

RSJ

The Regency Society Journal

Setting sail

Palladian influences

Jenkins' Thousands

The shores of Bohemia

Setting out from Brighton

December 2011 | Issue 1



Embarking on a new venture: pushing the boat out

The editor



It might seem a peculiar contrariness for the first issue of the Regency Society's new journal (the *RSJ* for short) to focus on our city as a point of embarkation. We are always accustomed to seeing Brighton and Hove as a destination but there is another tale as well. This issue of our *Journal*, which we plan to produce twice yearly, reminds us of voyages outwards from Brighton – from the Prince Regent being manhandled into a boat to our Society members being transported to Bohemia.

Brighton is on the edge of England and always open to outside influence. We visit Palladio and he visits us, via Amon Henry Wilds. We took members in 2010 to Berlin, in 2011 to the Veneto and in 2012 we visit Czech and Glaswegian lands.

While this *RSJ* looks outwards geographically, our openness to influence is also metaphorical. The journal intimates our renewed

opening up – not least to the Regency and all that that might imply, as our major event for 2012 (*introduced on the back page*) will show. To which we add the great good fortune of having Simon Jenkins as our new president.

Each *RSJ* issue is to be built around a theme but not to the exclusion of anything else. In these pages, for example, there are sidelong glances at two very current items for the Society: the redevelopment of the County Hospital (*below*) and our new president (*page 10*).

We wanted to create a magazine to take us further than the newsletter or website, to play its role in promoting the protection and improvement of our built heritage and advancing public education in its history, conservation, protection and improvement. (These words state the Society's mission or, in the jargon, our charitable objects.)

We are extremely fortunate to have four published historians writing for our first issue. However, we very much hope that as a member you will see it as your journal; share your thoughts on this issue (whether for publication or not); and offer contributions of your own.

PS: I have been told that, because I have spent my life in the world of buildings, I may not realise that others might not know what is an *RSJ*. Well, as the Irish building worker said when explaining the difference between a joist and a girder, the one wrote *Ulysses* and the other wrote *Faust*. As far as I am concerned *RSJ* is the *Regency Society Journal*.

Welcome to your new *RSJ*

Welcome to *RSJ*, the new journal of the Regency Society, which we publish alongside our more frequent newsletter (which is sent in colour to most of our members by e-mail) and, of course, our constantly updated website, www.regencysociety.org.

Like the newsletter and website, the *RSJ* is put together by volunteers. No-one has been paid to write it, illustrate it, design it or edit it. The Royal Pavilion and Museums has generously provided some illustrations free. Many hours of work have gone into it. The Society therefore owes thanks to all involved, to the authors and especially to Sarah Gibbings and Rupert Radcliffe-Genge, who have handled the design and layout and made it very attractive, and finally to the editor, John McKean. I hope you enjoy it.

Mary McKean, Chair

Early Regency Society thoughts on the County Hospital

Marcus Whiffen, *Architectural Review* history editor and scholar of Charles Barry, wrote to RS founder Antony Dale on 13 July 1948: "*The County Hospital, I agree with you, is a bore – though I imagine I shall have to go into its building history, sooner or later.*" (Whiffen later published *The Architecture of Sir Charles Barry*, 1950)



Busby and Wilds, the town's leading architectural and building business in the 1820s, were miffed that they lost two plum commissions, and both to the same interloper, the young Charles Barry.

RS co-founder Clifford Musgrave commented: "*It is no doubt fortunate for us that Barry's inspired design for St Peter's Church was accepted, but it is hard to imagine that Busby could have produced anything more pedestrian than Barry's solid and unimaginative hospital building.*"

Cover: The cantilevered spiral stair without central newel, known in Italian as a *chiocciola* (or snail), was invented – Palladio tells us – by Marc'Antonio Barbaro. Palladio first built it, and its first English use is seen here, designed by Jones for The Queen's House (*see page 4*). Photograph by John McKean on the Regency Society Palladianism day trip in 2011. Having taken us to Palladianism and then to Palladio in 2011, David Robson's article (*opposite*) brings Palladio to Brighton.
Images: pp3-5: David Robson; drawings/uncredited modern photographs: John McKean



Palladio's legacy in Brighton and Hove

David Robson

In Ancient Greece and Rome a porch enclosed by an array of columns and topped by a pediment was used to mark the entrance to a temple, but during the Italian Renaissance the “temple front” came to signify power and grandeur and was applied to a range of building types including private houses and, paradoxically, Christian churches. This practice later spread and classical temple fronts were applied to such diverse buildings as museums and opera houses and even banks and factories. Thus, the White House in Washington, the old Parliament building in Sri Lanka and the houses of Brighton's Montpelier Crescent all incorporate Graeco-Roman temple-fronts. But they also merit the epithet Palladian for, since the 16th Century, they have all been inspired, directly or indirectly, by the example of Andrea Palladio, arguably the most influential European architect of all time.

Palladio was born Andrea di Pietro, the son of a Paduan stonemason, in 1508 and spent most of his working life in the small town of Vicenza where he died in 1580. All his built works are to be found in that town and its surroundings or in nearby Venice. Although successful and prolific, Palladio was not regarded during his own lifetime as one of the leading architects of the age. He was, in essence, a practical man and a provincial: not a great intellectual like Alberti, nor a renowned painter like Raphael, nor a brilliantly innovative genius like Michelangelo. He was inspired by the “buildings of the ancients” and in 1556 he helped his patron Daniele Barabaro publish a new edition of the Roman treatise on architecture by Vitruvius.

Palladio's clients were wealthy Venetian merchant families who had moved to the *terra firma* and invested in agricultural land. For them he built elegant palazzos in Vicenza and magnificent villa-farmhouses in the surrounding countryside. Only during the last decade of his life did he move centre stage with a series of four churches in Venice.

