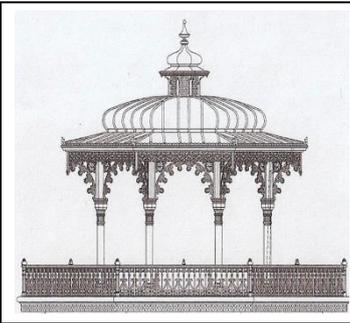


# Brighton Society



newsletter October 2017

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autumn roundup

KEEPING IN TOUCH-KEEPING INFORMED

## Feibusch mural, St Wilfrid's Church, Elm Grove

We were invited by Hyde Housing to view a 1940 mural in St Wilfrid's by Hans Feibusch, a German/Jewish painter who, like many other artists, came to England in 1933 fleeing from Nazi persecution.

The church was designed by Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendell in a semi-modern eclectic style. It was built between 1932-1933 and John Betjeman called it "about the best 1930s church there is". It fell into disuse in the 1980s and was subsequently listed to save it from demolition. It was converted into flats for elderly people in the 1990s and bought by Hyde Housing.

Parts of the original church still remain more or less intact, including the chancel and the Lady Chapel. The latter contains the Feibusch mural. Besides its obvious quality, we were taken aback by the sheer size and scale of it. It occupies three of the four walls and is representational, painted in a rather Expressionist style, typical of the time.

Interestingly for Brighton Society members, Robert Gregory, who was our Chairman for many years, attended the church as a boy and was the model for one of the figures in the mural. We will



*Nativity*

be talking to Robert - who is now well into his nineties - and hope to be able to discover more about the background to the mural from him.



*The Magi*

Feibusch was an important artist. Besides St Wilfrid's, he painted about 40 murals in churches all over the country, and the Pallant Gallery in Chichester has the contents of his studio, which he used from the 1930s until he stopped painting in 1997 - one year before he died, aged 99.

Brighton Society member Sarah Tobias has written a paper on St Wilfrid's church and Feibusch the artist, which will shortly be posted on our website. She also acted as a tour guide during the Heritage Open Day event last month. About 70 people viewed the mural - the first time it has been on public view for almost 40 years. Unfortunately access to the mural - and the original parts of the church - is difficult to arrange as it can only be gained by passing through private areas of the residential accommodation.

Hyde are keen to improve the access arrangements so that the mural can be opened up to regular public view - but this will require substantial building alterations. They approached us to ask whether we could assist in publicising the mural in order to help with raising the funds to carry out the work.

JM ♦

## Your new committee

The AGM was held on 5 July and was well attended. The following were elected to the committee: Corinne Attwood, Valerie Bolton, Sandy Crowhurst, Malcolm Dawes, Robert Edwards, Allan Grainger, Delia Ives, Lyn Lynch-White, Jeremy Mustoe and Ninka Willcock. Roger Hinton did not stand for re-election and he was thanked for all he has done for the Brighton Society over many years. Selma Montford was elected to be our first President, in recognition of her role in setting up the Society over 40 years ago and being its Secretary until 2016.

After the conclusion of the business of the meeting, Malcolm Dawes showed another of his excellent selections of photographs of sites around the City that have been of concern to us during the year, or have caught his eye. It is worth coming to the AGM if only for these, which are always illuminating and occasionally alarming as he records what is going on in the City around us. Join us next year!

At the first meeting of the new committee Jeremy Mustoe was elected as Chairman, Valerie Bolton as Secretary and Lyn Lynch-White as Treasurer. Corinne Attwood also represents the Clifton & Montpelier Society, Sandy Crowhurst the North Laine Community Association and Robert Edwards the Kingscliffe Society. VB ♦

## 87 Preston Road

### (Preston Road Annexe, City College)

Whilst Thomas Simpson's Circus Street board school has recently been demolished, and educational buildings at Pelham Street, by Simpson and his son, Gilbert, are once more under threat, there is at least cheering news to report regarding City College's former Preston Road Annexe. A largely intact example of a board school building by Thomas Simpson, it is in the Queen Anne style, with fine gables, chimneys and detailing.

