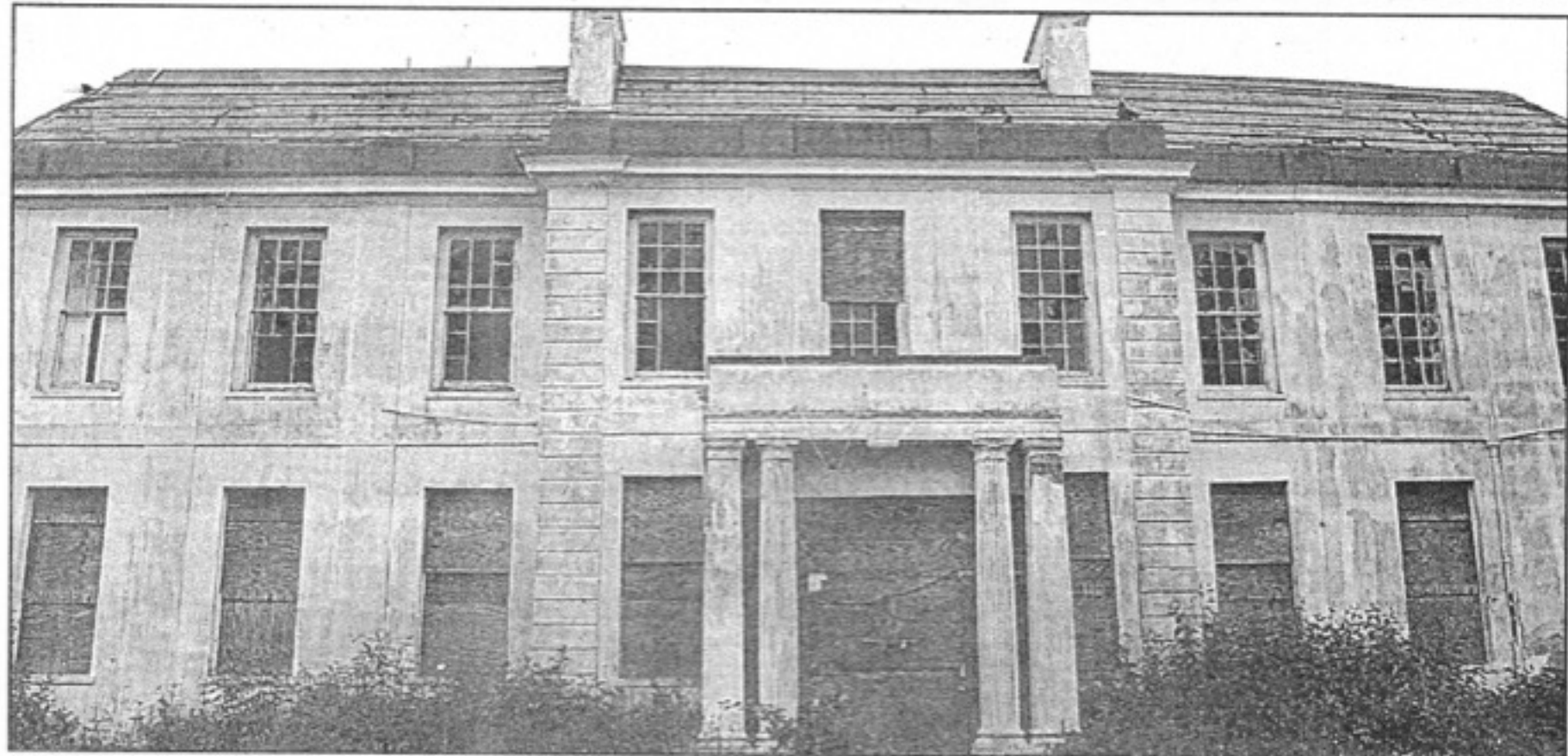


# Cash plea to save historic mansion from ruin



LOTTERY LOSER: Poltimore House as it looks today, in need of funding for a restoration project.

## Charity begins at home



APPEAL: Clive Adams, who is behind the restoration plan.

LOCAL people and businesses are being urged to help a £3 million project to save an East Devon mansion from ruin by creating an art gallery.

Plans to transform Poltimore House near Broadclyst have been hit by changes to the National Lottery funding award system.

