

Portsmouth Society News

The Newsletter of the Portsmouth Society - January 1997 (2)

Gunwharf / HMS Vernon- The Most Important Opportunity



Vulcan Building after restoration by the proposed Berkeley Homes / Lordland Developments / Hedley Greentree scheme - a splendid sight. But you won't see it from the harbour or the promenade. It will be hemmed in by houses.

The future of this unique waterfront site is so important that we are devoting this issue to it. To get the best deal for the city the decision must not be rushed.

What does this scheme do for Portsmouth?

The Gunwharf proposals are so complex that the executive committee has set up a subgroup to stem what at first appeared to be a headlong rush towards the granting of planning permission, which in our view would be completely inappropriate in a scheme of this importance. Surely the scheme is not so fragile financially that it cannot survive a few months working on improvements to it? Behind the developers lies the Ministry of Defence and behind them the Treasury. The pressure is not linked to the Millennium. It is the government's insistence on getting a high price for the site that is responsible for the scheme's overdevelopment.

Our first action, on sensing the pressure towards granting permission for an unconsidered scheme, was

to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment to ask him to 'call in' the application so that a public inquiry would be held. We are particularly keen that alternative ideas of real quality, responsive to local needs, should get an airing. We here set out our likes and dislikes about the proposals. We are relieved to find now that the City Planning Officer is in negotiation with the developers and both the Royal Fine Art Commission and English Heritage, who are looking critically at the proposals.

Above all our aim is to avoid wasting this unique opportunity for the city on something that is not good enough. What is in the city's best long term interests? Is Portsmouth to be a second rate place - or an international centre of excellence for the next millennium? We print here an abridged version of the criticisms made by David Lloyd.

We urge everybody to write with their views both to the City Planning Officer (Civic Offices, Portsmouth, PO1 2AU) and to their local councillors. If you don't know who they are, ask Roger James on

A Future for the Past?

So that local people could see for themselves the potential of this vital harbour side site to the future of our city, the Portsmouth Society arranged with the Defence Land Agent for public tours on the Heritage Open Days: 14/15 September 1996. With its future very much in the air, we were and still are keen, as the local civic society aiming to promote high standards of architecture and planning, to know how people view the site's past and its future. 150 people took the opportunity, and over a third of them told us what they thought about it.

All believed that Gunwharf's future is very important to that of the city. Most said it should be treated as an historic site combined with new development. Nearly all of them felt it was very important to keep, refurbish and reuse the historic buildings which represent its use by the army and navy. Beside the four buildings that the developers are committed to keeping, many wanted to retain others such as the elegant wardroom and its garden, the chief petty officers' mess, Warrior block, and the Actaon Building with its fine stone wharf - all of which are associated with HMS Nelson. As David Lloyd says, recent history is just as important as recent history and to some people it has even more

significance. All Navy buildings would be swept away by the current developers' scheme. The finest structure, the grand Vulcan storehouse has a marvellous interior space on the first floor which it would be a crime to turn into flats. It should be a public building: it would make a marvellous visual arts centre.

All these buildings could be adapted for the uses the developers plan for the site. Portsmouth has a most successful record of reuse: the City Museum, Southsea Castle, St. Mary's House, the Dog and Duck are just a few examples. What does sustainability mean if it does not include reusing for modern needs the bricks and mortar the past bequeathes us?

A two to one majority were against the Millennium tower, seeing it as irrelevant. The harbour entrance is dramatic enough already. The Society will also be campaigning for a change in the disposal rules for Ministry of Defence sites: sale to the highest bidder practically never produces good results.

Our councillors will soon be asked to make an important decision. We need to let them know how a first class scheme combines the past with



The Wardroom at HMS Vernon, built in 1926 and named "Ariadne".

Gunwharf Quays - The Portsmouth Society's Response

The Portsmouth Society's Executive Committee decided to work towards improvement of the Berkeley Homes application rather than opposing it, though it was important to recognise that we

What we like about the proposals

need not assume that there could be no other scheme.

