

Farewell Savoy Court



The remains of Savoy Court on the morning after the fire. It is now demolished.

The sad ending to Savoy Court when destroyed by fire on 9 August, closes one chapter but starts another. Instead of just one derelict site on our seafront where Savoy Buildings once stood, we now have two – and they are right next to each other in one of the most prominent positions in Southsea, opposite South Parade Pier.

Savoy Court had permission granted in 2009 to be converted to shops at street level, flats above and a fitness suite in the basement. We will watch with interest what will now be proposed but we urge all parties not to delay – our seafront needs restoring to its former glory. We ask also that any new building is of the highest quality and designed to fit in with the adjacent buildings in this conservation area.

Edwardian Seafront Shelter



The Edwardian shelter, dismantled to allow for the building of the Pyramids Centre, is depicted in its likely original guise

Please help with the restoration and redeployment of a currently dismantled and stored Edwardian, seafront shelter which is under threat of being to be sold off as scrap by our City Council.

The shelter, dismantled to allow for the building of the Pyramids Centre, is depicted in its likely original guise but was later probably modified as per its sister shelter still standing today to the east of the Pyramids Centre. It is hoped to be re-sited in a particularly useful location between Lumps Fort and the easternmost end of the Esplanade, where today there remains no protection for pedestrians from the elements.

Local citizens including myself and John Holland both from The Portsmouth Society along with Cllrs. Terry Hall and Luke Stubbs, local designer blacksmith Peter Clutterbuck and his son, committee member of the East Southsea Neighbourhood Forum Leon Reis and many others have now formed a group provisionally calling itself PRESS, an acronym for Project to Restore an Edwardian Seafront Shelter.

The group is hell bent on saving this precious shelter which is at present a pile of cast iron pillars, brackets, glazing bars, finials and so forth stacked safely in PCC storage. We hope that the shelter's wood slatted, bench seats and their ornate iron legs which were last seen several years ago, are also safely stored away.

Robin Kay

Civic Day 2011 – *In Retrospect*



The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Cllr Cheryl Buggy with prize winners at the Civic Day awards

Students, their parents, friends and teachers, gathered outside the Central Library waiting for the doors to open at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 25th. It was Civic Day 2011 and also the occasion for the Awards and Prizes for the Society's Schools Project – 'What I like about my City'.

Once inside, everyone was able to view the Students' work, which was exhibited for 14 days. Members of the Executive Committee were able to mingle with the crowd welcoming them and asking the Students if they had found the Project worthwhile and whether or not they felt that the Project was worth repeating. There was a resounding 'yes' to both of these questions.

Sue McClory, our Chairperson formally welcomed everyone and introduced the Lord Mayor, Councillor Cheryl Buggy and her Consort. The Lord Mayor presented all the participants with a certificate and there were also prizes – in the form of shopping vouchers – for the winner and runner up in each category. The judging was done by an Independent Panel. In her speech, Cllr Buggy, praised the Students and further encouraged them, before making the presentations. She also congratulated the Society for taking the initiative.

Earlier in the week the Society had a stall in The Cascades which enabled us to recruit a number of new members and to provide information to enquirers. We also took part in the Summer Fair held in Victoria Park, and

promoted an interest in trees. We believe that all of these activities helped to raise the profile of the Society and incidentally we received good publicity from The News and on Civic Voice website.

So what of the future? After taking advice from Sharon Watt the Head teacher of the City of Portsmouth Girls' School the Executive Committee has decided to promote the Schools' Project bi-annually, so as not to 'overload' the schools and ourselves. We plan to repeat having a stall in The Cascades and no doubt we will continue to promote tree campaigns.

During this school year, beginning in the Autumn we plan to take 'soundings' regarding involving more young people, with the Society, either through a co-option(s) onto the Executive Committee or setting up a separate young person's group. We intend to talk to local teachers, to representative members of the Council of Portsmouth Students and we also intend to consult Civic Voice Headquarters at Liverpool.

Terry Carter, Hon Secretary.

