

Portsmouth Society News

The Newsletter of The Portsmouth Society - Summer 2005

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR FRASER BATTERY?



Artist's impression of the proposed flats and landscaping at Fraser Battery with Fort Cumberland in the background.

QinetiQ, a privatised part of the MOD, the new owners of Fraser Battery had a welcome open weekend in April when local people had a chance to explore this special part of Portsmouth's coastline and consider its future. Its history including fortification, a naval test battery firing missiles out to sea, and research base is still apparent. QinetiQ's scheme is to clear the site – of the two masts, office/laboratory building, sheds, perhaps keeping one gun emplacement or two, and redevelop it as three blocks of flats from seven stories down to four. The Society says that the redevelopment should not obliterate the site's history, but celebrate it, retaining some of these features in future plans for the site, rather than clearing it to a 'blank sheet'. The outline planning application has now been lodged.

The Society believes that Fraser Battery offers a unique opportunity for a demonstration project for a sustainable village community. Clearly, planning such a development would have to commence from first principles. Defence Estates' recent booklet: *Design Better Defence Buildings*, sets out how the concept of Whole Life Performance is to be achieved through sustainable design. A key paragraph says:

"As energy costs increase in relative terms the use of sustainable energy (for example, wind, photovoltaic, tidal etc.) will have an increasingly important part to play in improving the Whole Life Performance. The use of energy-efficient carbon-neutral plant and solar water heating are also important. A recycling strategy [for building materials] should be agreed at the very start of a project".

The ODPM's advice on making a planning application states that sustainability should be at the heart of any submission. Sustainability is also a stated objective in the South East plan and the South Hampshire

In this edition .. How do you recognise a good building? Design Award 2005 - Nominations Invited, "Inside Out" home for Mary Rose, Beneficial School, Kent Street, Portsea, A sustainable future for Fraser Battery, Eastney? Concrete Threat to Front Gardens, Block Mills - top historic site and Building at Risk, Mudlarks, More Pompeyspeak, Travel costs since 1997, Traffic gridlocks in Portsmouth, The South East Plan, The Point and Broad Street – Appeal rejected, Nelson's statue and the Victory anchor, Moving around Portsmouth, What's On?

sub-regional strategy. It needs to be built into the framework and the design statement for development from the beginning, or it is likely to be regarded as an extra which adds to costs. There is also an ideal opportunity for opening up the main entrance to Fort Cumberland. QinetiQ are talking to English Heritage about this, though there are no plans to do so at present. Since the ground in front of the fort has been mainly undisturbed for so long, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists Trust have undertaken a survey of the shingle, and were surprised to find that the shingle lies over concrete.

Representatives of the Portsmouth Society and Solent Protection Society had a very constructive meeting with a representative of QinetiQ and their planner, where they took our suggestions seriously in a very full and detailed discussion. They entirely agreed with us that the development at Fraser Battery needs to be of exceptional quality, which is very encouraging. Where we disagreed was whether sustainability conditions should be built into the outline application, or later when the site is sold to a developer. We are seeking a meeting with Dr. Lomas, the new Strategic Director for Planning and Transport, to ask for Fraser Battery to be the first area in Portsmouth for a Local Planning Framework, for which the council is now committed in its new Draft Statement of Community Involvement issued by Planning Services in March 2005.

We want to ensure that the development is as sustainable as possible: with a car pool, grey water recycling, on-site sewage treatment - rather than sending it all the way to Budds farm and back, energy generation from the sun by photo-voltaic or thermo-voltaic panels - and of course, the entrance to Langstone Harbour is probably the best site for wave energy in the area - if not windmills, because the MOD and yachtsmen say they interfere with radar. We also want to ensure that the new development is a sustainable community. The planning department stipulated a limit of 131 apartments, 25% of them social housing. Where will the residents work, shop, go to school? As probably the most remote site in Portsmouth, a standard development - like so many in Portsmouth - would be an utter waste for this wonderful site.

Celia Clark

How do you recognise a good building?

The society's contribution to Architecture Week 2005 will be an interactive tour of Portsmouth on the morning of Saturday 18th June by historic double-decker bus to discuss buildings that have featured in the Portsmouth Society's annual Design Competition, to help build confidence in assessing quality of design. Not all our decisions are popular. Open debate should be stimulating and productive.

