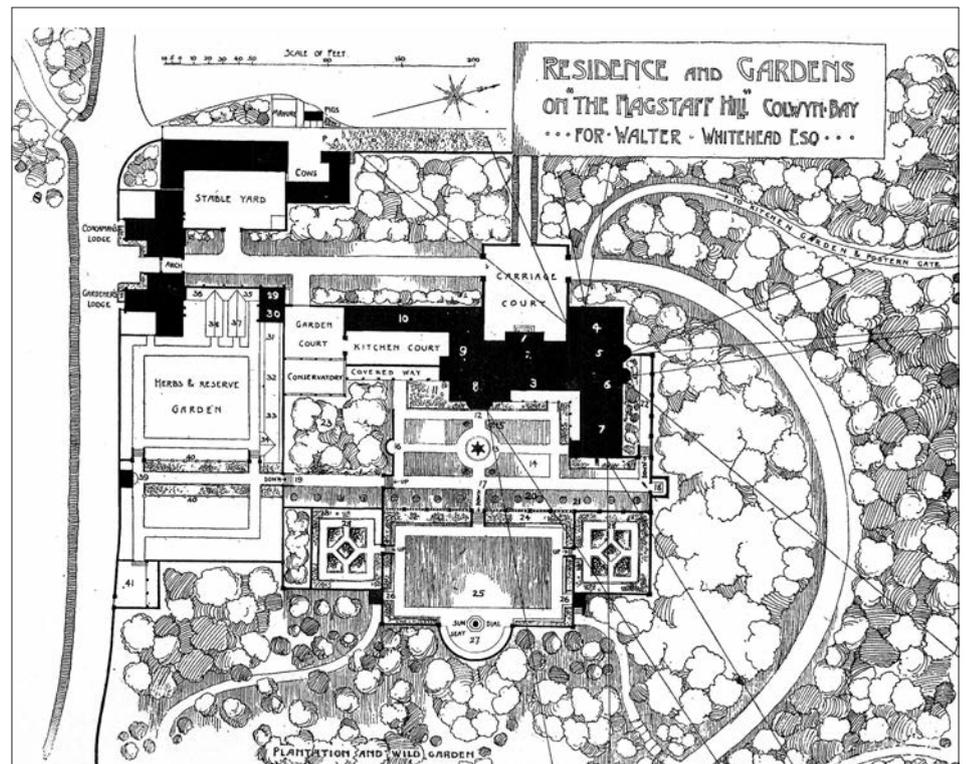


Mr Mawson and the Zoo

Gardens can be beautiful and in their beauty people find serenity and comfort. The art of creating a garden and maintaining it can be inspirational and hard work. Vita Sackville-West, who, with her husband Harold Nicholson, created the beautiful garden at Sissinghurst, said that the visits to the gardens of others were “a shortcut to hard-won experience”. We have many examples of the art of gardening in North Wales, Bodnant of course being the best example, but local councils also maintain many civic gardens which bring delight to people in our local towns. The creation and structure of a garden involves discipline and the virtue of taking care and bucket-loads of optimism and at the end of the day everyone seems to feel better in a garden. Diana Athill in her memoir, ‘Somewhere Towards the End’ writes about gardening as “a wonderful release from the consciousness of self”.

The present Colwyn Bay Zoo (or Welsh Mountain Zoo) has been created by the late Robert Jackson and his three sons, Tony, Chris and Nick on the Flagstaff Estate which was once the home, in the early 1900s, of a Manchester surgeon, Dr Walter Whitehead. The Colwyn Bay Council bought the 30-acre Estate in 1956 and eventually leased it to the zoologist Mr Robert Jackson in 1963. Sadly, six years after he had opened the zoo, Mr Jackson died in a terrible accident, in a thunderstorm, while he was fishing in the River Elwy. The zoo soon became one of Colwyn Bay’s chief tourist attractions and two years after it opened the dramatic Tree Tops Safari Restaurant was built. A new civic post was created, that of Mayor’s Falconer, harping back to mediaeval days when the office of falconer to the Lord of the manor was an envied office of distinction. Mr Jackson’s son Tony would often be seen at the head of a



Mr Mawson's original plans for the estate.

