Venice in Peril
The British Committee for the Preservation of Venice
Chairman’s Message

What prospects for Venice at a time of financial crisis

Anna Somers Cocks
Chairman

If the mobile barriers currently being built between the Adriatic and the lagoon had already been in action, Venice would not have been flooded on 1 December. This was the worst flood since 1985, reaching 156cm above the mean water level mark. Unfortunately, a shortage in State funding has already caused the estimated date of the barriers’ completion to slip from 2012 to 2014.

At this time of financial hardship, what are the prospects that Venice, which requires and will require constant expenditure to survive, will be adequately protected?

The mayor of the city, Massimo Cacciari, who has always opposed the barriers, makes political capital out of the fact that the city’s ordinary budget has been drastically cut to finance their construction and he encourages a popular belief in Venice and beyond that they are not necessary. He even made the illogical remark after this latest flood that they were a waste of money since it was 23 years since the waters had risen so high. The estimated cost of the barriers is €4.272 billion. To date, €2.443 billion has been voted, of which €1.963 billion as been spent; 46% of the work is complete.

Mobile barriers are, however, indispensable: this was the conclusion of the conference held by Cambridge University in 2002, attended by over 100 scientists and financed by the Venice in Peril Fund as part of a wide-reaching three-year research programme into the state of knowledge about the lagoon and proposed solutions to the flooding.

When the barriers are in place, even the small acqua alta will be prevented as they will be closed when the tide is predicted to rise to 110cm above mean water level, the level when the campi and calli begin to be awash, which has happened 55 times between 1996 and 2005.

The Cambridge conference also warned, however, that mobile barriers would only give Venice the time to develop whatever protection needs to come next, as no solution for Venice is for ever. The water level is already so high as to be eroding the fabric of the city. The ecological predicament of the lagoon is constantly changing and the effects of global warming, while as yet incalculable, are highly unlikely to be positive.

After the environment, the greatest threat to the future of Venice is the absence of any long term planning by the authorities for the protection of the city, and without long term planning there can be no long term research or long term projections as to how the costs will be covered. The most powerful reason why such planning does not take place is that the Venice question has become deeply and damagingly politicized. No issue is considered on its merits alone, but on how it plays within party politics. At a time of financial crisis, political factors are likely to weigh even more heavily, which is bad news for Venice.

The Venice in Peril Fund appeals to the Italian authorities, at national, regional and city level, to recognize that the future of Venice will always need exceptional funding, long term planning and collaboration between politicians of all parties to survive.

Venice is a treasure for all mankind and the world is watching.
In 2007 Dulwich Picture Gallery hosted the single most successful exhibition in its history, *Canaletto in England*. In 2009 the Gallery offers a kind of reciprocal visit in the exhibition *Sickert in Venice*. The Venetian Canaletto was at the height of his powers and fame when he visited this country; but the exhibition showed that he responded creatively and qualitatively to the demands of England’s very different townscape and countryside. By the time that Walter Sickert first discovered Venice, the image of the city had saturated the English psyche, not only in the universally popular works of his illustrious Italian fellow-artist, but in the passionate writings of John Ruskin in the 1850s, his *Stones of Venice* amounted to a rediscovery of the city in its Gothic and Romanesque buildings. Meanwhile, other artists had made it their own, Turner’s limpid watercolours dominating the field. Sickert was at the start of his career in 1895, when he first visited, and in a series of visits over the next 10 years, he effectively forged his style and the themes that were to dominate his output thereafter.

Sickert fell in love with the buildings at first, and his model in painting them would seem to have been Claude Monet. Just as Monet repeatedly painted Rouen Cathedral at different times of day, Sickert tackled the famous façade and domes of St Mark’s in a beautiful series of paintings that will be one of the highlights of this gorgeous show. Sickert is one of the very greatest colourists that England ever produced (I say England: he was, of course, born in Germany, but raised here). He seems to me to be neither impressionist nor expressionist in his use of colour, although he was well informed about the latest developments in painting, and was indeed one of the most important conduits for importing new ideas into British art. The colour harmonies he provides are unique to him, but if you twisted my arm I would say that the artist he most reminds me of—in colour only, of course—is Vuillard.

He is at his most Monet-like in the dazzling *The Horses of St Mark’s* of c.1905, but his lovely St Mark’s, Venice of c.1896–7 shows off his special talent for mysterious colour—decorative, yet somehow brooding. He was fascinated, also, by other famous ‘tourist’ views, of Sta Maria della Salute and, of course, *The Rialto* of 1901.

As his love affair with Venice progresses, there is a change of focus: he starts to see past the magnificent buildings and begins to focus on people. Gradually he moves indoors. Two catalysts in this process were his two favourite models, two working-class women called La Giuseppina and La Carolina. The denizens of Venice were, of course, famous in their own right for their picturesque qualities, and these two women with their extraordinary geisha-like constructions of hair (*La Giuseppina against a Map of Venice*, 1903) clearly fascinated him. Recording their interaction within shadowy rooms, as in his *Conversation of 1903* or *The Women on a Sofa*—*Le Tose* of c.1903–4, led ultimately to his ‘Camden Town’ interiors; even his later obsession with nudes in an interior was foreshadowed in Venice.

