



# Regency Review

CONSIDERING THE PAST...FRAMING THE FUTURE

[www.regencysociety.org](http://www.regencysociety.org)  
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REGENCY SOCIETY

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## King Alfred Redevelopment

Karis has now prepared detailed project briefs which have been forwarded to their architects following the wide public consultation that it has carried out. It reports 'The overall height of the development was one of the key concerns voiced by many people and in response to this we have reduced the overall height of the development to approximately 20 storeys, as opposed to the original concept (proposals) which indicated 38 storeys. The market flats are now generally smaller than those originally proposed, which will make them more affordable to local people'

'The Commercial Brief has been revised and now includes ... (additionally) a doctor's surgery. The amount of commercial and retail space initially proposed has been substantially reduced in recognition of the concerns expressed regarding the high level of parking this would generate. The reduction in commercial/retail space has enabled us to increase the number of residential units to 590, of which 40% will be affordable. 236 homes will be available for rent to people from the Council's housing waiting list and, through shared ownership, to people on lower incomes. The (revised) brief increases the average size of these flats by 10% compared to the original proposal. (As a result of feed-back from consultation) it is now proposed that the affordable homes are in blocks no higher than 7 storeys'.

These (selective) quotations are from a detailed letter to us from Karis which we shall be happy to forward to any member who wishes to see it.

As both Professor David Robson and former Brighton Planning Director Ken Fines have pointed out in the Argus, coming from opposite view-points, lower buildings mean wider, fatter buildings, in order to get the total development on the site, and some of us now consider that the total size of the development, now accepted in principle by the council, may be too great for this site to bear. (Incidentally, amongst the sixteen or seventeen members of the Society who attended the consultation meeting with Karis there were strongly held views both from those who supported the idea of high buildings and those who opposed them.)

*a quart into a pint pot?*

This re-appraisal of the detailed development briefs has now been agreed with Brighton & Hove City Council and endorsed at a meeting of the Policy and Resources committee at the end of June. At last the architects will be able to prepare their designs and 'outline proposals indicating the layout of public spaces and the position and height of buildings will be available by the end of this year'.

The overall programme for the project has inevitably slipped while this re-appraisal by the developer has taken place (albeit, it emphasises, a result of its wide consultation) and however 'world renowned' Frank Ghery and the large team of consultants may be there is a fear that even they may ultimately find it impossible 'to pour a quart into a pint pot'!

## THE WEST PIER



*On 29 July English Heritage issued a press release stating that as a result of its studies it was abandoning any further support for the proposal to restore the pier to its original 1866 form. Although it is perhaps not surprising that the total funding for this proposal was considered to be very much in doubt we were sorry that no details were provided, nor did EH report on any of the other options that it had said it would consider.*

*The West Pier Trust was naturally disappointed by the way the news of this volte face emerged (as were we) and press reports have described the successful re-creation of other important buildings that had been almost totally destroyed.*

*This long running drama has certainly not yet reached its last act and responsibility for, and the cost of, demolishing the remaining structure are being discussed. For some of us, with a romantic outlook, the hoped for sequel will be the re-birth of a pier, rising above the waves, but, even if it happens, this is also likely to be a lengthy process. Brighton needs two piers!*



*King Alfred: how much can one site bear?*

## Black Rock & Marina Development Proposals



*Black Rock and Marina West*

During the last two months it has emerged that the development proposals by Brunswick Developments for a tall block of flats on the beach opposite the seaward entrance to the Marina, with its lower blocks of 'affordable' flats beside it is in addition to the previous schemes 'floated' by Parkridge. Further development proposals by Asda are also coming forward for the total re-development of its store with associated car parking and 500 flats above the store. Despite the Special Planning Guidance proposals for this area (approved by the City Council after limited (if any) consultation, but prepared by consultants appointed by and paid for by the developer) no-one seems to be co-ordinating the different schemes prepared by the three leaseholders involved. It seems to be time for some joint discussions which should lead to a more 'joined-up' overall proposal.

There is no shortage of talent available, Piers Gough and Michael Hopkins and Partners have been working for Parkridge and Wilkinson Eyre for Brunswick, Asda's consultants have not yet been named. Progress with the ice rinks and event arena proposals on the Black Rock site has continued and an advisory consultative panel meeting has been set for September, when design drawings for the proposed arena and associated housing are expected to be available.

All these schemes rely completely on adequate (which means much improved) public transport, with the necessary infrastructure of roads, bus lanes and bus station facilities to move a greatly increased number of passengers at various times of the day and night. The Council's officers and consultants started to prepare their proposals for presentation for government grant consideration and then realised that it would be impossible for a fully worked-up scheme to be ready for the July cut-off date. Now it plans to make an application next year, by which time better co-ordinated and more detailed proposals for the commercial and housing developments on the Marina sites may also be available.