We are pleased to see the canal extended and being made an important feature of the site.

We are pleased to see catering - good class restaurants and cafés - at Gunwharf which will draw people into the site.

We are pleased that there is little surface car-parking or traffic.

What we dislike about the proposals

We are pleased to see the proposal to rebuild the demolished wing of the Vulcan building and its cupola and the retention of the crane.

The proposal is a third-rate waste of a world class opportunity.

The site is crammed too full with development because of the very high price expected by the Ministry of Defence.

We question the developer's claim that 1500 jobs will be created on the site.

There is not enough public open space on the waterfront which is where things really happen and where the best views are.

Unique asset wasted

The best waterfront sites on the southern part of Gunwharf are to be occupied by exclusive private housing - which is the opposite of good planning in the interests of the Portsmouth community.

One of the greatest lost opportunities - the prospect of the endless and varied water traffic. Nowhere else in Britain is there this marvellous movement of craft - from warships, 30,000 ton cross-channel ferries, Isle of Wight ferries, pilot boats, Gosport ferries and yachts of all types - to be seen close to. If you go to Greenwich or Liverpool the water is almost lifeless. Portsmouth is unique. At present the public can only enjoy this spectacle indoors from the two pubs on the Point. Almost as good a prospect is obtainable from the southern part of the Gunwharf site where the helicopter pad is situated, but the developers' scheme hands over this priceless asset to about twenty private houses! We would like to see this part of the quay used for pubs, cafes and restaurants. The Promenade, which is part of the Millennium

Planning and Conservation

scheme, but not of this application, will provide that view. Our cover picture of the reconstructed Vulcan building from the developers' brochure won't be the view you will get from the sea. We want a wider gap to show it off.

As a conservation area (No 25), also highly visible from another, Old Portsmouth (No 4), to say nothing of the site's visibility from the shipping channel and from Gosport, we are surprised that the government advice that developments affecting conservation areas should not be dealt with by outline applications is not being followed. PPG 15 says that only when the details are available in a detailed application can the effect of the proposal on the conservation area and its quality be assessed. What is the point of a conservation area which is to be totally cleared except for a few isolated structures?

Provision for the Arts

The case for the arts as key elements in city regeneration should not need to be restated. There

Gunwharf Quays - The Portsmouth Society's Response (continued)

should be a major arts facility at the heart of the scheme. Given the difference from our climate, the amphitheatre would hardly function in the same way as in Cape Town.

The setting and proposed use of the major historic building on the site, the Vulcan building, is not acceptable. As the major historic structure surviving from the days of the Gunwharf, built for an important public purpose, it would be a crime to reduce the magnificent interior to flats. We believe that the planners must have written the brief without seeing the splendid unencumbered spaces on the first and second floors. These would be totally lost in any conversion to residential use. We will be pressing for public use of these very fine spaces. Most appropriate would be a Visual Arts Centre, perhaps funded by Southern Arts, which should be pressed for by the city as a planning gain. Whether this would affect the viability of the scheme is not our concern. The benefits of the sale of government owned land should surely be returned to the community.

Sustainability

The scheme ignores completely the principle of sustainability, which should also be cited in relation to the demolition of so much reusable building. We are horrified that decent buildings such as the formerly listed Wardroom are simply to be thrown away. Other buildings such as the Commanding Officer's House, Chief Petty Officers' Mess and Actaeon building (gun carriage sheds) are also worth retaining. This would be suitable for conversion to factory shopping, if fire and safety regulations could be met since the building consists of wide largely uninterrupted bays. All these buildings are adjacent to the access road or waterfront; if this point is not made now, it might be taken as acceptance of the whole proposal and they would be lost.

We object to the filling in of the seabed between the north Gunwharf wall and the harbour station, which would be hugely expensive, contributing to the very large overall costs. The historical significance of the Portland stone wharf adjacent to the gun carriage sheds needs investigating. The opportunity for further exciting waterfront development using the more historic buildings would be lost if the water is filled in.

