

Transcript

Angela Brady

Former President of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

My name is Angela Brady, I'm a director of Brady Mallalieu Architects based in London, and I'm the past president of The Royal Institute of British Architects, the IBA. John Wilson who was leading the Save Preston Bus Station campaign, he approached me as President and said would I back the campaign and would I sign his petition? I think the building itself is very important because it is set in time and you know, often people misunderstand areas or eras of architecture and they pull them down. I mean even Kings Cross St Pancras – the St Pancras which is now the hotel – that was going to be pulled down, and now we all appreciate it as a beautiful building. But with Preston Bus Station I think the significance is that it is one of the key European Brutalistic buildings, and it's very much intact, it's very significant not only as a piece of architecture but for the people in Preston themselves.

When you have a whole collection of buildings in an older city that's over two, three or four hundred years old, you want to be able to read it like a book, like a page by page of what's happened every fifty or a hundred years. Now if you didn't have the 1960s Brutalistic architecture like Preston Bus Station for example, and you had to demolish that, you have a page missing in the history and it makes it very hard for people to understand, you know from just a story, you don't have the physical building there, even if

the building changes with time you know, that's flexible, that's a good thing. But if you actually demolish that building altogether, then you have just taken a piece of history away and I think that would be a great shame in any town or city.

I think my personal hope will be that more people will be actually using public transport as they do car shares, and then have no cars. But I think one of the things here is that at key nodes intersections, it's public transport that is the way of the future for connecting cities and that's where now Preston Bus Station is probably ahead of its time, because it is such a large bus station, and as people will have to cut down on fossil fuels and cut down on their own public private transport, that buses are going to be much more of the future.

When this building was designed and built in 1969, it was part of the brave new world, doing something different. We now have a new type of optimism for this building because it is saved, it is part of, it is a big public building. I think as long as it remains in kind of public and community use, then the community can come up with all kinds of new ideas for its future use, so there is still optimism there for the future, for changing it as we evolve.

Transcript

Graham Carr

Joiner working for John Laing during the construction of Preston Bus Station.

I'm Graham Carr and I worked for John Laing's on the Bus Station fifty years ago. Preston Bus Station will stand out with me. It was my first job with John Laing's. You've achieved something, working on something that you know is going to be there for years and years.

The Project Manager interviewed us, took us on, (me and a friend). We started work going around the perimeter of it, doing the tongue and groove boarding, all the way and then, for the numbers to be fitted on for each place, that's where the stands were going to go. Then after that I worked on the shuttering, the stairs. Most of the shuttering had been done before, but it was very enjoyable working here, a complete team spirit that was there. I knew then that this was the firm I wanted to work, for especially on the Bus Station. It was absolutely fantastic. The men, the different nationalities that I've worked with, Sikhs, Poles, Hungarian, all tradesmen and some labourers, but it was a fantastic feeling working with them. Different ideas were picked up. But they say, the Poles, if there were any little marks on the concrete, they could touch it up, they could clean it, they could make it beautiful. You see, wherever you look up here, where I'm looking at now there's loads, everything is concrete, but it's smooth, it's finished, everything about is finished. There's not hardly any brickwork as you can see, and everything was made just a few yards away from you. Constructed into the moulds,

cast, set, the crane would lift it up, place it in position and then take it down for the next one. Everything built on site, which was unheard of at the time.

It's most important is the Bus Station. Put simply, you've got to get from A to B. I mean I can't go to Scotland from my local bus station. I've got to come to Preston to catch one. I don't even go, I can't even get a bus from Chorley to go to Blackpool. I've got to come to Preston and get a bus from here to go to that. If you have a car, perhaps people say they are not interested in a bus station. If you haven't got a car you want the best, and I think Preston's provided with the best. If you've no car, you have to get here.

Transcript

Bob Frost **Skateboarder**

I'm Bob Frost, and I'm from Preston and I'm a skateboarder and I guess the relationship with the building is to do with skateboarding.

Well it was the eighties, it wasn't like it is now, in the eighties everyone was pretty poor. There was a lot of, what is very similar to what is happening now in society, it's a very polarized nation. I don't know, it just felt a bit of a dangerous place to be, the bus station, especially of an evening, but I guess that was being a teenager coming into town for the first time. You start skating outside your house on the curb outside your house or wherever, down the street. You get on the bus and come into town and you're like oh wow it's not as, it's just different and it's getting used to somewhere new. It did have that sort of dangerous feel to it, but is part of the charm and the attraction.

We went up the steps because we were too scared to get in the lifts, probably in the late eighties, probably watched *The Equalizer* too many times and just thought, oh I don't know about public lifts. So we went all the way up the stairs and got to the top and we started skating around and obviously you can skate from the top all the way down to the bottom in a big loop. We started doing that in groups, racing down there and then we started having a go on the actual quarter pipes on the side, which was a bit more hairy, because there was a massive drop on the

other side. But I've got friends that could skate it pretty well, I mean I didn't skate that much because it always got to me – the fact that if you got it wrong you could plummet to your death. The rest of the building, the banks on the top floor, the curb by the entrance to the ramp going down to the Guild Hall. That curb is somewhere we spent most of our time skating because it was a painted curb and you didn't get painted curbs in England, they were always in America, and we had our very own painted curb in the bus station. So we skated there a lot and then throughout the whole building really because it was part of the route on a Sunday when you came into town and skated for six or seven hours because there was no one else in town. It was ours until 1994 when Sunday trading came in and ruined everything.

I mean the structure always looked good back then, but you were more concerned with skateable terrain, which I am still now, but the actual distinct shape of it, the curves, and I also like the ramps – the car parking ramps – I think they look awesome. They're just dead simple and effective and it's just built with concrete which is one of the most beautiful mediums out there in my opinion, but then again I'm biased because I'm a skateboarder. Skateboarders and concrete go together. It's more accessible now is skateboarding, there's more skate parks being built, you see skating on the TV, big companies are getting involved and whatever you feel about that, it's exposing it to more people, and I've definitely noticed down at the park there's two or three girls skateboarding, but I can't really speak for BMXing or scootering.