It was bought last year by Aligned Properties who, with local architects, Yelo, have drawn up sympathetic designs for converting the building to a car-free development of 25 apartments, a full 40% of which are, unbelievably, to be "affordable", in line with the Council's often evaded requirements. To maximise space, apartments are to be open plan with mezzanine floors. It is particularly pleasing that the original school bell is to be restored and retained in situ and the ugly external modern pipework replaced and relocated.

On 9 August the Planning Committee voted unanimously in favour of this well considered

proposal (BH2017/01083), councillors describing the building as "beautiful" and "gorgeous" and the proposed redevelopment as "wonderful". We concur. We recommended the building for local listing (which was granted in 2015), and now enthusiastically await action on the site whilst, as always, keeping vigilant NW ♦



*The Board School on the right, Edwardian times*

## Brunswick Festival, Sunday 21 August

We chose well, it turned out, to attend the two day Brunswick Festival on the Sunday rather than the miserably soggy Saturday. For the sun shone and the rain held off until the crowds started to disperse, the music volume was cranked up and we'd have packed up anyway. Our display generated considerable interest, with Lyn, Sandy and I in almost constant conversation with stall browsers. Malcolm's photo display attracted comments and questions whilst Jeremy's model demonstrating that it isn't necessary to build high to achieve high density also made a strong impression. Merchandise was sold and new members recruited. It was a good day for the Brighton Society NW ♦



*Sandy, Ninka and Lyn with our stall at Brunswick Festival*

## The Preston & Patcham Society

In the early 1970s, blocks of flats were proposed for the grounds of St Bernadette's Convent in Preston Road, involving felling all the mature trees. Selma Montford, now our President, and John Morley, then the Director of the Royal

Pavilion, managed to have almost all of them saved. They then formed the Preston Society.

Soon afterwards, Brighton Station was threatened with demolition. The Preston Society objected to the loss of our magnificent station with its beautiful curved roof. The Save our Station (SOS) group joined with them in objecting to the demolition. They were successful and the station is now listed and beautifully restored.

The Preston Society recognised that it would be stronger if it merged with the already established Patcham Society, and they became the Preston & Old Patcham Society, later the Preston & Patcham Society.

Sadly, the Preston & Patcham Society, although it has a healthy membership, cannot find enough volunteers to form a committee to carry on its work and has had to be dissolved. The Brighton Society will do all it can to keep an eye on the area between Patcham and Preston on its residents' behalf. SM/ VB ♦

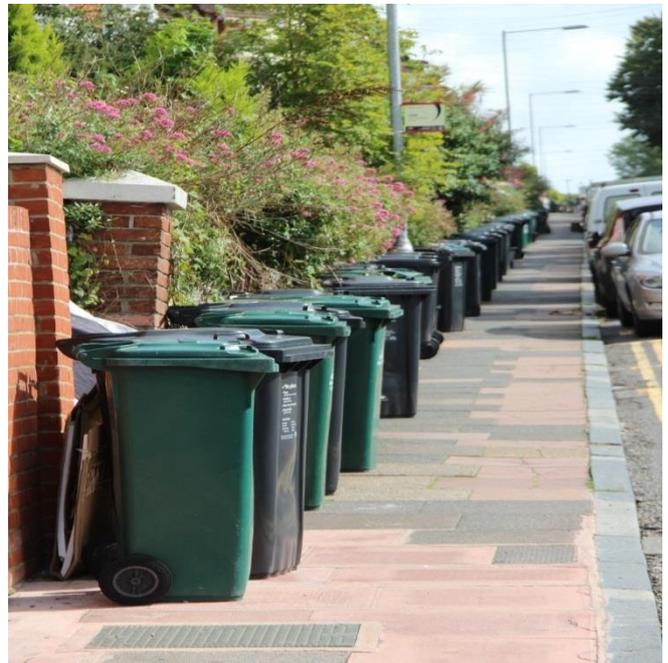
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### Recycling Wheelie Bins

Should we not expect our Council to show some responsibility for providing an acceptable environment on our streets? The appalling mess created by leaving lines of huge wheelie bins in narrow terraced streets seems to confirm that they have little interest in this. The view of a never ending line of bins in Bear Road is typical of what has happened in many areas and there are plans to roll out this programme throughout the City.

