



Isle of Wight Society Newsletter

November 2017

Issue 122

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An architectural walk around Ryde

In July a number of members took the opportunity to go for a walk around part of Ryde looking at the rich variety of architecture. The leader of the walk was Ben Cracknell, who is the Portsmouth Council Conservation Officer and lives near Ryde.



Starting from the Pavilion on the seafront, a rare example of cast iron decorative seaside architecture built 1926-7, we made our way uphill.

The Regency buildings and number of classical pillars on display were magnificent. The Regency style carried on being built into Victoria's reign in Ryde, as we have always been a little behind the times on the Island!

Vernon Square, 1836, is a gem. Those who have restored the garden are to be congratulated. A variety of original homes surround the square and one can imagine the gentility of the area in Victorian times.



Above Vernon House, first built in 1833, has thankfully been completely rebuilt in the same style as the original impressive home, using the original Doric columns by the front door



Page 1 photograph On the corner of Melville Street and George Street is one of the most perfectly preserved Regency villas in Ryde, dating from 1825. The canopied windows and porch are very typical of this period of architecture.

Vectis Hall, the earliest school in Ryde, has now been sold, we await developments. While some scaffolding has been erected around the Art Deco York Hotel restoration there may be prolonged.



Vectis Hall



The York Hotel

Walking along Lind Street and the Colonnade we considered the possible uses that the Town Hall, built 1829-31, may have in the future, soon we hope. We had yet another lesson on classical columns - the "Grand Tour" of Europe has a lot to answer for! *Below: Ryde Town Hall*



The present British Legion club was built in simple classical style in 1834 as The Mechanics Institute, a reading room and club. These columns are Ionic.



West Street offers examples of "Osborne" look alike observation towers on Victorian villas, as well as modern architecture, one of which was a RIBA winner at a recent awards ceremony we hosted.

Spencer Road gains its name from the Spencer family, who owned Westfield Park with its imposing gate arch surmounted by a stag. This was the same Spencer family to which Lady Diana belonged.

There are some delightful buildings along Spencer Road, some of which have recently undergone restoration. There is a Gentleman's club with decidedly Dutch influence to its style. Ornate brickwork is topped by stonework finials. Next door is the impressive brick built Telephone Exchange building dated 1935.



Above the Edwardian Spencer Road Ryde Club

St Thomas's Church was built 1827-8 and has been without its original spire since 1951. Over the central door is the coat of arms of the Player family. They and their successors, the Brigstockes were the proprietors of the church into the 20th century.

In St Thomas Street is the massive Brigstocke Terrace, restored in 1973 and the first ever winner of our Isle of Wight Society Conservation Award. Brigstocke Terrace dates from 1826-9 and was built by James Sanderson, a grand classical terrace. It is the largest terrace of this type on the Island.



Brigstocke Terrace



At the bottom of St Thomas Street is the Prince Consort Club, formerly the Royal Victoria Yacht Club, sporting impressive Corinthian columns, the ones with agapanthus leaf decoration at the top of them. The seaward part of the building was erected in 1846-7, and the single storey entrance twenty years later.



Prince Albert laid the foundation Stone for the yacht club.

It was a whistle stop tour, and definitely proves that Ryde deserves more of a look than one can see from the top of a bus!

It is planned to have more Isle of Wight Society guided walks around various towns on the Island.

We need someone to take on the task of organising walks and talks. Any offers ??

Let us celebrate the Voluntary Sector

Reading the County Press can be depressing due to the number of reports of crime, lack of consideration and other things not going well. Many letters to the editor are complaints. The Isle of Wight Council are struggling with increasingly difficult budget decisions. There are on-going problems with the Floating Bridge. Traffic congestion, especially around Newport, appears to be increasing. Residents are concerned about the Island's infrastructure being able to support the 550 new houses that are due to be built every year until 2025 and, presumably, beyond. What is there to be cheerful about? The Island's very active Voluntary Sector is a positive and encouraging subject.

