

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - SEPTEMBER 2014

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**General Issues**



Who painted this picture of the pier in its heyday ?

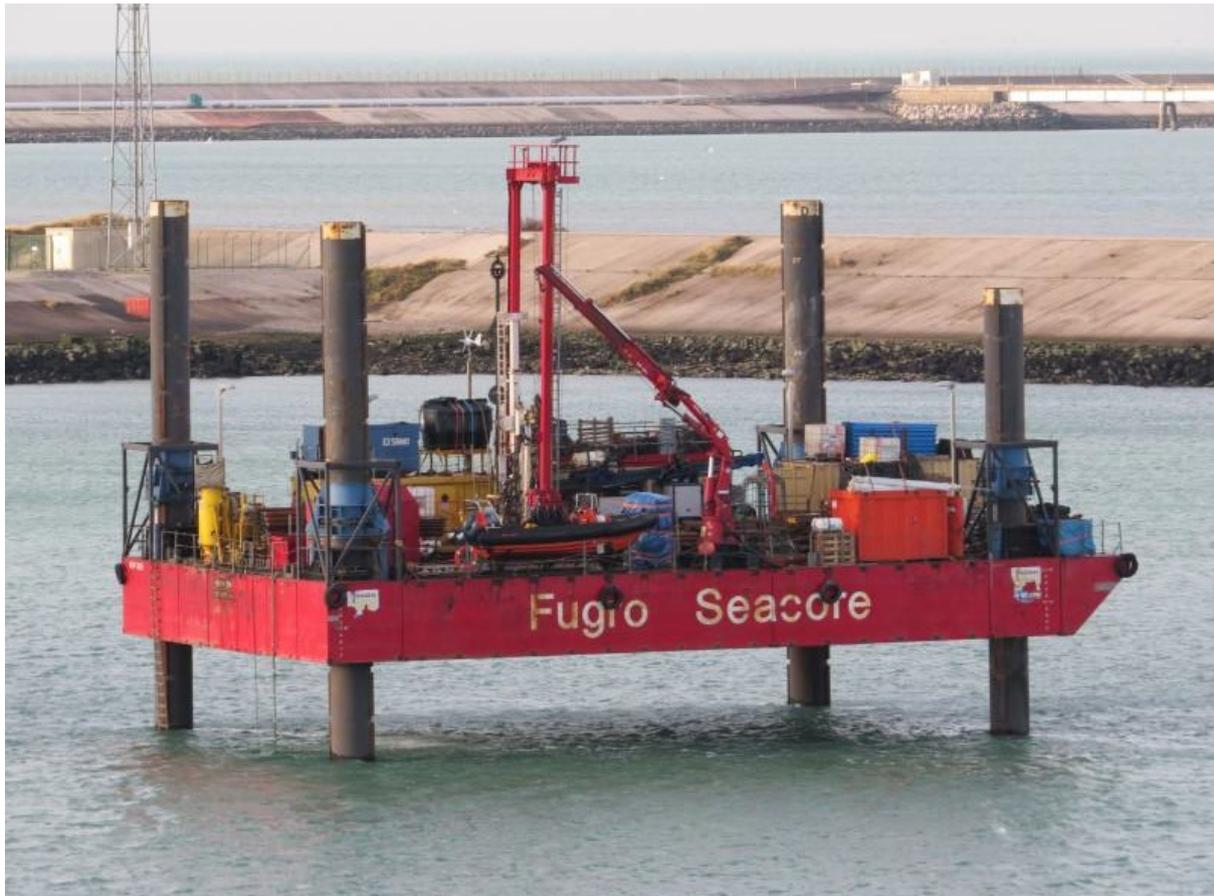
Can you help ?