It was his villas, more than 20 in all, which established his reputation as an inventive designer. This was a new building-type for a new kind of client, and Palladio treated each commission as an experiment, so that the canon reads like a set of variations on a theme. Each villa combined usefulness with elegance and was built economically of brick and stucco, thus embodying the Vitruvian ideals of “commodity, firmness and delight”. What they had in common was a symmetrical façade and horizontal layering which sandwiched the main inhabited floor or *piano*

nobile between a basement with cellars and kitchens and an attic with granaries and servants' rooms.

The *piano nobile* accommodated daily life in a sequence of interconnected rooms of different plan and height which were related by a system of harmonic proportions. These opened to covered porticos that looked out across the surrounding farmland and were linked to the ground by open staircases. Palladio designed the porticos in the manner of temple-fronts placing a pediment above a platoon of columns, usually four or six in number. This use of temple-fronts on secular buildings would later become commonplace but its application to a farmhouse was unprecedented and, at the time, audaciously innovative.

Palladio might well have been consigned to obscurity, had it not been for the remarkable set of books, *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, (below) which he published in 1570, 10 years before his death. Unlike the more theoretical and esoteric publications of Alberti or Serlio, these were recipe books that offered practical advice on how to build alongside descriptions of key buildings from antiquity and designs from his own hand.



Texts were short and to the point and were profusely illustrated with clear and precise drawings. The books were an instant success, appealing particularly to visitors from abroad who wanted to take away a visual record of the architecture of the Veneto.

The Renaissance had little impact in Britain during Palladio's century, and the Tudors added classical motifs to their buildings as decorative afterthoughts. This changed, however, after 1603 once the more



cosmopolitan King James VI of Scotland moved south to become the first king of both countries as James I of England. A young artist called Inigo Jones, having started out as a designer of royal masques, became Surveyor to the King's Works in 1615.

Jones had made at least two visits to Italy and had acquired his own copy of Palladio's *Four Books*, which he embellished with his own copious annotations. He is credited with designing the first Palladian buildings in Britain: the austere Queen's House at Greenwich which was begun in 1615 though only completed in 1635 and the imposing Banqueting House in Whitehall of 1619. Both of these were added to existing medieval palaces and must have seemed startlingly modern in their day. He went on to complete more than thirty projects in the new manner, including classical porticoes on the west front of St Paul's Cathedral and on St Paul's church in London's first renaissance square in Covent Garden (*top left*). His career was nipped in the bud, however, by the outbreak of the Civil War.

During the Interregnum the future Charles II lived as an exile in France and Holland and, after the Restoration of 1660, he and his successors turned their backs on Palladianism and favoured the more mannered French and Dutch styles. In consequence the prevailing architectural mode of the next fifty years, often referred to as English Baroque, is characterised by the ordered pomp of Wren, the florid exuberance of Vanburgh and, at their shoulders, the brooding genius of Hawksmoor. But Wren's efforts were often thwarted by English pragmatism – his plan, after the Great Fire, to turn London into a magnificent Baroque city came to nothing and his grand designs for St. Paul's ended in compromise.

English pragmatism finally came into its own in 1714 with the

accession of George I, the first of the Hanoverian kings. A new class of merchant-landowners was in the ascendancy as Whigs wrested power from Tories and new fashions flourished in literature, music and, not least, in architecture. Wren and his collaborators were ousted from their posts and the reputations of Palladio and Jones were restored.

The Scottish architect, Colen Campbell, who was a leading advocate of the new Palladianism, published a catalogue of classical architecture in Britain under the title *Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1715. Campbell lauded the architects of the Italian Renaissance, "but above all, the great Palladio, who has exceeded all that were gone before him... to whom we oppose the famous Inigo Jones" while castigating the "licentious excesses" of Bernini and Borromini and, by implication, their British imitators. Campbell's beautiful plates illustrate buildings that conformed to his Palladian ideals, including several designs by Inigo Jones.

One of Campbell's converts was the young Earl of Burlington. Burlington completed two tours of Italy during which he acquired a portfolio of original Palladio drawings and recruited an assortment of artists, including an Englishman called William Kent who was to become a leading Palladian architect and an exponent of "English Landscape" design. Having employed Gibbs and Campbell to restore his family home in Piccadilly, Burlington and Kent built a version of Palladio's Villa Rotunda on his estate at Chiswick in 1825 (*above, right*).

Burlington was spurred on by his neighbour Alexander Pope who composed his *Epistle to Lord Burlington* as an essay on taste, urging:

*Jones and Palladio to themselves restore,
And be whate'er Vitruvius was before.*

In 1735 an authentic translation of Palladio's *Four Books* was published by Isaac Ware with faithful copper-plate copies of the original wood-block engravings. By then architects like Roger Morris, designer of Marble Hill, were developing what we know as the Georgian Style and setting the stage for seventy years of remarkable architectural consensus.

18th century Britain witnessed rapid population growth and accelerating urbanisation. The squares of London's Bloomsbury, the terraces of Bath and the imposing grid of Edinburgh's New Town were all laid out on ordered plans in a uniform classical style. Terraces of houses were set out behind unified classical facades and





decked with columns and pediments to simulate urban palaces, while their interiors were ordered along Palladian lines.

But this was also the century of Britain's colonial expansion, notably in South Asia and North America, and from Virginia to Calcutta public buildings and important private houses were dressed in the Palladian manner. Thus architectural principles, which had been established in Ancient Rome and had later been revived in the 16th century Veneto, were now employed across the length and breadth of a new global empire.

