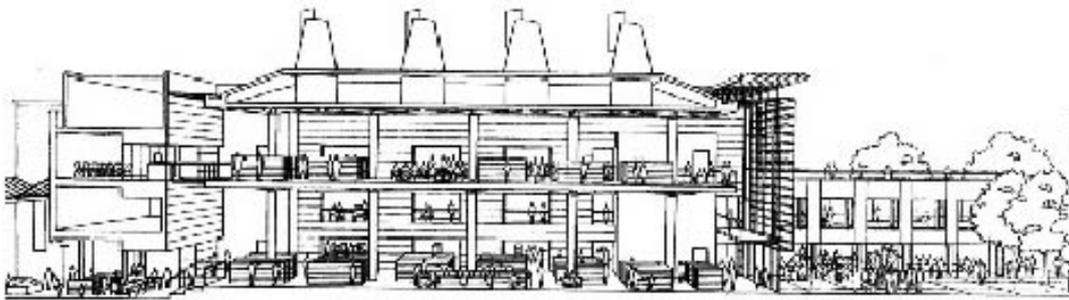




New central library for Brighton – at long last



IT WILL have taken 100 years, but Brighton is finally to gain a new purpose-built central library as part of the Jubilee Street development.

The overall scheme is reported to be costing £45 million and will also include a new square, 70 residential units, a 50-bed hotel, offices and workshops, a surgery and bars and restaurants.

It will be built as a public-private partnership, where the private partner builds the library and leases it to Brighton & Hove Council for 25 years, after which ownership is transferred to the council.

The private partner is the Mill Group, which includes Norwich Union, bidding with local architects Lomax Cassidy Edwards and architects Bennetts Associates.

Both practices have long experience of educational buildings and of environmentally-friendly designs. The library has been specifically arranged to minimise energy use.

A previous scheme proposed by East Sussex's in-house architects was scrapped in 1994 after strong opposi-

tion by The Regency Society and other Brighton amenity groups, backed by English Heritage. After that, a revised plan was called in and then abandoned.

Brighton library was set up by the Royal Literary and Scientific Society in 1869 and moved into the Church Street site in 1902, which had previously been royal servants' quarters connected to the Pavilion. The intention was to move to a permanent home thereafter but the only move since has been to a truly temporary home in Vantage Point, where librarians have seen borrowings fall by a quarter.

A planning application will be made shortly. As can be seen from the initial line drawing above, the library will have a fully-glazed frontage to the square and contain double-height rooms. The building's use of energy is expected to be half that of other modern libraries.

Your committee looks forward to examining the detailed proposals and asks all interested members to make their views known to both Brighton & Hove Council and to the Society's secretary, John Small, on 01273 737434.

Leslie Lauste, surgeon and friend of conservation, dies at age 92

IT IS with great regret that we announce the death of Leslie Lauste at the age of 92. Leslie served with great distinction as a surgeon during the Second World War, when he was taken prisoner. After the War he continued as a surgeon in Brighton until retirement in 1975. He was a man of distinction in his profession and well-regarded by his colleagues at The Royal Sussex County Hospital, which he served for 30 years.

He was also a great supporter of conservation and amenity causes and served on the Regency Society Committee from 1981 until last year. He was vice-chairman from 1997 to 2000. He will also be remembered by members for his successful organising of the Summer Long Week-End each year from 1992 to 1999.

Whatever he undertook he did it most thoroughly with an energy and conscientiousness that was as admirable as it was astonishing, latterly, in a man of his years. He will be greatly missed both as a source of wisdom in his comments and contributions to the Society and also as a friend.

Cats and carbolic:

EILEEN HOLLINGDALE recalls The Regency Society study tour, Chester, 19-24 June 2000

MEMBERS of the Society assembled for dinner on Monday evening at Blossoms Hotel, where we were to stay until Saturday morning. Blossoms is a very comfortable and welcoming hotel in the middle of the city. The Roman amphitheatre is at the bottom of the road and the Eastgate, with its familiar Jubilee clock, is just around the corner in the opposite direction. The Cathedral and The Rows are a short walk away. Tony and Stella Mercer had arranged a varied programme of visits to include three cathedrals, two castles, one stately home, a cotton mill and a model village built for the workers at a soap factory.

