



# Regency Review



The Newsletter of the Regency Society of Brighton & Hove

Issue 6

January 2003

## Big changes to come across the city

At a special meeting in June 2002, the Planning Applications Sub-Committee recommended that the Council grant permission for the PROPOSED COMMUNITY STADIUM AT VILLAGE WAY, FALMER, subject to some additional information from the applicant, which has now been submitted. This will be discussed at the Committee's 15 January meeting. Council officers have recommended that planning permission be approved.

The Community Stadium application, and the application for an alternative transport interchange to the north of Village Way which was refused by Lewes District Council, have been called in by the Secretary of State for his decision.

A joint Local Inquiry in respect of the above and the relevant draft Local Plan Policy, SR25, will begin at Hove Town Hall on 18 February.



*The proposed Falmer stadium: scale can be judged by the size of people at the bottom*

In December 2002, The Planning Applications Sub-Committee recommended approval for development proposals for the BRIGHTON STATION GOODS YARD SITE. The Regency Society Committee is very concerned by this decision and has written to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), requesting that it be called in for determination by the Secretary of State.

English Heritage does not support the application for the following reasons. It does not significantly enhance the transport hub at the station; it represents merely an outline application for the site, with more detailed proposals included only for the 'core' area, which is less than half the site; and the proposed development would have a detrimental effect on the nearby Grade 1 listed St. Bartholomew's Church and the Grade 2 listed Railway Station buildings. We await a decision from GOSE.

The partial collapse of the concert hall on 29 December 2002 had been forecast by the WEST PIER TRUST'S engineers. However, a serious decline

in health of any very elderly patient is always a shock and the present state of the building is leading to 'soul searching' among many of us. In November, The Regency Society Committee wrote to Simon Thurley, chairman of English Heritage, to enquire whether he would support the return of the Pier to its original 'promenade pier' form, to reduce running and maintenance costs and hence necessitate a smaller amount of 'enabling development'.

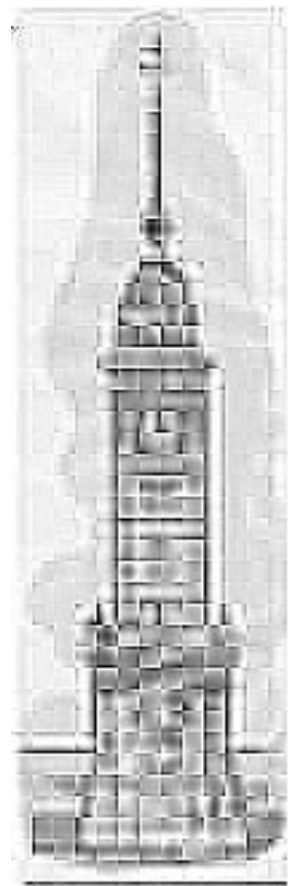
Mr Thurley has replied that this would still require a sizeable new development. EH and the Council are awaiting the consultant's report on financial information from St Modwen and the West Pier Trust in support of the new foreshore development in their application. We too await this report with considerable interest.

On 17 December 2002, representatives of the

Regency Society Committee attended a ceremony to celebrate the completed

### REFURBISHMENT OF THE CLOCK TOWER.

The golden ball, restored in gold leaf as recommended by the Society, rose to the top of its column at 10.00am, for the first time in more than a century. All other decorative features that were originally gilded have also been restored in gold leaf, but the new mechanism has suffered some teething troubles during recent cold weather and further adjustments to the clock's machinery are being made.



Both BLACK ROCK and THE KING ALFRED are subject to re-development proposals, following development briefs

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# Society backs *Seaside Album* display

The Regency Society is backing a new photographic exhibition at Brighton Museum & Art gallery – *A Seaside Album: photographs and memory*. It runs from 10 May until 8 October and we are delighted to announce that there will be a private reception purely for members of the Society in June.

The history of photography in Brighton mirrors the history of this medium in Britain. Leading pioneers set up studios here, or visited, attracted by the fashionable clientele and the clear skies. In later years, both distinguished exponents and commercial photographers came too: they captured the popular mood, created memorable studies and recorded the changing topography of the town.

A *Seaside Album: Photographs and Memory* reveals a story



of changing times, changing attitudes and changing artistic visions from the 1840s to the early 1990s, through the power of the photographic image and the spirit of Brighton.

The exhibition presents around 150 original photographs of Brighton and Hove, drawn from Philippe Garner's remarkable collection, assembled over the past 30 years.

