



SEAHORSE



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Newsletter of the Friends of the Midland Hotel, Morecambe

This year, due to the very poor weather conditions at the beginning of the year, we took the decision to hold our AGM in March and may I take this opportunity to thank those who attended. Some fifty members joined the committee in the Oliver Hill function room, several taking the opportunity of spending a weekend at the hotel. Lucky people!

The manager of the Midland, Matt Stanaway, gave a presentation on the plans that ELH have for the hotel, an insight into the other ELH establishments, and answered questions from members. At the meeting we found out that Urban Splash had again made a planning application for blocks of apartments adjacent to the hotel. The previous application was in 2008 but did not reach the full planning committee. We asked Urban Splash for the closest buildings to the hotel to be omitted as we considered they were detrimental to the original setting of the hotel. We also asked for the wall to be retained in its intended position and form. Both requests have been ignored - the apartment blocks remain and the wall, albeit not completely removed, will be partially demolished and remodelled. This is still highly unsatisfactory as it totally changes the intended footprint of the hotel as designed by Oliver Hill.

Thanks to all of you who sent written comments/objections to the Chief Planning Officer of Lancaster City Council following our mail shot. There was a quickly arranged meeting at the Clarendon Hotel in Morecambe several weeks ago just to get a feel of what people thought about this development, with prospective Labour and Conservative candidates attending. It was packed and people certainly made their opinions heard. The overwhelming opinion of the meeting was 'no' to the development where it is proposed. Several people made the point that the old Frontierland site is still vacant and in urgent need of development so that is where Urban Splash should go!

Another, more structured, public meeting is to be held on Sunday 13th June in the Winter Gardens, starting at 2.30 pm. We hope the full plans will be on display with representatives from Urban Splash and Lancaster City Council in attendance. Come along if you can.

If you wish to look at the comments already made to the Council concerning the planning application go to LCC's website at <http://planapps.lancaster.gov.uk/PublicAccess> The reference number for the scheme is 07/01810/OUT.

On a pleasanter note, don't forget to apply for your Relish card on the English Lakes website. There are some excellent discounts available to cardholders in the restaurants of all ELH establishments. From time to time Relish card holders are also offered room and dinner deals so

get your card. We have also asked about a discount on the room rates at the Midland for the Friends but no news on that yet.

This year the Midland Events team has planned quite a few events at the hotel such as jazz nights, murder mysteries, summer balls, etc, and we will be updating the website with details. We can recommend these events and will be on the sinking Titanic at the mercy of a murder mystery in June! Hope to see you at one of the functions.

Finally, please note that the password to gain access to the Members' Area of the Friends' website has been changed – see page 7.

Once again, thank you all for your continued support.

Sue Thompson

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF THE MIDLAND HOTEL HELD ON FRIDAY 26th MARCH 2010 AT THE MIDLAND HOTEL, MORECAMBE

Before the business of the AGM Sue introduced Matt Stanaway, the manager of the Midland, who gave a short talk outlining developments at the hotel since English Lakes Hotels took over its running in May 2009 and the progress he has made since being appointed manager last October. He told the meeting that bookings were strong and that the hotel was hosting numerous special events throughout the coming year, including weddings and themed evenings. A number of new staff had been appointed with several moving to the hotel from within ELH and Matt was confident that they were on track to take the hotel forward. He outlined the history of how the ELH brand had been established many years ago and how the company was growing and constantly seeking to improve. He concluded by answering questions from members and Sue thanked him for attending the meeting.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last AGM had been sent out to members and been posted on the Friends' website. Copies were also available at the meeting if members wished to see them. They were certified by the secretary as being a true and accurate record of the last meeting. Their acceptance was proposed by Ron Sands and seconded by Neil Byers.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

Chairperson's Report

Having thanked Matt for his talk Sue said that the Friends would try to help English Lakes Hotels by spreading the word about the Midland to friends and colleagues, encouraging them to use its facilities whenever they could.

Whilst Sue was addressing the meeting news came in that Urban Splash had just re-submitted its planning application for the development immediately adjacent to the Midland, plus the remodelling of the hotel's Grade 2 listed perimeter wall and gate piers designed by Oliver Hill. It was apparent that the height and proximity of the building blocks closest to the hotel had not

been altered from Urban Splash's previous submission in 2008 which the Friends had objected to. Sue told the meeting that she would keep members up to date with developments and that it was likely that we would again object to the scheme. Information would be sent out to members to bring the planning application to their attention. She reiterated the need to keep the Friends group going to look after the interests of the hotel in this and any future matters.

Sue ended by telling the meeting about the Relish Card Scheme introduced by English Lakes Hotels which gave discounts to card holders for meals in the Rotunda Bar and in other ELH hotels. New offers would be published from time to time by ELH. The card was free to applicants and details were on both the Friends and ELH websites.

Treasurer's Report

Barry presented the end of year report to the meeting which showed a balance of funds of £483.83. Income was mainly from membership renewals and new membership fees. Expenditure was made up of outlays for the Friends' website, the production and postage of newsletters, and holding the AGM. There was also a small cost for the hire of a musical group for the Friends' weekend held in July.