Liverpool was to be our first port of call. It was the first time I had ever been there and I found it a city of great contrasts. The skyline is dominated not only by the legendary Liver Building but also its great twentieth century cathedrals. In the centre of the city are municipal buildings which reflect the wealth of the citizens who built them, while many of the gracious town houses were occupied by those same citizens are now falling into slums.

The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King is dazzling. Designed by Frederick Gibberd and built in just five years, it makes full use of modern building materials and also ancient crafts like the making of stained glass. Its round liturgical centre seats over two thousand, while its perimeter chapels provide more intimate places for worship and contemplation. Although I knew what the building looked like, I was utterly unprepared for the impact of the building "in the

flesh" on me. If that wasn't enough, we were taken down into the crypt where the stunning brickwork had been designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Compare and contrast this with the Anglican Cathedral Church of Christ designed, oddly enough, by the Roman Catholic Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, he of the red telephone boxes. It is built of the local sandstone and although it is the largest cathedral in Britain it seems to squat on top of its hill. We were lucky because the cleaners had been in and we were able to appreciate the full length of the nave unencumbered by chairs. This cathedral had taken about 70 years to build and its interior reflected changes in fashion which had taken place during that time. The memorial to Lord Derby reminded me of that of a mediaeval knight. His effigy rests on a cushion supported by a model of the cathedral. A little mouse peeps out, much polished by curious fingers. On the other hand, the Visitor Centre is topped by a fine set of sails, symbolising Liverpool's maritime greatness.

Later in the week we visited Chester Cathedral. The Cathedral as we know it today was founded as a Benedictine Abbey. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Henry VIII returned the Abbey to the city as the Mother Church of the new diocese of Chester. The last Benedictine abbot became the Dean of the new Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Norman fabric of the building was skillfully restored by Sir George Gilbert Scott and later by his grandson, Sir Giles.

The monks' refectory is still in use, as the modern coffee shop, and it still has its canopied pulpit where readings would take place during meals.

Our two castles were Welsh and administered by the National Trust, but there the similarity ends. Powis Castle was built as the stronghold of a dynasty of Welsh princes and Chirk Castle was designed to keep the rebellious Welsh in order!

Powis Castle is the home of a branch of the Herbert family, another branch of the family lives at Wilton House near Salisbury. Much of the interior is Jacobean, with fine panelling and plasterwork ceilings. Later, when Lady Henrietta Herbert married the eldest son of Clive of India, Clive paid money for much-needed repairs, carried out by Sir Charles Smirke. There is much to see by way of fine furniture and pictures and there are also many relics of Clive of India.

From 1595 Chirk Castle has been the home of the Myddletons. The interior we see today dates from the 1770s when the castle was remodelled in the neo-classical style. Later Pugin and Crace had a hand but most of their work has been removed. The gardens of both castles are fine. Powis Castle rises above spectacular terraces, while at Chirk we are led through a series of 'rooms'.

Our stately home was to be a stunning example of the neo-classical style. Tatton Park is the home of the Egerton family. The present house was built about 1715 and remodelled by Samuel Wyatt and his nephew Lewis between 1780 and 1813. The furniture was supplied by Gillows of Lancaster. The



