



Regency Review

CONSIDERING THE PAST... FRAMING THE FUTURE
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REGENCY SOCIETY

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MARCH 2009

Goodbye ... and thank you

I THINK THAT THIS IS THE TIME when I should mention all the pleasure that I have had during the past 15 years as your 'Honorary Secretary'. I have very much enjoyed the friendship, enlightenment and entertainment that our members have provided during this time.

It has been a privilege to carry the Society's name on my lapel badge at the many meetings, conferences, exhibitions and visits that I have attended on its behalf, both in this country and abroad. The title 'The Regency Society' usually attracts attention and comment and, sometimes, puzzlement. This has led to my recalling the origin of the Society, when its name was certainly aptly justified.

It seems odd to us now that some sixty five years ago that buildings designed and built during the Regency (and for a time, after it) were considered as a lightweight and 'not quite proper' development of the much admired Georgian 'style'. By the time that I was an architectural student Victorian architecture had taken over as the style which was almost universally derided. It took architectural historians such as Nikolaus Pevsner and Siegfried Gideon to open our eyes to the qualities of nineteenth century buildings and to explain the various developments which led to the early twentieth century

style now usually referred to as 'modern'. So many waves of architectural styles have occurred since then that most of us quickly lose track of the various 'isms' that label them.

In Brighton & Hove we are fortunate to have a large selection of delightful, and often quirky buildings, which are possibly the result of having the Royal Pavilion sitting so prominently in their midst. Long may our city continue to be regenerated by a mixture of new and interesting buildings!

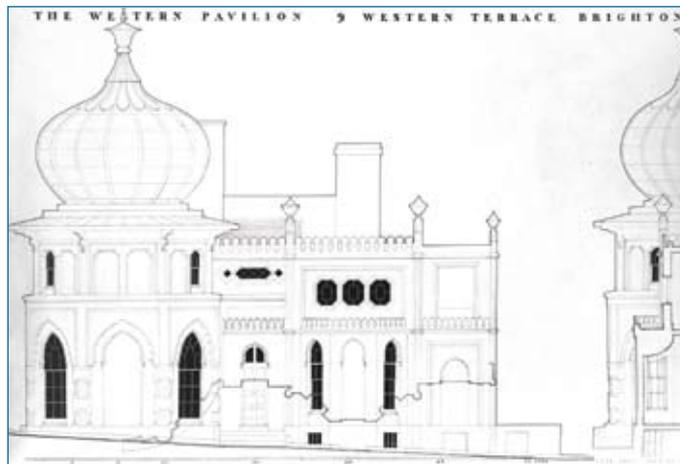
May I complete this short valedictory epistle with an illustration of one of my favourite local buildings – the Western Pavilion. Designed by and lived in by our most imaginative local architect – Amon Henry Wilds. I measured it in 1953 when it still retained other original details that now no longer exist. Like many of us it could do with a bit of sensitive regeneration!

With my very best wishes for the continuing influence, prosperity and growth of the Regency Society and to all its members, from your retiring Honorary Secretary.



above,
John Small photographed at
The Western Pavilion.

right,
his measured drawing of 1953.



CONGRATULATIONS

Last year, we were pleased to congratulate Selma Montford on being awarded an MBE. This year, another member, Robert Parsons, has received the same honour. Robert is a Herald Painter at the College of Arms and won his award for services to art.

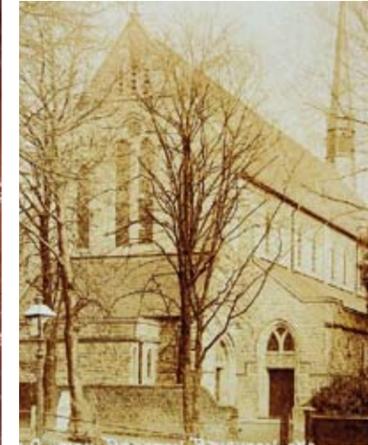
AGM AND COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Members are asked to give their attention to the proposal form for Committee elections: there is much work to be done, and rather than an accolade, election is the opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to the Society and the city that we love. Candidates will be asked to make a brief written statement of their intentions.

