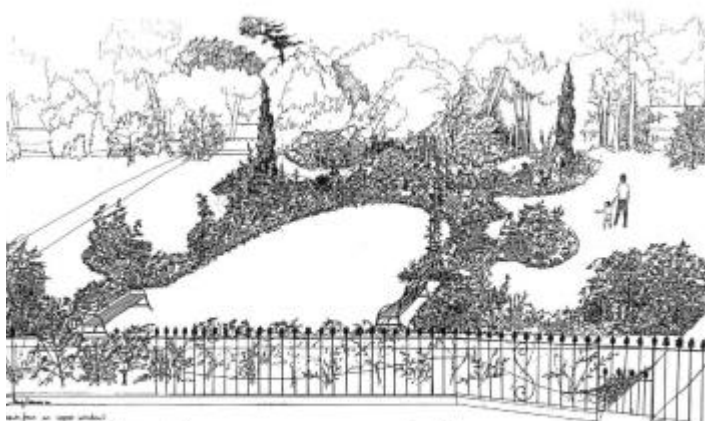


The Portsmouth Society Newsletter



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CRESCENT GARDEN, ALVERSTOKE - PROPOSED PLANTING, Spring '92

Summer 1994

PROGRAMME

Meetings are held in Room F on the 3rd Floor of the Portsmouth Central Library, Guildhall Square starting at 7.30pm, unless otherwise stated.

Wednesday 20th July

Walk-about in Alverstoke

Guided tour of The Crescent and Gardens led by Lesley Burton. Take 6.22pm Gosport Ferry, then no 8 bus to Stokes Bay at 6.35. Meet at big car park at 6.45pm. Last bus leaves Stokes Bay at 9.20pm.

Sat/Sun 10th/11th September

Heritage Open Days '94

A weekend of access to buildings not normally open to the public. The list in Portsmouth has yet to

be finalised. See article below.

Wednesday 5th October

New Buildings in Old Settings

Talk by John Winter, architect to the Naval Base Property Trust.

Wednesday 2nd November

Reuse of Redundant Dockyards

Talk by Celia Clark, Chairman of the Society.

Wednesday 7th December

The conservation of Historic Buildings in Hampshire

Deane Clark, Head of the Historic Buildings Bureau of Hampshire County Council

Wednesday 1st February 1995

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS '94

Subject to be announced.

Organised by the Civic Trust with the support of the Department of National Heritage, **Heritage Open Days '94** will provide access to properties of historic, architectural or cultural interest which are not usually open to the public.

In Portsmouth we are trying to arrange for access to Fort Cumberland, HMS Nelson wardroom, St Agatha's Church, HMS Vernon wardroom, Pitt Street Baths, and HMS Temeraire. Also, Boathouse 6, Storehouse 10, 2nd Sea Lord's building in the dockyard. As we go to press

FASCINATING ONE THOUSAND



As we were reaching 1,000 in the number of membership cards issued we decided to try for a little bit of publicity. We wanted a local celebrity to be our thousandth member. *Fascinating Aida*, which some of us had seen on its previous visit to Portsmouth, was due at the Theatre Royal on 16 June. Its star, Dillie Keane, had grown up in Portsmouth, was a brilliant performer and was approachable as her father and our secretary had been medical partners. So we wrote to her and received a most encouraging reply:

Dear Dr James,

Of course I remember you very clearly, and was delighted to hear from you. Your invitation to make me the thousandth member of the Portsmouth Society is a great thrill and I accept with alacrity and pleasure. Of all the family, I have always been the one who most loved my home town, and whenever I'm asked my origins, I always say that I am Portsmouth Irish. It's a unique breed after all!

She went on to say that she was sorry she couldn't get us any tickets for her sold-out show but

...in the meantime I enclose my membership application form filled in, plus a cheque for £4. Perhaps you can let me know what the details are of our photo opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Dillie.

The photo opportunity was arranged for outside the Theatre Royal at 7.15 with The News promising to send a photographer. A phone call



on the day revealed that that he would not be able to attend at that time so we hastily rearranged the presentation for 6.15. At 6.20 Dillie emerged from the theatre, very photogenically attired and, as there was still no sign of The News we took our own pictures. When he did turn up (at 6.40) he refused to snap our big yellow blown up membership card.

The Society's membership year runs from April to March. If you have not yet renewed for 1994-95 please do so today!

DAY SEMINAR ON OWEN'S SOUTHSEA

The Society held a Seminar on Owen's Southsea on May 21st in Dovercourt, Thomas Ellis Owen's own residence. This was our contribution to Environment Week and also a celebration of an important part of the City in connection with the 800th Anniversary.

