

THE
MONTPELIER
AND
CLIFTON HILL

ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

No 8 autumn 2010
www.montpelierandcliftonhill.org

Winter warmers
Royal Alex update
The MCHA's free party
***plus* planning round-up**

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Correction

In our article on the conservation awards in the summer issue the photo of 43 Norfolk Road was wrongly identified as 89 Montpelier Road and the photo of 89 Montpelier Road was captioned as 43 Norfolk Road. Apologies.



Free Christmas party

THIS YEAR'S Christmas party will be free for all members. It will be held at St Nicholas's Church, Dyke Road, Brighton on Friday 10th December and it will follow a members' meeting at 7pm.

We ask you to join us for a Xmas celebration in the traditional surroundings of Brighton's oldest church where a selection of canapes will be provided together with a couple of glasses of wine (additional glasses on sale) or soft drinks.

There will be music and carols and, of course, the opportunity to talk to friends old and new. As usual there will be a raffle to raise funds for the association so if you can provide a small prize we will be very grateful. Do come and join us, you will find your invitation inside this newsletter. Any enquiries to our membership secretary alan.legg2@btinternet.com or 01273 328624.

Changing the guard

SEVERAL new faces were elected to the committee at the 2010 AGM, which was held at the Brighton and Hove High School on 23rd June. Lori Pinkerton-Rolet, a past president of the British Institute of Interior Design joined the committee, while Graham Towers, a planner and

architect, who has been a co-opted member of the committee for a couple of years became a full member. Ian Thorburn stood down as membership secretary and has been replaced by Alan Legg.

The new chairman, Mick Hamer, replaces Roger Amerena, who has resigned from the committee. Mick Hamer promised to improve communications with members. He told the AGM that the newsletter will in future be published three times a year and the website updated regularly. He also wants to improve relations with other local groups.

The very latest news

FROM the Christmas party to the latest planning news you can keep up to date with the MCHA website. The website is now being updated regularly and during the exhibition of the Royal Alex proposals in August it was updated every day.

You will find details of future committee meetings, the next AGM, contact details for officers, the latest trade card as well as copies of past newsletters. And even if you don't have a computer you can still pay us a visit; all you have to do is to pop down to your local library and log on. www.montpelierandcliftonhill.org/

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The MCHA executive committee consists of **Mick Hamer**, Chairman, **Chris Jackson**, Honorary Treasurer, **Jim Gowans**, Honorary Secretary, **Alan Legg**, Membership Secretary, **Richard Killick**, newsletter editor, **Gabi Tubbs**, conservation awards, **Graham Towers**, planning group, **Ian Thorburn** and **Lori Pinkerton-Rolet**. The position of vice chairman is vacant. The co-opted members are **Carol Dyhouse** and **Corinne Attwood**.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS: Single membership is £10 and couples £15, corporate £30.

Forty not out

Jack Tyson recalls the early years of the MCHA

I CAME to live at 3 Clifton Road Brighton in December 1982. The following year, my wife, Judith, and I were introduced to the Montpelier and Clifton Hill Association (MCHA) by Camilla Dinkel, then its secretary, after we became concerned over the height and density of an office and residential development now known as Clifton Mews.

We joined MCHA at that time and it was because of its vigorous and articulate campaign that Brighton's planners limited the height of the buildings to three storeys and cut the number of units to be constructed on the site. The MCHA's involvement also paved the way for me to negotiate a party wall agreement between the developer and the owners of 1 to 8 Clifton Road so that the wall dividing Clifton Mews Clifton Road would be maintained at their expense by the developer and future owners of Clifton Mews.

In 1986 I was asked to serve on the committee of the MCHA and continued as a member until 2005. Throughout this long period Renee Schulman held office either as Vice Chairman or Acting Chairman and from 1989 until 2009 Martin Foster undertook the dual responsibilities of Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary. In 1994 I became chairman of the MCHA and I remained so until I retired in 2005.

Throughout my term I received steadfast commitment and support from Renee Schulman and Martin Foster. There was a time in 2002/3 when but for their tenacity the MCHA could well have been forced to wind up through a lack of committee members able and willing to undertake necessary administrative tasks.

When I became Chairman I was acutely aware of the background and achievements of the MCHA during the previous 25 or so years and I make no apologies for listing them now together with our achievements during my ten years of office.

The MCHA is the second oldest conservation body in Brighton & Hove and predates the establishment of conservation areas in the city. It was formed in 1970 by a group of local conservationists to promote high standards of architecture and planning and to protect and improve features of historic or public interest in the area which was then threatened by a variety of civic and commercial developments.

