

Newsletter

Spring 2013

Welcome to our latest Newsletter!

Joe Hellyer has produced our Newsletters for the past 16 years, and has decided to call it a day.

We owe him a great debt of gratitude, and hope that the Newsletters from now on will live up to his high standards.



This Newsletter has articles about **Pendennis Headland**, the **Custom House** and **Greenbank Gardens**, and raises some issues that need attention now and in the future.

Of course, for future editions, we look to you, our Members for ideas, short articles, photos, and any issues you would like us to raise.

Message from the Chairman

Prof. Mike Jenks

It has been an incredibly busy year. The changes in Planning Legislation and the development of a Core Strategy for our area by the County Council, have involved the committee in a lot of activity. We responded to the government about the proposed National Planning Policy Framework, and set up a sub-committee to respond to the County's Core Strategy document, proposing changes we felt were necessary, giving some positive suggestions, and providing a car-parking strategy for Falmouth.

One of our concerns over the year has been to ensure that any proposed growth and development is sustainable, well-designed and appropriate to need. To this end we have been actively encouraging the Falmouth Town Council (FTC) to engage in the process and take on a Neighbourhood Plan, as the only way in which local control can be exercised at a local, rather than County level. But, this has been muddled by the fact that a further process through the County was set up to produce a Town Framework.

We still don't know exactly what is in this plan, except that the process was charged with the task of identifying where the growth (of 3,000 – 4,000 houses, and other land uses) should go. I believe this has been undertaken with considerable care. But will it do what a neighbourhood plan should do? Will it just identify the 'least worst' sites for development that will then be available for developers to do their worst? Will it phase development over the next 20 years, prioritise social housing, design at the right density for the type of housing demand, and will design be genuinely sustainable and of a high quality? I still think a neighbourhood plan is likely to be needed, and there is now money available from government to help (albeit pitifully small). Or, given the bonfire of regulations, with more being scrapped, is it just too late? I hope not, and we will keep up the pressure. We have offered to help FTC with a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development orders, to help them define what they mean by sustainable development in a Falmouth context, and to produce design guidance. 2013 looks as if it might be equally busy!

Preserving Pendennis Headland

At our AGM on 27th March, Nicholas Johnson gave an excellent talk on 'Fortress Pendennis, 1850-1950'. This drew on his expertise as the former Head of Heritage at Cornwall County Council. He showed how defence technology shaped and changed Pendennis. The talk offered a new insight, demonstrating the different areas of Falmouth and the sea protected by the castle, the fortress and its batteries. We were also shown some of the lesser known remains and traces that can still be seen, if you know where to look.

The depth of this knowledge can be seen in a report he co-authored, *Pendennis Headland: The Defences 1540-1956*¹, which meticulously traced the history and archaeology of the headland, and also suggested what should be done to preserve, enhance and manage it, as befits its status as a scheduled monument.

The talk was timely, as it has been of some concern to the Society. Over the past few years there have been suggestions for development, including a large scale development of flats in front of the Ships and Castles (probably a bit of a flyer by Devington Homes), a development on Middle Point, and most recently a proposal for 14 luxury villas on the oil tank site – a Dubai-style development for millionaires.

And there are other concerns, as close by Ocean Bowl is up for sale, and the Society is concerned that another clone of the Maritime Studios for students could be proposed, ruining the view of the Headland. And

possible uncertainties over the Ships and Castles might also lead developers to think it might be a development opportunity.

Indeed, the leisure pool should not have been built on such a sensitive site, as it has compromised Upton Mount Redoubt and Traverse, which were Civil War defences. The land in front of the redoubt would have been kept clear as a line of fire and essential to the defences. It has traces of WW2 trenches, and is currently unused, and so remains as an open 'green' but inaccessible area. Yet this is the area where the flats were proposed.

In responding to the Council about these possible developments, the Society has made it clear that we see the Headland as sacrosanct, and that no further development should take place there. Indeed, we suggest that when land is unused or becomes available it should be re-instated for public use, to attract more people to the unique and internationally significant headland, and to Falmouth. Looking at the archaeological report, published 20 years ago, we fully support its recommendations which are still relevant today. If you can get hold of it, the report is well worth reading.