There's definitely a history going back to the sort of mid to late eighties of skateboarders using this place and it should really be embraced. It's had awesome renovation work done on it, nothing too jazzy, they've kept it authentic, which I really like. The fact that they've moved the buses to one side is manageable because a lot of the bays were empty and it's something Preston – it's a marmite thing I know – but it's something Preston should be proud of. It's listed now, so it isn't going anywhere which is ace and it would be great if they could incorporate sort of space outside we could use as skateboarders.

Transcript

Chantal Oakes

Artist

My name's Chantal and I'm an artist who works with communities exploring place and the relationships to the public sphere.

I came up to Preston from London 20 years ago and my partner at the time was in the campaign to save the bus station, so before I'd even seen it, I'd heard all about it and been asked to design a badge for the 'Save Our Bus Station' campaign, which was interesting. So, although I didn't use it, I'd heard a lot about the bus station and the efforts to save it, and that it was a brutalist structure and it was important, and it was the second largest bus station in Europe.

I have taken a bus from here a couple of times, but I mostly use it as the car parking facility for the town, which is an interesting space in of itself really. It's quite sort of oppressive, very low roofed if you're tall, I'm quite tall, the roof seems very low. I like the go-faster arrows up the ramps. It's a building that you feel like you have to sort of trust the engineer really when you come into it. That's how I've always felt with those, the swing of the, driving up very, very steep ramp ways, it's very Fisher Price. When I'm driving I do feel slightly unsettled because it feels like a quite difficult drive into the building. Always grabbing for change of course to get the right ticket. And it's quite a long walk from the car park into town itself. I feel quite uneasy, and insecure when I'm walking on the concourse

because it's not very welcoming atmosphere, because I don't look like I belong there. I think it has a boy's own sort of feel about it.

It never feels like there is anybody much around, although if you look out there is some lovely views. When I came here, I'd forgotten I think, or hadn't realised that local features are – people fight for them, places – that was a revelation really. It means a lot to people and I have, I respect that, people have fought for a long time to keep it, to renovate it, to look after it. I think that it's got to be respected, that people like it enough to do that.

Transcript

Craig Atkinson

Photographer and founder of Café Royal Books

I'm Craig Atkinson, I teach Fine Art at the University of Central Lancashire. I run Café Royal Books, which is a publishing house that focuses on publishing archive photography from 1960 onwards. My connection with the bus station is that apart from travelling through it twice a day for many years, I've made a series of photographs about the place, which were then published in a series of books. And for about six years, I probably passed through it sort of daily, twice, and maybe after about six months I started to take photographs. I just take photographs of wherever I am anyway really, and because I find myself here quite often, I started to build up quite a body of work. Initially of the people around the bus station and the people that work here and so on, and then I became more interested in the sort of structure, and so it was that really, my interest in how people use the place I suppose, or did.

I suppose because it's kind of a bit of a limbo type place, people don't really come here for any other reason apart from travel or arrival, or it's kind of a crossing place from, you know, half way through a journey or something so people, it's a bit like an airport transfer kind of room. You are sort of held here until your next bus comes or you can't not pass through the building if you're on the bus into Preston. There was an interesting thing about that, everyone was either in a rush in or a rush out, everybody was keen to get where they were going, but at the same time there was a lot of waiting around so it was just that, a

perfect place to get people kind of doing nothing in a way, which I quite like. It's not like people were working or people were doing anything specific. They were kind of hanging around being very natural so it was quite a good opportunity to take their picture.

On one occasion I was taking pictures through the window of the café, to be approached by the chef, the woman who was working as the chef at the time and she came out and told me to stop taking pictures, and she was having a fag, and it was after the smoking ban had come in and we sort of agreed to not talk about me taking pictures or her having a fag in the same place, but that was kind of a long time ago.

You still see some of the same faces, but I think the whole feel of the place has changed, the building has changed, the look of the place has changed, the kind of, without being overly critical I suppose to my mind it's lost a bit of its charm. The cage that's been put around each floor of the car park, I don't like that. I understand why it's there but I'm not sure why it was chosen to look quite like it does. Obviously I'm very glad it's sort of saved and wasn't bulldozed, but I think in the saving and in the kind of restructure of the inside it's kind of lost a bit of something.

I suppose it had a grittiness that maybe has been polished now, I suppose 99% of people that use bus station would be pleased about that, that they would probably think of it as a dirtiness that is now clean but I think it had a character that it still has but it's diluted a bit. I think it was kind of interesting where the barber's was and where the café was and its kind of vacant now, maybe that's not

going to last forever, but it might take a few years for everything to bed in and become a bit more natural again.

Transcript

Gill Ellard

Preston Bus Station user and participant in the Preston Passion BBC broadcast (2012)

My name's Gill and I've lived in Preston for a number of years now and I use the buses a lot, most of the time its how I get around, and I love the bus station. I did a special thing in the Guild year 2012, when we had the *Preston Passion* that was a programme on the BBC and I took part in a mass-sing of different choirs and different singing groups from parts of Preston and surrounding area.

I was very surprised when I was told this was going to happen at the bus station, because I thought well what in earth are we doing in the bus station for, couldn't they find somewhere else, it is quite austere looking. But when we got there we saw how they'd done it and I realized it was very appropriate because it was such a big space and they used the space really well. Apart from the crosses on the top they used the apron where the buses had been cleared for the performance and they had the dancing and the singing, and it used the space really well and there really wasn't anywhere else in Preston that would have been as dramatic I don't think.

Well I think having the bus station here is just very important for the people of Preston, it's a public space, it's a space that can be used for lots of different things. It has huge potential, we don't yet know what will be happening with the open space at the front and we could have lots of different things going on there. People need open spaces,

they need community facilities. There were plans to have a youth zone built onto the side of the bus station that doesn't have the buses, there was a similar youth zone in Blackburn that was very successful and it was a great place for the youngsters to meet and to do different activities, and I think it's a great shame that it has been put on the backburner.

The bus station will become more of a hub, I think as the roads get more and more congested and it takes longer to drive into Preston and car parking is more and more difficult. I would hope people would use the buses more, and the more we use the buses, the more they will be sustainable. If you're in your car you're just on your own, if you go on the bus, you'll never know who you're going to see. You can eavesdrop on other people's conversations, you might see somebody that you know, sometimes you get chatting to someone who you've never met before and they're really friendly. Even if you're only talking about the weather, it's communication with people and it's interaction, and that's good for everybody.