Clive Adams, the man behind the scheme to breathe new life into the abandoned building, had hoped the lottery would meet 75 per cent of the costs.

But new rules could mean the scheme wins less than half the money he had hoped for — so he is appealing for people across the region to help him raise funds.

His scheme to create a Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World at the historic mansion would bring an estimated 15 new jobs and attract up to 100,000 visitors to the region.

Mr Adams said: "We made careful plans according to the old lottery rules.

"Now we have been told we should not expect more than £1 million from the lottery and of course we have to fight for that alongside other projects.

"The Government has the right to change the rules. It does seem a bit unfair, but that's life and we are not deterred."

When the lottery began under the Conservative government, large, unusual projects were eli-

gible for 75 per cent funding though the Arts Council. Now the Labour government has changed the system, creating more bodies to distribute lottery cash.

This means the Arts Council has less money to give away. The council will be setting up new criteria for grant applications next summer.

Under their new system less money will be given to single projects.



HEYDAY: Poltimore House as it was depicted in happier times.

### HOW TO HELP

WRITE to Mr Clive Adams at 2 Swains Court, Fore Street, Topsham, EX3 0HH to discuss ideas and find out more.

Chris Humphrey, director of regional services with South West Arts, welcomed the shake-up of the system, but said: "We do not know the details of the arts lottery programme for next summer.

"This leaves organisations like Poltimore in a very difficult position.

"We are giving these groups individual advice on a one-to-one basis."

Alan Payne, of East Devon District Council, who has been working with Mr Adams on the Poltimore House scheme,

said: "It is going to be a long, hard battle to raise the necessary money.

"Research shows this is a viable project as long as we can start without carrying a debt."

Mr Adams and his panel are looking to the West-country for sponsors, patrons and fundraising ideas. They will also be asking trust funds for aid.

Mr Adams said: "Anyone who would like to see a new life for Poltimore House, for the benefit of the community, should get in touch."



# Be a World Cup Winner!

Your Golden Goal time - See Back Page  
School World Cup Winners - Page 12



GALLERY PLAN COULD RESTORE HISTORIC EAST DEVON MANSION

# £3m TO SAVE LANDMARK

A HISTORIC East Devon mansion could be saved from ruin in a £3 million project which could bring up to 100,000 visitors to the area.

Poltimore House near Broadclyst has fallen prey to vandals and the weather since it was abandoned more than 10 years ago.

Now art curator Clive Adams has proposed it as one of two sites for a new art gallery - the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World.

If the scheme is approved by his board of advisors it could put the tiny village of Poltimore on the world map.

Mr Adams, from Clyst St Mary, has already supervised the restoration of the Mostyn Art Gallery and established it as Wales's leading public exhibition space.

Now he and his panel, which includes experts from Plymouth University, South West Arts, Devon County Council and the Tate St Ives, are investigating the possibility of giving Poltimore House a new lease of life.

The centre, dedicated to artwork about the natural world, would be the first of its kind in Britain and Mr Adams predicts it would attract 80,000 to 100,000 visitors every year, creating 15 new jobs.

If his scheme is approved this month, and funding is secured, repairs would probably start next year and it would open in spring 2001.

Villagers in Poltimore have welcomed the proposal. Hugh Hossell, chairman of the parish council, said: "There is a tremendous amount of interest in the village



**MAN WITH A MISSION:** Clive Adams inspects the dilapidated Poltimore House. Picture: CLARE KENDALL

by HELEN PUTTICK

about the new hope for Poltimore House. I should be extremely pleased to see the house restored and used for something like an art gallery."

The future of Poltimore House has looked bleak since it was last used as a nursing home in 1987 and was partly destroyed by fire.

But last year the Buildings at Risk Trust bought the property from the Skipton Building Society

backed by English Heritage and East Devon District Council.

A Bristol-based firm has conducted a feasibility study on their behalf to decide the best use for the building.

Turning it into residential flats and the proposed art centre were identified as the only viable options.

The gallery, which would include a bookshop, café, study bedrooms and studio space, is preferred as it would allow public access all year round.

Mr Adams, whose committee is also considering a location in the west of Devon, said Poltimore was his favoured spot for the gallery.

He said: "It would be tragic to see a house such as this neglected and never restored."

Mr Adams can apply for lottery funding to cover 75 per cent of the project while the Buildings at Risk Trust is already seeking financial support from English Heritage to help with repairs.

