

Mock Tudor

When I was young it was politely understood that it was acceptable to shake the hand of a friend or acquaintance, or, when being introduced to a stranger, perhaps to doff your hat as a mark of respect. In the intervening years fashions have changed and you are thought to be unfriendly if you do not, at the first moment of being introduced to a lady, to enfold her in a warm embrace and kiss every proffered cheek. Just watch Michele Obama and Bill Clinton; they both power hug anything human that moves. Fashion is not only a notion associated with greeting someone or with clothing; architects are also designers and the buying public are as notoriously susceptible to the fad of the day, be it greeting someone or embracing a new architectural fashion, as they have always been.

Mock Tudor housing was once fashionable, but now, like the maxi skirt and the firm handshake, has been relegated to a past life, half remembered. In 1999, the folk singer, Richard Thompson, released a record album called 'Mock Tudor' which included sections such as Metroland and Heroes In The Suburbs, but sadly it was largely ignored by the public, not I suspect because of the quality of the singing, but possibly due to the ignorance of the public towards the content of the songs. Nothing becomes so old fashioned, as an old fashion.

Metroland, the evocative name given, by the wonderful John Betjeman, to the bizarre no-man's-land between London town and the open countryside, and created by the Metropolitan Railway, is littered with Mock Tudor buildings. Indeed, near the end of the Metropolitan Line stands a Tudor manor house called Ruislip Manor after which the local Tube station takes its name. The Metropolitan Railway was hugely influential in architectural terms, for as the company expanded into

Middlesex, laying new lines across virgin countryside, it bought up the adjoining farmland and covered it with mock-Tudor housing estates. These illusionary conurbations, selling a cut-price version of an Edwardian nirvana, set the standard for one hundred years of British house building and Colwyn Bay has not been unaffected. Go and look at the two semi-detached homes, numbers 19 and 21, on Whitehall Road in Rhos-on-Sea, and you will see a wonderful example of 1930s Mock Tudor design.

The architectural artist, Osbert Lancaster, called the mock Tudor craze, Stockbroker Tudor. The style was used to good affect by William John Bowen (NB Journal September 2006) when, in the 1930s, he designed the three houses, Cartre, Rhondda and White Cottage, on Allanson Road, Rhos-on-Sea. They still, prominently, display their debt to the Tudor influence. Three of the very best examples in Colwyn Bay of the Mock Tudor style can be seen in the three large detached homes, The Hermitage, 16 Coed Pella Road built in 1893, and next-door at number 14, and Dover Court, 17 Woodland Park. They prominently display every architectural feature associated with the style. The Hermitage, especially, not only demonstrates the longing for the Tudor era among rich people from the early years of the 20th Century but also many Arts and Crafts embellishments adorn the building. The Rhos Abbey Hotel, now demolished, displayed traces of the 1930s affection for



19-21, Whitehall Road.



Dover Court, Woodland Park.

the Tudor style of building and the architects of the flats which now occupy the Rhos Abbey site (next door to the Rhos Ffynach Pub) have attempted to ape the old Mock Tudor style of the original hotel, thus creating a copy of a copy or a pastiche of a pastiche. Not far from the Rhos Ffynach and the Rhos Abbey Flats, along Abbey Road, there are three other obvious examples of the Mock Tudor house style in numbers 41, 49 (Aquinus House) and 54.



Abbey Road.

The Tudor revival, or the Tudorbethan style as it is sometimes called, cannot really be compared to the timber-framed structures of the originals, in which the frame supported the whole weight of the house. If the 1930s examples in Colwyn Bay, such as the lovely house, Cotswold, on Brackley Avenue, designed by Alfred

Steinthal for Mr & Mrs Benger of Benger Bay Food fame, (NB Journal April 2004,) had been authentically on a frame, it would have come tumbling down a long time ago. The same would apply to Woodcroft Specialist Care Home, opposite the Civic Centre, on Abergele Road, which is another example of someone's desire to

live in a house which harks back to Tudor times, as is the house next-door, Brithdir, number 214 Abergele Road, which is partially hidden by large trees, where the wooden fascia boards are painted black instead of the normal traditional white.