Transcript

Charles Wilson

Architect, worked on original design of Preston Bus Station

My name is Charles Wilson and I worked on the design of the bus station working with Keith Ingham at Building Design Partnership. Preston Borough Council had a very inadequate bus station on Tithebarn Street, and for a number of years they'd had hopes of a new bus station. So the brief was to have a new bus station for eighty stands and for a car park for around 1000 spaces. This we believe at the time would be the largest bus station in Europe. Keith Ingham and I occupied a small room about the size of an average living room working up the designs for the bus station. One of the things that Keith Ingham particularly was concerned with were the details of the design. He himself had a passion and interest in graphic design and typography. Helvetica was his great type face that he enjoyed. The idea of the large arrows was partly to make it clear to the drivers in the car park where to go, partly to have kind of a focus and something that was interesting in a rather dull concrete environment, and to introduce some sharp colour. The other sort of details on the graphic side was we struggled for quite a long time to get was a decent digital clock. We saw the digital clock as the future – they weren't terribly common in those days – and I remember it took quite a while to get a clock sorted out.

I remember one very crucial meeting when we were approaching the design of the car park because one of the

most memorable features of the whole building is the curved up edge of all the car park decks. Keith and I went down to Manchester to meet Ove Arup. We had already determined that we wanted to have an overhang over the buses to give some shelter to the passengers getting onto the buses, and we wanted to have the minimum number of columns in the car park to make maneuverability as easy as possible. Thus we established imperial dimensions of 40 foot wide grid that gave us three bus bays and five car parking spaces. Arup said to us that in order to get the overhang then we would have to deal with the counter lever of the concrete structure. We could put a concrete wall on the edge, but that would be rather heavy and would require the structure to be stronger and thus heavier and more expensive. We could have a metal railing along the edge but as they pointed out as architects we would probably turn our noses up at that. So they said why don't we think about trying to just curve up the concrete at the edge and Keith immediately liked it, that's it! That's it, lets go for that and then that part of the design we spent quite a lot of time working that up into a structural detail.

The rather exciting ramps into the car parks would probably be quite difficult to achieve today. There would be all sorts of safety people worried about the elevation and turns but at the time we thought they were great fun. One of the interesting things about designing a very, very large building in the context of Preston was that there was no real detailed examination of the urban design implications. Clearly it had to relate to the new ring road which was being constructed, but as I recall there weren't people in Preston who were really concerned with the

urban design implications. That of course has all changed over the years and now there would be a much greater concern. So I don't recall objections, I don't recall difficulties with getting planning permission or anything of that sort. It may have slipped my memory but I don't remember any controversy at all until the building was constructed, and then the controversy was largely about day-to-day things of people being directed into subways they particularly didn't want to go into rather than not going over the area that the buses used in front of the station itself.

I think it's great that the building has survived and is now enjoyed. I think it's probably true of a number of buildings around the country and around the world, that they sometimes take time to become enjoyed. I think the other thing that's important about its survival that there is a huge amount of embodied energy in that building. Concrete is not the most sustainable building and to destroy something of that size and rebuild again would have been a most unsustainable activity. So I think the combination of people recognising its architectural interest and merit, and the fact we have still retained all this energy that has gone into the building is for the good of the community at large.

Transcript

Linzi King

Preston Bus Station Manager

I'm Linzi King and I'm the Preston Bus Station Manager based at Preston Bus Station. I've always lived in Preston, born and bred. I used to come to the bus station when I went to college, or caught the bus, then when I starting going out on nights out I would always meet my friends here. So I've used this building for, since I was, for over probably thirty years, so it's always sort of been part of Preston in my view.

When buses reverse they have to sound the horn as a warning to other buses, so it took a while to get used to that actually, sometimes it still makes me jump because they are so loud. Obviously because it's listed we couldn't drastically change the place because we needed to retain the character and various elements of it. A lot of people will come in and say, when we opened the sort of concourse area after the refurb, 'what have you done?', but it has changed so much. The work that has gone into it is amazing, and yes it may not look drastically different, but we have improved so much. The lighting, for one, just makes the place a lot more welcoming. The CCTV system makes the place a lot safer because we have our eyes everywhere now, nothing can really be missed.

There's been lots of sort of upset here to be honest, you know. It was before we had the car park renovated, there was a lot of people who came here if they were feeling they were going to take their own lives. Some did. My staff

dealt with that, which is highly upsetting. What people don't know is that there was that a lot of people came with that intention but didn't in the end because of my staff's intervention, which I'm proud of. But it's just sad.

When you work here everyday, you probably do forget a little bit about how amazing it is, but it's just an incredible building and people just really love it for different reasons like people love the black floor – some people love the black floor – the black floor is another bug bare though with a lot of people, they're like, 'if you've done all of this work why couldn't you have changed the floor', so then we have to go into why, its been listed and blah, blah, blah. People love the white tiles, I personally like the white tiles. People just like the vastness of the place as well.

Transcript

Farah Tabusam

Bus Driver at Preston Bus Station

Hi, my name is Farah Tabusam and I work in Preston Bus Station for Stagecoach the last, for over seventeen years now. The first time I came to Preston, I'd been here before but just looking for a job, it was a huge place and the building is something to look at. To me I think it's a piece of art, and I still think it is now they are improving it a lot, and I thought it is a huge place – almost like an airport to me –and that was the first thing. I hardly saw any Asian lady drivers down here but that didn't bother me because I wanted a job. I knew that this summer I'm doing my best to pass my test, and I did with Stagecoach.

At first, because I didn't tell them when I was in training, but when I passed my test I told them. My brother and sister were okay, my mum, oh my god she didn't like it. If I had been a pilot, they just sit in one corner and don't really interact with other people so that's okay. But being a bus driver and an Asian lady, what has she got into? She knows I am a different person. Once I remember I went home, and mum opened the door, she quickly said to me, 'hurry up, hurry up, go upstairs and change'. What is it, who is here? 'Somebody is here, just go'. It was one of her friends. The next time she did it, I changed my clothes, but I didn't go and see her friends. I just went outside, after she accepted it, but now she is okay, now she is okay. Most of the community don't think this is a job for a lady, to me a job is a job, I like it so, it's none of their concern.

