



Regency Square's Town Crier

The Friends of Regency Square Blog No 22 August 2017

WEEK 1 CELEBRATIONS ALL ROUND, INTEREST IN THE BEACH TUNNEL, MORE ON THOSE COLUMNS.

Saturday 5 August when *Pride* celebrated the 50th anniversary of gay liberation and was also the one year birthday of the *BAi360*. The Parade along the seafront lived up to the occasion with hundreds of floats and approximately 300,000 taking part and lining the route.

A very good day for signatures (four pages!) to our petition with everyone agreeing about the poor state of the front of our square.



THE ROYAL PAVILION APPEARS TO FLOAT ALONG OUR HORIZON



THE YOUNG - ON MESSAGE

OUR BEACH TUNNEL

The Seafront Office have told us that we may need to share the Regency Square Beach Tunnel with other interested groups.

Since we established a team to create a photographic exhibition of old prints and photos there has been a growing interest in making our Beach Tunnel an interesting avenue across to Regency Square right alongside the *BAi360*.

A community exhibition along the walls will be a good way to uplift the smelly tunnel to an avenue of local interests. Hopefully it will ensure a new commitment by the Council to maintaining and cleaning the tunnel which goes across to the Memorial statue and the car park of Regency Square. We understand that a gating order is being considered to close it at night.

The Council may have in mind the other underground subway from West St to the beach which will reopen when the works involving the Shelter Hall are completed. This tunnel was even more smelly than ours and with all the millions spent on that part of the seafront we hope that the Council will want to upgrade this also. In which case our tunnel may well be a foretaste of the general improvement and upgrade of beach subways.

So this is good news all round and our tunnel team will be happy to share the white tiled walls with other community groups who wish to take advantage of the prime location and to improve the tunnel.

We have now added a handyman to our team who can do the fixing jobs (subject to Council approval of course!)

The tunnel opened for Pride and we hope we will soon begin the start of the exhibition along the white tiled walls.

MORE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE COLUMNS

Rupert of Sussex Heights suggests the West Pier Trust offer their reinstated columns for sale *in situ* to their supporters - the owners having their own inscribed plaque attached to the base.

"With 24 columns this could bring in much needed money for the Trust to build their new kiosk on the Piazza".



Last week someone placed a colourful pot on one of the columns which suggests that they could also be used as the 24 plinths for exhibitions of all manner of interesting things.

The columns were designed as supports and deserve more than use as jumping-off platforms.

The general consensus is that the columns look far better at night with the uplighting and we hope that the *West Pier Trust* will find a way to add to their daytime attractiveness.

SUPPORTIVE ROLE AGAIN FOR OUR COLUMNS?

Something also should be done about the big expanse of very dirty looking floor tiles of the whole area after only a couple of months. What will it be like in a couple of years?

Perhaps the *BAi360*, the *West Pier Trust* and the new Arch dwellers should request the council locate a scrubbing machine locally to clean the tiles properly on a regular basis.

The same applies to the white steps either side of the *BAi360* - already they are looking stained and dirty.

WEEK 2, NEW MAN OPENS UP I360 ESPLANADE, AN END TO THOSE SECURITY QUEUES?

Muggy cloudy Saturday but high season crowds with good bookings for the Donut.

This week we met with the new *BAi360* Executive Director Steve Bax and he would appear to be keen to have the up-front operation far more user friendly than before.

He has now opened up the whole of the esplanade and has introduced some bumper sized family deckchairs.

We spoke about the possibility of extending the *BAi360* Membership scheme and providing platform tickets so that those waiting for their friends to take a ride could be admitted to the esplanade and use the deckchairs and catering facilities.

Some other good news - which had Pelleas' tail wagging - is that Steve is a dog lover and is considering a trial for an off-peak weekly dog-friendly flight designed for the local community. When he has settled in we will speak again about his future plans.

HEAVYWEIGHT SECURITY

In the last blog we asked for comments about the very visible up-front and heavy security operation for what is simply a 20 minute up and down seafront observation ride.



QUEUING UP TO BE FRISKED - A VERY PUBLIC INVASION OF PRIVACY

Mary of Astra House thinks the management of the queues puts off potential customers.

“Even if a flight is only half full the queues at the front caused by the security operation are so long that passers by must be discouraged from trying to get a ticket”.