At the time of the AGM, membership of the Friends stood at approximately 200 but more renewals were expected.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Sue Thompson and seconded by Stephen Jones.

Election of Officers

The Secretary asked if anyone wished to be considered for any of the main posts. As nobody wished to do so, it was unanimously accepted that the existing officers would serve for a further year.

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

Committee members: Pam Brook, Neil Byers, Stephen Jones and Peter Wade.

Howard Landey said he would like to join the committee. He was proposed by Sue Thompson and seconded by Shelley Rubinstein. There were no objections and Howard was duly elected.

Any Other Business

Pam Brook said there had been a ruling in the past from the Secretary of State regarding the Eric Gill relief being treated as part of the 2* listed building. She could see no reason why the perimeter wall and gate piers should not fall into the same category.

Sue asked Pam to put the content of the ruling onto an email and she would follow it up.

Ron Sands made the point that a red plaque had been attached to the wall and questioned whether or not it was appropriate.

There being no other business, Sue closed the meeting by saying refreshments would be served to be followed by a film show from Chris Abraham.

Ian Thompson

LOST AND FOUND? – LANCASTER'S CITY CENTRE DECO STYLE

The final disappearance of the Regal Cinema/Gala Bingo Hall building in Lancaster in February of this year reminds us that Morecambe's larger neighbour has its *Art Deco* treasures too and, more generally, that buildings of the period are all too vulnerable to alteration or, as in this case, demolition.

The Regal was originally an Odeon Cinema, designed, like many others, by Harry Weedon and was opened in 1936, the year before Morecambe's Odeon. The auditorium was split between stalls and circle with a total capacity of 1,592, slightly more than Morecambe's which was arranged in a similar way. In 1971, the cinema was split as Studios 1 and 2 but suffered later internal alterations with twin cinemas occupying the circle area and the bingo hall the stalls. Lancaster's Odeon shared architectural features with other buildings in the chain. Its corner site incorporated a cream tile finish along King Street as well as a corner fin, but a brick finish with simple raised horizontal speedlines running from the corner along the less important Spring Garden Street. An unusual concertina effect in the King Street elevation incorporated some of the windows. The Odeon was Lancaster's most obvious *Art Deco* building but was by no means unique and, despite its loss, leaves the city with several others remaining.

A less than fine example still stands at the top of King Street adjoining the refurbished Penny Street Bridge (for many years the Farmers Arms). The tiled first floor (now housing a snooker hall) still has a decorative external corner feature while the large spaces and layout of the ground floor indicate its former role as a garage and car showroom.

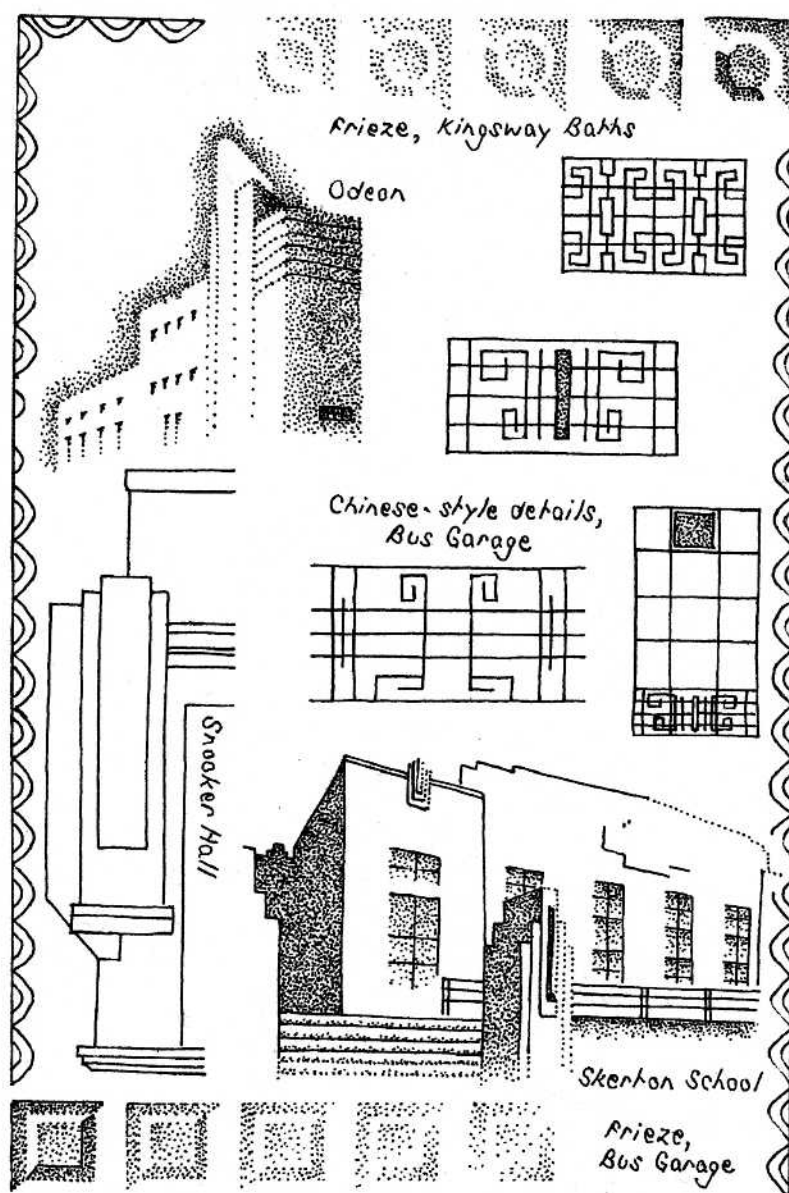
A walk down Penny Street reveals some of Lancaster's *Art Deco* shops and stores. The arched windows of Marks and Spencer's original 1933 store are still to be seen adjoining its extension at the corner with Common Garden Street. Further along, the stone façade of a one-time Woolworths store stands above Top Shop. Fluted panels connect windows vertically while undulating lines run around the windows and across the façade. Exactly the same design can be seen in other former Woolworths stores. The building is crowned with a stepped pediment.

