



THE TOWN HOUSE TIMES

Issue 2
November
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Welcome to Issue 2 of Town House Times. Since the balmy days of July, when Issue 1 was published, we have had a busy summer and early-autumn.

Repair work in the basement at No. 10 has been ongoing and we have made good progress with both joinery and internal plaster repairs. In a few months time, we will be releasing an online video revealing some of the repair techniques we have used. You should have more news of this in Issue 3.

Our annual Brighton & Hove Open Door event (staged as a part of the national, Heritage Open Days) was still being organised as we went to press with the last issue. A total of 107 events were eventually assembled into the programme and all seem to have been enjoyed by the visitors that participated in the event between the 6th and 9th of September. We are just completing a review of BHOD 2012 and this will be available for download via a link on our homepage on 5th November.

Currently at the House we are showcasing MacDonaldStrand Presents, an exhibition of experimental work by Gordon MacDonald and Clare Strand for the Brighton Photo Fringe. This biennial event, run in parallel with the Brighton Photo Biennial, showcases the best of current photographic practice and aims to embed photography into the cultural fabric of Brighton & Hove.

Everyone at the Town House is getting excited at the prospect of very soon passing the half-way mark with our MyHouseMyStreet tagging initiative. We hope that by early in the New Year all of the 100,000 local Directory pages will have been tagged, providing local people with the capability to quickly find their street in all of the volumes we have put online, from the very earliest dated 1784 to the last one published in 1974.

Nick Tyson
Curator

Tour, recital, wine and tea cakes

On the 30th September, the Townhouse hosted its first event for Friends. It was a lovely afternoon and everyone who was there seemed to enjoy it immensely. We gathered in the first floor drawing room which had been beautifully decorated with flowers by Gilly. At 4.00 Nick gave us an interesting and whirlwind tour round no. 13 and the basement of no 10. At 5.00 o'clock we had a wonderful recital, given by Celia Vince on the forte piano, of pieces by Clementi, Haydn and John Field (who is a sadly neglected contemporary). At 5.30 with candles ablaze, sparkling wine and an amazing selection of wonderful eats – made by Carole Jones, who edits this news sheet – we celebrated



our re-launch. By the end of the afternoon we had recruited two new friends and three new volunteers and raised £130. We'd like to say a big thank you to all our supporters and to add that we hope this will be the first of many such occasions.

REVIEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



ForTH has a new friend. The Reform Club on London's Pall Mall is one of the oldest "gentleman's" clubs in the capital, known to many as being the starting point of Phineas Fogg's journey around the world in eighty days. But it has many other important claims to fame: it was the first of the London clubs to admit women to membership and, of real interest to us, it is a close contemporary of 13 Brunswick Square. The Club first opened its doors to members in a house at 104 Pall Mall on the 24th of May 1836. It quickly set about planning its own building and, after an architectural competition, selected Charles Barry, later the architect to design the Houses of Parliament, to create a new clubhouse in the style of an Italian palazzo. The work was finished in 1841 and was immediately hailed as a masterpiece of classical architecture. The clubhouse has remained largely unchanged in appearance to the present day. However, its interior, also a masterpiece, was showing the signs of age due to the effects of tobacco smoke and London air and a restoration programme is underway. The results have been stunning, revealing a wealth of detail and rich colour.

We are inviting ForTH members to visit the Reform Club late January to hear about the restoration, see what has been achieved and work in progress. Further details of date and time to follow but if you would like to read more about the Reform Club follow this link <http://www.reformclub.com/>

The last issue carried the first part of 'How it all began', a brief history of The Regency Town House. Here, we conclude the article, bringing matters right up to date.

How it all began — part 2



Repairing the skylight at No. 10

Since we acquired the basement at No. 10 in 1995, we have had a daily struggle to stay ahead of the fabric maintenance demands the two properties dictate. "With our buildings decaying daily, in response to the vagaries of the UK weather, there's a never-ending list of works required" says Nick, our Curator. Each year, we have laboured to arrest decomposition and do a little more too, some type of additional repair and improvement activity that moves us closer to returning the properties to a fully restored state, where they can function well as historic properties educating the public about life in early-19th century Brighton & Hove. Much of this work is unseen by the general visitor, as it occurs on locations such as parapets or roofs, out of site, or it replaces a modern material with a traditional one.