Shopping

The City Council's Planning Brief states that limited provision for leisure/specialist shopping would be acceptable, though it also says that there is to be "no restriction on the total amount of floorspace permissible"... "The aim of these constraints is to protect the vitality and viability of Portsmouth's existing retail centres". These three statements are simply not compatible. The amount of shopping proposed is as much as half again of the floor area of the city centre.

We are dismayed at the size and prominence of the enclosed leisure/factory shopping shed on top of the car-parking sunk on the seabed. What a waste of a key site, to make an enclosed building on this scale for a use that could be put on waste or brown land! Though initially moneymaking, factory shopping might fade out, as is the case at Capetown, where the equivalent building is by no means fully let, and we'd be left with a ugly white elephant. Since there is no distinction in planning law between factory shopping and ordinary retail, we are worried about the effect of the scheme on the new Tricorn centre, city centre and Southsea shops.

Quality of Design

Despite the reference to "a world class mixed use waterfront development" we are not alone in considering the quality of architecture to be third-rate, unworthy of such a prestigious and prominent site. Instead of exhilarating modern buildings which would attract and inspire people to come to the site, we have a collection of old clichés - ziggurats, toadstools, maritime tat. What we want is a Portsmouth architecture which has the excitement of Barcelona or Bilbao. We are not reassured that design references will be taken from Old Portsmouth (why not Portsea?) which are likely to produce repro. We understand that there has been very little time to propose buildings of real quality, but it is for this reason that time should be taken to improve the design.

The Millennium

We are surprised to see the Millennium Tower now made part of the scheme. Its design remains poor. If we are to have a tower, we want a world-class design, arrived at through architectural competition. What steps are being taken to arrange this? The Secretary of State for National Heritage agreed with us that this was the way to generate a pool of excellent designs to

Gunwharf Quays - The Portsmouth Society's Response (continued)

choose from, yet although the contract is still not signed, a year after the announcement, no progress has been made. Ben Stoneham, Chairman of the Portsmouth and Southeast Partnership which had initiated the Millennium scheme, liked the idea of a design competition for the Millennium Tower and walkway and promised to see what he could do to set one up. Professor Michael Ellison of University College London, has offered to run a competition via the Landscape Institute.

The Millennium Walkway has not been allocated sufficient width or significance. It should widen to a piazza to give the Vulcan building a worthy setting and make it more visible from the sea and the promenade.

Transport

The site is so exceptionally well served by public transport, the issue of the sustainability of the scheme in the face of the proposed large car parking provision arises. How can it possibly be justified? Far more parking is being provided than the government's current recommendation. If the major road access to the site is to be via Park Road, how is this compatible with the City's proposed Millennium Boulevard, which is meant to be a major pedestrian link with the city centre? If

Cambridge Road is used, the University's plans for a unified campus will be destroyed. There are no significant provisions for cyclists - the proposed junction is positively cyclist unfriendly - and most pedestrians will have to enter the site at the same point as all the road traffic.

Before the reclamation takes place there will have to be an order under the Transport Works Act, and various procedures to change the Anglesey Road junction - all of which take time, to say nothing of the detailed civil engineering work. No preparatory work is yet being done by the City Engineer. If disruption to the local communities of Portsea and Old Portsmouth is to be minimised the routing of demolition and construction traffic needs to be discussed fully and soon, or things could be very unpleasant in the area for several years.

Lack of social provision

The lack of social housing when there is a clear need in the city should also be stressed, in the light of the Council's current priority to tackle deprivation. There is also an unmet need for university housing, which could be provided in a couple of medium height blocks.

Who is to determine the application?

The DOE have not yet officially said whether they will call in the application, but we have had a letter from Sir Jocelyn Stevens on behalf of English Heritage which said that although an outline application was contrary to government guidelines for conservation areas, EH had been consulted on the planning brief.