As a driver I spend more time here than at home. Sometimes between shifts there is eight and a half hours, that is a bit tough. Finishing the shift, going home, it's my mum or sister who cooks, I hardly cook now, and it is hard but you get used to and luckily I have help at home. I think if I was married, my husband would have kicked me out.

I do 68 and number 2, 68 goes through from Preston to Lea. Freckleton, then it'll go to Wharton, Lytham, St Annes and then to Blackpool. There are numbers, if you notice all the stands they have numbers, like number 3 is for Penwortham and it'll be going from number 21 stand. It can be because it is every 15 minutes, once one goes every 15 minutes the next one is available, especially for this Penwortham one. But there are numbers, mostly people, especially those that are not regular don't realize, what are these numbers? Stand numbers and service numbers are different.

The changes we've had like, for instance for disabled people, we had only one bay where we could load or unload them, but now they are renovating it, every bay has advantage for push chairs, even for single mums. Most passengers are single mums, babies, disabled people, it's very easy for them.

I remember the first time I was here and I realised I was reversing my bus – it was a double decker – right between two buses. And when I looked up all the drivers, even the Preston Bus side were looking at me. It's a hard thing when you're a new driver and you're doing it but now it just looks easy, it's not difficult. And while we are reversing we have to be very careful to look for those

people that might be crossing right behind. So it is, we have to be very, very careful because it's not a small car, even my own family, my niece will say, auntie you drive so slowly. I say no it's not that slow, because I drive all day my bus, and just compare a bus and a car, a car is a small one, there is so many people that I have to take care of.

Transcript

Steve Molloy

Barber at Preston Bus Station

My name is Steve Molloy and I've been apart of the bus station for 42 years. I've been a gentleman's hairdresser on the bus station and it's been a part of my life, or been the biggest part of my life for 42 years and it has been a rollercoaster of ups and downs in my life and with the bus station.

Many, many years ago when, 50 years ago when it was sort of designed, it was way, way, very scientific, it was like space age, people never thought this could have happened to Preston. And so we got this, and it was like wow what have they got? And I think also it wasn't just the design it was the size of it. We've got a bus station that housed 80 buses, forty on each side and it was like wow. That was special to Preston. The first time we went into the shop, it was like working in a goldfish bowl. You've got glass all around you and it's a very strange environment to be in, just glass from floor to ceiling, and we tried to put curtains – lace curtains – around to diffuse the situation and it still worked. It did take a lot of getting used to from inside, because there was also people putting their nose against the window and looking inside, and that was quite, quite strange because we used to have a salon three floors up in Preston. So we were used to looking at pigeons, and now we were looking at human beings that were looking at us. It's a very, very, more opened planned space for people to use and I think it's not as depressing as what it was and the big bus station that we have is a

place that we can now, I don't think the word's enjoy, because you don't go to enjoy a bus station but you can feel safe and you can feel happy in the bus station because it's that clean. People used to come into my shop and the most frequently asked question was, what are you going to do when they knock the bus station down? My answer to that was always, you tell me when they're going to knock it down and I'll tell you what I'm going to do, because I never, ever thought for one minute that it would get knocked down.

Transcript

John Wilson Campaigner

I'm John Wilson. I headed up the campaign to save Preston Bus Station. I was involved with many, many people throughout Preston and the UK. I was working as a former bricklayer on the Guild Hall, and so both buildings were coming out of the ground at the same time and I just, I saw the building growing and I saw the concrete structure coming out of the ground. And it's just immense to watch it. Construction has been my life, and that part of my time was in the middle of a journey in my career, so I know exactly what has gone into the building. I know not every nook and cranny, but I can see the meticulous work that's been carried out on site with all the pre cast units and all the in situ structure. So I was excited to see it coming up, in a space-age, a building for the future. I'm pleased its still here.

I was quite thrilled to see Borba Construction coming to my own town to build a 700 million pound project. I wasn't happy to see that they wanted to demolish the bus station and so we had council leaders for County Council, council leaders from Preston, chief executives, council officers and people from John Lewis and Partners, people from developers, the architect practices. I was really annoyed that these people were making the decision for us residents and that's sort of really when I went to town, I'm really going to go against this. I'm going to push and I made a lot of enemies, I made a few friends.

We had quite a lot of disagreements with the leaders of the council. The council was saying that they had an engineer's report that said the building was falling apart. I disagreed with that. I actually followed this through with English Heritage, they eventually sent their team down to survey the building. The bus companies were frightened to death that lumps of concrete would fall on customers, fall on the buses and endanger people. The council did nothing to help save the building, to repair it. Yeah, it went bad to worse. We had quite a lot of battles internally, externally, interviews with council leaders, interviews with many councilors. From there it spread and we managed to get a lot of people on board in Preston, all the architectural practices, engineering practices, surveyors, and with that more people seemed to join the campaign. UCLan in particular, and the banner, Charles Quick, a lot of people. Sally Stone with gate 81. I managed to bring on board Angela Brady. I got in touch with her, got her number and rang her, she was then the president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and I knew she would have quite a few contacts. That was a turning point, when English Heritage came here and surveyed the building from top to bottom and turned round and told Preston City Council the building is not in danger, the building can be refurbished. It was at a time then the local TV stations, Granada, BBC came down, we did interviews, the then leader Peter Rankin said, we're not ruling out anything, we're not ruling out anything, he said it two or three times, that we may even demolish it because they'd already agreed that they'd demolish it. We said that you cannot demolish a listed building, so in the end they relented and sold the building to Lancashire County Council for one pound.

Well 1969 was the space age wasn't it? We'd landed on the moon 50 years ago. Everything was going off in America and Russia with the space age and the Cold War, and this building was going up. It was something for the future, and we're here now, this is the future.

Transcript

Sally Stone

Academic and Campaigner

I'm Sally Stone, I'm a resident of the city centre of Preston, although I'm not a Preston girl, we arrived here around 15 years ago, we moved to Preston. The proposed demolition of the building inspired us to form the group, Gate 81. Preston Bus Station has 80 gates and we'd like to keep it that way. What we did was create a series of events which were intended to raise the profile of the building and bring attention to it, get people to notice it. And as soon as people start talking about the building, then people start to care about it and then there's much greater pressure on councilors and other people within the local government to seriously rethink their proposal to demolish the building.

