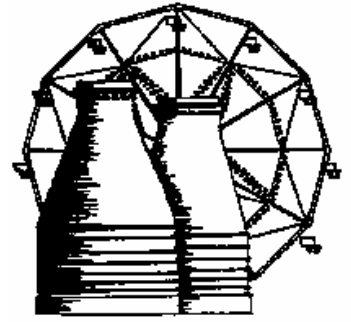


PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY

Newsletter - Winter 2007



Kilns Update

The initial remedial work by the structural engineers has been completed. An investigation of both kilns was undertaken to determine their condition and decide on any repair work required for the 1906 kiln.



The Kilns just before the collapse of the 1909 kiln. *Photo Archie Foley*

Access to both kilns has been created, with lockable doors installed. The debris from the 1909 kiln has been removed and it has been established that the internal dome has collapsed, although whether this happened during the implosion or previously has not been determined. The importance of the missing iron bents, “essential to ensure structural integrity”, has been admitted, something we have been impressing on the Council for years.

Simpson and Brown have been appointed as Conservation Architects and will report on repair options, a programme to take these forward and provide costings. It has been clearly stated that funding for restoration and rebuilding of the 1909 kiln will not be available from the Council for two to three years. In the meantime the intention

appears to be to cap this kiln to prevent further damage, which would allow the protective scaffold and shroud to be removed. The condition of the 1906 kiln is better than anticipated and repairs to ensure this continues will go ahead, which is good news.

It is clear that the restoration of the 1909 kiln is a long-term project, but the Council are fully aware that we will press to ensure that this work is undertaken to the highest standard and that the importance of these buildings to our local and national heritage is fully appreciated.

George Haggarty, archaeologist and a member of P.A.S., has produced, with aid from the National Museums Scotland, a C.D. detailing pottery shards found during excavations carried out near the kilns. He has kindly offered to send P.A.S. members a free copy of this if they send him a stamp addressed envelope of appropriate size. His address is : George Haggarty, 8/1 John Street, Portobello, Edinburgh, EH 15 2 EE.

North-West Portobello Masterplan

Over 250 people attended a public meeting, organised by P.C.A.T.S and the Portobello Masterplan Action Group, in conjunction with the Council, in the Town Hall on November 14th. to hear about the progress which has been made in drawing up an urban design framework for this area of Portobello which covers the Fun Park, Pitz and Baileyfield North sites, (including the former Scottish Power site.)

The consultants, C2WTA, who are preparing the design framework for the Council, were present to answer questions in the light of the public exhibition of their draft ideas in the library in June. They are suggesting the building of about 1,000 residential units in this area, in blocks of varying heights, including a row of five ten storey flats along the side of the Sir Harry Lauder Road. They also wish to move both the library and the community centre onto the Pitz site.

Several members of the public questioned whether the consultants really understood the existing character of the area and where the pressure was coming from for such overdevelopment which would overshadow many existing houses and create huge traffic issues. Strong feeling was expressed that the library and the community centre should remain in the centre of Portobello and that, while there was a need for varied housing types in Portobello, affordable housing in particular, high blocks of flats did not suit the area's character. Similarly, while a need was recognised for artists' workshops in Portobello, it was also felt that there needs to be a careful balance between residential and workshop units. Several residents in Baileyfield Road made the point that their houses did not even feature in the proposals, while others felt that the proposed building over Bridge Street car park would be a serious loss to residents, visitors and shoppers.

Alan Henderson, Head of Planning, stressed that the consultants wanted to listen to the views of the public and that community input was vital if the final design framework was going to be acceptable to the community, stressing that concerns which were important to residents should not be overlooked.

The consultants' report will be presented to the planning committee in December. It will then go to public consultation in January and February. Our local councillors have asked that copies of the design framework be placed in the library.

It is vital that as many P.A.S. members as possible look at these proposals once they are available and let the planning department know of their concerns. If the proposals are not what local people want then they must use this opportunity to say so in order to ensure that this large area of Portobello is developed in the best possible way, and in a way that is acceptable to local people.