These bins are the latest idea to solve the Council's inadequate recycling performance. But what is the logic of insisting on huge bins outside every house, however small? The houses in Bear Road, for instance, are made up of two small maisonettes, so the residents will produce only a small amount of recycling. But CityClean has decided that every house there will now have two huge recycling bins, plus a box for glass and two refuse bins. And there are many similar roads across the City.

The Council must have had meetings to discuss the implications of imposing these large bins on every household in the City. How can a row of wheelie bins stacked along the footpath - a sort of permanent rubbish dump - be acceptable? Other councils are banishing wheelie bins. Cambridge, for instance, has just got rid of 9000 bins with a new development eliminating bins on residential streets. Chutes will carry recycling and refuse into underground chambers which will be emptied by



*Street vista in Bear Road*

lorries accessing the underground levels. This will free up the pavements for walking and will create a vastly improved street environment - if only our Council had the imagination to realise that streets are not just for wheelie bins. MD ♦

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### The ABBA plaque

Our Chairman wrote to the CE of Brighton Dome & Festival to express our concerns about the ABBA plaque that appeared almost overnight on the Grade I listed Dome.



*Mama Mia!*

While not disputing that the ABBA event is well worth commemorating in some way, our concerns about this plaque were three-fold:

1. The City's Commemorative Plaque Panel (CPP) was not consulted;
2. The inferior quality of the plaque;
3. The Planning Department will allow only one plaque on a listed property.

The CPP always insists on a high-durability, high-legibility ceramic plaque, many examples of which can now be seen around the City. We understand that the present ABBA plaque will eventually be replaced by an aluminium one, but this would still be better suited to a position inside the Dome rather than outside. This would leave the exterior walls available to posterity's judgement on worthy recipients. We are still awaiting a reply. DI ♦

### Shelter Hall Kiosk

The kiosk that used to stand on the promenade at the bottom of West Street has now been relocated to the East Street Bastion. It dates back to the 1880s and was originally an air vent and lantern that illuminated the Shelter Hall below. It is a listed building and its removal and relocation required listed building consent. There was a requirement to use as much of the original structure as possible and to replace any missing parts of the fabric.

Much of the original steel frame was so corroded that it had to be replaced. The timber was also found to be in very poor condition and like-for-like replacement has taken place.

The planning consent stipulated that the kiosk should be returned to its original appearance with missing cast iron decorative pieces replaced with new cast iron.



*A work still in progress, we hope ...*

Many of the highly decorative cast iron sections that ran around the outer edge of the canopy had disappeared with only three sections remaining on the southern side. New sections were to be cast at a specialist foundry in Oxfordshire using moulds based on the originals. At the moment plain timber boards have been erected along the edge of the roof - so presumably it's still work in progress. We will keep an eye on it. MD ♦

### Graffiti

"Graffiti can encourage further antisocial behaviour including flyposting and the dumping of waste." This is the Council's view of graffiti, to be found on its website. It ignores the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, which requires land to be "cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity of the area". The Act emphasises community welfare, not the property owner's desire to adorn his building.

The Council has commissioned street art in the past but says it is "considering the powers available to us" when it comes to murals on private property, seeking an agreement "for the benefit of everyone". Did the residents agree to a graffiti mural commissioned by a landlord on a property in Viaduct Road? No action has been taken – the mural is still there after two years

It is evident that the Council has lost the battle against a graffiti epidemic in this City. Their suggested solution for preventing graffiti on private property - painting a mural or landscape over it - risks exacerbating the problem.

Should these mural "artists" not comply with the same vetting procedures as public art does? The Council's stated view is that public art "increases the use of open spaces and creates important environments for residents and visitors, insuring a cultural legacy for the future".

Is the mural on the corner of Hartington Road and Bonchurch Road that depicts the cartoon character Homer Simpson holding a spray can part of our cultural legacy for the future? It seems to fail to comply with either the Council's criteria or the Town & Country Planning Act. AG ♦



Subscriptions were due from 1 April, and a form is enclosed to renew or set up a direct debit . Please Gift Aid your subscription if you can.

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