Starting at the Guildhall Square, the bus will travel through Southsea, Milton and the Eastern Road to the Admiral Lord Nelson School. We will look at the controversial (but elegant) waste burner and its neighbour, the Materials Recycling Facility. Back to the City Centre via the Charles Dickens Community Centre in Lake Road, the Tricorn site (now a car park), followed by University buildings including the Students' Union, Frewen Library and School of Architecture. Finally we'll discuss the award winning flats and houses in Broad Street Old Portsmouth. We will alight to visit two of these sites.

We are delighted that city councillors are coming and we particularly want Society members to be onboard to take part in the travelling debate. We look forward to seeing you. Booking is essential, using the enclosed form.

Design Award 2005 - Nominations invited

The Portsmouth Society's Design Awards will be judged in September. Nominations are welcome! Please contact the Secretary if you'd like to propose a New Building, Restoration or Landscaping scheme for the 2005 competition. To allow for a settling-in period, we will judge only those schemes completed before 31st December 2004. Entries so far include :

New Buildings

Fleet Head Quarters, Whale Island
Incinerator, Quartermaine Road
Waterside School, Tipner
Warehouses and Tulip Hotel North
Harbour
VT Shed, Dockyard
John Pounds Health Centre, Portsea
Mental Health Units, St James Hospital

Restorations

Florence House Hotel, Florence
Road, Southsea
Portsmouth Grammar School Library
and Ken Woolas Laboratory
No 1 Battery Row, Old Portsmouth

Landscaping

No entries so far.

Block Mills - top historic site and Building at Risk

The seriously decayed state of Block Mills, listed Grade I, in Portsmouth dockyard was horribly apparent when delegates to the Dockyard Historical Society's conference visited the site on 30 April.

Block Mills is the site of a world first: the first steam powered mass production factory for the hundreds of thousands of pulley blocks for ships' rigging and gun carriages needed by the army and navy by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Toward the end of the Napoleonic period 922 pulley blocks were required to equip a standard 74-gun ship; the 27 British ships of the line that confronted the combined French and Spanish fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar would have had about 25,000 blocks in their rigging. 100,000 blocks a year were needed. The Taylor family of Southampton had been one of the largest suppliers of craftsmen-made blocks over three generations, but could not keep up with demand. Marc Isambard Brunel (1769-1849) who had been Chief Engineer of the City of New York had considered how blocks might be manufactured in quantity by machines.

Having failed to persuade Taylors to mechanise, Brunel convinced Sir Samuel Bentham (1757-1831), Inspector General of Naval Works, who had himself studied the application of machinery to woodworking in a small shipyard at Redbridge in Southampton, to set up the navy's own manufactory at Portsmouth dockyard to which the steam engine and machinery from Southampton were transferred. Brunel's machinery called for superior workmanship, and in Henry Maudslay (1771-1831) he found the brilliant engineer to make his precision machine tools in metal to give accuracy and rigidity. One set of machines manufactured the shell of the block from solid pieces of elm; another produced the lignum vitae sheave or pulley wheel. The series of machines they developed performed a sequence of some twenty separate operations to ensure a steady flow of components from raw materials to standardised assembly – a system for mass production which ran well for over a hundred and fifty years.

The first steam engine in dockyards was introduced in 1799 by the first Inspector-General of Naval Works from 1795, Sir Samuel Bentham. It was used to pump water out of dry docks at Portsmouth dockyard – a momentous step – since until then every dockyard had relied on muscle power alone. Horses had been used to transport timber and stores, operate gins for dock pumping, and, from the 1770s, to provide power for certain processes in the roperies. But once steam engines were given rotary motion and could be harnessed to machine tools they became practical and economic propositions. A rectangular stone structure surmounted by a heavy



timber frame inside the southern range of Block Mills marks the site of this early pumping machinery. Within the same range, a beam engine house with a horizontal iron frame supporting the beam trunnions also survives. It is probably the second steam engine for which Bentham commissioned Boulton and Watt to help with dock-pumping and to power the new machinery for the mass production of pulley blocks.

