

SEAHORSE



Number 16

May 2007

Newsletter of the Friends of the Midland Hotel, Morecambe

Welcome to the latest edition of *Seahorse* and may I apologise for the long time lag since the last issue. It was decided to delay sending out the newsletter until the redesign of the Friends' website had been completed and information about it could be included. When you log on to www.midlandhotel.org you will be able to see the results of the hard work put in by our website designer Kate Drummond.

A new feature of the website is the Members' Area which will be accessible only with a password. It will include items such as AGM minutes, newsletters and information specifically for members. Each time you click on this area you will need to type in the password **oh1933us** (please note it is case sensitive) to gain access.

This facility will enable those members who have requested the service to receive their copy of *Seahorse* online. If you are happy to download your own copy and do not wish to have one sent by post could you please email me via the website (Click on 'Join the Friends' and scroll down to Enquiries) stating your name, address and email address. You will then be contacted by email when the next issue of *Seahorse* is added to the website so you can view and download it. Everyone else will continue to receive the newsletter and other information by post.

Other new features of the website include a (periodically changing) photograph gallery with a section to keep members up to date with progress on the Midland's restoration. It will certainly be worth visiting the site on a regular basis.

The renovation of the Midland continues apace – see pages 2 and 3 – and it will not be long before much of the scaffolding comes down. This will reveal the sparkling, newly rendered exterior to the people of Morecambe and give those critics in the town pause for thought. Though still several months away, the completion of the project now seems a lot nearer.

As not much expenditure is expected in 2007, the committee has decided to make it a subscription-free year for existing members. Renewal forms for 2008 will be sent out in December. The committee is planning to organise an event for all the Friends next year to coincide with the re-opening of the hotel.

Finally, could I thank those members who have sent in articles for the newsletter – this issue is 16 pages instead of the normal 12 – and ask you to keep them coming.

Sue Thompson

RESTORATION UPDATE

Work is proceeding well on the restoration of the Midland. April's warm and dry weather enabled good progress to be made on the external rendering which, even without the finished polishing, is looking sparkling. Inside, however, the original plasterwork of the stairwell has been found to contain small amounts of asbestos and which will have to be removed. This will probably be done at weekends when the whole area can be sealed off.

The **basement** has now been 'tanked out' and special pumps installed to remove any surplus water. A central corridor now runs the length of the building and partition walls are being built to create a range of rooms. There will be two kitchens (linked to service areas on the ground floor), staff rooms, toilet facilities, gym/treatment room, etc. All these should free up room on...

...the **ground floor** which is designed to be as flexible as possible. The works of art are still fully protected as is the terrazzo flooring in the entrance lounge and on the staircase, and the wooden floor in the rotunda. The wall containing Eric Gill's incised plaster map of North West England will be moved in its entirety, through what was once the cocktail bar, to the back of a new wall where the artist's bas-relief will eventually be sited. This will leave a space suitable for large functions but one which can also be divided into smaller sections if required. Two of the seaward windows are to be altered into doorways to give access to the new sun-lounge, work on which will begin once the scaffolding comes down.

On the **first** and **second floors** the bedrooms are beginning to take shape. The room partitions have double-thickness soundproof boarding infilled with insulating material and then plastered. According to Kieran Gardiner, the senior site manager, you could have the cast of *Riverdance* going full blast next door and shouldn't be able to hear a thing! It is hoped to have a completed and fully-fitted 'show' bedroom ready within a few weeks. A number of the bedrooms facing the sea will have access via French-windows to a balcony.

At present there is a great deal of activity on the **roof**. The steel framework for the additional floor is in place and the wooden beams for the new roof are being fitted. The structure, when complete, will be largely of glass and will contain a function room and eight suites – with, presumably, a tariff to reflect the stunning views!

As Urban Splash has been unable to find a suitable end user to take over the finished building it has decided to run the Midland itself – a decision the Friends applaud. In January the company appointed a 6ft 5ins tall, 40-year old Belgian, Olivier Delaunoy, as general manager of the hotel. After training as a chef in Belgium, Olivier worked for Raymond Blanc in London before acquiring his own restaurant in Oxford. He gained his knowledge of hotel management with the City Inn chain and then set up his own successful project called 'Night Night' whose aim was to put the most luxurious facilities possible into the smallest hotel bedroom space.

Olivier will also have a major role in recruiting staff, planning the interior designs and choosing the restaurant menus – basically having a hands-on approach to everything concerned with the running of the hotel. "It is like mixing a lot of ingredients together to make the most wonderful soup." Already he feels passionately about the Midland and is determined to make it a hotel that Morecambe can be proud of. "This hotel will have a heart and soul and our guests will instantly feel great when they walk through the door."



On the hotel roof the framework for the additional floor is nearing completion.



Inside, on the first floor, most of the partition walls for the bedrooms have been installed and plastering has begun.

MORECAMBE TOWER (Part 1)

While there can be no doubt of the impact made by the Midland Hotel when it opened on Morecambe's seafront in July 1933, another, very different, building had caused quite a stir at the other end of the promenade 35 years earlier.

In November 1898, The Morecambe Tower Company Ltd issued a prospectus outlining its intention to build an imaginative new tourist attraction.

