

Transcription of 3D and VR Pavilion Estate curatorial commentary

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URL: <http://brightonmuseums.org.uk/3DPavilion/>

- **Royal Pavilion**

The Royal Pavilion was created between 1785 and 1823 by George, Prince of Wales who would later become Prince Regent and eventually King George IV. George first visited Brighton as a young man aged 21 in 1763 and soon after decided to make the seaside town his playground away from London. He rented a house on the site of the present Pavilion and in 1786 hired the architect Henry Holland to build him a 'pavilion by the sea'.

This first building on this site was a two-storey, symmetrical structure in a neo-classical style. It was elegant and sophisticated, but by no means exotic in appearance. George made alterations and changes to his pleasure palace throughout his life, gradually creating the outlandish and exuberant palace we see today -- although he never called it a palace. He mostly used it for lavish banquets and to stage great balls and concerts, and often spent several months at a time here.

The greatest change to the exterior was made between 1815 and 1823, when the famous architect John Nash was hired to transform the neo-classical building into an oriental fantasy. The exterior we can see here was inspired by Indian architecture, with added Gothic elements.

Nash added two large state rooms to the Pavilion on the north and south end, with tent-shaped roofs. The onion-shaped domes and ornamental features in the centre of the building were built around and on top of the existing building, using cast iron on a large scale.

In typical picturesque fashion the building and its gardens play with our senses, encouraging visitors to explore and investigate. Very few Oriental buildings in the West were built on this scale and with such confidence.

The Royal Pavilion is a very late example of a fashion for exoticism in architecture which had peaked in the 1760s – several decades before the Pavilion was completed in the form we see here. Some say that George singlehandedly revived the taste for all thing Chinese and Indian.

- **South Gate**

The gateway at the southern entrance to the Royal Pavilion estate has gone through many transformations. The existing India Gate dates from 1921 and was designed by Thomas Tyrwhitt in a simple Gujarati style. It was erected as a gift from the people of India to the people of Brighton as a gesture of thanks for the care given to wounded Indian soldiers who were treated in a hospital in the Royal Pavilion during the First World War.

We don't know exactly how the South Gate looked in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In architect John Nash's ground plan from 1826 it is called a lodge and shows only two small, square brick structures. A more substantial South Gate house was built in 1831 during the early reign of George IV's successor, his brother William IV. It was designed by the architect and surveyor Joseph Henry Good, who also created the North Gate, which survives today. Good's South Gate had three stories containing a number of rooms and bedchambers for staff and possibly guests. It was linked to further servants' areas to the east and a servants' dormitory block to the west, resulting in a much more enclosed look than the earlier gate.

After the purchase of the Royal Pavilion by the town commissioners in 1850, the South Gate was demolished. The bricks were sold for their material value, and replaced with a much more open and lower structure, comprising two arches resembling the main porte cochère of the Pavilion, but on a much smaller scale. This first municipal South Gate can be seen in many late Victorian and Edwardian postcards but was eventually replaced by the India Gate.

- **Brighton Museum**

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery is one of the country's leading regional museums. The site was originally intended for indoor tennis courts, but these were never built. In 1831, stables and a coach house were built here for Queen Adelaide, the wife of King William IV. When the Royal Pavilion Estate came into municipal ownership in 1850, art exhibitions were held in the largely empty Royal Pavilion, but it was never a suitable space for a permanent museum and art gallery.

In 1873 the current museum building was created by Borough Surveyor Philip Lockwood, in a Moorish style and colouring that blended perfectly with the existing stables complex built 70 years earlier. It housed the museum, art gallery and a small library, with the main entrance in Church Street. The entrance we use now dates from a 2002 redevelopment.

The museum included a top-lit picture gallery which was one of the earliest purpose-built municipal picture galleries in the country. Lockwood's building was the culmination of that Victorian belief that the cultivation of the mind was as important as law and order and working drains.

- **North Gate House**

North Gate House is the only survivor of a row of nine private town houses dating from the late 18th century called Marlborough Row. In the early 19th century these were gradually bought up by George IV and demolished. Only the most northern house was left standing and incorporated into the Royal Pavilion Estate.