An example of the latter instance occurred a few years ago when we decided to replace the concrete screed covering the back yard with York stone slabs, to re-establish the original finish. Either material provides a hard and weather resilient finish to the back yard and it's not immediately obvious to visitors that one has been removed and the other introduced, but it is a demanding and significant task. Nick says, "aside from the obvious benefits of reinstating stone, the project led to us discovering the original and functional well to the House and that was a really exciting find., I though it might have filled in long ago."



The skylight at No. 10 nearing completion

Another largely hidden achievement is the completion of the restoration of the Housekeeper's room in No. 13. Over the last few years, the room's floorboards have been cleaned and restored. A new Portland stone fire surround has been fabricated and installed, matching the original. An early-19th century cast-iron hob grate has been inserted. The plaster walls have been repaired and painted in the original colour. The joinery: skirting boards, doors, windows architraves, chair rail and giant fitted-cupboards have all been oak-grained. In addition to this, a flat-weave carpet has been installed, similar to the type of floor covering that would have originally been used. In time, this space will become the reference library reading room and more people will see it but for

now just our librarian toils in the space, busily cataloguing books and other documents.

Nick says, "Perhaps our least noticed, yet significant building activity of recent times, was the reinstatement of correctly sized 2nd floor windows. This involved removing oversized Victorian sash boxes, introducing new lintels and dropping the height of the windows to re-establish their Regency dimensions and then inserting newly built sash boxes and sashes. When we had done that, we had to re-render and re-plaster and then decorate all the new joinery, plaster and stucco. It was a large job, conducted in the worst of weather, but it needed to be done in order that the façade was correctly proportioned." Today, of course, no one knows of the effort involved!

Fabric maintenance and improvement remains our most challenging activity, largely because of the sheer cost of such work and the associated difficulty of raising funding for the maintenance of old properties. Everything in the Town House is on a grand scale. After we had re-rendered the rear elevation, it cost £6,000 to buy the paint for the walls, just the paint. Extra was needed for the scaffold, tools, labour, etc.

But it's not only building work that's progressed at the House. When lack of funds makes repair

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Erecting shuttering at the start of the bungalow repair process

Bungaroush

Hidden behind a stucco layer, the front elevation of the Brunswick Town House is brick, but as in many of the houses in Brighton the majority of the masonry material used to build the property is bungaroush. This was particularly used in the very long 'party walls' that separate each property one from the other.

Another area where bungaroush is frequently found in Brunswick properties is in the basement partition walls and this is true in our kitchen at No. 10. The bungaroush wall that separates the main kitchen from the scullery area is such a location and, before we could repair the timber frame and attach to the wall, we needed to reinstate the bungaroush lost through modern mis-repair.

Two recent volunteers, Ben and Paul, stepped

in to assist with this, as both were keen to learn more about traditional building materials and methods.

Ben is a conservation student, studying for a degree. Paul is a professional plasterer who has only ever worked with modern materials. Working together, and with the guidance of Nick Tyson our Curator and Neil England, a master plasterer, Ben and Phil successfully repaired the bungaroush wall in the kitchen.

The outcome will now withstand the test of time over several more centuries.

Bungaroush (often spelled bungaroush) was made principally of lime, gravel, coarse sands and flints, often with some brick fragments or other rubble added. This combination formed a type of mortar, or reinforced concrete. It offered an easy and proven way to create a wall that was strong, durable and cheap and was usually designed to be rendered and/or plastered.

Timber planking was braced into position where the wall was intended to stand. Two or three inches of a lime mortar were shoveled in, then flint, brick and more lime were layered on top. This process was repeated up to a height of about eighteen inches. When this section was sufficiently firm, the boards were moved up and the process was repeated. As the wall was erected, timbers could be inset to provide fixing points for nails. Where windows and doors were to be located, the surrounds were finished in brick, as flint and lime cannot be used to create viable corners.



