

WINTER INTO SPRING NEWSLETTER

Madeira Terrace: The end of the beginning

Thanks to the sterling efforts of many local people, the Madeira Terrace appeal reached its crowdfunding target with only days to spare. One of the doughtiest campaigners, Russell Miller of Arundel Terrace, tells how it was done.

Halfway through the crowdfunding campaign to save Madeira Terrace, it looked as if it was going to be a disaster. Setting aside the £100,000 donated by the Council, the pledges in the first ten weeks of the campaign, averaging about 20 a day, amounted to only about £80,000. As the target was £420,000-plus and the closing date was November 30th, it meant there were just eight weeks left to raise some £220,000. At the existing rate of incoming pledges, it was impossible.

If the campaign failed, it would almost certainly mean that the Grade II-listed Terrace, with its glorious cast-iron latticed arches, identified by the Victorian Society as one of the top-ten at-risk Victorian and Edwardian buildings, would go the same way as the West Pier, and that an important part of the city's heritage would be lost for ever.

It was at this point that Chris Goss, my friend, neighbour and fellow KTS member, suggested we should see what we could do to help. After an hour-long meeting with the Council leader, Warren Morgan, and other officials at the Town Hall, we were given the full backing of the Council to do whatever we could to stimulate the campaign, in particular to seek major contributions from local businesses. (It was agreed that it was extremely unlikely that residents would be either willing, or able, to meet the target.)

Chris was keen to organise a major corporate fund-raiser, probably at Concorde 2; the venue was very supportive, but we could not get a celebrity to anchor the event within the very short timeframe. I concentrated on sending personalised e-mails to businesses with a vested interest in the aesthetics of the city. We both distributed hundreds of posters and fliers in and around Kemp Town.

Most shops and businesses were keen to help. Some,

shamefully, were not. Brand Vaughan, the estate agent in St George's Road, refused to put up a poster despite the fact that it is a business dependent, in part, on Brighton being an attractive place to live.

Leafleting at the weekend in New Road, it became clear that there were two principal reasons why people were reluctant to pledge. The first was public anger that successive councils had allowed the arches to deteriorate to such a point that they have had to be fenced off as a dangerous structure. The second was



that the money spent on the i360 would have been far better spent on the arches. Both were entirely reasonable, but both ignored a fundamental truth: we are where we are.

It was, in many ways, a frustrating project because we had no way of knowing if we were getting anywhere. The rate of pledges was slowly increasing, but was it anything to do with us? We had no idea.

One of the businesses we targeted was Soho House, the fast-growing international group of clubs and hotels which is to

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develop The Terraces restaurant on Madeira Drive. Soho House has a public commitment to engage with the local community wherever it operates. Twenty-four hours after sending an e-mail, Chris and I were invited to Soho House headquarters to meet Min Shrimpton, the company's communications manager.

Min listened carefully to what we had to say, explained it was the kind of project with which they liked to be involved and that she would do what she could to help. At the same time she warned us it might take some time, as it would have to be agreed with Brighton Seafront Regeneration, the leaseholder of The Terraces.

Ours was not, by any means, the only initiative to help the campaign. Jax Atkins and her team were doing sterling work organising a major raffle which would eventually raise more than £16,000, the fifth-largest donation. In the meantime, while we were waiting for a decision from Soho House, momentum was building. The number of pledges was steadily increasing – they would eventually exceed 2,100 – and the target was becoming tantalisingly close.

Three days before the deadline, when we were beginning to lose hope, we received the following simple e-mail from Min, without the slightest fanfare: “Thanks so much for your patience on this! We have now confirmed that, in partnership, Brighton Seafront Regeneration and Soho House would like to donate £50,000 to the fund.”

The target was not only met – it was smashed.

The crowdfunding campaign is probably just the beginning of the effort to save and renovate the whole Terrace, and continued community engagement will be vital to that effort. If you would like to stay involved and up to date, do drop an e-mail to Christopher Goss, Lewes Crescent, at christophergoss21@gmail.com.

Artist's Corner

Kemp Town is full of creative people: writers, painters, sculptors, photographers. All are most welcome to discuss their work in these pages. Here Carla Power, who lives in Lewes Crescent, tells us about the creative process that led to her first book, “If The Oceans Were Ink”.

Groucho Marx, it's said, was once on holiday in Italy, and in his hotel found himself in a lift with some Catholic priests. One of them turned to him and said: “Oh, Mr. Marx, it's such a pleasure to meet you. My mother is a huge fan of your movies.” Groucho replied, “Hey, I didn't know you guys were allowed to have mothers.”