SOME GOOD NEWS...

Despite the many depressing reports of aborted schemes, the Bandstand renovations continue - and to give credit where it's due - congratulations to the present administration for reversing 30 years of neglect. Project architects **drp** confirm that completion is due in August.





Far left:
Preston Church, Sussex,
'From Nature & Etched by
R.H. Nibbs, 1851.'

Centre:
The aftermath of the 1906
fire, from Volume 18 of the
James Gray Collection.

Left:
St John's, Preston, around
1908, from Volume 18 of
the James Gray Collection.

PROSPERITY AND POVERTY, DERELICTION AND REBUILDING, THE STORY OF LONDON ROAD



As good as it gets?

87, London Road. Wilds & Busby, 1825

ST PETER'S, PRESTON – WORK ON THE CHURCH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The work for the Victoria County History's volume on the City of Brighton and Hove has revealed a considerable amount of repair and restoration work on most of the medieval churches between 1830 and 1914. Compared with some of the other churches, St Peter's was treated with a light hand. Most were not in good order by 1830.

This tiny church, a well known landmark on the northern end of Preston Park managed to be mentioned in The Times twice in sixty years. On both occasions the church roof caught fire, at the same end and because of the heating system.

In 1830 some work on the church resulted in the rediscovery of frescos which are probably from the 13th. The Rev. Charles Townshend ensured that both the Gentleman's Magazine and the Archaeological Journal received a report from him and excellent drawings by William Twopenny.

At some time before February 1841, heating was installed in the church. In February 1841, the Sunday afternoon service was stopped by a fire in the roof which had begun some time before it was spotted by two people passing by. It was extinguished mainly by railway workers who were then building the line from London to Brighton. The railwaymen pulled tiles off the roof to douse the flames with water. Then, buckets of water from local ponds and wells were used to contain and then extinguish the fire. This task was largely complete when the fire engines appeared from Brighton. The event attracted spectators, some of whom stood there telling people what to do. The roof did not fall in, nor were the wall paintings damaged. The fire was probably caused by a 'bursting of the flue' for the heating boiler.

By the late 1860s, more work was needed on the nave and the church required a new organ. The new organ, by Mannington was installed, just before Christmas 1873. Work on the restoration of the nave was completed in September 1874. This cost about £1,200. It was supervised by John Woodman (who designed Holy Trinity in Hove) and undertaken by Bruton. The old roof was replaced with oak beams and red tiles. More whitewash was removed from the walls. The author of an article about the work refers to the fashion for doing this and remarks that Mr Ruskin would have approved. He notes that:

'now the flint and stone walls are seen in their bare beauty, adding considerably to the effect of the church'

The brickwork used to block up the lower parts of the windows was removed, the floor was tiled, the box pews shown in the print by Nibbs were replaced with seats (which seem to have been chairs, not

benches) the pulpit replaced and a new reading desk provided. The south door which had opened on to a footpath was closed and a small vestry added. A porch was added to the north door. During the work, 'Clark's Patent Multitubular Heater' which consisted of several long pipes under the floor heated by a furnace, also beneath the building, was installed. Vere and Ellen Bennet-Stanford then undertook some repair work to the chancel for which they employed Ewan Christian in 1877-78. The stencil decoration survived the fire mentioned below. The Vestry did consider enlarging the church in 1899 and commissioned a report from Sir Arthur Blomfield. He was asked to consider two options, whether to enlarge St Peter's or build a new church. The change in attitude towards extending churches and the resultant loss of old fabric appears to have played a major role in the rejection of the idea of extending St Peter's.

Blomfield designed St John the Evangelist in Knoyle Road to the north of St Peter's which became the parish church in 1908. The Vestry then had to consider what to do with St Peter's. Weddings and funerals were thought to be ideal.