## EMBASSY COURT

On 29 July a meeting was held in St. Andrew's church, Waterloo Street, to publicise and celebrate the start of major repairs to, and re-decoration of this iconic 1930s building, designed by Wells Coates. Bluestorm Limited, the freeholder of the building, organised a 'round table debate' to report on progress, the start of which is self evident from the scaffolding that now surrounds the building.

Although the major legal squabbles now appear to be in the past there are still problems to be overcome, not least the raising of sufficient funds from the leaseholders to complete the work. But, at last a start has been made and we wish this project well. Although many Regency Society members may continue to think that Embassy Court is unfortunately sited, immediately adjoining the western extremity of Wilds and Busby's incomparable Brunswick Town development, there can be little doubt that a crisp and newly renovated Embassy court will be a vast improvement upon the sorry sight it has become over the past twenty years.



*The bandstand, with Embassy Court shrouded in the background*

## THE SEAFRONT BANDSTAND

The City Council commissioned Julian Harrap and Partners to prepare a survey of the condition of the bandstand and make outline recommendations for its repair and restoration. Julian Harrap is an experienced and expert conservation architect and has recently been working on the continuing repair of the Royal Pavilion. We were therefore delighted by this news and the excellent report that he produced.

The Council has decided to make progress towards applying for heritage lottery funding for this repair project but has learned that, according to HLF rules, it has to advertise the commissioning of a specialist consultant to extend Harrap's initial work in order to provide a full specification so that tenders for repairs can be obtained. Wishing to proceed with some haste (following years of neglectful delay) the Council is now minded to obtain the necessary specialised technical advice from its own officers.

The use of the building, once restored, is still uncertain and we wonder whether a lottery bid will succeed before its future use is agreed. Quite rightly, the Council prefers to obtain an offer from a suitable operator and potential leaseholder before proceeding but this is a chicken and egg situation and, meanwhile, the condition of the building gets worse. It now sits, forlorn and lonely, as winter approaches, on a small derelict island in the middle of new paving, paths and walls which form the final stages of the extensive 'seafront initiative' works.

It deserves better.



## REPORTS of EVENTS

Two visits earlier this summer were inspired and led by Professor David Robson, who has now returned to Singapore University as Professor of Architecture.

### Piers and Towers

*London on Sunday, 20 June*

Our secretary had remarked that some local critics of the architecture of Piers Gough and the suitability of very tall tower buildings to house family flats might benefit from an opportunity to visit some 'actual buildings'. David Robson enthusiastically agreed to lead a trip by members of the Society. Sadly, his enthusiasm was not matched by our members and too few of us set off for London on Sunday, 20 June in order to see for ourselves. David treated us like his students and re-created parts of former visits with them. This meant that he knew his itinerary backwards and threaded the coach through routes that would have been

impossible on any day but Sunday. We started with modern 1930s flats in Streatham, where a far from ideal site still looks magical and relatively low rise flats were designed and planned by Frederick Gibberd to make the most of their location by very skilful orientation. Then on to the City where we were joined by Piers Gough who showed us a large handful of CZWG buildings, many fronting the Thames where their original wit and eccentricity had mellowed to result in popular and well loved local residential developments. We then visited the Barbican, partly because it includes three 39 storey blocks of family sized flats which are

similar in height and in bulk to those included in the original proposals by Karis for the development of the King Alfred site in Hove, but also because it is an unusual example of a very large development by one client and one architectural practice. Opinions will differ about the architectural character but the flats are popular, have superb 360 degree views and many are occupied by families.

Finally we saw several recent tower blocks (both flats and offices), of various dates, and the latest riverside flats by the Foster and Rogers practices. A thoroughly educational trip, notwithstanding that we had to take most of it 'at the double!'



### Saint Hugh's Monastery

*Parkminster, West Sussex on Saturday, 3 July*

Despite strong reservations from a minority of the committee, about twenty three men visited Saint Hugh's Carthusian monastery where David Robson had made arrangements for us to see most of the buildings, led by a friendly, elderly monk. We were fascinated by the vast scale of the site, the chapel and the second largest cloister in Europe. The 1875 buildings seemed to be in fair to good condition and we were told that most of the cost of all major repairs was met by the mother-house in France.

There are only a few monks left, many from eastern Europe, and most of their cells (each the size of a semi-detached two storey Victorian house) are empty. The buildings must be very cold in winter, although some (surely inadequate) basic heating has been introduced in the chapel where services start (at a Godly hour) very, very early each morning.



