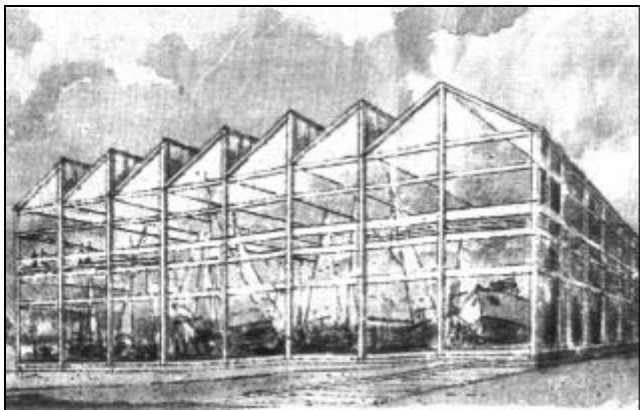


Portsmouth Society News

The Newsletter of the Portsmouth Society - April 1996

Boathouse 4 - Save or Demolish?



Boathouse 4 with glass replacing the corrugated iron, showing internal exhibits.

Boathouse 4 (BH4) in the Dockyard is the very prominent building with the green-grey corrugated end which faces you as you go in at the Victory Gate. It was built in 1938-9 and never finished because of the outbreak of war. It was intended to have another bay at its southern end. The corrugated iron wall was a 'temporary' end.

Recently it has been used for repairs to the timbers of the Victory; but last year the MOD decided they had no further use for it and handed it over to the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust (PNBT) who care for all the other buildings in the 'Heritage Area'. Boathouse 4 is not listed (The Society did apply unsuccessfully for listing a couple of years ago) but it does stand in a conservation area.

Early this year the PNBT applied for planning

permission to demolish the building. Their reasons were that they had no use for it and a report had shown that it was in a bad state of repair and needed money spending on it. According to their own terms of reference they were not permitted to spend their limited funds on 'non-heritage' buildings.

The law is that demolition in a conservation area shall be permitted only if it can be shown that the area is thereby enhanced. The PNBT's argument was that by demolishing BH4 they would open up splendid views: of the great Boathouse 6 from ships in the Harbour, of the three splendid 18th century storehouses, at present partly masked by BH4, from Victory Gate, and of the Harbour itself from within the Heritage Area. They also argued that the mere providing of this large open space would of itself be an enhancement.

The application raised two interesting controversial matters: where did heritage begin and end? And

could the demolition of a building, leaving an empty space, be regarded as enhancement of an area?

From the heritage angle it was argued that BH4 was but the latest in a series of boathouses in the area; the magnificent iron-framed, brick walled Boathouse 6 of 1846 across the mastpond and the two wooden late 19th century boathouses on either side of the pond, No.5, housing the Mary Rose exhibition, and No.7, recently converted to restaurant, dockyard exhibition, education area and shop. It was just its style and particularly its temporary wall that tended in some minds to deny a heritage role to BH4.

These were nicely balanced arguments and the executive committee of the Society went away to think about them. What decided us in the end against demolition were the imaginative ideas for renovation which would both give the building a use and transform its appearance - one put forward by the Director of the Royal Naval Museum and the other by the Winchester architect, Huw Thomas, acting on behalf of SAVE Britain's Heritage. There remains the problem of funding. It was at first thought that BH4 would not be eligible to apply to the Lottery Heritage Fund because it is not listed. However, the Society have ascertained that it is the opinion of English Heritage (EH) that it would qualify because of the national, if not international, importance of this particular conservation area; and furthermore EH would back any application made.

When members of the planning committee came to the meeting on February 21 most were under the impression that what they had to decide was

between keeping a disused, decaying and - as many thought - ugly building, "a green tin shed", and demolishing it to leave a cleared open space. (The interior steelwork is actually thought by many to be a splendid example of a large scale engineering structure). Most of the councillors were unaware of the fact that two schemes of rehabilitation had been proposed, both of which would transform the appearance from Victory Gate by replacing the corrugated iron wall with glass. There were four deputations to the planning meeting. Peter Goodship, chief executive of PNBPT, put their case for demolition; but there were three very effective deputations on the other side: Emma Phillips from SAVE, Michael Flower, a quantity surveyor working with Huw Thomas, and Peter Cobb of the Fortress Study Group who argued passionately for keeping the building and, if glazing proved too expensive, covering the iron with concrete cast on site. Councillors were visibly moved by these deputations and they resolved not to give permission for demolition for 12 to 18 months in order to allow time to see if rehabilitation was feasible.