Regency Style is associated with the final 30 years of the Georgian dynasty, although the future George IV acted as Prince Regent for only nine years. George, known for his gargantuan appetites and his outrageous lifestyle, was also a prolific builder and a leader of architectural fashion. The Regency turned its back on the classical consensus of the previous century, favouring an architecture of surface which was playfully eclectic and flirted promiscuously with everything from antique Greek and Gothick to the newly discovered styles of India and China.

The Prince Regent made his second home in Brighton and his Marine Pavilion, remodelled by John Nash as an oriental fantasy, acted as a catalyst for the development of Regency Brighton. But when Nash conceived his ambitious plan for London's Regent's Park (*top right*) and the succession of streets that connected it to the Prince's Carlton House, he adopted a Palladian language, setting out his terraces as a series of palace fronts with classical embellishments.

Amon Henry Wilds and his sometime collaborator Charles Busby together created Brighton's unique Regency townscape, taking their inspiration from Nash and from the great townscapes of the previous century. Busby had trained as an architect and was the more "correct" of the two. His work is late-Georgian in character and his debt to Palladio is clearly discernable in his designs for Portland Place and Lansdowne Square (*bottom right*), both of which terminated in grand temple fronts. Wilds started out as a builder and was an eclectic who could turn his hands equally to Moghul and Gothick – as at the Western Pavilion – or to antique Greek – as in the Unitarian Chapel – or indeed to Palladian.

His "linked-villa" developments take the form of necklaces of Palladian pavilions with flattened porticos that follow a gently curving driveway around a communal garden, each pavilion being divided into two or three individual town houses. At Hanover

Crescent (*top left*), built around 1818, the porticos rise directly from the ground following the example of Palladio's Villa Barbaro (*page 4, bottom left*). At Montpelier Crescent, built during the 1840s, the temple fronts stretch across the first and second floors above a rusticated base in the manner of Palladio's Villa Ragona.

Oriental Place was built by Wilds in 1825 to connect his projected Athenaeum to the sea and was inspired by Palladio's city palazzos in Vicenza. Here the parallel facades of the tall town houses are unified by pediments and pilasters. Western Terrace contains a row of five town houses built by Wilds in the 1830s, which are unified to form a small Palladian palazzo. The central house boasts a four-columned temple front with engaged fluted pilasters, while two outer houses are emphasised with paired pilasters.

Though Regency Brighton was part of a final flowering of the Georgian century, in its exuberance, it often overstepped the strict rules of Georgian decorum.

However, the ordered terraces of Kemp Town and Brunswick (*page 3, top*) are very much part of that neo-classical tradition which can be traced back through Bloomsbury and Covent Garden to the work of an obscure 16th century architect called Andrea di Pietro – also known as Palladio.

David Robson is a trustee of The Regency Society. He was a Professor of Architecture at Brighton until 2004 and while there, with colleagues, published a paperback *Guide to the Architecture of Brighton* (1987).



From the city's shore to the Continent

Sue Berry

Even without a natural harbour or rivermouth, Brighton has long been a place of departure. Into the early 19th Century many coastal settlements like ours were served by small trading vessels, which beached. There was no need to incur the cost of a harbour, which would silt up and need its piers repairing. Bigger vessels could anchor offshore while people and goods were rowed to and fro. Only when vessels became bigger from the early 19th century, and steam increasingly common, did harbours and piers become essential – and a popular tourist spectacle was lost.



This August 1819 sketch of The Prince Regent – *Britannia's Hope* [sic] – being transported between the lovely ladies of his Best Brighton Bathing Machine and the Royal Barge – has

a certain realism. It tells rather more about the contemporary scene. This and others need to be seen full size when the wonderfully scurrilous speech bubbles fill out the story – a treat, now that Kenneth Baker's collection is in The Royal Pavilion and Museum. They whet the appetite for Lord Baker's AGM talk to us on 20 April 2012 on *George III – bad as well as mad*.

For centuries many people used our coastline without major investment in it. North Sea fishermen sailed from Brighton, Hove and Rottingdean in the Middle Ages after herring, which they mostly landed at Great Yarmouth. Their vessels were small enough to be pulled on to the beach here by capstans just as they were along many stretches of our coastline. When the Brighton boats were not used for fishing they were used for trading. In the 17th century Brighton boats delivered cheeses and cattle horns from Cheshire, slate from Wales, and Portland stone for St Paul's Cathedral to London; and they imported wine from the west coast of France and exported grain from Sussex.

When the fishing trade collapsed in the later 17th century and with it Brighton's urban economy, mariners continued to trade. But they also

went to work on vessels working from Southwark, with which the declining town had strong links through trade and marriage. Mariners also joined the Navy and died of fevers in the West Indies. During the Civil War, it was sensible for Prince Charles to consider feeling England via Brighton, as Brighton was known to have Royalist sympathies, and had known regular trading links with France.

Those overseas trading links proved very useful in the mid-18th century when the town was rescued from a long decline by the development of seaside tourism. Visitors were easily supplied with French and Portuguese wines and could travel abroad on these vessels. In 1764 the first regular ferry service, or packet, was established for travellers rather than for cargo. The popularity of this route between London and Paris via Dieppe soon resulted in year round operation. By 1788 there were three sailings a week with normal practice being to make a late evening departure so coaches could be met from London after a daytime journey from the capital. Ambassadors, wealthy pleasure travellers, and ambitious young men, who wanted to have a spell in Europe as part of their education used it. The vessels waited off shore and passengers were rowed and clambered up the side. Coaches and horses were sent out first and loaded by crane. Pickled oysters and turkeys were amongst the return cargoes.

