

# THE HISTORY OF SANDFIELD TOWER



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My name is Jonathon Wild, a local historian from Liverpool, and the Proprietor of Maelstrom. My portfolio can be found at [www.maelstromdesign.co.uk](http://www.maelstromdesign.co.uk) and provides information on several campaigns, not only Sandfield Tower, but also highlighting the plight of the Grade 2 listed Eddesbury (West Derby) and the Grade 1 listed Woolton Hall.

I first discovered Sandfield Tower (or Gwalia as it is also known) back in the year 2000. Stuck in a traffic jam on the Queens Drive ring road, I happened to glance over at this building, something of which I had never noticed before. Being a church bellringer, the tower stood out to me straight away and with the building looking 'in not bad condition' but obviously abandoned, I did a quick 'google' and found absolutely no history on the building.

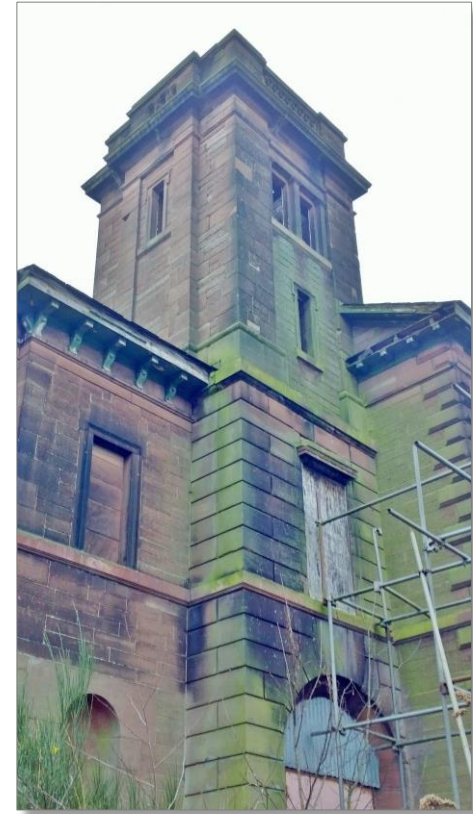
Little did I know that this chance discovery would see me stay overnight at the building on a couple of occasions, become involved in researching the history and finding out about this building, who owned it, what was the purpose, why was it abandoned.

However, I would not realise that at the start of this campaign to have the building recognised and restored in some way, it would lead me to a hard fought 22-year campaign (and counting) to have something done to this building. During this time, I would come to know the building inside and out better than my own house and spend a considerable amount of time researching the history, writing to Liverpool City Council, asking for help from Historic England, Save Britain's Heritage, having this building featured in the Liverpool Echo on many occasions and even a cameo appearance on BBC Northwest.

This book contains the full history of Sandfield Tower and has been written as a not-for-profit book. To simply show the beauty of the building inside and out, its fine and important history.

However, this book also shows the darker side of being involved in a long running campaign. It will provide details of this building being ignored by the authorities and will show how a very usable building with light restoration slowly fell apart over the following 22 years despite repeated attempts to keep this in the public eye.

A large thank you to all who have supported me on my campaign for Sandfield Tower and as long as the building is still standing, I will still campaign.





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I would like to thank Historic England for the help and assistance they have given me over the years with regards to a Grade 2 listed building. I would also like to mention Liz Fuller from Save Britain's Heritage who allowed the campaign to be featured at Building of the Month in September 2021 on the Save Britain's Heritage website.

My thanks also extend to Natalie Jones, a local historian in West Derby who spent additional time and resources in sourcing the original 1931 images of Sandfield Tower and helping me to piece together the history of the building.

A large Thank You.

Jonathon Wild

Maelstrom

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## SANDFIELD TOWER – AN INTRODUCTION

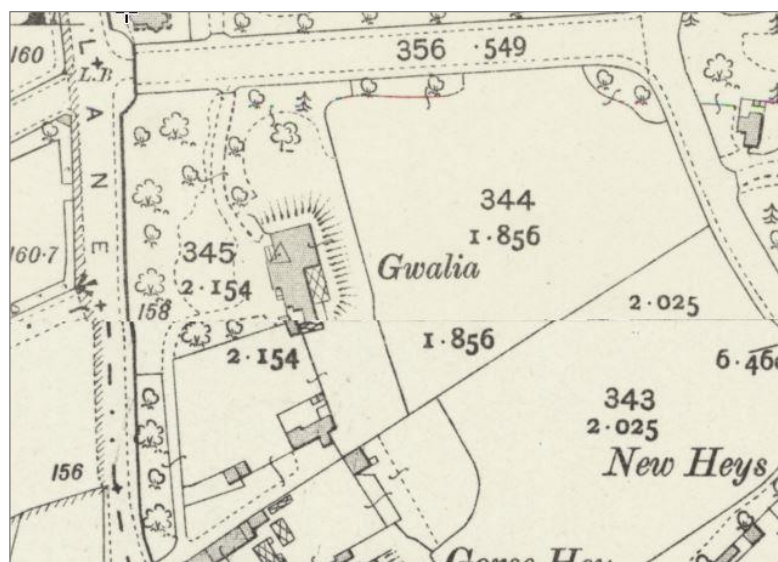
Sandfield Tower is a Grade II listed building located on Queens Drive, West Derby. Set back from the main road and lost in time compared to the neighbouring houses. The building is now derelict and fire damaged throughout and it is left to the mercy of the weather and elements from many of the open windows and part missing roof.

The original name for this building was called “Sandfield - The Tower” due to its location and the fact that there is a beautiful sandstone tower rising through the centre of the building but has more recently been known as 'Gwalia'.

Sandfield Tower was built in 1854 and was owned by Joseph Edwards, a South American merchant for use as a private villa. It was then owned from 1880-1881 by Miss Alice Houghton. William Kinsman owned it from the years 1882-1890 and then Ralph Lyon Broadbent owned the property from 1891-1900. When the building was then sold, it was converted in to the Fourth Church of Christ the Scientist by 1931. The Church used this building till repairs became too expensive and the Church then secured permission to erect the building on the corner of the site, now a private day-care centre/nursery. Sandfield Tower subsequently fell vacant after the Church moved into this new building, and it was then sold on to its present owner.

The building is located on the main outer ring road in Liverpool, West Derby on Queens Drive. Set back from the road and in its own plot of land, it once commanded the view of Sandfield Park well before the built-up area that surrounded it. Please note this building is private property and on private land.

This book is to highlight a twenty-two campaign to have the building recognised and restored to its former glory, or to be sensitively restored as private apartments. We have sat and watched this building fall apart for over 20 years with little to no work having been completed on this building. How many more years will the building last in its present condition?







Both English Heritage and Liverpool City Council are aware of the current state of the building and naturally, people from Liverpool will have seen the 'Stop the Rot' campaign which has been featured in the Liverpool Echo on many occasions. In 2001, the City Council employed a Buildings at Risk Officer to tackle the problem of dilapidated listed buildings. Properties were identified and prioritised for action. The City Council and Northwest Development Agency provided money to enable the Buildings at Risk Officer to use the statutory powers available.

Although there is now the Sandfield Park Nursery to the left of the building, and a new housing estate to the rear of the property, Sandfield Tower still sits in prime land, and this is the reason the owners are refusing to do anything to the property? They won't be named in this book for legal reasons. However, even though Sandfield Tower is in a very poor condition, the façade of the property and part roof is still in good order. I see no major deterioration to the structure of the façade in 20 years, so it has been a poor gamble if the owners wanted it to fall down years ago. Let us hope that this building is soon to be restored and the City Council can take ownership of the property finally.

Sandfield Tower is Grade 2 listed building on the National Heritage List under Historic England. It was first listed on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1973. Their description is as follows:

*GV II House, mid C19. Stone with slate roof. Two storeys, five bays, first bay recessed, end three bays project. First floor sill band and top frieze and bracketed eaves, quoins. Windows have architraves, those to first floor with floating cornices. Second bay supports tower with angle pilasters, frieze, cornice and pierced balustrade; windows are narrow. Second bay round-headed entrance with recessed surround. House now derelict (1984), entrance and some windows boarded, some windows retain remains of sashes with glazing bars.*

Historic England and Save Britain's Heritage are aware of this property and further details will be provided from my correspondence with them. Liverpool City Council are obviously aware of this building including my personal twenty-two-year campaign to have the building restored. The Liverpool Echo have run multiple articles on the plight of the building and have highlighted its condition over many years from small articles to a full double page spread.

Further to this, the West Derby Society have also taken an interest in the building with it falling under their district and they too have highlighted the plight of the building. I have spoken to the owners of the Sandfield Park Nursery next door on many occasions and directed them to complain to the City Council and Environmental Health on the health hazard and fire hazard of the overgrowth of the bushes and trees on the plot. Further to this, I have also spoken to local neighbours whose houses back on to the property and they have taken photographs of the rear of the building on many occasions to show the poor condition of the building from this angle.

The Pandemic has taken up two years of our lives and we are thankful to be here, yet this building was ignored by all for the last twenty out of the last twenty-two years. There has been further vandalism, further collapse of the interior structure and sadly the main part of the roof has now fallen in on itself. The building can now be considered as little more than a folly. Four outer walls and its tower. However, the building is still very much in a saveable state for those wishing to invest in the property.

We therefore would like to go back to the start of the buildings ownership and present the brief history on Sandfield Tower as well as taking you on a personal journey through the interior and exterior of the building so you can see for yourself what this fine building once looked like in its prime.

Sandfield Tower – still standing there in its own plot since 1854. Will the building see its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2054? We very much hope so!