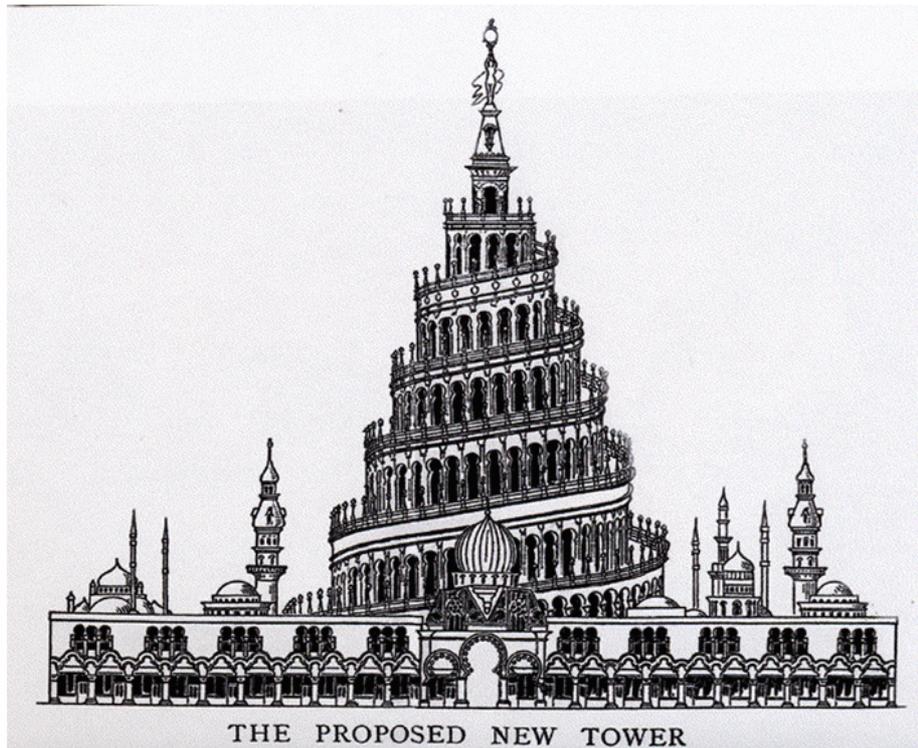
'This company has been formed for the purpose of constructing at Morecambe, in the county of Lancaster, a tower upon a scale somewhat in excess as regards attractiveness, and different in construction to the towers of Blackpool and Paris; also for the erecting in conjunction therein a Pavilion, Concert Hall, Restaurant, Arcade, Café Chantant and Eastern Bazaar and also 22 lock up shops fronting to the promenade; and also for the provisions and laying out of ornamental grounds.'

The architects, Messrs W.H. & A. Sugden of Keighley, believed their design for 'a lofty tower 282 feet high ... will we think form a most handsome and elegant pleasure palace.' The tower would contain 800 tons of steel and have a diameter of about 155 feet at its base gradually diminishing to form a platform 52 feet across at the summit upon which would be 'a large refreshment saloon, elaborately decorated'. To reach this platform 'a spiral road round the outside will gradually ascend by easy gradient from the ground floor.' Alternatively, non-energetic visitors could take the electric tramcar or hydraulic lift, perhaps stopping on the way up to patronise 'the shops, cafes, buffets, bazaars, etc, in the Eastern style' planned for the various floors. Perched on the very top would be a figure holding a searchlight capable of being seen twenty miles away. Assurances were given about the safety of the steel structure which had been 'calculated to stand the streams of solid crowds on every portion accessible to the public equal to a weight of 1000 tons, in addition to its own weight and wind stress of 56 lbs per square foot over its whole surface.'

Inside, the Grand Pavilion (which could accommodate up to 5,000 people) would be given over to entertainment 'from 10.30 am to 10.30 pm, by which the company hopes to secure the patronage of the vast army of day excursionists who usually leave Morecambe before the night show commences.' The entertainment would range from 'a first class orchestra under the conductorship of an eminent musician', to ballet, circuses and variety shows. In addition, there would be daily band performances in the grounds which would be illuminated after dark. Other attractions would include oriental lounges, restaurants, billiard room, smoking and retiring rooms 'all lighted and ventilated by electricity'.

The 1890s were prosperous years for Morecambe and there was a lot of faith in the future with no shortage of money to be invested in the resort's attractions. In November 1900 *The Visitor* announced 'The Tower to be ready for Whitsuntide'. By then the structure had reached 83 feet (which was two thirds of the metalwork) and the ornamental grounds were nearly complete. But then work stopped. The holdup was blamed on an economic recession resulting from Britain's involvement in the Boer War in South Africa and for the time being the tower remained an unfinished shell.

In the summer of 1905 the gardens were leased to Bernard Hishin, a Bradford confectioner, who advertised his New Tower Gardens in *The Visitor*. A few weeks later the newspaper was congratulating him on 'the success which has attended his efforts to provide a good open air entertainment for visitors and residents.' The entertainment was provided at 10.30 am, 3.00 pm and at 7.00 pm by various performers known as the Gaiety Concert Party, with sketches and duets by Miss Du Val and Mr Henry Eglington, comedian Bert Cook, singer Lucy Challard and Messrs Geo E. Carny and F. Armstrong, 'a very funny pair and the former is a clever siffleur (whistling artist)'. There was also a comedienne, Miss Lily Andrews, with her accompanist, baritone J. Knight and the



'The Morecambe Tower par excellence is at the time of writing only in its initial stage but a glance at the illustration will convince any one that there will be an elegance and solidity about the new tower which will be at once inviting and reassuring. It will stand in grounds on the Carlton estate, at the east end of the promenade, which are intended to possess all the beauty, brightness, gaiety, and colour of the most brilliant pleasure grounds.'