Exploring the qualities peculiar to photographs, the exhibition includes beautifully composed and finely crafted prints, together with everyday photographs of more modest intent, yet with a considerable emotional charge. The common thread that links the photographs on display is the activity, architecture and people of this colourful and intriguing seaside landscape.

The exhibition shows historic daguerreotypes from the 1840s

by William Constable, Brighton's first photographer; and the earliest known photographs of the Royal Pavilion, taken by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1846. A remarkable series of images by Edward Fox Jnr illustrates the town in the late 1850s and 1860s and studies by William Mason Jnr from around 1860 introduce local types: fishermen, domestic staff at work, artisans and itinerant musicians. From the turn of the century, a sequence of snapshots by George Ruff Jnr captures the life and bustle of the beach and promenades.

Twentieth-century visitors of note, whose photographs feature in the exhibition, include Cecil Beaton who celebrates Brighton's Regency past. Bill Brandt and Henri Cartier Bresson capture the pleasures of the beach and the amusement arcade; Roger Mayne and



Tony Ray-Jones explore new ways of depicting the faded glories of the post-war seaside resort; and Jim Cooke reveals the layered landscapes of 1990s Brighton.

Philippe Garner is widely recognised as a leading connoisseur and authority on photographs. He grew up in Brighton and his interest dates back to his teens in the early sixties. He was responsible for sales of photographs at Sotheby's from 1971, when it became the first auction house to establish regular sales in this medium; and was a Senior Director Senior Specialist in 20th Century Decorative Arts and Design, and Photographs at Sotheby's until June 2002.

- The private reception for members at the exhibition takes place on Tuesday 17 June 2003. We are honoured that Philippe Garner has agreed to be present and to give an introductory talk. Further details will be sent to members nearer the time.

and consultations initiated by the City Council's Leisure and Regeneration teams. At Black Rock three different schemes have been submitted and the Regency Society is represented on the



Advisory Consultation Panel. Our views are embargoed at present, while the Council assesses the financial implications of each proposal. At least one of the schemes could be developed into a useful, sustainable leisure and health project. We understand that four consortia have submitted proposals for the re-development of the King Alfred site with a combination of sports and leisure buildings and housing, in accordance with the Council's brief. We await the submissions with interest.

There are planning applications and potential planning applications for a number of TALL BUILDINGS on sites throughout the city, from the Marina to the King Alfred, including several close to the city centre. The Regency Society Committee, together with other groups, has suggested that these should not be considered until a policy for tall buildings is in place, to avoid the mistakes of the 1960s and 1970s. The Architects' Panel and the Conservation Areas Advisory Group have discussed guidelines suggested by the Council planners, but it is likely that the pressure to make decisions will outweigh the requests for a more studied appraisal to be made first.

*John Small, honorary secretary*



# Gutsy, courageous, tolerant – and intolerant

Dr Seldon, Headmaster of Brighton College, author of a clutch of successful books, including biographies of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, has turned his provocative, needlesharp eye towards Brighton and written, in association with Matthew Nurse, Edward Twohig and Chris Horlock, a highly stimulating, controversial and challenging account of Brighton & Hove as it was, is, and might be in the future.

The chapter headings give instant clues about the tone and popularist approach adopted by the author. *Chapter One, The Rape of the City*, leads the reader through surveys of the history of the two towns and studies of seaside resorts worldwide, to an appraisal of the elements that make such places successful.

Finally, he describes a highly controversial vision of the future, full of skyscrapers, an international airport, a museum of contemporary art and many other innovative ideas. It ends with “establishing the city as a thug free zone”: no controversy there.

This is an unashamedly popularist production, glossy pages, full of alluring images, almost all in colour.

