

TWENTIETH CENTURY BRIGHTON AND HOVE

Brighton began the twentieth century as an internationally renowned popular resort and ended it as an equally distinguished conference centre, although still successfully retaining its seaside character. Hove, in contrast, rejected candy floss popularity, defining itself as "a residential town by the sea". In 1997 however the two towns merged under a Unitary Authority.

Architecturally, the century spawned a vast number of new buildings; banks, cinemas, offices, shopping malls, high rise flats and council estates. The new buildings followed national and even occasionally international styles rather than using the local vernacular. These have suffered from the vagaries of fashion, and in many cases have come and gone within a half century. Exceptionally lavish "super" cinemas, built between the Wars, such as the Regent and the Odeon were demolished in the Sixties. Banking Halls and Building Societies built in prime shopping streets in the early years of the century in "Bankers' Classic" style, stone built to last, are now mostly restaurants. Theme pubs also changed to suit current fashion, but the "King and Queen" in Marlborough Place, world-class in its own way, survives in all its extravagant fantasy.

Central slum clearance schemes, both between the Wars and post-war, led to the building of "Garden City" style communities in the outer suburbs, and then, when these seemed to fail, bleak high-rise flats back in the centre. In the Sixties a new sensitivity to the value and character of the traditional central areas spawned an increasingly powerful conservationist movement which fought

against insensitive redevelopment. These new organisations were led by The Regency Society which had campaigned against the destruction of the Brighton and Hove heritage since 1946. Brighton Square (1966), designed to help revitalise The Lanes, was a pioneering example of sensitive reconstruction.(9)

From between the wars, individual building reflected the international, streamlined, functional Modern style. Embassy Court(14), Saltdean Lido(8), bus stations and garages(10) exhibited the trademark smooth clean lines, horizontal fenestration and a total absence of traditional ornament. After the Second war Sussex University(3), built in soft red brick and concrete in parkland, reflected the new sensitivity to setting and human scale. In the Sixties also Brighton acquired skyscrapers; Sussex Heights (background image) Chartwell Court and Bedford Towers proved to be more than enough for Brighton to swallow. Hove also acquired rows of tall apartment blocks marching up Grand Avenue and spreading along the sea front, block after block.

In the last quarter century the pace slowed, but demand for office space created new landmarks such as American Express (5) and numerous undistinguished blocks of "shoe box" structures. Reclaimed foreshore at Blackrock, enclosed by a massive seawall bastion became a Marina (12), but has proved to be more of a residential, commercial and entertainment centre. Elsewhere along the sea front much has been restored and improved. A balance of tradition and innovation has infused a new vitality into the traditional seaside heart of Brighton and Hove.



Citizens Regency Building Society, Marlborough Place, 1933
Architect: John Denman.
Sculptor: Joseph Cribb



Brighthelm Centre, North Road, 1987
Architect: Wells-Thorpe & Suppel
Sculptor: John Skeilton



1. The King and Queen, Marlborough Place.
Architect: Clayton and Black. 1932
"...a gorgeous flight of architectural imagination..."
(Contemporary record)



2. The Aldrich Library, Brighton University.
Architect: Long and Kentish. 1996



3. Brick and concrete in Stanmer Park
Falmer House, University of Sussex.
Architect: Sir Basil Spence 1960



4. Banker's Classic:
Barclay's Bank, North Street.
Architect: John Denman 1959



5. Sleek post-war modernism:
American Express, Edward Street.
Architect: Gollins Melvin and Ward. 1977



6. A marriage of Modernism and Tradition - private mansion
Princes Crescent.
Architect: Robert Cromie 1931



7. A new century celebrated in Arts and Crafts style:
Roedean School
Architect: John W. Simpson. 1899



8. Streamline Modern.
Saltdean Lido
Architect: Richard W.H. Jones. 1938



9. Sensitivity to scale and context.
Brighton Square.
Architect:
Fitzroy Robinson and Partners. 1966



10. Streamline Modern.
Caffyn's Garage, Kingsway
Architect: E.J. Love. late 1920's



11. Light for the Blind.
St. Dunstan's, Ovingdean.
Architect: Francis Lorne. 1939



12. Reclaiming the foreshore.
Brighton Marina sea wall
Architect: Overton and Partners 1976



13. Apartment blocks for Modern Living.
Furze Croft. 1936



14. Pioneer Modern.
Embassy Court.
Architect: Wells Coates. 1936



15. Designed for Public Use.
Hove Town Hall.
Original Architect: John Wells-Thorpe and Partners. 1974



16. Post Modern.
Car Showrooms, Portslade.
Architect: Wells-Thorpe & Suppel. 1990



18. Traditional materials used in the Modern Manner.
Fire Brigade, Preston Circus Station.
Architect: Graeme Highet. 1938



17. Fancy brick encasing structural steel.
Building Society Offices, North Street.
Architect: H.S. Goodhart-Rendel. 1936