

Portsmouth Society News

The Newsletter of The Portsmouth Society - Summer 2006

Wymering Manor Success

The huge efforts put in by the Friends of Old Wymering, the Society, Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust and a developer to demonstrate how much local people value Wymering Manor and want it to stay in the public domain finally paid off when the Leader of the Council decided on 21 June that the bid that we backed should succeed rather than the one submitted by the couple who wanted to make it a private home.

1400 people – a stampede at times – turned up to the open day on 27 May, and over three hundred of them wrote heartfelt comments and reminiscences which supported the bid by local developer Ian Young to restore it.



The city propose that Ian Young enters into a building agreement during the restoration period – up to two years - and ultimately a lease. He plans to make it a historic house hotel open to local events and education. Planning permission for hotel rather than hostel use is to be applied for. The Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust will monitor the work as its proceeds.

The next open days will be on 12 and 13 August. If you would like to help with the open days, train as a tour guide to the house, please get in touch with Ian Young 02392 295511 / 295555 or John Goodall 02392 358512 and if you want to help develop educational materials for local schools please contact Celia Clark by email at celiadeane.clark@btinternet.com

A bat emergence survey is to take place in July, and Ian intends to open the Manor for events and meals as soon as the kitchen is upgraded – so plan to go there!

Celia Clark

Southern Comfort 2006

Southern Comfort, the annual Meeting of Civic Amenity Societies from across the South of England, is being hosted this year by the Portsmouth Society. It will be held on Saturday 14th October 2006 at Portsmouth Guildhall. Civic Societies in the South are invited and we hope to welcome up to 100 delegates. Members of the Portsmouth Society are cordially invited and a booking form is included with this newsletter.

The morning presentations and discussions will be held in the Members' Room. Registration, Coffee Breaks and an optional finger-buffet luncheon will be held in an adjacent reception area with comfortable seating and opportunity for networking and further discussion.

The morning programme is designed to illustrate the keynote Architectural and Design theme and to promote questions and discussions amongst delegates about the theme and also in response to questions on wider topics of general or even specific interest. These may be submitted beforehand to assist correlation of the discussion programme

Delegates will be welcomed by the Chair of the Portsmouth Society, Dr Celia Clark. The keynote Speaker will be Paul Grover, the Director of the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design; his topic will be "What an Architecture Centre can do for you" .

The Discussion sessions will be chaired by the Society's secretary Dr Roger James and he will be supported by a Panel including Dr Clark, Paul Grover and Michael Carden, architect, and Vice-chairman of the City of Winchester Trust.

The afternoon programme will provide alternative guided walks to the Historic Dockyard or to Gunwharf Quays which has been developed on the site of the ordnance yard, HMS Vernon, and which accommodates a number of restored buildings.

Bob Adderley

In this edition .. Wymering Manor Success, Southern Comfort, What's On?, Buckingham House, Archaeology – missing in Portsmouth, New Publications, Knight & Lee, Portsmouth Festivities, South East Plan, Proposed Regeneration of Tipner, Abolition of Crown exemption, Think Tank, Volunteer Day.