This reprieve is allowing Mr Thomas to work up the details of his proposal - his sketch of what it would look like is on our cover. The idea is that it would have three functions: naval aircraft would be displayed, suspended from the gables inside the building; that on the ground level small 20th century boats would be displayed and perhaps repaired - the work being part of the visitors' experience; and that at a higher level there should be a restaurant

Art in Cities

The following is an abstract of a Guardian article headed "Our shining cities" which said that "an exhilarating mix of enterprising council chiefs, arts enthusiasts and Lottery cash is revitalising towns and cities around Britain."

Singled out for example was Kirklees metropolitan council in West Yorkshire where "it was change of leadership, rather than the availability of hard cash, that was crucial". In 1988, this new leadership launched its Vision for Kirklees, inviting partners to come forward with whom it could work. ... "some local art workers who felt they had very little to lose tiptoed up the garden path of the council and tapped on the door. To their amazement, it flew open and they were invited to take a seat at the table. they made 50 recommendations for cultural developments in Kirklees as part of the council's regeneration strategy."

"The result is that a local authority which 10 years ago was 'parochial, faction-ridden, narrow-minded,

defensive and riddled with self-doubt' now has an acclaimed 20,000-seat stadium for sports and arts events, a new 625 seat theatre, a media centre - as well as events to match. Huddersfield for example now hosts a contemporary music festival and calls itself the poetry capital of Britain.

"Down the road, Batley ... has started compiling an archive history of the community in sound, pictures and text".

"The concept of culture in the community takes on a different form at the Birmingham-based charity, Public Art Commissions Agency. The agency's role has been to open people's eyes and ears by bringing new life to the city and town centres ... there is an increasing awareness of the importance of artists in the public realm".

"The consensus is increasing that cultural planning and the management of what some are calling 'cultural industries' must increasingly be from the bottom up....The new unitary authorities have a



RAILTRACK

Spurred by SAVE OUR RAILWAYS which some of us belong to, we wrote to both our MPs urging them to oppose the proposed privatisation of Railtrack as follows:

"The Portsmouth Society ... are extremely unhappy about what we know of the proposed sale - in May we understand - of Railtrack. We ask you to do what you can to ensure that whoever owns it, arrangements are made for substantial investment in the railways."

"Railtrack's own plans are wholly inadequate. They have abandoned BR's plan to refurbish and modernise the West Coast main line and their maintenance plans imply that each length of rail will have to last 127 years."

"At the time of the passing of the Railways Act it was understood that Railtrack would not be sold until all the passenger services had been franchised. If the government have gone back on that and are hell bent on selling it off now, can you at least ensure that it is written into the contract that any proceeds from asset-stripping, selling off buildings, land etc,

have to be ploughed back into the railway operation. We understand that several Conservative MPs are keen to see this safeguard written in."

"It is widely estimated that the sale price will be of the order of £2 billion - 23,000 miles of track for the cost of two or three miles of the new Jubilee line extension. At that bargain price the purchaser ought to be able to afford very substantial investment in the system."

Mr Martin replied: "... I shall seek comment on the concerns you raise with me and contact you again. 'Lack of investment' has been a persistent criticism for as long as I can remember".

Mr Griffiths however had this to say: "I note the views of your Society but would have to disagree entirely. The whole purpose of the privatisation of the railways is to ensure the availability of private capital and efficient business management in order to improve the services. To delay the sale of Railtrack beyond the point where commercial interests are prepared to take on these responsibilities would simply put back the time when

Switching Priorities in Ipswich

A street stall, a jazz quartet and white and burgundy balloons for the children - this sounds more like pavement entertainment than a local authority at work. But in Ipswich, where councillors and officers cast off weekday formality for Saturday morning mufti, the combination has become a key part of the decision-making process.

Families lured by the razzmatazz to find out just what is going on in the town centre or the estate shopping arcade are encouraged to say just what they think should be the municipal priorities. The results of such "quality roadshows" - a term that proves even this borough has some bureaucratic starch - have already helped the Labour-run authority to switch funds from leisure to economic regeneration, particularly targeting companies which might want to move to the area .

