to find several proposed plans for the school. Yet, to date, we have only found a detailed document with the architects preferred scheme; option "C" which did not contain a quadrangle/cloister. As the architects recommendation was ignored, we can only ask ourselves why was an alternative plan, with this key architectural feature used in the Groves? What were the influences, social, political, and educational that resulted in the choice to establish a place of contemplative thought within the fabric of the school? I hope you will be able to explore these avenues.

We strongly believe that we have found ourselves at a cross-roads in our understanding of the historical value of the former Groves girls school; we believe that the dialog that can stem from this line of inquiry is in fact a critical path to understand the social and architectural value of the building. This "watershed" moment cannot be ignored. The clever design, with the creation of an academic, hallowed sanctuary, should be viewed as a vehicle for social, educational and ultimately class based change during the early twentieth century.

This fresh perspective have inspired us to examine the large amount of archival information available in the Denbighshire Archives. Some of these documents may help express the tangible links between the suffragette movement, improved educational equality to the deliberate architectural strategies that would reinforces the values of an an establishment offering an esteemed pursuit of higher learning. By designing a stately, handsome institution the narrative is one that transcends the typical educational experiences of the time; beyond cookery and needlecraft to include the addition of the "hard" sciences, such as mathematics and science.

This paradigm can be easily recognised by the physical presence of the cloisters/quadrangle within the building itself. The architectural programming for such a space speaks directly about the value of a place for contemplative, academic thought. Such a generous, perhaps indulgent use of space is a statement of grandeur often only expressed in places of higher learning. The fact that the school building has the cloister cannot be overlooked.

While our research is in its infancy, we can already draw some links to some critical historic moments, such as the 1887 Eisteddfod in London when the Cymmrodorion Society addressed a number of gender based issues regarding girls education. One of the resolutions declared at the time was that the provision of education to girls in Wales should be provided equally to that of boys. What is interesting in that they may have been some follow up at the 1888 Eisteddfod that was held in Wrexham. It is important to note we recognise that our research is not the same level of academic thought that you will demand in your evaluation. Yet, it is our hope that our research will provide more information for a broader assessment of the Groves school.

Another issue that puzzles many of our group members is why have the examples of school buildings that you have cited as comparable buildings to the Groves school been used? These examples seem at odds with the specificity of the design for a purpose built girls school. Why has the Groves school not been measured against similar Grammar Schools for Girls? May I suggest that this is because there are very few school buildings that were purpose built for girls prior to the Groves building. My research, so far only reveals one such school in England. In fact, and I believe this to be true, The former Groves Grammar School for Girls is the first of its kind in Wales. At present, the list that I have compiled is incomplete. However, I hope you will examine my theory about the schools position. While we can find buildings that were grammar schools for girls established before the Groves, they were not in purpose built buildings. Buildings, often former manor houses, were repurposed for

girls schools. For those schools that were built prior to the Groves, they were often established as a grammar school well after their buildings were erected.

Additionally, I wonder why the Groves has not been compared to purpose built girls schools for another reason. That is of the architectural style. Perhaps it isn't obvious to the casual observer, but surely it is to you, that girls schools were built with less ornamentation than boys or co-educational schools. Perhaps that is another feature for you to examine; surely it is a key difference of the kind of value placed on building girls schools in spite of the move towards greater access to higher education for girls.

The arguments about the school not being the finest example compared to the boys or co-educational schools must be re-examined with the understanding of the type of architectural design for a girls only school.

Buildings are often attributed to great men throughout history. Clearly an argument can be made that we need to recognise more buildings that are important to women in history. Likewise, we believe that North Wales, and Wrexham in particular, is often ignored in regards to its place of importance Welsh history. Surely it is time to rectify the astonishing North/South Wales divide by giving a greater measure of thought to the architectural gems that exist in this area.

We hope that you will be able to examine the architectural and historical merit of the school with a different lens today than you have in the past. We implore you to pursue this line of inquiry. In the meantime, we are hoping to gather some succinct information for your office by early to mid week next week. It is our hope that you will have time to be able to examine the materials we can provide you.

Lastly, may I leave you with one simple parable. Last summer I approached two carefree local girls, perhaps of the age of 12 or 13, who were on the school grounds and looking to sneak inside the school. My intervention led to an interesting conversation with the girls. We talked about the importance of the building; how it offered a place for dedicated female education. It is so easy to take for granted today our rights and easy access to educational opportunities. However, we don't have to look far behind us to see that without schools like the former Groves Grammar School for Girls, this would not have been possible. Surely, without the school should be held steadfast as an important listed building; without it we will suffer a further erosion of the historical fabric of Wrexham and for a wider level, all of Wales.

I believe that at a base level, your existence as an organisation is built on the tenet that historical buildings, etc. must remain in place in order to allow us to make sense of where we are today. The historical narration of our past is far more interesting and tangible when with the physical presence of these great building. Please consider the school within its historic place within the fabric of Wrexham, North Wales and on a national level.

Kind Regards,
Lynne Williams

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