

Fun, Fun Fun!

Aside from the serious work of Falmouth Civic Society, there is a social life that is my job to help develop. I must confess to having the best job on the committee as I love organising events and outings

It is great for like minded Falmouth residents to get together to enjoy visits to diverse locations and this year we were in the woods, delving into history archives and touring the Falmouth campus of the University. New friends have been made amongst members, particularly whilst patrolling the Terraces of the town picking up litter during the Spring Clean Festival in March.

Our talks have also been very popular and we thank members for their enthusiasm for such subjects as Maritime Archaeology, OS Benchmarks, the Jewish Cemetery and Art in Christianity. We are thinking up an interesting programme for 2018 but as always, please ask if there is a particular subject you are keen to know about. We'll make the tea, if you promise to keep coming!

Jane Boriosi Social Secretary

Catching up

Prof. Mike Jenks

A long time has passed since the last newsletter, and much has happened since. There have been many talks and visits, and we have installed our first blue plaque. A great deal is happening in and to Falmouth. Three members of the Committee have been significantly involved in drawing up Falmouth's Neighbourhood Plan. The full draft plan was put out to public consultation at the end of January and was very well received. So what has happened to it?

In the middle of the consultation Cornwall Council did an about turn, and removed the key sites to accommodate students, meaning the plan could not go ahead as intended. The plan had carefully selected a small number of well-located sites for strictly managed student accommodation in order to encourage a migration of students out of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and return them to family dwellings. The town would also have benefited from this development in providing funding for the transformation of the Church Street car park, better parking provision at both ends of town, and the upgrading and part pedestrianisation of our main streets. Fortunately, this change did not affect the plans to preserve and enhance all our open and green spaces.

Nevertheless, the result of this has meant considerable re thinking. The benefits that would have accrued to the town centre are still in the plan, but will be dependent on grant funding and public money. The Council have recognised this. There is a shortfall of some £4 million and the Council hope to support it through their economic development programme. The migration from the HMOs is unlikely to happen, as the alternative student village is far distant from where many students wish to live. The uncertainties are increased as the less favoured sites of Ocean Bowl, the Rosslyn Hotel and Fish Strand Hill go to appeal to build student accommodation there.

The re-drafting of the plan is ongoing, taking into account comments received from the public consultation, and has now to include a demanding heritage assessment required by Historic England on some of our suggested development sites. The referendum may not be until the Spring of 2018.

We note with sadness the sudden death of Councillor Candy Atherton at the end of October. She chaired the Neighbourhood Plan, and contributed so much to both Falmouth and Cornwall as a whole. She will be greatly missed.

The Falmouth Jewish Cemetery

By Anthony Fagin (Edited from his talk on 22nd May 2017)

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, small, but viable Jewish communities grew up in Cornwall, principally in Falmouth, Truro and Penzance. The thriving seaports of the south coast and the southwest attracted Jewish traders. Falmouth, in addition to the international maritime trade that was centered on its deep-water harbour, also had a flourishing economic hinterland based on fishing, agriculture and mining. Jews were welcomed and even encouraged to settle here. Their trading skills and linguistic abilities were a distinct advantage in this cosmopolitan town.

The tolerant attitude of the population of Falmouth, long accustomed to dealing with people coming ashore from foreign parts, enabled the Jewish traders to integrate into Cornish life without necessarily becoming assimilated through marriage. They joined and in several cases went on to establish and even to head important civic and private societies such as the Freemasons.

The first Jews to settle in Falmouth arrived in the 1740s, encouraged by one Alexander Moses (1715-1791), known as *Zender Falmouth*. He provided the community that he had been instrumental in establishing with an economic system which sent Jewish tradesmen from Falmouth out into the surrounding villages and towns, thus expanding opportunities and incomes. He and his family were connected through marriage to most of the Falmouth resident Jewish families whose lineages can be traced back to him.

From the mid-nineteenth century, however, as the economy of Falmouth began to decline, so the Jewish community dwindled. By 1880, the synagogue that they had built in 1808 on Smithick Hill overlooking the harbour was closed and sold in 1892. The lovely Georgian building remains standing to this day.

The Cemetery

Falmouth's historic Jewish Cemetery had been established here in the early- to mid- eighteenth century, around the same time as the adjoining Dissenters' Burying Ground, on land granted to both religious communities by Sir Frances Basset, Lord de Dunstanville.