The Future for St Peter's and St Luke's Southsea

St Peter's and St Luke's have been working together, under the direction of the Bishop of Portsmouth, to consider options for the future of the Church of England parishes in Somerstown / North Southsea. They have recently come up with an exciting new proposal to develop a new shared church building, which they hope will contribute to the wider regeneration of Somerstown, and release the church (i.e. the people) from an impossible burden of maintenance, freeing resources for community service.

The idea has been welcomed enthusiastically by the wider church and has the Bishop's full support. No final decisions have been made, however, and (contrary to a recent report in this Newsletter) the site at St Peter's is not up for sale, there are no plans to demolish the existing buildings, or to build a block of flats. Of course the congregations and the local community are rightly concerned about what the final outcome will be, but it is clear that the status quo at St Peter's and St Luke's is unsustainable, and in many ways undesirable.

Some readers will know of the two churches mainly for the community facilities they offer. But usage has declined, and both sets of halls, and especially the theatre at St Peter's, are in need of major capital investment

and emergency remedial work to comply with health and safety regulations, disabled access, etc. Although they have served the community well in the past, they are rapidly becoming unsuitable for 21st century needs. Part of the church's goal in considering the future, therefore, is to ensure that it remains in a strong position to serve its parish communities and the city centre. The church is also working closely with the City Council and others to identify suitable spaces for dance and drama groups to perform, and the planned development at the New Theatre Royal will provide excellent new facilities for amateur players.

St Peter's and St Luke's remain deeply committed to the area they serve. Their chief purpose is to enrich the spiritual, cultural and material life of the local community, to help local people grow and flourish; and they will work tirelessly to ensure that they have the best buildings to achieve that aim. They are ever grateful to all their supporters as they continue to move forward in faith and hope.

The Revd Dr Alex Hughes, Priest-in-Charge of St Peter's and St Luke's Southsea

Revising Lloyd/Pevsner



Picture of David Lloyd and Deane Clark at West Dean taken some years ago

In summer 2011 Celia and Deane Clark and John and Sue Pike have been revising the Portsmouth entries for David Lloyd. David is one of the only original authors of the magnificent Buildings of England

series still working on revisions and updating of his Hampshire and the Isle of Wight volume, originally published in 1967. We are working on his perambulations exploring Southsea seafront, Somerstown, Croxton Town, Castle Road and Great Southsea Street and Thomas Ellis Owen's

Southsea, adding photographs and descriptions of new buildings for him to consider including in the new South Hampshire volume, to be published by Yale University Press.



This picture shows the view looking southwest from the new Highbury College over the Palace Cinema; on the right is right James Watson Hall by Architecture PLB of Winchester 2003. On the left is St. Andrews Court by Seymour Harris Partnership 1989; behind that is Commercial Chambers, c. 1937, the first large multi-storey office building in the city. The tower with crane is No.1 Gunwharf by Amos Partnership under construction and the Spinnaker Tower by Peter Warlow of Hedley Greentree Partnership. In the foreground are the Mughal domes of the former Palace Cinema designed by A E Cogswell in 1921-2 after he had served in the Artists' Rifles at the Khyber Pass.

Celia Clark

The Friends of Cumberland House Natural History Museum, Southsea

Last year two of the committee of Friends of Cumberland House Museum collected 1070 signatures to a petition asking Portsmouth City Council to finance disabled access to the ground floor of the Museum. They voted £25,000 for this, and asked the Friends to contribute £10,000. While

collecting signatures we were asked again and again by mothers if a buggy park could be constructed. The Museum authorities agreed to set this up and asked the Friends to research the idea. Anita Stepnitz did so and with considerable help from Museum staff a design for an indoor buggy store was submitted. Museum staff constructed this, volunteers helped with the decoration and it is now in popular use.



We can't get in, yet!

Work on a disabled toilet and ramps inside on the ground floor has been completed to a high standard, in the autumn the entrance will be made feasible for wheelchair use. An exhibition of skulls was designed by a member of the Friends committee and set out with the help of Gareth Brittell of the Museum service and the use of the considerable skills of the Museum graphics artist, Deborah Richards.