There are voluntary organisations on the Island whose individual activities cover every aspect of human interest, such as music, literature, sport, health, transport, nature etc. The IoW Society's main interest is the preservation of the character of the Island to ensure that it continues to be a pleasant place to live. So our wide-ranging interests centre on urban development in an historic environment and the health of the countryside as a whole. We are fortunate to have active people and groups working with these interests at heart.

One key element is money. In general an organisation requires funds to do anything. Voluntary activities are the same. Therefore Islanders should be very grateful that people with the time and talent have obtained grant funding totalling millions of pounds for projects across the Island. The names of many of these residents are only known to those involved in their projects. Therefore it is time that we acknowledge their contributions.

The list includes Ian Boyd, one time leader of Island 2000 and now involved with Artecology; Richard Grogan, now lead officer of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team on the Island; Peter Fellows, financial officer for the West Wight Partnership and now filling the same role for the Down to the Coast programme in the East Wight; Mike Bulpitt currently lead officer of the Action Isle of Wight team based at the Riverside Centre and Ray Harrington-Vale, a life member of our society, who has been the driving force at the Footprint Trust for several decades. This list is just a small sample of those who have helped volunteer organisations to achieve their goals for the benefit of different communities across the Island. We would like to hear from anyone who knows of any other person deserving recognition in aiding voluntary groups to gain funding.

Congratulations are certainly due to Jon Matthews and the Friends of Northwood Cemetery.

This voluntary group have undertaken to raise funds, £1.3million, and carry out a massive project. There the two chapels of rest have been restored at great expense, as many unforeseen problems arose during the work. The buildings are now in an excellent state and ready for use by the Family History Group and the Friends of Northwood Cemetery and other people.

IWC Bereavement Services still operate the burial ground. The Friends of Northwood Cemetery have been working alongside them.

The grounds have been mapped and tidied, and much work has been done on recording and tidying the graves and their inscriptions. The history of the cemetery deserves a whole article to itself.

Congratulations to the Friends of Northwood Cemetery.



A FEW WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

A review of Society activity over the summer taken from the time of the Design and Conservation Awards in May shows an up turn in affairs. The close liaison with the Heritage Centre has played a large part in this and for that I am grateful and thankful.

There was an uplifting day spent at the County Show in July where we signed on some new members. Much of this success came from the location of our pitch with The Green Party on our right and Army Recruitment on our left. All three of us had items that children and adults could handle and this encouraged people to stop and talk. The Lion's Centenary Show at Sandown Airport had fewer people attending and with different interests. It was also wet and windy but again the chance to talk to people was worthwhile.

Wolverton Fair in September was interesting and we did much to raise the profile of complaints to the Island Council over the Floating Bridge inadequacies so we have supported Island issues in words and deeds.



We now have a Membership Secretary in Nora

Wray who has helped David to check on lapsed members. We have plans to offer winter time talks besides those in the Heritage Centre and David is investigating the ways to add incentives to joining the Society. Anyone with a business could contact him and discuss this further.

Peter White is a new committee member while Newman Smith has stepped down. Charlie Taylor, an old stalwart, died in August and has bequeathed much of his archive material initially to the County Archives, who will sort it and pass on material to East Cowes heritage and Cowes Heritage.

Wilf Curtis is now well over 90 years of age and thankfully contributes in an executive role, as well as twice a week masterminding the card index system at East Cowes Heritage Centre.

The web site is under constant review and any feed back on its style and content will be useful. Our venture into Face Book has not been successful and has been discontinued but we do want the web site to provide news and links.

Sarah, David and I are working with architects Colman Cotter and Sean McMillan on a new format for the Design and Conservation Awards since the Children's Design section has moved to a re-generation slot with the Island Council. The County Press are sponsoring a "Small Spaces Award" for next year. For example, all you shed builders and caravan restorers need to be in touch so we can tell you more.