We have received further material from the City Planning Officer. The Planning Department is hoping to take it to committee in February 19, which in our view is far too soon for such a complex proposal and will result in a third-rate scheme. Time is needed for the generation of alternative ideas and for detailed consultations of the communities closest to the site and of the Portsmouth community as a whole. The means so far proposed are only passive: a colour leaflet advertising the scheme paid for by the city distributed to every household, with no hint that it might not be ideal, and three days of exhibitions near the site - all paid for by the city council. Much more needs to be done by the developer, not the City Council. At the least they could answer the serious questions about traffic, employment and design at a public meeting.



The Telecommunication Tower, Barcelona by Norman Foster - an exciting design.

David Lloyd on Gunwharf

David Lloyd, architectural historian, well known to most members of the society, has written to us to comment on the developers' proposals and on the brief that they were working to. Here are his criticisms:

The proposals

The developers want to "dramatically increase tourism business" in historic Portsmouth. Certainly Portsmouth could attract more tourists, to its benefit, but there must surely be some desirable limit. Whatever is provided on the Gunwharf site, the main attractions of Portsmouth will obviously be the historic ships themselves - Victory, Warrior and what remains of Mary Rose in its museum. But the capacity of these is limited. However much more, ancient and modern, is made accessible for tourists to visit, they will mostly want, at some time, to see one or more of the historic ships; and one's ambition, in developing tourist potential should be conditioned by the capacity of these ships and their associated museums. In any case tourism beyond a certain point would make the older parts of Portsmouth less appealing to the city's residents. The developers refer several times to their Cape Town project. "Events on the City Quay will be stage-managed, building on the Cape Town experience ..." One must ask, how far is their experience there relevant to Portsmouth? Cape Town is a metropolitan city ... with a benevolent climate. The sort of leisure and trading activities which appeal to people there might be different from those appealing to visitors to Portsmouth, with its very different status and climate.

Reference is made to a "world class mixed use waterfront development at Gunwharf Quays". This is an exaggerated assessment of the quality of the developers' proposals, if they were all realised - or, to be fair, of any proposals which could practically be made for the waterfront.

Reference is also made to a "speciality shopping centre for the people of Portsmouth and its region", and to a "speciality shopping centre blending fashion, gifts, home furnishings, antiques and destination stores with a maritime bias." Some at least of these facilities would compete with the established shopping centres of Commercial Road and Palmerston Road. One must be sceptical as to how far the intended shopping facilities would be "entirely different to the traditional 'in town'

shopping centres".

There is little doubt that the shopping proposals go far beyond those envisaged in the brief.

What potential there is for a "speciality" market must be open to doubt. Once retail use has been established in the intended Gunwharf centre, there would be nothing to prevent it developing along more general lines. One should look at the somewhat similar earlier proposals made at Ocean Village, Southampton, and see how the originally very ambitious shopping centre there has fared after several years. Also the smaller Town Quay development at Southampton, where all the original shops have now closed (apart from a café) and they are being converted into offices - also the Brooks shopping precinct at Winchester and the Meridian at Havant should be taken as warnings of what might happen. In any case large-scale shopping is not particularly relevant to the Gunwharf site or to the naval traditions of the area.

The Multiplex Cinema is in itself a commendable proposition - its potential success could be gauged from the experience of the similar facility recently opened in Southampton.

What prospect will there be for the "Gallery of Electronic Art" as envisaged? Would the City Council run it? If so how would it integrate with the existing Museum Service?

The concept of the Millennium Boulevard is disquieting.

The part outside the Gunwharf site involves major traffic difficulties on Park and Anglesea Roads. Within the Gunwharf it seems to lead to an indeterminate series of spaces/buildings, not particularly aligned on anything; one would have to turn awkwardly to reach the heart of the reconstructed area. Why a "boulevard"? I suggest something more deliberately informal, leading visitors more subtly to the heart of the area, by a necessarily slightly indirect route - getting away from an overall right-angled grid concept. **I question the whole concept of a grand approach, externally and internally.**

The loss of the Wardroom block which is not "inevitable" is "regretted".