Last year 70,000 visits were made. The Museum is very popular with families as is demonstrated by the entries in the visitor's book. This year Monday closure was instituted, but entry is free. The Friends would like to see the whole ground floor opened up and a high quality cafe installed. The annual reptile and amphibian weekend was most successful.

This year the Friends have focused their activities on fund raising for disabled access. We have had two large coffee parties, an evening party for 80 people and a car boot sale. Various donations have been received, for example from Waitrose and the Portsmouth Oddfellows. Other events for members were a Dawn chorus stroll through the Rose gardens, a visit under South Parade Pier to examine and learn more about invertebrates clinging there and a walk to observe flora of the shingle beach. A "Buy a Butterfly" initiative is to be set up.

If you would care to join the Friends please ask Anita Stepnitz for a form, cost £3 per person, £4 for annual family membership. Address 4 Battery Row, PO1 2ND. anitastepnitz@tiscali.co.uk. K.Lewis, *Chairman of the Friends of Cumberland House Natural History Museum and Gardens T T*

The Localism Bill

The subject of the Portsmouth Society's May meeting was the Localism Bill with John Slater, Head of Planning at Portsmouth City Council, helping to explain the intricacies of the draft legislation.

The bill covers much ground including: new freedoms and flexibilities for Local Government; new rights and powers for Local Communities and Individuals; reforms to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and effective; reforms to ensure that housing decisions are taken locally; a preference by Central Government for Elected Mayors since some local authorities are seen as being too timid; Local Authorities to give more powers to local citizens, making it easier for local groups to take over facilities and run them.

On housing, the bill is against life-time tenancies preferring fixed tenancies instead. Councils should be able to keep the rents from social housing and use them to maintain and improve their social housing stock including new builds. The planning system should be more democratic with neighbourhood development plans. Regional strategies will be abolished.

John Slater made several comments and observations. When a bill like this is published there is always a vast amount of lobbying so we do not know what the end results will be! Localism is a major plank in the Government's agenda, pushing down decisions to a lower level. The South East Plan has been revoked (enabling PCC to reduce its housing targets) whilst economic regional Boards are being promoted. The previous Government attempted to streamline the process for major infrastructure projects (Heathrow Terminal 5 took 10 years to reach the building stage). The Coalition has brought these major projects back within the normal planning processes.

Other points included:

- There is a duty to cooperate clause which requires Local Authorities to cooperate with each other. Planning Inspectors' Reports will no longer be binding on Local Authorities. Developers will be required to talk to the locals. Councillors will have more freedom to comment in advance on planning issues.
- A great emphasis will be placed on Local Development Plans with communities taking over their own areas. Neighbourhood Plans have to be consistent with the Local Plan and with Planning Laws. Planning Departments can help by giving advice. There will also be a Community Right to Build e.g. building houses on an orchard if sufficient local people decide that is what they wish to do.
- There is no mention in the bill of design – it will be up to the community

has to decide what is important to them.

- Since most people are unfamiliar with planning laws and planning jargon there is a need to get these matters into the school curriculum and some facilitation will be required with regard to Neighbourhood Plans.
- For local groups who require finance for consultation purposes, referendums will have to be funded by the Council.
- Powers of enforcement will remain in Conservation Areas.

Terry Carter

Friends of Old Wymering – Alive and kicking!

*T*he summer newsletter featured Wymering Manor and pressed for an end to the delays and decay it has suffered since 2006. We are pleased to report there is a local group with a particular interest in the Manor and its future – Friends of Old Wymering (FOW).

We came into existence in 2005 as the result of a grassroots campaign to save the Wymering Manor from the threat of demolition – a campaign in which initially the Portsmouth Society also took part. We held successful Open Days at Wymering Manor to give people a chance to visit and learn some of its history. Most had never seen inside before and many, even locals, had not previously been aware of its existence. We also gave private tours to many different local groups and had visits from schools. We knew from the reaction of the thousands who visited that it was worth saving.

FOW contributed towards the dendrochronology dating carried out on behalf of Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust. We also engaged a professional photographer to record the important architectural features of the Manor, work we have built on so we now possess an important record of the building.