Proposed Waste Transfer Site

P.A.S. has supported the group of local residents who have set up P.O.N.G.S. (Portobello Opposes New Garbage Site). Their successful campaign has resulted in 674 individual letters of objection, 240 standard letters and a petition with around 700 signatories being lodged with the planning department by the date set for submission of objections.

P.A.S. itself has submitted a detailed letter of objection highlighting the many ways in which this application would have a hugely detrimental effect on Portobello's amenity. The proposal, which would generate 928 extra lorries a day using the Sir Harry Lauder Road, would have a serious impact on the traffic problems which Portobello already faces, resulting in even greater congestion, traffic delays, queuing and even more air pollution caused by even more lorries stuck in queues, their engines idling.

Houses near the proposed site would also suffer considerable noise and odour problems. The site would operate from 6am to 7 pm on weekdays and the noise generated by all the associated activities on the site would be considerable. Smells from the site and from the lorries on the roads would prove a high risk to the area. Residents at Seafield already suffer considerable problems caused by the sewage treatment works there.

We also have a council municipal site at nearby Fillyside, while the smell at the sewage pumping station at Joppa causes problems on a regular basis. Is Portobello, an outstanding conservation area as well as Edinburgh's seaside, to be totally surrounded by odour producing waste handling processes?

Many houses in Portobello already suffer from problems caused by vibrations from the volume of traffic on our rail and road network. These problems would only get worse if a waste transfer site was to be built in Portobello.

P.A.S. also questions the logic of bringing waste into the city by means of the road network so as to then take it out again. Surely it would make more sense to take waste out of the city first and then have it transferred onto the rail network? Millerhill, on the outskirts of the city, would seem to be, in P.A.S.'s view, a far more suitable site for such an operation. Waste could be brought there far more easily from East, West and Midlothian, as well as from Edinburgh, without adding to already congested city streets or damaging the amenity of a residential area such as Portobello.

New European legislation which will shortly have to be put into practice also means that the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian will have to get together in terms of a long term, environmentally sound plan for the disposal of their combined waste. This they seem reluctant to do and, to the lay person, it might seem that they are dragging their feet, displaying a reluctance to state what their future plans will be regarding this issue. If Viridor get permission for a waste transfer site in Portobello, and if Powderhall, which currently handles Edinburgh's domestic waste, closes, then one could end up with the horrendous situation of all of the commercial, industrial and domestic waste from the whole of the combined regions being brought by road into Portobello, merely to be transferred back out again past the outskirts of the city through which it has just been transported. An environmentally friendly long term solution to the problem of the disposal of the waste of the combined Lothian regions has to be thought out by the relevant Councils and an historic residential area like Portobello should not have to be the innocent victim of all of this at the expense of a profit making company such as Viridor.

Not surprisingly, this application has generated a very large number of objections. Due to this, it is expected that no decision about it will be made until the start of next year.



The Portobello Kilns in the 1970s: the 1906 kiln is awaiting repair while the 1909 kiln is still in good condition.

Photo City of Edinburgh Council

Shop Fronts on our High Street

FOR some years PAS has been asking the city's Planning Department to enforce the removal of new shop signs that are not sympathetic to a conservation area, and the re-painting of shop fronts that are painted in garish colours.

There are council-approved colours for shop fronts, which could be enforced, but have seldom been, and when a group of PAS members took two representatives from Planning on a walk along our high street recently, they admitted that the situation had got out of control.

PAS were astonished, however, to be told that guidelines for shop signs cannot be enforced, as the regulations covering them are not strong enough and have not been revised since the mid-1980s. It was suggested that the Scottish Parliament should be asked to revise these regulations to give the planners more teeth, and at PAS's request the Chair of Portobello Community Council has written to the Minister for Sustainable Communities about this.

