



NEWSLETTER 264
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Meltdown in Regency Square?

On a sunny Saturday morning towards the end of last month, eight members of the Society met with Neil England for a stroll around Regency Square.

Neil is a builder who specialises in the maintenance of historic buildings. He has many years experience and has worked on several buildings in Regency Square, including number 6, the Prince Regent Hotel and the Hotel Una back in the days when it was called the Portland House.

Neil has strong views about how properties like these should and shouldn't be treated. Before starting any major repair on buildings like those in Regency Square, it is essential to understand how they were originally constructed.

For example, if the ceiling in a room needs replacing it might seem quicker and cheaper to use modern plasterboard, rather than employ a craftsman plasterer to do the job in the way it was done originally. Neil's view is that this would be wrong. The traditional plaster plays a vital part in providing the strength of the floor above in a way that plasterboard cannot.

Another example relates to the cornice at the top of the front façade. This needs to be properly shaped to allow rain to drip off the building, rather than run down the front, causing possible structural damage.

Buildings that have not been properly maintained start to "melt" – Neil's word – in other words to sag in the middle. Eventually, if action is not taken facades could fall into the street. Neil believes that one or two houses in the square are at serious risk of this happening within the next few years.

The Council steps in



By coincidence, the Council seems to be taking an interest in properties in our area.

A "Section 215 order" has been issued by the Council for number 43 Regency Square. It requires repairs to the front door and windows and repainting of the whole of the front of the building.

We believe that this may be only the first of a number of enforcement orders expected in the square and nearby.

Traffic re-think?

A plan is being discussed locally to pedestrianise Preston Street and change traffic flows in the neighbouring area.

The aim would be to improve the environment in Preston Street and encourage businesses to open in the numerous empty premises. The idea was inspired by George Street in Hove.

New spaces would be created for open air eating and drinking. The street would look far more welcoming and hopefully attract more visitors.

The Society committee has had a chance to see the details of the required traffic changes, which would involve:

- removing the traffic lights from the south end of Preston Street;
- closing the north end to traffic entirely;
- new traffic lights at the bottom of Little Preston St.;
- all north-bound, through traffic, currently using Preston Street, including deliveries to Western Road, to be re-routed via Little Preston Street,;
- limiting vehicle access to deliveries and residents only in Preston Street, Regency Mews, Castle and Stone Streets;
- all traffic leaving those four street would do so via Regency Square;
- new traffic lights at the south end of Regency Square (east side) to allow left as well as right turns into Kings Road.

The plans are currently being put to the Preston Street Traders Association to find out whether they would be interested in proposing them to the Council.

Improvements to Preston Street would probably be very welcome, though the effect on traffic flows may well generate some opposition.

As yet Council traffic managers have not been consulted about the scheme and there is no indication whether funds could be made available for it.

These are early days and our Society has not yet made any decision about whether to support or oppose the scheme. Given its wide implications we would want to get members' opinions before making a decision.

Amy's View

a play by award winning writer, David Hare
Brighton Little Theatre

Join us to see the play at
7:45 pm on Wednesday 2nd November.
All members and friends welcome.

If you would like to come please send your name, telephone number and £8.00 per ticket to Ros Boulden, 8 Abbots, 129 Kings Road, Brighton, BN1 2FA, by 13th October at the latest.

Russell Square in the limelight again

Number 43 Russell Square has been the centre of attention twice again this month.

The squatters who had been living in the house have now left, following an incident to which the police were called. This allowed police to gain access to the property and secure it against further squatting.

Then on the 14th there was an official visit to the house by the jurors and others involved in a murder trial which is currently under way, following the death of a squatter back in January.

Meanwhile formalities have now been completed for transfer of the property to relatives of the late Ken Kennar, its previous owner. One of his cousins has told us that they plan to put it on the market shortly.

License refused

Number 15 Preston Street will not be opening as a late night drinking establishment. The license application was opposed by the Society and a number of residents living nearby.

The Licensing panel refused the application on the grounds that another late license would be likely to increase the existing anti-social behaviour in the street.

Graffiti invasion

There has been a recent spate of graffiti in the area. Much of it uses the same tag and appears on different days, suggesting someone local may be responsible.

Thanks to prompt reporting by our local street cleaner, much of it has been painted out by the Council.

As our photo shows, the Council workers who do this don't always come equipped with right colour paint, and the graffiti "artist" often attacks an area again after it has been cleaned.



The wall in the photo has now been re-painted (using the correct colour, BS 10-C-31) by a Society member, as have other areas nearby.

Fast removal of graffiti is a good way of discouraging it. Let us know if you see any new attacks.

Back for another try in Stone Street

In 2009 a planning application was made for re-development of a site between Stone Street and Castle Street. The Stone Street part of the scheme would have involved demolishing the former stable yard, until recently used by Hill Brothers' building firm.

We argued for the retention of this building, as one of the few remaining examples of the small industries that existed in the area to support the large houses in Regency Square. A more sympathetic re-development is needed, like that at number 1 Queensbury Mews.

The original application was withdrawn but a new one has now been submitted, which once again involves demolition of the stable yard buildings. We will be presenting our case again.

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Big changes in the car park

Regency Square car park will get a makeover under plans due to be approved by the Council this month.

Access to the car park from the A259 is to be simplified with vehicles entering from the east and leaving to the west. A new pedestrian crossing will also be provided to make it safer to access the seafront and the potential i360 development.

Detailed plans are not yet available but the changes are expected to reduce traffic into Preston Street, allowing potential future improvements. Traffic flows on the west side of Regency Square may increase.

New security arrangements will mean that only customers will be able to enter the car park itself. Once inside, they will find new lights, pedestrian walkways, railings and designated disabled parking spaces.

Other alterations will close off "dead" areas to discourage anti-social behaviour.

Drama at the Regency Tavern

After rave reviews at the Brighton Festival earlier this year "Cracked Alice" will soon be coming to a pub near you.

The "promenade performance" takes us from the bar of the Regency Tavern into darker places below, and back again, in the company of the Mad Hatter and White Rabbit.

Performances will be at 7pm and 8:30pm on Monday 31st October (Halloween) to Thursday 3rd November, and 3:30pm and 5pm on Saturday and Sunday, the 5th and the 6th.

Tickets cost £8 (£6 for concessions); you can buy them at the door or in advance from the pub.