It could provide a telling link with HMS Vernon's

David Lloyd on Gunwharf (continued)

occupancy of the site as well as making a pleasing contrast to all the new buildings around. The retention of an older building at this corner of the site, relatively far from the Georgian buildings to be retained, would be particularly valuable.

Opening one or more of the railway arches to provide direct access to The Hard could provide as dramatic an effect as does the archway entry into Victoria Park from the War Memorial.

One must question the viability of all the proposed “leisure” developments around the new City Quay, and how flexible they would be in relation to weather conditions. The form and intended use of the “Viewing and Exhibition Area” needs to be thought out, if the idea of such a feature is to be retained.

Further thought should be given to the future use of the Vulcan building, which architecturally and historically is the centrepiece of the area. The report refers, commendably, to the old axis through the central arch of the Vulcan building - to which the brief did not draw sufficient attention. Is the conversion of all of the building (and the use of its reconstructed wing) as residential accommodation the best solution?

A fairly large amount of new housing is acceptable in principle on this inner-urban site. It is a pity that the university should not be represented beyond the suggested Business School. Is there no scope for a students’ hall of residence, which would provide another element in the redeveloped site (not related to tourism), and would be good for the students involved? Such a hall might be available, as elsewhere, for letting during vacations. It would be popular on such a site.

The design of the new housing, as indicated on the drawings, must give rise to misgivings.

Two massive blocks trying to look like storehouses are shown fronting the new canal, on a bigger scale than the restored Vulcan building. While they may be an attempt to evoke the naval/military design traditions of Portsmouth, these suggested buildings do seem too bulky and blatantly deceptive. On the other hand the suggested waterfront housing would be many-gabled and romantic. For this there is virtually no precedent in the older parts of Portsmouth, where the Georgian houses are simple, formal and classical, with horizontal rooflines.

I suggest:

o Scaling down the intended development, particularly the shopping element. - further thought being given to all the intended “leisure uses” in relation to future public open areas and existing or proposed buildings.

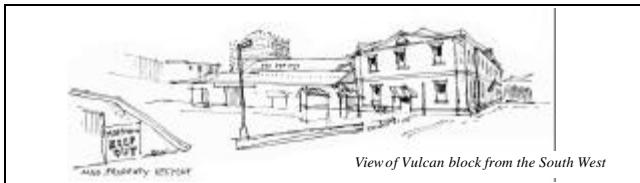
o Re-consideration of the role and prominence given to the existing historic buildings, particularly the Vulcan building, and their potentialities for “leisure” use.

o Re-consideration of the “Millennium Boulevard” within the Gunwharf site.

o Consideration for the inclusion of students’ housing.

o Detailed reconsideration of the effects of the traffic which would be generated by the redevelopment, particularly in relation to shopping, and its impact on the adjoining area of the city.

Above all, abandonment of the Millennium Tower. What would be its purpose? Is a



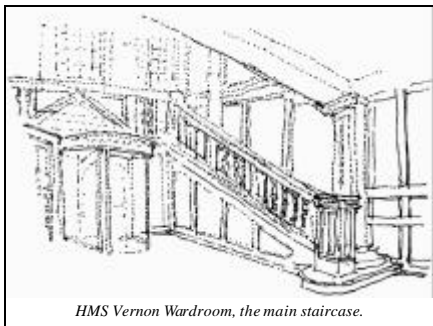
View of Vulcan block from the South West

The History of Gunwharf / HMS Vernon

There are a number of books on the histories of Gunwharf and Vernon in the Local Studies section of the Norrish Library. These include HMS VERNON A SHORT HISTORY from 1930 to 1955 by Commander E.D. Webb RN published in 1956, which we quote from below. We are also indebted to David Lloyd for some historical notes and to Brian Patterson, Nigel Sizer and Mike D'Aubeny, for additional information on the recent history.