The City Council gave us a grant as part of the 8th centenary which we used for hospitality and caretaking, and gave us the time of its officers who spoke, as all the other speakers, unpaid; the High School let us use the premises, and we collected £50 in donations from those attending. Your committee considered that it was all worth the work involved. The seminar was very well attended and offered an opportunity to bring out a wealth of disparate knowledge and expertise.

The following is a summary of the talks given, but of course we cannot reproduce any of the revealing slides or any of the great interest engendered as one new facet after another of the history and present state of Owen's Southsea was illuminated.

Barry Russell recalled his colleague, Alan Balfour, at the then Polytechnic, researching in 1968 his book on Portsmouth's buildings,

finding in the City Archives an 1838 Tithe Survey showing Owen's layout for Southsea. Two students, Preedy and Stewart, in 1970 wrote a dissertation on Owen's Southsea which the School of Architecture thought so important it published 50 copies for local distribution; the impact was great and their book of 1972 sold out. Conservation Areas were established successively in Kent Road, The Circle and Victoria Road South and at the City's behest David Lloyd produced *Buildings of Portsmouth and its Environs* in 1974. In 1975 Barry Russell and Celia Clark of the newly formed Portsmouth Society produced *Thomas Owen's Southsea: Four Guided Walks*, a leaflet with map of the properties on four walks radiating from St Jude's. Dr R. Riley of the Department of Geography then researched Owen attributions from rate books in the archives, publishing two Portsmouth Papers. Finally Owen's Southsea was designated an Outstanding Conservation Area in 1977.

Ian Stewart, one of the two students, recalled how eccentric their choice of dissertation seemed among their fellow students of the late 60's who were wedded to architectural innovation. They used the city archives, but for the most part walked the streets of Southsea attributing buildings by style, and Owen has several styles. They were much relieved when Ray Riley's historical researches mainly validated their judgements with the chief exception of Netley and Richmond Terraces. They found Owen to be not a specialist architect, but businessman, speculator and developer (and twice Mayor of Portsmouth) a combination distasteful to them at the time but one which architects are now taking up again.

David Lloyd then put Owen's planning in the context of his time. John Nash, as early as 1811, built detached classical villas in serpentine roads with green planting at Park Village, Regent's Park. Wealthy tradesmen began to move from living by their businesses in city centres to a carriage-drive away in greener streets; such planned leafy areas appear in the 1820's and 30's in Birmingham, Manchester, Cheltenham and Reading. Referring to Selina Emery-Wallis's research on the Owens, he found T.E.Owen at 21 designing a spa town by the sea in Gosport for a speculative group including his father; it was not

a financial success but The Crescent was completed. In Southsea Owen took care to be in control; backed by his wealthy architect father-in-law he bought land, planned roads, built classical terraces for rent to naval families, Italianate or gothicized villas for middle class residents, St. Jude's Church at his own expense, The Friary for his workmen and perhaps stations on the new Godalming line.

Charles Woodhouse, owner of The Friary, inherited it in 1988 from his cousin Margaret Allen who saved it from demolition for a car park. It is not mentioned in works on Owen, but the deeds show he bought a piece of marsh land by Marmion Road in 1851 and erected 'model lodging houses' on it, tradition says for the workmen building St. Jude's. The 23 flats and one shop had originally no lighting on the staircase, coal fires and paraffin lamps indoors, and outdoors shared toilets, washhouse and well. The 1988 Housing Act enabled it to be repaired and run virtually as a private housing association; some tenants have nearly a hundred years of family residence there, and the owner wishes to preserve this community. Research on the tenants in 1851 - 1890 would be welcome, and future inclusion in works on Owen.

Bob Colley described efforts to preserve Owen's townscape; Portland Terrace was listed in 1969, others followed but patchily as nineteenth century buildings were not readily accepted for listing; the listed buildings are well conserved and protected by law. Conservation Areas were set up after the 1967 Civic Amenities Act and Owen's Southsea became an Outstanding Conservation Area, with more grants available, in 1977. Some potentially damaging road widening projects had now been dropped.

John Pike considered control of development within a conservation area: unlike commercial buildings such as guest houses and shops, unlisted houses have 'permitted development' rights, allowing render-painting, altered windows, the destruction of walls; the City therefore must rely on enlightened house owners voluntarily seeking the conservation advice provided by the City and spread of knowledge through seminars like this.