mayoral procession in Colwyn Bay with a falcon perched on his hand. All of this would have been unbelievable to Dr Whitehead had he been alive to witness it. Dr Whitehead had bought 37 acres of woodland, 420 feet above sea level, near what are now the rock and water gardens in the zoo. He intended to retire there and build a mansion. In 1909 he was host to the Bards of the National Eisteddfod of Wales and in the following year a stone circle was built in the grounds, which still stands near the sea lion enclosure. He, in a sense, had been the Lord of his own manor, the Flagstaff Estate, named after a hilltop station from where flags were flown from the summit, over which he did more or less as he pleased and which he ran in his own distinctive fashion. One of the things he wanted for his manor, was a beautiful garden and large manor house, for this he

turned to Thomas Hayton Mawson. One of Mr Mawson’s axioms was, “Plant the hills and flood the hollows”, and he certainly practiced what he preached at the Flagstaff Gardens.

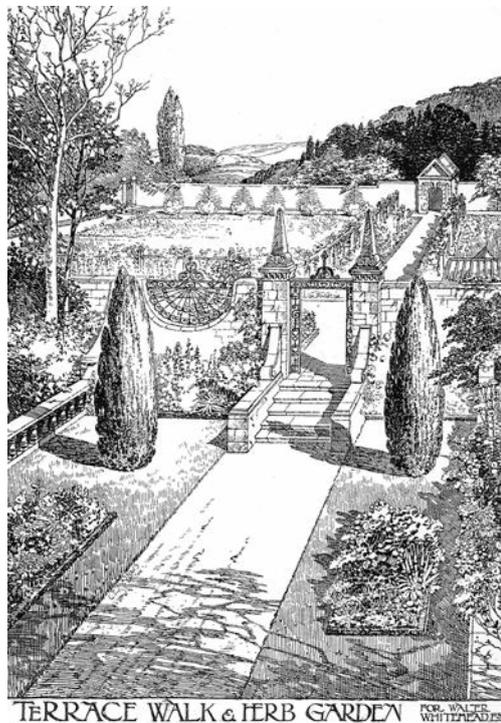
Mr Mawson was born in 1861 in Lancaster. He left school when he was twelve years old and was apprenticed to a building firm in Lancaster. He then went on to train at a nursery in London, so laying the foundations for his future career in which he would become known as the most celebrated landscape architect of the Edwardian era. When he was 23 years old he married Anne Prentice and they went to live in Windermere where they raised nine children, four boys and five girls. Mr Mawson created landscapes that used both his architectural and horticultural skills which can still be discerned, as you look around the Zoo as though conducting your

own archaeological dig on Dr. Whitehead's 1900 Flagstaff Estate. Mr Mawson completed commissions in America, Canada and Europe including the prestigious garden of the Palace of Peace in The Hague. In 1929 he was appointed the President of the Institute of Landscape Architects.

Mr Mawson in his sumptuous book, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, published in 1900, writes about Dr Whitehead's Estate, "Very few sites in the British Isles command such an extensive panorama of sea and landscape scenery". He goes on to say that "the site presented an unusual number of difficulties" one of which was Dr Whitehead's instruction that Mr Mawson should come up with a design that allowed him to "find a sheltered walk on which to promenade from which ever direction the wind might proceed". He goes on to maintain his plan for the site, "shows the advantage of a scheme in which both architect (Mr Dan Gibson) and garden designer are mutually interested."

Prosaically, he wrote in 'The Art and Craft of Garden Design', "if the designer is to meet with any success in his treatment of natural objects he must take nature as his handmaid, humour her, follow her..."; and this he did, around what we now know as the Zoo. Part of Mr Mawson's garden design, which he describes in his book, is still very recognisable at the zoo today. He wrote in his notes for the garden: "Main Terrace Walk 9 feet in width which is finished at N.E. end by a shelter or Summer House and high terrace wall and at the other end by a Wrought Iron Gate with overhead ornament through which is seen the shelter in the reserve garden". Next time you visit the Zoo, see if you can find it.

Unfortunately, to a certain extent, Dr Whitehead's association with Mr Mawson ended in tears. The Doctor ran out of money and the grand house which he had envisaged being built on this land was never built while in his autobiography Mr Mawson moaned about how much money Dr Whitehead still owed him. But there are still wisps of Mr Mawson imaginative plan for the grounds; the stone steps down to the sea lion enclosure, the garden above the bear enclosure (which was once a tennis court), the stone steps leading up to the gateway and wrought iron gates leading to the children's animal area and the stone summer house nearby; all these



The Gateway and Summer House are still in place.



features are Thomas Mawson's ideas.