¹ Johns, C., Johnson, N. and Sharpe, A. (1992) *Pendennis Headland: Historical Credentials, Current Condition and Future Potential of the Defences, 1540-1956*, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall County Council, Truro.

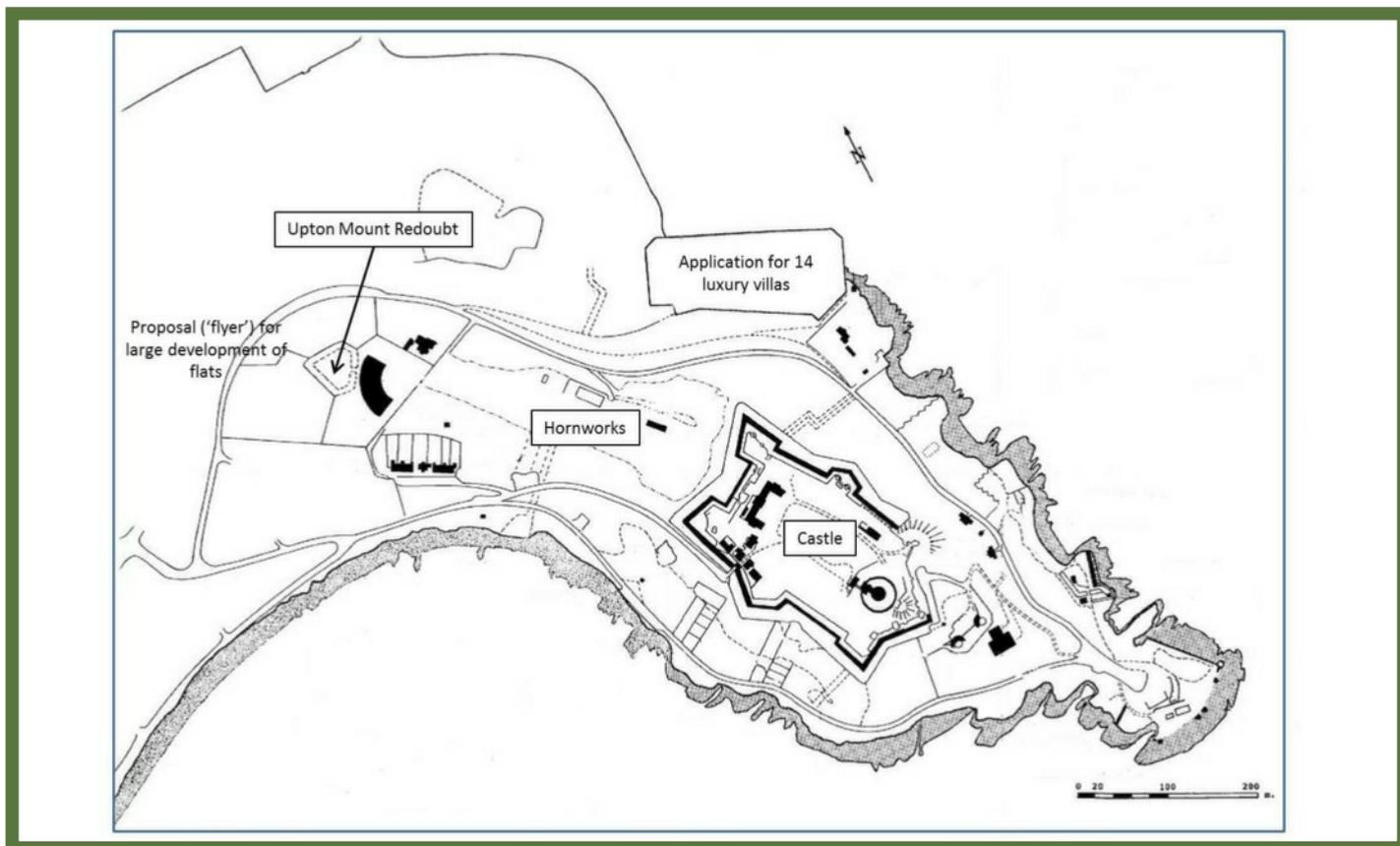


Fig. Pendennis Headland showing Upton Mount Redoubt and some development proposals, adapted from a map in Johns, C. et.al (1992)

The Custom House

Nearly 200 years old!