Rupert of Sussex Heights writes:

“The security at i360 - the frisking/searching/glaring - is exactly like hostile prison security and how they treat unsuspecting visitors (like criminals). I don't travel any more but perhaps airports are like that now and hostile, rough-club bouncer-style security is the norm!”

The Friends believe that this security operation would best be carried out behind the ticket office which would overcome the problem of these queues in front of the glass partition. We suggest a simple ticket and bag check at the two glass partition entrances with the main part of the security operation taking place in a newly positioned security hub being behind the box office kiosk where boarding cards can be issued for those taking the next flight.

At the moment only passengers taking the next flight are admitted to the esplanade but now - with the whole esplanade having been opened up - those arriving early could be admitted and could use the deckchairs (and be catered for) while waiting for their full security check and boarding card issue in the newly positioned security operation out of sight behind the Box Office.

At the present time the whole security operation (involving up to 10 personnel) is concentrated at one entrance alongside the ticket sales kiosk.

What we are suggesting is not a reduction in security but a safer distribution of it throughout the upper esplanade.

The upper esplanade is licensed for approximately 3 pod loads of people so there is plenty of room and splitting the security operation in this way will overcome the unsightly queues. Boarding cards relating to specific timed flights would be collected at the pod entrance when it arrives for loading.

Perhaps British Airways were hoping to establish for their “flight” passengers an element of the excitement of foreign travel but they should be careful of the negative aspects of present day long security queues at airport terminals - expected to get worse as a result of *Brexit*.

Is this is the kind of association they should be rekindling down here on the seafront?

Please let us have more of your views on this security operation - remember this is essentially just a seafront attraction with no international borders being crossed, no drugs being trafficked, no illegal immigrants being transported - so let's keep things in perspective and be rid of those horribly unwelcoming security queues.!

It is no way to run a seafront attraction and certainly alienates the local community.

WEEK 3 SOME FRESH AIR FOR THE BOOBS, MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR OUR COLUMNS. BA'S NEGLECT OF WAITING FRIENDS, MURMUR IS HERALDED

On this sunny Saturday morning our petition table was approached by a local man who seemed familiar.

“What - you still here?” he said

"I signed your petition nearly a year ago - what's happening?"

I explained to the puzzled man that we are aiming to gather 1200 signatures which is necessary to present the petition to full Council. We now have over 900 and may yet decide to use the Council on- line petition facilities if necessary.

(Our full conversation appears at the end of this blog.)

Later we had a bare- chested "Free the Nipple" march along the seafront as part of a campaign to desexualize the female body - held to highlight the double standards where men can bare their chests in public but women can't. Never a dull moment on our seafront!

WIND FARM TO USE OUR COLUMNS?

It is rumoured that the *Rampion Wind Farm* will be joining our new Arches community and Roger of Regency Square suggests they mount stylish wind turbines on top of the 24 columns - "to generate lights and sounds of the sea - a modern version of the Aeolian Wind harp".

(Not sure this one would go down too well with those *Rampion* detractors who think they have spiked our horizon!)

But thanks Roger for your novel and mellifluous idea. Let's keep column suggestions coming in.

WAITING FOR THEIR FRIENDS TAKING A RIDE IN THE I360

Having to perch on the terrorist prevention blocks those waiting for their friends taking a *flight* feel like outcasts.

We believe that Platform tickets should be sold so they could also enjoy the deckchairs and catering facilities of the top deck which remains practically empty most of the time.

Far better to have the esplanade buzzing with activity which probably would encourage much more business and certainly more catering income.

It would also prevent the up- front congestion on busy days.



NO WAY TO TREAT THE FRIENDS

The Friends also think platform tickets should be sold to Brighton locals using the *Membership* scheme. This would stimulate repeat business and encourage local groups and societies to come and enjoy the *BAi360* experience - especially during the quiet months of winter.

GOOD REVIEWS FOR MURMUR

Newly opened Murmur seems destined to bring quality to our area if the culinary reviews they have been having are anything to go by.

Quality restaurants do well throughout the year and neighbouring traders along our newly named *West Beach* are hoping that Murmur will help keep trade buzzing during the winter months.

WEEK 4 LADIES LIFT THEIR TOPS, WEST PIER CENTRE OPENS

The last of this year's Bank Holiday weekends was a scorcher and the distinctive guttural sound of Lambretta exhausts with their glittering attachments heralded the big annual *Mod* gathering along the seafront.



THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES

OBJECTING TO THE SEARCHES.

We learn this week that supporters of the *Stevenage Football Club* are objecting to the humiliating searches in front of the queues which include ladies having to lift their tops to show their bras and to have them felt by female staff!

Distaste for heavy Airport-style security is growing and we hope that the *BAi360* will take heed.

While the *BAi360* staff stop short of this particular clothing invasion their security measures include body searches, frisking and scanning and confiscation of personal possessions that appear on their very lengthy list of banned items. All this at the very front of the upper deck in full view of the queues stretching across the front of the esplanade which of course blocks our view of anything beyond the queue.

Remember this massive security is for a short up and down seafront ride! It is not a good look at the front of the attraction and as we describe in last weeks blog could easily be avoided by deploying the staff differently which would also improve overall security.

WEST PIER CENTRE OPENS



Now resident again on site after many years the West Pier Trust this week celebrated the opening of their new Arch with a photographic exhibition by Roger Bamber and a reception.

Highlight of the event was the reading of his poem about our *Grand Old Lady* by the Trust's oldest supporter - the sprightly 101 year old Leonard Goldman whose autobiography is available for sale in the Centre.

Here was someone who walked upon the Pier in it heyday during the 1920's when it was at its very best. Wow!

THE TRUST RENEWING THEIR ON SITE PRESENCE

The Friends hope that the Trust will also identify with some of our concerns about the operations of the *BAi360* and help lift standards of maintenance and cleaning of what has now been named *The West Beach*.

Perhaps it is time to restart last year's community meetings between all interested parties? We have a lot to talk about.

NEIL ROSBOROUGH 27 AUGUST 2017

WHAT'S TAKING YOU SO LONG?

Secretary of *The Friends of Regency Square* explains to a keen supporter of our petition (referred to in WEEK 3) why we are taking so long in gathering signatures.

I explained that the weekly appearance with the petition at Regency Square's Memorial statue is a good way to keep in touch with new developments in an area undergoing as much change as when the old West Pier first arrived opposite us 150 years ago.

We have also during this time acquired hundreds of *Friends* and will eventually apply to the Council for formal *Friends* status which will mean we can use the Council logo.

Plus we have also during this period gained the support of our *local ward councillors* and also the *Deputy Leader of the Council* - Gill Mitchell.

WHY WE NEED ANOTHER GROUP TO LOOK AFTER PRESENT DAY MATTERS

We have a conservation group - The **RSAS** - who maintain the appearance of the houses through the Planning process and the *West Pier Trust* who brought about the *BAi360* and who are planning a new pier.

So the past and the future are in good hands - but that leaves the present and this is where the *Friends of Regency Square* have an important role.

Regency Square has a long and illustrious history with regard to activities and it is sad to have to admit that the present era is not one we can be proud of.

We have an almost total lack of public community events on our square and the proof of this is the absence of a communal notice board. (Where is the need of a notice board if nothing happens?)

Compare us in this regard to Brunswick Square, St Ann's Well Gardens and of course to Regency Square hundreds of years ago when it was a thriving social gathering spot with fairs amusements and markets.

The Friends are purchasing a community noticeboard and this will be a sign of a new inclusivity in approach which hopefully will be more fitting in what is a public square.

Neglect (particularly at the front of the square either side of our circular mound of stones pictured here) bears witness to a present lack of vision and drive.



(An unknown onlooker carefully balanced all the broken-off stones of our circular mound into a spire - perhaps sending a message to the council about the lack of repairs to our stonework - It is years since our mound was repaired).

The permanent presence of the illegally parked motorcycles either side of the mound is further indication of a lack of concern going back decades.

The Regency houses around our square are beautiful but the square itself has been woefully neglected for many years.

We must do something about it!

SYMBOL OF MOUNTING NEGLECT

AN EXCITING TIME TO LIVE IN THE REGENCY SQUARE AREA

I then explained to our puzzled supporter that the *BAi360* together with new Arches, the *Event Space* and *The West Pier Piazza* make it a very exciting time to live in the area and it is no real hardship to keep the petition going with Saturday morning sessions.

Also it can be fun and something new and different crops up all the time - witness last week's "Free the Nipple" march.

Only in Brighton indeed!

NEIL ROSBOROUGH 27 AUGUST 2017