Dr Whitehead died in 1913 and his Ashes were buried on his estate, in the beautiful

which would have wiped the men's vision from the face of the earth. Well done Dr. Walter Whitehead, Thomas Hayton Mawson and Robert Jackson.

garden created by Mr Mawson, in what we now know as Colwyn Bay Zoo. His inspired garden designer died twenty years later and is buried in Bowness Cemetery within a few miles of some of his best gardens overlooking Lake Windermere. And today we must be ever grateful to Robert Jackson and his family for creating the zoo on the Flagstaff Estate for in so doing they have saved a vestige of Thomas Mawson's garden design of 114 years ago. Had not the Jackson's enthusiasm for the animal kingdom been so fervent, and the vision and help shown to Robert Jackson by Geoffrey Edwards, the Colwyn Bay Town Clerk, been so influential and effective, the area covered by the zoo, Dr Whitehead's estate and Mr Mawson's garden, could now be covered by a housing estate



Mr Mawson's steps down to the present Sea Lion's pool.



Mr Mawson's Summer House.

The Wren's Nest

The Wren's Nest (NB Journal March 2009 'Building For The Family')

In 1926, Mrs Annie Guy, a wealthy widow from Wednesbury, near Wolverhampton, arrived in Colwyn Bay and asked Mr Sydney Colwyn Foulkes, the local architect, to design a home for her on a plot of land she had bought on Lansdowne Road. Mrs Guy's husband, George William Guy, had died nine years earlier in 1917 at the age of fifty seven, leaving his wife with three children, two girls and a boy, Ethel Rose, Marjorie May and George Harold. Mr Guy had owned and ran a large factory manufacturing tubes and had been the first person to export bicycle frames to America. Unfortunately, when he was producing munitions, his factory was also the first ever to receive a direct hit from a German zeppelin during the 1st World War.

The Wren's Nest, named after a well - known beauty spot in the Midlands, (now covered by a housing estate) is Neo-Georgian in style. There is the lovely detail of a reeded frieze below the eaves. Over the front door Mr Colwyn Foulkes designed a recessed balcony with delicate balustrading and the whole structure is built with his signature concern and insistence on good brick work. The interior rooms are an ideal size with elongated widows; there is a large hall

and a good sized staircase. The shape of the house is perfect; indeed Mr Colwyn Foulkes himself always felt that it was probably his best work and that he never improved on it and kept a picture of the house on the wall of his office in Pwllcrochan Avenue. He went on to design a house for himself, Moryn, on the corner of Cayley Promenade and Bryn-y-Mor Road, but due to its larger size it lacked the exquisite proportion of The Wren's Nest.

Sydney Sandford (NB March 2001 Journal) built the house, as he did for many of Mr Colwyn Foulkes' other commissions including Moryn and Meldreth, a house just down the road from The Wren's Nest, on the corner of Grosvenor Road. The large garden surrounding The Wren's Nest was originally laid out by Mr Tull from Llandudno Junction and it has not altered greatly over the years. The house has not altered greatly over the years either mainly because it enjoys Grade 2 Listed Status; an acknowledgement of the distinguished architectural and historical nature of the building.

Mrs Guy moved into the house in 1926 (not 1932 as Edward Hubbard in his book 'The Buildings of Wales' published in 1986, maintains) along with her two daughters, Ethel Rose, always known as Queenie and Marjorie May. Mrs Guy

died in 1943, Ethel died in 1981, aged 94 and Marjorie in 1988 also aged 94. In 1932 when the factory in Wednesbury was eventually sold, Mrs Guy was able to add a garage to the house, and a chauffeur and maid to the household. The ladies lived in some style. Ethel took a keen interest in the Girl Guide movement and became the District Commissioner for North Wales while her sister Marjorie became a well-regarded novelist. She wrote two particularly well received novels, one called 'Joe Doughty' written before the 2nd World War, which was a 1st World War spy story based in a boys school and another more general story called 'When Carter Ruled' published in 1949.