Many of the large Rydal Penrhos School buildings (NB Journal February 2013) are Mock Tudor in style. Walshaw on Oak Drive, Outram Lodge on Pwlycrochan Avenue, Netherton on Brackley Avenue and The Grange on the corner of Oak Drive and Pwlycrochan Avenue all feature Tudor style facades. However, perhaps the most prominent building in Colwyn Bay which demonstrates the need of architects and certain clients in the 1930s to ape the fashion for the Mock Tudor style of building is the Stermat

Store (the old Braid's Garage) on Abergele Road in Colwyn Bay. However hard you might try, you just cannot miss this glaring attempt to stamp the Mock Tudor form on Colwyn Bay.

John Betjeman, famously, in his war-time poem 'Slough', articulated his dislike for the minimal Tudor references intended to create an instant atmosphere in the 1930s speculative housing estates; he wrote about "bald young clerks" who gather:

'And talk of sport and makes of cars

In various bogus-Tudor bars

And daren't look up and see the stars.'

Yet today the Mock Tudor houses of Colwyn Bay surely enhance and add variety to our stock of homes. Variety, we are told, is the spice of life and homes such as numbers 6 and 8 Llwyd Grove, Colwyn Bay, or just around the corner in Elian Road, numbers 8 and 10 (Goda), and another fine example, 1 Ael-y-Bryn Road, Colwyn Bay, or the now demolished Russell House, bring and brought, colour and interest to our town; what was once a fad is now a welcome part of our built heritage. Perhaps the polite handshake might return and replace the embarrassingly proffered cheek.

I wonder how many Mock Tudor buildings you can spot?



The former Penrhos Junior School building.



Former Braid's Garage, Abergele Road.

The Rosa Hovey Trust Homes



The Hovey Houses Tan yr Allt Street.



Chapel Street, Mochdre. Circa 1910

The Rev George Henry Hovey, a Methodist minister, and his wife Frances had eleven children, two of whom were Rosa (born in 1865) and Ethel (born in 1870). The two ladies came to live in Colwyn Bay where, in 1894, Rosa was appointed the Headmistress of Penrhos College and Ethel became the bursar. Both of the ladies were sympathetic to the ideals voiced by the suffragettes, but they were careful not to display this enthusiasm

too publicly as it could have damaged their positions within the school and dented the willingness of fathers of some girls to have their daughters educated by women who held such radicle views. However the sisters' public spiritedness was evident in the fact that Ethel became the first lady Mayor of Colwyn Bay and was created an Alderman, and Rosa founded the philanthropic Rosa Hovey Trust. The Trust is still in being and is still being used for

the welfare of the people of Colwyn Bay. The Trust owns a number of properties in the area which have been purchased with the endowment made available by the Hovey family, which are used by people, who, for one reason or another, cannot find alternative accommodation. Many years ago the Trust was able to house families who had fled the war in Vietnam. The only houses which the Trustees of the Trust have built, are the row of five homes, numbers 19 to 27 on Tan-yr-Allt Street, on the corner of the street and Singleton Crescent, in Mochdre. The houses were originally built to house soldiers returning from the 1st World War. They form a block on their own, unattached to the rest of the houses in the street, and all are painted the same colour with identically painted front doors. Thus it is that the housing stock in Colwyn Bay is being well maintained and added to, by a lady and her family who thought not of themselves but of the wellbeing of others.

What's in a Name (Noddfa)

Number 43 Min-y-Don Avenue is called Noddfa; number 13 Wellington Road is called Noddfa and so is 43 Penrhyn Avenue. Number 12 Craig Wen, Rhos-on-Sea is also called Noddfa. Noddfa is the Welsh name for a refuge, shelter, a sanctuary or as some believe, an asylum. It is an obvious Welsh name for a home.