Meetings and Events

Meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month (not Jan/Jul./Aug/Sep) at the John Pounds Centre in Queen Street unless otherwise stated. There is no admission charge - all are welcome. For the latest programme see www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk .	
Sat 12th & Sun 12th August <i>10am to 4pm</i> Old Wymering Lane	Wymering Manor Open Days - Wymering Manor - the oldest house in Portsmouth and the Church of Saints Peter and Paul - the oldest church in Portsmouth, will once again be open to the public.
Wednesday 6th September <i>6pm</i> (to be confirmed)	Visit to Henry Leach building, Whale Island (to be confirmed) - We are planning a visit to the design competition winner, the Henry Leach building, at Whale Island. Please phone 02392 821667 if interested.
Thursday 7th to Sunday 10th September www.heritageopendays.org.uk www.kings-southsea.com	Heritage Open Days - Celebrate England's architecture & culture. Free access to properties closed to the public or which normally charge for entry. The Kings Theatre Southsea has tours each hour from 11am to 3pm with special children's tours on Sat & Sun only at 3pm. 023 9282 8282.
Sat 16th & Sun 17th September www.londonopenhouse.org	London Open House - London's biggest architectural 'exhibition' gives everyone the opportunity to visit over 600 buildings new and old. Free.
Wednesday 4th October <i>7.30pm</i>	Tipner Regeneration Project - Charles Tharnthong of the Tipner Regeneration Company will introduce the scheme which includes park and ride, a new junction on the M275 and redevelopment of Pounds Scrapyard.
Saturday 14th October <i>9.30am to 4.00pm</i>	Southern Comfort 2006 - The Portsmouth Society is hosting Southern Comfort 2006, the annual meeting of civic amenity societies from across the south of England, at Portsmouth Guildhall. The keynote speaker will be Paul Grover of the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design. <u>Advanced booking required - see form enclosed</u>
Wednesday 1st November <i>7.30pm</i>	Proposed new buildings in Portsmouth - Speaker : Mrs van Heyningen of Van Heyningen-Hayward, Architects - designers the University's No.1 Building, Lion Terrace, and the second 'anchor' building in City Centre North.
Wednesday 6th December <i>7.30pm</i>	Froude and Brunel - Lesley Burton of the Gosport Society will speak about William Froude, the engineer and colleague of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Froude's pioneering work on hull design led to the establishment of the ship testing tanks at Haslar.
Wednesday 7th February 2007 <i>7.30pm</i>	Portsmouth Society Design Competition - The judges will report their findings for the 2006 design competition for which awards are given for Best New Building, Best Restoration and Best Landscaping.

Buckingham House, Old Portsmouth

Planning permission for conversion of Buckingham House in the High Street, the second oldest house in Portsmouth after Wymering Manor, and the adjoining Felton House into a historic house hotel was granted unanimously once the Development Control Committee had visited it. Ian Young plans to restore both Wymering and Buckingham House together with a team of specialist craftspeople. This is especially welcome, given the fragile state of Buckingham House. It has a fascinating history; staff at the adjoining Portsmouth Grammar School are researching its history to develop educational materials for local schools.

The chequered south wall of Felton House will be breached for new windows facing onto the courtyard, with a first floor walkway at the back which will provide access from the Grammar School car park to a new bedroom which would also double as a green room for theatrical performances. The painted and stencilled panels of the Red Room uncovered by previous owner, Robin Thomas, may have been decorated when William Smith, founder of the Grammar School, owned the house. Intriguingly, he mentions Wymering Manor in his will....



Archaeology – missing in Portsmouth

The Society is very concerned about the level of expert archaeological advice being given to Portsmouth City Council planning department since the departure last year of the City Archaeologist Jenny Stevens. Archaeology is a material condition of the planning process and details of the required level of archaeological advice can be found in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 - Archaeology and Planning. With the level of development and redevelopment in the city at the moment we are concerned that the duty of the city council towards archaeology and built heritage is not being fully met; archaeology and historic buildings may be being needlessly damaged or destroyed without adequate provision for excavation and recording.

English Heritage is also very concerned at the lack of archaeological advice in Portsmouth, both in terms of land-based development and intertidal and maritime archaeology in Portsmouth and Langstone harbours. Large and important sites, such as the former Brickwoods Brewery / Heritage car park in Queen Street are not being monitored. The discovery of five wells there has not been monitored or recorded and it is uncertain as to whether there was a watching brief or recording condition in place when the remains of the King's Mill at Gunwharf Quays were recorded in the current redevelopment. The hole dug inside the scheduled area of Southsea Castle for the Most Haunted TV programme without applying for Scheduled Monument Consent is a criminal offence, and English Heritage could have prosecuted the offenders.

