

First base is first class

It has gone from pub ballroom to royal chapel and, more recently, a centre for the homeless – and, in the process, travelled across the centre of Brighton. Now the former church of St Stephen's in Montpelier Place is open for business again after a 12-month restoration and refurbishment programme. The Grade II* listed building, now the First Base day centre, has been sympathetically renovated to balance old with new. The result, says Regency Society trustee Professor David Robson, is an overall impression of cleanliness and light.

"It is an exemplary project, as good as anything of its kind in our town," he says. "The architects appear to have addressed the issues associated with conserving an old building that has to accommodate a new use with considerable skill and ingenuity. They have restored the interior of the original ballroom, met the exacting demands of a modern day centre and provided a bright, welcoming environment for its homeless users."

The building started in 1766 as the ballroom of the Castle Inn, near Castle Square. In 1822, George IV had it converted into a private chapel so he did not have to walk up the hill to go to church. In the mid 19th century, the chapel was relocated to Montpelier Place to stop it being demolished by Brighton Council, who bought the Pavilion Estate from Queen Victoria. The church was renamed St Stephens and continued to be used for worship until the 20th century. It later served as a centre for the blind but, after being gutted by fire, was taken over by Brighton Housing Trust who brought it back into use as the First Base centre for the homeless.



The interior today



The interior, 1930s
(James Gray Collection)

Welcome – and thank you

As this is the first issue of our new newsletter, it seems appropriate to begin with a thank you to everyone who gave us feedback on the Society and its work. Your responses have all been read carefully and your views taken into account. Knowing what you value helps us to plan for the future and ensure that you get the most from your membership.

For example, you said you'd welcome more walks, trips and tours, so we've planned more – please see the back page. You told us that you would appreciate more social events, so we're working on that too.

The lectures are always very popular and, fortunately, most of you are happy with the current venue, City College, as our budget won't stretch to the grander alternatives a few people suggested.

The feedback has also provided valuable guidance on the direction in which we should be taking the Society in the future, explains chair Mary McKean.

"We want to get closer to the membership and attract new recruits – and this exercise is an important start," she says.

"Stepping up our communications is part of an ongoing strategy to expand and improve the programme we offer members. It's only by understanding what you want that we can move the Society forward."

Other key objectives include extending our appeal to a younger audience and increasing revenues. We also need to reduce costs where we can, which is why we are increasingly communicating with you electronically. For those of you who don't have access to e-mail, we will be making items such as our new journal (coming later this year) available in print.

• You can keep abreast of all our activities on our website, www.regencysociety.org, where you will also find current information on planning issues affecting Brighton & Hove. We will also be covering national events that are likely to have an impact on planning in our city.

Royal Sussex Hospital redevelopment proposals



Amended proposals for the ten-year, £400 million redevelopment of the Royal Sussex Hospital site on the Eastern Road have been put forward. See page 3 for full report

The Duke of Grafton KG, 1919-2011

A memorial service for our president, the Duke of Grafton KG FSA, was held at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, on Monday 27 June. He died on 7 April at the age of 92, having devoted much of his life to conservation, gaining the nickname The Duke of Preservation.

He was a past chair of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, the Architectural Heritage

Fund, the Church of England's Cathedral Advisory Commission and Sir John Soane's Museum. He was also vice chair of the National Portrait Gallery.

Regency Society vice president John Wells-Thorpe first met him during his tenure at the Royal Fine Arts Commission. "He was a tall and elegant figure and was as unmistakably 'old money' as he was patrician, which made him

quite daunting on first acquaintance," he remembers. Other members of the Society met the Duke at 50th anniversary dinner at the Royal Pavilion and enjoyed his hospitality during our 2004 study tour of East Anglia, when he and the Duchess invited our group for a private visit to his seat, Euston Hall.

"It was a very special day that gave a real insight into life in a stately home," says member Tony Hadley.



Top: portrait (Allan Warren)
Bottom: The Duke with Society members (Tony Hadley)

Estate agents go overboard

Estate agents Priors and Mishon Welton have each been fined £1,000 for erecting for sale and to let boards in conservation areas, with costs of £480 and £1,200 respectively. These were the first prosecutions after a new council regulation banned boards in 12 conservation areas.

Boards were banned from 20 September last year. While boards erected before that date could stay until the property was sold or let, new boards are not allowed. To their credit, estate agents Brices voluntarily removed all their boards before the ban.

Both Priors and Mishon Welton were sent letters by the council reminding them of the restriction but they failed to comply until taken to court.