Richard Trist discovered (through the Guided Walks leaflet) that Jacob Owen was his great great great grandfather. Born in 1778 Jacob became a construction engineer in Staffordshire, then from 1804 - 1832 part of the Ordnance Board responsible for defence works and barracks at home and overseas. He repaired and redesigned the City Keys still in use, built the Grand Storehouse (Vulcan) in Gunwharf and possibly Milldam Barracks. He had 17 children, 13 surviving, and outlived all but five, dying at 92 in 1870.

Rosemary Dunne dealt with Jacob Owen in Dublin where in 1832 he was in charge of the new board of public works where he worked on the Law library, military school and Mountjoy prison; he retired in 1856 at 78 and in 1867 left Dublin for Park Mount Southsea, built by his son Thomas.

Deane Clark showed slides of the severe disrepair in Portland Terrace, which had been a furniture store, and of the processes of restoration preserving historical accuracy.

Chris Romain showed some details in a poor state at St. Jude's.

Tim Sage advised restoring owners to use slate for roofing not concrete tiles, to match the original mortar, not to dip and strip panelled doors which twist but to use heat or chemicals, and to preserve all details such as cornices.

Wendy Osborne illustrated the processes of community involvement (even of children) in the restoration of The Crescent garden at Alverstoke for public use; research and fundraising were needed, and the project had been a valuable example of local authority consultation with residents and cooperation with volunteer labour.

Nick Ditchburn, City Arboricultural Officer listed the trees available to Owen, some of which remain. Trees can be managed better by crown thinning than pollarding, and careful selection of species can gradually and subtly return and increase tree cover without burdening owners with expensive pruning or potential danger; the aim is a balance between safety and appearance in these fine streets.

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PLANNING MATTERS

One of the most important activities of the Society is the reviewing of planning applications. This time-consuming work is often overlooked and we intend to publish some of the more important schemes which we have objected to or supported in recent months.

Housing at Eastney Fort West, near Eastney Barracks - we have objected because the development will spoil the setting of the fort and hinder any future pedestrian access to the site. Building on the Crinoline Gardens next to the former officer's quarters in Eastney Terrace would be over-development in a densely populated area. We would prefer to see a pocket-park for public use.

Eastney Terrace, conversion to hotel and apartments - we liked the scheme and welcome the much needed restoration work to this Grade II listed building.

Old Police Station, Albert Road - outline conversion to form a public house (no objection).

391 Old Commercial Road - Hole in the wall and paved area for car-parking (we objected).

Former Chapman's Laundry Site, Kingston Crescent - Demolish nos 50-60, build 3 to 4 storey office block with 128 car spaces. We liked the way the design conforms to the alignment of Kingston Crescent but objected to the use of the site as a temporary car park following demolition and before new building work commenced. How long is temporary? We asked that demolition should take place only when new building work was ready to start.

Wheelbarrow PH Kent Road - change of name to Tut'n'Shiv. This insensitive renaming could not be prevented. We hope that it will not be long before the owners see sense and restore its name, and the wheelbarrow that stood for countless years on the parapet high up on the front of the building (Where is it now?).

British Gas Building, Spring Gardens/Exchange Road - demolition and use of site for temporary car park (until plans for new building are

finalised). We objected and are trying to get building listed part of which is of high quality (Victorian Gothic clad in terracotta) and could be restored. Other grounds for objection were: it is against government advice to demolish in a conservation area, providing more car parking in the city centre city militates against the intention of supporting public transport, an open car park in so central and prominent a site (next to the Guildhall) promotes a bad image.

Former Vosper Thorneycroft site, Old Portsmouth - 63 new housing units, some using footings from a previous scheme, which have good features including direct harbour-side public walk. The neo-classical style which we thought clumsy and fussy does not fit in with either the old or the modern further down White Hart Road. We suggested a more modern style and more planting than indicated.

THE UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY

The Portsmouth Society arranged a one day seminar in May on the subject of the University in the City. Speakers from the University, the City Council, County Council and elsewhere addressed the 60 delegates assembled in the Menuhin Room of the Central Library. Topics included The University's place in the City, The University Campus - beyond 2000, The Master Plan, The City and County's views of the plans, Planning a new academic building, The University's mobility policy, What students gain from Portsmouth - and what they give back to it, The cultural advantages to the City and University. A discussion and open forum concluded what was a stimulating and most interesting day.

We plan to bring a full report of the event in the next issue.

HAMPSHIRE RUBBISH

On 1 June Roger James gave a talk on the disposal of household waste in Hampshire. RJ had been appointed to the South East Regional Forum - part of the consultation process set up by the County Council. He visited waste disposal sites in this country and in Denmark, had attended numerous meetings and lectures, received huge quantities of reports and had carried on questioning correspondence with the authors of several of them. What he read and saw changed his mind

several times.