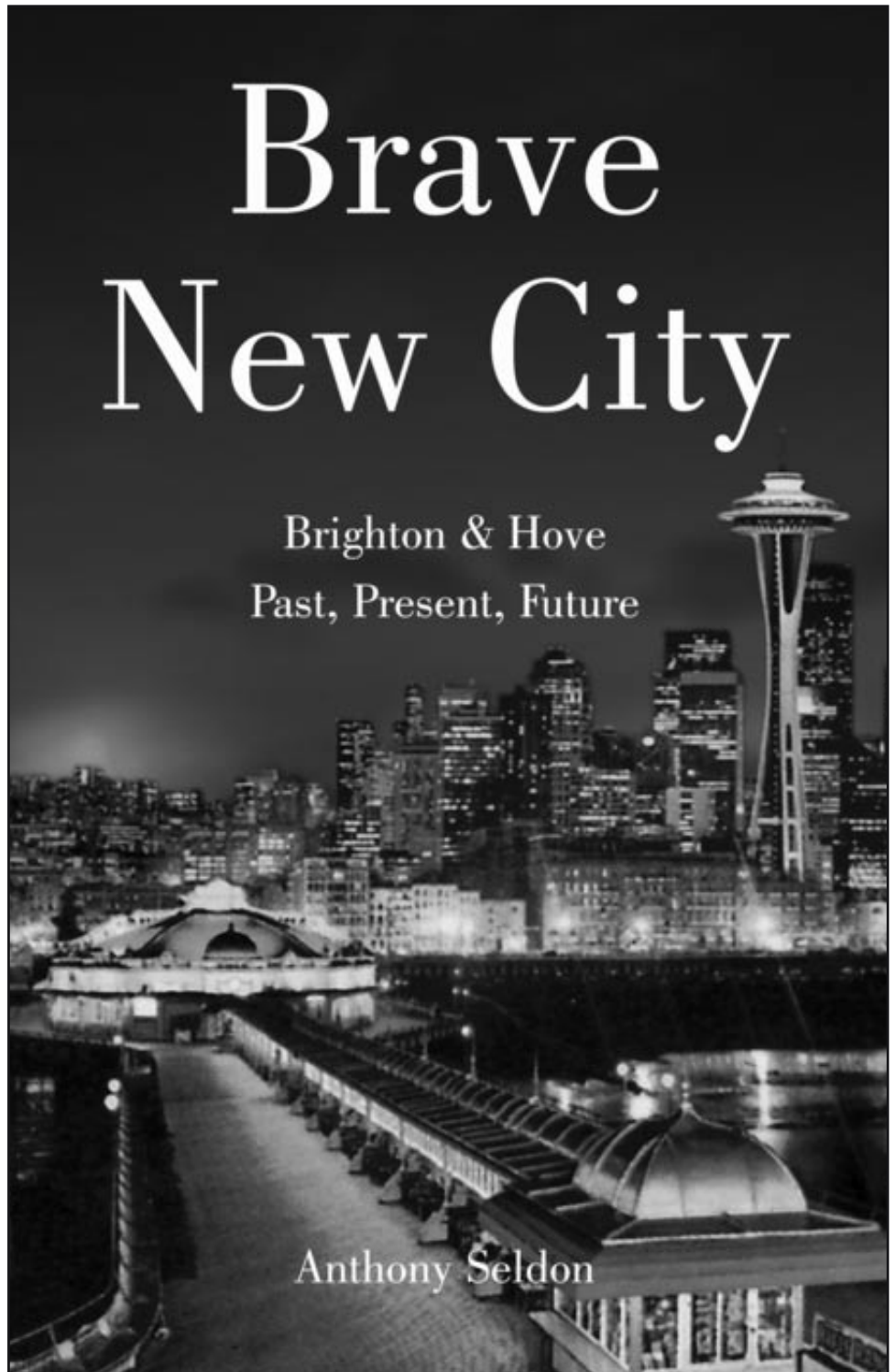
Bold labels, stuck seemingly with casual informality, proclaim that this or that historic building has been “demolished”, “destroyed by fire”, “cleared for development” or “obliterated”, setting the scene for the survivors of “the glorious 18th and 19th centuries”.

Dr Seldon is not at all shy about proclaiming his own preferences: the city’s Top Ten Buildings include his own College, as well as my own home, which is very comforting to us both.

At the very top, at Number One, as “Top of the Pops” used to proclaim, is the dear old collapsing West Pier.

Later in the book, after a vain search for evidence of comparable quality in 20th century developments, Dr Seldon selects his Worst Ten Buildings, inevitably all of the last century.

This section is very, very controversial, with some personal favourites of mine such as Brighton Square, St. Dunstan’s and Marine Gate, lumped together with real monsters such as Kingswest, a.k.a. the Odeon and Hilton West Pier Hotel, a.k.a. the new Bedford.



On a more positive note, the Ten Best 20th Century Buildings include the King & Queen Pub, Marlborough Place, a controversial entry in the Regency Society’s own 20th Century poster compilation.

Re-enforcing his final choice are the retro-style Van Alen flats in Marine Parade, named after the architect of the Chrysler building in New York: information for which I am truly grateful.