In 1906 the little church was so badly damaged that it was newsworthy. Postcards showing the damage were sold. The fire began below the organ and gallery and spread along the roof and into the tower. The chancel was not damaged by the fire but the interior was badly affected by smoke and by water. P.M. Johnston, a local architect, supervised the restoration by H.J. Penfold and Co. The new stained glass windows were by A.H.J. Westlake. Declared redundant in 1997, the church is now cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust. The key can be borrowed from the Crown and Anchor pub. Local members of the CCT open the church at weekends. There are some very interesting memorials in the graveyard, some to people who died in Brighton.

For a while the church and the house were more visible from the Park to the south which improved supervision-overgrown shrubs have imposed a barrier which encourages silly behaviour including damage to the grounds of the Manor. Here is an interesting area for people to explore which is not signed from the Park or from Preston Drove as a way in to the Park. Better management of this area does not require much more money, it needs better layout and some thought and in places the return of that ace controller of errant folk, the railing and gate! The Victorians knew well how handy they were.

Sue Berry

Until about 1750 London Road had been just a valley running through downland fields. The first development in this area became Brighton's first suburb, built on the open field known as the North Butts, an area which we can now identify as between London Road, Viaduct Road and Ditchling Road, a triangle ending in the south at what is now St Peter's church. The first roads to be developed there were Queen's Place, Marshall's and Brunswick Rows.

The road we now know as London Road was initially called Queen's Road, but was renamed in the early 1800s. Large villas built along the west side between 1800 and 1825 are still visible above the shops, which have been built on their front gardens. An article in The Gardner's Magazine of 1842 states: "The Street Gardens of Brighton . . . are in general very neatly kept, more especially on the London Road . . . There is a degree of neatness, select planting and high keeping, which is far from being common, in the same proportion in the street gardens of London."

More small houses were built on the North Butts along Oxford Street and Court, and Brunswick Place North, now Ditchling Road. At this time London Road became the main route to London, and St Peter's church was built.

The railway to Brighton was opened in 1841, which led to the development of the locomotive works, small scale houses and St Bartholomew's church on land between London Road and the railway line.

In the mid-1800s houses continued to be built along London Road as far as Viaduct Road. From 1900 London Road developed as a shopping street, though the tram system resulted in some demolition at Preston Circus. The status of the inhabitants in the London Road villas began to decline, and the shops started to take over.

In the early 20th century several streets west of London Road: Queen's Street, Fleet Street and Peel Street, and Peel Place were demolished to make way for the extension to the railway workshops. The London Brighton & South Coast Railway Company was required to replace the houses which had been demolished, and they did so in Compton Road and Inwood Crescent. However the rent for these houses was far too high for almost all the people displaced from Queen's Street, Fleet Street and Peel Street and Place. It is not certain where most of them moved to, but it may have been to the small streets on the other side of London Road.

After the WWI ex-servicemen started the Open Market in Oxford Street, later on the Level and finally in Marshall's Row, to provide themselves with employment.

During the 1930s several branches of chain stores open in London Road: Marks & Spencer's, Sainsbury's, the Co-op, etc. Houses in

I acknowledge information from Geoff Mead, Jenn Price, Marigold Rogers who have all made contributions towards a book 'The Lost Gardens of London Road: Highway & Byways' which it is hoped to publish in 2009, also from David Roberts' study of the failed rehousing scheme by the London and South Coast Railway in Compton Road and Inwood Crescent. 'Back Street Brighton', which describes some of the London Road sidestreets was published in 1989 by the Lewis Cohen Urban Studies Centre at Brighton Polytechnic with Queen Spark Books. Queen Spark Books reprinted it in 2008.



Fine detailing and original features on upper floors



Post Co-op - what now?

NEXT LECTURES

March 4 at 7pm
The Old Market, Hove.

Dr Paul Snell
'G.F. Bodley, J.D. Sedding and Henry Wilson, leading figures of the Gothic Revival and the Arts and Crafts Movement.'

April 1 at 7pm. Royal Pavilion
AGM + Gavin Stamp

GARDEN PARTY

Full details in due course, but the date will be June 20.

STUDY TOURS

Member Dr Geoffrey Hatcher writes:

Douglas Chamberlain and I feel that it would be a pity to drop the tradition which Antony Dale established and which Leslie Lauste and Tony and Stella Mercer carried on. If there were sufficient support, we might be prepared to arrange a tour for June 2010, although probably not to Kent. We should like to hear from members of the Society who might be interested in joining us.