In addition to archaeological development control advice, the city Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) is also not currently being adequately maintained, something that is also of concern to the Portsmouth Society and to English Heritage. The SMR is the primary record of the known archaeology and historic buildings in the city and should form the basis for all future research. If information is not entered onto the SMR then important information on the development and heritage of Portsmouth could be lost forever. It is imperative, then, that the SMR is maintained properly, especially as it is likely to become a statutory requirement if the changes in heritage protection currently being discussed at national government level come into force.

We understand that temporary part-time archaeological advice is currently being "bought-in" from a Southampton based archaeological contractor. This situation is far from ideal and contravenes accepted professional best-practice that development control advice should not be undertaken by a commercial contractor as this may lead to a conflict of commercial interest.

We raised this and other concerns such as the poor state of Southsea Castle and the future of city museums at a friendly lunch meeting with Councillor Eleanor Scott, and hope that despite budget constraints, an archaeologist will again be appointed within the planning department.

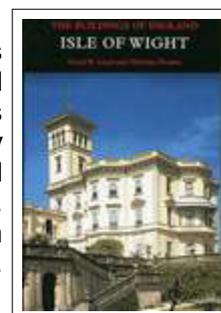
On a slightly more positive note. Some "unexpected human remains" were recently handed in to Southsea Police Station from Sword Point, Langstone Harbour. Having established that they were not looking at crime scene, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology recorded what was there. According to the gentleman who handed them in, a sailing instructor from the outward bound centre, the shifting sand bar has also revealed what looks like the remains of a submerged forest which will also be recorded.

Stephen Appleby and Celia Clark

New Publications

.The Buildings of England : Isle of Wight

This new volume of the Buildings of England series by David W Lloyd and Nikolaus Pevsner and is a comprehensive guide to the buildings of the Isle of Wight. David Lloyd wrote the description of Portsmouth and the surrounding area in the 1966 edition and was the author of 'Buildings of Portsmouth and its Environs' published by Portsmouth City Council in 1974. This new volume has taken him many years of painstaking research, and it is a refreshing and illuminating read, which offers many hours of enjoyable exploration. David Lloyd is a lecturer on architectural subjects, planner and consultant on conservation for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and is a member of the Society. Publisher: Yale University Press, Price £19.99.



Trafalgar 200 Through the Lens - Queen Elizabeth II 80th Birthday Edition

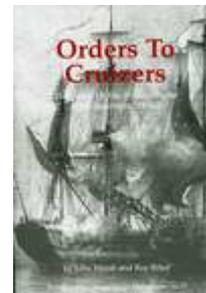
This new book contains pictures of international seafarers and ships during the Fleet Review by HRH Queen Elizabeth II. Several pictures were taken from a helicopter and show excellent views of the landscape and buildings such as Spinnaker Tower. ISBN 0955300401.174 Pages, 400 Photographs, 8.5 x 11, Paperback. The book can be previewed at www.deskilfeather.com

Around Portsmouth Harbour

Around Portsmouth Harbour is illustrated and written by B J Robertson on Portsmouth Harbour and the settlements that surround it. Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, Portchester, the military defences and the Royal Navy are just some of the topics which are described and illustrated with detailed pen and ink drawings. The 80-page A4 sized book is published by The Portchester Civic Society and is available from them at a cost of £8.00 plus £2.00 P&P. For more information contact the society at 8 The Keep, Portchester, PO16 9PW.

Orders To Cruisers - The Career of The 20 Gun Frigate HMS *Experiment* 1740-63

This booklet written by John Marsh and Ray Riley, No.19 in the Portsmouth Grammar School Monographs, researches the life of the frigate *Experiment* launched in 1740 and sold in 1763. This 'warrior of the working day' was not in any way of exceptional design or sailing quality, nor even a participant in a major naval action, but her career was typical of many similar and equally unsung craft in the mid-eighteenth century.



