



# Regency Review

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REGENCY SOCIETY

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CONSIDERING THE PAST... FRAMING THE FUTURE

## James Gray Collection Digitisation Complete

All volumes of the James Gray Collection of photographs are now online and may be freely viewed at [www.regencysociety-jamesgray.com](http://www.regencysociety-jamesgray.com). This is a remarkable achievement, which has been accomplished through the dedication and professionalism of Lavender Jones and Duncan McNeill. They undertook the entire digitisation and the painstaking task of creating a comprehensive index.

There are about 7,500 photographs, sub-divided into areas of the city, and annotated by Gray. They give a unique and very complete picture of Brighton & Hove from 1845 until 1990. All 39 volumes have now been sponsored.

Within the last three years there have been over one and a half million viewings, and the Society has received many letters of appreciation and interest from around the world. Here are a few extracts:

*"I must congratulate you on making this collection available online. Apart from the remarkable photographic quality, the pictures (and captions) are of enormous historical value and can now be enjoyed the world over. The search facility is a joy and works very well. I am doing research on an ex resident of Brighton who resided at No 9, The Drive in Central Hove."* From South Africa



Beach Scene with Punch and Judy Show (1935)

*"I discovered your James Gray Collection earlier this morning, and am writing to thank those responsible for digitising all the wonderful images... I am thrilled to see a picture of Mills Terrace; the images ... are the first photographs I have seen. My 3 x great grandfather, James Mills, built Mills Terrace, and he, his wife and children, and grandchildren lived there for some years."*

From Australia

*"I am writing to you to firstly congratulate you on your wonderful website and photographic archive collections of Brighton and Hove. I am currently researching the travels of a lady from the late 19th Century, and am delighted to see that you have several pictures that show the very street in which she was resident for a period, and also the church that she was said to have visited."*

From Scotland

*"Re the wonderful James Gray Collection. The website is an amazing resource and I have to confess to being frequently distracted from other things, and spending many enjoyable hours browsing the James Gray collection."*

Brighton resident

*"Thanks for a MARVELLOUS website. Many of my ancestors were part of the more impoverished residents of Brighton, and it is so rare to see photos of the streets where they lived. If you are interested in more background information, I have some on [the] picture ... of Oxford Street. In 1871 my great-great-great-grandmother... and her second husband... lived and worked at 21-22 Oxford Street as beerhousekeepers... these are the buildings in the photograph called the Oxford Restaurant and the Burger Bar."*

From Australia

The Regency Society is working with Brighton & Hove Museums to ensure that the images will be available for private and commercial reproduction. We hope that this service will be launched on 1 April. Initial enquiries and requests should be sent to [objectimages@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:objectimages@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

# THE REGENCY SOCIETY



James Gray Collection – Entrance to Royal Pavilion (1912)

## A Note on Planning

The squares, crescents and terraces on the seafront, and those of the hinterland, are amongst the most distinguished examples of good town planning in western Europe. Sadly, waves of bad planning have destroyed much of our historic and beautiful city.

The rot started with slum clearance. Undoubtedly many tiny houses were crammed together in unsanitary conditions, many had been neglected by absentee landlords, but much that was good, repairable and restorable was swept away at the same time. One example was William Street, a group of Georgian houses, which would have been most desirable today.

Where were the inhabitants, who had formed close-knit communities in their small-scale houses, to move to? The communities of extended families, who had supported each other in times of adversity, were split up and scattered to the outskirts of Whitehawk and Moulsecomb, too far from the town centre which had offered many job opportunities.

Moulsecomb was designed as a delightful garden suburb, but it was not designed for the inhabitants of inner city Brighton, who had been used to chatting to each other on the doorstep abutting the pavement, and where there were small local shops where news could be exchanged.

Fortunately, legislation changed. Otherwise, Hanover and North Laine would have disappeared too, both now much sought after places to live.