Contact Dr Hatcher at geoffrey.hatcher@googlemail.com

NEWS

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Jackie Fitzgerald left me excellent records when handing over the Membership but I am bound to have made some mistakes so if anyone is in doubt, or appears to have suddenly dropped off the list, please email me at the address below. For Annual Members, reminders will be sent out as usual, but you will find there is a second date in red on the paperwork. This indicates the date by which renewal must be sent to ensure that you are not dropped off the mailing and membership list.

If you do not wish to renew you can, of course, wait to this date and you will be deleted, but it would be a kindness if you could send back the form marked 'not renewing'. It clears the list and saves the Society postage trying to locate people in order to establish their status.

Lesley Clarke palmeira@mistral.co.uk

The James Gray Collection

Give us the tools and we will finish the job!

The Society bought the James Gray Collection of thirty-nine volumes of photographs in 1997. It was James Gray's expressed wish, reported in 1953 when there were only 500 photographs in the collection, that in due course he would hand the collection over to an organisation that could provide access for all to see the historic form of the town. At present it is kept in the Royal Pavilion and access to it is limited. A member of staff has to be present to ensure that photographs are not damaged or stolen and these complications have meant that less than ten people a year have been able to see it. The Society has decided that photographing it digitally will ensure that it survives, and does not need to be handled physically in future as the images may be viewed on a computer. More importantly they can be made available more widely. Work began with only two volumes and, as each volume has been completed, it has been put on the Society's web site. By January 2009, over half a million views had been made in this way from addresses all over the world. Many thanks to our sponsors who have made this resource available to all.

Since December, eight more volumes of the collection have been put on-line: six of these have been sponsored from the society's own resources. These cover North West Hove (volume 16), North East Brighton (volume 27), Lewes Road Area (volume 28), Central Valley (volume 30), Withdean, sponsored by The Preston and Old Patcham Society, (volume 34), Sea Front (volume 6), Hove: Central (volume 12) and Greater Brighton (volume 33). The Montpelier and Clifton Hill Association is trying to raise the money for the Western Road volume (volume 19). This will bring the total number of volumes digitised to 30 out of 39.

We need sponsorship to complete the task – only nine more volumes – and the areas not covered so far are:

- volume 3, Seafrost
- volume 5, Seafrost
- volume 10, Old Town
- volume 13, Hove Central
- volume 14, Hove Central
- volume 15, Hove Central
- volume 17, Hove
- volume 21, North Street
- volume 22, Eastern Brighton



James Gray in 1953

The James Gray collection is probably unique as, not only is it a fine assembly of photographs of Brighton and Hove and adjoining areas dating from the 1850s, but Gray's text adds considerable value. Usually his comments are confined to helpful, factual statements, drawing on his extensive knowledge of Brighton's history, but just occasionally we are shown a glimpse of Gray, the man. A product of his time, he had an excellent knowledge of local Dance Halls, didn't care too much for heavy traffic, thought that short hair and suits were suitable for men, and in the 1970s, didn't favour 'Hippies'. Time after time he pondered the length of time that it took to replace demolished buildings and empty sites – no change there, then!

If members or their friends could help, we would be very grateful. Each volume costs around £1000 if gift-aided. In some cases, banding together has produced this sum. Several volumes have been done as memorials to loved ones. The Sponsor's names are attached to each volume.

We need a final push to finish the task and ensure that this wonderful resource is used for the maximum benefit.

If you can help, please contact me on 01273 506077

Michael Ray



POST CARDS

from the
James Gray Collection

The Society has produced a limited edition of 8 photographs from The James Gray Collection. Sized A6, the cost of these cards is £3 per set. They will be available at our lectures in The Old Market,

or by post (cheque, payable to *The Regency Society* and SAE required, standard postage) from:
*The Membership Secretary, 4, Oak Lodge,
49, Palmeira Avenue, Hove, East Sussex. BN3 3GE*