[*'A New Guide to Morecambe and Neighbourhood' 1899*]

renowned cellist Mr Frank Butler. In *The Visitor* for 28th June a special Gala Night with free admission was announced at which twelve London star artistes would appear. 'With the thermometer at its present height it is pleasant to take one's amusement out of doors and in pretty surroundings such as the gardens of the tower.'

Another four years elapsed before it was reported that the Tower and Casino were to open in July 1909. The new owners were builders Messrs Thos J. Hawkins and Co. who planned large scale alterations to the building. The Grand Pavilion was to have a new stage, more seating and a promenade at Circle level. Some adjoining land had been acquired for a skating rink, side shows and more gardens which would eventually be laid out on formal lines and lit up at night by coloured electric fairy lights strung from the trees.

Meanwhile, the tower itself was experiencing problems and was not expected to be completed until the following winter. In the event this turned out to be an optimistic assumption as it had become obvious that the sandy subsoil of the site was inadequate to support the weight of the proposed structure. Morecambe's answer to the Eiffel Tower remained little more than a stumpy skeletal framework until the First World War when it was dismantled and the steel used for munitions.



Despite the disappointment of the tower, the remainder of the entertainment complex – theatre, ballroom, restaurants, shops and gardens – was to enjoy great success for the best part of fifty years, a story which will be continued in the next newsletter.

Stephen Jones

WADE'S WALKS

Peter Wade, a committee member of Friends of the Midland Hotel, has long been known for his *Art Deco* walks. However, he is also something of an expert in other aspects of local history and has developed a number of diverse and interesting excursions in the Morecambe and Lancaster area, details of which are shown on the page opposite.

Echoes of Art Deco

An evocation of the 1930's heyday of Morecambe conjured up from its surviving *Art Deco* buildings. The tours begin and end with an exterior exploration of the landmark Midland Hotel now undergoing restoration.

Saturdays 30th June, 28th July, 25th August, 29th September and 27th October

The walks set off from The Platform at 2pm. Tickets £2.

A Date with Dame Thora

A gentle stroll past the places familiar to Morecambe's favourite daughter, the late Dame Thora Hird.

Saturday 15th September

The walk starts outside the Post Office at the corner of Victoria Street and Market Street in Morecambe at 2pm. Tickets £2.

Eric's Morecambe

A walk back in time from Eric Morecambe's seafront statue, unveiled by Her Majesty the Queen in 1999, to the humble backstreet terrace where Eric (Bartholomew) was born in 1926.

Saturday 18th August

The walk starts at the Eric Morecambe statue on Morecambe Promenade at 2pm. Tickets £2.

In Search of Turner's View

J.M.W. Turner's watercolour *Heysham and Cumberland Mountains*, owned at one time by Turner's champion, John Ruskin, is hard to reconcile with what is now regarded as Turner's View.

Saturdays 2nd June, 7th July, 4th August and 1st September

The walks start at the bus terminus in Heysham Village at 2pm. Tickets £2.

A Perfect Landscape: Artists' Impressions of the Lune Valley

The Lune Valley has proved a source of inspiration to artists old and new, from Turner and Lamorna Birch to the creation of upside-down trees.

Saturdays 14th July and 11th August

The walks start from the car park at Halton station on the Lancaster to Caton cycle track (off Denny Beck Lane) at 2pm. Tickets £2.

Dinosaurs, Helium & Scientists

An exploration of the early lives of four world renowned scientists who were born or lived in Lancaster at the start of the 19th century.

Saturday 21st July

The walk starts at Queen Victoria's statue in Dalton Square, Lancaster at 2pm. Tickets £2.

Lancaster's Lost Observatory

The tale of how a lost Victorian observatory linked Lancaster to a north western cotton empire.

Saturday 22nd September

The walk starts from the entrance to the Ashton Memorial in Williamson Park, Lancaster at 2pm. Tickets £2.

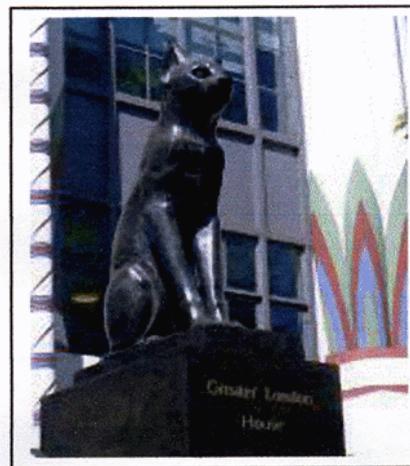
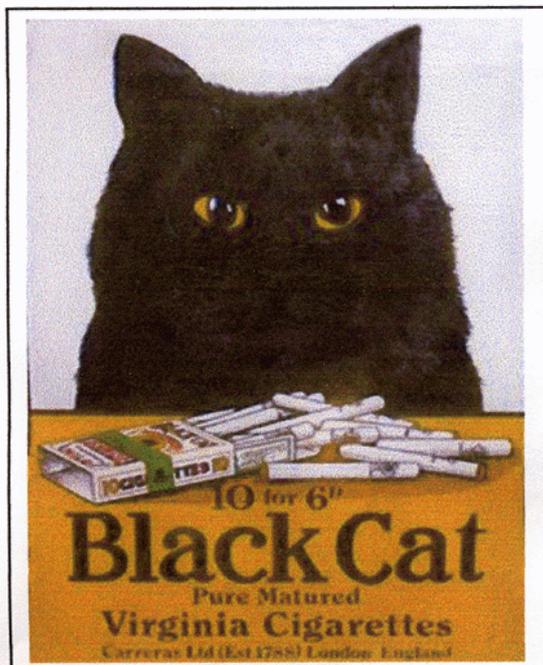
For further details of any of these walks, please contact Peter Wade (Tel: 01524 420905 or email: p.wade@lancaster.ac.uk).