He illustrated his talk with a County Council video, and slides he had taken himself and some of the County's. The problem was how best to dispose of some 600,000 tons per year of household waste in the county - roughly a ton per household. At present the waste is dealt with either by landfill or by incineration. But the County's incinerators are old, nearly worn out (the Portsmouth incinerator had to be closed two years ago) and would not meet new environmental laws due to come into force in 1996; and the landfill sites were filling up. Paulsgrove tip in particular had only four more years' capacity.

There were four main considerations in making the decision: cost in money terms, cost in terms of energy, damage to the environment by direct pollution and by transport vehicles, and linked to this, considerations of transport - how far does the rubbish have to be taken to the disposal point? He went through the four possible means of reducing or disposing of waste - not mutually exclusive - listing their advantages and snags.

Reuse This, after waste reduction, was obviously the ideal. The humble milk bottle exemplified the principle. But here you have an existing means of collection and even this was under threat because the supermarkets were undercutting the milkman. Why are not other drinks supplied, as many used to be, in returnable glass containers? Clearly because of the cost of transporting their increased weight. The centralisation of supply for supermarkets and off-licences was the point.

Recycling This was attractive at first sight. The disadvantages were the enormous cost of segregation and the difficulty in many cases of finding a market for the product. He had been impressed on a visit to the recycling plant at Sompting on the downs above Worthing, by being told that the separation, which they were carrying out of the various types of plastic bottles into their different materials, was costing them £20 a ton, even when they could find a market for the recycled product. Landfill would cost the council only £8 a ton.

Landfill This is the one method that could take care of everything. The

County Council had already ruled out out-of-county landfill on principle. However distasteful the idea may be, the great advantage of landfill - at present - is cheapness. In rural areas landfill costs authorities about £8 a ton. In contrast the SELCHP Energy-from-Waste plant at Deptford is costing £20 a ton for the waste it consumes; and recycling operations involving segregation processes cost up to £80 a ton. These costs are highly dependent on government action and subsidies, and are quite different, for example, in Germany. When complete, landfill sites can be made into usable and even beautiful additions to the landscape, e.g. at Srompting near Worthing and, provided that the necessary pipes and wells are planned in advance and installed as the pit fills up, burnable gas can be drawn off for at least ten years and used for heating or electricity generation.

Incineration Roger James had initially been attracted to incineration as an answer because it promised to recover what was perhaps the most valuable ingredient of the waste - namely energy. On the face of it, by burning it and using the heat generated we could in Hampshire save some 200,000 tons a year of coal equivalent. If you decide to go for incineration there is a case undoubtedly for not bothering with recycling or any segregation of waste. Burn it all, especially the plastics which are made from oil and in producing a lot of heat will save oil used directly for heating.

The SELCHP plant at Deptford, commissioned to deal with 400,000 tons a year of waste from Lewisham and Southwark, has cost £85 million to build. At least £26 million of this has gone towards the cleaning of flue gases. These plants have to be very large for a number of reasons; and the great size means a large collection area which means a lot of lorry traffic. The huge capital cost cannot be incurred without some guarantee of ongoing usefulness. Hampshire would have to guarantee that, say, 500,000 tons a year would be supplied for at least 20 years, making nonsense of a programme of waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

This realisation added to RJ's disillusion which began when he discovered that SELCHP, despite its name, was not in fact planning to use the efficient process of combined heat and power, CHP. In spite of

the sophistication of the flue gas cleaning processes there are still **great and justifiable worries** about the contents of these gases. There can be no guarantee of complete removal of everything harmful.

Anaerobic Digestion This is an alternative process for dealing only with organic waste. There seemed to him to be a number of snags which he outlined.

Gasification is a promising process for the future. He had visited the small experimental plant at Romsey which is being supported by the County Council; but at present it is not an option.

There is a fifth alternative of only marginal application - composting.

RJ very much feared that we might end up with two of the most expensive and mutually antagonistic of the methods of disposal - maximum recycling and incineration of what is not recycled. They would work against each other; for the greater success in recycling - and waste reduction - the less fuel for the incinerator. But the monster has to be fed.!

Best of a bad job Roger's own best-of-a-bad-job solution was to continue selective landfill - or land build-up - for the residual waste (why shouldn't Paulsgrove tip be built up higher?); and at the same time intensify efforts at waste reduction, reuse and recycling. This at least gives time, for example for gasification to come on stream, and does not involve commitment to enormous capital investment which would burden the future.

A fuller account is available on request from Roger James.

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