Venice inspired and continues to inspire many artists; Sickert found in the city not just a fabulous setting to paint, but also some of his most profoundly personal themes. Focussing on not just the Venetian output provides some ravishing images, it also gives us a genuine insight into the forces that moulded his career. ■

Ian A C Dejardin
Director, Dulwich Picture Gallery
Venice News

& Current Venice in Peril Projects

The inexorable flow of tourists, traditionally at a peak in September, dropped off significantly this year. According to the local Statistics Consortium this drop was partly a general trend, inevitably linked to the worldwide economic situation. After a season of operating at half capacity, the additional vaporetto Line 3, which had been introduced to meet residents’ complaints of overcrowding, was withdrawn at the end of the summer. The Venetian feast of Sta Maria della Salute on 21 November saw an expected swell in numbers, and the basilica was packed with people wanting to hear the Cardinal Patriarch preach at the 10 o’clock Mass.

Association of International Committees
The 36th Annual General Meeting of the 22nd “Comitati Privati” (International Voluntary committees) took place 23-25 October in Palazzo Zorzi. In the 40 year period of their existence, the Committees have financed projects of varying proportions to a value of some €50 million, and during the financial year July 2007 to June 2008 the total committed was 2 million Euros. Delegates were addressed by the Director of the UNESCO office in Venice, Dr Russ, and his Director for Culture, Mme Roudil, as well as representatives of the Region, Province and Municipality, the representative of the Cardinal Patriarch and by the two representatives of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Environment, dott.ssa Nepi Scirè and arch Renata Codello.

There was a lively discussion criticising the aggressive commercial publicity erected on public buildings in exchange for ‘sponsorship’ of restoration work, particularly in the area of Piazza S. Marco and Palazzo Ducale. (See the Chairman’s message, page 2.)

Next year’s Annual General Meeting will be held on 22-23 October.

Municipal Housing for Residents and University Students
Plans have been announced jointly by the Councillor for Public Works and the University of Architecture’s Foundation for the long delayed re-development of certain sites that will provide accommodation for Venetian residents on the waiting list and students of the two universities. Funding will come from the Ministry for Education as well as local sources. One notable site in Cannaregio is the ex-convent of the Crociferi (next to the church of the Gesuiti) transformed into a barracks during the Napoleonic occupation. If the feasibility study, tendering and execution go to plan this should be ready for 2011. Other sites to be renovated are an ex-glass factory on Murano, the former Scalera film studio area on the Giudecca, the campo Celestia near S. Francesco della Vigna, also in the area of S. Pietro di Castello.

Additionally, the ex-slaughter house complex at S.Giobbe – home of the Department of Economics at University of Ca’Foscari – will be redeveloped. A house in an adjacent calle was restored in a joint project between Venice in Peril and the Comune from 1997 to 2006. This provides four family units.

The Flood Barriers
The Municipality still resents the continuation of funding for the barrier scheme, which, it claims, deprives them of resources for vital maintenance. Their appeal to the local Regional Tribunal to block funding to the Consorzio Venezia Nuova for the construction of a village for the 500-strong work force engaged in the building has been rejected.

Meteorological high tides predicted in Venice for late November were overshadowed by considerable flooding on the mainland, particularly in eastern Veneto where several rivers burst their banks. On 1 December the city was flooded to 156cms over the mean water level, the worst episode since 1985. There was repeated flooding during the rest of the month.

The Armstrong Mitchell Crane in the Arsenale
Venice in Peril has adopted this sole survivor of a number of cranes made in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1880s. So far we have financed its stabilisation and a detailed study, under the direction of the Superintendency, of how it should be restored. Due to the risks involved in removing the ballast from its counterbalance chamber, which must however be done as its casing is cracking, the estimate has come in at €2.5 million, nearly three times the initial figure. We are determined to continue with this project, and we are consulting with other experts in the field. The crane was seen by thousands of visitors to the Architecture Biennale, which closed 23 November.

Lazzaretto Nuovo
This season’s educational programme, administered most efficiently by dott. Gerolamo Fazzini and volunteers from the Archeo Club d’Italia/Ekos Club, closed on 23 November. It ended with awards for the young participants in the summer school and an excellent presentation by Prof Matteo Borrini, forensic archaeologist from Florence University, of a new, permanent display of skeletal remains and artefacts. These remains and artefacts were excavated from the quarantine island, a place where the crews of ships arriving from the Orient were held until they were judged to be clear of infection. Victims of the bubonic plague (the first in 1365 left victims in the Lazzaretto Vecchio and at S.Marco in Bocolama) were housed for the brief period of the fatal infection in cells open to the air. The subsequent plague of 1630 caused thousand of deaths, its final termination being commemorated in thanksgiving by the re-building of the church now known as Sta Maria della Salute, designed by Longhena.

Subject to receiving a detailed description of the work that needs to be done Venice in Peril will continue its funding for the recovery and preservation of the remarkable “graffiti” on the walls of the Tezòn Grande.

Palazzo Grimani near Sta Maria Formosa
This wonderful Renaissance palazzo, in which the great collector Cardinal Grimani housed his collection of classical sculpture
against frescoed walls, has reopened to the public after many years in restauro. Venice in Peril financed the research into the whereabouts of the dispersed pieces, of which there is a computer presentation. There are three tours a day, for a maximum of 30 people, at 9.30, 11.30 and 13.30. To book, ring +39 041 520 0345.

Teatro La Fenice
The generous bequest from the estate of Mrs Dorothy Hare has been spent on providing the baroque instruments needed by the orchestra, to be used initially in performances of Bach’s Christmas Oratorio conducted by Riccardo Chailly, 21-23 November.

The XXV edition of the national pianoforte competition, Premio Venezia, took place in mid-November, the 21 year old winner, Fiorenzo Pascalucci, performed Chopin, Scriabin and Debussy to great acclaim and, once again, part of his prize will be a performance in London next year, generously funded by Marina Morrison Atwater, a Trustee of Venice in Peril.