*the cloisters*

*exterior*



*chapel*



*charterhouse*



# Study tour to East Anglia

Norwich from June 4 to June 9 2004

This year's study tour was arranged with their usual friendly efficiency by Tony and Stella Mercer. We were based at The Maid's Head Hotel, Norwich, near the cathedral and just round the corner from Elm Hill.

We began on Saturday with a walking tour of Norwich, lead by an excellent Blue Badge guide and then we were off to Sandringham for the afternoon. On Sunday we visited Blickling Hall for a private tour before the house opened to the general public and we returned to Norwich by way of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia. Monday was divided between Ickworth House, home of the eccentric Hervey family and Euston Hall, the home of our Patron, the Duke of Grafton. On our last day we went to Holkham Hall and ended the tour at Norwich Cathedral, where several of us stayed for Evensong.

We saw some outstanding buildings, both historical and modern, but I think all will agree that the highlight of the tour has to be the visit to Euston Hall. The Duke and Duchess of Grafton made us so very welcome and the Duke, although now quite frail, insisted on showing us round the garden himself. E.H.

*HOLKHAM HALL : The entrance into the marble hall is described by Simon Jenkins (in England's Thousand Best Houses) as 'a tremendous coup de theatre' as this illustration shows. He continues 'The space is on two levels with steps sweeping from the ground floor up to the doors of the salon. The columns are of brown-and-white grained Derbyshire alabaster. ...The astonishing ceiling is covered upwards to deeply incised panels, the coffering distorted to give a heightened effect' Simon Jenkins gives it five stars - to learn more about his enthusiasm for England's best houses come to his lecture on 4 October (see page 4 for details)*



new restaurant at norwich cathedral



sainsbury centre



the group at euston hall



# The Garden Party

Yvonne Dale's Secret Garden, June 27

Our sincere thanks must go to Yvonne Dale for again allowing us to use her secret' garden for our Summer Garden Party. Yet again, the weather was kind to us and the evening was a great success. Audrey Simpson undertook on the catering with her usual style and many thanks to her. The Brighton Youth Orchestra provided the musical note for the evening with a quartet that was much appreciated. All in all, a most civilised evening!

the place



the music



the people



# Derek Sherborn

## A Passionate Conservationist

1924 – 2004

Derek Sherborn, who died in July, had served on the committee of the Regency Society since 1982, for a time acting as Vice-Chairman. It was typical of his passionate and life-long dedication to conservation that, as soon as he came to Brighton to establish his new home in a tall, stuccoed house on Marine Parade, he should have wholeheartedly given his support to several local societies, among them the committee of the Friends of the Royal Pavilion and the Kingscliffe Society (of which he became President). For the Regency Society he first compiled a scholarly report on the town's balconies and verandahs and later a comprehensively detailed study of the Valley Gardens Conservation Area embracing the historic core of the town with its many notable Regency buildings.

Born in Streatham, Derek came from what he described as a "vaguely artistic family", numbering, as it did, several figures such as his great-grandfather, William Sherborn, a noted engraver. After attending Streatham Grammar School he served in the RAF until being invalided out in 1944. Four years later he joined the Ministry of Town and Country Planning as an investigator of historic buildings. This was a daunting time for conservation when wartime damage and neglect and the rise of the post-war developer seriously threatened the existence of many fine country houses. Derek's memoir, "An Inspector Recalls", published two years ago, contains a melancholy roll-call of Britain's lost architectural glories.

In due course he rose to become Principal Investigator of Historic Buildings and then, in 1978, the Ministry's Principal Inspector. On his retirement in 1982 he had served the Ministry for thirty four years.

As a boy in Streatham Derek had dreamed of coming into a fairytale inheritance. His wish came true when, in 1950, his father inherited a property,



Fawns Manor, in Bedfont, Middlesex, which Derek claimed had been associated with the Sherborn family since the fourteenth century. Although in the 1880s another Sherborn ancestor, a railway engineer, had made some bizarre alterations by partially encasing the house in a new form of patent cement, Derek's substantial collection of paintings and antiques did much to ameliorate any adverse effects.

However, the encroaching metropolitan wilderness of greater London made the house increasingly vulnerable and a series of brutal robberies finally persuaded him to move to Brighton where he unpacked his vast collection of pictures, china and furniture and settled into his fine seafront house.

An avid saleroom bidder since his youth, Derek had built up a sizable collection of paintings from the British School including works attributed to Romney, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Lely (one of his most important paintings, Allegory by Hans Eworth, was recently acquired by Tate Britain). His pictures, hung densely in gold frames on his Brighton walls, helped create a splendidly atmospheric effect with the house now sumptuously decorated in the style of William IV.

Privately, the kindest and most gentle and hospitable of men, Derek could be strenuous in opposition when convinced (perhaps sometimes mistakenly) of his cause. His association with the Regency Society became stormy after he had strongly criticised the committee for failing to act more robustly to save the Imperial Theatre.