Back along King Street at its junction with Market Street, the building opposite Waterstones proudly announces its rebuilding in 1930 beneath another stepped pediment with decorative circles on either side. Many will still remember the main part of this as Wigley's bookshop. Simple rectangular panels sit between the windows and, among the smaller shops running around the corner into King Street, some original leaded windows and doors are to be seen.

The one-way system leads on into China Street and the grey stone façade of the Priory Hall. Its foundation stone dates it to 1936 and various original features are again to be seen. These include yet another stepped pediment forming the gable at the southern end of the building, and various original windows. Of particular note is the stylised central column over the central doorway, a quotation from the vernacular carved stone door lintels common in the district in the 17th and 18th centuries especially.

The northern part of Lancaster contains its finest *Art Deco* buildings. Literally now a shell at the northern tip of the city's one-way system are the facades of the 1939 Kingsway Baths and adjoining bus garage. These were somewhat controversially listed a few years ago (grade 2) but the redevelopment of the area shows how they could all too easily have been swept away completely. The stone columned entrance to the Kingsway Baths now forms the façade of PC World with colonnades adjoining. The façade itself is stark with uncompromising fluted columns without additional decoration top or bottom and only a simple frieze of octagons along the top of the building. The whole has a severity which would not have been out of place in a totalitarian state of the day.

The adjoining bus garage is now somewhat controversially squatted upon by a multi-storey apartment development above. The development has recently been featured in the property pages of the local press under its new name of The Old Bus Depot along with descriptions of it as 'a cylindrical buff coloured building', one which 'provides the area with a significant land -



Art Deco elements in Lancaster

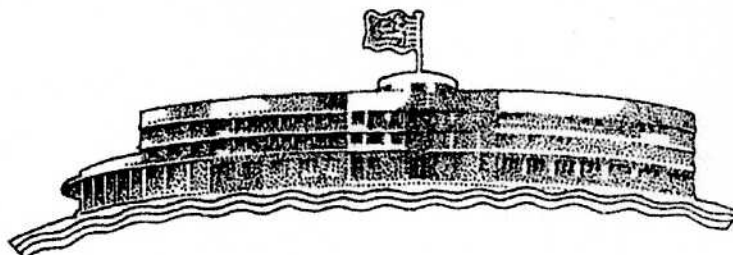
mark' and one which 'has been described as "innovative, exciting and striking"'. The description of the new development also refers to it as being 'iconic'.

I remember being asked by Lancaster Civic Society to support their objection to what we see today and their rather more sympathetic alternative design for the apartments. The objections were to the form (one which not only overwhelmed what lay below but, in the original proposal, actually hid some of it from view by means of a steel mesh hanging from above), the lack of a roofscape, lack of opportunity for the planting of fresh trees and inappropriateness of the building's finish (rather than the hope that it might 'morph from golden to silver over time', it was suggested that the colouring would simply blacken due to the traffic fumes rising from below). In the event, the plans were slightly modified so that we have at least a view of all the remaining façade below. My main concern had been about the preservation and display of the Chinese-style railings at the windows (unique in Lancaster and rare in the county) which are happily still in place and on view though to be close enough to appreciate them properly you have to brave the traffic. The larger features like the frieze of squares, the curved walls by the doors and the stylish version of Lancaster's coat of arms can still be appreciated from a distance.

The crowning glory of Lancaster's Art Deco buildings is Skerton School which, dating from 1933, makes it a contemporary of the Midland Hotel. The key attraction of its design lies in the repeated use of projecting blocks as a decorative motif. This is best seen in the main gateposts at the entrance. Original gates and railings are also to be seen here. The stepped pediment of the central block can be seen from afar but not so well the finer details such as the central coat of arms with the date on either side. In springtime the drive is marked by an avenue of cherry blossom which is a very attractive addition.