The first of these development proposals, which directly led to the MCHA's formation was the building of the block of flats known as Heather Court on the south side of Montpelier Place in 1971. Other planning issues which the MCHA has either challenged included the Western Road Traffic Scheme of 1984, which aimed to divert all traffic along this road into the residential roads to the north. We successfully opposed this. In 1989 we were faced with the Breeze into Brighton inner ring road

traffic proposal to widen Montpelier Road to speed through traffic into the town centre. That would have resulted in heavy pollution along the area's residential roads. This plan was defeated by MCHA's highly organised and well publicised Freeze the Breeze campaign spearheaded by the MCHA's then Chairman, Sheila Rawlings.



Clifton Mews: cut down to size by the MCHA

The MCHA introduced an annual design award scheme in 1984. The work of organizing, viewing, selecting and photographing entries has been undertaken in the past six years by Gabi Tubbs.

The area has a large number of trees. It became apparent in 1991 that many pavement and roadside trees had been lost and were not being replaced by the local authority. Martin Foster carried out a comprehensive survey, mapping the exact location of every existing and lost tree, to back our case for a rolling programme of replacement of all the lost trees. This replacement programme was ultimately adopted by the council and is still continuing under the watchful eye of Martin Foster and other MCHA members.

From the lean times in 2002/3 the MCHA's well being has significantly improved and when I retired I was able to hand over the chairmanship to Roger Amerena on a sound footing.

Jack Tyson was MCHA chairman from 1994 to 2005



Wrap up warm for winter

AS THE weather begins its seasonal change we alter our clothing in order to stay warm. Perhaps it's also time for your property to dress differently.

In his new book "Urban Eco Chic", author, broadcaster and Brighton resident Oliver Heath provides some compelling statistics. He says that the loft accounts for around 25 per cent heat loss in the average home, while walls and windows account for a combined heat loss of around 45 per cent.

Here are some practical ideas for avoiding environmental waste while enjoying a warm winter.

In the Regency period, fabrics for curtains would have been heavier than our recent trends encourage.

Linings and interlinings gave visual structure and physical warmth to window treatments in lighter fabrics such as silk. The curtain pole became popular during this period with many a swag and tail keeping cold air from leaking into the room from above the pole.

Poles are still popular today but are often used with unstructured and unlined fabric panels. In "The Joy of Home", style guru Naomi Cleaver suggests that you have a warm lining made for your existing curtains. A heavy interlining and lining can be made to fit onto the same hook and ring system you already have and can be removed during the summer.

Any extra 'layer' used on the window or wall will provide some heat insulation. If you are fortunate enough to have solid wooden shutters, now is the time to

get that paint loosened so they can function fully. Even the addition of a humble roller blind will create a pocket of air between the window glass and the inside of the room and help to keep the room warmer.

The new interior fabric collections for 2011 were just unveiled at trade shows in London last month. Heavy cut velvets and beautifully weighted solid colour wool cloth are very fashionable. There are black-out linings which retain heat in the winter and keep it out in the summer. A specialist should be able to advise you on how best to handle your particular needs. Or you could look for old curtain panels on-line or in antiques markets. In addition to window treatments there are other simple

Regency fabrics were far heavier

and fairly inexpensive preparations you might consider this autumn and winter. Small rugs and beautiful textiles can really be appreciated by displaying them on a pole fixed to

the wall. You can think of these as modern-day 'tapestries' and they can often be less expensive than similarly sized paintings. The textiles will hang better if they have been lined and interlined.

Draught excluders need no longer look like dachshunds or rows of needlepoint cats! They can be easily fashioned out of most heavy-duty fabrics or even a decent leather sample. So, as you break out the woollens this autumn, its time to make your home warm, inviting and practical.

Lori Pinkerton-Rolet is an MCHA committee member and past President of the British Institute of Interior Design

It's curtains for you

The elegant way to shave pounds off your heating bills

SASH windows are one of the glories of our conservation area. Yet they are an important source of heat loss in a period house, *writes Mick Hamer*. Typically a sash window will lose about two-and-a-half times as much heat as the same area of solid brick wall—and five times as much as a modern cavity wall.

Modern houses are almost invariably built with double glazing, not just to cut heating bills but also to curb emissions of the global warming gas carbon dioxide. Throughout Britain many Victorian houses and even some Regency buildings have had their original timber sash windows replaced by double glazed plastic windows in the name of improving energy efficiency.

You can see the march of the double glazing salesmen all over the city, from the UPVC windows on the Royal Alex to the replacement windows on domestic buildings. So is double glazing the only way to improve the energy efficiency of your house? The answer is an emphatic *NO*, according to researchers at Glasgow Caledonian University.