Bridge St Row, Chester



Chester Cathedral

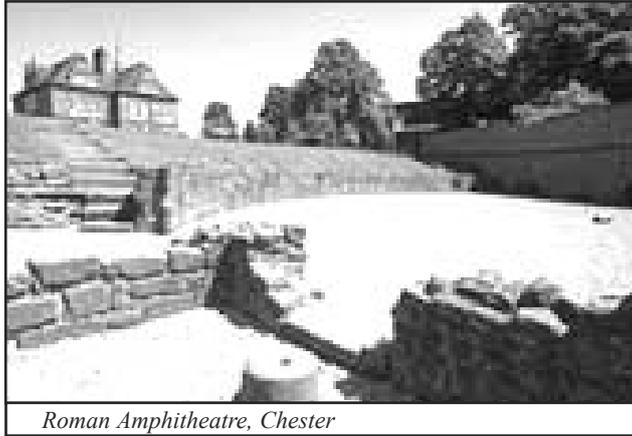
Egertons were collectors of fine porcelain and pictures, including a wonderful Chardin. For me the highlight of the house was the hall and staircase where the upper landing was hung with a series of portraits called The Cheshire Gentleman. The grounds near the house are laid out in a series of gardens including a Japanese garden refreshingly free of fiddly little red bridges.

In recent years we have taken the opportunity of visiting at least one industrial site. Quarry Bank Mill stands on the banks of the Rover Bollin at Styal. Built as state-of-the-art cotton mill in 1784, its motive power was supplied by an enormous water wheel, still on view today. Here we were shown the manufacture of cotton goods, from cotton bale to finished fabric, and were given the opportunity of buying some in the Fent and Fabric Shop. We had been advised to arrive about lunch-time so as to avoid the school parties, but we all agreed that the visit was too short.

Having seen the mill, we went to the Apprentices' House, where orphan children were brought up and educated and sent to work in the mill. Medical care was of

the brimstone and treacle variety and we were introduced to a very important member of staff. His name is Eric and he had, luckily, just been fed. His carers receive payments every so often of, literally, blood money. Eric is a leech!

We did not, unfortunately, have an



Roman Amphitheatre, Chester

opportunity of visiting Styal Village, which had been enlarged by the mill owners to house their workers, but we did visit another industrial village. On the day we visited the Liverpool cathedrals we lunched in Port Sunlight. This was built by William Hesketh Lever to house workers at his soap works. Some 30 architects

were employed to build not just houses, but also schools, shops, a church and social facilities. The jewel of the place is the Lady Lever Art Gallery, built to house Lord Leverhulme's collection of paintings and ceramics. The collection is particularly rich in the Pre-Raphaelites and I kept

bumping into pictures I knew well from reproductions. There is also a magnificent collection of Wedgwood. Yes, I have to admit, I did buy a bar of Sunlight soap from the Port Sunlight Heritage Centre, which is now the only place where it is sold.

Our party broke up on Saturday morning. As I had the morning to myself before catching the Sussex Scot from Crewe, I went on a Cheshire Cat hunt. I captured two of the beasts, one a smug china one decorated with pink roses, the other

looking as though it had just stepped out from a Tenniel illustration, hell-bent on mischief. That's the cats taken care of, but what of the carbolic? Believe it or not, you can buy it in the gift shop at the Lady Lever Art Gallery as a reminder that the glories you have just seen were paid for by washing other people's dirty linen!

Major plans for Brighton & Hove



The French Convalescent Home

The application to demolish this fine building has been squashed and its owners have now applied for alterations and a change of use permission to allow the building to be turned into 14 flats.

Your committee is in favour of the change, providing the fine detail shows that the changes are sympathetic to the original design.

While the comments closing date is officially past, members with strong feelings about the building can still contact Matt Payne at Brighton & Hove planning on 01273 292359.

King Alfred Centre, Hove

The major leisure and commercial redevelopment scheme for the 1930s sports building and the adjacent site will not go ahead.

Versions of events differ but the developer sought to reduce the size of the project and omit funding the restoration of the swimming pool. This proved unacceptable, says the council. We understand that a new planning brief is now likely to be prepared for this site.

Imperial Theatre, North Street

Demolition has started on the Imperial Theatre, which was later the Essoldo Cinema, then a bingo venue and more recently, the unlamented Hot Shots leisure venue. The Society strongly objected to the proposed replacement building, consisting of three large shop units with 14 flats at roof level, but to no avail.

Astoria Cinema, Gloucester Place

This building was recently listed Grade II following an application by the Astoria Moving Picture Trust, which wishes to purchase it for widescreen

cinema use with an associated cinema museum space. Surprisingly, most of the original internal decorative plaster decoration is still in place although the condition of the building is likely to decline if some precautionary restoration is not carried out to keep weather and pigeons from damaging this interesting interior.