Over the past 5 years we have maintained pressure on PCC to conclude the negotiations with Ian Young and to raise concerns about the building's increasing deterioration. Since these broke down we have tried to keep the Manor in the public eye and ensure PCC is aware of the continuing public interest.



The Jacobean style staircases.

We took action last year to bring its plight to the attention of national bodies such as English Heritage and Save Britain's Heritage, applying successfully to both of them to have Wymering Manor listed as 'At Risk'. Save Britain's Heritage contacted the BBC, which covered the story in a News programme in May, in which FOW was interviewed along with the Portsmouth Society. The potential funding towards renovation which may become available from English Heritage was made possible due to FOW's action in contacting them.

The Friends of Old Wymering recognise the importance of the whole of Old Wymering Conservation Area. Our objectives are:

- To promote interest in Old Wymering
- To promote, encourage and support the restoration of Wymering Manor house and other historic and interesting buildings in Old Wymering as resources for history and social education, community purposes and for public access where and when this may be obtained.

We have developed a website (www.friendsoldwymering.org.uk) which attracts interest from around the world, and published a leaflet 'A Walk around Old Wymering Conservation Area' to encourage people to look more closely at this neglected area.

This is a crucial time for the Manor. It is still for sale and the city council will soon make its decision. Our primary concern is to ensure this wonderful building is sympathetically renovated and brought back into use in a way that preserves some community access and involvement. We would be prepared to work with whoever acquires it to ensure this happens. We would welcome the opportunity to work with other groups who share our aim. If you would like any more information about our group then please visit our website for more information.

Tracey Jones, Chairperson, Friends of Old Wymering.

Guided Walk - The City Centre's Best 20th Century Buildings.

Starting in Ravelin Park with guide, Ben Cracknell, we learnt that the park is named after a tall triangular shaped defensive structure, part of the fortifications built on the site by Sir Bernard de Gomme between 1665 & 1685.

Standing in the park we observed: Phases I & II of the Library (interesting "squat" building; 1977), Phase III (harmonious and refined edition; 2008), the School of Dentistry (clean and unfussy; Phase I, 2005 & Phase II, 2010); Horatia and Leamington Houses (19 story "point" blocks; 1965, reclad in mid 2000s); the Spinnaker Tower ("iconic landmark"; 2005) and No.1 Gunwharf (the "Lipstick"; 2005). Does the last detract from the setting of the Tower and would it have benefited visually from more glass in its design?

Walking on passing the University Students Union (Civic Trust Award 2003; “an elegant box”), Nuffield Building (eclectic character difficult to date; 1949); Mercantile House 1962; (11 stories, mundane but saved by its elegant “triangular” stairwell on the north elevation); Commercial Chambers (stylish stepped façade; 1937); and the grade II listed Charter House 1899; (florid and imposing, late Victorian/Edwardian revival of the baroque style in architecture).

After a skeptical glance at St Andrews Court; (“post modern” but half hearted and lacking conviction; 1989) and round the corner, St Michael’s Building; (a winning entry in a limited architectural competition, 1996); James Watson Halls; (of massive scale, accommodating over 700 student bedrooms, of very cubic composition; 2003); and the unusual University House; (post modernism influence in form and materials, 1987), we reached the Crown Courts (1981) on Winston Churchill Avenue - a low key, muted building whose real use is only revealed at the stepped entrance with the Royal Coat of Arms ornament.

Next we observed the Art College: (simple and elegant 1959, renovated in the mid 1990s); and approaching Guildhall Square, passed the curved linear form on Bateson Hall (about 1974). Guildhall Square (1974), the Civic Offices (1976) and the Guildhall itself (Grade II listed, 1955-59) form ultimately the most significant “set piece” in the city.

Ben’s notes: ...“The square and its surroundings are a genuine 1970s “period piece” I can think of no other civic space conceived and delivered on this scale during this period anywhere else in the country”...