New academic quarter proposed for Lewes Road

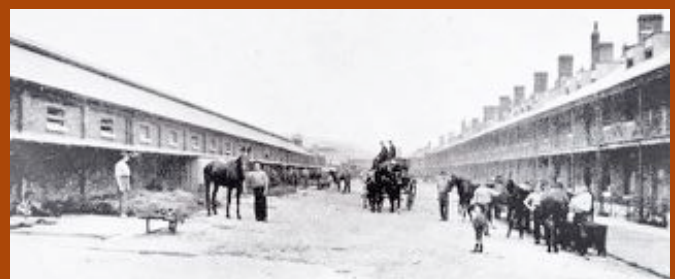
A new partnership between the University of Brighton and the city council could lead to the creation of a new academic neighbourhood centred on Preston Barracks and adjacent university sites along the Lewes Road.

The integrated approach to the sites has been welcomed by the Regency Society in our response to a draft planning brief.

We emphasised the importance of ensuring that any redevelopment was on a human scale and aimed at creating a cohesive neighbourhood, rather than an iconic statement, highlighted the needs of pedestrians and asked for greenways linking to other green spaces further along the Lewes Road.

We also questioned whether the site could support the density of development that was proposed and queried the merits of combining family housing with high-density student accommodation.

Pictures from top: the proposed redevelopment site; Preston Barracks in 1850; the barracks in 1907 (James Gray Collection).



Royal Sussex Hospital redevelopment plans

Brighton and Sussex Universities Hospital Trust aims to submit a planning application in June or July 2011 for the comprehensive, £400 million-plus modernisation of facilities of this acute regional centre – neuroscience transferred from elsewhere, a major trauma centre instituted, the cancer centre expanded and the medical school facilities enhanced.

Around 80 per cent of the investment is earmarked for modern, fit-for-purpose facilities to serve the local catchment area.

Clearly, residents in surrounding streets, extremely close to the site, will be most directly affected by the volume and massing. Two conservation areas, East Cliff and College, are adjacent to the site and the helipad would enter some views from and of the Grade 1 listed Kemp Town estate.

Key issues and features include:

- Massive disturbance and heavy traffic during a ten-year redevelopment programme
- Demolition of the present line of buildings immediately to the north of Eastern Road, including Sir Charles Barry's building and its listed Victorian chapel
- Three tall, thin blocks of wards that will run down towards Eastern Road to the south of the even taller Thomas Kemp Tower
- A helicopter pad that would rise above the Thomas Kemp Tower
- The replacement for the Barry building: street frontages in the



Looking down on the development; helipad on Thomas Kemp tower

west would have a similar roofline to the hospital block that is being replaced and, at the east, to the adjoining Victorian terrace

- The view of the building from Paston Place – the latest proposal is for a light, curved, balconied structure

The project team is very keen to gather local opinions on the redevelopment. The Regency Society, the city's Conservation Advisory Group (of which we are a member) and local residents' groups have been engaged in monthly liaison group meetings from the start and there is an open invitation to take part.

Pepperpot worries

The Grade II-listed Pepper Pot on Queen's Park Road is a much-loved Brighton landmark – one whose future is giving the Regency Society cause for concern. We have therefore written to city planner Martin Randall, explaining that we fear "that Brighton and Hove appears to be allowing the building fabric to deteriorate by mismanaging its maintenance and conservation."

The distinctive building (*James Gray Collection picture from 1908 below*), also known as the Pepper Box, is a defining element of the local landscape and, as one of the few surviving remnants of the Attree Villa estate, an important historic monument. We added, "The Pepper Pot was designed and built in 1830 by Sir Charles Barry, one of the country's most celebrated 19th century architects, so it is essential that it is preserved for future generations" and recommended that "someone with the relevant historic building expertise is consulted to plan its conservation and repair."



Brighton Wheel to rise

The Brighton Wheel has been given the go-ahead by planners. It has been granted temporary planning permission and must be removed by May 2016. The operators, local company Paramount, must also take measures to reduce noise and improve public transport to the site.

The £6 million, 45 metre-high wheel will have 36 enclosed, glass pods, which can hold a maximum of 288 people. It is expected to carry around 250,000 people a year and will operate every day of the year between 10am and midnight, with the wheel illuminated at night. Council landlord consent means that, if the rival i360 is built at the West Pier, the wheel must be taken down.

The Regency Society was among objectors to the development, citing its overbearing scale in a residential and conservation area and the danger of setting a precedent. The Wheel, according to *The Argus*, is currently in Cape Town, South Africa, awaiting dismantling.