Of course the bus station was constructed in 1969, which is the same year the first man landed on the moon, and the bus station itself embodies that sense of optimism and hope that was happening all through the 1960s. But it was never refurbished and because of that there is still quite a lot of original features in it. The white tiles, the brilliant white tiles, the timber benches, the timber partitions, the plastic lettering, and even the clocks are all still present. The clocks are brilliant because they are both analogue and they're digital because it was late 1960s, early 70s. It was that moment in time when we were moving from an analogue world to a digital world and so it embodies both of them. Before it was refurbished and the clocks stopped

working, the analogue clocks carried on working, and it was the digital ones that actually stopped.

The demolition of the bus station was first proposed as part of the Tithebarn scheme, which was an enormous proposal to regenerate the whole of the city centre with the construction of an enormous shopping centre. The out of town shopping centres meant that not so many people were coming into town centres to do their shopping. And also the rise of digital shopping, which meant the sort of future of any highstreet, the future of any town centre was in doubt because no longer were people coming to do the majority of their shopping because they can do it elsewhere. They can do it from the comfort of their own home, or they can do it in a massive out of town shopping centre and do many other things as well. So the developers for the original Tithebarn scheme pulled out and that sort of initially saved the bus station. The council hadn't really invested in the town centre or the city centre as it was then, by then, for a number of years and they thought, well because of the Tithebarn and the hopes for that, and they were left with a city centre that was slightly run down. They said right, how are we going to regenerate this city centre quite quickly, and they regarded the bus station as a sort of great big white elephant on the edge of the city centre which if it wasn't there, the possibility of getting developers into these sort of areas would be much greater. So their proposal was to demolish it and replace it with a surface car park.

So this was the catalyst for the Gate 81 project, there was also the Save Preston Bus Station website. The then head of the RIBA, the Royal Institute for British Architects,

Angela Brady, she launched a t-shirt campaign, so architects all over the country were campaigning to save it. It was in The Observer, it was in a lot of the architectural press, and so there was a series of articles and a series of people reappraising the building. At about the same time as our parade, we got listing so that was, it became a celebration, it was actually a couple of days before, so it became a celebration of the fact that the bus station had been saved, which is a marvelous thing and it's a brilliant thing for Preston.

Transcript

Kathryn Poole

Preston Bus Station User

I'm Kathryn Poole and I use the bus station as a commuter for about 5, 7 years now, to and from work and university. I think me and a group of friends had just decided to go here instead of the train station. We thought it might have been a closer walk, being lazy. So we came here as a group, but it never really, it wasn't you know, world shattering for us, it was just another building for us to go into. It was warmer and out of the rain and a more reliable way of getting the bus. You don't have the chance of them shooting off past you.

When people came to Preston to see the bus station, I see it a lot on Facebook, like just friends of friends come and visit Preston to do a photo shoot at the bus station or have lots of friends who are interested in brutalism and that sort of, kind of architecture so it's really, when you do see it in photographs it is very, it dominates the landscape, the local landscape and its very striking in a photographs because of all the geometric lines and the really interesting shapes of the building. It looks great, but I think Instagram probably helps. So it probably builds its popularity, like social media, people taking pictures and then they see it, tag it, geo-tag it and then you get lots more people coming and it looks good in a black and white filter.

I think it's a relaxing space because there's not as much pressure to get on and off the buses as there is on a train.

You're not going to fall onto the tracks if you miss the step on the bus. There's less, it's people just coming to work so it's more high-strung in the morning. But people just going home in the evening, it's a lot lower energy, and people are just tired and just want to go home. I don't know whether it's just me, but in my mind the best seat is at the top of the bus in the front on top of the driver. And then across the aisle behind the stairs. Sometimes the front on the bottom next to the driver, but only if you don't know the driver, otherwise you have to talk and I'm antisocial, so I don't like that. I do notice on the way to work, if I'm getting the same buses, the same people sit in the exact same spots, like there's a really young pretty girl that sits across the way from me. She gets there first so she obviously thinks that's better, but she's wrong.

Transcript

Mohammed Yousaf Former Bus Conductor

My name is Mr Mohammed Yousaf and I have been a bus conductor from 1969 to 1985. I have no job, I come to bus station, and apply for job and they give me form, I fill out the form. They start me, you know and the one other Pakistani, Mr Armein gave me training for bus conductor and I pass. Some people don't like conductor jobs. You get there early in the morning, five o'clock, half past five. So our people, like me and a lot of my friends, they look for jobs, they come for jobs, that's why they get up early in the morning.

Some people make trouble on the last service, 11 o'clock from, you know, once upon a time, one passenger put a cigarette in my eye. My favourite journey was Preston to Southport, from Preston, Penwortham, Penwortham to Walmer Bridge, from Walmer Bridge to Longton, Longton to Hundred End, Hundred End to Southport. See when I started the only bus, the bus office was a very small house, only two storeys. Then I moved after two years to this bus station, a new one. When they build the new bus station I was very happy, everybody happy. New canteen, and they give you lockers. Before the bus station, the buses going were going on the street, you know, Lancaster Road, and you know, Church Street to pick up. And then they move to bus station and people were very happy you know, the public very happy. The people come from London, my relatives, for the first time on the coach and when they're coming I just, when they're coming to

pick up and they all say oh I'm very happy, it's better than Victoria.

Transcript

Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines

Widow of George Grenfell-Baines (founder of Building Design Partnership)

My name is Milena Grenfell-Baines and I am the widow of George Grenfell-Baines who was the founder of Building Design Partnership. Building Design Partnership were responsible for designing and building the Preston Bus Station. They used to have, when someone designed something, they used to have what was known as design sessions, so they would all get together, look at the design, make comments, possibly be critical. But the person who was in charge of the building was left to do his own thing. And this is why basically George decided to change the name of the firm from Grenfell-Baines and Hargreaves to Building Design Partnership. So when the bus station was being designed, he no-doubt would have seen the design, may have made some comments about it, but Keith Ingham, who was the chief architect would have been left entirely to make the final decisions.