Portsmouth's gun wharf was established by the Board of Ordnance in 1662 between the fortified towns of Portsea and Portsmouth to serve not only the navy but also the land defences. Royal Dockyards normally contained no weapons. The Board of Ordnance, distinct from the Navy Board, had its own yards and powder magazines from which it supplied warships with everything from heavy guns and their equipment to cutlasses and boarding pikes. The gun wharf was enlarged and improved in 1797 under the Duke of Richmond, Master General of the Ordnance.

During the Napoleonic wars space was at a premium everywhere in Portsmouth. To lessen the crowding at Gun Wharf, more land fronting the harbour was acquired on the south side of the channel leading



HMS Vernon Wardroom, the main staircase.

from the mill pond. This, known as the New Gun Wharf, was linked to the old by a bridge, and its acquisition effectively doubled the size of the Ordnance Yard. It contained a number of storehouses and other buildings of which the most imposing was 'The Grand Storehouse'(1811-14), now known as the Vulcan building.

From 1824 the Royal Marine Artillery Barracks were located in Gunwharf until they moved in 1858 to Fort Cumberland. They moved again in 1860 when Eastney Barracks were completed.

In 1867, a special section of the Gunnery School, HMS Excellent, was formed to study the new science of torpedo warfare and the application of electrics to gunnery. In 1872, the hulk Vernon, a frigate launched at Woolwich in 1832, was moved to Portsmouth and moored close to the Dockyard



HMS Vernon - The Chief Petty Officers' Mess

The History of Gunwharf / HMS Vernon (continued)

wall in Fountain Lake, where she became a tender to Excellent and a floating classroom for instruction in torpedoes, electrics and mining. Two other hulks were added: the Ariadne, for officers' accommodation, connected to the Vernon by a bridge, and the old sixth rate, Actaeon, as a workshop.

Vernon's first commanding officer was 'Jackie' Fisher, famous later as the driving force behind the building of the dreadnoughts and First Sea Lord at the outbreak of the first world war. Fisher realised the importance of torpedo work and proposed that Vernon should become a separate command. Vernon was commissioned as an independent establishment, the Portsmouth Torpedo School, under Captain W.Arthur, on 26 April 1876.

As time went on, other hulks became part of Vernon, including in 1904 the epoch-making Warrior, then reduced to a hulk, which was attached as Vernon III, a floating workshop and wireless telegraphy (W/T) instructional ship. Vernon and its hulks moved to Portchester Creek in 1895. In 1923 the whole establishment moved ashore to the Gunwharf, as a naval shore establishment, HMS Vernon, taking over the Army's part of the Gunwharf. The names of the old hulks, Ariadne, Actaeon and Warrior, were taken over for the buildings of Vernon on shore, - Actaeon for the gun carriage sheds which had been built in 1873 along the north wall of the Old Gunwharf, and Ariadne for the splendid Wardroom built in 1926. At that same time the chief petty officers' mess, still extant, was built to a standard envied by other similar messes on shore.

Subsequently and during the second world war Vernon was the centre for the development of mines and mine counter measures - magnetic and acoustic. During the war itself HMS Vernon as a training establishment moved away from Portsmouth to Roedean School for Girls.

The Gunwharf site was also the base of the Channel mine-sweeping fleet as well as being the base for the boom defences of Portsmouth Harbour. But mining and diving went hand-in-hand and diving training was carried out there. The diving tank was until very recently a landmark on the site. From the war until it closed, Gunwharf was the site of the Navy's anti-submarine school for the use and



Entrance to Actaeon: Gun Carriage Sheds 1877

Captain Webb describes the defeat of the German magnetic mine (the first successful dismantling of a mine took place on the ground floor of Vulcan building), the blitz and the dispersal of Vernon, the return to Portsmouth and the start of the torpedo and anti-submarine branch. His History has useful maps - of 1859 showing the Old Gun Wharf (the northern section) and the New Gun Wharf - 1940 and 1955, with notes on the buildings. For example, the Infirmary is described as probably the oldest building now standing in Vernon. Shown as a 'Royal Marine Infirmary' in 1859. In Vernon days the top floor has always been occupied by the Photographers. The ground floor was used as a workmen's dining hall while the Mine Design Department was in Vernon, and has since held a variety of tenants, including Dockyard joiners, a diving store and sports store. Freddie Emery Wallis believes this building was designed by Jacob Owen of the Board of Ordnance.