A flavour of the Veneto – food for brain and belly

Alison Minns, one of the members to secure a coveted place on the Society's tour of the Veneto in June, reports on an enriching experience.

Visit the Veneto on a Regency Society study tour and lose five pounds in six days – David Robson, our guide, claimed to do just this. The stress of herding and educating 27 “youngsters, middlers and matures” as he categorised us, perhaps? (See picture, bottom right.)

I'd heard such glowing reports of David's Berlin tour I was determined not to miss this one. He was assisted by John McKean (both are professors of architecture) and had planned the trip impeccably, navigating the way through a complex collection of scattered venues with idiosyncratic opening times.

Our prime aim was to uncover the genius of two Italian architects: Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) – actually described as “second rate in his day” by David – and Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978), by visiting villas, mooching in museums and perambulating through palazzos and piazzas, with the odd historic theatre, basilica and cemetery thrown in. With comfy coaches at our disposal, my congenial travelling companions and I discovered the delights of Vicenza (our base), Verona, Venice, Mantua and Padua.

Before David's pre-Veneto London trip and a delve into the recommended reading, I knew nothing about the two architects but at the end of the tour I was able to distinguish a voussoir from a thermal window and realise I have a voussoir above my (Hove) villa front door. The display at Villa Poiana, featuring villa plans and block models explaining Palladian proportions, also helped demystify.

I still find it a challenge to name all the villas, which apparently assume the titles of their current owners – and

there are two Villa Pisanis. Relatively modest, with perfectly proportioned rooms housing stunning art, Villa Pisani (Bagnolo) felt stately yet homely. We bought bottles of estate wine here, rebranded *Pissani* by a group wag.



Villa Capra (*top*) stands out both literally and metaphorically, commanding a prime position overlooking Vicenza. The setting for Losey's *Don Giovanni* (sequences of which David had thoughtfully shown us), it boasts a Pantheon-like dome with in-your-face decoration. Another highlight was Vicenza's Teatro Olimpico. Seated on the original wooden seats we admired the

dramatic 3D stage sets. David's forte was Palladio. John's was Scarpa. Our first Scarpa experience was Verona's Castelvecchio Museum. My companions liked it – the odd angles, the staged displays. But it left me unimpressed: lumpy, muddled, concrete. In Venice we had an illicit picnic in Scarpa's Querini Stampalia garden. Again, I found the lines, angles and colours uninspiring. It wasn't until we visited Scarpa's Brion Family Cemetery (*middle*) that I began to appreciate the composition and construction of the complex and get my eye in for those trademark details.

We didn't neglect other aspects of Italian art, marvelling at the muted colours of Mantegna's Mantua frescoes and the vibrant colours of Giotto's Padua frescoes. In Palladio's San Giorgio Maggiore we came upon Kapoor's intriguing installation *Holy Ghost* and had free time to explore *Venice: the Biennale*, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the Grand Canal...or have a long, lazy lunch. Our visit to Verona's Giardino Guisti coincided with the play of early evening light and shadow. Lofty cypresses, a squat box hedge maze, pots of lemon trees and fountains made for a perfectly peaceful setting.

We packed in such a variety of sites and experiences. Visits to villas were interspersed with samplings of prosecco, aperol (a lurid orange Campari) and grappa. And Regency Society chair Mary McKean, with her fluent Italian, seamlessly organised excursions to excellent restaurants for those who had not over-indulged in ice cream.

Food for the belly and food for the brain. Both diets were rich and sustaining. I just don't see how David lost that weight.

Secret Garden Party 2011 – fabulous fun for all

With fabulous fizz, delectable canapés, gentle music from Bayleaf Brass and a hubbub of happy people, this year's Secret Garden Party was a great success. The only thing missing was the sun – but this is England, so we're used to its absence.

More than 100 guests included Brighton Kemp Town and Peacehaven MP Simon Kirby; council leader Bill Randall; the new chair of Brighton and Hove City Council's planning committee, Phelim McCafferty; and his deputy, Linda Hyde; chairs of other

conservation and amenity societies including Kingscliffe's Roy Davis; and many members and their friends.

We are grateful to the Antony Dale Trust for kindly allowing us to continue the tradition started by Yvonne Dale and use this special garden.



Win a bottle of bubbly

There's a bottle of bubbly – as enjoyed at the party – for the person submitting the best picture caption for this photograph of Regency Society chair Mary McKean and member



Jane Carver. Or choose another photograph from the gallery if you prefer. E-mail your suggestions to regencysocietybh@gmail.com or write to RS picture competition, 18 Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT, by 25 August, when the winner will be chosen.