## SANDFIELD TOWER – THE OWNERS

Sandfield Tower was commissioned by **Joseph Edwards**, a rich south American merchant, in 1854. There appears to be little information on Joseph Edwards himself or as to why he chose this particular spot, or even why it was designed in this way, but it would have complimented the area of Sandfield Park. It is known that his 'counting house' was listed as Orange Court, 4 Cook Street Liverpool.

7768	Edwards, Joseph	Liverpool Sandfield park, West Derby	Owner and occupier of freehold and copyhold house and land	Sandfield park
7769	Edwards, Robert			

I have been looking into further information on who owned and lived at Sandfield Tower before it was a Church, and with the fantastic help from local historian Natalie Jones, she uncovered an excellent connection and further information on **William Nutter Kinsman**. I am indebted to her for uncovering this further information and together, I have sourced further records from Ancestry to bring this to life.

William Nutter Kinsman was born on the 29th of July 1829 in Handsworth, Warwickshire. His occupation in 1851 was a Clerk in the Bank of England and by 1856, he was described as a Gentleman of Liverpool and was married in Manchester Cathedral to Eliza Pearson a spinster aged 23 of Yew Bank, Broughton. **Left:** is William Nutter Kinsman in 1865. **Right:** is Eliza Pearson in 1845.

In the 1861 census he was living in Derwent Road with his wife, Eliza, daughter Anne and son Albert. William and his first wife Eliza had three children, Anne (1857- 1912), Albert (1860-1881) and William Pearson (1861- 1942)



1856. Marriage solemnized at the South Parish Church in the Parish of Manchester in the County of Lancaster

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
420	August 7th 1856	William Nutter Kinsman Eliza Pearson	27 23	Bachelor Spinster	Gentleman	Liverpool Yew Bank Broughton	John Knill Brett Purvis, Kinsman William Pearson	Clerk in the Bank of England Manufacturer

Married in the above Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by Licence or after \_\_\_\_\_ by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William Nutter Kinsman in the Presence of us, Edward Walker - Vicar of St Matthias, Salford  
Eliza Pearson Henry Jones  
W. P. Kinsman

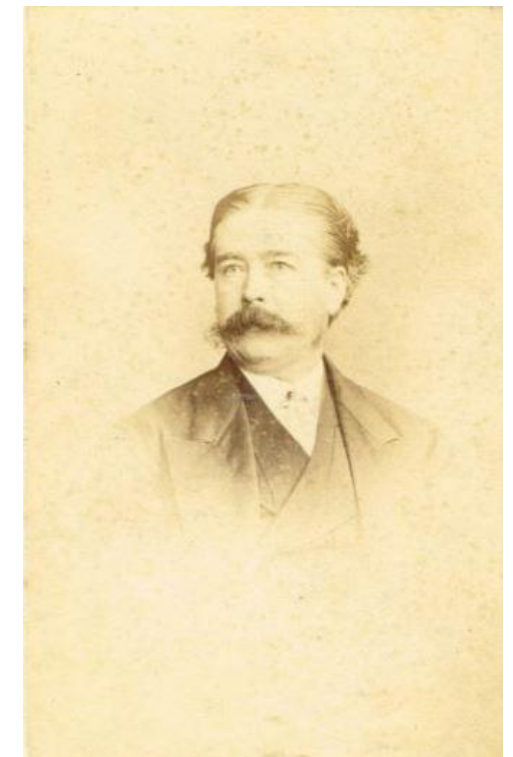
In the 1861 census he was living in Derwent Road with his wife, Eliza, daughter Anne and son Albert. William and his first wife Eliza had three children, Anne (1857- 1912), Albert (1860-1881) and William Pearson (1861- 1942).

Sadly in 1861, his wife Eliza dies at the age of 27 in Salford and is buried in St Paul's Church, Kersall. In 1870 William was listed as Occupation Second Lieutenant Lancashire Artillery in Lancashire: 12th Lancashire Artillery Volunteer Corps - William Nutter Kinsman, gent. to be Second Lieutenant Dated 25th June 1870. **On the right:** William pictured in 1875.

### Alice Houghton

Alice Houghton was born in 1834 and by 1881, she is listed as living at Sandfield Tower as the Head/Occupier together with her sister Susan, stepsister Pattie, niece Mary Smith, and three servants. How did Alice live in Sandfield Tower? Was it gifted to her, or did she buy it for the family? Certainly, she was doing well for herself, as a spinster, if she was able to buy or rent Sandfield Tower.

On the 20th of July 1881, Alice Houghton marries William Nutter Kinsman at St James West Derby.



215	Sandfield Park The Tower	1	Alice Houghton	Head	Wom	46	No Occupation	Liverpool Lancaster
			Susan	Sister	W	51	"	Lpool
			Pattie Aught	Step Sister	"	41	"	Lpool
			Mary Smith	Niece	W	21	"	Hampford Lanc
			Margaret Jenkins	Servt.	W	37	Domestic Cook	Ireland
			Ellen Wainstandy	"	"	32	Housemaid	St Helias
			Annie Taylor	"	"	25	Waitress	Isle of Man

1881. Marriage solemnized at *St James Church* in the *Parish of West Derby* in the County of *Lancaster*

No.	When Married	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
410	20 July	William Nutter Kinsman	Full	Widower	Gentleman	222 South Road	James Nutter (deceased) Kinsman	Gentleman
		Alice Houghton	Full	Spinster		Sandfield Park	James Carter Houghton (deceased)	

Married in the *aforsaid church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *Licence* or after \_\_\_\_\_ by me, *Red Wainwright, Vicar of St. John's, Altrincham.*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *William Nutter* and *Alice Houghton* in the Presence of us, *Richard Pulman* and *Martha East* *J. Houghton*

He moves into Sandfield Tower to be with his wife. They live in Sandfield Tower for 9 years until his death on the 15th of Dec 1890 where he died in Southport. **Probate:** The Will with a Codicil of William Nutter Kinsman late of Duke-street Southport in the County of Lancaster Gentleman who died 15 December 1890 at Duke-street was proved at Liverpool by William Pearson Kinsman of Wrekin-villas Lostock Park near Bolton in the said County Cotton Mill Manager the Son and Richard Charles Birch of 61 Broughton-lane Lower Broughton Manchester in the said County Surgeon the Executors. Personal Estate £243 2s.

## **Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, Liverpool. The History**

I recently received a copy of the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, Liverpool, a copy of the history booklet on the building and the background of how Sandfield Tower came into their hands. Janet Finlayson remembers the building well and is as frustrated as much as I am, more so because she remembers the original interior to the building and how it was well kept. I have reproduced the history in full below:

It was on August 14th, 1927, that a Local Practitioner, a member of the City Church, felt the need for Christian Science Services in the district of West Derby, where she resided, about five miles from the city. She called together about sixteen loyal students, and a committee was formed to look for suitable premises. Everything was most harmonious, and the committee were guided to a very small room over a shop on the main road. The students were called together, and a Christian Science Community was formed. The first appointments were: Readers, Clerk and Treasurer. Our finances amounted to £20 and the cost for the hiring of the room was 10/- a week, including lighting, heating, and chairs. Very loving friends from neighbouring churches presented us with the Readers' desks, Hymn boards and collecting bags and another church sold to us a supply of Church hymnals at a reduced rate.

The next purchase was a piano, and this was paid for by monthly payments. We then appointed a Sunday School Superintendent, and four teachers. The Sunday School was held every Sunday morning and the Church Service every Sunday evening. Testimony meetings were held from the first Wednesday, and both the Testimony meetings and the Sunday evening Services were very soon well attended, so much so that although the room held forty-five people it was filled to overflowing. The Sunday School started with ten scholars and very quickly grew to twenty-five. All the workers worked together for the love of the Cause; each one of them had proof of the healing power of Christian Science, and their desire was to give it out to others, so that we had no salaries whatsoever to pay.

We had a collection every Sunday evening which was devoted to Church expenses. At the end of 9 months, it was found that the room was far too small, so we had to turn and look for larger premises. This seemed an impossibility, but one member had a basement to her house which was not being used, and very lovingly offered it to the Community. It was accepted with gratitude, and as the premises were rent free, we had no expense beyond the cleaner's expenses with the result that our collections were entirely devoted to furnishing the room. Just at this time, a member of the Community passed on, and left us the sum of £400, from which we were able to furnish the basement.

We had a Church Hall and a cloakroom, but at the end of three months we found that this basement was too small, and on the advice of a building constructor, we had a wall removed, which gave us a Hall capable of holding eighty people. The Sunday School numbers had increased to between 30 and 40 and although we remained in this basement for 2 years and 9 months, and were very grateful for our progress, we found it very necessary to enlarge again. This time we knew that we were to do something on a bigger scale, so the Board called a Church meeting, and put the matter before our members. A committee was appointed to look for suitable premises. At the meeting, a resolution was passed that no salaries would be paid to Officers until we were free of debt.

The Committee inspected what they thought a very suitable building – a gentleman's large house standing in its own grounds, but the price asked was £1800. However, we had confidence and knew that if we were acting rightly, nothing could hinder our progress and we had no desire to take one step unless it was God's will. Our prayer was that we should be prevented from making any mistake or leaning to our own judgement.

After much discussion, it was decided to go forward, and the eleventh hour was upon us. An appointment had been made with the solicitor to pay the deposit on a certain morning – The evening before, at 11pm, a friend informed us to stop negotiations, for there was something very dishonest on the side of the seller. We were not dismayed. We had asked to be guided and for this demonstration of protection we were very grateful. A brief time afterwards a much more attractive building was found.

This was a large house with a tower, standing in large grounds and on one of the chief roads of Liverpool. The price was £2750, and although £1800 had seemed formidable, as we felt we had been so guided and protected in our earlier venture, we felt we ought to go forward, again trusting God to lead us and guide us so that any step we took was in accordance with his Will. We then needed £750 for the initial outlay. We already had £350, and members were asked how much they could individually contribute towards the sum remaining to make up the required £750. The funds then grew to £600, and arrangements were put in hand with our solicitors.