Iccrom Stone Course 2009
The International Course for the Conservation of Stone is to be revived from 16 April to 3 July in Venice. As in previous years, Venice in Peril is funding a bursary, and UNESCO is offering a further 12. A British expert, David Odgers, is on the teaching staff.

The Martin Randall Music Festival ran from 23 – 29 November with lectures, recitals, visits and concerts in selected, exclusive venues all over the city. Venice in Peril is most grateful to Martin Randall, his artistes and the participants for the revenue that the Festival has generated for the Fund.

Finally, Warwick University in Venice now based in Palazzo Pesaro Papafova in Cannaregio, is holding its History and History of Art undergraduate course from September until mid-December each year. The long commitment of the late Professor Sir John Hale, the late Professor Michael Mallett and the present academic generation, is greatly valued in the city. The Circolo Italo-Britannico have an agreement to hold their Monday evening lectures in the prestigious venue. Other events are held in the palazzo when it is available during the spring / summer term. ■ by Frances Clarke

“Il Nuovo Trionfo”
This last surviving Trabaccolo has been rescued by a group of Venetians; about 20 metres in length with two masts, Il Nuovo Trionfo was originally used to transport sand. It is a fine example of a cargo vessel that used to be a common sight in the northern Adriatic.

This vessel survived because it was bought in 1977 by an Austrian engineer who restored it and used it as his houseboat.

A volunteer group has been established all of whom have contributed funds for the purchase and maintenance of the vessel. She is available for hire by clubs, schools and individuals. ■

www.ilnuovotrionfo.it
info@ilnuovotrionfo.it,
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Thirty years after the initial publication of Le Isole Abbandonate della Laguna, this book has been updated by San Marco Press with an English translation.

This dual language edition in Italian and English describes many of the islands that have been abandoned over the centuries. Several, such as Santo Spirito, Sant’ Angelo della Polvere and Madonna del Monte, still remain deserted, having been thriving monasteries, or military depots in previous years. Others, like Lazzaretto Vecchio and Poveglia, are under restoration, whilst Lazzaretto Nuovo and Certosa have already been restored.

The book contains many fascinating antique prints, extracts from books about the lagoon over the centuries and recent photographs that illustrate and explain the development and subsequent desolation of the islands.

It is an indispensable read for those with an interest in the Serenissima’s interaction with its immediate lagoon territories.

The publishers will be donating 10% of the list price of the books sold in the UK to Venice in Peril and of those sold in Italy 10% will go to assist in the further restoration of Lazzaretto Nuovo.

It can be ordered from www.sanmarcopress.com directly from the publishers, from Old World Books in the Ghetto in Venice venezialibri@yahoo.it or other Venetian and selected UK bookshops. ■
Venice is becoming a city of mega-advertising but outsiders are making the real money

The well known economist, John Kay, who took part in the Venice in Peril Debate about expenditure on Venice in 2006 and who recently won the new Istituto Veneto Prize for outstanding journalism about Venice (his acceptance speech is published in this Newsletter on pages 12 & 13), has also given us the things he loves and hates most about the city.

His first three loves are all the great views of Venice, the views that have moved travelers for centuries and catch our breath even if it’s the hundredth time we see them. He says: “First: The opening scene of Visconti’s Death in Venice. Aschenbach sails from the Adriatic into the lagoon and city on board a steamer. Second: Thirty years later, I sail from the Adriatic into the lagoon and city on board a yacht. Third: To travel down the Grand Canal in a water taxi and land at the mooring to receive the Istituto Veneto’s prize.”

Well, it is precisely these views that have been desecrated in a way that has never occurred before in the history of Venice. The pale pink façade of the Doge’s Palace now has two Lancia cars careering out from one corner on a bright blue background, while the villain of a James Bond movie lunges out of a huge Swatch ad on the Piazzetta. Vast ads are cropping up on more and more palazzi on the Grand Canal and it is clear that any public building is now up for grabs.

The agencies dealing in mega-advertising locations have realised they can exploit a recent change in the law to sell space there and make a large profit, yet they still get called sponsors by the authorities. This law allows the scaffolding on public buildings under restoration to carry advertising so long as the local Superintendent considers that it does not “detract from the appearance, decorum or public enjoyment of the building”—a condition that is clearly not being taken seriously at present.

Yet, while the ads have aroused local and international protest, Venice Superintendent Renata Codello insists that she has been very discriminating: “I have turned down masses of proposals, including one with the entire Italian football team dressed only in their shorts,” she told the Association of Private Committees for Venice in October.

We asked three advertising agencies to contact Plakativ Media, the main firm handling the Venice sites, and enquired discreetly as to how much it would cost to hire the two other spaces that are about to go up in St Mark’s Square. Plakativ is paying €3.5m to restore the Correr Museum side of the Square in exchange for a 240 m² advertising screen (half the size of an Olympic swimming pool) on the scaffolding of the façade.

We discovered that near the Campanile there will shortly also be a 60 m² ad, which has already been let out, and for which the asking price is €165,000 a month. The ad on the Correr is currently for rent at €50,000 a month, €75,000 in February when the carnival is on, but its price rises to approximately €158,000 a month for a minimum of 12 months when the screen goes digital.

It is difficult to calculate exactly how much money Plakativ will make on the deal because it depends on its success in selling the spaces over time, on its discounts, and the duration of its agreement with the authorities, but at these prices it is likely to a very large profit indeed—not to the benefit of Venice, of course.

But there is also an unpleasant uncertainty about what these ads will look like and how long they will be up. The Superintendent say that the big one will be only for the duration of the Correr restoration, due to end in 2012, but Plakativ has told potential clients that its agreement is for seven years plus. As for their appearance, Dr Codello told the Annual Meeting of the Association
Conserving the memory of Venice's Scuole piccole

Paul Holberton

of Private Committees that she would definitely not allow digital advertising, but that is precisely what Plakativ is currently offering potential clients.

