

# Portsmouth Society News

## City Signing Strategy

Inhabitants of Portsmouth cannot have failed to notice the arrival of new direction signs on every main road and at every traffic intersection which are the visible result of the City's "Accessible City" project.

The scheme aims to create a clear and co-ordinated signage system for all modes of transport, facilitate the movement of visitors and residents around the city, raise awareness of attractions and amenities and create a positive and welcoming first impression.

We cannot disagree with the intentions, and anything to help people find their way through our confusing road system is more than welcome. However, it's the siting, design and content of some of the 320 new signs which cause us concern.

Huge, motorway size signs now adorn the Eastern Road route into the City although the signs directing people away are of more usual proportions. Most are mounted on two or three large posts of sufficient strength to survive an earthquake.

The designs show no genuine thought to sympathetic design and the reduction of street clutter, and there is certainly no special treatment for conservation areas (anything but!).

All signs are carefully sited away from the carriageways but little account is taken for pedestrians who are protected only by the fact that the locations meet Department for Transport minimum guidelines. This has not prevented poles being slap bang in the middle of pavements - tough if you are a wheelchair user, a parent with a pram or buggy, are blind or partially sighted. Poles have even been placed on our popular and busy seafront promenade.

Planning controls, especially in conservation areas, mean that all new buildings and changes to existing ones are scrutinised, publicised and approved only if they meet stringent conditions, yet the highway authority can do just what it likes. Yes, there was consultation some 18 months ago, but this did not include publicising the design and positioning of the signs. Our planning laws need changing to prevent such shambles from happening again.

Our advice to anyone finding a new sign that they object to is to write to the City Engineer, stating the location of the sign and what is wrong with it. Copy your ward councillors (names and addresses in Flagship Magazine or from the members secretary on 023 9283 4172). Enclose a sketch or photograph if you can.

### More observations ...

Where is "Central Southsea"? Many have followed signs to it but alas we're not sure where it is. Our best guess is Albert Road (it's not Palmerston Road).



*Oversize new sign in Clarence Parade, Southsea; does it enhance the conservation area? Poles are hazardous to pavement users.*



*Promenade encroachment - is this good practice? It's a conservation area too.*

**In this edition ..** When you're in a hole, stop digging! City Signing Strategy, Trafalgar House mural, New Fleet Headquarters at Whale Island, Gunwharf developments, Architecture Week Seminar, St James's Hospital, Buildings of concern, The City Centre Plan, Buildings at Risk Register 2002, Vospers in the Dockyard, Pompey as she is spoke - readers' comments, Meetings and Events....

Symbols direct us to ferries, but there are no symbols for ferries to France, Spain or even Hayling Island.

What's the difference between Historic Ships and Historic Waterfront? Where does the Historic Waterfront become the Seafront,

Why do signs on Western Road, Cosham indicate that the only destination for those crossing Portsbridge is Halsea? Have North End & Copnor been abolished? JH

## **When you're in a hole, stop digging!**

The Portsmouth Society urge the City Council to get out of the Spinnaker Tower project as soon as possible. It is a bottomless pit. The piles should be capped, and then the people of Portsmouth asked what the platform should be used for.

### **Reasons**

The indications are that the absence of a works contract so long after commencing substantial works, suggests that the sponsors do not have the management skills available to run a contract for a novel construction. This raises short term concerns about the delivery of the contractless works to programme and budget - with any cost overrun having to be picked up by the public purse, either directly by you or indirectly by further lottery funding.

There is the longer term concern that the city has not yet secured an operator for the completed tower, which leaves a large financial question mark over how the maintenance of the novel construction will be funded. This must create the possibility of increasing liability falling on the city.

### **Background**

The Portsmouth Society was initially excited by the concept of the Millennium Tower. Members worked hard to encourage those involved with the lottery bid to hold a design competition to attract worldwide interest. When this was dismissed as being too time-consuming, we put considerable energy into having what appeared to be a substantially costed and viable design prepared by the Norman Foster Partnership taken into consideration. That firm's international prestige would have added a lot to the project.