Well-designed car parking can transform neighbourhoods

Well-designed car parking can help create more attractive and safer communities. The way housebuilders arrange car spaces can affect the lives of residents and has a significant impact on the public environment. The findings are contained in a new toolkit called "Car Parking: what works where" published in May by national regeneration agency English Partnerships in collaboration with Design for Homes. For more information see the English Partnerships website at www.englishpartnerships.co.uk or telephone 020 7881 1600.

Knight & Lee, Southsea - Proposal for listed status

The current Northern Quarter development in Portsmouth, embracing the former Tricorn site, is to include a new John Lewis Partnership department store. The present business in Palmerston Road, Southsea, trading under the title Knight & Lee, will therefore transfer to Portsmouth, with the Southsea premises vacated, to be put to alternative use. It is the future of the Palmerston Road premises that is of interest to us.

The business history dates from 1831, when Mr William Wink opened a lace manufacturing firm at 112, Queen Street, Portsea. William died in 1857 when Sarah Wink, presumed to be his widow, took over the firm as 'lace manufacturer, milliner and dressmaker'. By 1865, the firm was in the ownership of Mr Frederick Wink, trading as 'Wink & Co., Silk Mercers and Ladies' Outfitters'.



External view of Knight and Lee, Southsea

In 1874, Frederick Wink moved the operation to the then developing shopping area of Palmerston Road, expanding the departmental character further, with 'family mourning and funeral furnishing' mentioned. Wink & Co. was purchased by two young brothers-in-law from London, Jesse Knight and Herbert Soden Lee, in 1887; they had, in their time, both worked at Whiteley's in Bayswater. The business expanded rapidly, soon providing departments for men's and boy's wear, also naval and military uniforms. In 1899, the business became a private company, with nominal capital of £65,000.

Between 1908 and 1910 the original row of shops – on the site of the present building - was rebuilt, providing departments on two floors, with living quarters for employees on the third and fourth floors. New departments catered for drapery and soft furnishings, with a restaurant as an added attraction. Mr Knight and Mr Lee died in 1922 and 1924, respectively, but Knight & Lee continued to operate, without interruption, until 1934, when the business was acquired by the John Lewis Partnership.

The original premises of Knight & Lee, dating from 1908-10, were completely destroyed by bombing on 10 January 1941. Yet, within a matter of a few weeks, the firm reopened, occupying smaller premises in Palmerston Arcade, expanding, later, to include a number of separate premises nearby. In the mid-1950s, rebuilding of the store commenced, with the first section opened on 24 September 1956. The completed

building, which remains almost unaltered to this day, was officially opened by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth in March 1959.

The 1950s architectural design appears in the name of Cotton, Ballard and Blow of London, Birmingham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Given the period of austerity in which the building was conceived – and built - it is a remarkable statement of the day, given its many interesting and distinctive features.

It is evidently of sound design and construction – having escaped the adverse criticism attaching to buildings of the period, where demolition has been their fate. It remains a refreshing experience, both to behold and to use, and survives as a credit to both the design team and the client of 50 years ago.

It was probably, for its day, adventurous, inasmuch as features were incorporated to which shoppers in Southsea were unaccustomed. While the spiral staircase in the entrance hall is a feature in its own right, the 'Italian Terrazo'



Knight & Lee - spiral staircase in the entrance hall

central staircase is a *most* striking example of 1950s 'commercial sculpture'. Throughout the building, the simple, yet effective, use of surface materials, in both metal and non-metal, is undeniably imaginative – and most pleasing. The ambience on all three floors (*of steel and concrete construction*) remains one of serene spaciousness. The building incorporated, ab initio, both air-conditioning and thermostatically controlled heating. Externally, deep picture windows together with elegant, yet bold, structural features form a statement of confident commercial architecture, one that is eminently deserving of retention as an important example of successful mid-20th century design.