Occasionally a rowing boat turned over, but the local papers, lover of disasters as they were, do not record anyone ever drowning. Certainly, in 1802 the shrieks of a boatload of 34 passengers, mainly women, being rowed out in rough weather were heard from the shore. And in 1814 a packet nearly sank in a storm after being badly damaged. But the era of the ships waiting offshore ended in the early 1820s, when Chain Pier was opened. This marked the end of centuries of leaving Brighton from the beach, though it was certainly not the end of embarkation from Brighton.

Sue Berry is a former trustee of The Regency Society. She is editor of the *Victoria County History: City of Brighton and Hove* and an Associate Fellow of the University of London Institute of Historical Research.

The (other) Royal Embarkation

The arrival of Queen Victoria in the royal yacht at the Chain Pier, as memorialised by Richard Henry Nibbs (see opposite page).

A self-taught painter (exhibiting at the RA), he was a professional cellist (in the Theatre Royal orchestra), who lived all his life in Brighton.



Reproduced by permission of The Royal Pavilion and Museum, in whose fine collection it hangs.

Leaving from the Chain Pier by steamer

John McKean

The idea of leaving Brighton by setting out from the beach may, for many of us, bring up an image of Magnus Volk's Daddy Longlegs, precariously voyaging – for so few short years – along the shallows (eight metres above the seabed and up to 100 metres off-shore) to Rottingdean and back twice a day.

But it is perhaps a surprise to realise that at the end of the Regency, by the early 1820s, Brighton was probably the busiest English cross-channel port. Travel via Brighton was the quickest route between London and Paris and, as Sue Berry notes (*opposite*), regular crossings to Dieppe had been going for half a century; in the 1760s the 70-ton schooner the *Princess Caroline* charged a guinea each way, six guineas for a cabin and the offer also to carry your horse.

Of course it was not the shortest possible sea crossing and could take many hours. But with overland speeds – in the days before Macadamised turnpikes and steam railways – being even less reliable than those in the Channel, this route was advantageous. Brighton is not only closer to London than Dover, but there was a French shorter land journey, Dieppe to Paris - 120 miles - taking about 14 hours via Rouen in a diligence (stagecoach).

The Napoleonic Wars had caused a drop in traffic but, after Waterloo, by 1817 it was rapidly growing again and one estimate suggests over four thousand people a year were using the crossing. As Sue Barry writes, embarkation here at Brighton could be precarious, with the smaller rowing boats ferrying travellers to the cross-

channel vessel that by then included the 137 ton *Eliza* boasting four cabins for thirty people. Then, in 1822 when the first steamship, the *Swift*, entered service, steam began to replace the 9 sailing ships on the Brighton-Dieppe route.

With cargo also more efficiently transported by sea than overland, it made sense also to land goods on the beach rather than haul it over the South Downs and from further afield.



But it was back-breaking work to take cargo like coal off ships and on to rowing boats and thence ashore. In 1817, the young architect Charles Barry, bound for his foreign travels and yet to build St Peter's Church or the General Hospital in Brighton, left our beach for Dieppe. The boat that was to take him out to the waiting packet off-shore overturned in the launching and ducked about 40 people of varying degrees of eminence.¹

And so, in response to the increased traffic between Brighton and continental Europe,

the Chain Pier was built at the cost of £30,000 and opened in 1823. From there steamships sailed daily to Dieppe, but very soon the pier's secondary value was also recognised: platform tickets were sold to promenaders, attractions began to be added, including kiosks, and at the land end a camera obscura, bazaar lounge and reading room. It had become the first pleasure pier.

From the new Chain Pier (*pictured* – c1870, from the Society's James Gray collection), William Hazlitt and his bride travelled Brighton-Dieppe on their journey to France and Italy in September 1824. In October 1829 the Duke and Duchess of Clarence, who often promenaded on the Chain Pier, disembarked there from Dieppe. In 1843 Queen Victoria arrived in the steam-powered royal yacht from the French Riviera (*opposite, bottom*), was received by the pier's designer, Samuel Brown, stayed at the Royal Pavilion, visited Rottingdean and Kemp Town, and a few days later embarked again for Ostend.

Railways – London to Dover and Calais to Paris – completely changed the scene for Brighton as embarkation point, but the railway to the natural harbour of Newhaven in December 1847 finally ended Brighton's role as England's premier jumping-off point for Europe.

John McKean thanks *The Encyclopaedia of Brighton* and Bob Gibson's 30 June 2011 blog.

¹ This anecdote is from Marcus Whiffen, Barry's biographer, in a letter to Antony Dale, January 1949