The Society has members with a wide experience in the design, procurement and construction of building both in the private and public sectors and have made regular contact with councillors, officers, and a deputation to the Millennium Commission stating concerns about the contractual position and the financial consequences that may be bequeathed to the city by transient politicians.

The city is fortunate in having asked Mowlem to start the work. They are an experienced and respected public works contractors who should have had the management ability to extricate themselves and the city honourably from the current situation RJ.

## **New Fleet Headquarters, Whale Island**

Following the fuss we stirred up in the architectural press and our appeal to CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), the MOD withdrew their application for a very dull design for the new fleet headquarters and substituted a new application to the design of the respected firm of architects, architecture plb

The Fleet HQ - 150 senior officers and ratings plus 100 civilians who will direct the operations of around 40 warships - is being moved from Northwood near London to Whale Island. The site chosen is the south-western tip, the most prominent possible where it will be seen from every cross-channel ferry and from all round the harbour.

The MOD don't need planning permission; they only have to 'consult'. We wrote to the City Planning Officer, to both MPs, to the Architects' Journal and to Building Design on the subject of the original design.

The Architects' Journal headlined an article on the matter: "Portsmouth blasts 'hideous' Pick Everard (the designers) Navy scheme". Roger James was reported as saying 'The government endlessly assures us that it is committed to good design, and the Ministry of Defence has produced a guide: Design Better Defence

The AJ quoted Commander Mike Tompkinson, the Royal Navy officer responsible for the project, who was

happy with the proposals and insisted critics did not realise the full brief or the needs for security 'Any building is a potential terrorist target and I think the fellow [James] is quite out of order making these sorts of statements'.

The new design is sleek and sophisticated, and in quite a different league from the first proposal. The harbour side is clad in terracotta - the same material that architecture plb are using for their city centre students' hostel, and the other in textured steel and aluminium, with a long atrium in the middle and a round tower at the southern end of Whale Island, which should have wonderful views for those inside.

Building Design used Celia Clark's phrase for the first design "lumpen". Let's hope that new design gets a sparkling new nickname.

## Trafalgar House mural



As a result of the national forces that we stirred up, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) decided to list Trafalgar House, Edinburgh Road, in response to an application to English Heritage from the City Conservation Officer. The building itself is of no architectural or historic interest and the listing is on account of Eric Rimmington's mural. This was painted in 1949 when it was home to the Trafalgar Services Club. We understand that this - the listing of a building solely on account of a work of art that it contains - is extremely unusual.

Wetherspools have now applied for listed building consent to rearrange the interior of the building, which is to be a Wetherlodge, so as to preserve the wall that carries the mural and to give them the bar space they need.

## Copnor Bridge

The bridge over the railway at Copnor is weak and requires rebuilding. One of the proposals is to build a new bridge to the north of the existing one, taking the space occupied by the Copnor Bridge Bowling Association. The bowling green is a unique haven and its loss would reduce recreational space in an area which is short of such facilities. We understand that the facility would be re-provided, but where exactly?

To the south of the bridge, between Milton Road and the railway line, there is a commercial area known as Copnor Business Centre. This has poor road access and is an isolated pocket of industry in an otherwise residential area. With these businesses relocated, a better alignment of Milton and Copnor Roads across the railway could be provided and the bowling green left untouched (indeed the recreational area could be increased). Note that we do not propose that any existing houses should be demolished.



Given that Government money will be used to rebuild, the City could demand that sufficient funds should be made available to relocate the business centre at one of the many industrial estates within the city and make a much better alignment for the bridge which does not destroy the bowling green. JH

## Gunwharf developments

The first phases of the massive Gunwharf development opened in February 2001, but there are still sites to be developed. We objected to the uninspiring designs still being proposed, particularly the replacement offices/hotel on the site of Ariadne - the late lamented ward room - and to a dull and too tall residential block: Canalside, - both by the Amos Partnership - to fill in the gap between the shopping/ restaurant complex and the residential area already built to the south of the site. The hotel/office design was improved, but despite the trenchant objection from English Heritage, Canalside and the later hotel application was given planning permission on the City Planning Officer's recommendation.