Noddfadigion is a place of refuge for an evacuee. During the 2nd World War there were many hundreds of evacuees from Liverpool in Colwyn Bay and the surrounding area. A few of these children were given sanctuary by Mr and Mrs Wyatt at their home in The Close in Colwyn Bay and some others were

looked after by Mr and Mrs Scollon in Abergele. Many years later when Mr & Mrs Wyatt's son married Mr & Mrs Scollon's daughter and they went to live in Craig Wen, they felt that the obvious name for their home should be Noddfa; and so it is.

The Rhos Playhouse

Will Catlin was an entertainment entrepreneur who ran several troupes of Catlin's Pierrots who performed on open-air stages in several seaside resorts. Mr Catlin eventually became so prosperous that he built the Arcadia Theatre on Princes Drive, which he had asked a young Sydney Colwyn Foulkes to design. Sydney Freres was Will Catlin's top comedian and singer but he decided to leave the Pierrots and branch out on his own. Mr Catlin admired Sydney Frere and in his honour he put on a benefit performance for him before he left his employ. The only architect that Sydney Freres knew, was Sydney Colwyn Foulkes, so he asked him to design a much smaller version of The Arcadia on land he had purchased on Penrhyn Avenue in Rhos-on-Sea. We now know the building as The Co-op store. When I was young, we lads had six cinemas to choose from, The Supreme Cinema (sometimes called the Picture Palace) in Old Colwyn, The Arcadia on Princes Drive which was pulled down to make way for the building of the A55 road, The Odeon Cinema on the corner of Marine Drive and Conway Road which was pulled down to make way for the Swn-y-Mor flats, the Cosy Cinema on Conway Road which was housed in what is now Matthews' Hardware Store (opposite the HSBC Bank), the Princes Cinema on Princes Drive which is now the home of the Wetherspoon's pub, and in Rhos-on-Sea, the Rhos Playhouse (which we boys, affectionately, used to call the The Rhos Flea-Pit) which is now the Co-op store. All are now gone. Mr Foulkes' design for the Rhos Playhouse for Mr Frere was simple. It is basically a long stone barn with a typically cinematically curved ceiling covered in



The Rhos Playhouse, on the left, before the breakwater was built.

tricksy plaster roundels with an ornate marble block front. I suspect, from the design, that Mr Frere did not have as much money to spend, as did his former mentor, Mr Catlin. Almost everyone lives in a building, works in a building for a large part of their life, and sees buildings every day. Of all art forms, they are the most present to us. We are much happier if they are beautiful and commodious. Mr Colwyn Foulkes understood this and cleverly presented his Rhos-on-Sea cinema so that the paying audience would walk off the road through an imposing entrance and sit in the semi darkness beneath an extraordinarily decorated ceiling. We can all still see the front of the building as we go to buy our food, but the original ceiling, which is still there, has now been covered by the utilitarian, low hanging ceiling beloved of all convenience food emporiums. For the original design of the building Mr Colwyn Foulkes was astute enough to connect a lovely idea with the ordinary aspects of our daily lives.

In the late 1930s, there was of course, no breakwater defending Rhos-on-Sea from the ravages of rough, high tides and storms, so that the sea water would sometimes come rushing down Penrhyn Avenue. Mr Frere's wife used to sit in a cubicle in the foyer of the cinema

collecting the customer's money and issuing tickets and would recall that sometimes as she performed this task the sea water would be lapping around her feet. Just before the 2nd World War, Sydney Frere sold the cinema to George Lee. Mr Lee had been a police officer serving with the Metropolitan Police force in London; he had received an injury while on duty and so he resigned from the police

force and came to live in North Wales where his family was also living. He went on to own the Supreme Cinema on Cefn Road, Old Colwyn, (the building is now used as a Co-operative Food Store), and a cinema in Barmouth. He was always thinking of imaginative ways to entice the paying public into his cinematically fantasy worlds. He bought a special screen and hundreds of vividly coloured spectacles to be used at the Playhouse in, as he announced it, the first ever screening of a film in 3D. He always insisted on having gaudy coloured lighting in the cinema, and as many old film-goers in the Colwyn Bay area will fondly remember, he installed double seats along the back row of the Playhouse so that amorous young couples could canoodle away to their hearts delight while keeping an eye each on the screen at the other end of the cinema. Mr Lee bought the seats from an aircraft company; they were from an old Boeing Aeroplane and one day while cleaning the seats, Mr Lee's wife, Carol, found a Boeing tea spoon stuffed down under the seat covers!