One shop sign causing particular concern is McColl's, beside the police station, with its 'Booze Buster' slogan. After receiving complaints about it from residents, Councillor Stephen Hawkins wrote to McColl's Managing Director. PAS also wrote to Kenny MacAskill MSP, who replied that regulations on the promotion of alcohol sales "will be invoked in due course".

Planting and Planters

You will all no doubt remember that the bulbs were mown too early this Spring with the green leaf being cut before the bulbs had time to absorb their goodness. As a consequence of our complaint to the Leisure and Recreation Department, the bulbs in Brighton Park should have had supplementary planting carried out and we look forward next Spring to an even better display there.

It seems a long time since our post-planters were on display on the lamp posts outside the Town Hall. Now that there are new lamp posts it seems it will not be possible to rehang our planters and there is a reluctance to replace them on the part of the Lighting Department. Investigations are ongoing into a different way of having a floral display. It has been suggested that floral towers on either side of the Town hall steps might be suitable and costings for this are being assessed.

If any of you have an idea of how we can achieve a good quality floral display or can help with the maintenance of one, please do make contact.

Portobello's Coade Stone Pillars

The three pillars in the Community Garden at the foot of John Street on the Promenade have been much admired since their erection last autumn. Since then the Council has done more planting and an information board, funded, like the pillars, by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has been placed by the pillars. In May the Community Garden participated in Edinburgh's Parks and Gardens Day (EPGOD); PAS members were on site to explain the Garden and pillars and distribute leaflets describing the planting executed by the Council.

A free talk on Coade Stone and the pillars was given on 22nd November 2007 in St John's Church hall. Speakers were John Stewart (history of the pillars); Paul McAuley, conservation officer, City of Edinburgh Museums (history of Coade Stone); Celia Butterworth (site choices, Lottery funding); Graciela Ainsworth, sculpture conservator and restorer (cleaning, restoration and erection of pillars); Alison Robinson, potter (making replacement parts in modern Coade Stone).

The large pillar, unlike its neighbours, lacks an ornamental top because there was no top available in original Coade. Following comments on the unfinished appearance of this pillar the Sub-committee leading the Coade Stone project decided to commission a top for the large pillar. This top, of the same 'crown' design as the other pillars, is being made by local potter Alison Robinson, will be paid for by the Lottery grant and be in place by June 2008.

P.A.S. Monthly Meetings

Would you like to find out more about what is happening in Portobello? Would you like something done about Portobello's traffic and parking problems? Are you interested in protecting and enhancing Portobello's many listed buildings? Would you like to see the amenity of Portobello improved and environmental and landscaping projects carried out? If the answer to any or all of the above questions is yes, then you are most welcome to come along to any of P.A.S.'s regular monthly meetings to air your views and to find out just what the society is doing to improve Portobello for everyone who lives and works here. For details of meetings, please phone John Stewart on 669 6466.

Local Business Support For P.A.S.

Please use our excellent local businesses, especially those which help the society to make Portobello a pleasant place to live and to work. The society is very grateful to the following businesses for their continued support as associate business members: -

Allan's, Chemist; Robin Bond, CA; Findlay Meats; Brian Forde, Optician; Gordons, Butchers; Joppa Turrets, Guest House; H.S.Kidd, Chemist; The King's Manor Hotel; Kitchener's Delicatessen; Kristoffersen Carpets; McIntyre Lewis, Solicitors & Estate Agents; Mulberries Gift Shop; J & S Penman, Vets; Portobello Library; Jas. Scott, Funeral Directors; Shapes Hair.

Please support our local businesses, especially those who themselves support our local community.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year April 2007 – March 2008 are now due. If you have not already paid for this year, please complete this slip and send it to:

Dr P.K.Wraith, 3 East Brighton Crescent, Portobello, Edinburgh EH15 1LR.

Name:

Address:

I enclose my subscription of:-

£5 per household (normal)

£1 per household (retired/unwaged)

(Please tick as appropriate)