We continue in our efforts to find a public, cultural use for the Vulcan Building, splendidly restored by Michael Underwood of HGP Partnership. We wrote to national art galleries and museums. Angela Weight, Keeper of Art at the Imperial War Museum said that it offered very handsome spaces, but restricted access and a lack of environmental controls. Setting up a branch of a national museum or gallery might require matching funding from Portsmouth City Council. The ground floor has much more potential as an art space with more linear metrage, and the spaces below the mezzanine could possibly be used for projecting multi-media art works as well as wall-based work.

It would be easier to incorporate the necessary office space and would be more compact, flexible and cost effective to convert than the upper floors. Portsmouth, as a bit of a cultural desert, should be looking to the cultural sector as a driver for its regeneration schemes. It could certainly do with a high quality venue of this sort. If the ground floor were to be used for contemporary art, it should be a locally based initiative - for example, relocating the Aspex Gallery. This would dramatically raise its profile and increase its visitor numbers, but such an initiative would require the support of the Arts Council Lottery Fund.

English Heritage have sometimes collaborated with local and regional arts organisations to commission temporary site-specific artworks to publicise their buildings and bring in a new audience from a wide geographical area. A building like the Vulcan, which resonates with history, would be very attractive to high profile artists. Perhaps Berkeley, English Heritage and South East Arts could get together?

## St James's Hospital

A year ago we heard the tremendous news that the campaign to preserve these splendid grounds as a Town Green had been successful. Portsmouth City Council had unanimously acceded to the report of the public inquiry inspector, that the best part of the area we asked for should be designated. We had only just got over celebrating this news as a famous victory when the Secretary of State for Health announced his intention of taking the Council to the High Court for making this designation.

The case - which has wide significance for the future of NHS open space - was brought on the grounds that the Inspector's recommendation was wrong in law. The hearing took place in April this year. Portsmouth lost. The court ruled against the Council and in favour of the Secretary of State, but they are to appeal, citing the city plan which designates the grounds as open space.

Better news is that if we can identify sources of funds, Portsmouth Primary Care Trust intend to restore the splendid hall of 1879 with its unique theatre machinery to its polychromatic glory. They are to demolish one of the gazebos in the grounds, but have begun work to restore the other two and the chapel, but the villas and school still are boarded up. New buildings are put up instead, because NHS rules require individual patient bedrooms with en suite facilities, capable of staff observation, a clash of objectives with government requirements for sustainability, including reuse of buildings.

## Vospers in the Dockyard

Although the Society is of course very pleased that there is a prospect of shipbuilding returning to Portsmouth, we did object to the dull design of the enormous sheds that are to be built to house the operation - 45 metres high! We have to accept their huge size but we suggested that it might be possible to make them look nicer and to be somewhat disguised.

We suggested clerestorey windows or roof lights not only for appearance but also for the benefit of the workers. Camouflage paint was used during the war to disguise size and shape why not here - or pale blue all over?

## Architecture Week Seminar - Overcoming the Barriers to Good Design

This one day conference in June was supported by the City Council, Portsmouth Housing Association, RIBA, the Civic Trust and by those who freed staff to attend for the day. We were delighted by the wide range of interests represented by the 80 people who attended: members of the public (some living in the properties discussed), councillors, council officers (from Portsmouth, Fareham, Eastleigh ...), housing association officials, architects, Portsmouth Society members. Five speakers had half an hour each in the morning – a brisk and successful format.