In our Civic Society we have two lady members who have a close family connection to the cinema; both are related to former owners of the Rhos Playhouse, one to Sydney Frere and the other to George Lee.

The Rhos-on-Sea Environmental Action Group



The Promenade before the breakwater was built.

A committee was formed about a year ago, made up of concerned and interested Rhos-on-Sea people, to investigate how Rhos-on-Sea could be developed and improved. The committee is called 'The Rhos-on-Sea Environmental Action Group'. We, who have lived here all our lives, have seen a mild transformation in the infrastructure of the area. However the promenade, from the Cayley, (Combermere Gardens) to the Rhos Point, skirting the anchorage beside the breakwater, is now looking dilapidated and in need of extensive repair.

The Environmental Group has a formal constitution, meets regularly, and the President, Chairman and Secretary of the Colwyn Bay Civic Society are members of the committee. Six months ago the committee of our Civic Society agreed to donate £200 to the Rhos Environmental Action Group to help refurbish the tennis courts and children's play area beside the bowling green on Penrhyn Avenue and we have now agreed to give the same Environmental Group a further £250, as have other local societies, to allow the Group to fund the preparation of formal, detailed plans, possibly drawn up by the Council's Architectural Department, for the improvement of the Rhos-on-Sea Promenade, opposite Ninos.

The imaginative aspect of this proposed development is the inclusion of some sort

of memorial to Prince Madoc and the story of his discovering America. In the same way that the fictitious story of Gelert has brought untold thousands of people to visit Beddgelert, or Hans Christian Anderson's story of the Little Mermaid and her bronze statue lying on a rock draws hordes of folk to Copenhagen, so it is hoped the name and possible history of Prince Madoc could help curious people to travel to Rhos-on-Sea. The idea for the area is to make the Promenade wider with terraced steps down to the beach and a dais on which would be placed the memorial to Prince Madoc along with an information board explaining the history of Madoc's journeys to America, which took place 300 years before Christopher Columbus landed on the Continent. A website is being prepared and contact has been made with the town on the coast of the USA near where it is suggested that Prince Madoc first landed. Another advantage of improving this piece of the promenade is that it would make it more worthwhile, and an incentive, for some enterprising businessman to develop the Rhos Point area, which at the moment is a terrible eye-sore. Our Council is not financially able to develop the site itself; (nor perhaps should it have to); indeed it

seems that it probably does not have the financial resources to clear away the present slowly disintegrating building.

We must be realistic: Conwy County Borough Council cannot afford to fund any major engineering project on its own. It is all about the 'art of the possible'. It is not, in this day and age, possible for the Council to initiate any large expensive construction, because they do not have the funds to carry it out. Gone are the days when the Council could do everything for everyone. We residents must understand that there is a difference between what



The area marked for improvement.

we need and what we want. If we want our local town to have improved amenities and a better infrastructure, the system now allows us, indeed demands of us, that we get involved ourselves. Hence the creation of the Rhos-on-Sea Environmental Action Group, which, we trust with the help of other organisations, such as our own Civic Society, the CPRW, the Rhos-on-Sea Rotary Club, the local shop owners and residents etc, can help raise the necessary funds, first to have the plans prepared and then present those plans to various engineering and building companies for estimates as to the final costing of the project. Once those estimates have been received the Action Group will approach the Lottery Funding organisation and other such funding agencies for the necessary money to carry out the project; this money would be match funded by the Council. The Conwy County Borough Council has assured the Group of its support, as has the Secretary for Wales, the Rt. Hon. David Jones MP.

