



James Burton
1761-1837



Decimus Burton
1800-1881

Newsletter Winter-Spring 2018

We were saddened to learn of the death of architectural historian Gavin Stamp, who died on 30th December last. Professor Stamp was to have addressed the Society in January just past on a subject dear to his heart, the work of the Gilbert Scott family, and in particular on the subject of St Leonards parish church, the work of Giles and Adrian Gilbert Scott (see page 2).



Gavin Stamp (1948-2017)

We reproduce below an extract from an obituary published in *Apollo* magazine:

“Gavin Stamp, who has died at the age of 69, was a resolute champion of good architecture. He brought his vast learning to large numbers of readers who might otherwise have overlooked debates about architecture and how profoundly it shapes our lives (not least as ‘Piloti’ in *Private Eye*); as a passionate and dauntless campaigner, he fought for the preservation of many historic buildings suffering negligence or threatened with demolition, and against the wanton development of this country’s historic urban fabric. In his writing he took no prisoners, but in person he was as gentle and courteous as they come.

As *Apollo*’s architecture columnist, Gavin wrote more than 150 articles for the magazine – expansive in scope, exuberant in their curiosity. [Many were collected in] *Anti-Ugly: Excursions in English Architecture and Design* (2013). They were of course so much richer for his decades of looking at and thinking and writing about buildings. There would always be room for an aside about his beloved Sir Edwin Lutyens, the focus of two books, and for Sir Gilbert Scott and his dynasty; his illustrated biography of the latter, *Gothic for the Steam Age*, was published in 2015.

There were the churches which Gavin so cherished ... And there were celebrations of the buildings in places that had structured his own life – from Scotland, where he had taught at the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow from 1990 until 2003. He had enjoyed travelling in recent summers with his second wife, Rosemary Hill, the biographer of A.W. N. Pugin. On the 30th anniversary of [Ian] Nairn’s death, he wrote that ‘So much of what [Nairn] wrote, excoriating the impersonal, is all too relevant today.’ Gavin, like Nairn, has died before his time – but we will want to keep reading him, and will need to keep campaigning in his memory, for many decades to come.”



St Leonards Parish Church (1961) at Undercliff. Principally the work of Adrian Gilbert Scott. It is a Grade 2 listed building. The original church by James Burton was destroyed by a German flying bomb in 1944. The condition of the church has been a major concern of the Society for some while. It is now disused as a result of structural problems relating mainly to its direct abutment on to the cliff behind it. The solution to these problems and possible future uses for the building will be the subject of a meeting to be organised by the Society at an early date.

Scheduled talks taking place in the Burton Suite at the Royal Victoria Hotel will be:

- Sunday 25th February
Dr Graham Whitham on 'Modernism and its Enemies - the De La Warr Pavilion'
 - Sunday 25th March
Andre Palfrey Martin on 'The Heritage of Sidney Little'
- Both at 4 pm

- Sunday 29th April—speaker to be advised, on St Leonards Parish Church [this is a provisional arrangement; the talk may be re-scheduled for later in the year.]

Hastings & St Leonards Society

An Open Meeting of the Hastings and St Leonards Society will be held on 15th February, starting at 6.30 pm. The principal subject will be the West Marina locality including the old bathing pool or lido site and the question of the siting of any proposed new marina for Hastings and St Leonards. The meeting will take place at the **Hastings campus of the University of Brighton, Room 204, Priory Square Building** (via Priory Street or Havelock Road).

The aims of the recently formed Society are to encourage enthusiasm for and pride in the town, celebrate its spirit and the beauty of its natural setting. It will act as an umbrella group for local amenity and similar organisations.

Benefits for members include regular news, priority booking for lectures and trips, and discounts for certain events. For further information, please e-mail hstlsoc@gmail.com

The agenda at the Open Meeting will also include a brief presentation by Ian Jarman concerning the future of the Harold and Edith statue in West Marina Gardens.