*Good design? New housing (with bus stop) in Copnor.*

### The Speakers

**Martin Bacon**, Chief Executive of the Civic Trust spoke of the importance of making cities more pleasant to live in to reverse the trend for people to move to London or the countryside. For a good quality of urban life there should be, accessible on foot, a mix of shops, houses and public buildings with some locally distinctive features and pavements that are a joy to walk along. Buildings should be densely packed to conserve land and no land should be left derelict; there should be a variety of housing enhancing the local environment, with attractive outdoor spaces on the doorstep. For this we need skills in urban design in the Council, and partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors. To use brownfield sites well, public consultation is essential – large London-based organisations sometimes put up standard designs in ignorance of the location; they often saw public open space as a cost, a loss of profitable footage, but space attracted people and increased business. On housing sites, residents' involvement in the maintenance of spaces was essential and often their suggestions brought in profitable uses. Housing schemes had been too road dominated; narrower roads calmed traffic and saved land. We specially needed innovation in the building of blocks of flats and houses; too many were dull. There was also too little awareness of nature – the view, the prevailing winds, the promotion of healthy city living.

Architect **Simon Hudspith** illustrated the skill needed to put modern buildings into historic cities: it required a study of the whole city, the materials, design and purpose of the historic streets and buildings that gave it character, a demonstration to all concerned of how the new will suit the old, and finally planning regulation that does not allow commercial distortion of the design.

Architect **David Levitt** outlined the difficulties of good design for housing associations. Intense competition for land meant large developments (such as the council blocks and estates of the past), were beyond them; councils had to insist that a proportion of any private development was given over to affordable housing. This resulted in a useful mix provided the differences were acknowledged. Owners and private renters could afford a high level of service charges, affordable housing tenants needed low running costs. Tall private blocks did not need direct access to the street, could share entrances and circulation paths, could have multiple entry-phones and large lifts; social housing needed quick street access, a maximum of 10 people sharing phones and entrance, and 15 to a lift, with on-street parking and family dwellings at ground floor in buildings of only 4 to 5 storeys, plus careful consideration of rubbish disposal and site maintenance for cash-strapped tenants; anti-social behaviour resulted if these differences were neglected. On the other hand, social housing tenants tended to stay for life, so it was worth including from the start facilities for the eventualities of a now long lifetime.

**John Butler**, Director of Portsmouth Housing Association and Southlands (S.E.Hants) Housing Association said they provided 150 homes a year, about two and a half thousand homes since 1970 and were constantly learning. Design quality included the visual, comfort, facilities, cost in use, durability, security, accessibility, location, community accountability, conservation and innovation, all on a strict budget. Housing Associations were highly regulated; some of their provision was more durable than in the private sector; considerations such as accessibility and sustainability often outweighed the visual aspect and technical design came before aesthetic. In Portsmouth, renovation and conservation had produced some outstanding successes. Most new build was in modest infill sites, not grand schemes; more attention might well be paid in future to external appearance, but still low running costs and long-term maintenance would be important, as the

experimental Eco-house in Warren Avenue indicated. Consultation with all parties from an early stage was essential : architects, planners, contractors, future users, professional Housing Association people and volunteers.

**Paul Ramshaw**, the Council's Urban Design Officer, emphasised the importance of public spaces. Every city had an individual 'image' nationally and abroad, formed not only from buildings but from public spaces. Portsmouth had enormous assets and much to be proud of. One obstacle was the notion that open spaces did not generate revenue. But they generate activity and that draws in business. Another obstacle was funding; this had to be generated creatively from many sources. Another was dealing with existing occupiers of important spaces – this required constant consultation. Public spaces also needed the support of all potential users in the community, businesses, residents, shoppers, police, council officers and councillors. This involved corporate thinking, political will and public opinion, to produce city spaces, especially at the city centre, we could be proud of.

## Discussion

A general discussion after lunch attempted to identify how dull schemes got built without protest: one suggestion was lack of consultation with future occupants, but then, those consulted were often stuck in older dreams of 2-storey house with garden, impossible in cities now; this resulted from the total lack of attention to architecture in the national curriculum; the public was often unaware of the buildings in their streets; moreover better buildings would not solve problems if their environment was bad.