● **Landmark dreams: Page 12**

## 'Vicious' attacker is hunted

A WOMAN was left with serious facial injuries after a vicious attack in a remote field in East Devon.

The middle-aged woman was hit repeatedly in the face with a blunt instrument by a man wearing a baseball cap.

She was taken to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford where police have been waiting to interview her.

The attack took place in the early hours of yesterday morning on isolated land off the A3052 at Half Way Inn near Aylesbeare.

Police have set up an incident room at Sidmouth police station. A spokesman said: "At around 3am yesterday morning a female was seriously assaulted at an isolated location near the Half Way Inn.

"The victim was confronted by a male wearing a baseball cap. He hit her a number of times with a blunt instrument causing serious facial injuries."

Anyone with any information should call the incident room at Sidmouth on 0990 777444 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.



THE SCENE: A lane leading to where the attack took place. Picture: JOHN FFOULKES

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Farmers in Euro protest

ANGRY East Devon farmers joined a huge national protest in Cardiff to call for an immediate lifting of the export ban on British beef.

The demonstration took place on the eve of a major meeting of European leaders in the city.

The farmers demonstrated outside the building where a two-day European summit hosted by Tony Blair was due to get under way today.

● **Full story: Page 2**

### Stress tests

EXETER students are acting as guinea pigs to test whether flower power can ease their exam stress.

● **Full story: Page 3**

### Hospice aid

AS Sunflower Week is launched to highlight hospices, we look at the work in Exeter of local charity Hospiscare.

● **Full story: Page 6**

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**Could crumbling Poltimore House be the ideal location for an innovative art gallery?**

THE vision of three people could save one of Devon's most beautiful landmarks and create a new art gallery of international importance.

Poltimore House, a Tudor mansion near Exeter, has been savaged by vandals and the elements for 10 years.

Now it could become Britain's first Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World.

**HELEN PUTTICK reports.**



DECAYING: Poltimore House in its heyday, above, and as it is today.

ONCE described as the finest room in Devon, the Queen Anne room at Poltimore House is now just a shell.

Through the gloom you can pick out a long mirror from the house's former glory days. An elaborate pattern of fruit and cherubs decorates the ceiling.

But the floorboards have been ripped out by thieves.

This is where the Treaty of Exeter was signed on April 9, 1646, saving the city from destruction during the civil war.

Yet centuries of history are now dusted with a decade of neglect.

For eight years Alan Payne, principal planning officer for East Devon District Council, has been fighting to save the building.

Now art curator Clive Adams and his wife Jill, from Clyst St Mary, have picked it as one of two possible sites for a groundbreaking art gallery.

The final decision rests with an advisory panel and should be made before the end of the month.

If Mr Adams' and Mr Payne's dreams come together Poltimore House will not only get back its dignity, it will put the tiny village near Broadclyst on the world map.

Mr Payne said: "This is the marriage of two ambitions - my ambition to save Poltimore House and his ambition to create a great international gallery."

"And what is even more important, we have massive support locally."

Since 1987, when the mansion was being used as a nursing home and fire gutted part of the west wing, locals have been teased by failed schemes to reuse the building.

Two bids to open a plush hotel collapsed while residents watched the white 1580 manor house decline.

Hugh Hossell, chairman of Poltimore Parish Council, said it had been sad for the village to lose what was once the pivot of the community.

He told the Echo: "When you first see it up close it is very depressing, but when you get inside you see just how sound the building is and you realise it can be rebuilt."

Despite the scaffolding poles which jut across the spiral stairs, the fading wallpaper and rust, Poltimore House could have a new life.

When he saw it, Mr Adams seized on the way you can walk from room to room without going back on yourself and the natural light which still spills

# Big dreams for local landmark

Ove nine centuries of history

1086 - Manor of Poltimore is recorded in Domesday Book  
1306 - Manor is bequeathed to John de Bampfylde whose family retain it until early 1900s

1642 - Civil War rages in England, Sir Thomas Fairfax places a garrison at Poltimore House.

1646 - The Treaty for the Surrender of Exeter is negotiated and signed at the mansion.

1681 - Main front facing South East is added to the mansion

1831 - Sir George Bampfylde is given a peerage and becomes Lord Poltimore.

1921 - Bamfylde family sell Poltimore House.