We had decided not to discuss money matters and feeling sure that if we were taking the right step our need would be met, we did not allow doubt or fear to come into our thought, nor any suggestion that the right amount would not be available. One Wednesday morning, the Solicitor telephoned to the Treasurer and asked if it would be convenient for her and her co-trustees to meet at his office the following morning to pay the deposit. She knew that there was only £600 in the Treasury but had the confidence to know that if we were taking the right step, our need would be met, and agreed to the meeting. On that Wednesday evening, after the Testimony meeting, the Treasurer informed her co-trustees of the appointment.

Nobody asked if she had the money. That night, the Treasurer had a troubled time, for materially there seemed to be no way to turn to get the further £150 required; but as the morning came, it was very clear to her that this was God's work and she fell asleep. During the morning, the Solicitor telephoned asking the Treasurer if it would be possible to postpone the meeting for a fortnight. She said, Certainly, and felt very grateful that Love had once more come to our aid.

During the following week, donations and loans poured in and we not only had sufficient to pay the deposit but sufficient to pay for all our decorations and alterations, which were considerable. The house was quite a large one, standing in its own grounds, red stone building with a Tower and it was very imposing. A friend from one of the City Churches, who is an Architect, offered to do the work that was necessary but said 'Don't speak money to me – Let me just tell you the best that can be done with the premises, and then you can say if you can afford it'. We let him go on, and when he had told us of his decision, we knew that as the money had been supplied before, it would be supplied again. Gifts poured in – Reading Room furniture, foyer furniture, furniture for the Reader's rooms, and a three manual pipe organ and we had no anxious thoughts over finances, everybody knowing that this was God's Cause and God's work, and we expected the results which followed.

**We opened our Church on Sunday 1st March 1931, during a very heavy snowstorm.**

The services were very well attended, people sitting in the aisles, on the steps and in the foyer. We were obliged to hold our Sunday School in the afternoon, because up to this time we did not think that we could find sufficient room to hold the Sunday School in the morning; but after a very few months it became clear that the upstairs floor could be used for this purpose. We again appealed to our members, and they gave their gifts cheerfully, and without touching our ordinary finances we sufficient money to alter and furnish a Sunday School that holds 60 to 70 children, there being six classrooms. The Sunday School roll now consists of fifty children, a Superintendent, Secretary and nine teachers.



We obtained the status of Christian Science Society of 3rd June 1931, and on 15th February 1945, we became Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, Liverpool.

We have had many demonstrations, dry rot made itself manifest in various parts of the building, but this was very soon eradicated although it was found necessary to obtain a further mortgage advance on the Property. Central heating had been installed which is looked after by our resident caretaker, and now we have a very beautiful building, dedicated to the Service of God. Our Reading Room, which we opened at the same time as the Church, is at present open on 2 afternoons per week.

Our Testimony meetings are very well attended, and testimonies of healing are interesting and progressive. On this occasion, we should like to affirm our loyalty to the Mother Church, the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Mass, USA, that body which is ever present to help and guide us from its long-established store of experience. It would see fitting too, to record our deep gratitude to the pioneer members, who steadfastly pursued the ideas which dawned out of their desire to share with others the blessings they knew came from the teachings of Christian Science.

#### **FOUNDING MEMBERS**

Miss Emma Parry

Mr Wallace Roberts

Mr and Mrs B Priest

Mr and Mrs S Rowland

Mr and Mrs J Morgan

Mr R Brighthouse

Miss E Brighthouse

Miss E Morgan

Mr W Blackburn

Mr and Mrs C Haslam

Mr and Mrs Hayton

Mr and Mrs McKie

Mr and Mrs Warriner

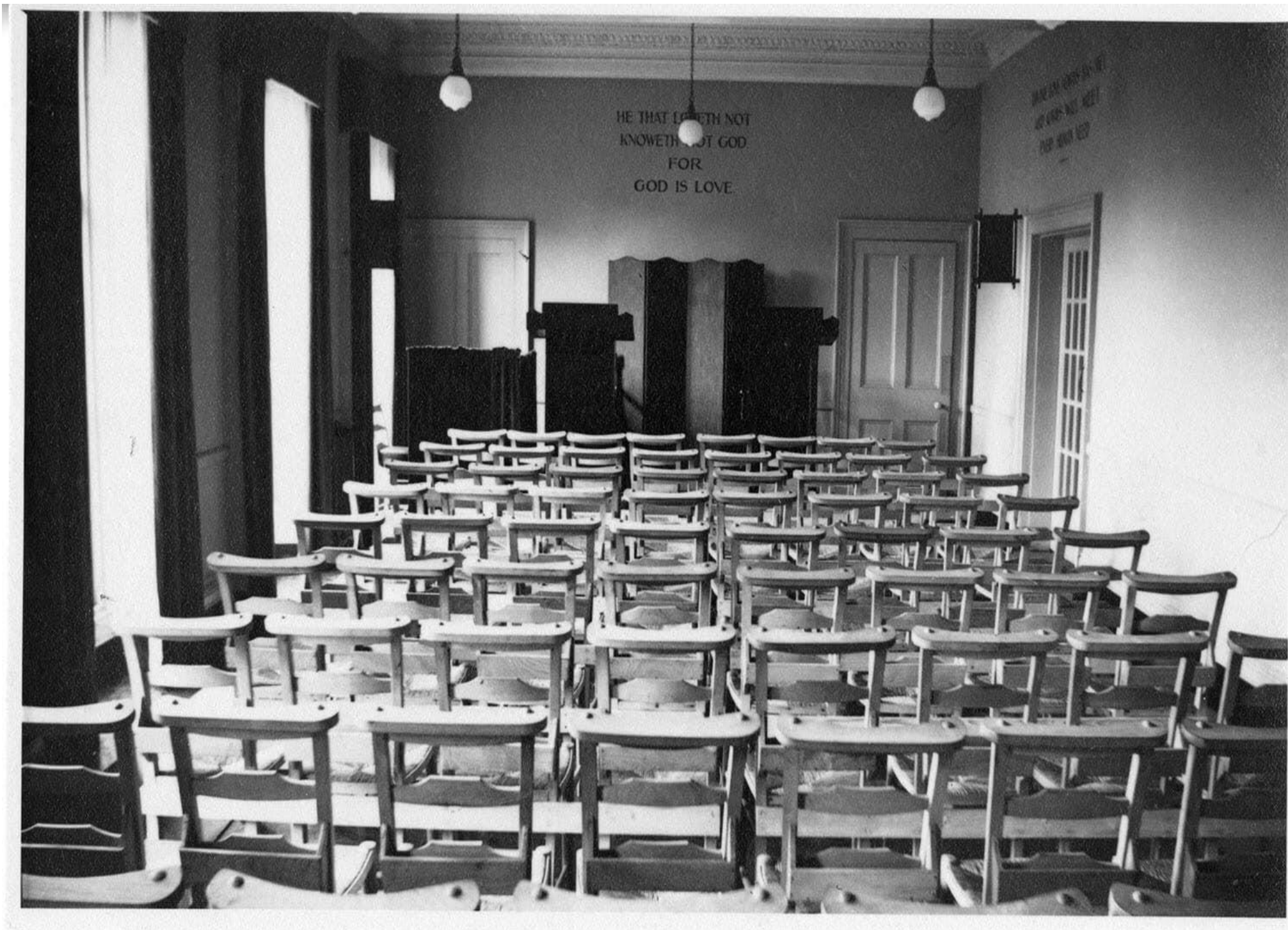


FOURTH CHURCH  
OF CHRIST SCIENTIST  
ENTRANCE FOR CARS

FOURTH CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST

CHRISTIAN  
SCIENCE  
SERVICES







When I discovered the building and wanted to know more, I planned to enter the building early one evening and see how much I could map out and photograph. I therefore decided to gain access to the building at the start of January 2000 on a cold morning and decided my best plans. I took many items into consideration. How would I gain access to private property? How safe was the building? Was there any security or CCTV? What was the layout of the building?

I left contact details with family members of where I would be, I had a fully charged mobile, a torch, a camera, and something to eat and drink. I then looked at the property and found that there was no side fence to the side of the property and thus I could walk straight into the grounds. Further luck was on my side in the way that the entire front window frame had been removed, and with a slight running jump, I was able to up and through the windowless frame.