The oldest surviving Jewish headstone in this cemetery, and possibly in all of Cornwall, was discovered recently.

Uniquely it is made of granite rather than slate or fine-grained sandstone and although the inscription is no longer decipherable, it is thought to belong to one Esther Elias who died in the late 1780s. There are almost certainly earlier burials dating back to the 1750s perhaps, but in unmarked graves.

Headstone inscriptions dating from before 1838 are exclusively in Hebrew with dates written according to the Jewish tradition. Later headstones also incorporate English with secularised dates. Two of the oldest headstones are Listed Grade II. The ornate and beautiful Hebrew inscriptions were expertly carved by local craftsmen, presumably non-Jews using templates. Some of the headstones carry an incised trademark OLVER of FALMOUTH. It is touching that at least four members of the Olver family are themselves buried in the adjoining Dissenters' Burying Ground.

Alexander Moses (Zender Falmouth) was buried here in 1791. His gravestone reads: *'May his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life. Here dwells and takes delight a faithful man, a leader and guide; a shield to his generation with his body, his blood and his flesh. His house was open and his table laid for all. He stood righteously until the Lord, in whom he trusted, gathered him. Alexander the son of Moses. Died on the 24th and was buried on the 25th Nisan 5551.'* (Thursday 28th April 1791). The last person to be buried in the Jewish Cemetery was Nathan Vos, born in the Netherlands in 1833, who died on the 29th of October 1913 aged 80 years,

Having suffered from decades of neglect and more recently vandalism, the two ancient cemeteries that lie side-by-side in Ponsharden between Sainsbury's and the so-called Vospers site are now protected by a security fence erected by Sainsbury's. Furthermore the cemeteries have at last found a group of local champions: in December 2013 the Friends of the Ponsharden Cemeteries came together formally to protect, maintain and improve the condition of the Dissenters' and Jewish cemeteries. In addition to local volunteers, the Friends' management committee includes representatives of Historic England and Falmouth Town Council. Both of these historic cemeteries are designated as Scheduled Monuments.



A New Blue Plaque for Falmouth

By Angela Shields and Associate Professor James Ryan



A break in the clouds and stormy weather on Saturday, 21st October allowed a gathering of people at 4 Kimberley Park Road, to celebrate the unveiling of a plaque to Robert Hunt (1807-1887), chemist, writer and early photographer. The plaque was officially unveiled with speeches by Charles Fox, whose ancestor, Robert Barclay Fox, had a close connection with Robert Hunt, Professor David Hosken of the University of Exeter and by the Mayor, Councillor Grenville Chappel, and thanks were given by Professor Mike Jenks, Chair of Falmouth Civic Society. The plaque was initiated by Falmouth Civic Society and sponsored by the University of Exeter. Falmouth Civic Society hopes that this will be the first of many such plaques celebrating people of renown who have connections with Falmouth.

After a reception and lunch at the Poly, where Robert Hunt was Secretary from 1840-1845, Associate Professor James Ryan of the University of Exeter and presently on secondment to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, gave a fascinating talk about this multi-talented man. In his talk, James Ryan examined the significant but frequently overlooked contributions made to early photography by Robert Hunt, the Devon and Cornwall-based chemist and popular science writer. Hunt's contribution has opened up questions about where and when early photography developed.

Above left: Charles Fox, Mike Jenks, Chelsea Hiedstrom (Police Cadet), Grenville Chappel (Mayor), David Hosken (University of Exeter), James Ryan - and the plaque to Robert Hunt outside 4 Kimberley Park Road.

Above right: A watercolour portrait of Robert Hunt by the William Buckler in 1842, Wellcome Collection, London.

About Robert Hunt (1807-1887) by James Ryan

From a relatively humble background with strong family roots in Cornwall and Devon, Robert Hunt experimented widely with early photographic processes, impressing leading scientists Sir John Herschel and William Fox Talbot who took an interest in this young man's enterprise and ability. Not only did Hunt make the earliest photographs in Devon and Cornwall, but from his home in Falmouth he wrote a range of texts that earned him praise as an authority on this new 'art-science', including the first and much reprinted English language manual and general history of photography: *A Popular Treatise on the Art of Photography* (1841). Through his role as Secretary of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society in Falmouth (1840-45) Hunt came to occupy an influential position in local, regional, and national networks of applied science and art. He championed photography in learned society through his prolific writings, exhibitions and lectures.