CARRERAS HYGIENIC WONDER FACTORY, LONDON NW1

'The Wonder Factory – where the famous Black Cat Virginia Cigarettes are made under ideal conditions by contented workers. A Pure Product from a Clean Factory.'

No sooner had I discovered the existence of this building than I was on a mission to find it - shouldn't be too difficult, I had an address and, having lived in London for several years, I had little doubt that I would locate it quickly. My husband, sister and I enjoy 'away days' together and this time it was my turn to choose where to go and what to do. London, shopping, a nice lunch and the Black Cat factory. All went well until we exited the Underground at Euston – the heavens had opened and it was pouring (appropriately) cats and dogs! Andrew decided to wander down Hampstead Road and after twenty minutes we got a bit worried. Then he rang us on his mobile to say we might as well get on a bus as we'd drown before getting there – and yes, the factory certainly did exist. On the bus my sister and I chatted to the locals, all of whom wanted to know what we were looking for – what Black Cat factory? I was beginning to think Andrew was hallucinating when, two stops later, we saw this enormous white building on our left – not to mention some idiot in the middle of the road flagging the bus down. I didn't recognise Andrew, he was so wet. The bus stop was actually right outside the factory and everyone on the bus, including the driver, wanted to see it – and, trust me, you cannot miss it. I was curious to know why people didn't seem to realise it was there and later discovered that for several years parts of the façade had been boarded up.

Dripping wet, I entered the foyer. Sadly there is nothing left of the original interior so I went up to the security desk. I asked if there was any information on the building. He listened politely and, spotting me as a fan, decided to give me a rare and precious and 'not to be given out to just anyone' sales catalogue. I went back out into the rain clutching my treasure with my poor entourage following.



Bronze cat outside factory entrance

Advert for Black Cat cigarettes

Many of you will be familiar with the iconic Black and Yellow advertising logo that is Black Cat cigarettes. My school art teacher has one of the original metal adverts in her kitchen and although I drop heavy hints on a regular basis, they seem to fall on deaf ears. But what of the factory?

Construction started in 1926 and the factory opened in 1928. At the time it was not only the largest cigarette factory in the world but also the largest reinforced concrete building – and a beacon of the forthcoming *Art Deco* style. Following the trend for all things Egyptian (Egyptomania) inspired by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, the decoration of the front of the building was heavily influenced by the style. Archaeologists had also found a temple dedicated to Basta, the cat-headed goddess, which influenced the unusual external design and the two 7ft high bronze cats that guarded the main entrance. A further ten black cat motifs were moulded into the façade above Egyptian style pillars. Not surprisingly, the Carreras company logo was a Black Cat.



The restored Carreras factory with its guardian cats.

Carreras was an innovative company and working conditions were enhanced by air conditioning, dust extraction and full welfare services – hence their boast of 'ideal conditions'. Carreras sold the factory to developers in 1959 due to a fall in profits. It re-opened in 1963 as the Greater London House but with many of the decorative features removed. It was restored to its former *Art Deco* glory in 1999 at a cost of £6 million – including reproductions of the 7ft bronze cats. The originals are believed to be in South America but luckily the casts for the cats were never destroyed.

More information can be found at...

http://www.pawsonline.info/cats%20in%20advertising/black_cat.htm

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/postcodes/places/NW1.html>

<http://www.greaterlondonhouse.com/bldg.lasso>

http://www.citiesofscience.co.uk/go/London/ContentPlace_3180.html

Anna Ludlow

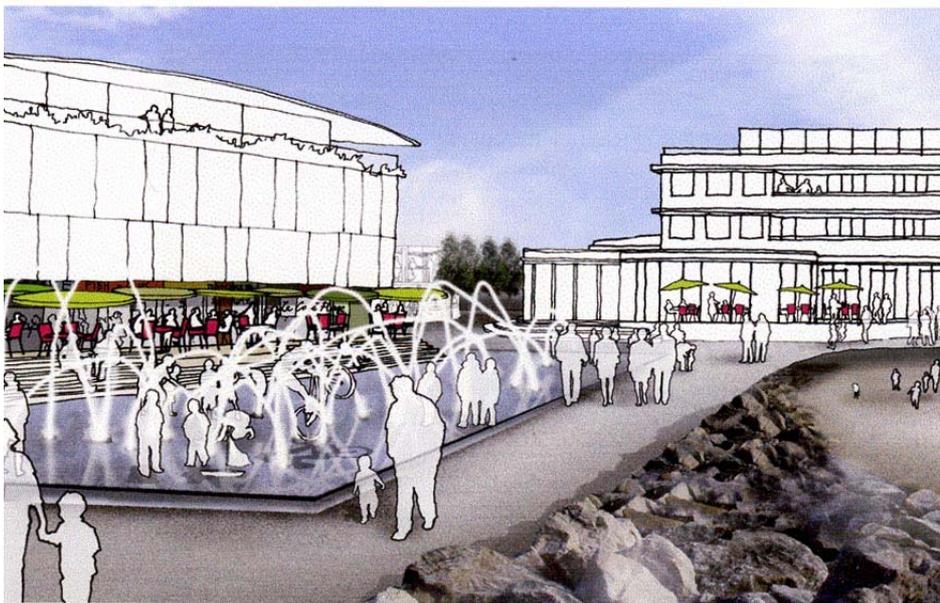
THE MIDLAND'S NEW NEIGHBOURS?