Peter Wade

WADE'S WALKS 2010



This year's programme of guided walks in and around Morecambe features the usual mix of established favourites and new departures. Apart from this year's evening walks, the walks begin at 2pm. All the walks are priced at £2.50 per person.

Echoes of Art Deco

May 31; June 26; July 31; August 28; September 25; October 30

Meet: The Platform opposite the Midland Hotel

In search of Turner's View

July 17

Meet: Bus turnaround, Main Street, Heysham Village

Lancaster's Lost Observatory

July 24

Meet: Entrance, Ashton Memorial, Williamson Park, Lancaster

Sunderland Point and Sambo's Grave

August 7

Meet: Information Board, Causeway End, Sunderland Point

Sons of the Sands

August 14

Meet: Corner Lord Street and Morecambe Promenade (opposite Gala Bingo)

Hest Bank – Mawson's Garden Village

August 21

Meet: Level crossing, Hest Bank

Eric's Morecambe

September 4

Meet: Eric Morecambe statue, Morecambe Promenade

A Perfect Landscape

September 18

Meet: Old Railway Station, Denny Beck Lane, Halton-on-Lune

A Date with Dame Thora

October 2

Meet: Post Office, corner Victoria Street & Market Street, Morecambe

Dinosaurs, Helium and Scientists

October 9

Meet: Queen Victoria's statue, Dalton Square, Lancaster

Hidden Heysham

October 16

Meet: Bus turnaround, Main Street, Heysham Village

Poulton-le-Sands and Old Morecambe

October 23

Meet: Police Station, Poulton Square, Morecambe

A short season of Tuesday evening walks beginning at 7.30pm will also be held. The starting points are as above.

Hest Bank – Mawson's Garden Village, July 20

Sunderland Point and Sambo's Grave, July 27

Dinosaurs, Helium and Scientists, August 3

Eric's Morecambe, August 10

In search of Turner's View, August 17

Watch out too for free tours of Morecambe's 1932 Town Hall on September 11 & 12 as part of this year's Heritage Open Days.

For further details of the above walks or to arrange walks/talks at other times, please contact Peter Wade on 01524 420905.

NEW PASSWORD FOR MEMBERS' AREA OF WEBSITE

eg33er

THE AVIATOR HOTEL AND SYWELL AERODROME – FACT OR FILM SET ?

I remember my childhood well. I return there in my thoughts frequently as I wonder what influenced my love of the Art Deco/Moderne period and when it was that I consciously became so fascinated by its shapes and colours? I was allowed to read 'Look and Learn' as my parents believed in its supplemental educational value and eventually I was allowed to have a girlie comic all of my own where I became heavily influenced by a serial entitled 'The Secret Ballet School'. Neither of these can I remember being a vehicle for an overwhelming interest in all things futuristic. My older sister only remembers having access to something called 'The Children's Newspaper'; another dead-end. My friend Julie, on the other hand, had two brothers and when I went round to her house we disappeared into the loft and read 'Superman' comics. How I loved the idea of the futuristic society on Krypton, the short skirts, the sophisticated capes, and especially the boots that went with the short skirts. The colourful skyscraper buildings bunched together looking so elegant and clean, flying automobiles and the see-through tubes connecting buildings. Of course, Krypton exploded but the City of Argos survived long enough to give us 'Supergirl' and the evil genius 'Braniac' who shrank the City of Kandor thus preserving for posterity that most noble relic of a lost planet. Siegel and Shuster really played to my imagination!

My parents were probably amongst the first to invest in a television set and I remember being allowed to watch the 'Adventures of Robin Hood' (our local hero) and the other historic heroes – William Tell and Ivanhoe. But history was history not the future. One night I was sent to bed in the middle of a film (a regular occurrence) – it was apparently a film about a devastating war but I noticed and was fascinated with how the decades and centuries were portrayed as speeding by. Sneakily, after an appropriate (in my mind) time lapse, I came down to complain of thirst, knowing my mother would not allow me to take a glass of water upstairs to my bedroom. As I dawdled over the drink, the image on the screen had become completely different from the one I had left. No more scenes of war and pestilence but clean sleek lines, air personnel ruling the world from the clouds – I was in heaven but that didn't last long as I was once more then sent to bed. It was many years before I discovered that the film was 'Things to Come' starring Raymond Massey based on the H.G. Wells short story 'The Shape of Things to Come'. In the meantime, I had discovered the Buster Crabbe serialisation of 'Flash Gordon' and 'Buck Rogers' which brought to life the concept of a futuristic society. I then came across the film 'Metropolis', drawn to it by the sound of the name of the city which was the same as that inhabited by Superman's alter ego Clark Kent. My fascination was further compounded by being given 'Brave New World' as one of my set books for A-level English Literature – images of Krypton and all things *moderne* took hold of my imagination.