In defence of her decision to allow all these ads, Dr Codello said: “I have no choice: last year some of the marble facing of the Doge's Palace fell down; this year it was a bit of the cornice of the Correr Museum. Under law I am personally responsible if a tourist is hurt. With the cuts to the funding of our ministry [25.8% in 2009], I can expect no help from government.”

It really is a tragic situation when a government which repeatedly boasts that the countries major assets are its art and beauty can put a government official in such a quandary. For while Italy has indeed got major public expenditure problems, it is not a poor country. That these ads are being allowed is a sign of how an outdated and inefficiently interpreted ideology of the free market has taken over the governance of heritage and culture in Italy. From a policy of meticulous, if sometimes over rigid protection of historic buildings, we have come suddenly to this slap in the face of the tourist, who may be seeing Venice for the one and only time in his life and will be bitterly disappointed.

John Kay’s thesis is that any shortage of money for Venice is a sign of mismanagement; that if run properly and with a long term strategy (here he compares the city unfavourably with Disneyland, not because he thinks Venice is like Disneyland, but because it would be better run if it were Disneyland), it would raise abundant funds for its conservation. Sadly, many, including Mayor Cacciari, chose to misunderstand what John Kay was saying, but from within Venice itself, among the younger professional classes, and in the outside world, a sense of indignation, a sense that things must change, is spreading. For Venice is not just another city, it is the “fairy city of the heart”. Tread softly for you tread on our dreams.■

Anna Somers Cocks

The Venice in Peril Fund this summer acquired a manuscript, rather unusually, but illustrating the interest of the Fund in the conservation of all things Venetian in the widest sense – in this case of a peculiarly Venetian tradition, that of the piccole scuole. The six (or, later, briefly, nine) Scuole Grandi were a prominent part of the city’s fabric, both visibly and politically, but the piccole scuole, of which there were some 925, though they were less conspicuous and spent less conspicuously on art and buildings, were even more vital. Among historians interest in them, as representative of the popolo minuto, has recently been aroused, also, among art historians, in connection with Tintoretto, who was so largely patronized by them (it was mostly their chapels he decorated throughout the city) that he could make the gesture of painting the Scuola Grande di San Rocco for free.

The manuscript the Fund has acquired, which has been donated to the Archivio storico del Patriarcatto di Venezia, was the mariegola (matricola in Italian) or combined rule-book and logbook of the Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento in the church of San Polo. These scuole of the Holy Sacrament (or Eucharist) sprang up in the early sixteenth century and were soon established in every parish church of the city, then 70 in number. Historians like to read this movement as an early sign of the stirrings towards Church Reform of the period, and soon enough this pious reverence for the host as the bodily substance of Christ came to stand in aggressive contrast to the denial of Lutherans and Protestants. The prime purpose of the Holy Sacrament scuole, however, like that of all the scuole, was to care for the unfortunate among their number and to ensure the decent burial and, through masses, the afterlife of their members; and in particular in their case to distribute the Sacrament to the sick. A comparable mariegola shows precisely this, a man in bed with the host being brought to him; the illumination accompanying this mariegola recalls instead a devotional altarpiece, being fixed on the worship of the host. The chalice with the host was the universal emblem of these scuole, appearing for instance on the box or banco in the church in which each kept their paraphernalia, including their mariegola.

While such mariegole follow a common pattern, derived from state documents, of an illuminated frontispiece followed by an endowment text, they are all different, all individually commissioned and conceived, though the foundation of each had to be approved by the vigilant Council of X. This manuscript opens with the Council of X charter, which was granted in 1507, but it is a copy, and its initial pages probably date, like the frontispiece, to the 1510s. Its great interest, however, is that thereafter the manuscript continues uninterrupted, added to over the ages, until 1771, and would no doubt have continued after that, if the scuole had not been suppressed by Napoleon. If not itself a monument, it was once vital to the life in and around the church of San Polo; not hitherto known to scholars, it will now be accessible and should aid a developing area of interest.■

With thanks to Christie’s, London, for enabling the purchase without commission.
How the Veneto has betrayed Palladio

The Royal Academy is celebrating Palladio’s quincentenary with an exhibition this month, but his famous villas and the sublime countryside around them have been wrecked by hideous urban sprawl.

“The Veneto is one great construction site that has produced monstrosity after monstrosity over the past 50 years, damaging both people and the environment,” says Francesco Vallerani, a geography professor at Venice University.

The Veneto has mountains, alpine lakes, romantic hills and rivers, the lagoon and the sea. It has more medieval city walls than any other region in Europe. Most importantly, it has thousands of 15th- to 18th-century villas that are the very symbol of the Veneto. The patricians of Venice bought land, invested in huge estates and commissioned famous architects to build magnificent residences.

The Istituto Regionale Ville Venete (IRVV)—the regional institute for the conservation of Veneto villas—has statutory powers to help 4,270 properties, around half of which are listed, with 30 designed by Andrea Palladio. Unfortunately, however, these powers have always been limited to the buildings, and it has no official remit for the unprotected land surrounding them.