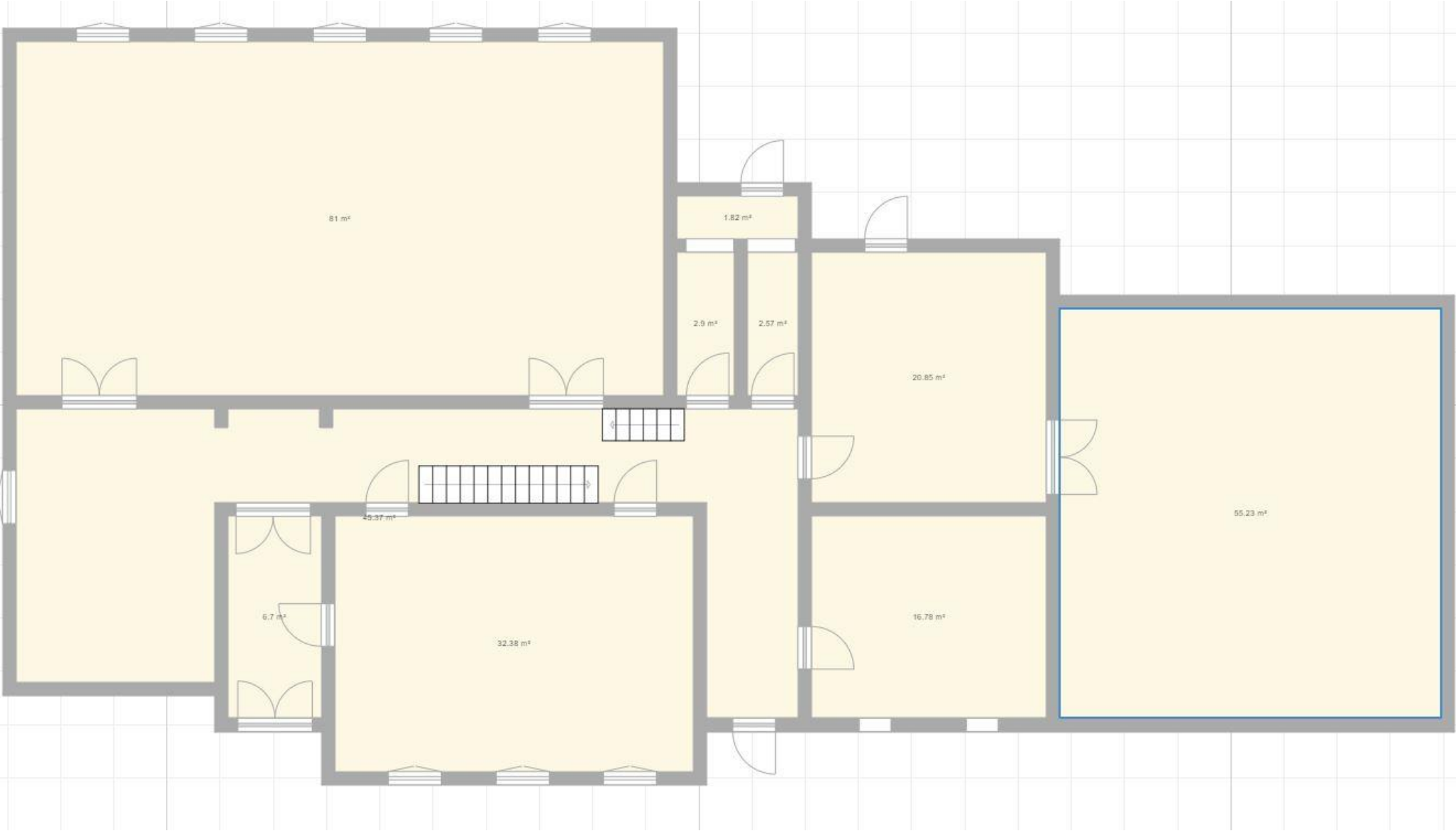
The image on the left was my first close-up of the building. And what a building! A ground floor, first floor, attic space followed by two levels within the tower. I also discovered a side entrance (Tradesmen/servants), and direct access to the basement too from outside. It was frustrating to see the building in its poor condition even back then. Clearly there was fire damage to parts of the property and obvious vandal damage too from the lack of windows/doors and graffiti on the building.

At this stage, the 1931 photographs had not been discovered, so it was difficult to picture the building as it was. Were the window frames painted, what type of glass was in the windows, what was the front door like? Was the layout of the ground outside different? Were there any further discoveries to be made outside or had the plot been cleared apart from the building itself?

It was plain to see that this building had stood the test of time yet even back in 2000, it was clear that something needed to be done to save this building.

Furthermore, what would access be like once inside? Would there be a ground floor still left in the property? Would there be any way of ascending through the building to the upper floors? Was there even a staircase left? My biggest fear would be to become trapped in the building if the floor gave way and thus a sensible cool head was used to test every part of the floor lightly before moving around the interior. In the following pages, I have added the images I took of the ground floor, with the building in near darkness save for my torch and flash of the camera. Again, at this stage, there were no floor plans of the property, and it would have been a disappointment to have only been able to look around one room. As it was, I was able to have the full run of the downstairs and basement area.

I did not have the luxury of a plan of the building so this is something I have recently created to help not only myself, but others who wish to understand the ground floor layout. It has been created looking at the front of the building and one can see the front windows that correspond with the floor plan below.

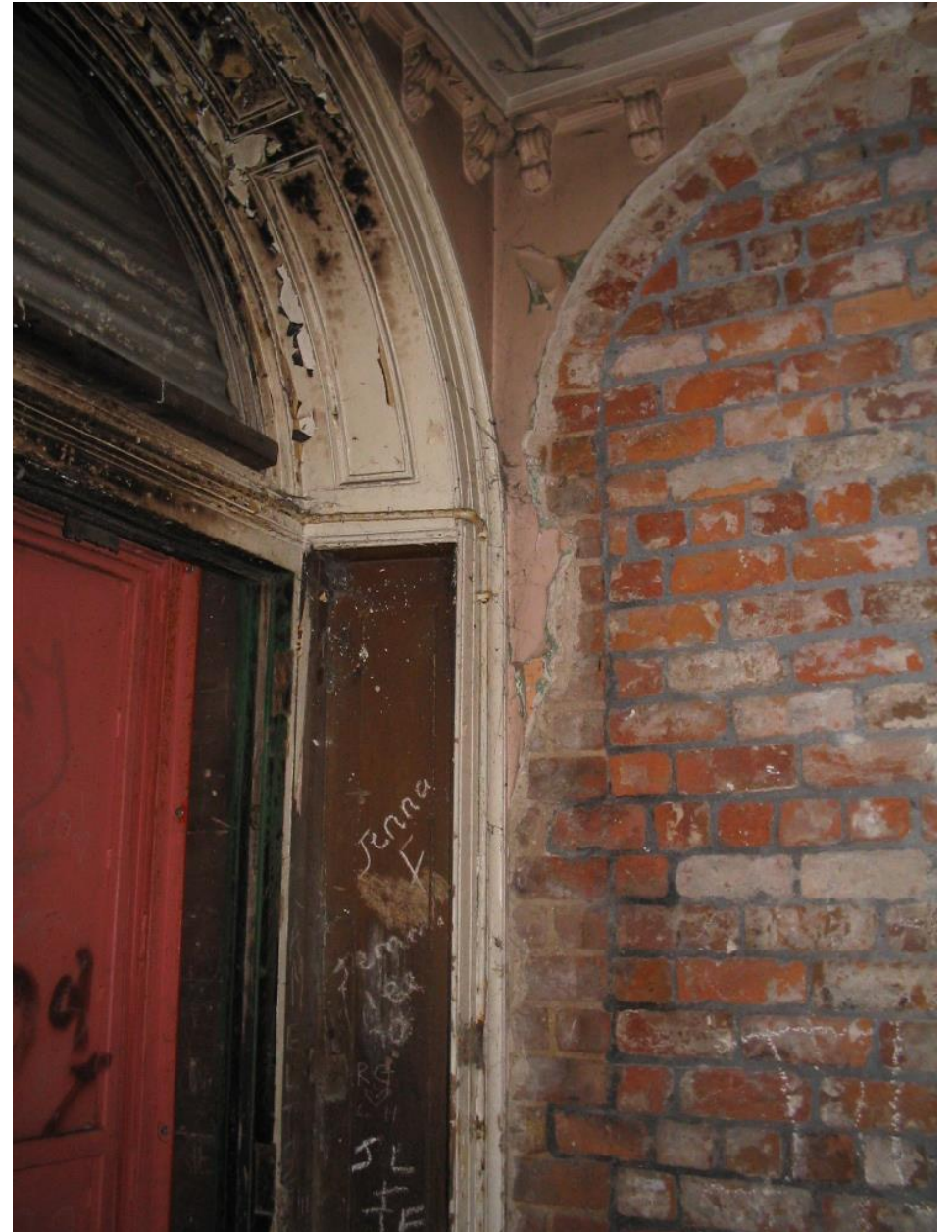


An image taken from the rear hallway looking into the front room and looking out towards Queens Drive.





If one were to walk through the front room and go through the doorway, they would find themselves in the main entrance chamber. Looking to the left would give access to the main door and looking right would give access to the alcove area. It would be at this point that the Hall would be shaped in a letter T – turning left would give access to the front left room, turning right would give access to the main staircase.





We have now turned left at the alcoves and are now looking into the left-hand side room at the front of the building.



If we were to turn around, we would be looking down the hall towards the stairs. Sadly, on my visit there were no stairs left, nor much left of the hall floor.

This image shows the hallway from the other side looking towards the side room.



Once in the side room, it gave access to the large main rear room of the property in which the main Church services took place.