Mrs Guy's son Harold, had three daughters, Helen, Barbara and Ann; Ann married Geoffrey Knight Taylor and they had two children Roger and Josie. In 1983 Roger and his mother moved into The Wren's Nest and Marjorie (Roger's aunt, the novelist) moved out to live with the gardener in Old Colwyn. The house has now been sold to a new family and the Taylor family link has been broken.

The Wren's Nest is a lovely house.



The Wren's Nest, Lansdowne Road, Colwyn Bay.

Rydal Penrhos – The Conserver

All these buildings are still intact and still used for a useful purpose; all because of a school in our midst.



Pwllcrochan



Walshaw



Hathaway



Ingleside



Netherton



Main School



Beech Holme



Heathfield



The Grange



Outram Lodge

The Link to Links



The Colwyn Bay Golf Club House (above Pwllcrochan Woods).

When I was at school in Colwyn Bay in the late 1950s, for exercise, we had to run up to Upper Colwyn Bay, along Pen-y-Bryn Road, across the Golf Links, across Llanrwst Road, down Hafodty Lane, over the farm fields to the Old Highway and so back to the top of Pwllcrochan Avenue, where we all collapsed in a heap. We met very few cars on the roads. The trudge across the golf links was along a narrow public pathway lined with straggly trees bent over by the wind, where sheep grazed contentedly. That now is just a memory and the scene has altered out of all recognition as the land is now covered entirely by houses.

In the 1970s the building company, Price Brothers, built a huge number of dwellings and confirmed the link with the previous use of the land by naming the roads after British Golf Courses; St Andrew's Road, Wentworth Avenue, Troon Way, Birkdale Avenue and Close, and Sunningdale Avenue and Grove. As the houses grew in number, the builder, McBrides, contributed to the numbers and named one cul-de-sac, off St Andrew's Road, without checking with the local authority, Badger's Brow. The name did not go down well with the new residents and Mr McBride suggested to one new owner, Brenda Clarke, that she find a fitting name for the road. She discovered that the houses and bungalows had been built on land smothered with heather which had covered that stretch of the original golf course. She proposed therefore the name Rhodfa'r Grug which in English means Heather Walk or Way. The golf course had been founded in 1893 and was originally a nine hole course but was

extended to eighteen just prior to the 1st World War. In those days golf was very much the preserve of the wealthy and for those men with time on their hands, so this Club

was considered the preserve of, what was then thought to be, the important people of the town; doctors, solicitors and the like. In the introduction of the official club handbook published in 1948 it announces that, "Few courses in the United Kingdom offer a finer panoramic view of mountains, moor and sea than Colwyn Bay Golf Course.." It goes on to say, "Should one, for instance, through an error of judgment, drive into the reservoir from the fourteenth tee, the glorious views do much to soothe the annoyance!" In 1906 the secretary of the Club was Mr J Evans, who with Mr Porter ran the Pwllcrochan Estate from the Estate Office on Conway Road (NB Journal February 2012). At the time the entry fee was £1 1s 0d and the subscription was £2 2s 0d. There was a membership of 230 and visitors fees were 2/- (20p) a day and 7/6d (40p) a week, increasing during the summer months to 2/6d a day and 10/- (50p) a week. Sunday play was allowed but without a caddy as it was thought improper to insist that a caddy should accompany a player when the caddy may well have wanted to be in church or to rest on the Sabbath. After the 1st World War, by 1922 the membership had risen to 300. A club member, Mr B Weastall, had a very successful year in 1924 returning scores of 76 and 81 to win the qualifier at Royal St David's for the £100 Welsh



The Clubhouse and Eighteenth Green.

Professional tournament. The links continued to be used during the 2nd World War when the membership was enhanced by the influx of the civil servants working for the Ministry of Food. Indeed with the railway station only being a mile away a service of cars ran up and down Kings Road to help the players to reach the course more quickly.

The clubhouse, which stood on the present site of the Pen-y-Bryn Pub, had originally been the home of Mr J.M.Porter which he had named Braeside. When he sold his house to the club he moved to a house on Pwllcrochan Avenue which he renamed Braeside and which still bears that name today. The clubhouse was demolished in the late 1960s and Mr Taylor built a pub on the site (called Taylor's) which he built with reclaimed bricks from houses that had been demolished on Princes Drive to make way for the construction of the A55 dual carriageway.