The bathing pool, the work of borough engineer, Sidney Little, soon after it opened in 1933. It survived as a lido until 1959. It was then converted to a holiday camp but was closed in 1986 and demolished in 1993.

On September 17th last autumn, a group of us huddled together at the chilly hour of 7.30 in the morning, in Upper Maze Hill, awaiting our coach to London, where a tour of one of the great clubhouses, the Reform in Pall Mall, had been arranged for us. We would also have an opportunity to admire the exterior of Decimus Burton's Athenaeum, next-door-but-one to the Reform.

Contrasting these two, the Athenaeum, 1829, and the Reform of 1841, we can see a dramatic change in taste from the so-called Greek Revival to the Italianate. It is interesting that these two, with the Travellers Club in between, form an island which shares the same gardens facing south. The Reform, replete with its inner, covered courtyard, now called the Saloon, and sumptuous mid-Victorian 'gloomth' (in the Horace Walpole sense of a kind of elegant and positive gloom) is Italianate and palazzo-like par excellence.



Its staircase, revolving up from one side of the colonnaded Saloon, is a tour de force of grandeur and reflection, with its mirrors making one feel like a character in an M.C. Escher drawing – or as grand as a Renaissance prince. The Athenaeum, on the other hand, is full of light. It pours down the entrance stairs, where, half way up you're greeted by Burton's plaster cast of the Apollo Belvedere, the God of the Muses, and of poetry, song, medicine and a multitude of other things dear to the hearts of the club members. It certainly bears more signs of the Greek Revival and love of all things classical than Charles Barry's Palazzo-like Travellers Club immediately next door, and the Reform next to it. And yet, The Athenaeum, completed in 1829, some 12 years before the Reform, also has signs of the Italianate - despite gilded Athena's welcome atop a Grecian inspired portico.



We parked conveniently behind the three clubs which stand like an island, facing a shared garden to the back, between Wellington Place, Pall Mall and Carlton Gardens, and were soon admitted to the quiet, understated door of the Reform and were conducted around the grand palace.

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What are the main features of the 'Italianate' , created by Charles Barry with the Travellers and Reform, so fondly repeated all over the country, not least by Decimus Burton, along the seafront in St Leonards? Based on the general model of the sixteenth Century Palazzo Farnese of Sangallo and Michelangelo, these include a plain facade with no columns – 'astylar', an exaggerated cornice or *cornicione* along the top and a gently sloping roof and often exaggerated quoins. The decorative features around the windows are also of Italian Renaissance origin and again are repeated in St Leonards-on-Sea.

We were later set loose to wander as we wished with a map showing the nearby delights, including the remains of Inigo Jones' intended palace, the Banqueting House in Whitehall, and his Chapel Royal, designed for the Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria, sober on the outside and much gilded on the inside. An outstanding day. More such are planned. Keep an eye on our website.

Elizabeth Nathaniels

DECIMUS BURTON'S VANISHED VICTORIAN GLASSHOUSE

On Saturday 17th February Elizabeth Nathaniels will give a talk for the Winchelsea Conservation Society about the Work of Decimus Burton (1800-1881), with special reference to his local connection to St Leonards and his lost glasshouse in Regent's Park. Burton's glasshouse was commissioned by the Royal Botanic Society of London in the 1830s and built in the 1840s to stand on the Inner Circle of Regent's Park. It was the first known example of a freestanding Winter Garden and became a gathering place for the fashionable of London. It was demolished in the 1930s and by the 1950s so little was known about the design and evolution of the Winter Garden that Burton's role as designer was doubted. Elizabeth, a published authority on Decimus Burton, has pieced together the story from many original archival documents. The talk will be held in Winchelsea New Hall on Rectory Lane, (the A259) at 2.30 pm. Admission: £3. Refreshments available.



Decimus Burton's glasshouse in Regent's Park: an illustration published in July 1851 by Ackermann & Co.