The Custom House was built in 1814, so next year will see its 200th anniversary. It is a very special building. Of course, it was mentioned in Pevsner as one of Falmouth's 'most noteworthy public buildings' in the Greek Doric style.

The local press has also highlighted it. As long ago as 1972, Bob Dunstan wrote a feature in the West Briton, stating that it was 'one of the most elegant Georgian buildings in Falmouth', and that its maintenance was 'superb'. Those responsible at the time were the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, who had a repairing lease.

How times have changed. The Custom House (Grade II listed) is now in a poor state, with cracks, peeling paintwork and blocked gutters. It is further spoilt by inappropriate signs attached to its railings, and a broken weather gauge.

Surely now is the time to find a better use for it. It needs to be regenerated, repaired, and to attract people to visit and enjoy it. What better way to celebrate its 200 years presence in the town?

If you have any suggestions, thoughts or ideas for the best and most practical ways to revive it, please let us know.

Photographs (Mike Jenks)

Fig.1 The Custom House, nearly 200 years old, neglected and deserves better

Fig.2 Fine views at the rear overlooking the harbour

Fig.3 Ugly signs, broken weather gauge

Fig.4 Peeling paintwork, and growth in gutters and on the pediment



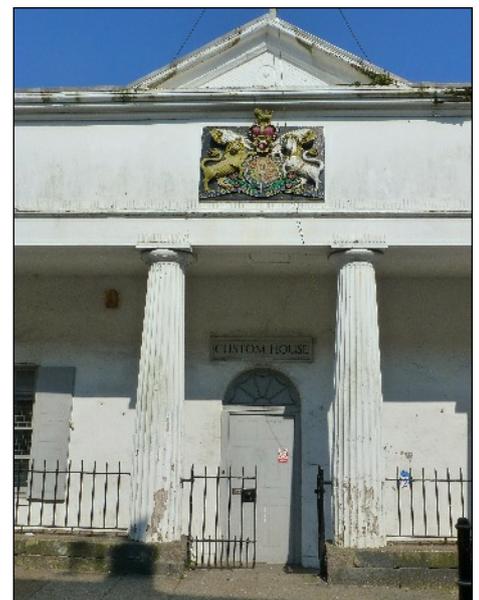
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The Greenbank Gardens



Photos and article by Angela Beale

In our newsletter of August 2011, Myra Morris wrote an article entitled *The Fountain that Lost its Head*. Twenty years previously her family had found stones belonging to the fountain on the foreshore and had manhandled them up to their Stratton Place garden for safety.

On November 27th 2011, the headline in the *Falmouth Packet* was that the 'Council vows to fight to save gardens'. The Greenbank Hotel owns a small triangle of land which forms part of the Greenbank Public Gardens, the majority of which is Council-owned. In 1910 the Greenbank Hotel leased this small plot of land to

Falmouth Town Council for 99 years. In spite of reminders from interested parties, nothing was done to renew the lease, thus the concern caused about access to the gardens in the future, particularly for the disabled and those with buggies.

Because of this concern, a *Save Our Foreshore* group was formed. In 2012 Falmouth Civic Society became involved when we applied for a Community Grant Scheme, through the local County Councillor, Grenville Chappel. We were successful in our bid and some of this money has been used to replace the fountain's head stones. However we are still waiting to

learn where the new entrance will be, so we can make sure the rest of the money is wisely spent. Our Councillor is confident that the council and the hotel are about to sign an agreement which will secure a new disabled access into the park.

We will keep a close watch on developments to ensure that the access to the foreshore is preserved for the public and we will also encourage more community involvement in improving the appearance of the gardens, so that this valuable open space is still there for future generations.

Afterword: Derek Toyne on the October 2012 newsletter

The colour photo on page 2 actually shows two High Street models. The larger model was commissioned by Francis Hewlett and built by Vernon Rose and students in 1972/3.

The incomplete model was built for our exhibition in 1975, largely (so far as I remember, and apologies to anyone I have left out) by Gill Holliday. It shows the redevelopment of the areas proposed by architect Tony Jennings and was built from Tony's partially completed drawings. After the exhibition it was either destroyed or given to the architect, but seems to show the scheme substantially as built.