Whatever may be its proposed future, the building is one of great local value and is, we feel, eminently deserving of listed status. Any proposals ought to take into account, as a pre-requisite, the need to preserve all external features, in the interests of period integrity. Modifications, such as may be required for the building's conversion to alternative use, should observe strictly the demands of aesthetic acceptability. Internally, it is essential the staircases be retained, with any proposed designs taking fully into account the need to preserve these imposing features, unaltered, as far as be practicable, in their original setting. The Society has applied to English Heritage to list the building.

Bruce Oliver

Portsmouth Festivities

The Portsmouth Festivities, largely promoted and organised by Portsmouth Grammar School, have been going for a number of years, but I personally have not taken proper advantage until last year and this. We owe, I think, a great debt to Dr Timothy Hands, Headmaster of the Grammar School for his personal inspiration. He is Chair of the Festivities Executive Committee, and was present at nearly all of the events that I attended. This year the festivities were billed as a celebration of the bicentenary of one of Portsmouth's most famous sons – Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806 – 1859). This is an account of the events which I attended this year.

Gala Concert

The first was the gala concert by the London Mozart Players in the cathedral on Saturday June 24. It began with the Gloria from Bach's Mass in B minor played by the orchestra with four professional soloists. Then came Rain, Steam and Speed, a specially commissioned orchestral piece inspired by Turner's picture with this title. I have to say that this was the first time I have ever enjoyed a specially commissioned piece of music. The composer herself was there to take a smiling bow. This was followed by some of the best of Mendelsohn – the Hebrides Overture and then his Ave Maria, sung by choristers from the Cathedral choir and the Grammar School choir including surely a star in the making, a solo teenage girl soprano, Philippa Clay, from the School. She has a really beautiful voice. Her singing was for me the highlight of the evening, far outshining the professional performances. The concert ended with Mendelsohn's heavenly violin concerto in which the distinguished solo violinist, Tamsin Little, gave pleasure to us all not only with the sound of her playing and the sight of her obviously enjoying it so much herself, but by her smiling looks at the orchestra,

drawing all of them – and us - into her enjoyment. The splendid finale of the concerto gave an appropriately joyful end to a wonderful programme. We couldn't wait to start applauding.

Block Mills

On Monday evening Dr Ray Riley gave a characteristically funny and informative talk about Block Mills and how Marc Brunel, Isambard Kingdom's father, came to invent and institute this pioneering steam-powered production line for pulley blocks for which the navy had an insatiable appetite. This was a world first though not, as Ray insisted, the beginning of the industrial revolution. Most of us knew the vague outline of what Block Mills was all about; but I for one did not fully understand until Ray explained with his beautifully clear photographs how the machines worked, in particular how man power and automatic machine power were interlocked.

Swing Band

On Tuesday I went to the lunchtime concert given by the Grammar School's Swing Band in the hall of St James Hospital. Several patients, incapacitated in different ways, were in the audience, one mostly asleep and another interjecting loudly. I like familiar pieces and I was pleased to be greeted with Mac the Knife which was followed later by In The Mood, all played with vigour. The same evening I went to hear the Endellion String Quartet in the Cathedral playing Mozart, Britten and Ravel. The last time I heard this quartet was when they took a distinguished part in the 1970s in the Portsmouth International String Quartet competition – Portsmouth's regrettably brief appearance on the international music scene which drew to Portsmouth as its president the legendary Yehudi Menuhin.

Adam Hart-Davis

On Thursday evening we were entertained in the Action Stations cinema in the Naval Base by the television star, Adam Hart-Davis, who appeared wearing a stove-pipe hat and Brunel baggy trousers to tell us about Brunel's life and achievements. When one sees him on television it is not obvious to what extent he is dependent on a teleprompt or some electronic aid. Here he was not backed up in any way. What was so impressive was his extraordinary memory. He walked slowly up and down with a microphone pinned to his shirt and talked non-stop, tripping off dates and facts without hesitation except for the occasional lapse when, to keep the audience on their toes he appeared to forget a name and asked for our help. As with Ray Riley's talk it was something the bones of which we all knew; but he was able to add, with his illuminating slides and anecdotes, touches that brought the whole thing to life. These included drawings and diagrams of the improbable "atmospheric" railway along the Exe estuary. He conducted his own question session which showed no sign of running out of steam.