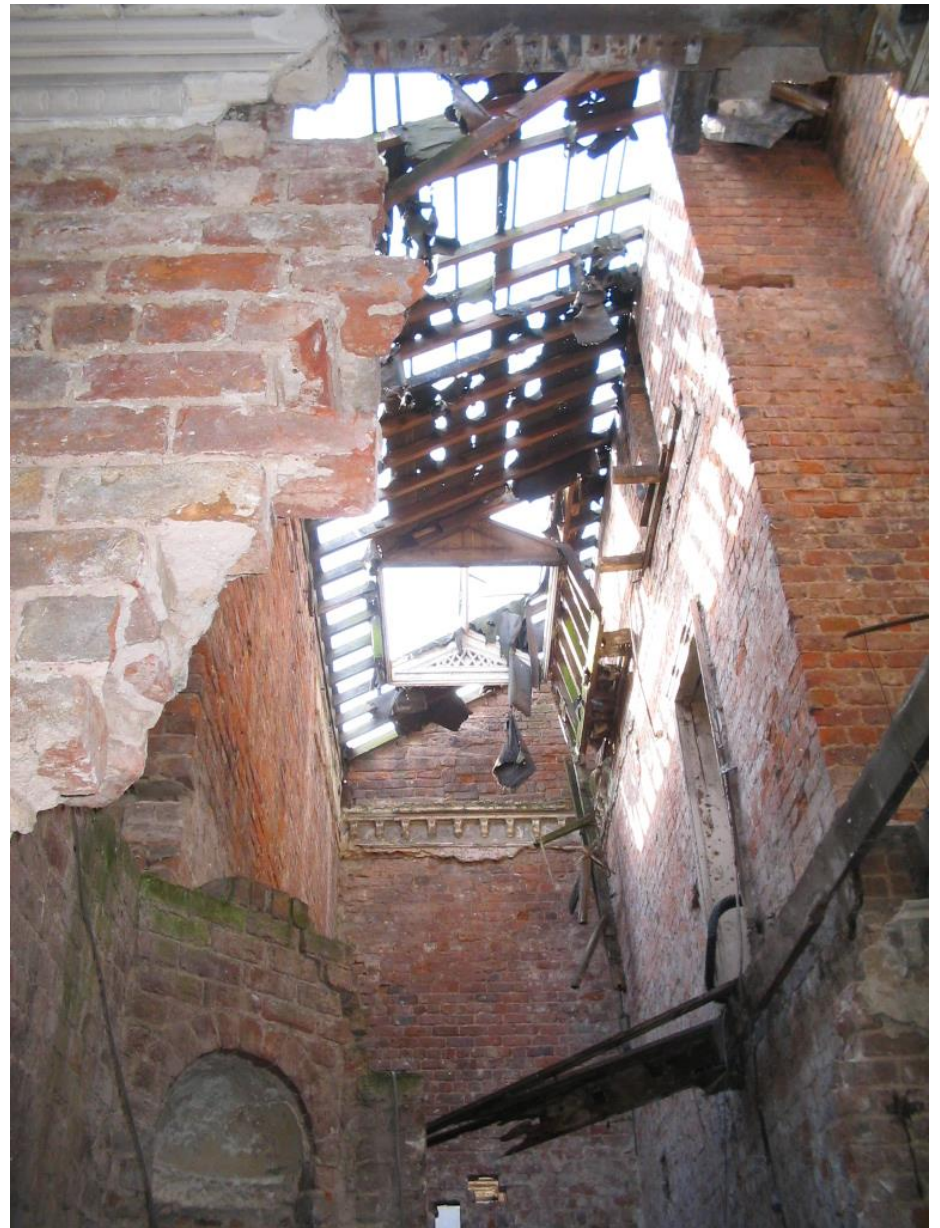
The following images show the viewpoint to the first floor looking up from the rear room.



And from the other angle.



In this viewpoint, we are looking at the hallway towards where the main staircase would have been. There is only a mark on the wall to show all that is left.





At the rear of the hallway, again, this gave access to a toilet block next to the main rear hall and then a further hallway for the side front entrance to the building.



The image below shows the right-hand side of the property in which this was a small stock room of sorts at the front of the building.



It was very frustrating to see the floors or what was left of them. To give an idea of how to get from the front room to the hallway, one beam was used to balance across!



We also look at the main entrance chamber and base of the tower, which was completely inaccessible during my visits.



I was recently contacted by a lady who used to go to Sunday School when the building was used by the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist in the 1970's and she has kindly given me her words of a guided tour of the building from her memory. This is a fascinating read to hear of someone who has been in the building when it was in use.

*As you went in through the front door, straight ahead was the foyer, with two alcoves, one to the left and one to the right. We never really knew what they were for. Then to the left was an archway and another hallway with a fireplace in it to the left and straight ahead a large window looking out to the garden. There was an entrance to the Church auditorium at that point. There were two doors one at the back and one at the front.*

*There were windows down all one side and a platform at the front, with two podiums and an organ in between them. There were seats down either side and an aisle down the middle. If you went out the door at the top on the left side it brought you back into the foyer. Opposite was a room which was at the front of the building, which was partly used as a cloakroom, with a partition down the middle. The other part of the room was a meeting room and had a fireplace in it. If you continued past the staircase on the ground floor was what led to the back stairs and the living quarters of the Wilson family who used to live there as caretakers.*

*The staircase had a smooth wooden banister with a curve at the bottom and at the top was a doorway straight ahead and one to the left. Straight ahead was the Sunday School, it had a foyer area, and then to the right was an archway and there were three rooms off it. A large room on the left functioned as the Sunday School, the middle room was a small room for the Soloist before the service to prepare, and to the right a large room which acted as a room for administration, it contained a large board table and a gestetner machine for copying documents.*



Entering the basement of the property, there were a total of thirteen small rooms, each for different use such as storage, a quiet room, and further servants' quarters.





We now look at the exterior of the property and take in the views from April 2000

















Taken in 2007, these images show the start of the collapse of the roof and right-hand side wall/chimney area.











We remind ourselves of how the rear of the building used to look when in service:



Back in 2019, after further deterioration of the property, we find that the main roof has now sadly collapsed in on the interior of the building:









## THE CAMPAIGN

When I had visited the property several times to take images both internally and externally, I began to piece together the above history of the property and attempt to discover its timeline. I made sure that I returned to the property each year and took further photographs to show the deterioration and to make the authorities aware that this building is rotting away for all to see on Queens Drive. I started to build a website which can now be found at [www.sandfieldtower.co.uk](http://www.sandfieldtower.co.uk) and has the background to the twenty-two-year campaign to have this building recognised.

In the early days of the campaign, I kept in touch with the City Council and voiced my concerns on this property. In that it was slowly rotting away without any work being done on it at all. That this was a Grade 2 listed building on the main ring road on Queens Drive and was hardly an advertisement for the entrance to Sandfield Park.

I look back at my early correspondence and have provided details in my e-mail's to the City Council on my questions and their responses. It makes interesting reading.

September 2013, I wrote off to the Mayor of Liverpool with the following:

*I am writing to you with regards to Sandfield Tower (known as Gwalia) which is a grade 2 listed building situated on Queens Drive, West Derby. For years, I have personally campaigned through my website to highlight the plight of this building. I have been at the forefront of this campaign for at least 7 years, and this has seen me appear on BBC Northwest to 'put this building on the map'. Looking at pictures I have taken of the exterior at the start of my interest of the building to the present day, I can provide clear evidence of the worsening state of the building, although I believe that attempts have been made by Liverpool City Council to provide emergency repairs to the building in the past.*

*I am certain that this building cannot last much longer in its present state and we would have lost another grade 2 listed building 'on our watch'. Therefore, this correspondence is to ask you/the Council, what plans you have for the building? I believe that it is still privately owned so your hands are tied to a certain degree, and again, whether this could be suited to a single dwelling or flats is another subject, but I would like to put it to you to ask what powers you have to finally save this fine building - like we have done with Lowlands at West Derby and like we have done with 'The Florry' in the Dingle?*

### **I received a response from the Mayor of Liverpool:**

Many thanks for your recent enquiry concerning Gwalia, Queen's Drive, West Derby and thank you for taking the time to contact me about this issue. The City Council is very much aware of the poor condition of this grade II listed building and is actively taking steps to remedy the situation. In April 2012, a Section 215 Notice was served upon the owner requiring the external refurbishment of Gwalia. The notice was not complied with, and an alleged offence was committed in November 2012. The City Council is now proceeding with a prosecution of the alleged offence and a court hearing is due in October 2013.

In conjunction with the above enforcement action, Planning Committee took the decision to delegate authority to the Divisional Manager Planning in July 2013, to serve a Repairs Notice on the owner requiring him to commence full repairs of the property within 2 months. Failure to commence full repairs could lead to a compulsory purchase order being made in respect to the property to ensure that it is fully refurbished for re-use. At this stage the Repairs Notice has not been served, pending the outcome of the forthcoming trial. A back-to-back developer is currently being sought to take on responsibility for ownership and appropriate redevelopment of the site, involving the full restoration of the grade II listed building. I hope to be able to provide further positive news regarding Gwalia's future over the coming months.



After visiting the property again back in 2015 for my annual photograph records of the building, I sent a further e-mail to the Mayor of Liverpool:

*Further to your previous e-mail from 2013, I have now redesigned my website on Sandfield Tower of which you can find at [www.sandfieldtower.co.uk](http://www.sandfieldtower.co.uk)*

*As you may be aware, this is now the 15th year that I have campaigned to have the building made safe at worst, and restored at best, however each time I go past the building on a nearly daily basis, there has been no progress at all. There is further collapse to the roof as there was two years ago, and I can provide external pictures from year's gone by to prove this to be the case.*

*I have made English Heritage aware of my personal plight, and also informed Save Britain's Heritage again with the website remake.*

*Are you able to provide me with any news on this building's plight so that we can attempt to save this from complete destruction? I fear that it will only take further strong winds and the rest of the remaining roof will lift off. Are we any further from your comments below? If there is anything I can do to assist in highlighting the plight of this building, please let me know.*

*I hope that 2015 sees the start of some progress in saving this fine structure before it is too late.*

**I received a response from the Mayor of Liverpool:**

*Further to my previous response, I can confirm that the City Council has recently offered to buy the property from the present owner and are awaiting a response. The Council is now considering making a Compulsory Purchase Order of the land in the event that the offer is rejected to ensure that the grade II listed building is saved from being lost. Working with a preferred developer, the Council hopes to secure the full repair of the property and beneficial use before further deterioration sets in.*

Although this was a small response and didn't go too much into detail, I was greatly encouraged by this response. Here we have the Council aware of the value of Sandfield Tower, both as a structure and the plot of land, and yet for whatever reason, the sale did not go ahead. Why was this? Was the offer too low? Was the owner holding out for more money? It would surely have been a sensible offer to have taken the money given the poor state of the building and the fact that nothing had been done with the building for at least 15 years?