Our volunteer archive group has been busy collecting material for our digital archive. This involves taking copies or photos of material from individuals and institutions, returning the originals to them. The **Conquest Hospital** has let us

know about three paintings of the pier on display near the main reception which they think would be great for our archive. However the hospital doesn't know who painted the pictures. The oil paintings were originally donated many years ago to the West Hill Boys Club for their recreation room. It's thought they were originally painted in the 1930s or 1940s and are fine examples of the art of the period. In 1992, the paintings were donated to the Conquest Hospital, shortly before its opening in July of that year. They were restored and reframed with funds donated by the Conquest League of Friends. The paintings are looked after by Arts in Healthcare, a charity founded when the Conquest was being built to bring visual arts and live music into the hospital. Margaret Richards, who runs the charity, says they made great efforts to find out the identity of the mystery painter when the pictures were first passed on to the Conquest. But to no avail.

Our volunteers are always keen to hear from anyone who has any pictures or objects (such as tickets, programmes, souvenirs etc.) or any memories or stories which relate to the history of the pier. Please [email](#) or phone or come along our **archiving mornings** at the Hub on **Wednesdays** from **11.00am - 12.30pm**.

Significant progress is now being made on the restoration of the Pier itself. Almost 40% of the work is complete, with more than 40 people working on site. On the parade extension (nearest the land) 62 of the 64 trusses to be replaced have been completed as well as approximately 250 deck beams, amounting to a third of the structure. The next significant operation will be putting in new columns to support the extra weight of the visitor centre. The new steel support structure will then follow. On September 15th, a jack-up barge is due to arrive (see picture below). This will load up in Rye Harbour with steel and equipment, including a 120 tonne crane. It will start the demolition of the ballroom, and re-instate the columns and beams at the pier head that were destroyed in the February storm. The Pier Trust is still hoping to open the pier next summer, with two weeks of celebratory events. The use of the jack up barge is of course an expensive operation, but its usage is necessary to dismantle the large remaining concrete section of the old ball room that is still standing, having survived the ravages of the 2010 fire.



### **Hastings Private Rented Sector**

Hastings has an unusually large private rented housing sector, comprising around 30% of housing in the borough, and almost half of local residents living in private rented housing. Although some landlords are very good and provide excellent accommodation at fair rents, a lot of this housing is in a poor condition, with tenants fearful of reporting disrepair and bad practices because they might lose their home. So Hastings Council is pursuing a number of new initiatives to tackle this. Firstly, the council has launched a 'rogue landlords hotline', where tenants can anonymously report bad practices, disrepair and unresponsive landlords. Complaints to this number will be investigated by council housing staff. The number to call is 0800 027265. You can find out more about this at:

[http://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing\\_tax\\_benefits/housing\\_options/support\\_scheme/](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing_tax_benefits/housing_options/support_scheme/) To tackle this issue further, the council is also considering introducing a private rented sector licensing scheme. This would require all private landlords in about the half the wards in the borough (ie the half where the private rented housing is) to register their properties with the council. This would mean the properties would be annually inspected to make sure they were in good condition, as well as requiring landlord to have proper tenancy agreements, arrangements for repairs, and so on. There will be a consultation on this scheme during the autumn, watch the council website for details. A social lettings agency is also being considered. This would be a voluntary scheme, whereby landlords leased their properties to the council at a fixed fee and for a fixed term, and the council handled lettings. Details of this scheme will be reported to the council's cabinet later in the year.

### **Country Park Interpretation Centre**

Hastings Council is planning to build a new visitor centre in Hastings Country Park. The proposal is for an eco-friendly building made of straw bales (really building blocks made of compressed straw, and rendered with lime mortar, so that you don't actually see the straw). The building will have better facilities, toilets, an education centre, and a tearoom, and will probably be on the west side of the Coastguard Road, opposite the existing visitor centre. The existing small and inadequate centre will be demolished. There will however be a comprehensive consultation on the design of the building and what should be in it, including taking a shop in Priory meadow for three weeks to display the proposals, and take on board the comments of all interested parties.

### **Isabel Blackman Centre**

The process to find an organisation to operate the centre is well underway. An advert was placed on the South East Shared Services e-Portal, and potential providers were able to download the pre-qualification documentation. The deadline for applicants to submit the documents was 22nd July. Six pre-qualifying questionnaires were returned and these are being evaluated. The County Council say that communication with users, carers and staff is planned and will continue throughout the process. The intention is that new management arrangements should be in place during January to March of 2015.