Evelyn Glennie

On Saturday afternoon I attended part of Evelyn Glennie's master class and in the evening the whole of her performance and lecture. I cannot but admire the amazing things she can do with multiple drum sticks, although for me personally compositions for solo percussion are not likely to be a great draw. In the question session I was tempted, but did not dare, to ask why she adopted that hair style with long tresses hanging completely unrestrained each side of her face. It was obviously irritating, for at every opportunity, at every break in her playing, she used both hands to brush her hair back on each side. One blown up photograph of her which was displayed on the screen showed her left eye completely obscured by hair.

Timothy West 'Profane Steam & Speed'

I enjoyed very much the final event last night (Sunday) at the New Theatre Royal. I had not read the programme in detail and so had no idea what to expect. I was drawn solely by the name Timothy West, a favourite actor. What happened was that Mr West and four other actors sat in a row along the front of the stage with a piano slightly set back. They read from prepared scripts details of I.K.Brunel's life and achievements from letters to him and by him and diary entries, covering much the same story as had been given to us by Adam Hart-Davies but with additional background of more personal and often funny detail. His partner had written a letter to him with the conventional formal ending. To which Brunel replied "I wish you were my obedient servant. If you were you would, ..". Interspersed between the reading there was piano music by Mendelsohn— his songs without words and other works. Rather too much of it some of us thought. It was the words that never palled. The relevance of Mendelsohn to the story was that he and Brunel had competed for the hands of the Horsley sisters. Mendelsohn later found a wife elsewhere; But Brunel did eventually marry Mary, the most beautiful one, after a very long courtship. The length was explained by his reluctance (very proper the Horsley family thought it) to ask her to commit herself before he had established himself in the world sufficiently to be able to offer her what she was entitled to expect. What had lured an actor of Timothy West's eminence down here? It turned out that he had himself devised and compiled the programme. And a very worthwhile and original programme it was.

RJ

South East Plan

The Society has taken part in the consultation on the South East Plan. Our main objection to it is, in so far as it is concerned with the South Hampshire sub-region, that it does not make its main purpose to maintain "the high quality environment" of the area. This is only a secondary objective as the Plan stands. Its main objectives are economic and are based on such specious statements as "the area is punching below its weight". If this means anything it means that the Gross Annual Product per head is less than that of some other subregions. The remedy is seen to be to cram into the area more "resources" including of course houses and people. We have suggested that the reason for the lack of "punch" if it exists may be that the high quality environment attracts productive people who may deliver their product elsewhere by, for example, working in London or at home, so that their productive activity shows up in the statistics of other places. The Plan seems to us to ignore the effect on local statistics of central government spending. We reminded the planners of the case of 'silicon valley' the area of high prosperity along the Thames valley. Its success had been attributed to such things as the Great Western Railway or the M4, but the key factor turned out to be the concentration of government-funded institutions - Aldermaston, Culham and the science departments of Oxford University. In our region the spending of the MOD may be the relevant factor.

Also we expressed doubts about the newly proposed Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) which seemed to differ little from the ill-starred Major Development Areas (MDAs) of the South Hampshire Structure Plan. In our areas these have been developed just where they were supposed not to be. Whiteley and west Waterlooville are the notorious examples. They were supposed to develop areas already well serviced for transport especially public transport. Micheldever which outstandingly fills this bill was overlooked while west Waterlooville, nowhere near a railway and without even an A-road, is filling in the valuable gap between Waterlooville and Portsmouth.