It also describes "The Customs House: An old building of the same sort of date as No 21 Building Vulcan and used as an office block even in the days of the Old Gunwharf. A chapel was installed on the ground floor between 1941 and 1955."

"No 21 Vulcan Building. The most notable building on the New Gunwharf, the foundation stone being laid by the Duke of Clarence in 1811".

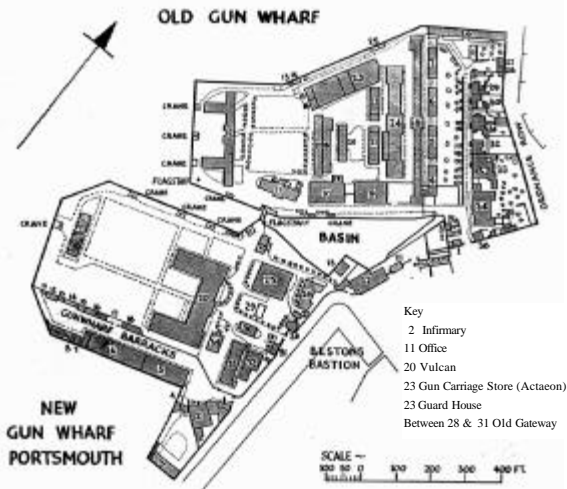
As David Lloyd says, the planning brief pays no

The History of Gunwharf / HMS Vernon (continued)

attention to the interior of the Vulcan building - certainly the most important historic building within the site. Part of the internal structure is supported by slender iron columns. 1811-14, Vulcan's date, is very early for this type of construction. The first large building with internal iron supports dated from the 1790s (e.g. the extant former factory at Shrewsbury), and there were several others c.1800-15, particularly textile mills in Derbyshire, of which one or two survive. Nevertheless Vulcan must be important in the history of building construction, certainly among those early buildings containing structural iron which survive. It is, for instance, 30 years older than the remarkable No.6 Boathouse in Portsmouth Dockyard, 35 years older than the first great iron-roofed railway station at Newcastle, and up to 40 years older than the Crystal Palace.

Vulcan was used as a storehouse until the Mining School came ashore during the First World War, when part of it became their offices. Between the

was the offices were shared between the Whitehead Department, the Mine Design and Mining Departments and the Superintendent of Torpedo Experiments. The last named moved to Greenock in 1936. The ground floor included the Naval Stores Department, and the northern wing was used during the latter part of the blitz by High Power Electrical Instructional and Seamen's Electrical. The roof and top floor of the building were badly damaged by incendiaries on 10th January 1941, when the clock tower was burnt out. The northern wing was pulled down to make way for the proposed new North Block and the site of the clock tower was roofed over with corrugated iron, so that the Vulcan Building has lost much of its ancient splendour. In 1956 it contained the Production and Drawing Department, Mine Warfare Instructional, Sub-Lieutenants' Instructional, Long Course Lecture Room, Commander-in-Chief's Schools Liaison Officer, Mine-Watching Section, Confidential Book



Plan of the Old and New Gunwharf sites of 1859.

Dave Davenport, Chairman

We are sad to report the death at the age of 77 of our former chairman, "Dave" Davenport. His wise humour and immense experience were vital to us, and he and Muriel were mainstays, not only of the Portsmouth Society, but of the Theatre Royal Society, HMS Warrior, the local branches of the British Institute of Management and the Institute of Supervisory Management and many other voluntary groups in Portsmouth. Their cheery presence at tree-plantings, work parties and lectures enlivened us all.