## **Ofsted Report on County Council school improvement service**

Ofsted inspected the school improvement service (basically East Sussex as a local education authority) between 9-13<sup>th</sup> June. The Council's arrangements for supporting school improvement are judged by Ofsted to be ineffective. Ofsted only inspects local authorities when inspections of schools or other providers raise concerns about the effectiveness of a local authority's education functions. East Sussex is only the 10th authority to have a report published under this inspection framework. Ofsted found that "Over the past three years, a significantly lower-than-average proportion of pupils attained the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards in English and mathematics are too low across both key stages. The gap in progress made by pupils known to be entitled to free school meals and their peers across all age groups is too wide." An action plan is now being prepared to tackle the weaknesses Ofsted have identified. They particularly criticised "the council's decision to reduce funding and take a 'hands-off' approach to challenging and supporting schools." The county has now agreed to the expenditure of an additional £870,000 to fund the action plan. The Ofsted report can be accessed: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/east-sussex>

## **All Saints Primary School**

All Saints was judged to have "serious weaknesses" by Ofsted inspectors some time ago. An Interim Executive Board was installed replacing the school governing body. It is now proposed that the school should become an academy under the umbrella of the new Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust. A consultation has started concluding on 6<sup>th</sup> October and it can be accessed at <http://www.allsaintsacademyconsultation.co.uk/>



### **The Annual Coastal Currents Arts Festival**

Having kicked off with a launch party at St Mary in the Castle at the end of August, the festival carried on over the following two weeks and included a wide variety of eclectic visual arts performances and exhibitions by (mostly) local artists. A central part of the festival was the Open Studios, where artists throw open the doors of their studios to the public – good for an excuse for a leisurely walk, cycle or drive around studios from Bexhill to Rye. Once again this proved to be a very successful festival for the mass of talent that Hastings can boast, and a very welcome inclusion once again in our annual cycle of attractive events.

### **Our Seafront Strategy**

The council is also currently consulting on its refreshed Seafront Strategy. This looks at the future of the whole of the seafront, from the country park through to Glyne Gap, and makes suggestions for what policies the council should adopt for different sections and areas. For example, how can the area around the newly regenerated pier be improved? How can access from the town to the seafront be improved? What should happen to Bottle Alley? How can we introduce more kiosks and catering facilities on the seafront? Hastings and St. Leonards have a remarkably long front line, much of which they own or hold as the trustee of the Foreshore Trust. However, much of the commercial development of our seafront is restricted to a few hundred yards towards the east of the Town. This is an opportunity to look beyond what is already developed, and consider how our attractiveness as both a holiday resort, or a place to live can be improved by the refresh of this strategy. To download the consultation document and make your comments, go to:  
<http://tinyurl.com/lw7lpo8>

**Tec66 - A Showcase for our Cluster Industries** For the second year running, Hastings will be hosting the international Tec66 conference for high-vacuum and photonics industries, on Monday 27th . There is a cluster of such businesses in and around Hastings which is fast gaining an international reputation - the purpose of the exhibition is to showcase the work that takes place here. As well as a trade fair at Sussex Coast College, there will also be a series of talks and seminars on fairly high-level physics by visiting experts. But there will also be a day of lectures and talks for local school students on the preceding Friday, to get them interested in physics and in working in the sector. This will be led by Dr. Maggie Aderin-Pocock , rocket scientist and TV presenter – this is her second year here, she proved to be very popular last year. Visitors registering to visit the conference are from all over the world, and four UK universities with specialism in applied physics will also be exhibiting. Visit the website to find out more: <http://www.tec66.co.uk/> and register to come along, even if you're not a high-level physicist, but would just like to find out what high vacuum technology is all about – and it has nothing to do with EU regulations on vacuum cleaners !