I think that brings the past and the future up to date. Thank you to all who have contributed to the running and existence of the Isle of Wight Society. I think there is much to look forward to in the next six months.

With regards, Helena Hewston.

The AGM Isle of Wight Society Annual General Meeting was held on the 22nd June 2017 at Whippingham Church Hall, by kind permission of the Parochial Church Council.

As everyone paid for their own lavish slices of cake and scones and teas, any fee for the use of the hall itself was waived, for which we are very grateful.

The meeting appointed the same Chairman and Treasurer. Members were reminded that Helena's four year term of office as Chairperson is complete next May.

Following the general business, members were taken on a guided walk around the fascinating churchyard at St Mildred's Church by Sarah and David Burdett, who spend Friday mornings gardening there, and reading inscriptions on the tombstones!

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Isle of Wight Society Information

Meetings for members and the public are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm except December at East Cowes Heritage.

Conservation Awards Entries Date is 14th February. Let us know of any worthy work.

The Awards evening is 18th May 2018 at the Royal Yacht Squadron.

Chairman: - Mrs Helena Hewston, 3, Sunnyside, Main Road, Newbridge.

Tel 555099 e-mail sybug@aol

Treasurer: - Mr David Burdett, 92 Greenlands Road, East Cowes, PO32 6HT

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Affiliated with the national organisation for civic societies – Civic Voice. Take a look at the Civic Voice Website next time you have five minutes to spare! There are lots of ideas there we could take on board.

Subscriptions are due on 1st January each year.

The rates are:

Full membership £12, Joint Full membership £20,

Senior membership £10, Joint senior £18,

Corporate membership £25.

Subs should be paid direct to The Treasurer, or by Bank transfer to the Society Account:

Name: Isle of Wight Society Bank :Lloyds

Bank Code: 30-95-99 Acct Code: 00331217

In the Reference Box please insert your name.

If paying by BACS please email the Treasurer with your full contact details as these do not show up on BACS payments.

Bequests will be gratefully received. Please inform the Chairman if you intend to make such a donation.

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Regeneration and Consultancy

After WW2 industry on the Island went into a slow decline, mainly led by the shipbuilding industry that had employed so many people. Employment on the Island became more difficult to obtain. This, in turn, led to those parts of the Island that relied on these industries to suffer falling living standards.

In 2001 central government set up the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) with a main office in Guildford. One of SEEDA's projects was to boost industry in the Medina valley. Marine industry was the main target. SEEDA spent over £12 million purchasing the GKN Westland North Site, the old Trinity House Depot and other property in East Cowes. As time passed the Project shrank from being the Medina Valley Regeneration Plan to the Cowes Regeneration Plan, then to the East Cowes Regeneration Plan. The main impact of this was the loss to the community of the car park in Well Road and the GKN Sports facilities. The term Regeneration may have been self-defeating as it infers that something has declined to a poor condition that has to be rebuilt. Regeneration may have put off potential investors.

SEEDA were approached by a company seeking premises to build expensive motor yachts. The site of Seaholme, an attractive Victorian house on the East Cowes water front, that gave visitors arriving on the Red Funnel car ferries a flavour of the Island's architecture, was chosen as the most suitable for the new factory. SEEDA rapidly demolished the building, only to be told by the company that they had selected a site at Hythe on Southampton Water and would not be setting up business on the Island. The only construction triggered by SEEDA was the Waitrose Store, and housing on the sports club site.

With a change in Government, SEEDA was disbanded and the assets transferred to the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) whose brief was to sell all the land acquired by SEEDA for housing. In East Cowes part of the land owned by HCA was sold

off to developers who were given planning permission to build more houses. One developer is due to use the profits from the housing to "enable" the building of a new marina and convert the Victoria barracks to hotel accommodation and restaurant. The rest of the HCA land has been sold to Red Funnel to enlarge their marshalling yard, demolishing factories previously used for marine industry. HCA has spent a lot of money preparing an area south of the power station for an industrial estate that will include water frontage for marine industry. The presence of blue-slipper clay and Sites of Special Scientific Interest may limit the extent that the site can be used for industry. All the decisions on what should be developed have been made in offices on the mainland.