I was a young mum – children – and although I knew what was going on in the office, I didn't really see any of the designs. 50 years is a long time ago, but my memory of the bus station is that I did come to the opening and if I remember correctly most of it took place towards the left end which is near the hotel-end of the bus station. There was a very large carpeted waiting room and down the whole of the corridor of the bus station were very nice glass showcases, which were to be used by the local shops to advertise their goods. Very sadly my biggest

memory of the station is possibly unfortunate, because very soon afterwards, those glass cases got smashed and they were never used. The beautiful carpeted waiting room was vandalized and it was in the era I think of the worst vandalism that we experienced in this town and I'm afraid the bus station suffered.

I was concerned when we heard that it might be pulled down with some new planning that was going on in Preston, relieved to find that it was not, and delighted to know that it has been listed, because in itself, it is really quite a beautiful building. George stuck to his idea of modern architecture, and the firm, that's the way the firm developed, and the bus station became a perfect example of the 60s brutalist buildings, if you like. We had actually visited the Czech Republic in the early 60s, from which I came. I was born and came to England in 1939 on one of the last Nicholas Winton trains – on the last Winton train. So I suppose through me, there was this contact with the Czech Republic, and of course, modern architecture there was there well before the war. But panel construction had become the mode at the time. In fact the person of the panel construction there was invented, and although it wasn't very beautiful, that was at the time, the modern architecture of the 60s. Another example of it, in fact, is the Czech embassy in London. It's the same brutalist type of building which is also a listed building.

I think if George was alive today, he would say well done Preston.

Transcript

Chris Harding

Chairman of Building Design Partnership

My name is Chris Harding. I'm the chair of BDP, otherwise known as Building Design Partnership, and our relationship with Preston Bus Station is that we were the architects and the engineers who designed the project. Grenfell Baines who set up the practice in the 1960s had this idea of a totally different kind of practice – the idea of inter-disciplinary working, where architects and engineers and graphic designers would work together. It was a totally unique idea for a design practice in the 60s. So we were formed on this idea of inter-disciplinary working and Preston Bus Station was one of the very early projects for the practice.

I think the truth is that the building is 50 years old, and so, when I first joined the practice, I wasn't aware of Preston Bus Station. It wasn't until brutalism, the controversy around the campaign to save the structure, that we got more and more drawn into it – really as bystanders watching what was happening – not having any active involvement in this project here. Obviously now brutalism is very much back into fashion, and I think one of the things for the practice is that what the design displays is great simplicity of design concept. And for me, I think for everyone throughout the practice, that clear concept is something that is very inspiring and perhaps you could say that not all of our work has that clarity of design concept, which is really what makes this building so appealing.

Of course, one of the not so good things about buildings of the 1960s era, is the way that the buildings themselves were sort of strong concepts and quite beautiful, but they didn't relate in a good way to the city. The original concept for this building was to have underpasses between the island where the buses were and connecting back into the city. So I think Keith Ingham, who was the architect, had a very strong clear design concept; perhaps where this project fell short was how it connected with the wider urban design.

I hesitate to admit that about 10 years ago we were looking at potential redevelopment options, even demolition of the bus station, and the redevelopment of sort of this side of Preston to make better connections with the city centre. You know the city obviously is very simple plan and is very human scale. You can obviously walk to everything which I think is great. But walking through the historic part of the town and coming through a 1960s shopping centre and then arriving to see the bus station for the first time – there was a little bit of disappointment for me, because I was expecting something perhaps closer to the city. It is more peripheral and it has to be obviously because it's collecting people from cars and buses and then letting them walk into the city centre. But the building just looked a bit full on in the way it related to the public space, but hopefully when that public space is created it will tie into the city centre.

I love strong clear concepts and brutalism is in the sort of post-war rebuilding Britain and when architects had to come up with bold decisions using new materials to create

bold forms, but sometimes very uncompromising forms, and I think that some brutalism is terrible and some of the concepts were totally inappropriate and lacking in any human scale. I don't think Preston bus station is one of those, but some brutalism is absolutely beautiful and some is absolutely horrendous, and there are probably examples of equal measure on both sides of that.

Transcript

Natalie Kościelniak Bus driver at Preston Bus Station

My name is Natalie Kościelniak, I come from Poland and I came to this country about 15 years ago and I work in the bus station for the last 12 years as a bus driver and as a lead driver, being a supervisor.

My first impression wasn't so good to be honest, it seemed dark and big. I would never have thought that I would want to work here, but hey-ho I'm here and I really got connected with this place, I spend most of my time in here. So I got used to it enough and it feels like a second home now.

(They/there were ...?) especially I was 22 years old in a different country

1.00

Transcript

Shezad Akram

Café owner at Preston Bus Station

My name is Choudhury Shezad Akram and we run the café since November 2007. Me and my wife, we jointly run and we have some staff and we've been serving Preston since 2007.

We are lucky that this café was open when the bus station was opened in 1969, so families used to own it from 1969 to 2007. When they retired then we took over so it is you know has a lot of customers come and they say we have been coming here for the last 50 years now. We are celebrating our 50th anniversary this year now.

Since we are here 3 or 4 movies have been filmed here, one was Hollywood sci-fi movie. I don't remember the name of the movie, but when I asked the producer and the filming team, they said 'it is unique and we searched all over the UK and this was the best location we could find'.

We are open from 7am till 5pm. From 7 o'clock people start coming, you know an arrival of people are coming to their works and changing their buses here. They are like young generation, and then schools and college and university students, then the normal you know going to offices. Then after that 9/10 o'clock there's you know the retired people, pensioners, they come and they use this facility. Also there's coach passengers, holidaymakers, they use here. They make transfers here, buses and coaches. So I would say that it is important for every walk

of life, every age group of the people, they use it, from the youngster to the pensioners.

Hard to describe it, it feels good when it is in a hustle-bustle, with all the people changing their buses, their coaches. Then it feels lively. See now people like a personal service not like the corporate, the big corporations. Now lately, early this month there was a news item that the Greggs is coming here in the bus station, so that is a bit of worry. But you know we try to compete with them, our service and our quality and we take it as a challenge.