Brighton Marina – an early version

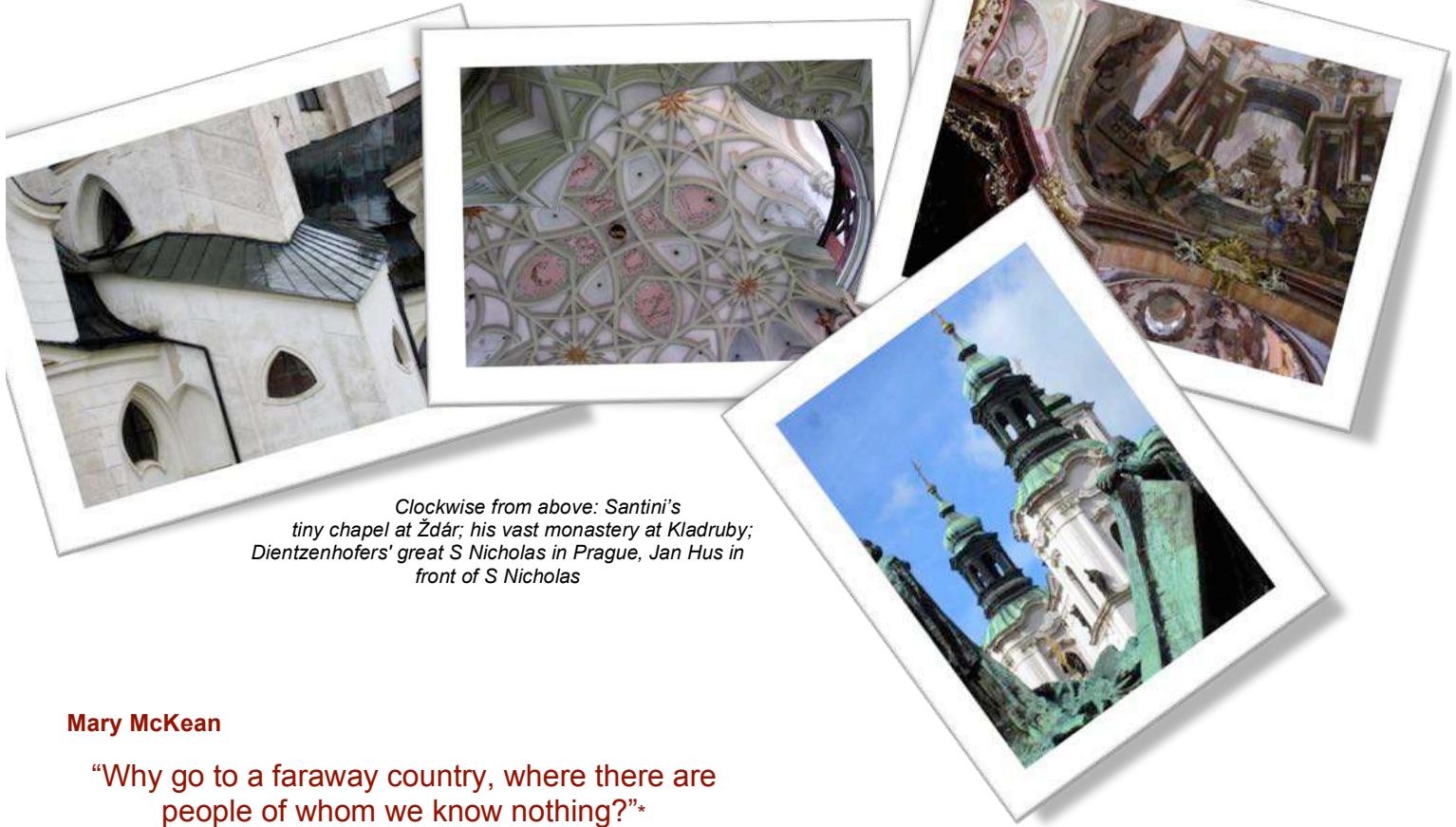


One attempt to keep Brighton's position as premier departure point for Europe, and eliminate the disadvantage of lacking the natural harbour of Newhaven, was William Henry Smith's unique "Harbour on the recoil principle" from the mid 19th Century.

We see a traditional eastern masonry arm running from the Chain Pier to a new lighthouse. But, much more unusually, a prefabricated metal western arm, as a skirt to protect the range of vessels under steam and sail as they load and unload. Mr Smith's caption claims: "Guaranteed Cost and Repairs about one tenth that of Stone – Time of Construction Three Months."

To see all the amazing detail in this unique project, visit the Royal Pavilion and Museum collection, by whose permission we reproduce it.

To the shores of Bohemia



Clockwise from above: Santini's tiny chapel at Žďár; his vast monastery at Kladruhy; Dientzenhofers' great S Nicholas in Prague, Jan Hus in front of S Nicholas

Mary McKean

"Why go to a faraway country, where there are people of whom we know nothing?"*

Thinking about the Society's tour to Bohemia and Moravia next May, it crosses my mind sometimes that we might be mistaken for a cut price tour operator. Why should the Regency Society take its members to look at the work of architects like the Dientzenhofers and Santini, at their extraordinary and so different baroques? What has all this got to do with Brighton and Hove's architectural heritage?

It is even odder when you consider how different the soaring domes, twisted columns and exuberant marble waiting for us are from our own dear refined, solid Regency squares and terraces. The only building in Brighton anything like as flamboyant is the Pavilion, which is one of a kind and was so long regarded by the metropolitan cognoscenti as something of an embarrassment.

I lived in Prague from 1996 to 2000, so know it reasonably well. My job was to promote Britain's culture, language and achievement to the Czechs, and I found that that was only possible if I gained some insight into theirs (though the language mostly defeated me). There was much to delight – there are some breathtakingly beautiful places in Prague and dotted around the countryside which are quite unlike anywhere else. I also met some fascinating people – intellectuals who had lived throughout the communist period working as window cleaners or factory hands and now ran university departments. There was also much which surprised me as we tried to 'bridge the gap' – to bring elements of recent and not so recent British culture to a country which had been out of touch with the west, effectively, for over 50 years. We simply could not bring enough pop art, for example – a bit tired at home but infinitely fascinating to the Czechs.

Having got rather closer to that land than most brief visitors can, I am quite convinced that there is much to be gained from a Regency Society visit. But for it to make sense, we first need a bit of background.

Czechoslovakia was created in 1918 and split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. Before 1918 Bohemia and Moravia had formed part variously of the Holy Roman and the Habsburg Empire and experienced its own repeated violent religious upheavals and changes of ruling dynasties. After 1918 it was independent until 1939 when it became part of Germany and then was governed by the USSR from 1948 until 1989.

How different from England, which has enjoyed independence since the Norman conquest. We've had our ups and downs, but by and large we have been in a position to choose, carefully and tastefully, the European influences to have a bearing on our own cultural development, rather than having to put up with them and all their social, religious and political baggage - often at the point of a sword or the barrel of a gun. No wonder our style is generally rather calmer.