What we did not know, until his son Grahame sent us details, was his fascinating early history and distinguished career. He was born in 1920 in Ardwick, Manchester where his father built up a small factory producing handmade wallpaper. With distinctions in his school certificate, Dave started work in the Gas Department of Manchester Corporation by day and studied at the University of Manchester by night. He wanted to do engineering, but as there was a surplus of engineers at the time, his father persuaded him to do economics. In 1939 he gained a BA in Administration and was then called up by the army. He became a sergeant in the Reconnaissance Corps, serving with an armoured division in the invasion of Europe, landing on Sword Beach on Day + 6. His unit was involved in the fighting round Caen, where he was in charge of an armoured car. He was involved in the liberation of several French villages, and was interviewed by a Portsmouth Evening News reporter. There's a photo of him with the French Resistance. He became involved in retraining in the Army Education Unit in Germany. After demob he returned to Manchester Corporation and his part-time studies which eventually rewarded him with an MA. In the late 1940s he became a qualified teacher and in 1947



married Muriel who was born in London of Welsh parents. She served as a colour sergeant during the war and later worked for the Inland Revenue. He became a lecturer at Broadstairs College of Further Education, moving to Swindon FE College. In the late 1950s he was seconded with his family including Jayne and Grahame to Lahore in Pakistan to develop their technical education system. One of his students produced a wonderful testimonial of his inspiring qualities as a teacher. He converted a Bedford

van into a fully equipped dormobile, complete with gas stove, sink and opening roof incorporating beds for the children which took them to the Khyber Pass, Kashmir and Swat. The many cine films of the trip are still in the attic in Bembridge Crescent. He moved to Highbury College, becoming head of the Department of Management Studies and then Vice-Principal where he was very popular and well-liked.

A water polo player when he was younger, he and Muriel were season ticket holders at Pompey and members of Hampshire Cricket Club (though he was originally a Man. City supporter), and they crewed a yacht owned by a college colleague. Dave was a keen supporter of Camra, and when he retired would usually lunch at a pub or travel further afield to sample new ones. He was involved in the local Liberal party, though it was Muriel who was the more active.

His college colleague and sailing partner Guy Negus said: "Dave and his wife Muriel were a couple in a million, devoted to historical Portsmouth". We can add our own memorial: bashing away at the rust of the bridge at Milton Locks, he looked up with an enormous grin and said: "We're the Youth Employment Scheme!"

We hope to plant a tree in his memory, close to

THE PORTSMOUTH SOCIETY

Chairman: Celia Clark, 8 Florence Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 2NA, 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.

We welcome new members to the Society. Please come along to any of our meetings or contact Jean Thompson at 4 Malvern Road, Southsea, PO5 2NA telephone 01705 812667 for more information.

Beleaguered Cities by F.L.Lucas

A poem recalled on visiting HMS Vernon, in the once beautiful garden in front of the Wardroom.

Build your houses, build your houses, build your towns,
Fell the woodland, to a gutter turn the brook,
Pave the meadows, pave the meadows, pave the downs,
Plant your bricks and mortar where the grasses shook,
The wind-swept grasses shook,
Build, build your bables black against the sky
But mark yon small green blade, your stones between,
The single spy Of that uncounted host you have outcast;
For with their tiny pennons waving green
They shall storm your streets at last.

Build your houses, build your houses, build your slums,
Drive your drains where once the rabbits used to lurk,
Let there be no song there save the wind that hums
Through the idle wires where dumb men tramp to work.
Silent the seige, none notes it; yet one day
Men from your walls shall watch the woods once more
Build, build the ramparts of your giant-town;
Yet they shall crumble to the dust before
The battering thistle-down.



The Portland Stone of the Gunwharf North Wall

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

Wednesday 5th February

Stephen Checkley, Head of Property Services and

Review of the 1996 Design Awards

Wednesday 5th March

Building with the Community by Martin Affleck, Head of Design Services, Portsmouth City Council

Wednesday 3rd April

Annual General Meeting and Open Forum

Wednesday 7th May

Speaker to be announced

Wednesday 4th June

Speaker to be announced



HMS Vernon, Actaeon, Warrior Block and the Wardroom