The mystery pictures in the last issue of *Regency Review* were: St Nicholas Church, from inside the West porch, and a house on the east side of Grand Parade.

Weatherbeaten walkers applaud guide to Patcham's history

A group of 12 brave walkers battled wind and rain on 12 June alongside local historian Geoffrey Mead, who led a guided walk around Patcham for Regency Society members and their guests. He highlighted the phases of Patcham's development, touching on its rural past before focusing on the inter-war housing boom and won a spontaneous round of applause at the end.



The buildings you love – and the ones you hate

Brighton and Hove is architecturally eclectic so perhaps it's appropriate that the people who live here have equally diverse tastes, as we discovered when we asked you to nominate the best and worst buildings in Brighton and Hove via our website and Facebook page.

The Royal Pavilion is, of course, a given on your list of favourites and the West Pier, even as a ruin, also has a special place in your affections.

St Bartholomew's church (*pictured top*) scored well and was especially popular with younger correspondents – "What an awesome sight it is," wrote one. "It puts you in your place and give you a lift at the same time."

The Theatre Royal was another hit. "How many cities are lucky enough to have such a gem of a small theatre?" asked one writer. "It may have its limitations but its interior, in particular, is charming and reminds us that television wasn't always the dominant form of entertainment."

The 1930s drew mixed reviews, with nominations for and against Marine Gate on the cliffs above the marina (*pictured bottom*), which was described both as "a blockhouse" and "elegant, simple and far more pleasing than the later clutter that stretches out towards Newhaven."

The grade 2* Embassy Court by architect Wells Coates, which was completed in 1935 and recently restored (*pictured second from top*), also drew both praise and criticism. "Wonderfully evocative, liner-like curves that complement the Regency terraces," said one writer, while another complained, "It's OK but it's in



the wrong place – it dwarfs the older buildings around it."

Post-war architecture generally attracted more brickbats than fans, with the Kingswest Centre and Bedford Towers joined by "just about any of the office buildings around the train station – International House, for example" and "that hideous run of office buildings opposite Preston Park along the London Road".

There were exceptions, with two buildings by John Wells-Thorpe taking a bow. "Hove Town Hall was a far more exciting building than it now appears because of clumsy modifications," we heard, while his 1980s Porsche showroom (*pictured third from top*) close to Portslade Station was described as "looking like a Porsche feels – glamorous and practical".

But perhaps the most interesting thoughts came from members who love the great set-piece terraces, squares and crescents for which the city is famous and the smaller, more everyday back streets that give it so much of its character.

One especially thoughtful writer spoke of her experiences working in the Lanes, expressing concerns that modernisation could destroy the area's character.

"The council have done an amazing job with the Pavilion but the Lanes matter too. This was where the poor lived and worked in fishermen's hovels and helped to make Brighton prosper," she wrote.

"I do trust records are being kept of its true character. Without it, Brighton would not be the same."

We'd be delighted to hear more from you – do e-mail us at regencysocietybh@gmail.com, or write to: The Regency Society, 18 Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT.

Our new look – we're moving with the times

Even conservation societies need to move with the times and when a logo and website have served you for more than a decade, they're bound to be a bit tired – and to lag behind current thinking and technology. So we've updated everything from our letterhead to our printed publications and our website. The James Gray Collection website will follow once further funds are available.

The central purpose of our new website is simple: we want to offer more to our members in the electronic media that have become, for many of us, the primary way to communicate and gather information.

With its strong colours and simple, graphic approach, our new logo underlines our commitment not only to the past of Brighton and Hove but to its future

That's not to say we've abandoned our Regency heritage. The colours we've chosen are inspired by the colour schemes of the Royal Pavilion and other important, historic buildings in the city. The bright blue, for example, is an echo of the North Gallery and the Banqueting Room ceiling, while you'll see the rich red in many rooms, including the Music Room.

The column in the centre of our logo follows the architectural theme of the capital in our old look – it is a stylised, graphic version of a fluted Georgian column, although it also echoes period coving and the reeding found on architraves.

As for the website itself, you'll have seen that it has been radically updated and simplified, with new sections such as the learning centre (*see below*). We hope to extend the content over time, making www.regencysociety.org the first port of call for everyone who cares about our city, its history and its evolution in the 21st century.



The learning centre

Many people have told us that they could do with more help in understanding our city and its historic context – we often get enquiries about the design and maintenance of historic buildings too. This new section of the website aims to share some information and ideas. We plan to expand it over time – do let us know if you have any requests or suggestions.