I further visited the building in 2015 and 2016 and saw further deterioration of the structure. At this stage I was unwilling to enter the property due to the health and safety risk of the structure of the roof. Further photographs were taken, and it was frustrating to see that time had literally stood still with the building. Given the encouraging news that the City Council were looking to make a purchase of the property, nothing came of this and once again, the building stood alone and deteriorated further over another cold winter. The side wall of the main roof was starting to crumble, and it would only be a short time before the whole roof would collapse.

I therefore updated my website and waited for a further response from the council. Little did I know that I would be campaigning for many more years to come.

At the start of 2017, I sent a further e-mail to the Mayor of Liverpool:

*I am now into my 17th year of my personal campaign to highlight the plight of Sandfield Tower/Gwalia, in West Derby. Since the year 2000, I have set up and run the website [www.sandfieldtower.co.uk](http://www.sandfieldtower.co.uk) and each time I pass by the building, more and more of the roof structure is now falling in.*

*Are you in a position to advise me what steps the Council are taking to secure the future of this building? I understand that there was a previous CPO attempt on the building by the Council. Has there been any movement on this?*

*I am well aware that the council's hands are tied in relation to a privately owned building, but I think 17 years is now long enough to have highlighted the plight of an abandoned building (I have also been featured in the Liverpool Echo and BBC Northwest) and I believe we are at the stage where another winter and the rest of the building's roof will collapse. It was in a shocking state when I first visited the property back in 2000 so dread to think of the structure now.*

*Please can you give me an update or advise me where I can go from here? Both English Heritage and Save Britain's Heritage are aware of my campaign.*

**Frustratingly it took nearly 6 months for a response from the City Council after a second request:**

*I can inform you that there was a resolution by Planning Committee on 26.01.16 to serve repairs notice and make a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the building. Negotiations are ongoing with a developer to secure funding for the making of the CPO and carrying out of works to save the building. It is anticipated that these will be concluded by April 2018 and the CPO process will commence immediately thereafter.*

Given the above information, we were finally motoring! The City Council were making good progress with the owner and as such, it looked like it would be a straightforward process and that by the middle of 2018, we should see things moving. How wrong we were.

During the summer of 2018, I contacted the City Council's Principal Planning Officer and offered all my history, images (internally and externally) and documents on Sandfield Tower to help with any CPO process. It held 18 years' worth of images to show the deterioration of the building and how the building went from a solid structure to that of little more than a folly. The Officer responded and thanked me for my efforts during this time and for the last 18 years. I wanted to show that I was 100% behind the City Council and wanted to help in any way possible to secure the future of this building.

I also received many e-mail's from the curious, the interested and local businesses who wanted to own Sandfield Tower. All business correspondence was forwarded over to the City Council in the hope that there would be a local business willing to work with the City Council to bring the building back in to ownership and that the building could be restored in some way. There was absolutely no refusal from my side of the building being restored for any purpose considering it was just a shell at this time. The early photographs I had taken would have gone some way in working out the layout of the upper floors and the attic rooms, so I was confident that it was a waiting game to find the right interested party.

At the start of 2020 and before the Pandemic, I received a further e-mail from the City Council's Principal Planning Officer. He sent me a copy of the November 2019 report for the progress on Sandfield Tower:

## **Introduction**

In Octobers Digest it was explained that enforcement action had been authorised and outlined how officers intended to secure repairs to Gwalia. However, in the last month the wider financial position of the council has meant that the timetable will need to be revised.

## **Progress In the Last Month.**

On the morning of 18th October, Invitations were sent out to three specialist building engineers asking them to submit a price to survey the building and prepare a schedule of repairs that can be used to support a Listed Building Repairs Notice. All three engineers have indicated that they will be submitting a price.

Invitations and supporting packages were also prepared, but not sent, asking valuers to provide a price for estimating a realistic market price, should the case ultimately be subject to compulsory purchase.

## **Spending freeze**

Later, on the same day, with immediate effect, the council put a spending freeze in place to address this year's overspend.

The council needs to make significant savings in order to reduce the in year overspend and look to reduce next year's savings target. As a result, the council took the decision to implement a 'Spend Freeze' which means that council money may only be spent if it falls within one of three Essential Spend categories, regardless of whether or not there is a budget in place to cover the expenditure.

The Essential Spend categories are:

- Service Failure
- Legal Requirement
- Contractual Obligation

The proposed enforcement action at Gwalia does not fall into an essential spend category.

## **What to Do Next**

It is not possible in the immediate future to appoint the engineers or valuers. However, on the assumption that when the spend freeze is lifted the authority will still want to serve repairs notice on the owner of Gwalia, the invitations to the building engineers to tender have not been withdrawn. The deadline for their responses is 18th November.

It is proposed to assess the tender prices in the normal way and to inform the successful engineers of the delay in appointing because of the spending freeze. When the spending freeze is lifted, the successful tender will be asked if they are willing to match their original price. If not their revised score would need to be compared with the second placed tenderer.

## **New Authority**

Authority to serve a Repairs Notice was granted in January 2016. Due to the time that has elapsed, Roger Mann (solicitor) has advised that we seek renewed authority to proceed with the Repairs Notice and compulsory purchase if appropriate. A report will be prepared as soon as possible.

Time in Weeks / Anticipated Date

0 / 0 Start Date

7 / 7 Invite Building Engineers to submit process

4 / 11 Assess Building Engineers tenders.

4 / April 20 Building Engineers to prepare list of repairs.

6 / April 20 Invite Valuers to submit Price

4 / April + 10 Assess Valuers tenders

4 / April +14 Valuers to Complete valuation

4 / April + 18 Prepare Service of Notice

6 / April + 24 Report findings to committee.

4 / April + 29 Within 28 Days of the order owner may appeal to Magistrates Court for order staying further procedures. The Magistrates Court must then decide whether steps are being taken by the owner to properly preserve the building in accordance with the Repairs Notice. If the Magistrates are satisfied that the Repairs Notice is being complied with, the City Council will be prevented from pursuing the CPO. When making an objection to the Magistrate's Court for an Order staying the proceedings, the building owner can also seek the removal of the direction for minimum compensation. such a notice could, if necessary, be defended

9 / April + 34 2 months for owners to demonstrate they are complying with notice.

1 / April + 35 Local authorities can compulsorily purchase property. If no objections are received in response then the Council may confirm the Order itself. Any objections will be referred to the Secretary of State for their consideration, which would be likely to result in a public inquiry.

14 / April + 39 After 3 months of the service of notice, the owner can serve listed building purchase order

77 / April + 112 Public Enquiry would take IRO 18 months.

## **HISTORIC ENGLAND**

I then turned to Historic England again in September 2020 with the following e-mail:

I am a Local Historian based in Liverpool and run a small campaign on several websites on local history. The reason for my contact is that I have run a campaign for the last 20 years (20!) on the plight of Sandfield Tower (Also known as Gwalia), based in West Derby, Liverpool. The building has gone from a fairly 'intact' structure (20 years ago) to recently seeing the sad collapse of the main roof structure into the building.

I have been in touch with Liverpool City Council on numerous occasions who are aware of my plight and over the years I have taken detailed internal and external pictures of the property (you are welcome to have a copy on request). I have written a website [www.sandfieldtower.co.uk](http://www.sandfieldtower.co.uk) and produced a PDF write up to include high resolution images of the structure (please let me know if you require a copy at no charge).

Please can you look to include this on your Heritage at Risk Registers? To date, no work has been completed in the last 20 years on the property. It is Grade 2 listed and something of a personal passion to see this building saved. It is still privately owned, and the Council have been in talks with the owners over the years, but nothing has been done. This is on the main ring road in Liverpool and is seen by hundreds of passers-by each day, it is not a building that is hidden from view.

You are more than welcome to use the website link or any images (high resolution on request), to promote the risk of this building.

**I then received the following response from Historic England:**

*Thank you for your email regarding Sandfield Tower in West Derby, Liverpool. Apologies for the delay in responding.*

*I have run a search on our database and can confirm that the Grade II Sandfield Tower is not currently on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register.*

*I regret to inform you that due to the lack of resources Grade II secular buildings aren't currently eligible for inclusion on the Register.*

*Secular buildings at risk need to be listed as Grade I or II\* (or Grade II if in the London area) to be added to the national Heritage at Risk Register.*

*As Historic England has no enforcement powers and such Grade II cases are not within our remit, I encourage you to continue to be in contact with the Conservation Officer at the Local Planning Authority for the area for help with potentially protecting the building from any further deterioration.*

In Nov 2020, I sent a further e-mail to the Mayor of Liverpool and Peter Hoey (Liverpool City Council) with the following response: (My questions are in bold)

***Is the City Council still implementing a spending freeze at this moment and if so, does this exclude the £10million as mentioned above?***

*The spending freeze is still in place. The £10m set aside for the hospitality industry is not included in the spending freeze. This money has been prioritized to keep jobs and businesses in place to be able to contribute towards the economy as soon as the covid threat is lifted. Once jobs are lost, they are difficult and expensive to replace.*

***Considering £10million is a vast sum (but could get swallowed up quickly), has any of this budget been set aside for historical buildings? (I ask this in all fairness as we all know that jobs could be created for the restoration of Sandfield Tower).***

*No part of the £10m has been set aside for historic buildings. The council is still spending money on its own historic buildings, where there is a contractual obligation to do so and when money spent now would save money in the future.*

***How much did it previously cost to attempt to CPO the building? I assume there would have been a final cost (I know you gave figures on the fines, but I do not think anywhere has been mentioned on the cost of bringing the owners to court)? Can I ask this both as a campaigner and if you are not able to answer this, ask under the Freedom of Information Act 2000?***

*The council has budgeted £50,000 to pursue legal action towards CPO. The council does not have the resources to purchase the building and would not CPO the building without having identified a potential purchaser to immediately buy the building after CPO. A potential purchaser has been identified.*

***For this building to sit there on a major ring road must be an embarrassment to the City Council, and a danger to the neighbours in the road behind (who have looked out on this scene for years), what are the local councilors in the Knotty Ash ward doing to push this process forward?***

*The City Council and Councilors are extremely displeased about the situation at Gwalia but are faced with much reduced financial and staff resources.*

## Local Neighbours & Businesses

As my contact details, both e-mail and telephone number are on my website. I regularly receive e-mail's from local residents asking for further help on how to tackle the health and safety of Sandfield Tower. Is the building going to collapse on to their property?