The Society has received the following letter, which may be of interest to our members. If you would like to attend the meeting in London on 14th May, please let us know, preferably by email to info@burtonsstleonardsociety.co.uk
Alternatively, please contact the Society's Secretary, Christine Francis, on (01424) 421207

Decimus Burton, FRS, FSA, FRIBA (1800-1881)



A small steering group has recently been working on the idea of forming a Decimus Burton Society. The purpose of such a Society would be to research, appreciate and champion the works of this noteworthy 19th century architect through activities that might include:

- The creation of some central resource point, containing a collection of material relating to Burton and his work, with links to material in other places.
- The holding of talks relating to Burton and his work.
- The arranging of visits to Burton-designed buildings, places and landscapes.
- Possible publication of research into Burton and his period.
- Encouragement of students and others to study and appreciate Burton's work.

Although, as a matter of convenience at this early stage, the steering group has been based in Tunbridge Wells, where Burton had strong connections and many of his buildings survive, the aim is that the Society should be a national or international organisation, serving all those interested in Burton, for whatever reason and wherever they may live.

As Decimus Burton was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, it would seem fitting for the inaugural meeting to be held in the Society of Antiquaries Meeting Room at Burlington House, in London's Piccadilly, and this has been provisionally arranged for the afternoon of Monday 14th May 2018. It would be most helpful if you could very kindly indicate whether you might be interested in attending this meeting, or joining a Society on the lines suggested.

Kind regards,

Dr Philip Whitbourn OBE, FSA

Chris Jones DPhil

Paul Avis BA Hons Arch

The officers of the newly formed Society have invited members of the Burtons' St Leonards Society to visit them in Tunbridge Wells as the first event after their formation, and we plan to make this visit on 28th June. £20 for members and £25 for non-members. Further details will be posted on our website but if you are interested in joining the visit, please let us know by email: info@burtonsstleonardsociety.co.uk

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Our visit will begin with a preliminary talk by Dr Chris Jones before our visit to Calverley Park.

Calverley Park and Grounds and adjoining property, which together formed the Calverley estate, were acquired in the 1820s by John Ward. Development of the villas and their associated landscape setting, to designs by Decimus Burton, began in the autumn of 1828 and was complete by 1839. The Ward Estate remained the freeholder, the villas being occupied leasehold until they were progressively sold off from 1947 and the parkland became the property of the trustees of the Calverley Park Association. In 1920, the western half of the site, known as Calverley Grounds, was acquired by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for a public park. The site remains in the hands of the individual villa owners who form the Calverley Park Association, the local authority, and a number of further individual and commercial private owners.

Calverley Park consists of twenty-four villas (all listed grade II*), which are arranged in a quadrant, their varied designs forming a homogenous whole.

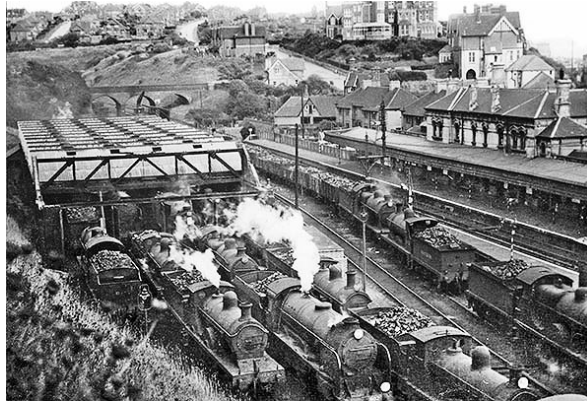


Returning to Hastings Positive signs

In the decades since the War, Hastings has a history of unfortunate planning decisions. The Society has sought to combat many of them; indeed it was itself the result of an effort to prevent the Council inflicting further depredations upon the historic heritage of St Leonards. We are always concerned however to give credit where it is due. We award “high marks” for the redevelopment of the former Royal Mail sorting office at the northern end of Kings Road, St Leonards. This block of flats demonstrates that affordable housing can be built on a tight site which had been standing unused for 35 years. The way it has been blended to accord with the adjacent Victorian terrace but complies with contemporary building regulations demonstrate how good design resolves both social and urban design issues. It also demonstrates the shortcomings of the adjacent Ocean House ‘curtain wall tower block’ of the 1960’s.