Transcript

Owen Hatherley

Writer and journalist

How I ended up getting interested in Preston Bus Station was partly the obvious thing that, if you're interested in post-war architecture, it's important. But it also came from a peculiar job that I had in 2012 to help write the official history of its architects, Building Design Partnership. So I ended up being, kind of spending loads of time, in around 2012/2013, in and around Preston, which was the point when the council were the most determined to pull it down. The reason why the bus station was going to get demolished was because of a scheme called Tithebarn, which was going to be a sort of gigantic open air shopping mall on the site of the bus station, around the back of the markets and the guild hall and so on. What was interesting comparing it to a lot of other campaigns that were happening at the same time, such as over castle market in Sheffield or Robin Hood gardens in London, both of which are gone now, but what made it a lot like Birmingham Central Library, which was also being proposed for demolition and then demolished at the same time, was that it seemed like a very popular lively campaign. You would be as likely to meet people that wanted the bus station kept as you were to go 'oh it's an eyesore knock it down', which is odd, that was unusual, especially at that point before it was, it was becoming fashionable in sort of hipster circles, but it hadn't become like it is now that brutalist architecture is becoming increasingly kind of you know neo-gothic for millennials.

I mean, it's not got big red flags flying on top of it but you know, it's very much about the idea that you make this quite ordinary building type into something special. And that's quite unusual for bus stations, even in the post-war years you know, bus stations could be a bit bleak, and they've got only worse since then, and it was always sort of treated like this poor relation in public transport. And one of the big ideas that BDP had when they designed it was that it should be like an airport, and obviously now you might here that and think of like Luton Airport, or some awful tin shack like that, but at the time it had a really specific meaning of like an airport it will be really luxurious and spacious and modern, and at that point an airport was like the thing that took, when the jet-set was the thing, you know, and taking a jet meant that you were posh. And so to treat a thing that, you know, was where you get the bus to Chorley like that was a statement, was a statement of this is as important as that. So on that level it was, I think, politically quite radical.

I was told by various people at BDP and I see no reason not to believe them, is that the underpasses that connected it to the Guild Hall and the Harris and what not, those underpasses originally were lined with shops, and you know, if you go to like a lot of similar buildings in Eastern Europe you'll find that those underpasses still are lined with shops. And you know, there were signs on the walls and so on, and within a week all of that got smashed up and it was never replaced. And that's one of those sort of 70s things I think, that kind of, which no one has ever really adequately explained, the kind of huge rise of vandalism and sort of petty crime within the 70s, which has declined a lot. It's quite doubtful that that would

happen now, but there was something going on in that decade. It was then followed by in the 80s the deregulation of buses. So a city like Preston would have had a municipal bus company run by the city, so that deregulation really kind of pushed the quality of bus services down and pushed the expense of bus services up. And so for something like Preston Bus Station you can see that it just had been left to rot, you know apart from like painting the concrete, basically nothing had really happened to it since 1969, by about 2012. And any building, no matter how high quality, if you leave it to rot that's what's going to happen to it. The main thing that needs to happen really next, and this isn't something which the council can do on its own, is the buses themselves need to be sorted out. I think that's the important thing first, you kind of go there now and it feels like a London transport building, and London's transport buildings are in very good nick and are very well treated and well used, and then you realise that you are not in a London service, and in a lot of places it is genuinely like a much much worse service, which is not the case in bigger cities, it is not the case in a lot of continental Europe, but it is the case in a lot of the North of England. So we're obviously going to need, everyone notices now, we're going to need a massive expansion in public transport in this country, and a huge amount of that is going to be buses, particularly in places that you know, that aren't going to have the budget to build themselves like trams or metros or whatever. So having buildings that kind of treat that as being as important as you know Victoria railway station is going to be crucial.

Transcript

Christina Malathouni

Academic and former case worker for the 20th century society

So my name is Christina Malathouni, I am currently a lecturer at the Liverpool school of architecture, but in the past I have worked for 20th Century Society, so that's how the connection with the building started, because I was the case officer on behalf of the 20th Century Society. They were campaigning to have it listed and not demolished.

It is a difficult building to love, but when you engage with it and try and understand how much attention, every single detail had been thought through, so the whole design doesn't have one element that is not thought through, how the construction, the aesthetic, the fittings, the graphics, you name it, everything has been thought through. And at the time it was, it wasn't 50 years, it was 40 something years, and it's a building with a very rough and very demanding use, public use, no care whatsoever, and you can see materials surviving to a degree that nowadays you have 10 year buildings and they don't survive in that condition. So it just felt wrong, demolishing it felt wrong.

About 1998, that's when, late 90s was when listings started looking at post-1939 buildings, it's a long story there as well. They started doing, it's called sort of like a tentative list, so buildings that have not been listed yet, but what is now Historic England, were doing surveys of buildings and they were sort of electing which buildings could potentially be listed and protected. So that's the first

time it was identified as a building of special interest. And then local initiatives in terms of regeneration started putting the building under threat of demolition, and that's when the first listing application came in, and I believe it was directly from what is now Historic England, it was turned down at the high level which goes to the Secretary of State; there was a review request, it was turned down. Then 2009, the 20th Century Society where I was working put it forward again, because within 5 years you can put it forward again, turned down again at Secretary of State, Historic England was again supporting it, review request turned down. Then the third listing application, that was the big surprise, because that was in less than 2 years from the second one, and normally you can't do that, you need 5 years. But because there was new material, new research and an aspect of the building that hadn't been considered, they were allowed to reopen the case. And there was a different minister this time, and these things matter, so the building got listed.

I think the two main arguments I have heard are the cost of keeping it both running and maintenance and then that it's not needed, it's too big. Risk in terms of using the subways was something that a lot of people didn't like and that has been addressed, the subways have been closed, so you don't demolish a whole building because of such an argument, and that was a part of the planning principals of the time, in the 1960s that was a popular way of planning.

In terms of bus stations in particular, it is a very exceptional building. That was the intention of the designers at the time, because there was, that was the

future. They could see the motorways opening so that was the car park element, but also bus, public bus transportation a being very important and growing area. And it was the intention of the designers, that's what they've stated at the time, that they wanted to give the luxury that you usually have with air travel, but at the time it was not affordable for most people, but they wanted to give this kind of, if not luxury then definitely very good service to bus users as well. And it has been appreciated as such, so there are very few other, if any other, bus stations of the time of the same sort of, of scale but also attention to detail.

