

THE FRIENDS OF GIBRALTAR HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No.1 August 1986

In February 1985 there was a conference held in London which was opened by HRH the Duke of Gloucester and which discussed ways of helping Gibraltar to preserve its rich architectural, military and natural heritage. As a result The Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Society has been founded and a steering committee under the chairmanship of Sir Eldon Griffiths MP has been at work for the last few months. The Society will be incorporated shortly and negotiations are under way with the Charity Commissioners to register it as an approved charity.

The aims of the Society are :

1. To raise funds to preserve, restore, and maintain for the protection of the natural surroundings and the preservation of natural features and animal and plant life.

2. To promote interest in the history of Gibraltar and its people, buildings, monuments, and environment, and to assist in the conservation of Gibraltar's heritage, and encourage the application of aesthetic standards to its contemporary environment.

It is hoped that the Society will basically operate in conjunction with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust which is at present being formed by the Government of Gibraltar, but it will also cooperate with all other bodies in Gibraltar and Britain which share its interests.

The minimum subscription for members will be £25 a year, but there will also be Associate Membership at £10 a year. In addition there will also be provision for Corporate Members. The Society will raise funds in order to assist projects which it adopts, and will also arrange lectures, visits to Gibraltar and other activities for its members.

WHY BOTHER HELPING GIBRALTAR

The Society has got off the ground thanks to the untiring efforts of Sam Alper who is a strong supporter of Gibraltar. We asked him why he had got involved and are pleased to set out his reply below:

I think Gibraltar is worth supporting, it needs assistance, and it cannot cope with all the problems of preservation of its heritage on its own.

Why is it worth it? Gibraltar is unique. You knew that, but did you know that Gibraltar has the most complete system of fortifications - spanning 1,000 years - in the world? Did you know that Gibraltar has the largest collection of military and naval buildings in the world? I for one had no idea until I read the report by SAVE (Save Britain's Heritage) and started to look carefully around me. Then of course there is the upper town and the fascinating domestic architecture...

Why does it need it? Because if not looked after the buildings and fortifications will become completely derelict. This would reduce Gibraltar's value as a tourist centre, and tourist business is needed to replace the loss of defence spending by the UK. **Why cannot Gibraltar do it by itself?** Because it has a population of less than 30,000. The maintenance requirement alone is beyond the financial and technical ability of a population of this size. On top of this, much restoration work is needed urgently. The sheer volume of work required would daunt a town like Edinburgh which has more than ten times the population!

Following the opening of the frontier last year there is a great deal of pressure for development on the Rock. There is nothing wrong with that, it is very necessary, but care must be taken that in the process the traditional character and beauty of the place is not destroyed.

I got involved because I thought it was interesting and worthwhile and I like Gibraltar. I hope you will think the same. This is your chance to join what will become a really big and important conservation programme. If you are interested in supporting and joining the Society please write to the Hon. Secretary of the steering committee (his address is given at the end of this newsletter).

THE SPONSORSHIP WORKING PARTY

A working party has been formed to identify projects suitable for the Society to support. The members are General Sir William Jackson an ex-governor, Colonel Charles Cumberlege who commanded the Duke of Wellington's Regiment while it was stationed at Gibraltar recently, and Hugh Cantlie FRICS an eminent surveyor and great friend of Gibraltar.

They will be working, in the main, on ideas put forward by the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, when it is formed in Gibraltar, but they will also be looking for projects put forward by other associations or groups in Gibraltar, committed to conserving Gibraltar's heritage. The word conservation will be interpreted in its widest possible sense, from the preservation of historic fortifications at one end of the spectrum to Gibraltar's birds and wildlife at the other. The aim will be to match possible projects to potential financial sponsors, and to convert good ideas into practical reality.

While waiting for the formation of the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, the working party has been looking at such well known projects as the opening of the Northern Defences and some of the tunnels to the public. This will involve renovation and making the fortifications safe for visitors. Another project being considered is the creation of an Artillery Heritage Trail, showing the successive periods of development on the Rock from the simple muzzle loading cannon of the Great Siege, through the early rifled guns, including the 100 ton Vickers gun in Napier Battery, to the sophisticated rifled breach loaders, and culminating in the 9.2 inch guns on the top of the Rock.

The working party is also making contact with the Gibraltar Museum Committee, the Gibraltar Conservation Society, the Gibraltar Ornithological Society, and the Gibraltar Environment Group. They hope to identify some of the smaller projects which could be acted upon quickly, to show what can be done and thereby encourage a snowballing of interest not only in conserving Gibraltar's great heritage, but also in persuading as many people as possible to join and support the Society so that more can be done.

VISIT TO GIBRALTAR

The Society is organising a visit to Gibraltar in November. The party will leave from Gatwick on Monday the 3rd. at the civilised hour of 1.30 pm and will return on Monday the 10th. Arrangements for a package tour have been made. The party will stay at Both Worlds, and the overall cost of the tour including flight, transfer to the hotel, accommodation, breakfast, dinner, and various functions which are being organised, is £135; which is an extremely reasonable figure. Tours will be extra and there will be a £35 surcharge for single occupancy. Arrangements can be made to stay longer, a fourteen nights stay costing £273 inclusive

During the week in Gibraltar it is hoped to organise a visit to the Convent, guided tours of the Northern Defences and-Moorish Castle, the Tunnels, the Gibraltar Museum, Fortress Headquarters (to visit the model and the 100 ton gun), O'Hara's battery (9.2 inch guns), places of worship, the town walls, and of course, tea at the Garrison Library!

If you are interested and wish to join the party please send the form below to the Hon. Secretary :

Stuart Hamilton-Towler,
East Skirdle, Waterrow,
Taunton TA4 2AY.
Telephone: 0984 23112.

I wish to book _____ places on THE FRIENDS OF GIBRALTAR HERITAGE SOCIETY visit to Gibraltar on 3 November 1986

NAME

ADDRESS

Please tick below:

I wish to go for 7 days

I wish to go for 14 days _____