



SEAHORSE



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Newsletter of the Friends of the Midland Hotel, Morecambe

Apologies for our extremely low profile over recent months and for the somewhat delayed appearance of this issue of Seahorse. This has been due partly to illness and partly to the fact that there has not been much of interest concerning the hotel to report to members. Since its management was taken over by English Lakes Hotels the Midland has settled down to become a well-run and efficient establishment. Key new staff have been appointed (including a new head chef) and the Midland is now benefiting from the expertise of a well-established hotel company. Room occupation has been good with the Christmas and New Year packages being particularly successful in attracting guests.

However, this could be the calm before the storm. As many of you are aware, Urban Splash still has a planning application pending for the development of the land adjacent to the hotel. This will be heard in the near future although the date of the meeting has not yet been finalised. At this stage we do not know if there have been any further changes to the original plans (for blocks of flats) which resulted in several hundred written objections to Lancaster City Council. As soon as we have more details we will send out a flyer to members. The Friends will ask for representation at the planning meeting.

I am sad to report that Mike Archer, Evelyn's husband, passed away in December. Evelyn is Chair of the Friends of the Winter Gardens and Mike has been at her side throughout their campaign to restore the theatre. He was one of the founding members of the Friends and worked tirelessly for the theatre, always giving of his time and knowledge freely. We will miss him. Our condolences go to Evelyn and her family.

On a happier note, as the Friends have enough money in the bank to cover newsletters, etc (and as we have been semi-dormant these last few months) it has been decided that members deserve a free year – so no subscriptions will be required for 2011.

Finally, the Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 25th March at the Midland. We hope the weather will be a little kinder to us by then! Further details can be found on page 12.

If you want to email me for information on anything you will have to use my personal email at colliehouse@btinternet.com for the moment. We have had to change our service provider as it was causing us problems with the Friends' website.

I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and wish you all a happy 2011.

Sue Thompson

Marina plans hit snag

URBAN Splash has poured cold water on the idea of building a yacht marina near the Midland Hotel.

In a letter to Lancaster City Council, the hotel's owners warned that a marina would cost too much, would not be profitable and would interfere with their own plans to redevelop the central promenade area.

After receiving the letter and a 93-page feasibility study into a marina in Morecambe by engineering consultants Gifford, council cabinet members opted to delay talks on a marina until after Urban Splash's planning application to build on land next to the Midland has

been discussed early next year.

Patrick Sheridan, associate director of Urban Splash, wrote: "We have always liked the idea...but the marina would cost in the region of £20m to deliver which would have to be 100 per cent public funded. We also felt the use was not compatible with the environmental designations of Morecambe Bay."

Mr Sheridan said Urban Splash could still work with the council to deliver a marina, but having spent more than £1m on their plans to date they would expect compensation if they had to change their scheme to accommodate a marina on the site.

Midland owners to sell prime site in Cumbria

URBAN Splash is trying to sell off a prime piece of coastal land in Cumbria with spectacular views of the Lakes - dashing hopes for a leisure development on the site.

The owners of Morecambe's Midland Hotel want to offload a former slag bank in Millom just two years after buying it.

Copeland Borough Council had identified the site for a tourism attraction, possibly a holiday park.

The council hoped that Urban Splash would regenerate the area but now the land, which boasts fantastic views of the Duddon estuary, is up for sale and expected to fetch £450,000.

Assests

Chris Stalker, associate development director with Urban Splash, said: "We have a periodical review of our assets and decisions are then taken by our board.

"This has not always been on the cards. It is a business decision we have taken to explore the possibility of anyone interested."

Urban Splash recently wrote to Lancaster City Council to say they remained committed to the regeneration of Morecambe.

Lancaster City Council planning committee will soon meet to discuss their radical blueprint for the central promenade area.

The award-winning regeneration company

by Greg Lambert

wants to build a mixture of modern high-rise flats, cafes and shops, car parking space, a leisure development and gardens on land next to the Midland.

In 2008, Urban Splash opened the restored Midland Hotel but a year later they handed over the running of the property to English Lakes Hotels under a management contract.

Since then, the Manchester-based business has endured tough financial times, reporting a loss of £38.3m in 2008/9.

But the losses fell to £10.3m in 2009/10, when the developers also secured £150m of extra finance.

Urban Splash has recently been working on new property schemes in several cities including Bristol, Bradford, Plymouth and Sheffield.

These two news items concerning Urban Splash appeared in recent editions of *The Visitor* newspaper, the first on 15th December 2010, the second on 26th January 2011.