The Sea Shore



The Promenade being built.

It is believed that had the Victorians not constructed the Colwyn Bay Promenade, the sea would now be lapping at the bottom of Station Road. Only a hundred years ago the land stretched out into what we now see as the bay of Colwyn. Once upon a time this coastal strip of land once extended almost to the Point of Air. The present Llandrillo Church is not the first such church, the original one was built on land now claimed by the sea. As a boy I can recall an old man telling me about the tree stumps that used to be visible, when the tide was out, beyond the Rhos-on-Sea Pier. Norman Tucker in his book, *Colwyn Bay Its Origin and Growth*, wrote, "Not many years ago a workman in the employ of the Borough Council, fixing iron steps from the promenade at Rhos-on-Sea, uncovered a tree root in a hollow of which was hoard of nuts". It is recorded that large tracts of beach were lowered as much as six feet in the six years ending 1907. A photograph, shown in Tucker's book, taken on the foreshore below the original Colwyn Bay railway station some time

the 1880s shows a fringe of turf between the embankments and the shingle, where the new sand was dumped in May last year, which is the last tattered remnant of a morfa which has now disappeared. We must be grateful therefore to the continuing efforts of the Council, with an ever decreasing budget, to renew and fortify the sea defences from Penrhyn Bay to Old Colwyn. It is an important, continuing and desperate battle to save the Colwyn coastline, of which Porth Eirias is an important part. It was good to discover therefore that in May 2013 the Welsh Government had passed on a further £5 million in funding to Colwyn Bay to boost our flood and coastal risk management schemes.

The coast line is continually on the move. Eleven years ago in the March 2003 edition of these Journals, in an article headed 'Sorrento', it was pointed out that the house, 23 Marine Road, Penrhyn Bay, is called Sorrento and that a beautiful stained glass window flows round the lounge which depicts a view of a town named Sorrento in Australia, which in

turn was named after the town on the Island of Capri, which in turn reminded the original owner of the house, of the bay of Colwyn. It is a superb sweep of a bay and is continually at risk. Fourteen years ago, in the September 2002 edition of these Journals, in an article entitled 'Three Cheers for Common Sense', the Cayley Residents Association and others were congratulated in forestalling efforts to have the road from Aberhod in Rhos-on-Sea to Rydal Penrhos sailing compound, sealed off from through traffic. The Promenade, which featured in an article in the February 2005 edition of the Journal, is a living, vital feature of our town and should be valued as such. This Society has therefore had the preservation of our shore-line continually in its mind.

We have no Chesil Beach or Lulworth Cove; ours is not a rugged coast line, except perhaps at Penmaenhead, the very name of which, Penmaen Rhos, 'the stone headland in Rhos' attests to its ruggedness, the first spot where the uplands unite with the sea. As last year's dumping of thousands of tons of sand on the beach has demonstrated, it is continually on the move and constantly under threat. The Afon Ganol River which means Middle River, once-upon-a-time entered the sea where the house, Odstone, was built on the promenade beside the golf course at Rhos-on-Sea. A map of 1720 shows this river broadening into a lake near its mouth where recent coastal defence work has been carried out; at this spot there are two huge iron gates let into the concrete sea wall. There is ancient masonry in the garden of Odstone (which now forms part of a rockery) which may once have been part of an old quay. Since Roman times, thirty villages have been lost to the sea along the Yorkshire coast and without constant care our sea shore would be eaten away by the unforgiving sea. Some 33 per cent of the coastline of England and Wales is protected by artificial defences, like our own newly built Porth Eirias or the massive breakwater at Rhos-on-Sea built in the 1980s or the 22,000 dolos concrete objects, each one weighing 5 tons, which were designed to withstand a storm of severity likely to occur on average once in every hundred years, which have been knitted together along the beach at Penmaenhead and Llanddulas. It is estimated by the Government's Foresight Group that



The Promenade today.

under current climatic conditions, the coast of England and Wales could experience an average of up to 67 metres of erosion over the next 100 years. In future years, more money than ever is going to be needed for coastal management and our County Council must be congratulated in their efforts to secure elusive funding for this ever present problem.