There are now very few 1930s cinemas in the country where the original auditorium space is intact.

Brighton Station Goods Yard site

An artist's impression of an indeterminate and unimpressive development of housing, hotel, office and retail supermarket has been released. It does not inspire confidence that a solution to the manifest problems that beset this development site will be overcome.

The major questions of easy access from and to London Road and the need to reduce to the minimum additional car journeys while retaining a car park for the supermarket remain to be answered. The proposal is not good enough.

Devon delights for lucky Society members



The mediaeval courtyard and Great Hall, Dartington

THIS YEAR the Society's visit will be based at Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon and run from Wednesday, 27 June, to Monday, 2 July.

Dartington Hall was built in the second half of the 14th century and vies for pre-eminence with Haddon Hall and Wingfield Manor in Derbyshire as the most spectacular domestic survival of late mediaeval England, according to Nikolaus Pevsner. The original building has been restored to provide high quality conference facilities and accommodation.

Single or double bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms are available, including dinner, bed and breakfast.

Around Dartington Hall 20th century buildings have been added in a variety of architectural styles resulting in an unusual combination of toleration and pragmatic innovation. Pevsner continues, quoting a contemporary source, "The Trustees wished in every way to combine function, economy and delight, but since most of their needs were special it was not easy to find architects who had specialised in the needs of children, or of cows, or chickens, or of wage earners or of factory buildings, between 1928 and 1935." Join our visit to see for yourself whether you consider that this experiment in education, combined with rural development and industrialisation succeeded.

Places that have been suggested to visit include Exeter Cathedral, Castle Drogo, Saltram House, The Eden Project, Lost Gardens of Heligan and St Ives for the Tate Gallery and Hepworth Gallery. The inclusive cost will be about £500. We hope to arrange coach transport to and from Brighton at an additional cost.

Booking forms and further information can be obtained from:

Mrs Stella J Mercer
12 Norbury Way
Great Bookham
Surrey
KT23 4RY
Tel: 01372 458641

Please apply promptly because numbers are limited.

Lecture list 2001

Lectures from the Hove Civic Society

All meetings are held at St Andrew's Church Hall, Church Road, Hove, near the bottom of George Street. Regency Society members are welcome. Please remember to bring your lecture card with you.

Monday 26 February 7.45pm

Sir Basil Spence

The Rex Binning Memorial Lecture – an illustrated talk by Dr Maurice Howard, Reader in the History of Art at Sussex University.

Tuesday 27 March 7.45pm

History of Shoreham

An illustrated talk by Trevor Povey.

Tuesday 1 May 7.45pm

Annual General Meeting

Followed by John Small's entertaining look at architecture triumphs and disasters in Brighton and Hove during the past year.

Lectures from the Regency Society of Brighton and Hove

Tuesday 13 February 7.00pm

Unitarian Church, New Road, Brighton
John Wells-Thorpe on

Great Moments in Architecture

John Wells-Thorpe is the immediate past chairman of the Regency Society. He has served as President of the Commonwealth Association of Architects and was until recently the chairman of the South Downs Hospital Trust.

Tuesday 13 March, 7.00pm

St Michael & All Angels Church,
Victoria Road, Brighton.

Peter Howell on

St Michael and All Angels – the Architecture of G.F Bodley and William Burges

Peter Howell is a former chairman of the Victorian Society and co-editor of *The Faber Guide to Victorian Churches*. Presented in association with the Friends of St Michael and All Angels. A collection will be made for the church.

Tuesday 17 April, 7.00pm

The Music Room, Royal Pavilion,
Brighton

Steven Parissien on

The Grand Entertainment – George IV as a Patron

Steven Parissien is the author of a number of books which relate to the Georgian and Regency Periods. This lecture will coincide with the publication of his new book on George IV. The lecture will be followed immediately by the Society's Annual General Meeting.