So is Dr Seldon, now that his Number One choice for retention, the West Pier, is fast sinking into the sea, going to plump for a 21st century replacement, a sort of

offshore Bilbao Guggenheim perhaps, which he advocates in his Seaside Cities Worldwide section?

You know, I am fascinated by this book: its gutsy, courageous, tolerant (and sometimes intolerant), demotic. Like Brighton itself, you might say.

*Peter Rose, vice-chairman*

- Anthony Seldon: *Brave New City: Brighton & Hove Past, Present, Future* (Pomegranate Press: £20.00) A half price discount is offered at Sussex Stationers.

# The delights of Normandy

Our guide in Normandy during last June's annual summer study tour was Peter Avis, a francophile who has maintained close associations with Dieppe over many years. He introduced us to the architectural and gastronomic delights of northern France in an action packed tour that was both informative and thoroughly enjoyable.

Our day in Rouen took in the Cathedral and its magnificent interior, other medieval buildings in the vicinity, some modern shops and the 20th century Joan of Arc Church nearby.

In complete contrast, the following day, we visited the lonely clifftop church at Varengeville to see Matisse's gloriously translucent stained glass window.

Lutyens' splendid house Les Moutiers was next on the itinerary. Here, the ambitions of a visionary client, who saw the potential of the site, became a stunning reality through the combined talents of the brilliant young architect, Lutyens, and the garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll. We were shown round by the original owner's great grandson and his mother -- a marvellous visit, marred only by too much drizzle and too little time in the garden.

When we arrived at Giverny, the garden and lake sparkled in the sunshine: reality surpassed even Monet's many painted versions of this wonderful place.

We spent two days in Dieppe, where the town centre and harbourside building conservation schemes have made a huge improvement to the appearance of the town. At the Castle Museum, we studied the history of Dieppe and also enjoyed a retrospective exhibition of work by Anthony Caro. We visited the churches of Saint-Jacques and Saint-Remy, and discovered that the continuing upkeep of parish churches is as much a problem in France as it is in the UK.

JS



*The gardens at Giverny*

## Lecture programme 2003

Our current lecture series, Restoration, Regeneration, Patronage and Music, has been arranged by committee member Peter Bareham. It continues with special events, including talks by leading architects.

**JOHN McASLAN: NAVAL COLLEGE TO MUSIC COLLEGE**

*Tuesday 11 February, 7.00pm. St George's Church, Kemptown*

The Old Royal Naval College at Greenwich was designed by John Webb in the 1660s and 'enhanced' by Sir Christopher Wren. John McAslan & Partners, who were voted Architectural Practice of the Year three times in four years, remodelled this magnificent building for Trinity College of Music, whose principal is Gavin Henderson.

John McAslan will describe how these historic premises were reshaped, with state-of-the-art facilities, as the new home for this prestigious conservatoire.

A private visit to Trinity College of Music has been organised as part of A VISIT TO GREENWICH on Thursday 27 February. *(Please see enclosure).*

**AN EVENING VISIT TO THE BRIGHTON MIDDLE STREET SYNAGOGUE**

*Tuesday 11 March, 7.00pm.*

Our hosts, the Congregation of the Synagogue, will tell us about the interior and musical traditions of this fascinating Grade 2 listed building, which was designed by Thomas Lainson and consecrated in 1875.

**SIR JEREMY DIXON: THE RESTORATION OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, COVENT GARDEN**

Followed by The Regency Society's Annual General Meeting

*Tuesday 8 April, 7.00 pm. Music Room, Royal Pavilion*  
Dixon Jones have created some of the most successful new spaces in central London, including the National Portrait Gallery extension of 2000 and the remodelling of Somerset House and its Fountain Court. They have been appointed architects for the £21 million scheme to reconfigure the National Gallery entrance.

This evening, Sir Jeremy will talk about his involvement with the Royal Opera House including his restoration of the magnificent auditorium and the transformation of the Floral Hall into a dramatic space with exciting views over the piazza

**DEREK SUGDEN: OPERA HOUSES AND CONCERT HALLS**

The Regency Society Lecture for Brighton Festival  
*Tuesday 6 May, 6.00 pm (please note time) Venue to be announced*

Derek Sugden has been responsible for the acoustic design at major music venues throughout the world including the Maltings, Snape, and Glyndebourne Opera House. His hobbies include "visiting music houses and experiencing them in performance" and his knowledge is encyclopaedic. For our special Brighton Festival lecture, Derek Sugden will give us some of his thoughts on opera houses and concert halls. Lectures are open to non-members at a cost of £5 per head.

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