The saving of our coastline was started by three events at the Rhos-on-Sea end of the coast; the building of the demolished ancient sea wall near Penrhyn Bay, the constructing of the railway, especially the branch line to Llanrwst which opened in 1863, and the creation of the Rhos Golf Links. Up until then the Afon Ganol was slowly eroding the sea shore, indeed it is believed that the river flowed down what we now know as Penrhyn Avenue, making the area around Abbey Road into an island. There was, within living memory, a farm on land now occupied by Rhyd Drive which leads from Penrhyn Avenue to Abbey Road, named Rhyd Farm, or more correctly, Rhyd-y-cerrig-gwynion, -the Ford of the White Stones.

Another problem is the ever increasing severity of the European Union strictures on sea pollution which may render our beach, along with many others, in the Union's view, unfit for bathing. The new regulations, due to come into force in 2015, are up to twice as strict as the former requirements and in the view of many people are deemed to be unnecessary. Fortunately the sea at Colwyn Bay has not traditionally been a mecca for bathers, it is our sea-shore and

its swathes of sandy beach which is the attraction on which to relax and for parents to watch their children play. And bordering our sea-shore is one of the true delights of Colwyn Bay, the uncluttered, relaxing, promenade. The town itself is slowing, imperceptibly, improving. The 40s Festival in April 2013, the RGC rugby triumph and the wonderful sporting facilities at Eirias Park, the arrival of Costa Coffee and the new beach at Porth Eirias are all positive moves. Now that Porth Eirias is built we must be optimistic about its future. The promenade however, other than sprucing it up, should not meddled with; it is unique, in that it still retains, while cluttered with the inevitable line of multi coloured cars, its old fashioned Edwardian feel. In 1901 a pier was erected, although its length was curtailed to avoid the arrival of steamers laden with the Liverpoollains hoi-polois, who the town burgers were anxious to avoid, because a pier was a necessary symbol and accepted requirement of a sea side resort in those days. Someone has suggested that the Pier is at the centre of Colwyn Bay; that is now blatantly not the case, not even metaphorically or aspirationally speaking. Rhos-on-Sea also had its own pier which was demolished fifty years ago and although it is no good crying over spilt milk, this pier would today, perhaps been of more relevance to the promenade than the rusting hulk further along the bay. However, except for the shelters dotted along the curve of the prom and three small kiosk type cafes, there was, and still is, nothing else; there is no crescendo towards a gaudy

hotel or concrete block theatre. And that is a blessing from which our town benefits to this day. There is nothing tawdry and flashy about our promenade, it is delightfully unencumbered by the coloured lights, trinket sheds, amusement arcades, rock selling emporiums or a line of greasy cafes that can be found at larger more commercial sea-side resorts. Colwyn Bay promenade is for the easy going, relaxed, little stressed person, who is looking for a golden beach, without the hectoring nuisance of a garrulous vendor selling stuff no one wants. People walk along Colwyn Bay Promenade to relive a more gentle age which we have been able to retain. It is a promenade made for the slower movement of the daily stroll. Colwyn Bay is no longer a sea-side resort; it is a town beside the sea. If any grants are coming our way they should be spent on the infrastructure of the town, on the regeneration of the shops, restaurants, parking spaces, and houses and roads; it was good to discover last year that £1.1 million is to be spent on the Parc Pwllwys estate to introduce nature trails, landscaping and allotments. And yes, money must be found for the resurfacing of the promenade, the repainting of the cycle track, the repainting of the promenade railings, which used to be painted every year by Faircloughs the decorators of Rhos-on-Sea, the refurbishment of the kiosks and the shelters and the strengthening of the structure itself. The Colwyn Bay shore line and its promenade are distinguishing marks of our town.