My interest in the Midland and Ocean Hotels are well documented elsewhere and my husband and I visited Burgh Island regularly to celebrate our anniversary. After twelve visits we felt the time had come to explore something new. We found, although we didn't know what a 'find' it was to be, the Aviator Hotel situated on Sywell Aerodrome, Northamptonshire – a privately owned enterprise whose greatest advantage over the Midland, Ocean and Burgh Island hotels is that it has been preserved rather than restored.

We decided that it was close enough not to merit more than a one-night stay. It proved a little tricky to find but once we were on the last lap the aerodrome was well sign-posted with notice of how to proceed to the hotel avoiding the airfield. The only way to enter the hotel forecourt to appreciate its full splendour is through the designated gate. It was a jaw dropping experience – turning into the gate and seeing, in full glorious shimmering technicolour, the set of 'Things to Come' come to life. On our left was the accommodation block, in the centre was a large stainless steel stylised Thirties model aeroplane on a plinth and to the right was the full splendour of the entrance to the reception and bar areas. The only visual blight was the number of modern cars parked on the forecourt.



The Aviator Hotel front entrance

The history of the aerodrome and what is now the hotel is reproduced in condensed form here from the website:

"Sywell is unusual in having remained in private ownership since its founding over 75 years ago. The first aerodrome, occupying the western portion of the present site, was prepared by the members of the newly formed Northamptonshire Aero Club and opened in 1928. Sywell quickly became a mecca for club and private pilots and its annual air displays attracted wide participation.

Flying training became nationally important as Britain rapidly expanded the Royal Air Force from the mid 1930s. Sywell played a key role following the establishment of a large flying school by Brooklands Aviation to teach RAF pilots to fly and the establishment of the local RAF Volunteer Reserve. During the Second World War activities at Sywell included the expansion of flying training, repairs to 1,841 of the RAF's Wellington bombers and completion and flight testing of some 260 Lancaster Mk 2 four engined bombers. Approximately 2,500 wartime RAF, Commonwealth and Allied pilots were trained at Sywell; the Aerodrome was also the centre for training the 'Free French' pilots who had escaped to England from occupied France."

Those same pilots slept in what is now the Hotel which is really just the old accommodation block providing utilitarian but clean and comfortable sleeping quarters. Staircases reflect the aviation theme, the wrought ironwork depicts stylised aircraft and related images.

They also relaxed in the bar which is now full of historical references – propellers provided by Douglas Bader, telegrams from the War Office and walls of pictures of the heroic pilots. The restaurant area is festooned with memorabilia and the most delicious wall-lights in the shape of little pot-belly aeroplanes reminiscent of the old Universal opening film credits. Leaving the bar and going into the outside area and garden, the layout looks hauntingly familiar until you remember that you have seen the same image in many an air force related war film. We could just imagine the pilots lounging around on their motley assortment of tatty armchairs, deckchairs or anything they could sit on or lean against, smoking their cigarettes, reading their newspapers – just waiting for the klaxon that would be the signal for them to come to life, vault over the fences and leap into their aircraft. Of course, as this was a training centre this romanticised

version is perhaps a little bit of poetic imagination. However, I defy anyone taking their drink out into this little back garden resting place and not thinking of that scene from the film 'Battle of Britain' when the non-English speaking freedom fighter pilots received their commendations after disobeying orders and springing into unauthorised action!



Entrance floor motif



Stylised stainless steel aeroplane

Visit the Aviator and just steep yourself in this beautifully preserved and perfectly representative creation of 'Wings over the World'.

Full history: <http://www.sywell-aerodrome.co.uk/history.php>

Aviator hotel: <http://www.aviatorhotel.co.uk/bar.php>

J. Anna Ludlow

MIDLAND WINS TOP AWARD

At the recent Civic Trust Awards ceremony in Liverpool the Midland Hotel won the prestigious 'Special Award for Restoration'. Launched in 1959 the Civic Trust Awards are unique. They are given to projects that make an outstanding contribution to the quality and appearance of the environment – and which also benefit the local community in some way.

In the view of the judges the refurbishment of the Midland Hotel was handled sensitively and with care, underscoring the building's heritage without resorting to pastiche. The developers (Urban Splash) and the architects (Union North) deserved the highest praise, having managed to preserve the best of the hotel's original features with great success whilst incorporating those modern fixtures and fittings necessary to make the hotel commercially viable.

Urban Splash's chairman Tom Bloxham said: "This is fantastic news. The Midland Hotel was an exciting yet challenging project for Urban Splash and our ultimate goal was to restore one of the UK's finest buildings and create a modern, luxury hotel which would attract new audiences to Morecambe. This award is a testament to our efforts."

The Midland's Civic Trust Award comes hot on the heels of the Royal Institute of British Architects' 'Crown Estate Conservation Award' which was presented in late 2009 to Urban Splash for its restoration of the Midland Hotel.