The great cultural critic Edward Said told the joke in the context of a discussion of the portrayal of Muslims in the Western media: that the loudest voices about Islam were Strong and Loud men, whether despots, or extremists, or silent, muffled women. These stereotypes tend to drown out our discussions of other facets of Islam. The mass of ordinary Muslims don't make headlines, which means non-Muslims have no idea of Muslims as three-dimensional people, with mothers and mortgages and nut allergies, and kids who ask for the keys to the Subaru.

The Groucho Marx Mother problem, as I have decided to call it, was one impetus for me to write “If The Oceans Were Ink”, a memoir of studying the Quran with a traditional Islamic cleric. I enlisted my old friend and former colleague from the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Sheikh Muhammad Akram Nadwi, a renowned Indian scholar, and asked him if I could trail him. As a journalist I'd spent the better part of two decades writing on Muslims. But no editor had ever asked me to really immerse myself in a Muslim worldview, and to see how the Quran animated lives. I wanted to serve as a cultural cartographer, trying to map out where the Sheikh's beliefs and my own views converged and diverged. I'm a secular humanist and feminist, raised without religion by a mother whose Jewishness was a dim memory, and by a lapsed Quaker father. I'd grown up shuttling between the American Midwest, the Middle East and Central Asia, the child of a father who much preferred Kabul's bazaars and Cairo's mosques to teaching law in St. Louis.

Sheikh Akram gamely embarked on what for an intensely private guy would be a cumbersome year, with me shadowing him

at his lectures in Cambridge and Oxford, at the gym, seeing him off to Mecca on pilgrimage, and back to his ancestral village in Uttar Pradesh and his beloved madrasa in Lucknow. We spent lots of time in cafes and Oxford kebab shops, parsing Islamic



Sheikh Akram with Carla Power

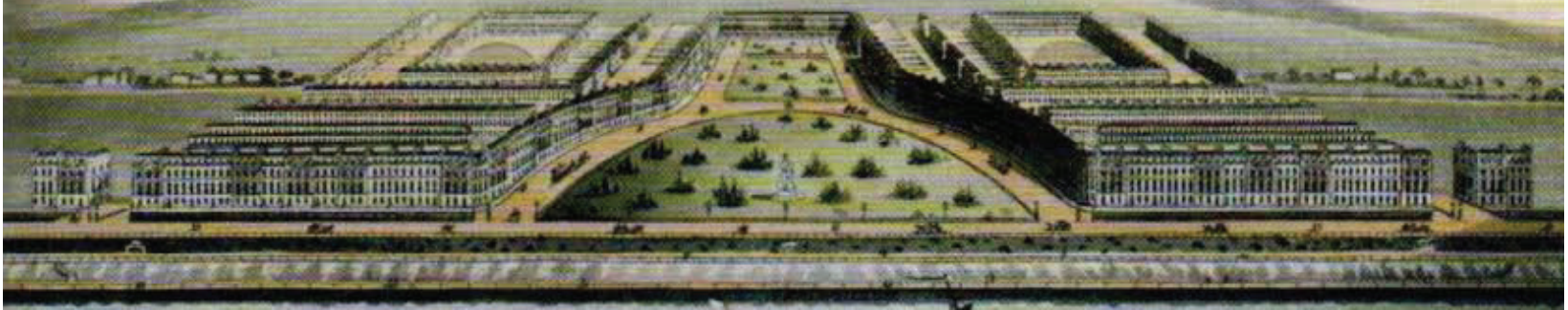
teachings on everything from jihad to veiling, from hell to Jesus. We also brought our families together for meals, and because our mothers died within ten days of one another, mourned the loss of our parents together.

I was tremendously lucky to have such an acclaimed—and at times, controversial – scholar as a friend, for his expertise in classical Islamic texts led him to my own interest in gender relations. His masterpiece—the book that made him famous in the Islamic world – is a ground-breaking history of women scholars of Islam. What he thought would be a mere pamphlet of 30 or 40 names of women has now stretched to a 40-volume work with over 10, 000 entries. The Sheikh's discoveries help point up the lie, peddled by extremists and Islamophobes alike, that Islamic religious authorities are male, and always have been.

My book now feels like an ever-more poignant appeal for cross-cultural understanding. On days that bring more dark news of Islamophobia or suicide bombs, I call the Sheikh, to hear a friendly voice, and a reminder that the divide extremists claim to see isn't really there, after all.

“Oceans” was a finalist for last year's Pulitzer Prize and 2015's National Book Award. Carla is now at work on her second, “Prodigal Children” (Random House/Penguin, 2019), investigating deradicalisation programmes for violent extremists.