Today, pools of water stand in the main linking hall where parts of the overhead drive are still in situ. The enormous beams supporting the timber flooring of the north block has partly rotted away to a pile of wet shreds, and the precious Maudslay machines upstairs have had to be covered with polythene sheet to protect them from leaks in different areas of the roof. The drains are backing up, causing more damage, and the wall of the north wing is bowing out, perhaps because of the spreading of the Belfast roof trusses. On the top floor of the south wing are long standing wet patches, green with mould. It ought to be a matter of public shame that the building at the very top of English Heritage's Buildings at Risk list - at Extreme Risk - is publicly owned. We heard at the conference that there was a proposal for Block Mills to be taken into Guardianship some years ago - which failed because the government would not spend £15,000 bringing it into good repair. If that had happened Block Mills would at least have been kept weather-tight. We will be adding our voices to those pressing the Second Sea Lord to take urgent action on repairs, and also to open up proposals for its future to public debate.

Celia Clark

"Inside Out" Home for Mary Rose

According to the Architects' Journal, a team led by Wilkinson Eyre Architects has won the competition to design the new Mary Rose Museum in Portsmouth's historic dockyard. The winning alliance which includes Pringle Brandon and Land Design Studio, saw off entries from Austin Smith: Lord, Higgins Garnder & Partners and a joint bid by Wilford/Schupp/Dyson. Masterminded by the Mary Rose Trust, the museum is set to become the permanent home of Henry VIII's favourite warship and is expected to open in 2011 to coincide with the ship's first voyage.

Built between 1510 and 1511, the Mary Rose's wooden hull has required constant conservation since it was raised from the bed of the Solent more than 20 years ago. The museum will display a collection of 19,000 objects raised from the wreck and there are proposals to enclose the dry dock on either side with educational, conservation and support spaces, as well as a shop, restaurant and cafe.

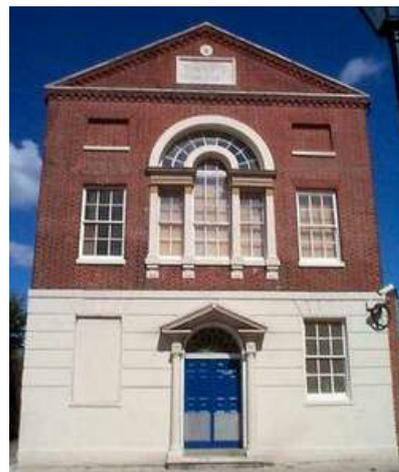
A trust spokesman said: 'This "inside out" approach ...cradles the hull at the centre of an arena which reunites the original artefacts with the ship by placing them in context within a virtual glass hull representing the missing section.

'Deck galleries run down the length of the ship in layers, corresponding to the original deck levels and lead into further gallery space at the end of the dry dock in Portsmouth, where the hull has lain since she was raised from the seabed in 1982'. *Richard Waite The Architects' Journal* 5 May 2005 pp 6-7. Robert Law of English Heritage who was on the advisory committee said that the Society would like the winning design. We look forward to seeing it in more detail, and also to what new uses will be found for Boathouse 5 when the museum moves into the dock.

Celia Clark

Beneficial School, Kent Street, Portsea

The Beneficial School, listed Grade II*, is one of the earliest surviving friendly society buildings. It was built by the Beneficial Society in 1784 as a monitorial school for the poor and needy on the ground floor and an Assembly Room above - the setting for many great occasions including Paganini concerts; Mrs. Dickens was present the night before Charles' birth. The society was formed in 1755 by a group of tradesmen who made monthly payments into a fund which paid out sick, funeral and widow's benefits in time of need. Eight bays were added to the original four in 1856 for a girls' school. Its fine Palladian windows at either end and Doric porch in the rusticated ground floor are reminders of the elegance of the dockyard town of Portsea, which had its own walls and city gates, separated from Portsmouth by the Milldam.



Laurence Gatt wrote a Portsmouth Paper about its history: "The Beneficial School 1755-1939" in 1986 using the Society's records to bring its evolution as a school to vivid life. The school - with only curtains between the classes - continued in use until 1960, when the adjoining primary school was built. Over the years various unsuitable uses have been suggested - such as rag-picking - and it was still under threat in 1995 when I featured it in my book *Beacons of Learning: Breathing new life into old schools* published by SAVE Britain's Heritage. A more appropriate occupier was a disabled training centre, but it was still poorly maintained with broken windows, dry rot in the staircase and inappropriate partitions in the upper floor. The Beneficial workshop used it to train people in carpentry, upholstery and printing. They were succeeded by the Shaw Trust, which helps the long-term disabled into jobs. On November 5 2004 a fire was started by a firework; the Shaw Trust members were locked inside. Shocked at this experience, they moved out; the fire badly damaged the roof. But the owners, Portsmouth City Council, had insured it, so they repaired and redecorated it.