I have had reports of local rat infestations were local residents are unable to use their gardens because of rats appearing from the growth in the Sandfield Tower Plot. There have also been reports filed to the Police about attempted break ins of the Nursery next door with CCTV showing access from Sandfield Tower plot.

*1 – Reported smashed glass and attempted break in at the Nursery.*

*2 – Spoke to Liverpool City Council and explained that there has been further trespass on their property and further trespass at Sandfield Tower. Liverpool City Council stated that it was Public Protection who deal with abandoned buildings and that they will report the matter further.*

*3 – Spoke to the owners of Sandfield Tower in 2014 asking for them to cut down the overgrowth that is against the party wall, but no action taken.*

*4 – Spoke to the owners of Sandfield Tower again in 2018 to advise that there had been a further trespass and they had got in via the Sandfield Tower plot. Children have been seen as young as 15 hanging off the scaffolding bars and further metal shuttering have been pulled back to gain access into the building.*

*5 – Spoke to Liverpool City Council in 2017 because of the rat infestation coming from Sandfield Tower's plot. The business has had to pay for someone to come out and deal with the issue from their side.*

It must be a constant source of frustration when you are simply trying to run a business and yet you are constantly dealt with issues from the plot.

I have also had residents contact me to ask who the best person is to speak to with regards to rats in their garden. Again, this is a constant problem with their gardens. They are concerned that the overgrowth is a fire risk, and the rats are a very real problem. I have asked them to contact Liverpool City Council, Environmental Health and to keep copies of every report. This has been going on for 20 years without any resolution!!

It is frustrating that the owners have not properly secured the perimeter of the plot, nor have they kept on top of any work done in the plot of land. As previously mentioned this is not just a building down a back street hidden by view, but this sits on the main ring road, Queens Drive as the entrance to Sandfield Park. It is passed by thousands of people a day who must wonder why the City Council are doing nothing about this building.

If you stop at the Petrol Station across the road, this gives a perfect view of the building, and if this is the first time you have entered Liverpool, is this what we want people to see? We seem to have the money to pave the City Centre with new pavements, new roads and yet seem to have no money to have this fine building restored.

## MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL & WARD COUNCILLORS

We received the news that the past Mayor of Liverpool had disbanded from Liverpool City Council, and we were to receive a new Mayor of Liverpool. Given the past allegations with the past Mayor, I felt it was a wonderful change in direction for Liverpool City Council. As soon as the new Mayor of Liverpool was installed in the chair, I sent the following e-mail and CC'd in Liverpool City Council:

*First, please allow me to congratulate you on your new office and title. I am hoping for immediate change to the city of Liverpool with your new direction and newly elected team.*

*The reason for my e-mail. In West Derby, there is a Grade 2 listed building called Sandfield Tower (Gwalia). It sits on the main Queens Drive ring road and was built in the 1850's as a private villa. It changed hands until it became the Fourth Christ the Scientist Church until they disbanded in the 1980's. Since then, it has been badly fire damaged and vandalised. I entered the property back in 2000 on more than one occasion (no front window frame afforded me access) and photographed every inch of the building inside and out. I then went away and researched the history and constructed a website on the history of the building, of which you can find at [www.sandfieldtower.co.uk](http://www.sandfieldtower.co.uk)*

*I have further written an offline PDF format history booklet on the history of the building and my campaign to have this building restored to its former glory in some shape or form. I have been on BBC Northwest, numerous articles in the Liverpool Echo and have liaised with Peter (in CC) on the plight of the building. I know the buildings layout as well as my own house. Over the last 21 years I have campaigned for this building to be recognised and restored. It is not a building that is sitting hidden, it can be seen by the hundreds of people who pass up and down Queens Drive each day and is an absolute disgrace to the area.*

*Pre covid, there were plans to bring a CPO against the owner, and I was able to see documentation provided by the City Council on this proposal. On the date that this was looking to commence, (the same day), there was a spending freeze on council spends and thus we are no further on. This is not a short campaign of a few weeks; this is a 21-year personal campaign to have this building saved before it collapses. There have been various e-mails between myself, and Peter and I felt that I was getting no response from the Council. I therefore requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 a small number of questions relating to the property on the 15th of March. (I will forward you a copy). To date I have no response from this e-mail in my request.*

*I therefore ask you as our new Mayor of Liverpool to bring yourself up to speed on the plight of Sandfield Tower and to advise me whether the City Council is now able to start CPO proceedings once again to save the building? I have 21 years-worth of photographs showing the decay of the building, and recently the roof collapsed in on itself. I have highlighted this to the West Derby Society, Save Britain's Heritage, English Heritage and have recently written off to the Secretary of State for Environment to ask what they can do to assist Liverpool City Council.*

*Please can I ask that I am provided with a timely response on the above and what your plans are to save this building from complete destruction. I am happy to work with you and provide any documentation on the building (Peter has been kept informed at all times on my images/video of the building). I will forward you over the last e-mail from my Freedom of Information Act 2000 request in which I hope to receive answers in due course.*



Frustratingly I didn't receive a response. So, I e-mailed again, and this time CC'd in the West Derby Councillors. Harry Doyle picked up my e-mail and said that he would pass this on to her and raise this personally with her in office. I received no response from either Harry Doyle or the Mayor of Liverpool. I e-mailed again and still had no response from the Mayor or Harry Doyle who had previously promised to get back to me.

I therefore e-mailed the Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council to see if I can gain further updates on Sandfield Tower given that two of my e-mail's to the new Mayor had not been responded to:

*My name is Jonathon Wild, and I am a Local Historian in Liverpool. I run several websites on historical buildings in Liverpool (St Luke's Church/India Buildings/Sandfield Tower/Eddesbury) and I also run several historical Facebook groups for Liverpool related items (Liverpool Churches/Liverpool Graveyards/History of Childwall). My portfolio is [www.maelstromdesign.co.uk](http://www.maelstromdesign.co.uk) and my Facebook group members total over 20,000.*

*The reason for my contact is that I have been campaigning to have Sandfield Tower (Queens Drive, West Derby) returned to its former glory and below on the e-mail trail, you will see that I have done as much work as possible to highlight this building. This has been a 21-year campaign to have the building restored (I am happy to send you my PDF history of the building) and my website is [www.sandfieldtower.co.uk](http://www.sandfieldtower.co.uk)*

*I kept in touch with Joe Anderson who briefed me on the building in the past, but since the new Mayor of Liverpool has taken up her position, I have sent no fewer than 3 separate e-mail's Sandfield Tower and yet I have not received any response at all.*

*The building is privately owned, and I am aware of its poor condition. However, this is not just a brief campaign, I have been campaigning for 21 years to have this recognised. As you will see from the website, the building is now in a shocking state, and it may not last another winter. This is a Grade 2 listed building fronting Queens Drive and is a terrible blight on the area, especially when the thousands of people who travel down the road each day must wonder what we are doing with our heritage.*

*Would I be able to obtain a response from the Mayor of Liverpool to understand how this can be moved forward with immediate effect?*

I then received a short e-mail from a Senior Support Officer, Cabinet Members' – Mayor's Office to say that the mayor has forwarded on my e-mail and there will be a response in due course. There never was.

Fed up with being ignored on countless e-mail's to the Mayor and to the ward councillors, I e-mailed the City Council again but this time under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in the hope that my request will be taken seriously. I was aware that we were in a pandemic and that staffing was low, yet I failed to understand how four separate e-mails to the Mayor could go unanswered, especially when I took the trouble to explain the campaign and how I have assisted the City Council in the past from my own time and money to give this building a better start and recognition it deserves.

It is in my opinion that writing to the City Council under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does give some response, and I received the below response from the City Council on my questions posed. My questions are in bold.

**1 - When was the last time the City Council went into the grounds of Sandfield Tower to complete a full inspection of the exterior (or interior) of the property? What report was completed and is this report available to the public? At what cost was this to the City Council? Did the City Council inform the owner that this would take place? Was the owner present?**

On the 10th April 2012, the council served a s.215 Notice on 10th April 2012, which took effect on 8th May 2012, the notice will have been based on an inspection however there is no inspection report on file and there is no record of whether the owner was present. The owner was convicted of an offence in relation to noncompliance with the s.215 Notice on 3rd October 2013 at Liverpool's Magistrates Court. Subsequent prosecutions resulted in convictions for second and third offences on 27th November 2014 and 3rd September 2015 respectively.

**2 - You mention in your e-mail that when you are next passing you will check the condition of the building. Can you confirm when this will be? Who will be in the party? Will the owner be informed of this and be given notice to do any repairs to the property beforehand? Will a report be prepared from this?**

An Officer visited the property on 12 March 2021 and again on 14th June 2021. The owner was not informed, and a report was not prepared from this. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that the boundaries were secure. The officer did not enter the property because the boundaries were secure. The owner was not given notice to carry out any repairs. When the spending freeze is lifted the authority is intending to employ structural engineers to prepare a comprehensive schedule of repairs

**3 - As you have had official access throughout the years, what photographic documentation do you have to support your claims that the building is in dire need of restoration? (This is apart from my complete archive) i.e., photographic evidence from the Council showing the year-on-year deterioration of the property? Can this be made available to the public (or myself)?**

The Planning Department does not generally share photographs with members of the public because such photographs are exempt under s31(a) and(c) fall under prevention of crime and disorder in terms of risks of further access to third party private property and associated criminal damage risks which would in turn jeopardise the future of the building which is already substantially at risk.