1922 to 1939 - The Tudor mansion becomes Poltimore College, a boarding house for girls.

1940 - It becomes a public school for evacuated boys.

1945 - The house is turned into a nursing home and later a hospital.

1987 - Poltimore House is used as a retirement home for the last time. A fire destroys part of the West wing.

1988 - Trolleycraft, a subsidiary of Clerkenwell Holdings, buy Poltimore House.

1992 - Clerkenwell Holdings look set to sign an £8 million deal to turn the home into a luxury hotel.

March 1993 - Echo reveals plans to turn the mansion into a hotel have been scrapped.

September 1993 - The Skipton Building Society begins talks about resurrecting a development deal.

English Heritage and local councils plan an alternative rescue package.

1997 - The Buildings at Risk Trust buy the house from the Skipton to safeguard its future.



FIGHTING TO SAVE POLTIMORE HOUSE: From left, Hugh Hossell, Alan Payne and Clive Adams, and, pictured right, the state of a typical room today. Pictures: CLARE KENDALL



inside. Both features would be ideal for an art gallery.

Since 1995 he and his wife had been searching for just that - a location for their own Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World.

Mr Adams, 51, explained: "We were both heading towards our 50th birthdays and I think we wanted to do something worthwhile in our lives."

The location and the nature of Poltimore House, as well as the funding which comes with it from the Buildings at Risk Trust, made it one of very few viable locations for the project - which will be unlike anything experienced in Britain before.

"The centre is for contemporary art which relates to the natural world," said Mr Adams. "It is something differ-

ent. It is my feeling as we approach the millennium it is time to look in fresh ways.

"Through the different exhibitions we hope our visitors will learn via artists' eyes more about the natural world and their place in it."

Painting, sculptures, photos, architectural drawings and even computers could all appear in the centre as long as they relate to the landscape.

Visitors would be able to browse in a specialist bookshop, sip tea in the café or even take up residence in one of the study bedrooms upstairs.

But beside the new there would be room for the old.

If Mr Adams' panel choses Poltimore House the finest room in Devon will become a lecture hall and recital

lounge - but it will also regain its old character.

Mr Payne has a few secrets up his sleeve. An honest antiques dealer picked up door surrounds looted from Poltimore House in London and discovered a receipt written to Lord Poltimore with them.

After doing his research, he returned the precious items to East Devon District Council last year and now they are at a secret location ready to go back where they belong.

Devon police have also helped trace stolen antiques while others took precious items to safety before the thieves could snatch them.

The days of Baron Poltimore, banquets and balls have gone. But there could still be a future for the house.

## A wheelbarrow with a difference

PHYL Besley, 88, has lived in the village of Poltimore all her life.

Her parents rented farmland from Lord Poltimore, eventually buying it for themselves.

She still has the book from the day when Poltimore House was auctioned by the Bampfylde family in 1921.

It reads like an extraordinary game of Cluedo.

The library, the Red Drawing Room and the Green Drawing Room appear in a contents list which stretches over pages, including details of servants' quarters and marble chimney pieces.

But it is the grand entrance hall which left an

impression on Mrs Besley when she visited the house when she was a youngster.

"I remember a mahogany wheelbarrow with silver fittings in the hall," she said. "It caught my eye."

"There was also a staircase which fanned out in both directions like a butterfly with lovely

mahogany red bannisters. Of course, they have all been pinched now."

As she grew up Mrs Besley saw the manor house become a school for evacuees from Dover College. She put their parents up when they visited at weekends and recalls the young lads pinching eggs from nearby farms.

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**POLTIMORE HOUSE:** Advisers have backed plans to convert Exeter's historic Poltimore House for use as an arts and study centre. Picture: CLARE KENDALL

# Arts chiefs back Poltimore centre

by **HELEN PUTTICK**

**A NEGLECTED** East Devon mansion has been chosen from sites across Devon to become the home of a ground-breaking gallery.

Earlier this year the Echo revealed Poltimore House near Broadclyst could be saved from ruin in a scheme to set up a new art and study centre.

Now a panel of advisers has selected the landmark as the location for the £3 million project which is expected to draw 100,000 visitors to the area every year.

Art curator Clive Adams, who is the inspiration behind the proposal, plans to bid for lottery money to help his idea become a reality.

If he is successful, the abandoned mansion, parts of which date from the 1500s, will get a new lease of life.