At a recent meeting on site between Bill Fergie, Celia and Deane Clark and Roderick Jackson of the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, Roger James, and Lisa Tippen and Geoff Hutchins from the City's Asset Management Service it was agreed that residential conversion was the only way to secure the Beneficial's future - though this would mean filling the huge spaces on the first floor with structure which would have to be elegantly done. There is also room for new-build in Curzon Howe Road and on the Kent Street frontage. There have already been expressions of interest from local developers; the City is marketing the building nationally.

Celia Clark

More Pompeyspeak

In the February 2002 edition of this newsletter we published an item called Pompey as She is Spoke about the Portsmouth dialect. The article remains on the society's Web site and is the subject of many of the emails that we receive. Here are some of the latest contributions.

"One common phrase I haven't heard mentioned on these pages is **"to cop the needle"** describing when somebody has lost their temper, usually abbreviated to he/she has copped. I was born in Buckland where this saying used to be in widespread use. I don't know the exact geographical spread of usage for this saying, but to my knowledge I haven't heard it used anywhere else. I also haven't come across anybody who can explain its true origins, which is perhaps an excellent example of the mysterious mechanics of diachronic linguistics! I have a private theory as to the origins of this phrase but I am by no means certain."

"If you go for a tour on HMS Victory, the guides will tell you that due to the desperately hard life of a 18th Century sailor, sailors would often feign death instead of simply deserting. This meant they would be buried at sea by being sewn into a canvas body bag. The sailor's plan was to conceal a knife and cut themselves free when they hit the water. In order to negate this practice, the powers that be ordered that when they were sewn in, the final stitch was to be put through the unfortunate sailor's nose. Hence "cop the needle". I'd certainly be as mad as hell if somebody put a needle through my nose, and it would certainly tie up with the naval connection. Anyway, I'd welcome further theories." - *Boomslang*

"I was reading your article Pompey as she is spoke with great interest on the Internet so I thought as one born in St Mary's Hospital and raised in Paulsgrove I might add the local term **'savoury ducks'** which are cakes made of sausagemeat dipped in beaten egg and coated with breadcrumbs and then fried. I was often given these for my tea as a child and having moved around the country to various places know that they are unique to that area, having never found them anywhere else or finding anyone who knew what I was talking about except in Paulsgrove. I don't know if this is of interest. I think they are still made and sold by the local butcher as my aunty still lives there in Ludlow Road." - *Debbie Tucker*

"Whether it is historic or a present day thing, many Portsmouth people adopt the **present tense** when speaking of past events, this is characterised by the "egoes argoes" diction :- He goes "Im out the door and up the road wiv im legging after me". I goes "leave it out, ee's wiv me at the match", and so forth. All conversation is subject to exaggeration and embellishment but this is moderated with the expression "As you do". Thus "I decked 'em both and walked off with both their birds" must be greeted with "as you do". The other prone to exaggeration is the "black cat man" on the basis that if you have a black cat he has a blacker one."

"Building site life is tough, but warmly embracing to those whom life is treating roughly or who are in despair. Often a few kindly words to indicate that one is losing a sense of proportion will be indicated by either "life's a bu---r, then your'e dead" or "don't you think you're taking yourself a bit seriously ? ""

"**Inversion** should be recognised: "I decked 'im" usually transpires to have been an argument with a little shoving and pushing, while "I gave him a slap" is a euphemism for a serious case of Greves Bodily Harm. The two should not be confused " - *George Langton*

I live in Havant, to the North of Pompey, my Mother being from Portsmouth. We still say dinlo and **moosh** in this area. - *Sharon Davage*

"One Pompey phrase that has baffled be for years is **"Jelled off"** to imply that somebody has left, or more so that somebody has made a hasty exit. Going home is usually expressed "Jelled off home". I have asked speakers how they would spell the word but no sensible answer has been forthcoming."