Following a RIBA international design competition, the London-based architectural firm FLACQ was chosen in February 2006 to work alongside Urban Splash in the redevelopment of the Central Promenade site next to the Midland Hotel. By December 2006, FLACQ had produced more detailed plans which were put on display at the Platform Arts Centre in Morecambe as part of a public consultation exercise. Having considered comments from all interested parties, FLACQ hopes to be able to submit its final plans this summer. The firm views this as a long-term project, estimating that it could take ten years to complete the redevelopment.

The aim is to produce a 'vibrant mix' of uses such as cafes, specialist shops, hotel accommodation, apartments, visitor attractions and new public open spaces. A spokesman for FLACQ, Marcus Lee, said "We want to breathe new life into the promenade and bring people back to Morecambe ... but at the same time, it's very important that we provide things for people who live in Morecambe to enjoy. It's about creating a new Morecambe by combining the new hotel, great food and attractions and great views that can be enjoyed either for a weekend or for a lifetime."

To the north of the Midland it is envisaged that there will be a series of finger-shaped blocks, with the lower ones closest to the hotel providing additional guest accommodation. Those further away will have residential use on the upper floors with retail, catering and other commercial uses below. A visitor centre is planned beyond these blocks with possible provision for local information, the arts, sport and natural history, especially birds to link with the Tern Project. Parking will be provided underground leaving large areas as open spaces. These include one in front of the hotel - the proposed 'Midland Circus' - which could be extended for large-scale events by closing the remodelled Marine Road to traffic for certain periods. Adjacent to the Midland and the Stone Jetty would be a 'Seaside Square' (see illustration).

Possibly the main obstacle to the acceptance of these plans by the people of Morecambe is the inclusion of blocks of apartments on the promenade. Fears are that they may be too high and cut off the view of the bay. Marcus Lee attempted to give reassurance: "What we want to do is exploit the views, not block them out. What we have tried to do is design these fingers of buildings which taper down to a low point so you have a variety of heights with curved roof forms. Between the fingers will be a range of two-storey shops or entrances which you'll be able to see right through. It's a permeable scheme in that sense."



MIDLAND MEMORIES

It was late November 1996 when our friend Peter saw the Midland Hotel's advert for Christmas Day lunch at a bargain price of £25 per person. We all laughed and said "Yes let's, why not?" So Peter made the booking for six of us. We all commented "at that price we'd better keep an open mind as it might be like *Faulty Towers*."

Open minded, we arrived on Christmas Day in time for an aperitif at the bar before being told that our table was ready. It was situated with the conservatory window at the back of us and the table was festively laid out. We hailed the waitress over and requested the wine list. Her reply set us off laughing as she told us there wasn't a wine list but the choice was either "red or white". We all chuckled and agreed "well, what can you expect for £25 a head on Christmas Day" and chose the 'red'. It was a set menu and we all ordered the soup. Our waitress was ever so busy and seemed to be serving a lot of tables. Then she appeared carrying a very large tray full of bowls of steaming hot soup. Her arms were stretched out as wide as she could to carry the tray when we noticed that she was fighting back a sneeze. Somehow she managed to turn her head away from the soup dishes and stifle her sneeze – obviously very well trained! We enjoyed the soup which was good and hot but realised that the bottle of 'red' had not been uncorked. The waitress apologised and told us she couldn't find a corkscrew and would have to borrow one from the bar as soon as they could let it go. Our chuckles were turning into giggles – the atmosphere was good and we were enjoying ourselves except that the wine was still not uncorked.

Jack, my hubby, decided to go to the bar himself for the corkscrew and we opened a bottle of wine and toasted our Christmas Day together. The rest of the meal went well and we were getting quite chummy with our waitress. She was a dear old soul, full of fun and laughter, and a real character. We hung on to the corkscrew and kept ordering more of the 'red'. As we had booked our meal a bit later than everyone else, the tables emptied and we were still sat at ours for a while after. Two of our friends decided not to stay for the dancing so we had two empty chairs at our table. Suddenly, our waitress appeared for a well-deserved break and we encouraged her to "sit down and put your feet up". She took us literally and did so! We shared a few laughs with her and told her she had made our day.