The house has lain empty for more than 10 years, at times savaged by vandals, thieves and fire.

The gallery and study centre would revive the former glory of the building where Sir Thomas Fairfax signed the Treaty of Exeter in 1646, signalling the end of the civil war in the region.

Hugh Hossell, chairman of Poltimore Parish Council, said: "I am delighted Poltimore House has been chosen for this use and I think Poltimore villagers are to."

"It would have been a disap-

GALLERY PLAN COULD RESTORE HISTORIC EAST DEVON MANSION

## £3m TO SAVE LANDMARK

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Poltimore House near Broadclyst has fallen prey to vandals and the weather since it was abandoned more than 10 years ago.

Now art curator Clive Adams has proposed...



MEAN WITH A MESSAGE: Clive Adams inspects the dilapidated Poltimore House. Picture: CLARE KENDALL

pointment if the project had gone anywhere else.

"I cannot honestly think of a better site for the gallery."

Mr Adams has harboured an ambition to open a centre linking art and the natural world for 25 years.

He and his wife Jill, from Clyst St Mary, considered 16 different sites in Devon for the scheme.

With the help of advisers they narrowed the choice to three locations in February.

Now a panel of experts from Plymouth University, South West Arts, Devon County Council and the Tate St Ives, has made a final recommendation.

Mr Adams said he was sorry to reject alternative locations but excited by the potential of Poltimore House.

"Without finding Poltimore House I do not think the project would have been viable," he said.

"It is a big responsibility but

I am sure it is going to succeed. There is so much support for it. It think it has a natural momentum."

Accessibility for residents, tourists and the disabled, local support and its proximity to the Exeter-based Arts Faculty of the University of Plymouth made Poltimore House the favourite choice.

As a gallery, it would boast a bookshop, cafe, study bedrooms and studio space. It is designed to be self-supporting once open although it will take £3 million to prepare.

At the moment the mansion is owned by the conservation group the Buildings at Risk Trust which stepped in to safeguard the property's future last year after the building had been used for a series of business ventures.

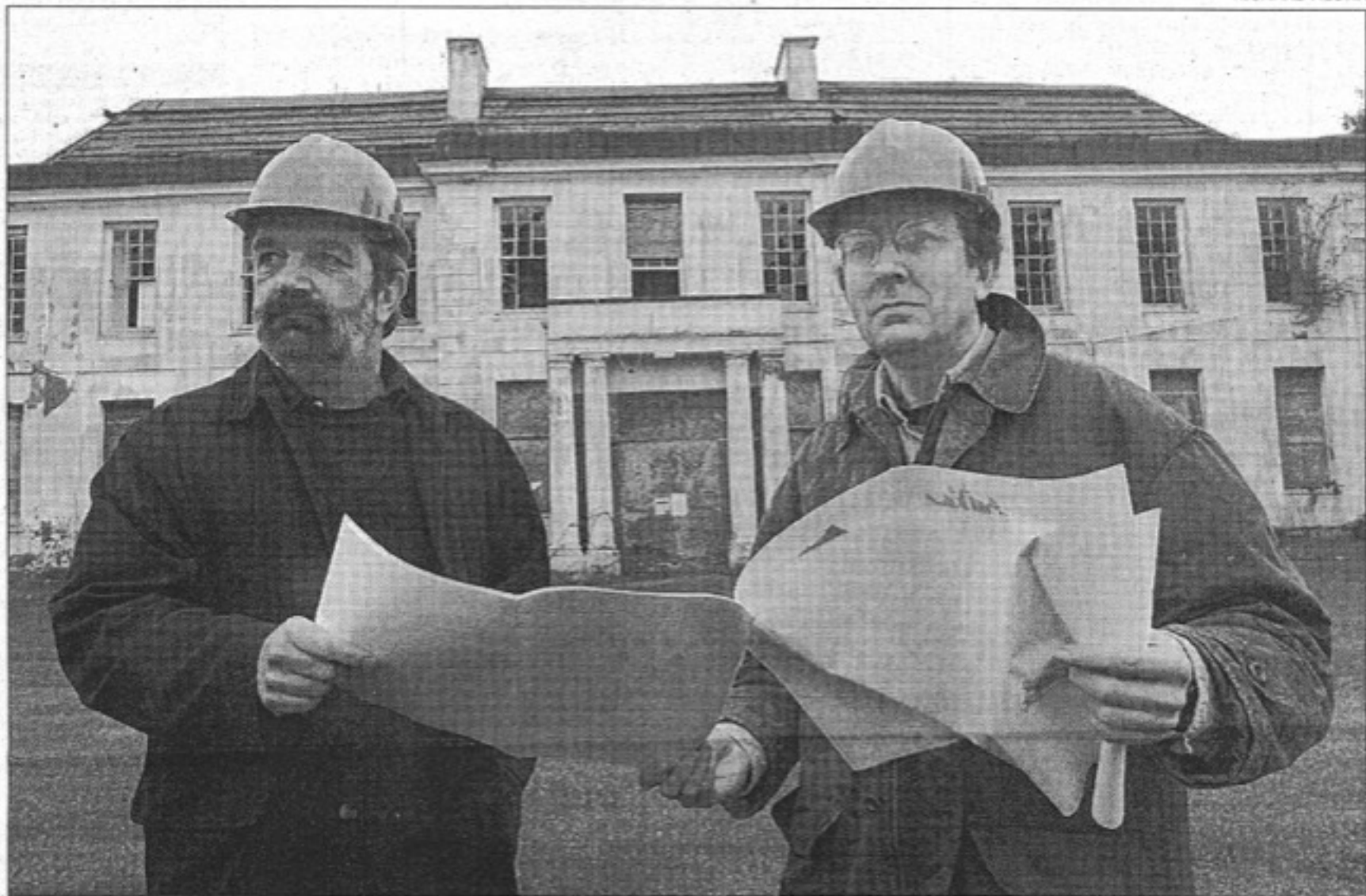
The trust is currently seeking funding from English Heritage to repair the home and it is hoped the gallery could open in the Spring of 2001.