## Site Visits using Placecheck

Attendees in six groups went off with guides (and a packed lunch) to study examples of domestic architecture and the space between the buildings in various parts of the city to identify good and bad

**Gunwharf housing** successfully provided privacy but was sterile and insular, and the square in the shopping centre was a disappointment, not an appealing space; more seats, different trees and some public art would encourage diversity and interest.

**Queen Street** had a mix of building; it needed better lighting, green areas people used – they were empty in this beautiful weather- and some attention to Sarah Robinson house.

In **Elm Grove** a block of private flats had its back to the south and frontage with balconies opening on a busy road though its façade was modestly interesting; Housing Association flats on the corner of Yarborough Road were more traditional in design and did not happily join onto Yarborough housing or turn the corner well.

In **Highland Road** one block had its frontage at the back and gardens to the busy road, an important corner site had been filled piecemeal; public toilets occupied the corner itself.

**Anchorage Park** houses worked well if you had a car or two – no walkers were sighted that afternoon; the estate was more like Waterlooville; there were no landmarks; it was not unattractive but had no character, and it was quite difficult to find one's way around.

At the new houses behind **Fratton Bridge** a resident came to talk; the houses were arranged round a courtyard and the development had its own car park and children's playground; it needed better lighting of

April Square was much criticised for dull housing (not part of the original architect's design), cars dominating front gardens, roads dominating the square and a badly maintained grass patch in the centre, an example of inappropriate city development.

## The Way Forward

Martin Bacon summed up: we needed to improve not only house design but the environment also by greening the city and reducing the dominance of the car and its road system; pedestrians should have greater priority. Much more consultation was needed among the professionals – no developers had accepted the invitation to this conference; engineers, developers, landscape artists, housing associations, planners, architects all need to confer much more; the general public needs to think more about buildings and spaces, from schooldays on. We all need to generate more public interest in the city by being in touch with local radio and TV. And a final plug for the Civic Trust, to whose urging we owe this very successful day, we should consult their website and the RIBA's to look at schemes that have won their awards.

*Betty Owen*

## Buildings of concern

Pitt Street Baths and Reginald Road Arts Centre are still under threat of demolition in the City Plan. Wymering Manor, the oldest house in Portsmouth, suffered a collapse of a key corner post, and two rooms are propped up and unused. Neither the city council nor the Youth Hostels Association appear to have the money for repair, but we are trying to help identify sources of help. Buckingham House in the High Street is still awaiting conversion to a heritage hotel. The seventeenth and eighteenth century Dog and Duck pub in Fratton Road, restored by the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust in the 1980s is sadly still boarded up, awaiting a new use, about two years after NatWest bank moved out. Happily, artists are converting the pretty Victorian lodge in Victoria Park into a studio. Rivers Street Hall in Somerstown is now occupied by a firm of architects.

*Celia Clark*

## Buildings at Risk Register 2002

The English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register for 2002 brings together information on all the Grade I and II\* listed buildings, and scheduled ancient monuments (structures rather than earthworks), known to English Heritage to be 'at risk' through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so. In addition, Grade II listed buildings at risk are included for London.

Buildings at risk in Portsmouth are : Grand Storehouse or HMS Vulcan, Gunwharf; Fort Southwick, moat and ramparts; Fort Cumberland; Hilsea Lines; No. 25 Store, Yard Services Manager's Office, Dockyard; Iron and Brass Foundry, 1/140 Victoria Road, Dockyard; Block Mills, Dockyard; No. 6 Dock, Basin No. 1, Dockyard; Horse Sand Fort; Spitbank Fort. Full details with photographs are available on the English Heritage Web site ([www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)). The buildings are also listed in a publication available from English Heritage Customer Services, PO Box 569, Swindon Wiltshire SN2 2YP. Tel 0870 333 1181.

## The City Centre Plan

The News has twice commented recently on the need to refurbish the Commercial Road shopping precinct. Portsmouth City Council has in fact been holding consultations on this for eighteen months. The Portsmouth Society took part in these last September by holding a Placecheck Day outside the Town station, so we have been sent an advance copy of the proposed City Centre Plan.