LIGHTING THE WAY – THE LUMA LIGHT FACTORY

On 26th August 1939 a notable event in Co-operative history occurred at Shieldhall, Glasgow with the opening of the British Luma Co-operative Electric Lamp Society's new £60,000 factory - the first international co-operative factory in Britain. It provided some 500 different varieties of lamps covering all requisite voltages and wattages and at full capacity its 150 workforce could produce 8,000 lamps per day. The factory was jointly owned and controlled by the Scottish and Swedish Wholesale Societies which claimed that it marked 'an important development in the sphere of international co-operative progress.' In reality, the factory was born into strife at home and abroad. It was set up to defy ELMA (the Electric Light Manufacturers Association), better known as 'the ring', which had its own form of co-operation resulting in a fixed minimum price policy in the UK and Europe. ELMA estimated that the Luma bulbs would reduce the price of a bulb from one shilling and nine pence to nine pence halfpenny. Bulbs were, in fact, being made under licence and both output and retail prices were controlled. Sadly, the SCWS was forced into submission.

'Architecturally, the British Luma Factory is outstanding. It is the most distinctive industrial structure in an area where new industries abound.' So reported the *Scottish Co-operator* of 12th August 1939. It continued: 'The principal feature is a tall glass conical tower reaching out above the clean straight lines of the two-flatted factory.' Actually, it's as though the drum - a typical feature of many modernistic designs in the Thirties - had been lifted from the ground and thrust upward through the roof. Appropriately for an electric bulb factory it becomes a lighthouse. 'This 84 feet tower radiates beams by night and day. Primarily it operates as the testing locus of the burning hours of the lamps. It is invaluable as an advertising medium. Its rays in the darker days and evenings can be seen for miles around the second city of Empire - truly a co-operative Empire tower.' With World War Two just over a fortnight away I doubt that it spread its rays of light for very long.

The Luma factory was designed by architect Cornelius Armour, scarcely a household name but someone who did a lot of work for the Co-op in Scotland in the 1930s. His factory was very up to date and included an air conditioning unit that could change the air every six minutes. Individual staff lockers were heated for the purpose of drying damp clothes. There were spray baths and a kitchen and dining room on site.



The Luma Tower 2010

By the time I got to know this stunning building in the late 1970s it had fallen on hard times - unused, empty and semi-derelict with all its windows smashed and bushes growing from the roof of the tower. It got steadily worse through the 1980s and into the 1990s but one could still glimpse the sheer quality that shone through the neglect. It looked as though this would be another tale of a superb Glasgow building that nobody wanted except for the demolition team waiting in the wings.

But the gods were working on its behalf. Amazingly, the Luma factory is still with us although it now provides comfortable accommodation rather than light bulbs. It has been beautifully restored externally and the grounds are immaculately maintained. The factory has been renamed the Luma Tower and the adjacent road also bears the name Luma. Not often does a mere factory give its name to a local roadway. At first glance the building appears to have one continuous façade but to the rear the wall actually encloses a courtyard at the western end that may well have contained loading bays in the past. Unexpectedly, at the rear of the Luma Tower on the northern side are a handful of semi-villas in the same style as the factory, finished in white with flat roofs and windows that go around corners - very Thirties. I would suspect they are contemporary with the factory and were possibly available for rent to supervisors and other staff whose presence near the factory was essential.



Front entrance



Rear entrance

Charles McKean's (1987) opinion is that the Luma factory provides an interesting example of how a straightforward three-storey flatted building can be visually transformed. 'In this case, the means is a slightly projecting staircase tower which smashes through the roofline and is capped by a bulbous, entirely glazed, conning tower more appropriate to an airport.' His comments and a (possibly) early 1980's photograph accompanying them give us some insight into how the building has changed. Most noticeably, the glazed 'conning tower' we see now is now only half the size of the original and has thus lost much of its visual impact. The factory height is still the same but an additional floor has been inserted to provide flatted residential accommodation on four levels. The creation of porthole windows - a favourite Thirties motif - at the base of the tower and flanking ground floor doorways suggests that the recent architects who effected the transformation were inclined towards a maritime rather than an aerial interpretation of the original building. Although the Clyde (and at time the dockyards) are easily discerned to the north from the tower, so is Glasgow airport to the west.

The Luma Tower is widely and affectionately admired among Glaswegians and that is a tribute to Armour in bringing off something exceptional at Shieldhall - an impressive factory building that, in other hands, could have been commonplace and utilitarian.

Mike Stone

DOCTOR AT THE MIDLAND

As a native of Morecambe (now living in North Wales) I was very familiar with the Midland Hotel as a child although I never went inside. However, my late father Dr Frank Cliff MD MRCP was closely connected with the building during the Second World War when it served as a RAF hospital. When he was invalided out of the RAMC after Dunkirk he returned to Morecambe to continue his work as a GP. My father was unusual for those days in that he had specialist qualifications in dermatology. As a consultant physician and dermatologist to the Queen Victoria Hospital in Morecambe and to Lancaster Royal Infirmary he was quickly involved with the RAF hospital at the Midland, treating patients with burn wounds and other skin disorders. Sometimes RAF doctors would visit our house, where my father had a surgery, accompanying patients from the hospital or coming to discuss a patient's problems. One of the doctors was a very tall New Zealander my brother and I called 'Big RAF'. Alas, I cannot recall his proper name. I remember that the RAF patients from the Midland hospital wore a distinctive uniform – a darker, brighter blue compared with the regulation RAF uniform.