### **Retro poster aims to keep visitors on track**

A partnership between Hastings & St Leonards Tourism Association, and Hastings Borough Council, should boost visitor numbers to the town through the autumn. A poster that uses a famous 'retro' British Railways design has been given a modern twist, and will be on display at busy south and east London stations, including Charing Cross, London Bridge, Victoria, Fenchurch Street and Liverpool Street. Whilst many seaside resorts appear to shut down once the school holidays are over, there is plenty going on here in Hastings through the autumn. We know we are popular with visitors from the south and east of London, so this poster, based on a British Railways design of the early 1950s, should help encourage more visitors to come and stay here. The Hastings & St Leonards Tourism Association worked with the council on the campaign, and have split the costs with them, committing themselves to promoting the Town on so many busy stations. Let us not forget our own graphic designer who has done a great job in putting a modern twist on a really iconic poster from sixty years ago, and we are very grateful to the National Railway Museum for allowing us to adapt the original design. Of course, we have some great events to promote this autumn, and this is a really good way

of getting to our target audience. We have had a super summer, and now look forward to an awesome autumn.

### **Pre-Application Forums**

The council will be holding pre-application forums in Hastings for four planning applications in the town. The aim of the pre-application forum process is to improve councillor, stakeholder and public involvement in the pre-application process, and provide a greater understanding for developers of community expectations of significant developments within the town. Pre-application forums are a very welcome step forward in the application process of major developments in the town. Forum meetings are held in public, and the developer is able to explain development proposals directly to councillors, the public and key stakeholders at an early stage. The process is designed to assist the developer to deal properly with important issues and to reduce delay and frustration on everyone's part in the formal planning process. Currently we are one of the very few councils that offer this form of consultation.

Forums will be held as follows 6pm – 8pm:

Wednesday 24 September at the Stade Hall, Stade Open Space, Hastings – **Queensway Gateway Road between Queensway and Sedlescombe Road North.**

Thursday 02 October at the Town Hall, Hastings - **West St Leonards Primary School Site**

Tuesday 14 October at St Leonards Academy, Edinburgh Road - **The Grove School Site**

Thursday 30 October at the Town Hall, Hastings - **Hastings Country Park Visitor Centre**

### **Sea Food and Wine Festival**

During the month Hastings staged its eleventh Sea Food and Wine Festival on the Stade open space in the Old Town. While Other seaside towns may have closed for business, we have still got lots to look forward to here in Hastings. We were very pleased to be holding our Seafood & Wine Festival again this September. It has grown from a small community event into the South's

premier seafood & wine festival, with nearly 40 stalls showcasing the very best in local produce, and some great live entertainment too. We are rightly famous for our events, and I am particularly pleased that at the Seafood & Wine Festival we were exhibiting posters designed by local schoolchildren on, appropriately, Famously Hastings. This was part of our support for a project organised by the local Education Futures Trust during the summer for students going into Year 7. This festival is always very popular and once again visitors flocked in over the weekend to sample a mass of local produce and wines, and generally to enter into the festival spirit. Please look out for details of our next events, with Hastings Week, culminating with the traditional procession and bonfire, and then on in to November for our famous Herring Fair..

### **New street naming at site of Osborne House**

As part of the above new development of forty nine houses and one block of six flats, three new streets have are being created and have now been formally named:

Beauclerk Way: chosen to recognise Penelope Beauclerk who once owned this land as part of her dowry when she married a grandson of the Duke of St Albans in 1844.

Holt Way: Penelope Beauclerk sold the land to Septima Clara Holt who then built Osborne House on the site.

Whistler Close: selected from the Council's suggested list of people that we wish to recognise by way of a street name. Anna Matilda Whistler (1804-1881) was the mother of American-born, British-based painter, James McNeill Whistler and the subject of the famous painting "Arrangement in Grey and Black" (1871), better known as 'Whistler's Mother' which now hangs in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Anna retired to Hastings in 1863 where she died and was buried at the Cemetery and Crematorium.

In addition, Beynon Way will be extended with new properties addressed to both this road and Elphinstone Road.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself with any concerns that you might have with regards to the ward, and are within my gift to resolve.

*Kind Regards John Hodges*









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### **Tressell Issues**

We're now dealing with local issues in Tressell ward in the monthly newsletter from