Although relatively small, North Gate House offered useful additional accommodation. In the 1820s George IV's last mistress, Lady Conyngham, lived here.

In 1830 George's successor William IV gave the house to his sister Princess Augusta. In 1832, when the new North Gate was built, the house was refaced and given some oriental features, including turrets and scalloped arches, in order to blend in with the style of the North Gate and surrounding buildings.

Since the 1930s it has been used as offices for museum, library and Pavilion staff, and at one point it housed the children's library. It now links to the main museum building and the Education Pavilion built in 2000.

- **North Gate**

The magnificent North Gate may look as if it is contemporary with the Royal Stables and the Pavilion, but it was added after George IV's death by his brother and successor William IV in 1832.

The designer of the Moorish-style gate was the architect and surveyor Joseph Henry Good, who had been appointed by the King in 1830 to survey the entire Royal Pavilion Estate and make significant changes and additions. Good created the North Gate we can see today, and a gate to the south which has not survived.

The North Gate is built with a combination of Portland stone, sandstone and other materials, topped with an onion-shaped copper dome. It was a much grander entrance to the Royal Pavilion Estate than John Nash's previous entrance and created an impressive first view for visitors arriving by coach from London.

The North Gate is a good reminder of the ambitious plans William IV had for the Royal Pavilion. He clearly intended to leave his own mark on the Pavilion, while continuing his brother's tradition of partying and entertaining at Brighton. William died in 1837, after only seven years as King.

- **Dome**

Brighton Dome is now a performance venue that comprises three spaces: the main concert hall in the Dome proper, the Corn Exchange to the north of it, and the Studio Theatre on its western side in New Road. The main Dome was built between 1803 and 1805 as the new Royal Stables for the Prince of Wales. The Prince was a great horseman and his elaborate new stables housed up to 60 horses, with apartments for grooms and ostlers behind the galleries above the circular dome area. It was a daring and expensive building and one of the most ambitious stable complexes in the whole of Europe.

It was designed by architect William Porden, and at the time it was the largest domed structure in Britain apart from St Paul's Cathedral in London, measuring 24 meters in diameter, with a height of nearly 20 meters.

Built of yellow brick and Bath stone in an Indian style, it was inspired by pictures of the Great Mosque in Delhi. It was also the first building on the Royal Pavilion Estate with external oriental features.

The building dominated the skyline of Brighton in the early 19th century. At the time of completion it made the Pavilion look rather small. This almost certainly inspired George to think about enlarging and transforming his neo-classical Pavilion into something more exotic.

Most of the original interiors of the Royal Stables have been lost and the building has undergone two major internal changes, first in 1867 and again in 1934. The stables complex was connected with the Pavilion via a shallow underground passage that ran from the north end of the Pavilion to what is now the backstage area of the Dome.

- **Tunnel**

There is an underground tunnel that connects the north end of the Royal Pavilion with the Dome complex, which was originally the Prince of Wales' stables.

The tunnel is 73 meters in length and was added in the last phase of the transformation of the Pavilion under John Nash. The tunnel probably dates from early 1822 and the costs were estimated at £1,783. It was constructed with bricks, cement, clay and an unreliable material called 'mastic'. It is a 'cut and cover' tunnel: a trench was dug and then filled and covered with a brick and cement structure, rather than being excavated from below ground.

The tunnel was lit by circular glass top lights sunk into the arched top of the tunnel that can be seen in the Pavilion grounds today. At its highest point the tunnel measures just 2.6 metres and you can just about spread your arms out in it. At intervals there are small niches in the walls, presumably to hold lanterns.

The tunnel is usually said to have been built to provide access for the King to his stables, either for privacy or in bad weather. But it may have also been constructed to allow access to the building for members of the King's Band, and could have provided a route for bringing large and messy goods such as coal and wood into the building, without damaging the Regency gardens.

In the Second World War the tunnel and other subterranean areas of the estate were used as air raid shelters. This not-so-secret underground passage has been the inspiration for a number of fictional stories, and countless urban myths have developed around it.