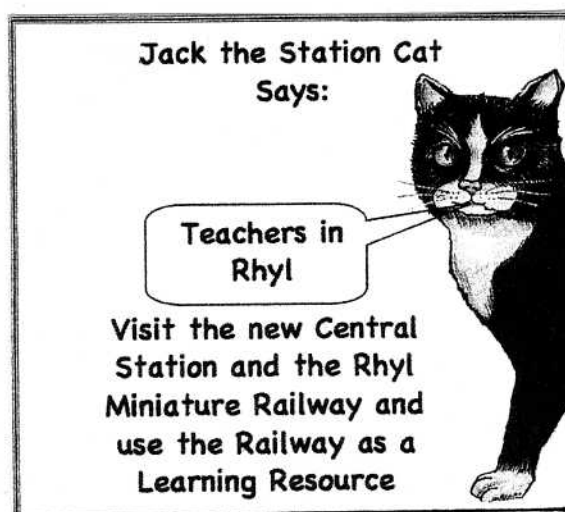
My father was also 'surgeon' to the LMS Railway at Morecambe and Heysham. In this capacity he was once called to Heysham harbour to examine a sick seaman on a submarine. As it was school holiday time I accompanied him to Heysham but had to remain in the car under the guard of a soldier with a fixed bayonet. When my father returned he was obviously amused at something. He told me that trying to enter the submarine via the conning tower he became wedged (he was a trifle tubby). It took the combined efforts of the officer on top and crewmen underneath to pull and push him back up the tower until he popped out like a cork. He eventually entered the vessel through the hatches where the torpedoes were loaded. I was told not to tell the story in case the Germans learned that our submarines were so small that medical officers could not enter them! Acting on my father's advice the sick seaman was taken to Lancaster Royal Infirmary.

Alan Cliff

Editor's note

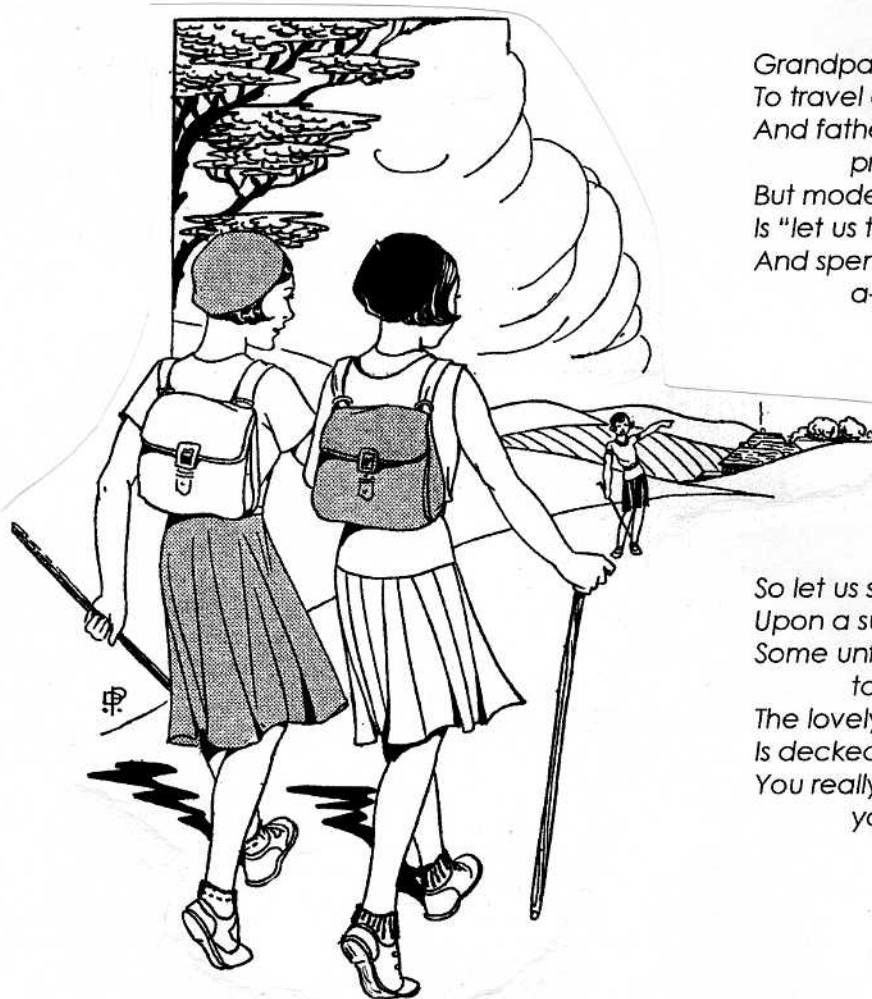
Like his father, Alan is also involved with a railway, although one slightly smaller than the LMS. He is currently President of the Friends of the Rhyl Miniature Railway in North Wales, Britain's oldest miniature railway. Since ill health forced him into early retirement in 1987 Alan has written extensively on railway matters and also enjoyed a new career as a successful children's author, most notably for his series of books about 'Jack the Station Cat'.