As Keeper of Mining Records in London from 1845 he mixed with an even wider network of learned societies, such as the Royal Society of Arts. He had founding roles in the Calotype Club (1847) and the Royal Photographic Society (1853) from where he played a decisive part in successfully opposing Talbot's patent claim on the calotype (negative-positive) photographic process, hence opening up photography to everyone. His research and writing on chemistry and light secured him election to the Royal Society in 1854. Hunt's important—and at times contentious—contributions to early photography need to be better appreciated and understood alongside the contemporary place of science and applied arts in Cornwall and beyond.

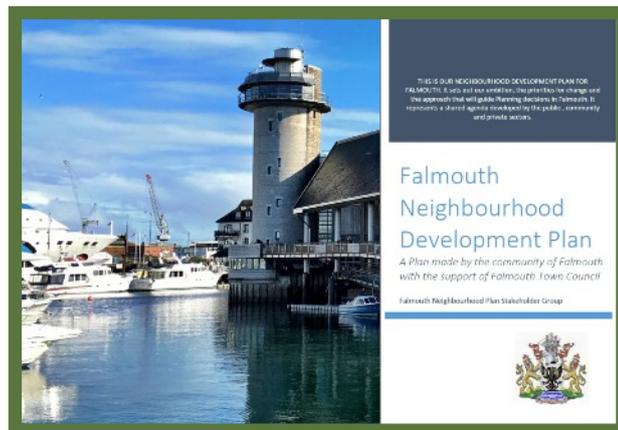
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300 more houses for Falmouth?



The plan is of 'Falmouth North' between Hillhead and Ponsharden roundabouts; a plan for the Church Commissioners by Lichfields. We want something better, in line with the Neighbourhood Plan, and this is what we said to Cornwall Council.

The proposal should be judged rigorously against Falmouth's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) to ensure that the proposal meets the local needs and aspirations for the future of the town. This site has clear policy intentions and proposals set out, and clear design criteria which we would expect any proposal to conform to.

For all the well-founded analysis of the Pre-Planning Application, the Illustrative Masterplan fails to meet many of the policies and criteria set out in Falmouth's NDP.

The proposed plan is a very long and extended cul-de-sac that is segregated from both Falmouth and Penryn. The connections to the neighbouring open space are weak and only for pedestrians, and the

same is true for the Sainsbury/Vospers site.

This designed-in isolation, precludes this proposal from contributing to the creation of a sustainable community that closely links to the existing and adjoining Lambs Lane community. Both are weakened as a result, whereas the aim should be to strengthen the community as a whole. This extends to the location and extent of the community facilities that should be accessible to both, and to the lack of connection to, or upgrading of, the open space. The local community should be involved in the drawing up of plans for the improvement of this significant open space at the heart of the potential community.

The NDP's framework envisages a more urban (less suburban) structure with inter-connected streets, and also with key connections for vehicles through the site from the Union Road roundabout to the Sainsbury/Vospers site, and much better connections to Lambs Lane (cycle way and pedestrians at the least).

Also envisaged were some areas of relatively high densities that would result in apartment or town houses, and an urban form and density that would enable more affordable or social housing to be viably developed. To this end the plan suggested that an increase in housing numbers (perhaps to 380) could be achieved without increasing the land-take, while at the same time increasing the potential for significant place-making.

Dates for the diary

Tuesday 20 February, 3.00pm: Talk by **Pat Fitzpatrick** on **Fairtrade**, at St Mary's Church Hall, Kimberley Place.

Friday 16 March, 6.00pm: AGM and talk by **Charles Fox** on **Quaker buildings and homes**, at the Athenaeum Club.

Monday 16 April, 2.30pm: Talk by **Francis Howie** on **Falmouth's Geology**.

Tuesday 15 May, 6.00pm: Talk by **Phil Boddy** on **Falmouth Ambassadors**.

Monday 11 June, 2.30pm: Visit to **Falmouth Artists' Graves**, guided by **Glyn Winchester**.

A charge of £3.00 is made to cover costs and refreshments, venues tbc.