In the 20 years since the Veneto Region set up the IRVV, the institute has distributed preferential loans and grants to 1,750 villas for repairs. In 2007 it contributed over €3m to 22 restoration projects, and this year the figure will be almost €5.5m. Yet there is still a lot more to be done: one obvious example is Palladio’s Villa Chiericati in Vancimuglio, which is in a dire state of repair, and surrounded by warehouses, a shopping centre and an incredible new “Palladian style” hotel. Lionello Puppi, an art and landscape historian and member of the scholarly committee of the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio (the international institute for Palladian studies), says: “We are celebrating Palladio’s 500th anniversary with a host of exhibitions and events, including ‘Palladian’ tourist itineraries, but I’m afraid that some important sites will not be visited because of the terrible condition they’re in. There’s Villa Zeno in Cessalto, for example, a Palladian masterpiece built in 1554 to be the centrepiece of a large estate. It is boarded up and in danger of being demolished. The current owners used to run a large farm on the estate, but the villa itself was no use to them and expensive to run, so they abandoned it. New buildings are engulfing Villa Forni Cerato in Montecchio Precalcino near Vicenza. The last owners went bankrupt and abandoned the villa, which is now in ruins and has been repossessed by the bailiffs.”

Nadia Qualarsa, director of the IRVV, says, “It’s a crucial time for the Veneto: new urban zoning legislation has come into effect, and the Veneto Region should be following through by implementing the laws in collaboration with the various municipal councils.”

The Veneto Region’s recent planning memo does now stress that urban planners must recognise the importance of the land itself: a villa cannot be considered out of context of its surroundings. But havoc is still being wreaked.

Around 2000, the Veneto’s local industries, which had generated great wealth for the local economy, were in crisis, and the building boom appeared to have abated. Not so: it just took on a different form. In the 2003 budget, finance minister Giulio Tremonti slashed funding to the provincial governments and municipal councils. The municipal councils in turn tried to generate revenue by levying one-off taxes on construction work. The situation deteriorated further with the abolition of the ICI (Imposta Comunale sugli Immobili), the municipal council property tax. “It’s ironic,” comments Professor Vallerani. “For years, the municipal councils sold off the land to property developers in order to get the ICI on the new buildings. Now the ICI has gone and there are empty factories and warehouses everywhere, monuments to the blinkered property speculation.”

The villas and countryside of the Veneto are now also under threat from the massive expansion of the US military base at Dal Molin in Vicenza. Professor Puppi, who has studied the project in detail, is alarmed. “It will be catastrophic for the countryside, with miles of concrete in an area where Palladio built some of his finest masterpieces. The most serious case is Villa Caldognò, which was rescued by the Veneto Region and Caldognò municipal council and is now home to a Centre for Contemporary Culture. The villa is located slap bang in the middle of this concrete jungle. Villa Valmarana in Vigardolo, one of Palladio’s earliest works, is facing the same problem, along with another villa in Tricoli built in 1537.”

Another high-profile project currently underway is the new A31 Valdastico Sud motorway. For years now, charities such as Italia Nostra, the World Wildlife Fund and the Landmark Trust, along with local citizens’ groups, villa owners and farmers, have been fighting to stop the motorway and prevent the countryside from being destroyed further. In October 2007, Italy’s high court, the Consiglio di Stato, finally ruled in favour of the motorway, overturning an earlier decision by the regional administrative law court to reject it. In fact, some of the strongest support for the motorway has come directly from the municipal councils, the provinces, and the Veneto Region itself, which even campaigned for it during the last elections.

Francesco Vallerani is worried: “The motorway itself may not have such a devastating impact on the countryside. The problem is that when a new motorway is built, the land on either side of it can also be rezoned for construction. All it takes is
for the municipal councils to amend their official urban plans, and you have pockets of urbanisation springing up everywhere. The municipal council regulatory plans should be kept in check by the regional law, but we'll have to see if it is enforced.”.

The motorway could even hold the world record for the number of exits, seven over 54 kilometres. Margherita Verlato, director of the Medio e Basso Vicentino branch of Italia Nostra (an association set up to protect Italy’s cultural heritage and countryside), is decidedly pessimistic. “The race to buy up the land along the motorway has already started. It’s the last remaining agricultural area in the Vicentino, and the effects will be devastating. There are at least 23 listed buildings and sites in the zone, as well as numerous other magnificent buildings which, though not listed, are very important, including villas, medieval courthouses, funerary chapels and Benedictine oratories. All of them will be affected.”

One historic building that will suffer directly as a consequence of the motorway is Villa Saraceno, a listed masterpiece by Palladio designated by Unesco as part of a World Heritage Site. This is now in perfect condition following its exemplary restoration by the Landmark Trust. The motorway will pass within 700 metres of the villa.

The motorway has caused a furore in Britain, where Save Europe’s Heritage has joined the campaign against it. The project has also come under scrutiny from Unesco. In 2005, after consulting its member states and their administrative bodies, Unesco and Icomos (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) sent a delegation to Italy to meet officials from the Veneto Region and the municipal council of Agugliaro. A dirty trick was played: “We were screened out of the entire process,” says Lorella Tonellotto, who runs the Italian branch of the Landmark Trust. “They didn’t even let us meet the delegation to put our point of view across. No-one told us they were coming, and the delegates were told that we had refused to see them.” Nonetheless, Unesco put forward its own recommendations and asked the state and the municipal council to propose measures to limit the visual impact of the motorway on Villa Saraceno (e.g. creating an underpass, lowering the overpasses and changing the exit). Italy was supposed to submit the final plan for the motorway at the end of 2008, which Unesco will evaluate at its annual meeting in February 2009.

It is clear that property speculation is still rife in the Veneto but the source of the cash pouring into the region is less easy to pinpoint. There is talk of shady dealing and money-laundering: everyone seems to know about it but it is hard to find proof. This is no longer just about the odd small house that a farmhand or factory worker might want to build for their family; it is about entire residential areas, shopping centres, even motor racing circuits, financed by foreign investors and anonymous companies.