He and his wife have been owned by cats for a number of years, prominent amongst which was a black and white shorthair called Jack who delighted in 'helping' with Alan's model train layout. This inspired Alan to write a story about Jack and the railway which he has developed into several books based on Jack's adventures. One of these, *Jack – Special Agent*, a story from *Jack the Station Cat and the Space Aliens*, was shortlisted for the 2003 Goodchild prize for Excellent English. From the beginning Alan was determined that his 'Jack' books would be entertaining and wholesome. "There is, sadly, a lot of darkness in modern children's literature and some pretty sordid stuff. Children deserve brightness and laughter."



Jack has been co-opted to appear on some of the interpretive panels in the new station displays at the Rhyl Miniature Railway

WHO'LL COME A-HIKING WITH THE SCHOOLGIRLS OF 1933 ?



Grandpa used to like
To travel on his trike
And father used to sing the
praise of biking !
But modern schoolgirls' code
Is "let us take the road"
And spend a happy holiday
a-hiking !

So let us speed away
Upon a sunny day
Some unfrequented pathway
to be striking.
The lovely countryside
Is decked out like a bride
You really only see it when
you're hiking.

What better summer holiday could any schoolgirl desire than a glorious hike in company with her best chums ? School is over for the time being; long days of leisure await you in the country or by the sea. Surely it would be hard to find a more delightful or health-giving type of holiday than this ?

If you are thinking of having a walking holiday there are quite a number of important details which you mustn't overlook when making your plans. Naturally, the more the merrier on a hike and, if you can persuade a number of your best chums to join with you in a walking holiday, so much the better. When you have decided how many are going, the next thing is to decide where to go.

Footpaths and lanes are the walkers' highways and in order to discover these you will need a good ordnance map. Probably daddy has a road map which he would lend you for the occasion and you will be able to decide what route you intend to take. Don't attempt to walk too far. If you do, your holiday will be spoilt. One of the chief delights of hiking is that you don't have to keep to a set programme. If you feel very lazy one day you need only walk a short distance whereas, if you feel particularly energetic, you can start away for a long day's tramp. By the way, if you intend to walk along the cliffs, be sure to make enquiries first that the paths are safe. If this advice had always been seriously taken, many accidents would have been averted.

What better fun is there than getting ready for a glorious holiday – especially a hiking holiday ? You'll be kept quite busy for days beforehand.

You will want a light haversack or rucksack in which to carry the necessities you will need on your hike. This haversack can be slung over the shoulders and need not weigh very much. In fact, when you are used to it, you won't notice it at all! Even though it is summer, you will need to study the weather. A light silk mackintosh is just the thing to take away with you on a walking tour and, if you are wise, you will take a light walking-stick. You'll find that a stick will be ever such a help when you are beginning to feel a little tired at the end of a long day.

You should study your clothes too. Don't forget to wear a large shady hat to protect your head and neck from the sun. It is not very wise to walk bareheaded for, if the sun is hot, you may get a headache and you won't want to spoil your hike by such things as headaches! Shoes are most important too. Make sure that they fit you perfectly and that they are strong and watertight – unsuitable footwear will rob your walking of half its pleasures. You will find it a tremendous advantage to wear a pair of tennis socks over your stockings; not only is this more comfortable, but it will save your stockings from 'holing' at the heels, as they are liable to do on a long walk. Don't on any account walk bare-legged. If you do, your legs will be bitten by gnats and other insects and such bites are often very dangerous.

Be very careful too, not to catch a cold when you are on a hike. Your mackintosh will come in handy when you decide to have a picnic meal during the day. Spread it out on the ground where you intend to sit and you'll have a nice dry seat; even during the summer the ground is not always dry enough to sit on.

If you are feeling thirsty after a particularly hot spell of walking, don't be tempted to drink lots of water. Besides being very bad for you when you are warm, it will only make you more thirsty. The best drink, strangely enough, is hot tea; it will make you feel deliciously cool after a few minutes.

If you bear these points in mind, you should be reasonably assured of a good hike – but no matter how practically you pack your haversack, how businesslike your clothes or how sensible your shoes, the day won't be a success if you don't take a big dose of good humour along with you. Be prepared to take the rough with the smooth, to laugh at hills, unexpected showers and at boisterous winds.

Take things easy, don't overload your back, sympathise with your feet and treat them accordingly. Whistle and sing to your heart's content. And so you will wander home, side by side, in the cool of the evening, finer friends than you have ever been.

**Extracts from an article in the 1933 edition of
'Schoolgirls' Own Annual'**



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