We think it is a good plan, not just refurbishment but a complete rethink, and the Planning and Leisure departments, the Urban Regeneration officer Paul Ramshaw and their teams are to be congratulated on a rational, occasionally 'visionary,' long-term plan.

It may take several years to execute but it is preferable to wait to do quality work bit by bit rather than bodge the whole. It does not include City Centre North, but acknowledges that a lively development there must be matched by liveliness in the whole City Centre.

### Pedestrian priority

The fundamental change is that pedestrians should be given priority. Shoppers are one and all pedestrians even if they come in by car; many of the shoppers in Commercial Road have walked from their homes nearby and most tourists are exploring on foot, yet in the past the convenience of the car has come first, so they have to negotiate formidable roundabouts and junctions.

The main car park is the Isambard Brunel multi-storey which it is proposed to extend, but how do people then get to the City Centre? Up a staircase too narrow for two to pass or by waiting ages at a huge road junction. Yet the City Centre has the advantage of being unusually compact, and also has quite short walking distances to the tourist areas.

So the plan proposes a strong spine for walking from the beginning of Guildhall Walk to city centre north, with attractive spaces on the way and good links to and from other parts. The spaces should all be for lingering in, not just for passing through, they should have all-day activity, including evenings. As well as attractive buildings, there must be gardens, seats, public art, live entertainment.

The links to other features of the city should be short, clear and well-signposted. Did you know it is 10 minutes walk from the Ferry Port to Commercial Road – but who would think of walking it at present?

### Remodelled spaces

The main remodelled space should be the Station Square, where those arriving by train, or at the proposed public transport interchange in Station Street, should have broad, easy crossings and clear routes to

Guildhall Square or the shops, with a view of Victoria Park and somewhere to linger; so the suggestion is take down the wall in front of the station and realign the turnings to slow traffic. This square should be the welcome to Portsmouth for shoppers using public transport.

For Commercial Road, refurbishment is proposed, with more live entertainment and more public art. Arundel Street in particular needs a draw at its eastern end, perhaps somewhere for children to play, perhaps the market, which needs relocation - its brightness and bustle would create liveliness.

Guildhall Square is at present the best of our spaces, but it has no seats at ground level; its ramp for wheelchairs is too steep; the busy stairs between the Civic Offices and the Norrish Central Library are inadequate; access to the Mountbatten Gallery is poor and the square could do with more retail spaces to get people to linger. Guildhall Walk has theatre and entertainment at its heart and the most should be made of this. The War Memorial could become a feature if it were not obscured by a pub. Victoria Park is hidden behind a car park fence and should itself have more links with the swimming baths, and St. Agatha's and the dockyard wall ought to be tourist features.

### **Links to the City Centre**

The links to the centre for walkers from Old Portsmouth and Southsea, a straight line south from Guildhall Walk, should be better signposted ; from Gunwharf along Park Road could be a good link if there were a clear path through or by King Henry building – it is not a long walk; from the Dockyard along Queen Street to Edinburgh Road is a straight line but could be made a more interesting walk; and the Ferry Port should be made accessible on foot.

The roundabouts at Lake Road and near Central police station and the junction at Unicorn Gate could be made more convenient for pedestrians, the Greetham Street Jacob's Ladder and the crossing of Isambard Brunel and Winston Churchill Roads should be made more people-friendly. We think the City Centre has been looked at with a fresh eye, and could well become a place people take pleasure in visiting.

*Betty Owen*

## **Pompey as she is spoke - readers' comments**

Do you use the word "weee" to describe something strange, amazing or horrible? What do you call the famous British pudding made from suet and dried fruit? Our previous edition featured an article on the Portsmouth dialect (Pompey as she is Spoke) and we've received many comments and questions. One reader found us by searching the Internet for the word "dinlo". Another requests information on the mudlarks and we've received a poem too. The full text of the comments are on our Web site at [www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk) but we reproduce a selection here.