**AMBITION:** How on June 15 this year the Echo reported the proposal to revamp and convert Poltimore House into a £3 million arts and study centre.

£11m project is launched to transform building into contemporary gallery

# Historic house will be home to new art

RICHARD AUSTIN



● **AMBITIOUS PLANS:** Clive Adams and Andy Davey of Simpson and Brown Architects outside Poltimore House near Exeter

## MATTHEW ROBINSON

A HISTORIC house on the outskirts of Exeter is to be turned into an alternative art gallery.

Poltimore House, five miles north east of Exeter, is being transformed in an £11 million project by the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (CCANW) after it was chosen from a possible 13 sites throughout the county.

The scheme, which has also been heavily supported by East Devon District Council, should be completed by 2004.

Project officer Clive Adams says the centre will display artists' impressions of how the natural world has an effect on society.

"You only have to look around you today to see what importance the natural world has on us," he said.

"It will exhibit the interpretation of the natural world by artists through a variety of different mediums.

"The search for a suitable building began five years ago.

"We were looking for a site in a number of different places, but eventually we chose Poltimore because of its history.

"We want to make this arts centre accessible to all, but particularly to disabled people, and because Poltimore used to be a hospital, that made it an ideal site."

The centre will have a framework of events and educational activities, and through art, design, new media, literature, music and dance some of the most important issues concerning society's relationship with nature in the new millennium will be explored.

The regeneration of the building comes after years of campaigning by East Devon Council. A rescue operation was undertaken by the authority in conjunction with the English Heritage and the Buildings at Risk Trust, which resulted in the formation of the Polti-

## Building's long story

POLTIMORE House dates back to Norman times and has a varied and chequered past.

The name Poltimore may derive from the Celtic "Pwll-ty-mawr", which in Old Welsh means the pool by the great house.

In the Exeter Domesday survey the house was recorded as a manor held by one of William the Conqueror's barons.

The name most commonly associated with Poltimore is that of the Bampfylde family, who lived at the house for over 600 years.

John Bampfylde was assigned the house by a canon of Exeter Cathedral in 1293. His descendants continued to inhabit the estate until a kidnapping of two-year-old heir Richard Bampfylde in 1528.

However, he returned to claim his inheritance in 1550.

The owner during the Civil War, was John Bampfylde, who was a royalist and made a Baronet by Charles I.

But he became a partisan of the Parliament in 1642, much to the king's displeasure, and eventually took Plymouth from the Royalists.

Since then, Poltimore House has been altered by a succession of baronets until the first Baron Poltimore extensively renovated it between 1831 and 1852.