Striking the shuttering several days after the repair has been made.

In Brighton and Hove, bungaroush was mainly used for garden walls and the party and rear wall of terraced houses, although it is also found in infill panels on front elevations. It was so popular in Brighton in the building boom of the 19th century because it was less expensive to build with than brick and using it avoided having to pay so much in brick tax.

We are constructing a guide about the restoration of bungaroush and this will be available on our website in due course.

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activity impossible (and most of the time when it is possible, too), it's all hands to the wide variety of other projects that we have underway. In our last issue, we wrote about the MyHouseMyStreet, initiative, documenting the City's less fashionable areas, but there are many other programmes at the Town House, including projects looking at 18th and 19th century family letters, architectural drawings, architectural ornaments, foreign language works about Brighton written in the Regency period, 3D architectural model making - to produce animations about the building of the town, and documenting the history of the House.

Add to the above, the organisational effort that goes into staging the annual Brighton & Hove Open Door event each September, the weekend House tours offered during the summer months,



Griff Rhys-Jones and Nick discuss Brighton & Hove Open Door

the cyclic exhibitions we stage with partners and the non-stop research we conduct into other local historic properties and figures of note and every week is a very busy one Nos. 13 and 10.

Right now, volunteers are working to clean the cornice to the front entrance lobby of No. 13, repair the plasterwork and joinery in the Housekeeper's room at No. 10, and restore a skylight to the basement at No. 13. In the coming months, we hope to also start to rebuild the roof over the chicken coup in the rear yard of No. 10. The timber has been purchased and she slates set aside so now it's down to finding volunteered roofing know-how and labour.

Interestingly, it's estimated that with a further spend of about £350,000 the Town House could largely be finished and made fit for furniture and soft coverings. Only when we get to this point can we perhaps say that the project will have moved on from the start phase, so right now we are maybe still beginning. We'll be sure to keep you up-to-date with progress!



At the end of the '70s Brunswick Town was considered a deprived area and an enlightened Council recognised that a sense of community and eventually pride could only be fostered by helping to bind its inhabitants together. To this end the Brunswick Community Association was formed in 1980, the Council granted it money annually and for a few years at least, a Brunswick Neighbourhood Worker was appointed to encourage local projects. These included mother and toddler groups, summer play schemes, art groups, cafés and in 1981 the Brunswick Festival. It soon became popular and lasted a few weeks each summer encompassing local art fares including installation art, opera in Brunswick Square, beach barbecues as well as food and jazz and stalls selling all kinds of things. In 1994 the umbrella Community Association folded, but the Festival survived albeit in a truncated form. To begin with the costs were minimal, partly because insurance was not much of a consideration and partly

The Brunswick Festival

because there were no 'portaloos'. These have both become mandatory and so, whilst there are fewer grants available, costs have simultaneously risen. However the council has continued to contribute annually, the popularity of the festival is enduring and evidenced by the number of stalls who all pay to take part. Local involvement is still very much encouraged and to the forefront.

On 18th August, for the first time in recent memory, the Regency Town House had a bric-

a-brac stall. Living over the road, we were able to earmark our place of preference as near to the house as we could, and the organisers were brilliantly accommodating for in addition to the interesting collected detritus of all our lives, including lamps, ceramics, hats, handbags, games there were books as well as some extremely heavy objects of architectural interest that are for sale on e-bay. The weather was fantastic, indeed we were lucky to have a large umbrella in one corner giving us some shade. It was a wonderful and really enjoyable day and the stall was busy from the beginning. We all learnt a lot about the pleasures of haggling, some people proved to be masters at it – and some less so. The atmosphere was terrific and we were surrounded by exotic food stalls, jewellery stalls, clothe stalls as well as more like our own. We made £327 for the Friends of the Town House, which is an almost unheard of sum, and we shall definitely book a stall next year.