Job creation, housing and the environment are seen as more important by the council-tax paying punters than leisure services, a preference confirmed by wider, more formal opinion polling in the borough. There are also far more down-to-earth everyday concerns - safety on estates and the town centre, the cost of car parking, the state of pavements-and council leader David Ball believes they provide a much wider picture than councillors' surgeries.

Officers involved say the , relaxed carnival atmosphere means people do not feel intimidated, in stark contrast to other consultation exercises where the council's exhibition bus was used

Ball hopes his authority's experience "will encourage more and more councils to consider their lines of communication. Most councils say they do a lot. but only touch a tiny proportion of the population. It is the

Membership Reminder

Please remember to renew your membership of the Society as soon as possible as subscriptions became due on 1st April. Please use the renewal form on the

Annual report

If you missed the recent annual general meeting and would like a copy of the Society's report for 1995 then please contact the Secretary at the address shown on the back page.

City Parking Survey

Recently publicised results of a survey by Hampshire County Council on car parking in Fratton and Havelock wards have shown that the streets in these areas (as in many other parts of Portsmouth) are becoming clogged with parked cars. When built, the city's rows of terraced houses were not designed to accommodate the private motor vehicle yet now the car is seen as an essential item of modern living by many people. With the growth in traffic currently estimated at 3% per year and the fact that four out of ten homes in the city do not have a car, the problem of parking is likely to get much worse unless action is taken, **but what can be done?**

The answer lies in a combination of actions for which no one organisation has sole responsibility. We must look to the council for evaluating and implementing resident's parking schemes which work well in other towns and cities. The provision of better, more accessible and well co-ordinated public transport should be top priority for local and central government (the latter having concentrated on reducing costs at the expense of quality and co-operation). More and better cycle routes are needed



to encourage people to take to their bicycles for commuting and shopping trips along with secure parking for bicycles. And finally there is the gradual change in culture where the car is not seen as the only means of transport. Who wants to travel on a busy bank holiday and get stuck in traffic jams? Who wants to visit tourist attractions and beauty spots to be greeted by seas of cars parked everywhere? The motor car is a great asset but the day of judgement

"The Biggest Aspidistra in" Portsmouth!



For those residents who care a great deal about the natural environment of our city, and Milton in particular, the 13th April 1995 is very important, as it is the date when a Tree Preservation Order was made by our City Council to protect the majority of the trees in the grounds of the St. James' Hospital.

The City of Portsmouth is second only to London in its housing density, and yet we have this unique area of outstanding parkland which is a precious part of our City's heritage in the form of mature trees, shrubs and hedges, most of which were planted just after the turn of this century, to line the driveways, creating pleasant avenues around the outlying villas for privacy.

Impending development of the site for new hospital buildings and houses made it important that the Order should specify the exact location and species of individual trees, rather than a "blanket" Order. This was a colossal undertaking, necessitating a complete survey of the whole site, monitoring every tree for condition, measuring height and spread on site, and then preparing plans to plot those trees to be included in the Preservation Order. Hundreds of

trees were involved, and the time needed was very considerable.

Meanwhile as outline planning applications were being received by the Council from the Health Authority who are the owners, anxious members or the public wrote in and petitioned the Council, urging that the trees be given the high priority they deserved when planning applications for development of the site were being considered.

After a period of six months the work was at last completed, and the Tree Preservation Order was made which covers 1,649 trees, consisting of well over 50 different species of tree. This is the largest Tree Preservation Order that the Portsmouth City Council has undertaken, and is ever likely to undertake in the future! They are to be congratulated for taking the protection of the trees on the St James' Hospital site seriously, and it is hoped that efficient monitoring in the future will ensure that any development does not jeopardise any protected trees.

On 29th September this year a further Tree Preservation Order was made by the Council to protect those trees and various shrubs in the St James' Playing Field which are in a healthy enough condition to be included, and which have lined this



Public Consultation on the South Hampshire Rapid Transit Scheme

The Portsmouth Society's response 17th

The Portsmouth Society are in favour of the development of LRT but are doubtful about the current proposal, particularly because it involves a tunnel under Portsmouth Harbour which will be disproportionately costly compared with the rest of the route. In addition to its expense its success would necessarily militate against the viability of the existing Gosport-Portsmouth Ferry. We are in favour of developing water routes for passengers and it is ironic that the first effect of LRT will be probably to sink the only water route we have.