"Portsmouth dockyard uses a floating gate to seal off the dry docks, know as a caisson but always pronounced "K-soon" with a flat K by the dockies. Another mystery." - *George Langton*

"Another interesting phenomenon in Portsmouth is how place names remain long after the places or people have gone. The Cumberland PH at Eastney was run by **Charlie Hurdle** upwards of fifty years ago but is still referred to as that, and recently boarding a bus at the hard I asked for two for the **"Gaiety"** and was given the correct ticket notwithstanding that the cinema was demolished 45 years ago." - *George Langton*

<p>Goodbye to the Portsmouth Building Society building in North End. Designed by Thomas Makins, it was a dignified example of a commercial office block with considerable presence. Let's hope its replacement is of the same quality.</p>

The South East Plan

The regional authorities – in our case the South East England Regional Authority - are charged with producing plans for the region which will replace the old structure plans produced by counties, which are out of favour with the government. The South East region is an awkward crescent-shaped area stretching from Milton Keynes in the north through Oxford and Reading down to Southampton and then along the Sussex and Kent coast to the Thames estuary – an area embracing but not including London. We are taking part in the consultation on the draft plan, a document half an inch thick, that contains very few positive proposals. After setting up a subcommittee we put together our response to the plan. It included general points like the need to make clear what elements of the Plan are to meet Government requirements and what are for the benefit of the S.E. Region itself, and that some of the proposals are dependent on Government help to fund the necessary infrastructure, especially the LRT in Gosport and the Hindhead Tunnel on the A3, and that the plan will not be achievable unless that funding is promised. We expressed shock and surprise that no references are made to public involvement in making the plan, or to quality of life, or to open space, which might be compromised if very high densities are to be achieved.

South Hampshire Region

There is a separate section on the South Hampshire Sub-region which is said to be 'punching below its weight'. This imprecise metaphor, surely out of place here, implies that South Hampshire's economic output is less than it should be. We pointed out uncertainties in its calculation. e.g. the Black and the Grey economy. In any case is it sensible to aim to bring all subregions up to the regional average, we asked, seeing that the region is the most prosperous in the country? The plan seems to take no cognisance of the role played by Government spending on which, in many cases, local prosperity depends. Remember 'Silicone valley', we said - the M4, Great Western Railway strip, whose prosperity turned out to be due to the proliferation of big recipients of Government money – Harwell, Culham, Aldermaston, and the science departments of Oxford University. In our area it is particularly the Ministry of Defence which is the big spender and supporter of local economies - and its role is rapidly diminishing as sites are sold off and redeveloped.

Options for siting

For siting of new developments the draft Plan invites us to choose between Option A. (new developments within the cities) , Option B (new development in 'Strategic Development Areas'), and Option C (new development within existing or new transport corridors). The last seems to go against the expressed desirability of preserving the undeveloped spaces between the urban areas, especially between Portsmouth and Waterlooville.

We deplore the absence of any reference to the recommendations of ecoSE, that the design standards of all new homes be raised to 'ecohomes' "very good" standard. This will reduce very much the energy and consumption and carbon dioxide production of new homes. The trouble is that the good effect will be swamped by the overwhelming numbers of existing houses which do not have these high standards. ecoSE want to 'retrofit' existing houses to save energy and water with, in particular, baths of smaller capacity, sprinkler taps, energy-efficient boilers etc. which would have to be thrown away. They don't seem to have faced the problem of disposal of the replaced items - like the discarded fridge mountain.

SDAs - MDAs

We are worried about the concept of Strategic Development Area which recalls the MDAs (Major Development Areas) of the Structure Plan. They were to be sited to maximise the use of already existing transport infrastructure; but although the principle was sound when it came to the point, it was ignored. The potential area with ideal transport connections, Micheldever, was passed over and one with no transport connections at all, nowhere near a railway and with not even an A road, West Waterlooville, was chosen and is now being built and closing the green gap between W'ville and Portsmouth. How will this mistake be avoided with the SDAs? Local communities also need to be fully involved, as well as developers.

The plan needs to take into account MOD sites in the area which are mostly very much underused and in some cases redundant. They are a useful source of brownfield land, and even though they were employment sites, too many of them have been redeveloped for private housing. The plan should make reuse of MOD sites for employment a priority.

Affordable Housing. The Plan needs to spell out the difficulty of achieving targets on affordable housing – what stops local authorities from prescribing more affordable housing in their local plans? And the Plan needs to emphasise the importance of a strategy for bringing into use the thousands of empty houses.