Too many complicated laws; municipal councils funding themselves by handing out building contracts; major companies and politicians dreaming up new motorways; construction firms and quarry owners profiteering from the building boom. “But there is a backlash among the people,” says Professor Vallerani, “although they need to be more savvy. In the Veneto, these local committees have also become a form of group therapy. We have an extraordinary cultural heritage, and this makes us all the more angry with ourselves for having taken part in its destruction. We used to be a nation of emigrants, but we stopped being poor in the 1990s; we now have to learn how to be rich, how to live in a different way. I hope our children will manage it.”

Edek Osser

Andrea Palladio: his life and legacy” is at the Royal Academy from 31 January to 13 April.

Go to www.savebritainheritage.org, click on “E Reports”, then “Veneto in Peril” for Save’s survey from a helicopter of the Valdastico motorway under construction.
Obituary

Michael Edward Mallett OBE, MA, DPhil, FRHistS, FRSL: Trustee of Venice in Peril (1932-2008)

With the death of Michael Mallett, the study of Italian Renaissance history has lost one of its most original and productive scholars. His doctoral research at Oxford and formative periods of study at the British School at Rome and the Scuola Normale, Pisa, led to the publication of British School at Rome and the formative periods of study at the one of its most original and productive study of Italian Renaissance history has lost With the death of Michael Mallett, the Trustee of Venice in Peril

Michael Edward Mallett OBE, MA, DPhil, FRHistS, FRSL: Obituary

Venice in Peril Newsletter

At the same time Michael was committed to the University of Warwick, which he had joined in 1967 soon after it opened, and where he became a professor (1978), and served as chair of the Faculty of Arts (1985-88). He was crucial in building up the History Department in scope and academic reputation, though he also supported developments elsewhere, particularly in Italian and the History of Art. He played a key role in the establishment and work of the Centre for Renaissance Studies, which did much to further the careers of younger scholars, as well as running a number of benchmarking international conferences, for example on Savonarola and the Italian Wars.

Earlier, he followed John Hale’s lead in organising a ‘Venice term’ for students of the Renaissance at the University. With this ambitious project he often had to struggle against the scepticism of colleagues and a perennial shortage of resources, but his persistence, diplomatic skills, and the supportive contacts he made and sustained in the city, insured that the project survived. Indeed, it now flourishes, to the benefit of generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as Venice itself.

Michael’s involvement in the cultural and academic life of Venice led to contributions to the multi-volumed Storia di Venezia. He also succeeded John Hale as chair of the British and Commonwealth committee of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foudation which supports the study of Venice past and present. He served for many years as a Trustee of Venice in Peril where – amongst much else – he championed the view that concern for that city was felt, and should be encouraged, ‘north of Watford’.

These activities, all conscientiously pursued, brought him well deserved recognition in the UK and Italy. He received the British Academy’s Serena Medal for Italian Studies (1998). He was made a Commendatore dell’Ordine al Merito of the Italian Republic. He received an OBE in 1998. Most recently, in November 2007 he received – along with his close colleague and friend Lady Frances Clarke – an honorary DLitt from his own university at a special ceremony, done with great style, in Venice itself.

Michael himself was modest about such achievements. In many ways he was an undemonstrative man, but those who got to know him quickly came to appreciate his love of Italy, his enthusiasm for Mozart and Italian opera and his enjoyment of good food, fine wine and congenial company. He was extremely loyal and supportive to colleagues, students and friends. Above all, he loved his family and his home. He was extremely loyal and supportive to colleagues, students and friends. Above all, he loved his family and his home. He was devoted to his wife Patricia. They met when she too was a student at the British School at Rome and they married in 1961. Latterly, he helped sustain her through a distressing and terminal illness. In this difficult time, he was closely supported by his two sons, Luke and Alex. They have clearly inherited his love of home and Italy, and they with the help of colleagues and friends are determined to see their father’s unfinished work through to publication.

This piece was printed in the Order of Service for Michael Mallett’s funeral, and was adapted from the obituary printed in The Independent, written by John and Maria Law.

With the death of Michael Mallett, the study of Italian Renaissance history has lost one of its most original and productive scholars. His doctoral research at Oxford and formative periods of study at the British School at Rome and the Scuola Normale, Pisa, led to the publication of British School at Rome and the formative periods of study at the one of its most original and productive study of Italian Renaissance history has lost With the death of Michael Mallett, the Trustee of Venice in Peril

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W.H. Patterson
Gallery’s Annual
Exhibition

Every January for the past 18 years, W.H. Patterson’s Gallery in 19 Albemarle Street hosts the popular ‘Venice in Peril Exhibition’. A wide selection of evocative contemporary paintings and watercolours, interspersed with some wonderful 19th century works, show Venice in its many guises.

Jeffery Courtney and Bela Toth Padari are two of the artists exhibiting in the forthcoming 2009 exhibition and their paintings express two very personal interpretations of Venice.

Jeffery Courtney

Jeffery Courtney has exhibited at the annual Venice in Peril Exhibition on many occasions. He has also exhibited at the Royal Academy, Mall Galleries, the New Grafton Gallery and at the prestigious Art in Action Festival in Oxfordshire. His work is sought by private collectors and can now also be admired publicly at the Royal Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, where his large murals are on permanent display.

“When I think of England I am very aware of just that, the land, the earth. The landscape dominates. With Venice I think of water and air, but not earth. Venice seems to exist on light, air and water. These three elements meeting in a magical way. The earth — the buildings — seem somehow hung, suspended in the other elements, giving the city a strange but beautiful transience. And what wonderful shapes everything has in Venice; chimneys, poles, domes and towers, such visual riches. But it is the unique meeting of water, light and air that fascinates me as an artist, how they interact and change continually presenting the old city in new ways, which is why I can return to Venice as a subject again and again.”