About LRT we, in the Portsmouth Society, have a sense of *deja-vu*. The very first public meeting we held after our formation in 1973 was concerned with public transport and the Assistant County Surveyor of the time told us that LRT was the way ahead. In 23 years there have been many reports but nothing practical has been done, partly in our opinion because the wrong routes have been chosen.

The county's own South Hampshire Transportation Study of the 1980s advanced serious arguments against what is now proposed. The conclusion then was that intensification of the bus system would be more likely to attract more people to public transport and that while "the Mini-tram proposals (for the Fareham - Gosport corridor) ... would attract considerable patronage, ... much of this would be transfer from conventional bus services and that there would be negligible reduction in road traffic in the corridor" (para 6.2, page 22).

However we appreciate that much work has gone into the preparation of phase 1 (Fareham-Gosport-Portsmouth) and if anything is to be achieved soon it will have to be along this route. Our doubts are mainly concerned lest it should turn out not to be viable.

What we want to urge is that preparations and surveys should start now for phase 2, the Portsmouth-Waterloo route which is of far greater importance to Portsmouth people. We would like to see it running south to Southsea and perhaps along Southsea Sea Front. Part of the Waterloo route still remains from the old Hordean Light Railway with an embankment by the side of London Road up Portsdown Hill and a bridge across

Southwick Hill Road.

Paragraph 231 of the draft Structure Plan, Hampshire 2011 says: "... make the best use of the existing transportation infrastructure for all modes of travel ..." and we very much agree with this. The existing railway track has stations at many of the places people want to go to and from: Fareham, Portchester, Cosham, Hilsa, Fratton, central Portsmouth and Portsea, and also Bedhampton and Havant; and there are plans for stations at Paulsgrove, Farlington and Copnor. We need frequent - 10 minute - rail services linking all these. If this would inconvenience and interrupt the long distance rail services then the possibility of doubling the tracks should be faced, or a tube-like signalling system. This could well be cheaper than the harbour tunnel. Unlike the Fareham-Portsmouth route where there is a railway line enabling the journey to be accomplished in twenty minutes, Waterloo has no railway and much of it lies away to the west of the motorway. That is why we think that LRT is urgently needed for journeys from central Portsmouth to Waterloo which would of course serve Cosham en route, and that this could be routed along the railway track from Portsmouth & Southsea to Cosham and then along the route of the old Hordean Light Railway.

We think we should be developing water services from Fareham and from Southampton Road, Paulsgrove, not only to Portsmouth Harbour station but to the Continental Ferry Port or Albert Johnson Quay, by conventional boat, hovercraft or hydrofoil. Even services across Langstone Harbour might be possible by hovercraft. There is well-established water transport organised by the MoD whereby dockyard workers from the Gosport peninsula park their cars in Royal Clarence Yard and are daily ferried across the water to Portsmouth dockyard; and there is a service from Haslar also. The Millennium project for Portsmouth Harbour proposes several water bus services. Water transport has the great advantage over both road and rail that its routes can be constantly varied according to demand and its track never needs renewing although its pontoons do.

Focusing specifically on LRT, our recommendations are:

WISH LIST FOR MAY ELECTIONS

This May's elections for the city council will be particularly crucial. The whole council are up for election, not just a third of it as usual, and the new council will, as a unitary authority, from April 1997 be taking on a number of new responsibilities and functions hitherto discharged by Hampshire County Council. At their meeting in February the Society's executive committee compiled a "wish list" a kind of manifesto for the new council as a new broom.

Below is a list of points which members raised and could perhaps be assembled into a kind of manifesto before the May elections:

General

Much better co-operation between departments of the council.

Pride in Portsmouth

Recognition of what we have - so much of the economy depends on tourism - the whole city needs to be well maintained and designed.

Change of city council's culture on voluntary bodies.

Transport

Possible formation of Passenger Transport Authority ? Sustainable transport - development of policies with employers and employees, e.g. restriction of parking especially for the employees of the council itself and of the university ? Cycle ways, especially for the whole length of Eastern Road.

Park and Ride, not just for shoppers at weekends - we want to encourage shoppers - but for commuters through the week, many of whom would be happy to leave their cars at Cosham and go on by bus if it were made worth their while.

Save our Railways (see item article) Ask MPs to vote against selling off Railtrack

Economic development

Reuse Tricorn rather than demolish it

Use redundant MOD sites to create employment

Higher quality of buildings on the sea front and in other sites of visitor importance.

Improve the quality of design on public sites.