Such different histories can surprise us with their consequences. I had expected that the intellectuals who led the Prague Spring uprising in 1968 would be revered national heroes once communism was finally over. But the truth was different – the 68ers, most of whom escaped to the west when the tanks rolled in, were seen as betrayers, leaving the rest to the dreadful fate of even more oppressive dominance by the Soviet Union which had built since the Second World War dominance by Germany. Most Czechs prefer not to remember those days – at an exhibition in 1998 commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Prague Spring I was the only person there, looking at a bedraggled show of poorly photocopied photographs pinned to the wall in plastic bags in a small park in the pouring rain.

Some of my favourite parts of Bohemia and Moravia reflect

evidence of the development of a fragile and hitherto suppressed indigenous Czech sensibility during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The language, which had been very little used outside rural villages since a defeat in the early 17th century, enjoyed a revival at that time. A defiant Czech sensibility grew – with its own style. Examples of this include the work of Art Nouveau painter Alfons Mucha, whose extraordinary Slav Epic (20 canvases eight metres wide by six metres high, currently housed in the small town of Moravsky Krumlov in Moravia) tries to convey a sense of their own history to the Czechs. In Prague, the most notable examples are the National Theatre and the Municipal Hall.

I have heard the National Theatre (*Národní divadlo*) described as a rather unremarkable late 19th century neo classical building. It probably is; but its fascination lies in the story behind its construction. Intended as an expression of the independence of Czech language and Czech culture in the face of German (Austrian) dominance, its cost was funded by public subscription – twice, because the first time it burned down. The words *Národ sobě* (the nation for itself) remain emblazoned across the proscenium arch – probably to the incomprehension of the many tourists who keep it going as a venue for opera these days.

The Municipal Hall (*Obecní dům*), located, provocatively at the time, at the end of a street frequented more or less exclusively by German speakers and opposite the main German bank, is an unusual triangular shaped art-nouveau building. Whether you are coming on the Society's trip or visiting Prague yourselves – the *Secessionstil* (Art Nouveau) coffee shop on the ground floor is not to be missed.

Great art and architecture these may not be, but they have significant political and social meaning for this small nation. (Incidentally – a word of advice to visitors related to the history of the Czech language and the feelings of its speakers. It is not a good idea to try to get yourself understood in German or Russian in Bohemia or Moravia – these are the languages of oppressors and speaking them wins you no friends. Fortunately English is now the most commonly understood foreign language.)

Prague contains a hotchpotch of architectural styles that by and large reflect the massive political and cultural movements that have swept through Europe. Our trip will be looking at the baroque in particular,

but we could if we wished focus on the Gothic, Neoclassical, Art Nouveau, Cubist or Modernist and find plenty of fascinating examples of each. Political and social upheavals, often whose origins are far away, are expressed in this architecture. We British can afford to find the baroque over the top – our ancestors may have fought and died during the English Reformation, but not on the tumultuous scale of central Europe. The emotion expressed so vividly in this architecture was extremely keenly felt.

The privilege of being exposed to this wonderful country has broadened my mind. I have grown to love the baroque which before I found impossibly over-ornate, and in particular the work of the Dientzenhofers (St Nicholas Cathedral and Břevnov are a must), which our tour will examine in detail. My time in Prague gently rubbed away quite a lot of my English insularity.

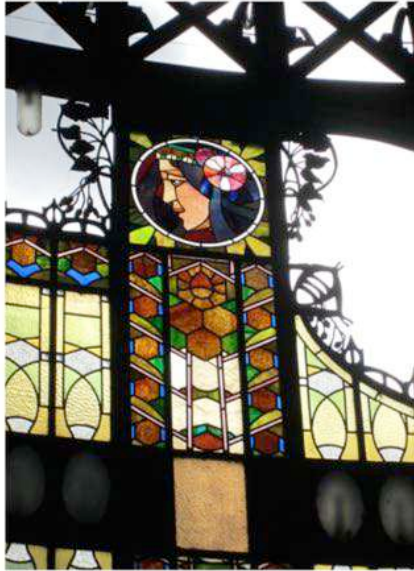
Members on the tour will pause in the Old Town Square in Prague and consider the meanings around them. Between the striking gothic spires of the Tyn Church and the baroque St Nicholas opposite stands Jan Hus, leader of the rebellion against the Catholic church a century before Luther. These sights are obvious, but look down – inlaid in the paving stones you will see the 27 tributary crosses to the Bohemians who lost their lives to combined Holy Roman and German forces in 1621, marking the effective end to a sense of Bohemian identity in Prague for over 200 years. Look up again, and many of the apparently ancient buildings around you were rebuilt after 1945.

So – to answer my own question – why should we go on a Regency Society tour to the Czech Republic and Vienna? Whatever your response to high baroque architecture, there is something to gain from looking at what happens elsewhere which helps to contextualise and make sense of what we have at home.

I believe that this broadens the intellectual base for thinking and feeling about new developments that might work for us in the future, and limits the tendency for immediate knee-jerk reactions. And also, of course, as our members have recently learned in Berlin and the Veneto, you meet like-minded people and talk these things over with them at your leisure. All this is immensely valuable to the Regency Society and also to Brighton and Hove.