We entered Victoria Park via the War Memorial; (Grade II listed, 1922, designed by sculptor, Charles Sergeant Jagger, 1885-1934, who favoured realism rooted in his own experience, his figures often conveying emotions such as sadness or fatigued. Victoria Park is overlooked by Zurich House; (a large 15 story modernistic “steel and glass” building; 1978. The best example of this genre in the city, soon to be accompanied by an even taller, 33 story, University Building on the other side of the park.

Ben also mentioned two disappeared buildings of note: Portsmouth Water Company Building; (an attractive piece of Victoriana at the end of Guildhall Walk; 1883 – demolished in 1970) and that other “icon” the Tricorn Centre; (constructed of concrete in 1966 described as the most uncompromising “brutalist” style architectural ‘tour de force’ ever erected in the city, it received a Civic Trust award in 1967 for “exciting visual composition”).

It was an evening for us to really appreciate some of the best and most interesting City Centre buildings that we may pass by every day with hardly a second thought, aptly described by Ben.

Pauline Powell

Refs: Illustrated handout by Ben Cracknell BA Hons. Dip TP, Msc, MRTP

News from Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens

On Sunday 22 May 2011 some Tree Wardens and their friends met in Queen Elizabeth Country Park, for a Walk in the Woods; part of one of the Tree Council's initiatives. We had a stand at the Portsmouth Summer Fair & Picnic, Victoria Park on 25 June and sold some infant trees and leaflets, provided information and a guided tree identification walk around.

On 14 July Tree Warden Malcolm Reeves arranged a guided walk on Southsea Common to look at the trees in the avenues with Stuart Campbell, arborist with PCC. A training event with Jon Stokes of the Tree Council was held at the fruiting hedge, Hilsea on 15 August about planting & looking after trees on and found out how trees survive. Maintenance work on the hedge continues. On 11



Tree wardens at the summer fair at Victoria Park. Irene Strange, Pauline Powell & Liz Button on the stand - photo by John Scot

September members met to follow the Southsea Common Tree Trail and on Sunday 25 September 2011 we meet at 2 pm outside Bastion 3 for a foraging walk along Hilsea Lines guided by Jon Stokes.

And finally we extend a big thank you to Waitrose of Southsea who gave us £286 as one of May's local good causes and to customers who gave tokens on our behalf.

For more information please see www.portsmouthsouthseatreewardens.co.nr and www.twitter.com/portsmouthtree

Pauline Powell



News from Civic Voice

VAT relief on historic building repairs rejected

Once again the Government has rejected efforts to remove VAT from listed building repairs, despite a strong recommendation from the House of Commons Culture Committee. The position is less constrained by European requirements than its response to the Committee suggests.

Planning policy overhaul.

The Government's long awaited review of national planning policy has arrived, and it is radical reform. Not only have over one thousand pages of existing guidance been reduced to 52 but important and controversial changes have been made. In a nutshell:

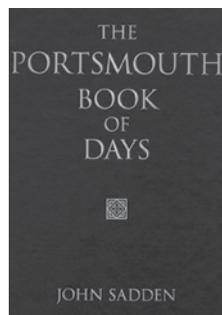
- The default answer to development is to be “yes”
- Planning policy is to be “pro growth”.
- Local and neighbourhood plans can provide for more but not less development.
- The focus of new housing is no longer to be on re-using urban land and local authorities have to provide 5 years of land plus an extra 20%
- Town centres should be the preferred location for retail development but the policy has been weakened for offices
- There is to be strong protection for designated sites, such as Green Belts and AONBs, but not for the local environment
- Good quality design and the importance of the historic environment are stressed but against the backdrop of planning for growth
- Civic Voice has already made strong objections and watch out for our campaign involving you and the members of your civic society.

Tell us what you think - send us your views on the draft national planning policies to info@civicvoice.org.uk by 30 September

The Portsmouth Book of Days

John Sadden's The Portsmouth Book of Days published by the History Press has extraordinary stories on every page. It's an amazing piece of research and selection, and a brilliant present for anyone who loves Portsmouth History. More details are available at: www.thehistorypress.co.uk.