Not another agency

The plan proposes the establishment of yet another agency - an Implementation Agency. Our reaction is to protest "No, please not another agency ! The public have difficulty in distinguishing the roles of SEEDA, SEERA and GOSE. The last thing we need is another agency. Surely one of the existing authorities - or a task group - can carry out the task?

There is a section called Communications and Transport. We are commenting separately on the preparations for a Local Transport Plan

Here we merely mark some priorities:

1. A Local Transport Authority/ Executive on the London model . This we regard as essential. Mainly to arrange bus-train interchange and pre-payment to avoid queues to get on the bus
2. The completion of the Eastleigh railway chord. We spell out its importance
3. Phase II of the LRT – Fareham to Southampton to have priority after Fareham to Gosport..
4. Alternatives to the congested A32 are essential to the local economy and environment.

Roger James

The Point and Broad Street – Appeal rejected

There was a public inquiry in February, adjourned to March and concluded then, into the appeal by the developers against the refusal of planning permission for their scheme to redevelop Broad Street and the Point. George Ferguson, president of the RIBA whose firm, Acanthus designed it, had come to Portsmouth to show his scheme to us before permission was applied for. We had criticised it and told him that it was not good enough. The site includes Wight Link's workshops at the northern end and the car park, toilets, and café, all owned by the city council on the east side of the street. Although the officers had recommended giving permission, the Development Control Committee had thrown it out, rightly we thought. The developers appealed. We agreed with the Committee's decision though not for their reasons. They wanted pastiche. We wanted contemporary. We have now heard that the inspector rejected the appeal.

At the inquiry we opposed the appeal. What we particularly disliked was the large gap in the terrace of houses designed for the east side of Broad Street. This accorded with the development brief. It was a feature inserted by the officers in response to pressure from some of the west side residents who wanted their view to the Camber to be preserved. We also disliked the rather overbearing building designed to balance Gunwharf at the harbour end of the scheme. The inspector agreed with us on this "in my opinion the building would be over-dominant and fail to respond adequately to the general scale, character and varied facades and roofscape of development on the west side of Broad Street"; and his report on the whole supported the council. He disliked the scheme for more or less the same reasons as we did, and dismissed the appeal. He considered "the main issues to be the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area . . . and the setting of nearby listed buildings"; and his Overall Conclusion was: "That the proposed developments would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area" but that such harm would not primarily arise from traffic congestion.

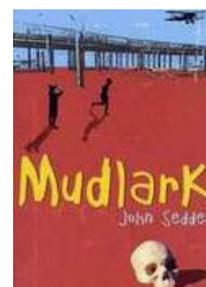
What we now want is a new planning brief which will lay down a more appropriate scale with a new continuous east side with no gap, balancing the existing west side, and a prominent but not dominating modern building incorporating a restaurant, that will balance Gunwharf but not compete with it when viewed from the harbour. We shall be asking the planning officer to set this in train.

Roger James

"Mudlark"

Author of *Defence of the Realm* **John Sedden** was already immersed in Portsmouth's history when he wrote this book, set in Portsea in 1917. It's full of vivid local detail and a real sense of place. He's a born storyteller. I just had to keep turning the pages, and I very much enjoyed his sly humour: the Portsea pawnbroker is called Berlusconi, and The News is thinly disguised as the Hampshire Times suppressing the truth about the murder of local prostitutes. The two teenage heroes break into the printworks and typeset a story accusing the King of being Jack the Ripper. The editor is first arrested, then knighted for keeping a lid on the story... and the two boys are forced to join up.... A good read if a sad ending! "Mudlark" is published by Puffin and costs £4.99.

Celia Clark



Concrete Threat to Front Gardens

"They used to be the preserve of proud gardeners clipping rose bushes, but now they are more likely to be home to a man armed with chamois leather polishing a four-by-four" according to a Camden newspaper. The loss of front gardens to off road parking - where there is room in Portsmouth's narrow streets - continues apace - but should this be allowed to happen? The introduction of controlled parking zones has increased the number of households converting their front gardens into off-street parking spaces, but they overlook two important factors: the pavement belongs to the local authority, and on-street parking is lost as a result.