The history of proposals for a St Leonards Marina

There have been three of these, the earliest being of the Burton era (John Manwaring Baines records that James Burton's family "in 1831 supported their father's rather venturesome plans to build a harbour at the western end [of St Leonards] at a cost of £6,000." These plans were frustrated by the filling of the area with spoil from the railway cuttings and tunnels). The idea of a marina gave rise in due course to the re-naming of the former terminus of the London Brighton & South Coast Railway as St Leonards West Marina. The second was a major scheme by the consulting engineers Halcrow and Partners commissioned by the former County Borough of Hastings to embrace the land between the foreshore of the Lido and the West Marina Station when that was designated as redundant under the Beeching Plan. The last was a 1980's design by Lewis and Duvivier (consulting engineers for the Brighton Marina) and architects Richard Bonington and Partners for a smaller scheme embracing the Lido and the lands westwards to the outfall of the Combe Haven River. This scheme had the backing of Hastings Borough Council. The reasons why they all failed to materialise despite the natural features of the area are illuminating. They will be referred to at the Open Meeting mentioned on page 2.



The photograph shows St Leonards West Marina railway station c. 1945. It occupied a site approximately where the car park of TK Maxx store now is. It was originally opened as Hastings and St Leonards Station in 1846 and became St Leonards station in 1851. It was finally re-named as West Marina in 1870 following the resolution of a dispute between two train operating companies (plus ça change!). Two years later the station was rebuilt on a site just to the east of the original. It closed in 1967 and was subsequently demolished.

The case for a marina in West St Leonards rather than at Rock-a-Nore

A marina could bring considerable benefits to the town as the effect of the Brighton Marina on Kemptown (previously run-down but now 'up-market') shows. But it could not be wholly self-financing. It would rely on income from the associated residential developments. So any viable location must have the potential for associated large-scale residential development. The geomorphological basics are that West Marina as opposed to Rock-a-Nore has natural features which favour it. It is a former estuary (Hollington Stream and Combe Haven) that was reclaimed from the sea with spoil from the railway tunnelling. Because it has far fewer buildings on it and has potentially excellent public transport connections, it would be much easier to develop than a Hastings location. It is also much closer to the long sea outfall, so disposing of its sewage would be much less of a problem. By contrast Rock-a-Nore is not a natural site for a marina, has very poor public transport connections and would pose serious challenges for sewage disposal. It would increase the interruption of long shore drift thus exacerbating the problem of erosion of the Heritage Coast to the immediate east.



Membership of the Society

£15 per person per year or £25 per couple

Membership application details may be found on the Society's website:

www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

The Society was registered in 1970 but conservation efforts leading to its foundation began in the 1950s. Our campaign, backed by various organisations such as the Civic Trust and the Georgian Group, resulted in the designation of Burtons' St Leonards as a Conservation Area by the local authority in 1969. Our aims are to:

- encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in St Leonards on Sea and prevent unsympathetic development
- stimulate interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of St Leonards on Sea and its surroundings
- encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general interest, in particular the contribution made by James and Decimus Burton to the architecture and town planning of St Leonards on Sea.

The Society keeps a vigilant eye on local planning applications, especially those affecting listed buildings, and on alterations to such buildings made without planning consent.

For more information, please visit our website at:

www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

For further information, eg on specific events or for advice on architectural or planning matters, please email: info@burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

Or contact the Society's Secretary, Christine Francis, on (01424) 421207



Note for existing members

If you are paying your membership subscription through your bank at an old subscription rate, we shall be very grateful if you would amend this to the current rate(s) shown above.

Email

If you have an email address which you think we may not hold, we shall be glad to have it. It will not be communicated to others except with your express consent. Use of email saves us a considerable amount of time and of money in printing and postage, and means that we can ensure that members receive communications as rapidly as possible.