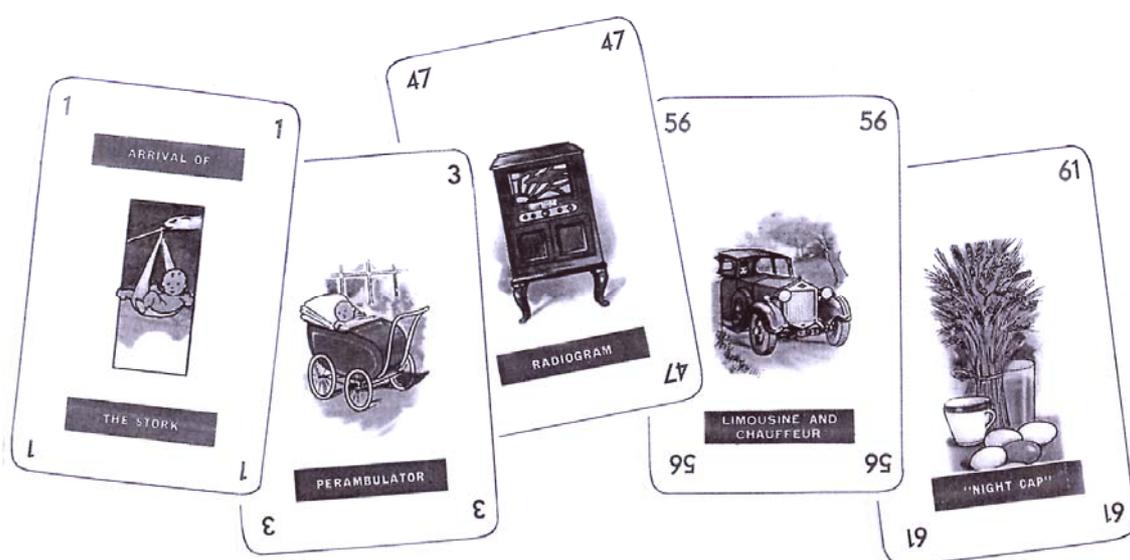
The tables were eventually cleared and moved back to create room to dance. One of the staff, who must have been a multiple tasker, became a sort of master of ceremonies come DJ come ballroom dancing instructor. We had a splendid time learning to do some of the dances and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. It was certainly a Christmas Day to remember. We all agreed to come back another time and stay overnight, which we did – but that is another story.

Shirley Vickers

MILESTONES

Imagine the scene – a rainy afternoon, some time in the summer of 1938 in the Residents' Lounge of the Midland Hotel. The rattle of the afternoon teacups is fading, it's too soon to change for dinner, far too soon for a refreshing cocktail and your 'good book' is anything but. What's to do? Would it be terribly forward to introduce oneself to that awfully jolly party in the corner? They do seem to be having fun. Hello – one of them is coming over. "I say, would you like to come and play 'Milestones'? No one wants to be Aunt Lucy!"

'Milestones', patented by Waddingtons of Leeds in May 1938, is perhaps one of the lesser known boardgames. While lacking the cut and thrust and sheer acquisitiveness of Monopoly, 'Milestones' did reflect the aspirations of the pre-war middle classes. In a brief summary of its principles, the game claimed to be 'played round the life-story of men and women of today'.



The game was played with an illustrated board divided up into 64 squares or 'Milestones' and a pack of 72 cards, each with a number, title and illustration representing a particular Milestone (see above). It commenced with players being born, passing through childhood, schooldays, university, employment and marriage, and ended with retirement or reaching 'home' at Milestone 64. Players selected partners - as the rules say, 'preferably of the opposite sex' - to become possibly Mr & Mrs Happie Red, Mr & Mrs Cheerie Green, Mr & Mrs Merrie Blue, Mr & Mrs Jollie Purple or Mr & Mrs Breezy Yellow. Any 'odd' player would become Aunt Lucy. Players moved along the board by throwing dice. Until they reached the crucial Milestone of marriage, everyone played separately but afterwards partners could move together, reaching 'essential points' such as 'Bank Manager' or acquiring 'amenities' such as 'perambulator' or 'radiogram' en route. Partners assisted each other with advice and with the exchange of cards.

A normal game usually took around an hour and a quarter to complete and was won by the lucky couple who reached retirement first – sounds like the ideal pastime for today!

With thanks to John Gordon Sutherland

MORECAMBE'S CAFÉ SOCIETY

Brucciani's ice cream parlour on Morecambe seafront is not only a grade 2 listed *Art Deco* gem but is also ranked 4th in a list of the top ten classic cafés outside London compiled by the *Classic Cafes* website (www.classiccafes.co.uk).

The website is run by Adrian Maddox who was born in Bolton-le-Sands and knows Brucciani's well. The site's description of Brucciani's refers to standard *Art Deco* features: brown wood and chrome exterior, black lacquer panels to the street, porthole lamps, ziggurat patterned doors and classic deco handles. Inside, we are promised extensive wall panelling, red Formica tables, red upholstered chairs, wall-to-wall etched glass of Venetian canal scenes, mirrors, deco clocks and even the original penny-in-the-slot cubicles in the cloakroom.

However, it is the contributors who bring such lists to life. In 2003, Daniel Lucas enthused 'I can highly recommend Brucciani's in Morecambe ... Super wood panelling, original red Formica tables, tasty food ... don't visit the north west without taking it in'.

Jess White recalled 'I once went to Brucciani's and it absolutely made my day ... It would have been about 1997 and so struck was I that I thankfully took ... photos ... the table, chairs, sugar and ashtrays are so spot on. Wonderful.'