At present, it would appear that there is nothing to stop this erosion of an important interface between the public and the private realm, which comes under the category of permitted development, even in conservation areas. Camden Council have been asked to make Article 4 Directions to stop this erosion which prohibit particular changes in conservation areas, though they are reluctant to do so because of enforcement costs. Should Portsmouth bring in guidance - or controls? Front gardens can be green oases - for passers by as well as residents. Walking along pavements becomes dodgy if we have to look out for cars crossing across our path. Are our vehicles now such important possessions that we must lose our forecourts - as well as putting our houses' foundations at risk by concreting over more soil so the rain cannot run into the earth?

Celia Clark

Demolition v refurbishment

"According to English Heritage refurbishing homes rather than demolishing and building new provides energy savings over a 30-year period of 60 per cent. The Building Research Establishment's recently published research shows that pre-1919 houses cost £1,000 per annum less to maintain than more recent homes. Demolition typically costs £17,000 a unit." Civic Focus 50 Spring 2005 p.5 Civic Trust

Heritage Open Days

Heritage Open Days 2005 - This year's celebration of architecture, culture and history takes place throughout England on 8-11 September 2005. Details of the properties to be open in Portsmouth will be available in July.

For those willing to travel to the capital, Open House London takes place on the following weekend, 16-17 September where 500 properties will be open for view.

Web links for more information : www.heritageopendays.org www.londonopenhouse.org

Nelson's statue and the Victory anchor

There has been a general consultation about relocating the statue of Nelson, at present rather inconspicuously sited to the south of Pembroke Road, and of the Victory anchor on Clarence Esplanade near the hovercraft terminal.

As far as the city council is concerned, the relocation of the anchor has been decided. It is to go, together with its plinth, to the Spur Redoubt, a hundred yards to the west of Clarence Pier, at about the presumed location of his final embarkation. This decision is still subject to confirmation by GOSE, the Government Office for the South East.

A recommendation that Nelson's statue be relocated to the square in Grand Parade will go to the Development Control Committee on 25 May and if accepted, that decision too will have to be approved by GOSE.

We had preferred a location for the statue on top of the Long Curtain overlooking the embarkation point. A member reported having concluded from some measurements that Nelson would not be able from the Grand Parade site to see over the promenade to the sea. The planning department say that he will be taller by a metre than the promenade wall. They will make sure and if necessary add to the height of the plinth. The railings surrounding the plinth say 'G. Grossmith of Portsea' on the seaward side. Does anyone know anything about this firm? The Crimean War Memorial has now been moved to enlarge the IOW hoverpad.

Roger James

Moving around Portsmouth

The City Council has to produce a Transport Plan for the period 2006 to 2011 for Government approval and funding. This is a two-stage process. The first part of the plan has been prepared by consultants (MVA) in conjunction with Hampshire County and Southampton City Councils because this deals with the sub regional issues and goes to Government in July 2005. Because of the tight time scale for comments the Society's Executive Committee appointed a sub committee to review the plan and make some general observations.

The second stage concentrates on Portsmouth issues and has to be completed by March 2006. Although this provides more time for consultation the City is struggling as to how to do this best. As an amenity interest society serving the whole City, the Portsmouth Society, has been asked to assist in choosing the way forward and to trial a survey sheet which it is hoped will be offered to Neighbourhood Forums and other groups round the City.

A form is enclosed with this newsletter for completion and return to Charles Burns who will welcome any comments and thoughts. Please give Charles your views, ideally when you return the form but if you have an aversion to forms then you may contact him on charles@kidby.net or by 'phone on 023 9282 7143.

Charles Burns

Traffic gridlocks in Portsmouth

We have written to the police traffic management at Winchester to ask for an explanation of the three recent serious blockages of traffic that have occurred in the northern part of Portsea Island and , in the first instance on 25 November 2004, over the whole of the city of Portsmouth. This first and most serious incident was, we know, caused by police action, and the most recent two were attributed to failure of the Unicorn Road traffic signals. The questions we ask are

1. Who is in charge of day to day traffic management in Portsmouth? In what way is responsibility divided between the police and the City Council?
2. Were any traffic police dispatched to manage flows at the Unicorn Road junction during the recent incidents? If not, why not?
3. In the case of the first and most serious incident - that of November 2004 - connected with a car driving into the barrier on the M275, why was traffic, especially in the city centre, not redirected on to unobstructed accident-free sections of the highway network? Was there any post-mortem examination of the incident? Were lessons learnt?

What assurance can we have that such incidents will be properly managed in the future? We have in mind of course the possibility of terrorist action which could hardly cause more chaos than was achieved by these three unanticipated incidents.