### **A question from Anne in Canada.**

I grew up in Petersfield but was born in Southsea. When ever we were told something strange, amazing, horrible etc. we would respond by saying "we" this was pronounced in a long drawn out way and with a tone amazement. I never use this word in this context except when my friend visits me; she also grew up in Clanfield and then Petersfield. We live in Canada and have been friends since we were 12 years old. Does anyone know where the expression comes from?

### **From Roger Attrill, who read our article on the Internet.**

I found your site on the web as a result of remembering a word of my youth - 'dinlo'. I moved away from Pompey ages ago, and no-one else I know now has heard of it. Sure enough - I searched google online and found nothing but connections with Portsmouth - including your website. Incidentally - dinlo often became 'dinny' or 'dinny dinlo' - maybe on account of Dinny being a real first name (?).

I was at the Grammar School in the mid 70's to 80's. PGS was known as Pigs' Grunting Society. I particularly remember 'dinlo' being in common usage there, and also rubbing of the chin and saying 'chin' (in reference to Jimmy Hill) to affect disbelief, but that could have been a general thing...

'Th' became 'f' and 'ow' and 'ou' as in Down and Southsea became 'ah' as in Dahn Sahfsea. Leading h's of course were rarely said and 'The' became nothing more than a quick token 'ah' - so "E's dahn ah front" - meaning he's gone to the seafront at Southsea.

20 years away from Portsmouth and I still catch myself lapsing into Pompey speak now and then: "oy ain' dun nuffin", and, as my wife will vouch when I haven't done something I should, - "ah wuz gunner"!

### **From Sheila in Devon.**

... I am surprised to find no reference to the mudlarks , the boys in the harbour who messed in the black mud for the people coming off trains to throw money to. I still hear the cry to the people leaning over the railings : "DIP ME EAD FOR A SPARSY". I think a sparsy ( spell ? ) was a sixpence.

... All along the railings were full of people throwing mostly pennies and halfpennies; not too many could afford a threepence or sixpence. The sparsy was either a threepence or sixpence. Of course it was only when the tide was out ! The mud was real black and the boys went right under for the money.. how they always found it was a mystery.

#### **From D. G . & M . Thomas of Perth, Australia.**

Lovely to read your say on Pompey. My husband and I are from Pompey; he was a sailor and I went to George St School then on to Copnor Modern Girls School which was at George St School.

#### **Keith Palmer writes from South Wales.**

"There are definitely differences with 'Cockney'! Born and raised in Pompey as were my parents, we never said 'dahn' for down but something closer to general Hampshire i.e. 'deyn' where 'ey' is similar to 'they'. Also we stress the 'R' sound, again as in Hampshire regional accent. Personal pronoun 'I' is said as 'oi' or even 'o' as in 'ore'."

"'Dinlo' was always said at school (George Street, Buckland) and elsewhere to mean dope idiot or clot. I have heard sailors referred to as 'skates' as well as the more universal 'matelots'. Portsdown Hill is always known as 'The Hill' and the country north of it as 'The back of the Hill'. Portsmouth and Southsea Railway station was always called 'Town station' as late as the 1980's and Southsea seafront is always 'The front'. 'Mush' was also used for 'person' or bloke or even 'friend' as in 'alright, mush?' Also one usually says 'alright' where others might say 'hello'. Dash of lemonade added to a pint of beer is a bitter or mild 'top', and a half and half brown ale and bitter is a 'brown ('breyn') split'"

"One import from London-speak is the cockney rhyming slang which is fairly widely used. The 'Pompey' accent (and the Hampshire) is however continuously moving towards Cockney because of the persistent assault of the television and radio media, where Cockney is king!"

#### **From Guy Dugdale of South East London**

For several years I have been transcribing and annotating a series of oral history interviews conducted by Dr Ann Day with ex-workers of Priddy's Hard and Clarence Yard.