Jeffery Courtney

Bela Toth Padari

Bela Toth Padari was born and grew up in the western mountainous region of Hungary, which became the main source of inspiration for his work as an artist.

His main interest now lies in the historical portrayal of important European towns and cities, especially in Italy, Holland and England.

“The Venice in Peril exhibition runs 14 January – 6 February 2009 and 10% of all proceeds are donated to Venice in Peril.

Once again Kirker Holidays will be donating a 4 star holiday during the exhibition.

W H Patterson, 19 Albemarle Street,
London W1S 4BB
www.whpatterson.com
Venice is a management challenge

John Kay, winner of the new Istituto Veneto Prize for outstanding journalism, has a critical but helpful view of how the city can be saved.

Venice threatened by crumbling infrastructure and rising sea levels, and by inexorable growth in the number of visitors. With effective planning, one problem solves the other. Gates that let the tourists in pay for gates that keep the water out.

Left unmanaged, the sea of tourists may be more threatening than the Adriatic. Currently, more than 15 million people visit Venice each year. Literacy and cultural awareness are growing, as is US population growth, and incomes in India, China and Eastern Europe are increasing rapidly. The number of people who want to see Venice and can afford to do so might expand by a factor of three or more in the next few decades.

There is little we can do to stop this growth of tourism: and we ought not to want to stop it. Venice is a crown jewel of Western civilisation. If we take pride in that civilisation, if we intend to promote its values, we want as many people as possible to come to Venice.

But the most widely circulated image of Venice today is probably not a reproduction of a Canaletto, or even a postcard of the Doges’ Palace. It is a picture of a young Japanese visitor standing in St Mark’s Square surrounded by pigeons, snapped by an equally bewildered compatriot. We should burn with shame, because the fault is with the host not the visitor. These people have travelled across the world to be exposed to a culture they know is profoundly influential, but know nothing of. What help do we give them?

When I talked of this once before, the English writer A N Wilson commented that the phrase cultural tourism was an oxymoron. It was a remark of quite exceptional stupidity. There is little exaggeration in saying that the mutual understanding which cultural tourism promotes is the most important contribution we can make to world peace: no exaggeration at all in saying that modern Europe can do more than any other continent to promote that understanding. The issue for Europeans is how not only to accommodate, but to promote, such cultural tourism without letting the visitors destroy what people go to visit. Nobody goes there any more, it’s too crowded; anyone who has been in Venice in August knows what sage and baseball player Yogi Berra meant. Imagine central Venice in August with three times as many people.

A somewhat different argument is that the promotion and preservation of culture is incompatible with the practice of management – or the pursuit of profit. Those who say that have forgotten how the Venice we treasure came into being in the first place. In its heyday, this city was the poster child of globalisation, and the centre of the international financial system. Its successful merchants displayed their logos – somewhat discreetly, it should be said – on the artistic treasures they funded from their profits.

Profit is, in itself, neither good or bad: what is done with profit may be good or bad. When I observe that Disney would run Venice better than it is run today, I seek to provoke rather than to make a serious proposal. But a sense that the primary motive of those you meet is to relieve you of your cash is, if anything, more omnipresent for the visitor to Venice than the visitor to Disneyland. Disney tries to offer value for money: the company wants you to have a good time because it wants you to come back. In Venice the postcard sellers and the tourist cafes do not expect you to come back and the residents mostly wish you wouldn’t come back. And while the Disney Corporation reinvests most of its revenues in the maintenance and development of its activities, the Venetian sellers of tatty merchandise take their money home on the evening train.

Profit should be to allow as many visitors as possible to experience their own personal Venice. Imagine that in the peak season, admission to Venice were only be available as part of a guided tour. Imagine day tourists arriving by train in a modernised station, from which they would enter a visitor centre – major commercial and educational development – which would offer audio visual presentations of the culture and history of Venice. The visitor centre might have lecture rooms and libraries, a shopping mall focussed on Venice related material, and restaurants of all kinds and price brackets. Merchandising in the city itself would be controlled, traditional but not kitsch. Imagine Ruskin weeks, in which no guided tours would be permitted, and numbers of visitors would be strictly limited.

There are many successful examples of such managed tourism. Yosemite succeeds in remaining a place of astounding natural beauty even though it is on the doorstep of California’s densely populated coastal strip. People who want to stand in front of the waterfall are bussed in and out: hikers and

“While the Disney Corporation reinvests most of its revenues in the maintenance and development of its activities, the Venetian sellers of tatty merchandise take their money home on the evening train.”

The objective of managed tourism would not be to turn up our noses at management and profits but to direct management and profits to the order and preservation of the city. Managing the tourist flow is the beginning. This involves segregating, in time and space, people who want only to be photographed in front of the Campanile from those who would dearly love to wander the streets as Ruskin did. Managing the flow of tourists gives day trippers a proper opportunity to learn about the history and culture of what they see, with well designed exhibits and qualified guides. Managing the flow of tourists takes t-shirt sellers and vendors of fake antiques off the streets and squares and diverts revenue from rip-off merchants to the protection and sustainable development of the city.
The proposition that shortage of money is the measure of the problem not the problem itself is equally true of non-profit organisations. At Oxford I would frequently hear ‘if only we had as much money as Harvard we wouldn’t be in such a mess’ which got it just the wrong way round. To have the best educational brand in the world and not enough money is a management problem, not a financial problem. The most beautiful city in Europe is visited each year by fifteen million people with open wallets. To find it in danger of physical and economic collapse is a management problem, not a financial problem. A problem we have a collective responsibility, as Europeans, to solve. ■

Mirco Ceci, born in 1988 in Bari Italy, began studying the piano when he was eight years old and performed his first concert at 13 years. He is studying at the prestigious Accademia Pianistica Internazionale of Imola under Leonid Margarius. In 2006 Mirco won the international piano competition ‘Pietro Argento’ followed in 2007 by the first prize in the Premio Venezia Piano competition organized by the friends of La Fenice.