Who's Been Living in My House ?



No. 5 Arundel Terrace: the home of Andy Anderson

Gordon 'Andy' Anderson, who died on September 5th 2017, was one of the very first active supporters of WBLMH. He was in possession of a large number of original leases and indentures for No 5 Arundel Terrace, some of which were signed by Thomas Kemp. Andy allowed us to photograph all these documents and also many of the paintings on the walls of his apartment. To see more go to www.kemptonwsociety.org and click on Who's Been Living in My House. Then find Arundel Terrace, House Histories, No 5. Andy was a fountain of information concerning the Estate over the last 60 years and I am grateful to have met him several times and shared some of his memories.

Vanessa Minns

Andy came to live at Arundel Terrace in 1957. He had just completed military service in the US Navy, in which he witnessed a hydrogen bomb test in the Marshall Islands and served at the US European HQ in devastated post-war Frankfurt and then Paris. It was in Paris that Andy met Willie and later came to live in Brighton at Willie's home. Count William de Belleruche, son of the impressionist painter Albert de Belleruche, was himself a painter and lifelong champion of his father's work and that of Frank Brangwyn. Through Willie's artistic connections Andy came to meet, and in many cases, befriend, artists, authors, actors and personalities of the post-war era. After Willie died in 1969 Andy continued to maintain a large circle of friends, many of whose names are still well known today.

Andrew Doig



Portrait of Andy by Duncan Grant

“[He] took to this raffish world of aristocratic bohemians... like a duck to water, and within its heady confines, where art and creativity and culture were paramount, Andy thrived. And if you ever thought that in the grim fifties party time was over, I can assure you now that in the group where Andy found himself the party never stopped.

“Climbing up to Andy's rooftop for his annual party was an event never to be missed, and the huge salads and the slightly burnt but delicious offerings that accompanied them, the relaxed and happy guests now crammed chimney breast to chimney breast, made this always the best party of the Brighton summer.”

Derek Granger

Kemp Town Society

The Hospital development

Jill Sewell reports: The heliport substructure has been completed and they are now building the deck and support structures.

The emergency department is progressing. Access is from a new area at the end of the current North Road for walking and car drop off at A&E, and parking is very difficult. If red lights flash and sirens ring this area is cleared as soon as possible, as major trauma ambulances will be arriving shortly. Taxi drivers are being informed. There is a new unit for walking casualties and by the

end of February there will be 70-bed short-stay wards adjacent, an increase from the current 4-8 beds.

The car park under the Stage 1 and 2 buildings will open shortly, although areas at the end will still be being worked on.

The website will soon show a speeded up film of the works to date, and is worth visiting for more information on the A&E redevelopment.

The Second Grand KTS Quiz Night: December 1st

Once again the Kemp Town Society welcomed Quizmaster Robert Snell to the august surroundings of St George's, where the Advent hangings added purple lustre to the occasion. Sixty people, making up ten tables of keen-as-mustard quizzers, braved the freezing weather to compete.

The winners, a clear six points ahead of all the rest, were the "Ealing Comedy" table, starring Keith and Jayne Paulin, Rupert Bagilhole and Cathy Moss, and their guests from Ealing. Well done!

Our thanks to Vanessa Minns for organising this, and for providing delicious picnic trays to keep the brain cells lively. Thanks too to Vaughan Rees and Tony Hyde, who, with Vanessa, chose the excellent wines; to Olli, from St George's, whose help was invaluable on the night; to all who helped shift chairs, etc, and to Friends of St George's for the venue.

Not least, our thanks to the ingenious Mr Snell, who we hope will come again next year.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS FORTHCOMING

Save the date!

The 2nd Kemp Town Society Concert and Dinner will be held at St George's Church on March 10th 2018. We are delighted to welcome back the Brighton Youth Orchestra for this very special occasion.

The dinner will be three courses with coffee this year.

Cash bar. Ticket price to be announced.

Members are encouraged to start assembling their tables, from 6 to 8 people please.

May 12th: AGM of the Society, at EF, 1-2 Sussex Square, at 10.30 am.

And on June 30th: the Garden Party! Full details in the next newsletter.

Friends of St George's Church: Forthcoming events
On Thursday February 15th, David Fisher will give an illustrated lecture on "Our Brighton Hippodrome".
On Thursday June 14th, Dr Sue Berry will tell the remarkable story of the city churches in Brighton in the period 1800-1914.

For more information, e-mail
friendsofstgeorgeschurch@gmail.com

Please send all copy and ideas for the next newsletter to
annwroc@economist.com by early April. Thank you!
The Kemp Society wishes all members a very happy New Year