In challenging the need for so many new houses, we drew attention to the work of the Empty Homes Agency which reports that there are 640,000 empty houses in England and that 420,000 homes could be made out of the empty commercial properties. In Portsmouth, Brunel House, the MOD-owned office block on The Hard, empty for a matter of years, springs to mind.

Consultation comments had to be in by 23 June; but this is not the end. There is yet to come the EIP - examination in public - which will be a matter of invitation. It will be at least two years before the Plan becomes policy.

RJ

Proposed Regeneration of Tipner

Several members of our committee attended the presentation of proposals for regeneration of the Tipner wastelands by the Tipner Regeneration Company in the Mountbatten Centre on 11 May. It was a warm evening and the windows of the room which faces the motorway were open. We soon had to close them. The noise even at that distance of half a mile or so was impossible. This brought home to us all that great care will have to be taken to protect the residential development proposed from the noise. It will be much nearer than we were.



The area stretches both sides of the motorway but does not include the rifle range which the MoD are not yet giving up. TRC propose a park-and-ride car park and residential and commercial development, and, recognising the noise problem, they propose mounding the ground on either side of the motorway. They propose road connections with the motorway via the half completed roundabout on Tipner Lane. There are already existing ramps on the motorway embankment in all four directions dating from the original intention of making a direct connection to Twyford Avenue when the motorway was first built. Otherwise the proposals were rather sketchy. They say they are waiting to know what the public want.

They are giving a presentation to the Society at our meeting on 4 October. So we hope they will have more definite proposals then. As asked we sent in suggestions on the proposals so far.

We urged them to plan for the monorail which, with a park-and-ride at Tipner, will serve the west side of the city very well. We asked that the development should be of high quality modern architecture and not mediocre pastiche, and as far as possible self-sustaining, using the prevailing wind for generation of electricity and orientation of the buildings to make best use of solar radiation, and collection and storage of rainwater. We wanted the housing to be integrated with what is already there, with no gated communities.

We told them that we support the idea of a bridge parallel to the M275 to carry pedestrians, cycles and buses to Port Solent and the proposed Environpark (redeveloped waste mountains). We suggested that the tank, visible on the left of the M275, and at least one half-sunk ship on the other should be retained as interesting objects in themselves as well as reminders of the previous use of the site and as a compromise between the wishes of those who want redevelopment and those who don't. We reminded them that money could be saved by not decontaminating ground to be used for such things as car parks. Finally, and very importantly, we urged that a feature should be made of the ammunition buildings on the site, which are listed and should be fully restored.

David Brock of English Heritage wrote to the consulting engineers that "even in their damaged state the magazines are of primary importance for the history of munitions as illustrated in the Portsmouth area by Priddys and Tipner... the substantial remains of the eastern ends and vaults should be considered as monuments, i.e. to be retained whether a use can be found for them or not... Personally, I would like to work towards an active and creative use which built on their distinctive form as the signature of any new development, but at all events I do not think that removing them from the site should be regarded as an option." He suggests that further research is commissioned, and if HGP is undertaking the assessments they will have to buy in the necessary archaeological skills.

RJ

Abolition of Crown exemption

Some governments exempt state facilities from civilian legislation including that on building conservation, giving dockyard managements freedom to alter their historic estate according to operational needs. A major enhancement in civilian input into UK planning of the future of defence sites is likely to follow abolition of the Crown Exemption, which exempts government departments from civil planning law. In 2005 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister drew up the timetable for its removal under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2006. It was abolished in England on 6 June 2006, when the Crown joined the Planning Acts in England and Wales, in Northern Ireland on 10th June, and Scotland on 12th June. The statutory consultees (such as English Heritage, the Council for British Archaeology, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Georgian Group, Victorian Society and Twentieth Century Society) will in future receive copies of development applications – on which they may decide to comment. Planning applications in the UK are publicly advertised, on or near the spot, which gives the opportunity for local people to comment on proposed change. The Ministry of Defence property agency, Defence Estates, will have to apply for Listed Building Consent, pay planning application fees etc.