The next wave of bad planning was initiated by highway engineers. North Laine nearly succumbed to the wreckers' ball for the Wilson Womersley plan to drive a high-level roadway from Preston Circus to a multi-storey car park in Church Street. 700 houses would have been demolished in a scheme which was welcomed by the local branch of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Brighton & Hove is in the main a planned city: from the famous architecture of the seafront to the Stanford Estate, North Moulsecomb, and the new Whitehawk. There is much to be learned from the Stanford Estate where the streets have a rhythm, a uniform scale and yet individuality of decoration. The best European townscapes are built in a similar scale, using similar materials, or with colour of similar tones, but broken up with a few punctuation marks such as public buildings and church towers.

I would like to see all planners, highway engineers and park designers spend several months of their training in an art school, acquiring visual judgement and learning to analyse good townscapes – and then, most importantly, how to create them.

Selma Montford, Committee Member

## OBITUARY

### Philip Graham Somerville FRCS

Following a distinguished career as a consultant surgeon at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Philip Somerville was invited to join the Committee of the Regency Society and later became its Honorary Treasurer. He was a diligent colleague, whose contribution was always so thorough that we never needed to devote much time to the Society's financial affairs, thus allowing us to concentrate on key issues of the day.

Although living in Haywards Heath, for many years he conscientiously made his way to Brighton & Hove for meetings, before ill health made this impossible. His funeral took place at St. Wilfrid's Parish Church, Haywards Heath, and was well attended by former friends and colleagues from the Regency Society.

John Wells-Thorpe, Vice-President



James Gray on Pavilion Parade, 1969

# EVENTS AND LECTURES

## EVENTS

### Spring/Summer 2010

#### **John Nash – Architect of the Royal Pavilion and his work** 14 April 2010

Royal Pavilion, Music Room  
7pm, before the Society's AGM

Lecturer: **Geoffrey Tyack**, the eminent architectural historian who is carrying out research on the life and work of Nash.



East front of the Royal Pavilion

#### **Midsummer party in the Secret Garden** 19 June 2010

This very popular, annual event will take place with the generous permission of Mrs Yvonne Dale. An invitation and application form are enclosed. Members may bring guests, but please book no later than 5 June. Last year it was oversubscribed!  
*Two tickets to be won – see The James Gray Quiz on p.4*

#### **Study tour to Berlin in June – sold out!**

Professor David Robson will lead this action-packed tour of Berlin and its environs, which he has organised in conjunction with Audrey Simpson.



Reichstag building, Berlin

## LECTURE SERIES

### 2010/11 Season

**Wednesday 6 October 2010**

#### **The Story of the Stanford Family and their Impact on Brighton & Hove**

**Dr Sue Berry**, leading historian of Sussex, Brighton & Hove, and Editor of the forthcoming *Victoria County History: City of Brighton & Hove*.

**Wednesday 3 November 2010**

#### **Palladio and English Palladianism**

**Robert Tavernor**, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the LSE. An expert on Palladianism in Britain and America, and author of *Palladio and Palladianism*.

**Wednesday 1 December 2010**

#### **THE INAUGURAL JOHN SMALL LECTURE**

#### **The Linked Villas of Amon Henry Wilds**

**David Robson**, international architect and author, former Professor of Architecture at University of Brighton.

**Wednesday 5 January 2011**

#### **Scattered Squalor and Downland Homes: Brighton's Interwar Suburban Housing**

**Geoffrey Mead**, highly regarded local historian, Convenor of Local History and Landscape Studies, Centre for Community Engagement, University of Sussex. He will also lead a walk, relating to this lecture, in Patcham on Sunday 12 June 2011, commencing at 6pm.

**Wednesday 2 February 2011**

#### **A New History of the West Pier**

**Fred Gray**, Professor of Continuing Education at University of Sussex, Trustee and historian of the Brighton West Pier.