To start with, we have:

- Fact sheets on elements of period buildings and how to maintain them
- Our heritage: Regency, Victorian and 20th century Brighton and Hove
- The story of the exemplary restoration of St Stephen's
- How well do you know your city?

photographic quiz

- Buildings at risk
- Sources of information about planning applications, how to make them, monitor them and object to them
- An introduction to The James Gray Collection – thousands of historic photographs of Brighton and Hove owned by the Society for you to explore online
- Decorative (and educational) panels celebrating Regency, Victorian and 20th century Brighton and Hove
- Plaque trails through Kemp Town, the Old Town and the area around the floral clock that bring bring to life the people behind commemorative plaques, plus a sculpture trail courtesy of one of our new season lecturers, Antony McIntosh
- Links to related societies and resources

The answers to May's photographic quiz were: the entrance to Queen's Park; Prince's House, off North Street; the juggler statue outside Hove Town Hall; the Sassoon mausoleum, now Proud Brighton Ballroom, in St George's Road, Kemp Town; Hampton Place; BHASVIC.

Your e-mail addresses

Thank you to everyone who has so far sent us their e-mail addresses. Every letter we do not have to post is money saved that we can put to good use.

If you do have an e-mail address and have not yet sent it to regencysocietybh@gmail.com, please do, so we can keep you updated. We do not pass addresses to third parties.

New season lectures for 2011-2012

Our 2011-2012 lecture programme focuses on the historic buildings, spaces and characters that have formed our city. Apart from the AGM lecture, which will be held on Friday 20 April in the Music Room of the Royal Pavilion, all lectures take place on Wednesdays at City College, Pelham Street, Brighton BN1. They all start at 7pm.

5 October

To Build a Dream: John Nash and the Royal Pavilion

Mark Perry Nash, historian and direct descendant of the architect of Brighton's most iconic building

16 November

Indian Soldiers and the Royal Pavilion

Kevin Bacon, digital development officer for the Royal Pavilion and Museums and co-curator of the Pavilion's Indian hospital gallery

7 December

Brighton Beach Kaleidoscope

Geoffrey Mead, local historian, geographer and one of our most popular lecturers



11 January

To be announced

1 February

Lost and Neglected Sculptures in Sussex

Anthony McIntosh, research officer for the two-year Sussex Sculpture Recording Project

14 March

The Duke of York Cinema and lost cinemas

Frank Gray, director of Screen Archives South East

Friday 20 April

George IV – Cad or catalyst?

Lord Kenneth Baker, historian, author and politician
Music Room, Royal Pavilion

- Entrance is free to members

Please remember your membership card. Guests and non-members are charged £5 to defray the considerable costs of the lecture series.

City College offers full wheelchair access, good public transport connections and ample parking nearby.

Study tours

Our study tours usually sell out fast, so we're running two. We'll visit *Bohemia and Moravia* from Wednesday 6 to Wednesday 13 June 2012 (seven nights, eight days), looking at examples of the Baroque and Gothico-Baroque architecture of the Counter-Reformation, including the works of the Dientzenhofers and Giovanni Santini-Aichel, as well as surviving works of Czech Modernism, from bases in Prague, Brno and Vienna. The likely cost is £600.

The lowlands of Scotland, from Thursday 13 to Monday 17 September 2012, explores Edinburgh's New Town, the Scottish Parliament and the Museum of Scotland. In Glasgow, we'll see the work of CR Mackintosh and Alexander "Greek" Thompson, as well recent buildings by Zaha Hadid and Norman Foster. We'll also visit the Forth Bridge. The likely cost is £350.

If you'd like to reserve a place on either tour, please e-mail greensett@gmail.com or write to RS study tours, 18 Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT, giving your telephone number and postal address.

One-day tours

Take in *Three seaside galleries* on Sunday, 18 September, by coach to Margate via Eastbourne and Hastings to visit three stunning new art galleries – the Towner, by Rick Mather Architects; the Jerwood, by HAT Projects; and David Chipperfield's Turner. The tour is led by trustees Caroline Stephens and David Robson. The likely cost is £20.

Another one-day tour examines *The Enigma of Nicholas Hawksmoor* and visits his London churches on Sunday, 22 April. Hawksmoor worked with Wren and Vanbrugh, designed a number of important building in Oxford, including the Clarendon Library, as well as the West Towers of Westminster Abbey and the six imposing London churches we'll be visiting (two of them can only be viewed from outside). The likely cost is £20.

If you'd like to reserve a place on either, please e-mail greensett@gmail.com or write to RS day tours, 18 Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT, giving your telephone number and postal address.