Where are these comments leading? Let us consider how the decisions about regeneration were made. The government, probably encouraged by the IoW Council and our MP, used statistics to conclude that an investment in job creation on the Island was necessary. True, SEEDA did consult residents in East Cowes by asking volunteers to stop people in the street and ask for their opinions. Naturally the responses were rather parochial with one of the main complaints being the loss of sports facilities. The staff at SEEDA's Guildford office set about creating a master plan for their part of the Town. They even advertised East Cowes as a development area at an international exhibition in the south of France! It was then up to developers to decide if they wanted to invest in the community, not to be part of the community but to make money out of creating new uses for the old industrial sites.

HCA have caused a short-term rise in employment through house building but failed to create long-term work for residents. To guide developers as to what would be acceptable developments across the Island the IoW Council are required to produce plans, approximately every ten years, laying out in broad terms how the Council sees the best way forward in housing, retail, industry, transport etc.. These broad plans are supposed to

be supported by detailed plans for local areas. These supplementary plans have never been fully completed. This leaves a developer with a fairly open choice in presenting their planning applications. Approval for an application can be influenced by the offer of an investment in a community facility.

Running a County Council is basically a business. The council seeks to gain as much income as possible to fund community services. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, councils, both county and local, acquired considerable properties both for their own offices as well as public buildings and open spaces. The cost of recovering from WW2 and the decline in manufacturing industry has meant the ability of councils to meet their expenses has become a difficult task. Rationalisation of their property portfolios has led councils to seek temporary financial solutions by selling off property no longer considered useful, often as part of a "development" package.

Like any business, it is not economically sensible to employ all the council staff needed to deal with every possible aspect of management. Several years ago the IoW Council decided to seek income from redeveloping the Newport Harbour area and employed a firm of consultants at considerable cost to carry out a survey and submit a report. The extent of the survey is questionable as they did not even speak to the Harbour Master! For their money the Council received four pages of paper! It appears to the public that this investment in a survey produced no development.

A theme that has been appearing over the decades is the decreasing capability for decisions affecting the Island to be made on the Island. We see this in industry where local companies have been bought by national firms. The IoW Council's decision to give Tesco planning permission to open a supermarket at Ryde led the way for an increasing number of national chain stores to open branches across the Island. The management of the stores lies at their mainland headquarters to which the profit from

retailing to Islanders is sent. Family-run businesses that were once the main feature of town centres have closed. It used to be these local businesses that supported the community carnivals that, in their heyday, attracted many visitors to the Island.

Recently we have seen a growing tendency for council services to be managed in conjunction with Hampshire County Council. Last year central government generated an extensive discussion about the creation of a mayoral authority in charge of a committee formed from representatives of Portsmouth, Southampton and the IoW Councils. A Government Minister thought that the Island was just part of an estuarine community. At a local level, the recent problems with the replacement of the Floating Bridge has caused one to wonder whether a better solution would have been to ask the crew to design a replacement that tried to meet the Councils' need for more income.

This year the IoW Council has employed new staff to create a Regeneration Policy and the team identified nine sites around the Island ripe for redevelopment. One of these is Newport Harbour. The team recently carried out a public survey at a market day held on Newport Quay. Despite having a council planning department, the regeneration team have now employed a professional urban designer from the mainland.

The current situation leads us to consider alternative solutions to deciding about developments. The Island is most fortunate in having the services of a very active voluntary sector. Many members of voluntary organisations are retired professionals from a wide range of industries. Perhaps it would be profitable for the IoW Council to cause the creation of a consultative panel of residents from the Island's commercial, architectural and voluntary sectors that would provide expertise and local knowledge to assist development decision making? Development plans are not easily created as they have to be able to attract investment. However if things went wrong we would only have ourselves to blame.