With the creation of the golf courses at Rhos-on-Sea and Old Colwyn where players were welcomed whatever their social standing in the community may have been, the Golf Links between Pen-y-Bryn Road and Llanrwst Road declined in popularity and they found themselves in financial difficulty. In the 1930s the local council had agreed to buy and operate the golf course but the outbreak of the 2nd World War put paid to that idea. After the war two local business men bought the land with the intention of creating a caravan site on the land. The local authority, learning that the developers intended to put 400 caravans on the site and knowing that there were already 4,000 of them at Abergele and 800 at Conway they decided to refuse planning permission for their use on the old golf course. A three day public enquiry was held in the Church Room of St.Paul's Church into the matter and in August 1957 permission to develop the 100 acre site for caravans was refused. In January 1958 the Council purchased the site for £10,250 and in 1960 they then sold it on for private housing development at a profit to the town of £40,000.

At the moment there is much debate and controversy over the Government's desire to build ever more houses on green field sites, but as the Upper Colwyn Bay Golf Links site shows, it was ever thus. Those of us of a certain age used to consider this golf course to be well into the open country side, now it is simply part of the urban sprawl of our town. Our ever increasing population must live somewhere.

Leonard Moseley F.R.I.C.S., L.R.I.B.A. - Architect

Leonard Moseley (NB picture on back of Journal June 2010) was both a chartered surveyor and a qualified architect who practiced in Colwyn Bay during the 1950, 60s and early 70s. His office was in the Estate Office (NB Journal February 2012) alongside Jack Porter's practice. His office was on the second floor from where he used to look down onto Hawarden Road. He admired Mr Porter but did not like his heavy association with the Masonic movement and so he tended to concentrate on his own work and practice and Mr Porter got on with his own work separately.

He was born in Crewe but spent the productive years of his life here in Colwyn Bay. He was described by a fellow Colwyn Bay architect as, "a good sound little architect" and his skills certainly had an effect on the landscape of our town. He was much involved in the life of the English Baptist Church in Hawarden Road which he could see from his office window, a church which had been initially built due to the financial generosity of Mr Charnley. The building in which Mr Charnley and Mr Moseley worshiped is today the Church Hall, the present main church building having been built on the lawn on the corner of the Hawarden Road and Princess Drive.

Mr Moseley lived in Bryn Hafod on Cherry Tree Lane, a house which has now been demolished and the land utilised by the building of three bungalows. He worked for the church, for the local authority, for private schools and for private clients, all of whom found him kindly, considerate and very professional.

Two religious commissions which he undertook were the design of the tower for St. George's Church, Rhos-on-Sea and the vicarage in Conwy which was built beside St Mary's Parish Church on Rose Hill Street. The original vicarage stood where the present car park is now to be found opposite the Methodist Church, adjoining the town wall. It was in the original vicarage that a former well respected member of this society, Noreen Edwards OBE, was born. Mr Moseley's design for the present vicarage, by the



St. Georges Church, Rhos-on-Sea.

look of it, was probably constrained by a tight budget, but it is never the less cosy and light and does the job for which it was designed.

When St George's Church was originally built the Parochial Church Council did not have enough money to have a tower incorporated into the design and so it stood for many years looking rather silly and unfinished. Eventually, in the 1960s, sufficient funds had been scraped together to engage Mr Moseley to design the tower that you see today. He also designed, in conjunction with the church authorities, the Celtic cross that now adorns the apex of the stumpy spire that Mr Moseley designed to sit on the roof of the crenelated tower. The low wall surrounding the tower is designed to look like a polite battlement from which only prayers would ever be shot.

On 16th August 1955 the foundation stone for Colwyn Bay Crematorium was put in place and Mr Moseley was present for the ceremony, as he had designed the building. Over the years the structure has been altered here and there to adapt to new legislation and the growing use to which the building is put, but by and large Mr Moseley's lightly influenced Arts and Crafts design is still intact. The rounded wall to the waiting room and the office, the curved entrance to the chapel, the simple interior space with the end wall, behind the cataphalque, with its inset elongated cubby-hole, all seem redolent of a previous age. For nearly sixty years Mr Moseley's idea has stood the test of time. It was opened by The Right Honourable The Earl of Verulam M.A., J.P., on Thursday 31st January, 1957.