But whilst this removal applies to town and country planning and listed buildings, it does not apply to scheduled monuments in England, which is an omission of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. However, it is planned to rectify this as part of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport Designation Review which is streamlining the designation system. Scotland and Wales have separate heritage organisations. The Crown will continue to work under Circular 18/84 arrangements in respect of Scheduled Monuments. Defence Estates (DE) produced new guidance for MOD staff involved in Town & Country Planning on their roles and the details of the changes. The anomaly for the AM and AA Act is to be brought to their attention.

"DE now have more professional advisers to support the protection and development that affects the Historic Environment and, I believe, a greater awareness of the significance of our heritage. I do not envisage any particular problems over the changes" says Martin Coulson of Defence Estates.

Celia Clark

New Think Tank

The University are setting up a Think Tank about the future of Portsmouth which will link the university with local people - liaising with Dr. Lomas and Barbara Thompson in the city council. We look forward to working with them.

Volunteer Day 17 June 2006

Four very different events – all run by volunteers on a hot summer day – really demonstrated how committed local people are to working to improve where they live.

Architecture Week Bus Tour

The Society's second bus tour as part of Architecture Week - meticulously planned - since it's not easy to manoeuvre an old Eastbourne double-decker in and out of tight corners, visited several places those on board had never seen before. Under the M275 to the Tipner Peninsular we saw Daniel Brunt's new Waterside School and the tops of the ammunition stores on the Pounds recycling site. At Whale Island – we got no closer to the Henry Leach Fleet Headquarters than across the bridge – despite zillions of phone calls to various navy personnel. We hope to arrange a weekday visit instead. Wymering Manor, church and village buildings were another surprise; more open days are planned following its sale to a local developer. Sadly the marvellous Inside/Outside playground was locked to local children and to us - because of a wedding, but we had better luck at the Incinerator, where John Collis and his deputy clad us in dayglo lycra and hard hats to show us inside and outside its gleaming metal, not quite nose to nose with the extraordinary mixture of things we throw away for burning. Two visitors came all the way from Cornwall, and, agreeably, said the tour was worth the trip!



Hatted and visible members view the incinerator's control room

John Pounds Centre Open Day

John Pounds Centre, the huge new community building commissioned and run by a local trust in Portsea, was officially opened that day. This is our new meeting venue, but I hadn't before explored the huge gym, fitness centre, library, studio of local artist in residence Jeannie Kershaw, or the pottery. Witty shoe shaped seats and an exquisite modern garden decorated with beautiful round sandstones from India make the outside spaces really special.



The garden at the John Pounds Centre

St James Memorial Trust Summer Fair

A quick hot potato and cold drink, and it was off to Milton again. St James Memorial Trust had their fifth summer fair on the new Town Green, which we helped to campaign for. Councillor Caroline Scott, chair of the Development Control committee was just starting the women's egg and spoon race. 'Queen' Janice Burkinshaw, formerly on our committee, opened the fete by "thanking us for coming to her birthday party..". Roger had his portrait drawn, and I revelled in the marvellous trees – at least as beautiful a setting as any country fete. Milton Cross school pupils played under a spreading copper beech.



'Queen' Janice at the St James' Trust Summer Fair

Alverstoke Garden Party

The fourth event was the annual Garden Party in Alverstoke Garden in Gosport – Pimms and lovely eats with hundreds of well-heeled people who contribute to the marvellous sustained effort of Wendy Osborne CBE and her team in recreating an early nineteenth century garden in front of Thomas Owen's classical Crescent. The magnificent old tulip tree was in miraculous flower, and the roses and stocks smelled delicious in the golden evening air. A day of celebration – of work – and summer.

Celia Clark

The Portsmouth Society, Registered Charity no. 266116

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We welcome new members. Please come to any of our meetings or contact Jean Thompson for more details.