The Elephant in the room is departing



Colwyn Bay Pier.

On 12th December last year the County Councillors at last saw the light, the scales fell from their eyes, and they voted in favour of the dismantling of the Pier. However the problem is still with us, thrashing about. Mr Hunt still believes he rightfully owns the pier, the council understand that it is their responsibility, many people feel that in future years it could be tarted-up and made to pay its way, while many others think that its glory days are well in the past and that it should be demolished sooner rather than later. Time whittles away at the keystones of an era's architecture: the Beatles' first LP was released closer to the 1st World War than to our day, the pier was built the year before Queen Victoria died and Colwyn Bay has changed irrevocably from the town that needed a pier. In an article in The Telegraph on the 30th August 2013, Joan Bakewell, writes that, "I have loved piers all my life", and explains that "They are intrinsically English, they are defiant survivors, and they are an all-generation, all-year-round pleasure." She goes on to write however that, "perhaps some things are simply destined to sink into the past to leave modern times where they no longer fit in and leave us scarcely noticing they've gone." She admits that, "I fear their pleasures and delights don't fit the template of today's leisure industry.... The fact is, these constructions belong to the past."

The Colwyn Bay Pier is a dead duck. It is horrifying to understand that the local authority has already spent £137,000 on legal fees associated with the Pier and that

there is an ongoing annual cost of around £52,000.

Nostalgia, that insidiously lovely opium of the mind, is nothing but a memory of pleasant times; it can be a great joy. The languorous sorrow for things that are lost. Time distorts our reasoning because it is hedged around with nostalgia. We tend to forget how fast time goes by. From the time the Germans dropped bombs by hand from Zeppelins over Allied trenches in the 1st World War to the time that an atomic bomb was dropped on old men, women and children in Hiroshima, was only twenty eight years; from the Wright Brothers' first manned flight in 1903 to Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon was only sixty six years. Our children will see more technological breakthroughs in the next ten years than were experienced throughout the 20th Century by our parents and grandparents. Under these circumstances what relevance does our pier hold for the next generation living in Colwyn Bay. Bryan Huxford, the owner of Eastern Airways, plans to restore the 140-year-old Cleethorpes pier and was reported as saying, "Older people can recall promenades on the seafront and piers are part of that: people don't want to see them fall down." By that, does he mean that only 'old people' do not want to see them fall down? History exists only in retrospect. It is good that piers will continue to exist as historical curiosities in more commercially, holiday orientated resorts. But Colwyn Bay is no longer such a place. On the hot summer days of last July all the parking spaces along the

promenade were full, the promenade was thronged with contented folk and the sandy beach was full of children and their watchful parents. These people were unconcerned by the fact that there was no open pier and that there had not been one for many years. They were probably here because they knew that they would not be assailed by the need to spend money unnecessarily, or be cajoled by insistent siren voices that they must take part in some artificially created amusement on the pier, but could instead relax without being badgered by people who thought they knew what was best for them. The throng of people who come to Colwyn Bay beach and promenade in the summer do not seem to be looking for beer, bingo and chips. In that lovely film, Cinema Paradiso, the story of an adorable Italian urchin and his friendship with a village film projectionist, Alfredo tells his young friend, when he is sending him off to start a new life, "Don't look back. Don't write. Don't give in to nostalgia."

The really good news for Colwyn Bay, which is evidence of the hard work that is going on behind the scenes by councillors and council officials, is the bid for £41 million of funding which would be spent over three years on such projects as housing renewal, community grants, the revival of the town centre and phase two of the waterfront project. Beside such necessary and vital work the future of the pier is a side-show and one which should be resolved, as the Secretary of State for Wales has said, without delay.