When Mr Ernest Coathup, in the 1960s, started his business, Diamond Stylus, he went to Mr Moseley and asked him to create a design for his new office and workshop on land which he had bought on the new industrial site in Mochdre; he then engaged Edward Jones to build the structure. For its time, it was an almost futuristic design, straight forward, with clean sharp lines, distinctive and ideal for the job for which it was created. Mr Coathup



Diamond Stylus Co Ltd, Mochdre.



Inglewood.



Fairways.

Mr Coathup wanted incorporated into the design. The building is still there today, still being useful.

Two distinguished looking private houses which Mr Moseley designed are Inglewood, 56 Brompton Avenue, next door to the tennis club, which was designed for Bill Graty, the optician from Woodland Road East, and Fair Ways on the corner of Glyn Avenue and Groes Road which was designed for Noel Kenyon. Both the homes stand out because of their excellent stone work and the grandeur of their conception. Fair Ways has an almost Lutyens look about it and you get the impression that was built for a well-heeled Edwardian gentleman. They are both lovely houses looking houses.

and Mr Moseley got along well as long as Mr Moseley agreed with everything that

Miss Constance Smith was soaked in Moral

Rearmament. She was of her time, strict, upright and moral and as headmistress, ruled Penrhos College for Girls with a beady eye and all-pervading sense of well-being. Possibly because he was a diligent church goer and always acted in a correct manner, she took a shine to Leonard Moseley and authorised him to design the science block at the school. He produced a functional design with lots of windows which made for an airy, light environment for the girls. The building was erected right beside the narrow public footpath which ran through the school grounds and adjacent to the short wooden bridge over the footpath which the girls used to get from one area of the school to the other. Many a passer-by would hear the girls giggling and the school mistress shouting her instructions to the girls while they looked down on the passing crowd.

Like other architects, Sydney Colwyn Foulkes, Brian Hallwood Lingard, William John Bowen, J.M.Porter, Gwilym Parry Davies, recorded in these Journals, Leonard Moseley has left his distinctive and distinguished mark on our town for which we must be grateful.

The Pier: the saga continues

One can but feel sorry for Conwy County Borough Council who has been burdened with the 'Pier Problem' for too long. The councillors are endeavouring to do their best with an almost intractable problem. For the Local Authority, the main headache is money. Either option, keep it or pull it down, is going to cost a lot of dosh in straightened times. To the financial problem is now added the ownership problem as the courts become entangled in this long and sorry saga. Richard Eyre writing in the Sunday Telegraph refers to Brighton's West Pier, "which was burnt down in 2003, is an island of ironmongery 100 yards from shore, a monument to inert town planners and dubious

developers." So we are not alone. The trouble with nostalgia is that the reality often fails to match up to it; this Society, decided a long time ago that, unfortunately, the life of the Pier has now come to an end. The Pier's continued existence is a blot on the landscape, it is giving Colwyn Bay a bad image which it does not deserve, and anyway it is no longer of any use to the future of our lovely town. While enjoying our memories of the past, we ought not to dwell there for too long. What made Britain great, and rich and famous, was not nostalgia and inertia, but its opposite: a native genius for invention, progress and pragmatism. A fever of retrospection is bad for us; we

ought to give modern visionaries the opportunity and the backing to transform Colwyn Bay for the future of our children. Almost a thousand years ago Saint Francis of Assisi suggested that people should 'start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible and then they would discover that they would end up doing the impossible'. Are there any visionaries around today? Cleethorpes Pier in

Lincolnshire has now been put up for sale. It was opened in 1873, twenty seven years before Colwyn Bay Pier was built, and now its present owners have discovered, as we have in Colwyn Bay, that to maintain a pier and encourage people to be interested in a pier, is nigh on impossible.

"Change has become a constant", the Queen told both Houses of Parliament in 2002. "Managing it has become an expanding discipline". As usual our Queen is able to see clearly what is required of the Local Authority, which is sadly hamstrung by legal wrangling, an understandable lack of finance and an unnerving absence of self-confidence and nerve. The Council should not be in thrall to history, but it must at least understand it. As an allure of 'pastness' the Council seems to imagine that the Pier represents a symbol of something which the people of Colwyn Bay ought to embrace for the future of the town, ignoring its probable irrelevance to all the young people and school children of the area. Now that the Porth Eirias water-sports centre has been built, the Pier has become even more of an archaic eyesore. If the only criterion of value is whether something lasts, then the whole of human life is a waste of time.



Colwyn Bay Pier - Another World.