Mary McKean is Chair of The Regency Society. She was the Director of the British Council in the Czech Republic from 1996-2000. **See back page for booking details.**

**My subtitle owes apologies to Neville Chamberlin who, on Germany's annexation of some of Czechoslovakia in 1939 said: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible, it is that we should be digging trenches and try on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."*



Above: Entrance canopy, Municipal Hall
Below: Dientzenhofers' baroque at its ghoulish extreme in S Nicholas, Malá Strana, Prague





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Simon Jenkins' Thousands – a Pevsner view

Nicholas Antram

Our president, Simon Jenkins, is currently receiving much publicity for his new story of England. Rather than look at that book, we felt it more appropriate to invite the well-known architectural historian Nicholas Antram to assess the polymath Jenkins as fellow architectural historian, and see how he fits our local buildings into his well-known bundles of a thousand. Antram, best known as co-author of the Pevsner city guide Brighton and Hove, has been a Pevsner author for decades, starting with Lincolnshire. We are looking forward to his forthcoming Pevsner for East Sussex.

Simon Jenkins is no ordinary writer of popular guidebooks. As a scholar, he has written extensively on architecture and conservation, was deputy chairman of English Heritage (1985-90), was, until 2011, chair of the Buildings Books Trust – sponsors of the Pevsner guides, and is chairman of the National Trust. He was editor of *The Times* and writes for *The Guardian* and the *London Evening Standard*. So his high credentials quickly become apparent when leafing through these two books. Like all good guidebooks, they do not simply give you the facts but also informed opinion and context and a personal response to what he is describing, something which is a little more restricted in the academic Pevsner guides.

As author of the forthcoming *East Sussex*, I decided to have some fun regarding the selection. I counted the number of houses and churches in the county mentioned by Jenkins (without noting which these were), 22 houses and 12 churches in East Sussex, and then made my own selection independently. With the houses our selections concurred on eight. With the churches we agreed on 12. The house selection is much more difficult, as Jenkins' definition is so broad: "English buildings which are or have been residential and are in some degree accessible to public view." He does not separate out East from West Sussex, but as my intimate knowledge is currently only of East, I have looked only at that half, observing current county boundaries, but including Brighton

& Hove – we agreed on the modest eight selected. This is not a country house county, though Firle and Glynde are notable exceptions. Bodiam Castle is every schoolboy's idea of a castle, even if it was built more for show than defence. Jenkins is able to tell the romantic story of how the 59-year-old Lord Curzon took Grace Hinds to Bodiam to propose to her and subsequently bought the castle. I was delighted to see Bentley House included; not an obvious choice, this farmhouse was enlarged by the classical architect Raymond Erith in the 1960s, its "elongated façade in a French manner, looking almost like a set of almshouses."

Once again the need for public access results in some odd omissions, such as Compton Place (now a language school), Eastbourne, rebuilt for Sir Spencer Compton by Colen Campbell from 1717 and later, through marriage, becoming the Sussex home of the Dukes of Devonshire; and the mid 17th century Great Wigsell, finer perhaps than the contemporary Bateman's. It is lovingly cared for but is not open to the public. While it does not have the Kipling connections of Bateman's it was the home of the glamorous Edwardian, Violet Maxse, wife of Lord Edward Cecil and subsequently of Lord Alfred Milner.

With the churches I found myself selecting the 12 chosen by Jenkins but I would have been more generous in my allowance. East Sussex is not an especially important county for medieval churches, nor for those of the 18th century, but it does have an exceptional legacy of Victorian ones, most, but not all, in Brighton & Hove and due to the zeal and munificence of the Rev. Henry Wagner and his son, Arthur. "No 19th century ecclesiastical grandee was more extravagant or exotic than Father Arthur Wagner," states Jenkins in his entry on the staggeringly over-the-top church of St Bartholomew, Brighton (*opposite page*), as Pevsner says, "an unforgettable experience. As far as East Sussex is concerned it may well be the most moving of all churches." For other Brighton churches Jenkins confines himself to St Michael's,

with its glorious Pre-Raphaelite stained glass. But what about St Paul's, with its complete set of Pugin stained glass; St Mary's, by the Burges pupil, William Emmerson, who pursued his subsequent career in India, designing the cathedral at Allahabad; J L Pearson's largest parish church, All Saints, Hove; or the oft overlooked St Martin's, by Somers Clarke, even larger than St Bartholomew's. And that's just Brighton & Hove, in any other county George Edmund Street's St Saviour's, Eastbourne, "a very noble church" would be jostling for selection.

Jenkins' books are informatively written, with a good balance of brevity, architectural, historic and social information, all very handy when planning an outing to a particular area. Like modern day Pevsner's, they are not especially portable, but to me their use is in planning an itinerary in uncharted territory and reading up on return to one's evening accommodation.

There is a long tradition of guidebook writing going back at least to the 18th century. In the first half of the 20th century the essential county guides were the *Little Guides* and *The King's England* series. These were supplemented in the

1930s by the wonderfully evocative and idiosyncratic *Shell Guides*; a county guides series, brainchild of John Betjeman, with collaborators such as John Piper.

More recently there have been various guides, especially to churches, such as Betjeman's own *Guide to English Parish Churches*. None of these was as well and consistently written as Jenkins' books and none can compare with the attractive layout and quality of colour photographs. Individual entries are supplemented by brief county introductions and very readable main introductions, making the books valuable both for the informed architectural traveller as well as for those