Now, I know there is assumed to be some vast gulf between Pompey and Gosport but is anyone claiming the Portsmouth and Gosport speech is so vastly different ? I have heard it referred to, self-deprecatingly, as 'broken Hampshire'.

I have attempted to locate any social linguistic study of the Portsmouth Harbour (let's put it like that) accent and dialect and failed. Perhaps your readers might know of one ? It would seem a self-evident project for the university.

I have collected slang terms used. These are mostly depot-related or clearly navy-derived. One more general expression was 'scran', a workman's cold lunch, a term not confined to Portsmouth Harbour, of course. 'Dinlo' and 'scraze' I will have to try out on interviewees with whom I speak and correspond.

While I have your ear (or eye) can I appeal for any information about the following ditty which had wide currency in variant wordings :

*O Look at the children, sitting on the Dockyard Wall, watching their fathers doing eff all.  
When they grow older they will be Dockyard Mateys too, just like their fathers, eff all to do.*

Not Wordsworth, certainly, but genuine old Portsmouth. I suspect it goes back deep into the 19th century. Other odd words I have heard are :

squibbling - not just squabbling, but encouraging division; puggled - knocked silly ? (from pugilistics ?); treader- bicycle; And : (discussing wartime Gosport) sirens is pronounced si-REENS.

#### **Dr. Bill Thompson would like to say ...**

"Oi, U, u din orr wot? 'arber? dount evree mush talk pompey. dare u t' tell me wymrin mates talk posh an u get yer face dun in."

It's the POMPEY accent, and was not confined to the harbour area (unless this clumsy term is being used to include Gosport, where the accent is NOT so thick).

There is a clear division between slang (always time bound) and words that are formed - and maintained - as the result of an accent. Confusing the two may lead to an overemphasis upon the dockyard when the accent pattern could be found all over the Island and hinterland.

There also appears to be some bowdlerisation too: 'spotted dick' was always 'darkies in a snowstorm' - a very unPC term.

Keep up the flow!

## New bridge on the block

We are delighted to welcome the new footbridge which crosses Hilsea Moat between the Lido and the newly restored ramparts. It's sleek, modern design is deliberately low-key so as not to detract from the surroundings and it indeed it looks like it has always been there. We wonder if this bridge will be named, and, if so, may we suggest "Hilsea Millennium Bridge" for it is certainly the first new bridge built in Hilsea in this millennium. (Please add this to the list for the 2003 Best Landscaping award - Editor).



## Who are we?

The Portsmouth Society is an independent voluntary body affiliated to the Civic Trust with the purpose of promoting good design in the built environment. We campaign for quality in new buildings and for the preservation of the best of Portsmouth's existing environment of buildings, streets, and open spaces. If you have something you would like the society to investigate or do something about, do contact us. We welcome new members; come along to one of our meetings or contact the Membership Secretary (contact details below).

## Meetings and Events

Our regular meetings on the first Wednesday of each month (January, August and September excepting) at the Norrish Central Library, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth. There is no admission charge and all are welcome.

13th-16th September	Nationwide	<b>Heritage Open Days 2002.</b> See <a href="http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk">www.heritageopendays.org.uk</a> and local press for details.
16th-22nd September	Nationwide	<b>Urban Design Week 2002.</b> See <a href="http://www.udal.org.uk">www.udal.org.uk</a> for details.
Wednesday 2nd October	Norrish Central Library, 7.30pm	<b>Landscape Design - everything is possible</b> - Michael Ellison of the Landscape Institute and University College London.
Wednesday 6th November	Norrish Central Library, 7.30pm	<b>The Hovercraft Museum</b> - A talk on the Lee-on-the-Solent heritage attraction.
Wednesday 4th December	Norrish Central Library, 7.30pm	<b>Christmas Meeting</b> with a talk from Dr Ray Riley.
Wednesday 5th February	Norrish Central Library, 7.30pm	<b>Design Competition 2002</b> - slides, reports from the judges and discussion on the Portsmouth Society's competition.

### **The Portsmouth Society, Registered Charity no. 266116**

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