A LETTER FROM OLIVER HILL

At a meeting of the Hotels and Catering Committee of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway held on 16th December 1931 Arthur Towle, Controller of LMS Hotel Services, persuaded the committee to appoint "a young and promising architect" called Oliver Hill to be responsible for the design of the company's new hotel in Morecambe. Towle suggested to Hill that he should spend a few days in the resort looking at the site before finalising his plans. Hill visited Morecambe the following month and then wrote to Towle with his ideas for the Midland Hotel.

26th January, 1932

Midland Hotel – Morecambe

Dear Mr. Towle,

Acting upon your suggestion I visited Morecambe and spent several days there, considering the matter of the new Hotel.

I also saw the Borough Surveyor and studied the Council's scheme for the new promenade which is to pass in front of the L.M.S. property on the seaward side, and also the proposed Open air Baths, Grandstand etc., to be constructed on the site of the old docks and shipbreaking yard.

The new promenade is being laid out in a wide sweeping curve and it is evident that the line of the new hotel must conform to this same curve, which will bring the centre axis through the hotel facing West.

The sketch plans and the perspective drawing which I have prepared will explain my scheme. The predominant idea has been to plan the hotel with the long flank facing the sea, so that all the public rooms, the private sitting rooms, and as many bedroom suites as possible, have the sea view. The upper walls on the sea front are recessed, so that continuous sheltered balconies are provided to the bedroom suites.

I have schemed the Service quarters all at the North end and with staff rooms exclusively over the Kitchen, so that there may be no possibility of cooking smell in any of the Guest rooms. Also, at the North end and adjacent to the Service quarters, are the Café and Vaults, which will overlook the Council's new Bandstand and Open air swimming bath.

A long many windowed Dining Room is provided, so that every one has an equal view, and so that all the tables can be arranged against either the inner or outer wall, with a central gangway.

At the South end of the building is arranged an open Loggia, which is extended beyond the actual building as a screen to the garden. Between the hotel and the road is arranged a Hard Tennis Court, correctly orientated, around which is the Entrance Drive and car parking space.

The new hotel is so planned on the site that it can be proceeded with and completed without dislocating the use of the existing hotel. A temporary hoarding would be fixed to the scaffolding on the old hotel side, so that it would not be too unsightly.

The construction would be hollow brick walls, rendered externally, with steel and concrete floors and roof, and fireproof stairs. The treatment generally, both inside and out, would be simplified and without unnecessary detail, and will rely upon its lines, proportion and the massing of light and shade, for effect. The exterior would be rendered in the new "Snowcrete" cement, with slight colouring matter and silica added, to give the necessary colour, sparkle and freshness.

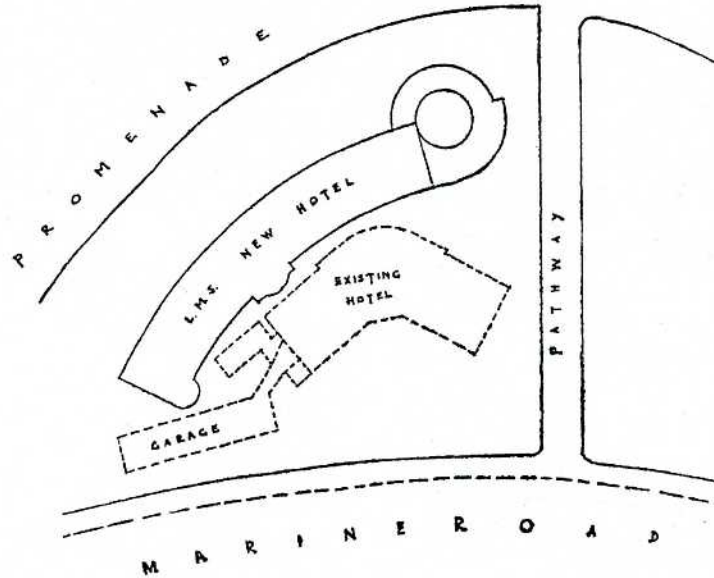
I have made it my business to keep in touch with the best Continental work of this kind, both in France, Germany, Austria and Scandinavia etc., and I feel that you have here an unique opportunity of building the first really modern hotel in this country. I may add that my enthusiasm was greatly stimulated by the situation itself.

I enclose herewith the report of the Surveyor, Mr. Clive Grimwade, F.S.I. giving the cost of my scheme which you will note will not exceed the authorized sum of £57,000 including all fees.

Thanking you for the opportunity you have afforded me.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Hill



The new hotel was to be built behind the existing one which would continue in operation during construction work



Sketch of proposed Midland Hotel by J.D.M. Harvey