The University as landowners need to be in closer dialogue with the city and community.

University Estates Committee should have a higher standard in commissioning new buildings.

The Environment

Sensible waste management consultation. We recommend continuing tipping at Paulsgrove (make a mound) until a safe alternative emerges.

Cleaner sea water and coastline - Blue flag for beaches

Support Friends of the Earth - the list they presented at the Environmental Services Policy Conference.

Trees in St James's - The city should have a clear aim to create a St James's Park (There are now 1,649 TPOs on the site - something we can take credit for. We urged the need to do this on a reluctant Planning Officer). We are in touch with the Hampshire Gardens.

Trust. Money is available from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to buy land for city to develop as parks.

Cheer up the approaches to the city, especially Eastern Road, Hilsea and railway line.

Buildings

Reinstate historic buildings grants. The budget for last year and the coming year is zero.

Reduce the overpriced rents of council-owned shops.

Moratorium on sale of council properties.

Development of railway land.

Sea Front Cafés

The Society are making a complaint to the Ombudsman about the way in which the designs for the two new cafés on Southsea seafront were chosen. It has only recently become apparent that there was at least one other choice for the much criticised Blue Oasis site.

Our complaint is of course driven by dismay at the extreme dullness of the designs on sites where sparkle and jollity, even frivolity, would be in order. However this matter of style would not be a ground for official complaint; what does constitute a ground is the fact that the choices were not made in public

by committees of councillors.

Our aim is to improve the arrangements within the council for approving new buildings on council property, so that the decisions are made in public in the light of professional advice, for example from the council's own Design Service. The designs for each cafe were approved by the Planning Committee, but councillors were unaware that other proposals which they might have preferred had been submitted. It seems to us important that the procedure should be tightened up now before design decisions have to be made for the Millennium tower and promenade and

Programme

Meetings are held at 7.30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month in Room F, 3rd Floor of the Norrish Library, Guildhall Square.

Wednesday 1 May

The Single Regeneration Grant

The SRG is a Department of the Environment scheme for funding the regeneration of older areas. Speakers will be Martin Dennison and Marion Dawson.

Monday 6 May

St Mary's Church May Fayre

The Portsmouth Society will have a display inside the church along with other societies and groups.

Wednesday 5 June

Portsmouth Shopping and Shopping Policy

Speakers: Ron Tate, Assistant City Planning Officer, and Geoff Wade of PIMCO (Portsea Island Mutual Co-operative Society)

Non-members are welcome but, are asked to contribute £1 towards the cost of putting on these meetings.

Wednesday 3 July

Walkabout in Shanklin, I.O.W.

Conducted by David Lloyd, meet at Skanklin Station 7.00pm

Membership

To join or renew your membership, please send this form with your cheque made payable to The Portsmouth Society to:-

Jean Thompson, Hon. Treasurer, The Portsmouth Society, 4 Malvern Road, Southsea, Hampshire, PO5 2NA.

Please enrol me/us as:-

ORDINARY MEMBER	£4.00
JOINT MEMBERS	£7.00
STUDENT	£3.00
SENIOR CITIZEN	£3.00
SENIOR COUPLE	£5.00
JUNIOR	£3.00

CORPORATE MEMBER
£25.00

I/We enclose subscription of £

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Portsmouth Society Merchandise

To improve identification at public events, and in general, the Society is considering ordering a range of articles with a logo. We would like you to let us know which you would be interested in ordering:

Mugs, T shirts, Sweat shirts, Polo Shirts

Please tick which of these you would like, and give size where appropriate. Send your replies to

Rosemary Flewitt 7 Mayles Road,
Milton, PO4 8NP. Tel: 01705 817713

Recycling Tip!



When you have finished reading this newsletter.... please pass it onto a

THE PORTSMOUTH SOCIETY

registered with the Civic Trust -

Chairman: Celia Clark, 8 Florence Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 2NE, Tel 01705 732912

Secretary: Roger James, 9 Eastern Villas Road, Southsea, Hants, PO4 0SU, Tel 01705 734555.

Treasurer: Jean Thompson, 4 Malvern Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 2NA. Tel 01705 821667.

Registered Charity No 266116

Photographic Record of

It has been suggested that we keep a photographic record of Portsmouth's Streets as there are small but continual changes to the scene as time passes. What do you think? Would you be willing to photograph streets in your area? Do you have old photographs of Portsmouth? Please let us know.