Transcript

Scarlet Mayer-Payne Preston Bus Station user

Hi my name is Scarlet Mayer-Payne, and I was a student at Cardinal Newman College and I used to travel everyday on the bus to get to college.

When I first started college they weren't doing any renovations or anything, and we'd come in the same way every time and go into the same slot of the bus station and then we'd all walk down towards the exit, and we'd just sort of walk past the way where the buses actually drive in and the drivers would look at us really angrily because we weren't supposed to be there. But all of the college kids seemed to go that way, it was just like that was the way that the college kids would go, and then we'd hop over a few fences and then just walk up the hill up to college. But I remember when they started the renovations, our number 3 bus would be coming in on the Preston bus side and then we'd be like 'oh no, now we've got to walk further, what are they doing, this is a Preston bus side', it was like a big old joke about how we couldn't be on Preston bus side, and then our little shortcut got cut off and we had to walk all of the way around the bus station, and as lazy college kids in the morning we were not happy.

I was about 16, and I think I had always had like a lot of anxiety with going out in public places, and just being nervous of who I was going to bump into, or if I'd get onto the bus and wouldn't have enough change to give the

driver, or I asked for the wrong ticket, or I'd end up in the wrong place, and I think that was where it all sort of stemmed from, and I was really anxious about that. But then I obviously realised that as soon as you get on the bus the drivers are really friendly and if you say to them 'I want to go here but I'm unsure of what ticket I need' they just help you, there's nothing to be afraid of.

It's sort of on the far end of town, and my mum would always say to me don't go past this certain shop, which would be, I think its whereabouts Wetherspoons is, because that end of town she said wasn't safe, and obviously the bus station is on that end of town. So in my head I'd got that not very nice people would be around here, it wouldn't be a safe place for me here as a young girl, yeah and obviously, I think other people had sort of said 'oh don't go down there'. I mean, I remember I came to town once with my cousin, and she's about a year younger than me, but she was a lot more confident with that sort of thing, she didn't really care, she was like 'oh come on, we'll just go, there's a shop down here that I want to go to', and I was so nervous, I was like well in don't really want to go down that end of town you know, I've heard it's not very safe, she was like 'oh, don't be silly'. We sort of walked down and I remember, like obviously nothing happened, it was absolutely fine, and obviously it's just normal people trying to get to places.

And I was always sort of anxious that something was going to happen to me, or someone would say something, or they will come up to me, or someone will try and steal something off me. And I think for me as I've grown up, being a young woman, I've sort of taught myself to not get

so anxious and worked up about other people around me. Which is why it was interesting to be here at night, and maybe not feel so safe but to just sort of think, it's okay, I'm doing my stuff and if anyone did try and approach me I'd just you know, have to stand my ground. I mean, some of the buildings that they build nowadays I'm a bit sort of like, urgh it's not very classy or you know, nice to look at. Not that the bus station is nice to look at, but I think that it can be appreciated for how long it's been here, I mean, when they were on about knocking it down and getting rid of it I remember, actually quite a few of my friends and me were like ooh, I don't think they should do that, because it is a historical building, it's been here for so long, it's in full use isn't it, and it has been for all these years.

Transcript

John Puttick

Architect responsible for the renovation of Preston Bus Station

I'm John Puttick, I'm an architect, and my practice were the architects for the renovation of the building. When we started the project, the history of the building over the previous 12 years had been quite difficult I think because there'd been this long debate about the building's future before we were ever involved with it. And there had been proposals to knock it down, to redevelop it I think as a sort of commercial area of some kind. Then ultimately, the building was listed and it was saved and there were questions as to how it could be renovated given the size of it, and so on. So I think in many ways the hardest part of the project at the beginning was more about winning people over, and it was sort of gaining trust that the client and ourselves as the architects really wanted to take care of the building, and sort of bring it back to its original strength.

The refurbishment exactly tried to achieve some of these things of making the building much more welcoming to a wider range of people and in a practical way, physically more accessible to people. Then there's lots of things

along those lines, so there's baby changing facilities now in the building, which there weren't previously, we've changed the configuration of the entrance to the toilets which might seem like a small thing but previously they were down sort of dark corridors, and as a result I think they weren't very well cared for in a way, so now they're much more, it's much more apparent how you get there, much kind of clearer.

One technical thing about restoring a building like that, this sort of exposed concrete building is that you don't really have anywhere to hide. If you're an architect working normally you've got plasterboard, you can hide everything behind the plasterboard. With all of these exposed concrete surfaces there's really nowhere to sort of hide a bit of wiring.

You can absolutely see, if you stay in the bus station during the course of a day, that people come there for all kinds of reasons, not only to get a bus. And there's plenty of people that come into the building, and it's sort of a, I guess a sort of stopping point within the city. So for whatever reason it's a convenient place for them to go for a while, they can sit there and chat, they can get a coffee, they might see people they know, there's sort of local businesses that run in there, some of the smaller shops there. So I think that has been really important to use the refurbishment to try and reinforce that and to allow that sort of, I mean again it's about the generosity of the building, to allow people to be able to just come in. There's not many public spaces you can just go in and sit down without anyone asking you to pay for something, you can just go in, sit down and you're welcome. And I hope that that's strengthened by the refurbishment.

I think before, people who were interested in that kind of architecture could see what was special about that

building. But I think I can also understand for a lot of people who are using it every day that because it was dark, the lighting was terrible, the toilets weren't clean, you had to go through the subway or run across bus parking, I can see for a lot of people who experienced the building on a daily basis, there's feeling for the building was not 'this is a wonderful piece of architecture'. So I really hope that by the changes we've brought in, the lighting in particular I think is a key one because I think it has made it feel so much brighter and more safe that it means that people who use it on a daily basis are far more likely to enjoy the architecture and sort of understand what is great about it and it just is a really an enjoyable experience using this building as a part of your daily life. So yeah, I hope that that would be something that you could then do elsewhere whether you're a public transport building or any other building.