Mirco gave a spectacular concert in aid of Venice in Peril in November and we are especially grateful to him; to Bob and Elisabeth Boas for hosting the event and Marina Morrison Atwater for sponsoring the whole evening. We are also extremely grateful to Luciana Malgara, Francesca Radcliffe and Luciana Moretti Forti for their help. ■

Ian Fraser has produced four, new, limited edition, contemporary architectural prints of Venice for Virtual Archive.

As a lover of Venice and its architecture he is pleased to support the Venice in Peril fund by donating 10% of each print sold through the web site www.virtual-archive.co.uk/venice.html
The Leading Travel Companies Conservation Foundation commits to research and restoration in Venice

The Leading Travel Companies Conservation Foundation has announced it will commit US$150,000 in 2008 to fund research and restoration in Venice as part of its inaugural sustainable tourism grant program.

The grant has been awarded to Venice in Peril. Part of this grant will be allocated to the publication of the forthcoming ‘Venice Report’ being produced in conjunction with Cambridge University. A restoration project will also be undertaken to preserve one of the city’s most precious monuments.

The Leading Travel Companies Conservation Foundation has committed to contributing $US1 million every year to projects around the world based on their ability to foster sustainable tourism, through the conservation and protection of the environment, wildlife and cultural heritage sites.

The Leading Travel Companies Conservation Foundation was established in 2008 to make a positive contribution to conservation and sustainability and is supported by Trafalgar Tours, Insight Vacations, Brendan Worldwide Vacations, Contiki Holidays, AAT Kings, Evan Evans, Busabout, Haggis Adventures, Shamrocker Adventures, and Eastern Trekker.

www.tltc.com/foundation

Exclusive Kirker Lecture Weekend in Venice

with John Julius Norwich

A weekend of lectures and visits in the company of renowned historian and Honorary Chairman of the Venice in Peril Fund, John Julius Norwich.

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please quote source code MVP
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Diary Dates 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venice in Peril Exhibition</td>
<td>14 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WH Patterson Gallery</td>
<td>6 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sickert in Venice, Private View</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulwich Picture Gallery</td>
<td>4 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Dolce Vita Gala Dinner, Olympia</td>
<td>25 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Dolce Vita, Olympia</td>
<td>26 – 29 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice in Peril Summer lecture</td>
<td>24 June</td>
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<td>Royal Geographical Society</td>
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Venice in Peril is sad to announce the unexpected death of Jonathan Raimes of Foundation Publishing.

Over the past three years Jonathan dedicated a great deal of his time and expertise to designing and producing our newsletter and other publications.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.
The Directors of W.H. Patterson cordially invite you to view our 18th Annual Venice In Peril Exhibition

Wednesday 14 January 2009 to Friday 6 February 2009 at 19, Albemarle Street, London. W1S 4BB.
Tel 0207 248 3824 Fax 0207 499 0119
Email – info@whpatterson.com

The exhibition can be previewed on our website www.whpatterson.com/preview

On display will be the finest selection of work by our contemporary artists and a wonderful array of 19th and 20th Century paintings.

During the exhibition, we will be giving away a 4th holiday to Venice sponsored by Kirker Holidays.

Kirker Holidays specialises in holidays for discerning travellers and is delighted to offer this prize to help the Venice in Peril fund raising. Kirker has been arranging holidays to Venice since 1986 and now offers a selection of over 30 hotels; all holidays including flights, water taxi transfers, hotel accommodation including breakfast and a complimentary entrance ticket for the Doge’s Palace.

The Venice in Peril prize being offered at the forthcoming Exhibition at WH Patterson Fine Art includes:

- Return schedule flights to Venice
- Return private water taxi transfers from airport to hotel
- 2 nights’ accommodation plus breakfast at a 4th deluxe hotel
- Entrance ticket to Doge’s Palace
- Kirker Guide Notes to restaurants, museums and sightseeing

All purchasers of paintings sold throughout this exhibition will automatically be entered into a draw for this wonderful prize.

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The Sunday Times

To book your tickets visit Ladolcevitaevent.co.uk Or call 0871 230 5589
My Venetian Dozen

First love, 1971 The opening scene of Visconti’s Death in Venice. Aschenbach sails from the Adriatic into the lagoon and city on board a steamer.

Second love, 2003 Thirty years later; I sail from the Adriatic into the lagoon and city on board a yacht.

Third love, 2008 To travel down the Grand Canal in a water taxi and land at the mooring to receive the Istituto Veneto’s prize.

First hate, 2008 Tourists covered with pigeons in St Mark’s Square

Second hate, 2008 Large boats and tankers sailing from the Adriatic into the lagoon and city

Third hate, 2008 The municipality of Venice and Mestre

Love, 2028 Arriving by train at the visitor centre at the southern end of the causeway amidst excited tourists learning what they are about to see and why.

Love, 2028 Visiting the city in a Ruskin week when day trippers are excluded from the city and it can be seen as Ruskin did.

Love, 2008 and 2028 Walking round the canals of Canareggio in the early morning.

Love, 2008 and 2028 Cichetti and a glass of wine in a bacaro

Love, 2008 and 2028 The Tintorettos of the Scuola di San Rocco

Love, 2008 and 2028 Jumping on any vaporetto that isn’t going up the Grand Canal.