Celia Clark



New Theatre Royal



We hope that many of you will have seen the exciting plans for the New Theatre Royal which were on public display in August. At last there is the prospect of a new stage, fly tower and dressing rooms to replace the facilities which were lost to fire many years ago. It is proposed also to reinstate the boxes, stalls, upper circle bar and orchestra pit and to provide wheelchair access. The changes will allow many small to medium size touring companies, for whom the Kings Theatre is too large a venue, to stage performances in the city. The NTR has teamed-up with the University of Portsmouth who will create a performing arts centre in the same building as well as more student residential accommodation in a tower rising to eleven storeys. Some have expressed the opinion that the building may be too high, however the tower is to the rear of the site and is screened by the accommodation block known as James Watson Hall. The scheme will be decided by the Planning Committee in October or November.

Corporate membership

In an initiative to broaden our membership, we have recently introduced a corporate category to our membership scheme. We hope that companies, large and small, will wish to join the society and support our activities. The annual rate will be £25. For more details please see the membership form at the end of the newsletter or contact mailbox@portsmouthsociety.org.uk.

The Portsmouth Society – Membership Application & Renewal Form

If you would like to join the society or renew your membership then please complete the form below.

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Post Code Tel. No:.....

Email.....

* I wish to pay by Standing Order (we will send you a form to complete).

Type of membership (annual): Full (£10)..... Joint (£15)..... Senior (£8)..... Senior couple (£10)..... Student (£5)..... Corporate bodies (£25)

I enclose cash* / cheque*/Postal order made payable to The Portsmouth Society for £..... (*delete as necessary)

Please tick if you have any special interests: Historic Buildings.....

Planning..... Transport..... Trees & Shrubs.....

How did you hear of the Society?

.....

Data Protection Act: We will record only the details you supply on this form solely for administrative purposes. We will not pass this information to any third party without your prior, written, consent.

Please send completed forms with remittance to: The Membership Secretary, The Portsmouth Society, 31 Allenby Grove, Fareham, Hampshire, PO16 9RP. Visit our Web site at www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk for more information.

Visit to Phoenix Lodge Rooms - Sunday 6 November

On Sunday 6 November there is a unique opportunity to glimpse inside one of Portsmouth's historic buildings. We have been invited to visit Phoenix Lodge Rooms at 110 High Street, Old Portsmouth.

Booking is essential for this event - to reserve your place, please contact Hilary Reed on 023 9286 5938 or email hilarysails@btinternet.com

Meetings and Events

<p>Our regular meetings on the first Wednesday of each month (January, August and September excepting). There is no admission charge and all are welcome. Most (but not all) meetings are at The St George's Building in St Thomas's St, Old Portsmouth which has free on-site parking and is served by buses 5, 6, 23 & 700.</p>	
<p>Wed 5th October 7.00pm</p>	<p>Somertstown Community Hub - The £12m Community Hub project is now underway. Steve Loughe (architect) and Mary Devaney (PCC project leader) will give presentations on the wide-ranging community facilities and housing to be provided in the first phase of the scheme.</p>
<p>Wed 2nd November 7.00pm</p>	<p>Conservation or Change - the care of church buildings. David Brindley, Dean of Portsmouth and Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches will look at the challenges and issues of maintaining and re-developing church buildings and land in the City'.</p>
<p>Sun 6th November 2.30pm</p>	<p>Visit to Phoenix Lodge Rooms. A unique opportunity to glimpse inside one of Portsmouth's historic buildings. Booking required. Contact Hilary Reed on 023 9286 5938 or email hilarysails@btinternet.com</p>
<p>Wed 7th December 7.00pm</p>	<p>Portsmouth Society Design Awards 2011. An illustrated report from the judges of the recent Design Awards.</p>
<p>Wed 1st February 7.00pm</p>	<p>The Dickens Archive and the Dickens 200 Festival. Speaker: Dominic Kippin, Literature Development Officer at Portsmouth City Council.</p>
<p>Wed 7th March 7.00pm</p>	<p>March monthly meeting. Speaker to be confirmed.</p>
<p>Wed 4th April 7.00pm</p>	<p>Portsmouth Society Annual General Meeting</p>

The Portsmouth Society, Registered Charity no. 266116

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