Other writers are whisked into the website mix such as cultural commentator Michael Bracewell or Kathryn Flett, here quoted from *The Observer*. 'Can Morecambe really be the most depressed place in Britain? ... things look up rather faster than I expect as soon as I stumble across P. Brucciani, purveyors of award-winning ice cream, tea, coffee and snacks ... Brucciani's is a perfectly preserved slice of the 1930s that (Eric) Gill would surely recognise. If this were Brighton it would be abuzz with earnest conversation over Penguin classics and the fog of a million Marlboros. But this is Morecambe and there is only me, six septuagenarians in pacamacs and even though it is run by Italians there is no espresso machine. Despite this, it is heaven.'

Elsewhere, on the *Been There* website (www.ivebeenthere.co.uk), MoragR waxes lyrical about her visit to Brucciani's earlier this year. As she says, 'Cafes don't come more swellegant than Brucciani's, a shrine for lovers of *Art Deco* as well as gelato. Opened in 1939, the shop has earned Grade 2 listed status for its immaculately preserved oak panelling, pink mirrors etched with Italian scenes, chrome window frames and Bakelite fittings. Bruno and Gloria Brucciani have been running the business for nearly 50 years, and still bustle around the premises dusting, polishing and serving up their classic confections. Ice creams are mostly traditional flavours - strawberry, pistachio, lemon, toffee crunch. Sundaes are simple-but-excellent standards including peach melba, chocolate nut sundae, fruit sundae. The coffee is famous, but you can also live it up with a Bovril or a glass of sarsaparilla. The location is superb: sit at a formica-topped table in the front and you can gaze over the whipped peaks of your sundae towards



the shadowy hills of the Lake District.'

Another account that's doing the rounds of the websites is Helen Chappell's which first appeared in the *Evening Standard* in 2003. I met Helen when she visited Morecambe and I feature in the account of her stay. 'He saves the most surprising until last: a couple of time-warped Deco interiors. First, Brucciani's ice cream parlour, its windows filled with photos of voluptuous sundaes in scorching colours. Inside, it is a symphony of frosted glass and bentwood panelling, exotic scenes of Venice and the Alps etched into the windows. We can't stay long though, because lunch is planned at Hart's Restaurant. The most startling aspect here is the menu. Dishes could have been offered at any time from 1925 to 1970. They perfectly complement the chintzy décor, unchanged since scenes from *The Entertainer* were filmed here in 1960. The waitresses are dressed like nippies from a Lyons Corner House. I order melon boat followed by boiled ham salad. Over a pot of tea, (we) discuss the future of the English seaside resort. One way to revive it could be to celebrate rather than hide its past pleasures. When the Midland Hotel is restored, what a mecca for nostalgics Morecambe could become.'

I particularly remember the lunch at Hart's (now closed) before it changed hands, where we scrutinised the menu among the polished teapots stamped with the names of cafes from a bygone era. We noted that no item from continental Europe or beyond had been allowed to infiltrate the traditional fare save for one kiwi fruit we thought we saw decorating a gaudy ice cream concoction.

Brucciani's is an example of what were originally termed 'milk bars'. The first was established in London's Fleet Street in 1935 and they quickly caught on. There were over 400 across the country a year later and over a thousand by the 1940s. Often set into earlier buildings, like Brucciani's which sits below the Regency-style bow windows of Craven Terrace, they boasted contrasting shiny surfaces and sleek lines. This was not to the taste of an earlier generation who saw 'in the nastiness of their modernistic knick-knacks, their glaring showiness, an aesthetic breakdown.'

Another Morecambe milk bar of 1939 was Smith's on Euston Road. Here you were invited to 'meet your friends at Morecambe's latest development, fitted with the most up to date devices for ensuring cleanliness, hygiene, comfort and quick service' and where you could enjoy 'health foods, dairy produce, honey, fresh cream' as well as 'coffee and tea, ices, milk shakes, sweets'.

The milk bars seemed to be part of a larger battle going on in the streets of pre-war Morecambe. Temperance marches, concerns about licensed premises, newspaper adverts for milk ('the best and most economical food') and rival adverts for beer (clever pictograms spelling out general messages like 'stick to beer to make you fit as a fiddle') all vied for readers' attention in the pages of *The Visitor*, Morecambe's local newspaper. Yet woe betide the milk bars if they strayed into doubtful areas such as the application of another one in Skipton Street to install slot machines, for they too came under fire from those who thought themselves on the moral high ground. Comments like 'cheapening the town' and being 'harmful to young people' would rain down upon their heads.

Peter Wade

MINUTES OF THE AGM OF THE 'FRIENDS OF THE MIDLAND HOTEL' HELD ON 19TH JANUARY 2007 AT THE ELMS HOTEL, MORECAMBE

A very pleasing attendance of 66 members just about fitted in the small function room of the Elms Hotel for this year's meeting. Before the business of the AGM took place, Sue introduced Kieran Gardiner, Senior Site Manager of Urban Splash, who brought members up to date regarding the renovation of the hotel. Kieran then invited questions from the floor and a question and answer session took place covering many aspects of the work being carried out on site. Sue thanked Kieran for both his attendance at the meeting and his work at the hotel. A short coffee break followed and the AGM commenced at 8.40pm with Sue reading out the apologies.

