



## LAMP'S FUTURE LOOKS DIM

BY MARY HARRIS

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A renowned architect vowed to continue his fight to save a period lamp in Chapel Place in Tunbridge Wells this week.

The presenter of BBC 1's popular Restoration series and director of English Heritage, who lives nearby, is desperate to see the Victorian cast iron lamppost restored to its former glory.

But Tunbridge Wells Borough Council said it intended to remove "the stump" and also three others lights, which will be replaced by new "attractive" heritage reproduction lamps.

In November last year Mr Dean highlighted the neglected post and said it was a matter of "civic pride" to repair it.

He said he received numerous letters of support but the saga had now "reached a critical moment" as he understood contractors were due to "chuck out" the post today (Friday). Mr Dean claimed that during months of negotiations with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council it had "resisted all along" the repair.

He was told an "unattractive" feeder post would be needed for switch gear near the base but Mr Dean was told by an independent contractor that a switch could be fitted at the top of the post.

Kent County Council had offered to pay the difference that restoration would cost over the purchase of new one, he said.

He has since been told by the borough council that once the lamp was removed, he could restore it at his own cost and place it in a position of his choice.

Yesterday (Thursday) he said: "Why, oh why, oh why won't this council do it? It will cost them nothing.

"There is no technological problem. It is because they don't want people participating - they resent someone from the outside interfering.

"It's time to grow up and put the heritage and people of Tunbridge Wells before the ego."

He said in principle he should not as a taxpayer fund its restoration because "any other self-respecting local authority would have carried out this work without question in the heart of a conservation area."

But borough council leader Cllr Melvyn Howell was equally firm that the council had "bent over backwards" to enhance Chapel Place with the three intended new posts and said it had been true to its word.

"The council is being faithful to the arrangements that were agreed with John Cunningham of the Civic Society and Daniel Bech of the Town Forum and we are endeavouring to be faithful to what Ptolemy wants to happen. This is a step in the right direction to improve Chapel Place and Cumberland Walk.

"The lights will all be the same and on three sites where they always used to be."

*Should Ptolemy's lamp be saved?*

Write to the editor with your views at Longfield Road, Tunbridge Wells TN2 3HL or e-mail [letters@courier.co.uk](mailto:letters@courier.co.uk)

## **Lamppost at Chapel Place – Ptolemy Dean / COURIER 11.08.06 page 3**

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In case I ever start writing 'My Year in Tunbridge Wells', the 'Ptolemy-lamppost' will certainly be a feature in it.

I have recently been told that the object of dispute was vandalised 'donkey's years' ago as there was allegedly some 'red light district' activities going on in the area and perhaps 'discerning gentlemen' did not want to be identified.

I strongly applauded Ptolemy Dean when he presented his view of Tunbridge Wells including the famous Chapel Place lamppost at the Civic Society's Award evening last year.

I was certainly interested in the issue as the Town Forum had started its campaign against 'grot spots' in town.

To me, the lamppost is a symbol for bureaucratic complications in Tunbridge Wells.

At first I was informed by Highways that a repair was impossible. Later I received some e-mails that only if an unsightly two feet high feeder post is placed nearby, the old lamppost could be put to use again.

I now understand that Ptolemy has provided a solution with an integrated feeder which makes the conservation of the lamppost desirable.

I am delighted that Cllr Howell confirmed to me that the lamppost will be saved. If for valid reasons it cannot continue its life in Chapel Place (perhaps it has still a flicker from its red light past) then at least it is good to see a precedent case set.

I have been advised that the column will be 'recycled' and put to use at Cumberland Gardens / Cumberland Walk where another hideous, out of place modern lamppost stands.

I hope that Highways will now follow the good example of Southern Water, who are restoring laboriously all their Victorian sewer vent posts. Would it not be wonderful and have all old 'Ptolemy-lampposts' in town sparkling again?

Daniel Bech