Roger James

Travel costs since 1997

Since Labour came to power in 1997, motoring has become 6 per cent cheaper in real terms (taking into account purchase, petrol, maintenance, tax and insurance), while bus fares have risen almost 16 per cent and a rail ticket is 7 per cent more expensive. This is from the Department for Transport, quoted by Transport 2000's journal Transport Retort.

Roger James

Stop Press

The Society's book of the Millennium Exhibition in St Agathas *Portsmouth 1945 - 2005* - updated to cover developments in the last five years - edited by Ray Riley and illustrated by Garrick Palmer and members of the Society is to be published by Sutton Publishers, which is also to publish the book in the Tricorn by Robert Cook and Celia Clark.

Celia Clark

Endpiece quote

*From Lynne Hodsdon's History of the Portsmouth Society,
University of Portsmouth*

"Having always maintained its independence from the local power groups the Society is best described as a "ginger-group". It stimulates discussion through the investigation of wider implications and alternative strategies. It can prevent the planning process being a dialogue between planners and developers. It seeks to change things for the better and get the best out of any changes. Its greatest desire is for the importance of its role in the city to be acknowledged and its views granted respect for the amount of work, knowledge and experience that goes into preparing them. They never stop bothering about the decisions being taken now which will affect lives now and in the future".

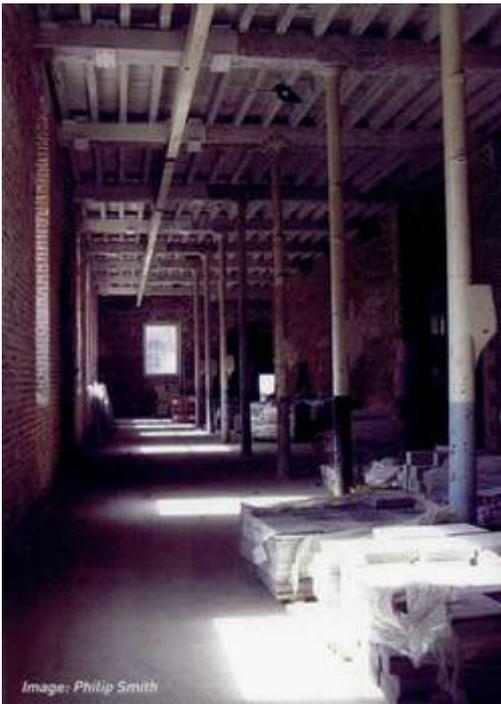


Image: Philip Smith

Left - The ground floor of the southern wing of the restored Vulcan Building is being converted for use by the Aspex Gallery. Guided tours of this part of Vulcan will take place on 22 June - see Meetings and Events below. Upper floors are being converted to residential use and the show flat is now open.

Meetings and Events

Meetings are on the 1st Wednesday of each month (except January, August and September) at the **Cathedral Discovery Centre, Edinburgh Road, Portsmouth.**
Free Parking - Near City Centre & bus stops - 5 mins to Portsmouth and Southsea Station Free admission - Visitors welcome!

Wednesday 1st June	7.30pm	Managing Southsea's Seafrost - A talk by David Evans - Portsmouth City Council Resort Services Officer.
Saturday 18th June	9.30am to 12.45pm	Architecture Week Bus Tour : How do you recognise a good building? A tour of Portsmouth by historic double-decker looking at buildings that have featured in the Society's annual Design Competition. See the article in this newsletter and the booking form enclosed.
Wednesday 22nd June	2.30pm and 3.30pm	Tours of Vulcan Building - Organised by the Aspex Gallery to show their new venue to the public, these tours must be booked in advance by calling 023 9281 2121. Vulcan is the major historic building in Gunwharf.
Friday 8th to Monday 11th September	Throughout England	Heritage Open Days - up to 2,500 buildings in England will open to the public free of charge. See www.heritageopendays.org .
Wednesday 5th October	7.30pm	Local Strategic Partnership and Portsmouth City Council - Who Does What? - Margaret Nudd, Chair, Portsmouth LSP.
Wednesday 2nd November	7.30pm	Block Mills - its history and its future - the world's first steam powered mass production factory
Wednesday 7th December	7.30pm	Nuclear or not? The potential for renewable energy - Dr Roger James

The Portsmouth Society, Registered Charity no. 266116

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Web site: www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk

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