English Heritage asked the university to look at ways of cutting this heat loss. The researchers took an ordinary Victorian sash window and set it up in their laboratory. They found that a few simple measures could dramatically cut the heat loss making the sash windows almost as effective as double glazing.

Sash windows lose heat in two important ways. First they leak. After 150 years or so most sash windows do not fit as well as they did when they were built. The gaps between the sashes and the frames suck in the cold winter air and allow our expensively heated warm air to leak out.

Draughtproofing and repairing any defective joinery are highly effective ways of slashing your heating bills. The researchers estimated that about 60 per cent of the heat loss in the poorly fitting test window was caused by air leakage. Draught proofing reduces this source of heat loss by a staggering 86 per cent.

Secondly, glass is a very poor insulator compared to wood or brick. In their laboratory the researchers kept one side of the window at a nice comfortable room temperature of 72 °F (22 °C). The outside of the window mimicked a frosty night, with the temperature of the air kept at a chilly 35 °F (2 °C).

We all know that in winter the glass of a window pane is far colder to the touch than the wood of the surrounding window frame—or curtains. Indeed most older people have vivid memories of waking up to find a thick coating of frost—on the inside of the windows.

The researchers were able to measure this heat loss through the glass. On the inside of the room where the air temperature was 72 °F the surface temperature of the glass was just 54 °F.



Curtain comfort: where science meets elegance

One of the easiest ways to cut this heat loss is to put up heavy curtains. Curtains cut the heat loss through sash windows by about 40 per cent and they will knock tens, if not hundreds, of pounds off your heating bills every year. But the researchers found that a snugly fitting roller blind was only a couple of per cent less effective at staunching the loss of heat than curtains.

So if you need a quick fix, a roller blind is a whole lot cheaper than splashing out on made-to-measure heavyweight curtains. But shutters are the most effective traditional way of insulating windows, cutting heat loss by more than 60 per cent, which makes them almost as effective as secondary glazing. Our Victorian ancestors knew how to keep their houses cosy.

“It is certainly not essential,” say the researchers “to replace existing windows to obtain levels of improvement in thermal performance that make traditional timber sash windows comparable with standard modern windows.”

For more tips on keeping warm this winter visit our website www.montpelierandcliftonhill.org/

A new look for the Alex?

The future of the Royal Alex hangs in the balance

TAYLOR WIMPEY has submitted two planning applications for the Royal Alex site. One still involves the complete demolition of everything on the site, including the much-loved main building. But the other option entails converting the main building, a key requirement of the council's planning brief, which was approved in March.

The conversion scheme does much to restore the elegant façade of the main building. The architects plan to remove the 1940s addition to the top floor of the curved balconies and restore the dormers that are currently hidden behind them. They then plan to take out the glazing to create open-air balconies for the flats in the main building. This part of the plan attracted plenty of favourable comment at the public exhibition of these plans in August. Clearly the company's architects have been very sensitive in their approach to converting the main building. The conversion scheme will provide about 118 flats.

The demolition plan involves razing all the buildings on the site and building 138 flats. This plan is not in principle a lot different from the one that was thrown out at the public inquiry in May 2009. It has affordable housing and a GP surgery, but does not comply with the planning brief because it fails to keep the main building. The council's planners are unlikely to approve wholesale demolition because it would mean tearing up the planning brief. **If you want to save the Alex, you should object to the demolition plan.**

The MCHA and the Brighton Society met Taylor Wimpey in August. It was a very constructive meeting. We told Taylor Wimpey that the conversion scheme would have to include an element of affordable housing if it was to stand any chance of getting planning approval. The planning brief sets a target of 20 per cent affordable housing for the site.

Taylor Wimpey listened carefully to our points and since that meeting the company has been modifying the original conversion plan. The conversion plan now includes some 15 per cent of affordable housing. This is a major step forward. But as we go to press there is one big unanswered question. Will the percentage of affordable housing will be enough to satisfy the council?



The shape of things to come? How Taylor Wimpey plans to transform the facade of the principal hospital building

The submission of two parallel planning applications is a puzzling strategy and will raise a lot of doubts about the company's true intentions for the site. The inspector at the last public inquiry said the main building made a positive contribution to the conservation area. One of the things that the company will now have to show in trying to persuade the council to allow wholesale demolition is that it is impractical to convert the main building. Yet by submitting a conversion scheme the company has shown that it is practical to convert the main building.

We told Taylor Wimpey that the public consultation had shown that 93 per cent of people wanted to keep the main building. So the only planning application that stood any chance of succeeding was one that kept the main building.