Four generations of the Stanford family

**Wednesday 2 March 2011**

To take place in *The Basement, Argus Lofts, Kensington St, Brighton BN1 4AJ*

#### **30s 60s 90s. Three models for 20th-century urban living in Brighton and Hove: Embassy Court, Park Gate and Argus Lofts**



Embassy Court building

**Paul Zara**, award-winning architect and head of Conran's Brighton office.

**Wednesday 13 April 2011**

*Royal Pavilion, in the Music Room*  
7pm, before the Society's AGM  
Special Guest Lecturer.  
To be announced in the next Regency Review

**All lectures are on Wednesdays, commencing at 7pm.**  
Free to Regency Society members.  
£5 per lecture for non-members.

Lectures take place at the Old Market, Upper Market Street, Hove BN3 1AS (apart from the penultimate and final lectures). The Old Market bar is open from 6.30pm until 10.30pm, and you are most welcome to meet up with other members and friends there, before and after each lecture.

## BOOK REVIEW

### BEHIND THE FAÇADE

*An Architect at Large*  
by John Wells-Thorpe

£17.99 hardback

Book Guild Publishing, Brighton  
www.bookguild.co.uk



John Wells-Thorpe

In general, architects are not literary people. Thomas Hardy was an exception. Judged by the house he designed for himself, it is

clear he later found a better career. So it was a pleasure to be asked to review a 436 page book written in exemplary and enjoyable prose by a distinguished architect.

John Wells-Thorpe has written the story of his career as an architect in the town where he was born, where he received his training, where he founded his own successful business, and where he still lives.

It is an unusual book, not least for its opening sentence: "If my father had not committed suicide I might not have become an architect", which may account for the marginally detached way in which he writes of how his life unfolded.

He has had a varied and interesting career. As a practitioner running a medium sized firm in Sussex. Later as an itinerant architect overseas; a Council member and Vice-President of the RIBA; a magistrate; an activist in charitable causes; and an extensive world traveller in voluntary activities, principally for the Commonwealth

Association of Architects, of which he was President. Finally, he chaired the South Downs NHS Trust and still found time to chair government enquiries and be a member of a BBC Advisory Board. He is still active in the public sector.

The book is entertaining, sometimes ruefully, about the vicissitudes and high spots of architectural practice, the ironies and the fun of being in the profession. Wells-Thorpe is a great raconteur and leavens his tales with lively and often caustic wit.

The author has set out his life in great depth, but always kept something back. He is to a degree an enigma in today's open and brash society, which is refreshing and dignified.

Michael Manser CBE, RA,  
Past President RIBA



Empire Day, walking up The Drive (1905-11)

The James Gray Collection

## THE JAMES GRAY QUIZ

### Win a pair of tickets to the Midsummer Party

Give the exact addresses for the following:

1. A milliner/drapery that is also called 'Mourning Warehouse'
2. Clements the pastry cook and confectioner
3. A store selling cork lino in the 1900s
4. G.A. Sutton the fruiterer
5. Hoardings advertising all-electric houses for £550

Email answers to: Lesley Clarke, Membership Secretary at [palmeira@mistral.co.uk](mailto:palmeira@mistral.co.uk)  
Please put 'quiz reply' in the subject bar of your email.  
Entries must be received by 5 June 2010.

### Extraordinary General Meeting

An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Regency Society took place on 5 February. This was called at the request of 47 members, to consider the motion to remove Audrey Simpson and Delia Forester from the Committee. Audrey Simpson and Delia Forester had appeared at the Marina Public Inquiry as private individuals, but referred to their positions in the Regency Society, whilst supporting the development proposal, opposed by the Society. At the EGM, an amendment was tabled to censure rather than remove them from the Committee for so doing. The meeting voted to accept the amendment and the substantive motion was then passed with little opposition.

### Acting Chairman of Regency Society

Stephen Neiman is acting as Chairman of the Regency Society until after the AGM on 15 April. Nigel Robinson stepped down from the position of Chairman, for personal reasons, in December 2009. Roger Hinton agreed to act as Chairman for the EGM on 5 February and for its organisation. The Committee extend their thanks to both Nigel Robinson and Roger Hinton for their hard work and dedication on behalf of the Society.