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting had been distributed to members and were certified by the secretary as being a true and accurate record of the last meeting. They were proposed by Steve Swithin and seconded by Ann Hutton.

2. Matters arising from the Minutes.

Colin Galbraith pointed out that both his and his wife's name had been missed off the 'Members Present' list of the minutes. Ian apologised for the omission and stated it would be included in the minutes.

3. Chairperson's Report.

Sue welcomed all the members attending the meeting and said she could not add much more to what Kieran had already said. She was disappointed with an article which had appeared in the local press describing the hotel as being 'jinxed' because the opening date had been put back to 2008. Kieran had already told the meeting of the problems encountered once work had started and Sue agreed with him that it was better to delay the opening of the hotel to ensure the problems were dealt with properly rather than rush the job to meet a target date.

Sue stated she was in regular contact with Urban Splash and over the months had come to accept, somewhat reluctantly, that the hotel could not be restored as a purist *Art Deco* building. She realised that the hotel had to appeal to a wide variety of people to make it financially viable and, whilst on the subject, went on to explain that there would not be a third party end user for the hotel as Urban Splash intended to run it themselves, which she thought would be good for the hotel.

She thanked everyone for continuing to support the Friends and pointed out that the group started with thirty two members and now had in excess of two hundred and sixty. She was grateful to Urban Splash for keeping us 'on board' because they did not really need us to make the hotel a success. She felt it was important for the group to work in harmony with the 'Friends of the Winter Gardens' as both buildings were extremely important to the area and in the future would be intertwined with each other.

In conclusion, Sue said she thought the hotel was going from strength to strength and was very excited about its future. She was particularly looking forward to holding the Friends' AGM inside the building.

4. Treasurer's Report.

Barry presented an end of year report to the meeting, which showed a balance of funds of £1,437.51. He stated that the figure represented an increase on last year (£1,066.59), a result of three factors: An increase in membership, the sale of a limited edition of commemorative mugs and the sale of a limited edition of 2007 calendars. Expenditure was mainly made up of costs for the newsletter, postage and the AGM. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Peter Llewellyn and seconded by Tony Porter.

5. Election of Officers.

The following posts were up for election: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

The serving officers were asked if they were willing to stand again for the next year and all indicated that they were. The Secretary asked if anyone wished to be considered for any of the posts. No other names were put forward and it was unanimously accepted that the existing officers stood in post for a further year, namely ...

Chairperson	Sue Thompson
Vice Chairperson	Jane Wright
Secretary	Ian Thompson
Treasurer	Barry Guise
Membership Secretary	Lesley Guise

Committee members are Pam Brook, Neil Byers, Stephen Jones, Steve Swithin and Peter Wade. Kate Drummond said she wished to be considered for the committee. She was proposed by Lesley Guise and seconded by Jane Wright. There were no objections and Kate was duly elected.

6. Any Other Business.

Derek Walters suggested that we might look into the possibility of steam train trips being organised to come to the hotel after it is opened. He said there were already excursions which visited other special venues and he thought the Midland would make a suitable destination. Ian replied that the committee would contact Carnforth Railway Station to find out who organised the trips and see if there was any interest in the idea.

The suggestion that the Friends could be used as guinea pigs to test the hotel's facilities prior to it being opened for customers was brought up again. Sue said she had some reservations about the idea and did not want members to lose out of being invited to a function once the hotel was up and running.

Steve Swithin proposed that the Friends arrange a social meeting with the Urban Splash contractors responsible for the renovation work on the hotel.

Ian told the meeting that the committee had engaged the services of a local web designer to redesign the Friends' website. The information on the site regarding progress on the hotel had been brought up to date but, since the site had been created some six years or so ago, it was looking rather tired. The committee was also considering a special members' area accessible by a password (issued to members only) which would enable the newsletter to be put online, and could include special offers and updated photographs of the restoration of the hotel. The site could be altered regularly because the designer was local and accessible. Ian requested that members email him (via the website) with any ideas for inclusion on the new site.

Sue thanked Ruth Coleman (a member of the Friends) for setting up the original site which has attracted many visitors and has been responsible for several new members joining via the internet. As the information regarding the history of the hotel is factually correct it has also been a great help to journalists and students undertaking projects, etc.

Derek Walters asked if the Friends had a logo. Barry replied that we had a group logo and held an example up to show the meeting. It appears on the newsletter in the form of a line drawing of an outline of the hotel.

Steve Swithin asked what would happen to the Friends once the renovation of the hotel was complete and it was open for business. Sue said she saw that as the start of a new era but believed that there would always be a future for the group. Steve went on to suggest that we may be able to offer help to other groups, via the website, by sharing the experiences of our efforts to save the hotel prior to its purchase by Urban Splash. Sue confirmed that the Friends were always ready to assist other groups.

Evelyn Archer, Chairperson of the 'Friends of the Winter Gardens', re-iterated what Sue had said and agreed that there would always be a need for a 'Friends of the Midland' and we were important to the future of the hotel.

Anna Ludlow suggested a book should be written on the hotel. Sue said that a book was in the process of being written by Barry and Pam Brook but it might also be a good idea for the Friends to produce a booklet about the group itself.

There being no other business the meeting was brought to a close at 10.05 pm.

Ian Thompson