Keep up with the latest developments in this long running saga on our website: www.montpelierandcliftonhill.org

Planning round-up

Hen parties set to invade Hampton Street

Tall storeys

TWO new planning applications have been submitted for Mitre House, the semi-derelict block that is sandwiched between Western Road and Hampton Street.

Plans to add a single storey to the north block of Mitre House and convert it into a budget hotel were submitted to the council in June. These plans are due to be considered by the planning committee as we go to press. But they have been recommended for approval.

The association objected to these plans because of concerns about night-time noise from late returning hen parties and stag nights and the extra traffic that the hotel's 200 plus guests will generate. We also said that although Western Road is identified as a suitable location for hotels, Hampton Street is not.

The hotel is likely to cause significant traffic problems. Guests arriving by car cannot go to the hotel's front entrance, in Western Road, because this is a bus lane and cars are banned from the bus lane.. Consequently a large number of guests will turn up at the hotel's back entrance in Hampton Street.

Meanwhile, the owners of Mitre House then submitted a second planning application in October. This is an application to add an extra storey to the Spring Street wing of the block and extend the top floor of the south block. This will affect the sea views from the conservation area, notably the view down Clifton Place and Spring Street. The extra storey will also tower over the cottages of Spring Street

Three years ago the owners of Mitre House proposed adding two storeys to the south block. This would have destroyed one of the key views from the conservation area down Victoria Street. The association successfully defeated these plans.



Boards banned

ESTATE agents' boards were banned in the central conservation areas from 20th September. As exclusively revealed in the last MCHA *Newsletter* the ban will cover all the Montpelier and Clifton Hill conservation area. Boards put up before the ban can stay but they will have to be removed after the property has been sold.

When the council first suggested a ban on estate agents' boards two years ago the MCHA argued for a blanket ban. Estate agents were initially happy to see the boards banned but as the recession began to bite they changed their tune and opposed a ban. As a result of their opposition a government inspector held a public hearing in March. The ban does not affect commercial premises.

Some you win..

The boarded up site opposite St Michael's in Powis Road, next to the laundrette, has been an eyesore for more than 20 years. It used to be Newings, a greengrocer's shop. But developers demolished the shop and got planning permission for two four-storey houses from the old

Brighton Borough Council in 1987. Now the developers want to build their houses—to the 1987 plans. And they may well get away with it.

The standard condition on every planning permission is that work should start within a set number of years. In 1988 a building inspector visited the site and saw foundations being laid—although local residents don't recall this work. This, says the council, constitutes making a start.

The houses will block views of the back of Powis Square and have a severe impact on the neighbours. Clearly what was allowed in 1987 wouldn't be allowed now.

The MCHA has asked the council to impose a standard condition on planning permissions that doesn't just impose a start date but also lays down a timescale for completing the work to prevent similar problems in the future.

Boxed in

OPENREACH's ugly new junction boxes have started to appear on the streets of our conservation area, despite our objections. The MCHA complained about Openreach's "one size fits all" approach and we have been liaising with other conservation groups, notably the Regency Society and the Kemp Town Society, to try to develop a common approach.

Two boxes have been installed in Montpelier Terrace. But plans to put a further two boxes in Upper North Street have been withdrawn.

One of the first planning applications for one of these giant boxes was in front of the garden wall of 72 Upper North Street. The council turned this application down.

So Openreach came back with a more "sensitive" planning application. It moved the box from the back of the pavement to the kerb. This application has now been withdrawn.



It's party time at the MCHA

IT WAS a perfect summer's day. There was barely a cloud in the sky, the sun shone, the band played and the verdant lawns of the Brighton and Hove High School once again provided the perfect setting for the MCHA's annual garden party, which was held on Saturday 10th July.

The party followed an unveiling of a blue plaque to Henry and Arthur Wagner, the father-and-son team of Brighton church-builders. The plaque is attached to the vicarage that Henry Wagner built in 1834.

The old vicarage is now part of the high school. The plaque, which was sponsored by the MCHA, was unveiled by Geoff Wells, the mayor

of Brighton and Hove in the presence of the Bishop of Chichester and other church leaders from the local area.

The brilliant weather encouraged record numbers of members and their guests to attend the garden party and help celebrate the MCHA's fortieth anniversary in style. More than 200 people attended the two events and most stayed for what became a truly convivial afternoon with a chance to catch up with friends on the latest planning news and gossip.

Waitrose kindly provided canapes and wine. The MCHA is grateful for the continued support of both Waitrose and the high school for its summer garden party.