Who, I wonder, is partial to piers at the Lottery organisation? They are making £11.4 million available for the restoration of Hastings pier and Clevedon pier has also received lottery funds. The pier at Beaumaris has undergone renovation but that pier is a lovely, tiny, dinky one, off which the local children fish for crabs. The cost of restoration of Colwyn Bay pier is horrendous; a few years ago the sum of £10million was mentioned, now it is £15million and the real cost of course would be well north of that. Weston-super-Mare's Grand Pier was damaged by fire in 2008 and has now been renovated at a cost of £39 million. Not £1 of the £594,900 that the Shore Thing Committee had been granted by the Lottery Fund would have been spent on the structure of the pier; it would in all probability have been spent on the nightmare of consultation and litigation, on environmental impact assessments and

equalities impact assessments, on lawyers and planners. This haemorrhage of cash would have been poured down the throats of consultants of all sorts and would have been exacerbated by an inordinate amount of time devoted to political dithering. All of that for no advantage to the town of Colwyn Bay. Last August the Chair Lady of the Victoria Pier Pressure Group was quoted as saying that, "Everybody wants to see the pier redeveloped..", which of course is not true. The national Pier Preservation Society is an excellent Society, an organisation of which we should all be members. There is, however, no contradiction in being a member of the Pier Preservation Society and understanding that Colwyn Bay Pier, in particular, has come to the end of its days. The Pier has as much relevance to

Colwyn Bay, and is as archaic, as the 'fax machine' or the 'long distance call'. One cannot but muse on the mutability of all things. Edmund Burke the 18th Century politician once wrote that society is "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born". It is wrong for us to believe that now is the only time that matters. Almost every piece of rot you hear in local politics comes from those who wish to lock us into what WH Auden called "the prison of his days". The pier had its heyday up to and during the 2nd World War and its popularity lingered for a while during the impoverished years following the war; today we effectively have no pier. Is a pier of any relevance to our children and for a town with the particular

characteristics of our own? We all, naturally, sometimes, have a desperate need for the past to have been happier than the present, but we should not allow this nostalgia to override the facts. For the children of today, the future is important. Time alters everything. Even though the decision has been taken to pull down the Pier, I wonder for how much longer we are going to have to watch its slow embarrassing, deterioration, while CADW takes for eternity to make up its mind, the courts endlessly discuss the intricacies of ownership and the blinkered folk, who the late Bernard Levin used to describe as "one issue fanatics", try to block what is a very sensible decision by the Council. Let us all resolve to do what we can for the better future of our town.

What's In A Name (Marbury)

Sedburgh and Marbury, numbers 9 and 11 Llysfaen Road, Old Colwyn are two imposing houses built side by side on a prominent natural shelf at right angles to the road. They were built by a Mr Ellis in 1925 and then given to his two daughters who lived happily next door to each other. A few years later Marbury became the home of Henry Wiggin Jones. Mr Jones ran a Painting and Decorating business from a shop at number 79 Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay. (NB Page 73 of the book 'Colwyn Bay Through Time'). Today the Curtain Shop business is run from the premises. (Cambrian Photography is close by). Eighty three years ago Mr Henry Wiggin Jones called the shop Marbury, the name he gave to his home on Llysfaen Road. His sentimental attachment to the Marbury name was

because his family had come from the village of that name in the agricultural area of Cheshire. It was not until 1930 that water was piped into the houses in the village of Marbury where the main occupation was cheese making. In all probability therefore the Jones family arrived in Colwyn Bay seeking a better

standard of living. The two homes had extensive grounds with a tennis court on the lawn. A house has now been built on the tennis court and a bungalow on the lawn behind the houses. On the steps, in the garden of Marbury, still to this day, are inscribed the letters of the original owner and his two daughters, R.E.E., J.E. and E.E.



Two more buildings gone in Old Colwyn do you remember them?

Nothing Changes

Nothing changes, except ourselves! This picture was taken in October 1944 after a severe storm. Like King Canute, we can do nothing about the weather. We can harness its power and build sea defences. It is thus, that we in Colwyn Bay, must be grateful to the Conwy County Borough Council for organising the funding for Porth Eirias sea defence and for the ongoing organisation for the defence of the rest of the promenade.