Always an idealist, Derek had failed to understand that his dream of converting the Imperial into a home for opera and ballet could never have been realised without gigantic subsidies. Derek's resignation marked a sad parting of the ways but it in no way diminishes his unstinted and much valued contribution in the years before. D.G.

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## OPEN DOOR 2004

10 - 13 September 2004

A closer look at Brighton & Hove's architectural treasures!

Staged over the second weekend of September, Open Door provides guided walks and public access to some of our city's most interesting buildings - many of which are usually hidden from the public eye.

This year 36 events are offered. Some offer unlimited access, others have only limited space and must be pre-booked. Please check the directory of events and where necessary book early for the activities that interest you.

Organised by The Regency Town House, details are enclosed on a separate sheet.



# REGENCY SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The following extracts from the minutes of the 2004 AGM held at the Royal Pavilion on 6 April will be of interest to members who were unable to attend and who do not have access to our website.

## COMMITTEE CHANGES

Andrew McGuffog and Lianne Jarrett have resigned. Both were thanked for their splendid work for the Society.

Jackie Fitzgerald, David Beevers and Selma Montford were elected to the committee, Jackie Fitzgerald was also elected as Membership Secretary. Thanks also to Rupert Radcliffe-Genge for helping to re-organise the membership database and standing in as temporary membership secretary.

In July Stephen Neiman was co-opted as Honorary Treasurer and committee member.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Notice of increases in subscriptions was given at the AGM in 2003 and these were confirmed at the 2004 AGM. The new subscriptions came into effect on 1 July 2004 and are now as follow:

Single member £12.50. Two members at the same address £20.00. Student member £5.00. Single Life member £100.00. Joint Life members £175.00. Corporate member £100.00.

## CONGRATULATIONS

Our chairman, Gavin Henderson, was appointed CBE in the Queen's birthday honours list for services to music and the arts.

## VERY BEST WISHES

Yvonne Dale celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in August.

## APPOINTMENT

The committee has agreed to co-opt Dr Michael Ray as a vice-Chairman of the Society pending confirmation of his appointment at the next AGM.

## NEWS of TWO CONFERENCES in OCTOBER

We have received details of the Civic Trust's SE Regional Conference, 'Conservation and Development' which will take place at Rochester on Saturday, 2 October 2004 and a conference on 'England's Seaside Architecture', organised by the Centre for Regional Studies, Anglia Polytechnic University and Cromer District Council at Cromer from 29 to 31 October 2004. More details and application forms are available from John Small 01273 737434.

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## LECTURE DATES

### Regency Society

Some locations are still to be finalised, but these are the details so far...

Monday October 4 at 7pm Sallis Benney Hall,  
Antony Dale Memorial Lecture  
Brighton University, Grand Parade, Brighton  
Sir Simon Jenkins...on **England's Thousand Best Houses**

Tuesday November 2 2004 at 7pm  
Lisa White (Keeper of Decorative Art at the Holburne Museum of Art, Bath)...on **Jane Austin and the Regency Interior**

Tuesday December 7 2004 at 7pm  
Wendy Hichmough (Curator at Charleston)...on  
**Arts & Crafts Houses**

Tuesday January 4 2005 at 7pm  
Peter Bareham (Architect, Lecturer and Regency Society Committee Member)...on **Harold George Turner, architect: his houses in Sussex and the Barrowfield estate, Hove**

Tuesday February 1 2005  
T.B.A.

Tuesday March 1 2005 at 7pm  
Patrick Conner (a Director of the Martyn Gregory Gallery, London) He was formerly Keeper of Fine Art at Brighton Museum.)...on  
**Oriental architecture in the West**

Tuesday April 5 2005  
AGM

### Hove Civic Society

Guests £2 at the door.  
St Andrews Church Hall, Hove.  
Further details: 01273 732234  
[www.hovecivic.org.uk](http://www.hovecivic.org.uk)

Tuesday 19th October 2004 7.30pm  
The Secrets of the Royal Pavilion  
Jackie Marsh-Hobbs

Tuesday 16th November 2004 2.30pm  
Bungalow Town Remembered.  
Mr and Mrs Tait

Tuesday 14th December 2004 7.30pm  
The Sussex Story  
David Arscott

Tuesday 18th January 2005 7.30pm  
The Bombing of Brighton and Hove  
David Rowlands

Tuesday 15th February 2005 2.30pm  
Modern Architecture  
John Ayles

Tuesday 15th March 2005 7.30pm  
The Rex Binning Lecture  
The History of the Conservation Areas of Hove  
Roger Dowty

Tuesday 19th April 2005 7.30pm  
The History of the Tram  
Ian Gledhill