Buildings on the estate became schools between 1922 and 1944 and it was a hospital from 1945 to 1976. Since then, the house had gradually fallen into disrepair before the CCANW project finally rescued it.

more House Trust last year. The important 16th and 18th century parts of the buildings will be restored to provide a series of flexible project and gallery areas, education rooms, a lecture and live event space, studio, accommodation and shop.

Later additions to the building which had been damaged by fire and vandalism will be demolished, the central courtyard recreated and an entirely new wing will be designed by Richard Murphy which will house large galleries, a restaurant, terrace, lifts and services.

"Another benefit of being located in Poltimore House is that we have a wider range of funding sources available to us," said Mr Adams.

The capital costs of the scheme are

estimated to be approximately £11 million and National Lottery fund distributors and the English Heritage are being approached for most of this sum.

"We have already applied for £2.5 million towards the cost of the new wing from the new Arts Capital Programme," said Mr Adams.

"Our application to the Heritage Lottery for around £4.5 million towards the cost of restoring the historic buildings seems likely to be considered in July."

Mr Adams said it would not have been possible to implement the scheme without the help of many supportive organisations, including East Devon District Council, English Heritage, Prosper and the Regional Development Agency.

# Hi-tech new role for old mansion

Reinventing a 16th-century Devon ruin as an arts centre will cost £11m, writes  
**Graham Norwood**

**A**t present the main inhabitants of Poltimore, a grade II-listed, mid-16th-century mansion, are birds and bats. The house, close to Exeter in Devon, has confounded recent attempts to turn it into a country hotel or to return it to a glorious family property.

It is estimated that it would take more than £10m to restore it solely to residential use. The cost, combined with the difficulties in sub-dividing it into flats, has deterred investment buyers. Rich individuals are unprepared to wait years for work to be completed.

Poltimore is now dangerous and derelict, but, unlike many buildings in that position, it is poised for a dramatic makeover by an architect who wants to combine the finest parts of its historic architecture with a striking contemporary wing emphasising glass and electronics.

Edinburgh-based architect Richard Murphy wants to restore some of the most important rooms, in particular the Tudor hall re-modelled in the 18th century to mark the visit of Queen Anne.

But Poltimore, set within 13 acres of grounds, is more than just an attempt to renovate the past. Murphy has also designed a 21st-century wing to become the heart of a Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, with creative and exhibition space for architects, designers and artists. They will live in accommodation being created in the house and outbuildings.

The new wing will have two large galleries — each 20m x 10m, and each with sliding walls that will sink into the ground to allow the exhibition space to open directly onto the gardens when the weather allows.

"This is a key part of the



**Bright future: Poltimore's re-birth will involve restoration and creative new building**

project," says Murphy. "The creative interpretation is that it would help artists and the outside world to communicate with each other. The architectural interpretation is that it should be a fantastic fusion of different periods of design, material and production."

The solid sliding walls can be overlaid with light filters of etched or clear glass to give various configurations and appearances to the new wing. The mono-pitch roofs of the two new galleries will be at the same inclination as the Tudor gables in one of the restored parts of the original house.

Poltimore has a dynamic and chequered history that Murphy wants to exploit.

Successive generations of one family, the Bampfyldes, owned Poltimore from its con-

struction in the mid-16th century up until 1921, adapting and adding parts over centuries. Consequently it has a Tudor courtyard and rooms, while the addition of a ballroom in the early 1900s has impinged on a particularly fine 18th-century wing.

During the second half of the 20th century it was a private house, a hospital, a school and an unofficial base for new-age activists — and part of it was set on fire in an insurance scam some decades ago.

"Some of the most recent additions over the past 100 years or so were badly constructed and these obscured and almost destroyed the integrity of the house," says Murphy.

"Thankfully some of the worst of the additions were burnt down and some of the

others have fallen down over time.

"So we're lucky — we don't have to argue to demolish some of the building in order to pay proper respect to the best of the older areas and to accommodate some new thoughts."

Planners are also determined to return the historic gardens to something like their original state. The grounds include sequoia trees, a 250-year-old avenue of limes, and some of the oldest monkey puzzle trees in Britain.

The total cost of creating the centre at Poltimore will be £11m. Some funds — £1.1m — have been secured while others are being sought through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Arts Council and local authorities in the south-west of England.