Regency Town House **ebay** project

find us on http://www.regency_town_house/



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Want a retro handle for your café?

Require some original sash pulleys to renovate your sash windows?

Fancy replacing your front door furniture?

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We have a large store of architectural antiques, which we are selling on eBAY. We have loop lifts, escutcheons, ball bearing sash window pulleys, axle sash window pulleys, hinges, window stays and rim locks. We have Victorian, Art Deco, Arts and Crafts, Gothic style, Edwardian, 50/60s and Rococo.



We can help with the renovation of period properties in providing original sash and casement window elements, door locks and handles and other fixtures.

All of the profits will support heritage projects, most significantly The Regency Town House in Brunswick Square, Hove - a grade I Listed terraced home of the mid-1820s being developed as a heritage centre and museum to focus on the architecture and social history of Brighton & Hove between the 1780s and 1840s.

Find us on eBAY by searching for Regency_Town_House and making certain you have ticked the 'include description box' located under search.



VOLUNTEER *inputs*



One person's journey: Gilly Burton at The Townhouse

by Catherine Page

In 2007, Gilly retired from retail work. She had reserved a year for pure relaxation, but soon came to realise that she needed some sort of structure in her life. If possible, she wanted to do something that further developed interests she already had, such as arts and crafts and architecture. The Regency Town House appealed because it seemed to offer a whole range of options with which to get involved. After an interview with Nick Tyson, she started work here in 2008.

At first, she was somewhat taken aback by the lack of ongoing progress to the house. Very little seemed to be happening and for a week or two she appeared to be one of only two people involved, Ellen the archivist being the other one. However quite soon My House My Street started and she and the new volunteers went down to the History Centre to photograph Street Directories.

After a few months Gilly began to work alongside them on a different project: listing and archiving the plans of a renowned local architect, John Leopold Denman, who worked in Brighton between the 1920s and the 1970s.

Since then, she has become involved in doing street research on the North Laine for MHMS. She feels that she's on the way to gaining a very thorough view of urban life from many sides of the spectrum – through books and papers which examine at the lives of working class people in the North Laine, thanks to MHMS, to plans of restorations of many of the local buildings thanks to the Denman papers and through actually working on an upper class house in Brunswick Square.

By 2010, MHMS was recruiting more and more people, so it was necessary to create a space for their weekly meetings and to this end she worked on the Decker's Room and the kitchen at the far end of the ground floor. During this she turned her hand to a multitude of tasks. Although the work they were doing at the time

was not restoration, through working alongside Nick she began to understand and respect his philosophy of working on an historical building, and so comprehend that this is a long and painstaking process and cannot be hurried. His aim is to re-create The Regency Town House as it was, not cobble together a facsimile. It's purpose is to educate as well as to show. To this end paints and other materials are sent off for analysis and for this reason, in the room on the ground floor that has been relatively newly painted, there is a place on the wall where you can see the original paint and similarly when the lobby is finished it will show its' original marbling. However, as she points out, this work takes a considerable amount of time and money and funding for restoration is problematic.

As the most experienced member of a growing team of eager but novice restorers, Gilly keeps an eagle eye on the work going on and the next part of the house to be tackled is and will be the lobby. The key to working on it was the launch of this organisation: The Friends of the Regency Town House. Many people have pointed out that the lobby made a terrible first impression, so it was agreed to tackle that next, and it was obvious that the first thing that

had to be done was to strip the cornice of its hardened cake of paint. After some trial and error experimentation with chemicals, it was decided to remove at least the top layers of paint with steam. Over-enthusiasm can easily destroy the plaster work underneath, so Gilly and of course Nick are keen to emphasise the benefits of a more thorough and measured approach. The cornice is however, only the first step in a big and complex task.

All of this constitutes for Gilly a unique journey: learning all the time, and taken in the company of similarly curious friends. She says "This place has given me so much richness, interest and diversity. Nick will allow you to work on your own if you're interested in something – and working here is like having a whole box full of toys. I can't think of what else I would have done."

"This place has given me so much richness, interest and diversity"