**4 - Can you confirm when the council spending freeze will be lifted?**

No date has been set for the lifting of the spending freeze

**5 - Can you confirm based on point 4, whether you will be continuing with the Compulsory Purchase Order as you were looking to go ahead with in April 2020 before the Pandemic kicked in?**

We are expecting to continue with repairs notice that could lead to CPO, unless the owner starts his own repairs or the property changes ownership.

**6 - If you are not looking to continue with a CPO, are you looking to provide any court order to the owner for enforcing the legal obligation to maintain the building? If the owner then fails to carry out this obligation, are you looking to go in and make the necessary repairs to the building? (The minimum to prevent any further deterioration).**

The repairs notice provides the owner with the opportunity to repair the building. A CPO would only be pursued if the owner did not repair the building as required by the notice. The City Council has already served another sanction known as an Urgent Works Notice which resulted in the owner getting a bill for repairs, but the building is still not fully repaired and occupied. As a result, a Repairs Notice leading to CPO is now regarded as the most appropriate course of action.

**7 - If the above is not in the council's interest, have the Secretary of State for Environment been contacted over this building as yet? The building is clearly being neglected by the owner and as the City Council are in a spending freeze and unable to assist at this time, I would be happy to write to them to offer my information PDF and website on the building.**

Historic England the governments agency responsible for advice on historic environment does not intervene to enforce repairs on grade II listed buildings which they regard as a local authority responsibility.

*While I was grateful for a response from the City Council, I was staggered at point 2. We have a fantastic Grade 2 listed building in very poor condition, and yet all that the City Council have done is to see if the main gate to the property is closed. Clearly people are still getting in the property from reports from the neighbours and yet we are literally shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. Were any photographs taken? Was a report made to understand whether the building is at risk of collapse on the neighbours' houses? Nothing. I then forwarded my last e-mail to the mayor (e-mail number 5) and still didn't receive any response.*

### ***SAVE BRITAIN'S HERITAGE***

I turned my attention to Save Britain's Heritage and I spoke to a lovely lady Liz Fuller. I had previously offered to undertake some free work for their business by checking and updating the At-Risk Registers they have on their website, and I mentioned to her about my full campaign on Sandfield Tower. We traded some very useful e-mail's and she was very pleased that there was someone looking to fight for so long on this building. I passed over all my information and pictures and a copy of the PDF history and she was delighted. Further e-mail's resulted in a lovely surprise. **Sandfield Tower would be Save Britain's Heritage's Building of the Month in September 2021!**

All the hard work to promote this building was finally being recognised by such an important body as Save Britain's Heritage.

I have since further spoken to Liz and advised her on additional campaigns for Woolton Hall and Eddesbury in West Derby. Here's hoping that both buildings can be on a future 'Building of the Month' to show what we are sitting on in Liverpool! I forwarded a copy to the Mayor of Liverpool to gain a response. (e-mail no 6) and didn't receive any response. I gave up contacting her after this.

## Building of the Month September 2021: Sandfield Tower, Queen's Drive, Liverpool



Sandfield Tower, also known as Gwalia, a once stately grade II listed Victorian Villa in Liverpool standing in ample grounds, is now a derelict shell. Over more than 20 years neglect has brought it from a building in need of some maintenance to a roofless, floorless ruin.

This handsome building with its distinctive square tower, giving it the appearance of an older fortified house, was built in 1851 and for the second half of the 19th century housed a collection of wealthy merchants and their families. In the 20th century, it was acquired and occupied by a church, which sold the house several decades ago, building a new building on the corner of the large site.

Despite standing in an affluent area of Liverpool, with some land around it, the owners have failed repeatedly to either repair or sell it on to a new buyer. The council has taken action several times to try to force essential repairs, but adequately protective repairs have not always been achieved and no viable long-term solution has been found.

In July 2020, it appeared that the council was making progress was towards taking action against the owner to require essential repairs and possibly lining up a CPO. This process has stalled after a spend freeze was introduced at the council.

To see more photographs and read about the history of the house compiled by a determined local campaigner, [click here](#). The house continues to attract wide interest and dismay at its state as reported in the [Liverpool Echo](#) this month [here](#).

### LATEST CAMPAIGNS



**PRESS RELEASE:** Future of palatial Thames landmark in the balance as public inquiry opens

The public inquiry into highly controversial plans to convert and extend London's Custom House has opened in the City of London. The inquiry is examining a series of issues arising from proposals to convert the 19th century landmark on the banks of the Thames into a 200-room hotel.

[Read more](#)



**PRESS RELEASE:** SAVE welcomes Liverpool refusal of Waterloo Dock infill scheme

SAVE Britain's Heritage welcomes the decision by Liverpool City Councillors to refuse proposals to infill part of West Waterloo Dock in the city's historic northern docks.

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### LATEST EVENTS



## OVERVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN

As you can see, I am very passionate about Sandfield Tower. I have visited the property on multiple occasions and stayed overnight on at least one occasion to experience the building at night. Deciding that I would be safe in one of the basement rooms with a decent floor above me, the building showed me no danger. I was in the back room of the basement, and it was surprisingly warm in the room. There was lots of noise from the pigeons who kept me company high up in the roof and each time they moved it sounded like the roof was coming in.

During my time spent in the building, I have explored every accessible part of the basement and the ground floor. By 2000, there were no stairs in the property making it impossible to get up to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor but looking at some of the ceilings/hanging beams, it would have not been sensible to have tried. The only part I have not seen the inside of is the tower and still cannot work out whether there is a small spiral wooden staircase to get up to the top part of the tower. Would there also be access to the roof on the tower? It would be interesting to find out.

One of the biggest frustrations is that at the start of this campaign, while the building was in a poor state as seen from the images, it was structurally (the façade at least) in good order. Rooms could be discovered and plotted on a floor plan. Even the upstairs portion had part walls and ceilings to show the layout of the upper floor. And yet each year the building has been completely abandoned with no repair work. The right-hand side upper wall has collapsed in on itself thus giving way to the roof beams and as a result, the entire front roof beam collapsed one day on itself taking all the interior floors and walls with it, so looking down into Sandfield Tower via a drone, just sees a large 'room' which shows the basement floor and then nothing in between until the roof area.

This building hasn't just been discovered by chance down a dusty lane hidden from view. It is on the main ring road of Queens Drive and together with this campaign, there have been many newspaper articles in the Liverpool Echo as well as appearing on BBC Northwest for a small feature on the building. What more can one do?

Over the last 22 years, I have spoken with the City Council numerous times. It is frustrating that their hands are tied – to a certain degree – yet they could well have done far more to have pushed to have this restored. The lack of response from the ward councillors and the Mayor of Liverpool show that this building is something that they're not interested in, yet as long as this building still stands, I will campaign to have this restored. Is it a pipe dream? No because I saw the condition of the 'Florry' in the Dingle and I see the building now, and I know it can be done.

Ultimately the blame must lie with the owners. I have never spoken to the owners, nor I have named them in this book. However, I wish I knew their intentions. Are they going to sit on the building until it falls down? They've done that for 22 years to my knowledge and nothing has happened. They could have taken the City Council's offer years ago and be nicely retired on it. As it is, if the building collapses on the adjacent properties, they will be held liable.

If the owners of Sandfield Tower are reading this, I would love to help them. I would love to get local businesses into the plot to cut back all the overgrowth for free as giving back to the community. I would love to crowdfund to help them with making a start to look to make repairs to the property. I would happily help to go into the property and look to remove as much of the rotten wood/roof as possible if Health and Safety allowed. Please do reach out to me.

So, what is next for Sandfield Tower? The building is on a knife edge now with its missing roof. It is literally little more than a shell. However, I am still as passionate about the building now as I was 22 years ago. I pass by the building every month and still wonder what it would look like all restored. To explore the upper parts of the Tower and see the view from there. Now that we seem to be entering the last phases of the pandemic, is there an opportunity for the building to be restored? I'd like to think so. But I don't think one individual will come along and spend thousands on this. I believe that this building could be restored as a community centre, apartments, even a boutique Hotel. Maybe it would be a private retreat where you could spend a few days there away from the stresses of life?

As an overview of this campaign, I have done the following:

1 – I have researched the history of the building from that of the first owner, right up to the present day and presented my fact finding to Liverpool City Council, Historic England and Save Britain's Heritage.

2 – I have taken a 22-year pictorial photographic record of the building to show the managed decline on the building.

3 – I have spoken at length to Historic England and updated their website with further information and pictures for the Sandfield Tower page.

4 – I have written a PDF on the history of Sandfield Tower which has been sent out to Liverpool City Council, Ward Councillors, Historic England and Save Britain's Heritage.

5 – Sandfield Tower has been featured in the press on many occasions, sometimes on a double page spread in the Liverpool Echo to highlight the plight of this building.

6 – I have been interviewed on BBC Northwest Tonight to show the plight of Sandfield Tower and my long-standing campaign.

7 – I have successfully had Sandfield Tower recognised as Building of the Month for Save Britain's Heritage.

8 – I have written this book as a reflection from my 22 years campaigning.

Lastly, I have added a few more images below on my very first night at Sandfield Tower. Taken on an old camera in the dark hoping that the flash didn't attract any officials, I look back at the way I crawled around very unsafe floors, rotten floors and parts of the building dropping all around me. I have a massive passion for the building and still look back on that first night wondering whether I would see day light again. I did and campaigned for the following 22 years.

I will not stop campaigning for this building until it is either razed to the ground or until I can walk in the restored front door.

Jonathon Wild.

Feb 2022.

















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