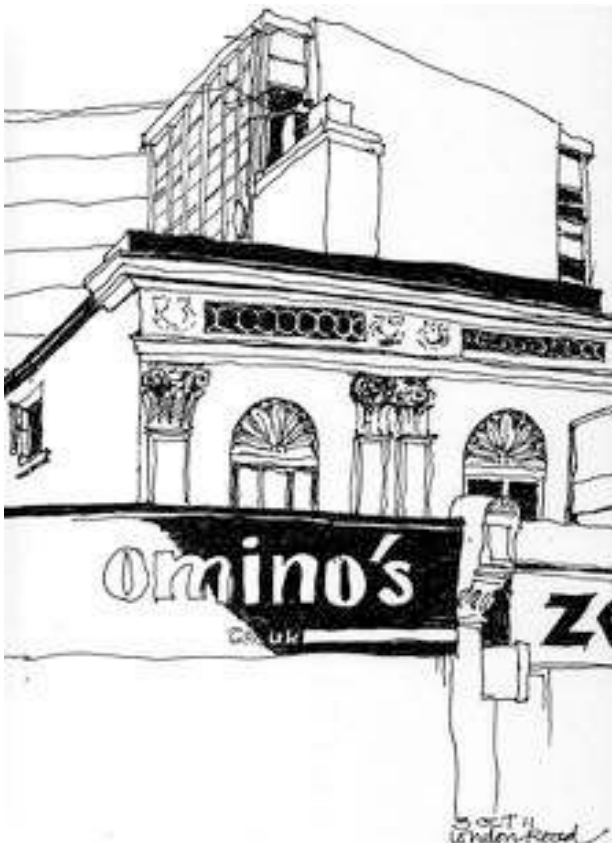


who simply wish to enjoy the best of England and Englishness without being bombarded with excessive facts or lengthy expositions; altogether a happy balance.

A final word about the *Thousand Best*. Marketing is ever more important and there is much competition in the field of tourist guides form the basic to the specialist. England's *Thousand Best* is a much catchier title than simply *England's Best*. It gives the impression that the writer has gone through a careful and laborious selection process, testified in Jenkins' introduction.

For churches he tells us there are about 8,000 pre-Reformation churches in England and a similar number built since then, and that is before one counts in the churches of other denominations. We learn that his initial short list was 2,500 churches, all of which he visited, honing down to the 1,000 "worth a detour". Having gone to all this trouble we then get a star system which helps reduce down to the top 100, all good fun for the inveterate church crawler or house visitor. Perhaps unsurprisingly Roman Catholic churches are not well represented, so I was delighted to find Pugin's masterpiece, St Giles, Cheadle, in with the top 100!

Brighton and Hove fragments – capital views



From Prague to Vienna...

The Society's tour of Bohemia and Moravia in early June 2012 will spend two days each in Prague, Brno and Vienna.

Highlights will include the Dientzenhofers' twin churches in Prague, Santini's church of S John of Nepumuk at Zdar, Mies van der Rohe's celebrated Villa Tugendhat in Brno (whose total restoration we hope will be complete), the medieval town of Telč and Otto Wagner's unique Steinhof Church in Vienna. We will also see examples of fin-de-siècle Secessionstil design and Austro-Czech modernism from the interwar and communist periods.

The seven-day tour, costing £610 (single room supplement £50), is provisionally full. To join the reserve list contact David Robson at greensett@gmail.com or 01273 202381.

Photo: Fischer von Erlach behind Otto Wagner as a Vienna tram passes



...then on to Glasgow

The Society is adding a British tour in 2012. From 13 to 16 September (four days, three nights) it will be centred in Glasgow, flying from Gatwick, with a coach to explore further afield but staying in a city centre hotel minutes walk from The Glasgow School of Art and Willow Tearooms.

Inevitably it will focus on the work of C R Mackintosh, as John McKean, tour leader, has written a number of books and also addressed the Society about Mackintosh. But Glasgow, as we will see, is about much more than Mackintosh.

Target price is c£330 per person (single room supplement). A provisional list is growing – contact john.mckean@clara.co.uk or 01273 554278.

Photo: Classical law courts and Victorian fountain on Glasgow Green

A Regency Society weekend about Regency society

To celebrate the bicentenary of the first full year of the Regency itself, and to honour the centenary of our founding figure, Antony Dale, who was born in 1912, we are planning a weekend next autumn to explore Regency society (small s) and life in Brighton.

The wide variety of events will open with Dan Cruickshank talking in The Music Room of the Royal Pavilion on Friday evening. Much is planned for the weekend and fuller details will be announced early in 2012.

We are working with the support of the Royal Pavilion and Museum Foundation and the University of Brighton on this major event in our society's calendar. Do mark the weekend of 12 to 14 October 2012 in your diary now and join us then.

Forthcoming lectures

11 January

Zero energy design for Portslade

Bill Dunster, architect of the Bed-Z zero-energy housing project in South London and of Port-Z in Portslade

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

AGM lecture: George III – bad as well as mad

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

Other lectures take place at City College, Pelham Street, Brighton BN1

Not many people know this...

Mrs Coade (the inventor of a concrete known as Coade Stone) made six statues to encircle the dome of Holland's Royal Pavilion in 1788. They were taken away in Nash's reconstruction – but he seems to have liked the idea of them, as nine more of these symbolical ladies (including, in both sets, Fortitude – an odd virtue for George IV to have chosen) were made by William Croggon, Mrs Coade's successor, for Buckingham Palace.

Alison Kelly, later to be author of *Mrs Coade's Stone* (1990), in letter to Antony Dale, 1983

Early thoughts of the Regency Society on the County Hospital



Marcus Whiffen, *Architectural Review* history editor, writes, "After the death of Charles Barry, history editor and Standard & Carters' Barry, on 10 July 1894, under Anthony D. Jewry, Bishopsgate & Greenwich Hospital, I agree with your suggestion that the history of the building should be written by a specialist, either now or later." (Whiffen later publishes *The Architecture of Sir Charles Barry*, 1950)

Bushy with White, the two leading architectural and building magazines in the 1920s, affirmed that they both planned to publish the same design, the one by both Charles Barry, RS co-founder Clifford Hyslop and Charles Barry. It is no doubt fortunate for Clifford Barry's inspired design, as St Peter's Church was accepted that Barry is inspired design for St Peter's Church, proved accepted more pedestrian to him. Barry's design could have a more hospitable building more pedestrian than Barry's solid and unimaginative hospital building."