

## NEWSLETTER

January 2012

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



### **A New Year brings new beginnings**

I'm sure very few people will have failed to notice that the Public Inquiry into Thanet District Council's proposed Compulsory Purchase of the Dreamland site from current owners, Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company, is now underway.

Proceedings began on Tuesday 10 January 2012 and were scheduled to finish on 25 January. The Inquiry has had a large amount of evidence to hear and, as a result, is taking than longer than anticipated.

The Inquiry will resume at 2pm on Wednesday 15 February, when Jonathan Bryant, our former Project Director, will give evidence. He will be followed by TDC's Heritage Development Advisor, Nick Dermott and consultant Simon Davis from Urban Delivery on Thursday 16 February. Ian Peck, of property consultant Bidwells will then give evidence on Friday 17th February. The Inquiry

will resume again on Tuesday 6 and 7 March when TDC's Planning Projects Manager, Ashley Hills and our Chairman, Nick Laister are expected to give evidence on behalf of the Council and Dreamland Trust respectively. All are giving evidence to support the Council's case.

Thanet District Council has a section of its website dedicated to the Inquiry, [www.thanet.gov.uk/dreamland](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/dreamland), where you can find information about times, dates and venue as well as summaries of council witnesses' proofs of evidence. Daily reports from the Council Chamber are also published on the website for those who are unable to attend the Inquiry.

The Planning Inspector's recommendations will be issued to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who will issue a decision later in the year. In the meantime the Dreamland Trust continues working toward a 2013 opening of Stage One.

### **The Dreamland Archive**

Toward the end of last year we made two exciting and significant advances on the Dreamland Archive.

The first was in the form of an extraordinary discovery by our Board Member and Director of the archive, Mandy Wilkins. Mandy writes:

"I recently received a phone call from a builder working at a friend's house in Sandwich who wanted to know if I would be interested in looking at a fibreglass mould that he had found in his garden in Kingsdown. I became very interested when he told me that he thought it was from Dreamland. When I went over the next day I was amazed to discover it was the original mould of the 'clown' faces used c.1960s at Dreamland and was delighted when he agreed to give it to the Dreamland Trust. This wonderful find (which has spent the last several decades as a pond liner) is under safe keeping at my friend's barn awaiting the time when it can be returned to its original purpose!"

The other exciting news was the launch of the Dreamland online archive on flickr. Our dedicated volunteer archive researcher, Suzannah Foad, had been digitising visual material for the best part of last year. A selection is now available to view at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dreamlandmargate/>, which will be refreshed each month, so keep an eye on that!

## David Wattenbach re-visits the Dreamland Cinema Organ



**Left: David Wattenbach courtesy of TDC. Right: Lewis Gerrard, Dreamland Cinema Organist from 1935-38 and 1947-52. Courtesy of Mike Nichols.**

In December our good friend and long-term Dreamland supporter, David Wattenbach, returned to the Grade II\*-listed Cinema, on behalf of Thanet District Council, to check on the condition of the Compton Noterman organ.

As many of you know the unique theatre organ, dating back to 1935, is the heart of the Dreamland cinema. This fine musical instrument was built for the Iles family by the Compton organ company, notable English church organ-builders. John Bird Iles was responsible for the design of the cinema building, in partnership with architectural practice Leathart and Granger. The organ has four manuals and 16 pipe ranks - the average theatre organ only has between six and eight pipe ranks. It also has a full set of tuned percussion and sound effects.

David's visit saw power restored to the organ for the first time since it was cut off in 2004. Testing

was carried out to check that the console would rise from the pit up to stage level. Although it still works, it does not rise to its full height, so further work will have to be carried out to this.

Work then moved to the organ chamber at the top of the building, which contains the pipework. The chambers were very damp and there was mildew all over the chest and pipework. In the main chamber, it was found that water had penetrated some of the chests, making them unplayable in the solo chamber. Although in poor condition, it was still possible to play the pipes.

David, who was brought up with organs in his home and has worked with them for many years, said: “By the time the electrics were switched off to this place, this organ was working at its peak and I’d say it was one of the 10 best instruments in the country. It made a wondrous sound and you could play any type of music on it.”

However, since then, its condition has deteriorated. “I’m very disappointed that it’s in such a bad state,” said David. “This place has really deteriorated in the last year at an incredible rate. The organ has got very, very damp and the priority now is to stop any more water going in and to keep it reasonably dry. Sadly someone has also stood on the side of the organ, console breaking two of the art deco glass panes. It’s such a shame, especially as there isn’t another one like it in the country.”

David’s examination has concluded that the organ will need significant repairs to get it back into a good condition. Organ builders have now been contacted to undertake a further assessment.

### **Re-animating Dreamland**

Well 2011 certainly ended on a high note when we received news from our creative partners, Animate & Create ([www.animateandcreate.com](http://www.animateandcreate.com)), that they had been awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund Young Roots strand to produce a series of short animated films about Dreamland.

The idea came about when Animate & Create were seeking heritage partners to work with them on the Young Roots project. The project provides young people with an opportunity to learn about their own and other people’s heritage and Dreamland is a subject that Animate & Create knew young people would love and fully engage with.

There are five themes in the series, they include: The Scenic Railway, Lord George Sanger, Memories, The Cinema and Youth Culture. Each themed film will have its own distinctive style such as clay, drawn, 3D objects or cut-outs.

Some of the films will be screened as part of the Cultural Olympiad this summer, followed by a premiere at the Carlton Cinema in Westgate then a public screening in the Canterbury animation festival, Anifest, in October.

### **Physical works update**



**Coombs chaps hard at working safeguarding the Dreamland Cinema Building on behalf of Thanet District Council.**

Work to the Dreamland Cinema building is being carried out by Coombs (Canterbury) Ltd on behalf of Thanet District Council. The work started in May 2011, after a series of Urgent Works Notices were served on the owners of the building earlier that year. To date, the contractors have been re-pointing the building and carrying out structural repairs to the steel frame and concrete, and to the doors and windows.

Most of the roof coverings and some of the roof structure has also had to be replaced, due to its poor condition. The work is expected to be completed by spring 2012 and is being paid for by money that the council received in 2009 from the Sea Change Fund through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Other work undertaken included the restoration of Dreamland's iconic illuminated sign on the 80ft Cinema fin. Each letter was taken down, stripped cleaned and re-lamped before being re-installed and switched on for the season's festivities.

Previously the lights operated on a circuit of five bulbs, so when a bulb expired 4 others would automatically cut out at the same time. The restoration work provided an opportunity to test alternatives including LED bulbs, which although dispensing of the five bulb circuit system problem have a very short life span, so there will be further investigation into what will work best for Dreamland.

### **And finally...**

The Dreamland website has recently been updated and includes new contact details for our Project Director and the Dreamland Archive.

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