



SPRING INTO SUMMER 2019 NEWSLETTER

Blue plaques – could you have one?

The history of our houses and their previous residents is often fascinating and worth publicly recording; and besides, few things add kudos to a building like a blue plaque. The latest to appear in the neighbourhood, at 8 Chesham Street, commemorates Prince Petr Alexeyevich Kropotkin, a Russian revolutionary and geographer (an interesting pairing!), who was expelled from his country in 1911 and lived here for six years until, with the revolution of 1917, it was safe to return.

How could you acquire such a plaque for your front elevation? As Jill Sewell, who represents the Kemp Town Society on Brighton and Hove's Commemorative Plaque Panel, explains, the first step is simple. You download the online application form, and propose someone. Blue plaques don't materialise out of thin air and civic pride; even if "everybody knows" that the Duke of X lived in a certain house, he will need to be properly proposed. The proposer can be the building's owner, a relative, or simply a fan. Recently a group of "historians and enthusiasts" wrote from County Cork on behalf of Edward Bransfield Master RN, "the first person to sight, sound, chart and prove the existence of the Antarctic continent on 30th January 1820." But sadly, not a Kemp Towner.

All such proposals are considered by the panel, a group of around a dozen people representing the main conservation areas in the city. Because their investigative work is painstakingly researched they award, on average, only around four plaques a year. The first criterion, obviously enough, is that the candidate must have a firm connection with Brighton and Hove: if not death and burial (as in the case of Edward Master), then birth or "substantial" residence. Prince Kropotkin, with his six years, just about scraped in. But the fact that Lewis Carroll spent happy holidays at 11 Sussex Square hardly earns him a plaque; the one he has is neither blue nor official, of which more later.

Some applications fall at those hurdles, though possibly more at another: a polite enquiry halfway down the form as to whether "monies are available". The cost of a blue plaque, including building

works and decoration, is about £1,200. Administrative costs, such as those for getting planning permission and listed-building consent (blue-plaque names tend to live in listed buildings!) can add quite a bit to that. The Council used to fund one plaque a year, but that source, unsurprisingly, has dried up recently. Now everyone must pay for their own.

If you can pay, could you therefore design and put up your own plaque? In theory, yes, and some do - whether out of devotion, or impatience, or a wish to have something other than blue. The blue plaques never vary now in style or script, though rectangular rather than round ones are used to commemorate events rather than people. (These are rare, and there are none in Kemp Town.) They are limited, too, to one per building, no matter how heavy the footfall of celebrities.

Individual initiative explains the Lewis Carroll plaque, as well as the metal plaque put up by Brighton Council at the Dome two years ago to celebrate Abba's appearance there. (The panel took a dim view of that, on the ground of non-residence.) And though it may seem tempting to put up two or three variously coloured plaques on your building with your own cash, it is far better to have the panel at your back to negotiate those multiple, and unavoidable, permissions and consents.

The panel operates without fear or favour, but historical anniversaries nudge it a little. More plaques than usual were installed last year to honour Brighton and Hove's four SOE veterans on the anniversary of the Armistice, as well as the city's first-world-war VCs, who were given both dedicated stones at the war memorial and blue plaques on the houses associated with them. Suffragettes are now in the frame: Brighton has just honoured its first, Clementina Black, with a plaque on the Ivy building in Ship Street, and a plaque commemorating the office of the Women's Social and Political Union may go up near the Clock Tower.

How about more in Kemp Town? None are in the offing, and the odd half-joking remark has been heard on the panel: "You've got enough!" Surely not?

Artists' Corner

Sally and Derek Henry are graphic designers. They live in Sussex Mews, in what was one of 10 stables built around 1840 by Lord Abergavenny. Their current studios originally accommodated six horses and a carriage, with hay stored in a loft on the first floor.

Their college training was in Visual Communication in Brighton and St.Martin's School of Art in London. They both work in a variety of media, including acrylic and encaustic, and their most recent work makes exciting use of artificial intelligence. They send their original photographs online to a computer in Cupertino, California, which runs a neural network, imitating the ability of the human brain to recognise structures and faces. The computer enhances and transforms the photos, and in less than five minutes they are returned as modified digital files - often touched with magical hues and textures, which the artists then refine to create photomontage original giclée prints.

As her latest project, Sally has applied this technique to photos of the Enclosures. (Many readers will



October



June

remember her wonderful prints of "Alice in the Gardens", juxtaposing Tenniel's figures on photos of the Estate). The neural network process is particularly effective in bringing out structures, especially the strong clustering of trees and tall plantings, and in catching, as Derek puts it, "that change in the atmosphere as you go through the gate".

Sally has worked to capture that special light and feel of the Gardens from season to season, and the result is a series of 13 very different landscape photomontages that make up a calendar for 2020. She has most generously offered to sell these calendars for KTS funds at the Garden Party on June 29th, when Alice prints will also be available: perfect presents for anyone, whether resident or visitor, who loves and treasures the Enclosures.

Derek and Sally, with Caroline Austin, are holding an "Open Studios" event at 1 Sussex Mews, Kemp Town, Brighton BN2 1GZ every weekend in May, from 11-6. (with a private view on Friday May 3rd at 7pm; call 07896 700 553 for an invite). The Mews is next to Marmalade Store on Eastern Road; first on the left through the archway.

Development news

The Committee, and **Mike Bedingfield** in particular, have been keeping a sharp eye on the latest plans for **Phase 2 of the Marina development** - planning applications for which have presumably now been filed.

A second public consultation took place in January. Mike noted that the only changes in response to our many criticisms after the first were "design modifications to the tower facade to make it 'more interesting' [hmm!]; amendments to the heights of the northern buildings in Phase 2, with the planners wanting more variety and a 'stepping up' towards the tower; extra car parking to provide 150 spaces in the new scheme, alongside the 200 or so spaces in Phase 1; and reconfiguration and reduction of the landscaped square beside the Marina's western arm, to take account of the fact that it will be unusable in stormy weather." (Pretty obvious, surely!)

In short, nothing substantive has been done to mitigate the chief drawbacks of the proposal, which Brighton Society characterises as "a blatant attempt to maximise development potential at the expense of the public realm". Hear, hear.

Meanwhile, **Chris Goss** reports on **Madeira Terrace**:

"Though outward signs of progress on the Terrace have been minimal, there has been considerable work behind the scenes. A full-time project manager for the Terrace was appointed by the council last summer and is hard at work, going through the council's procurement, planning and other procedures. I have spoken to her at some length and she seems able and committed. A

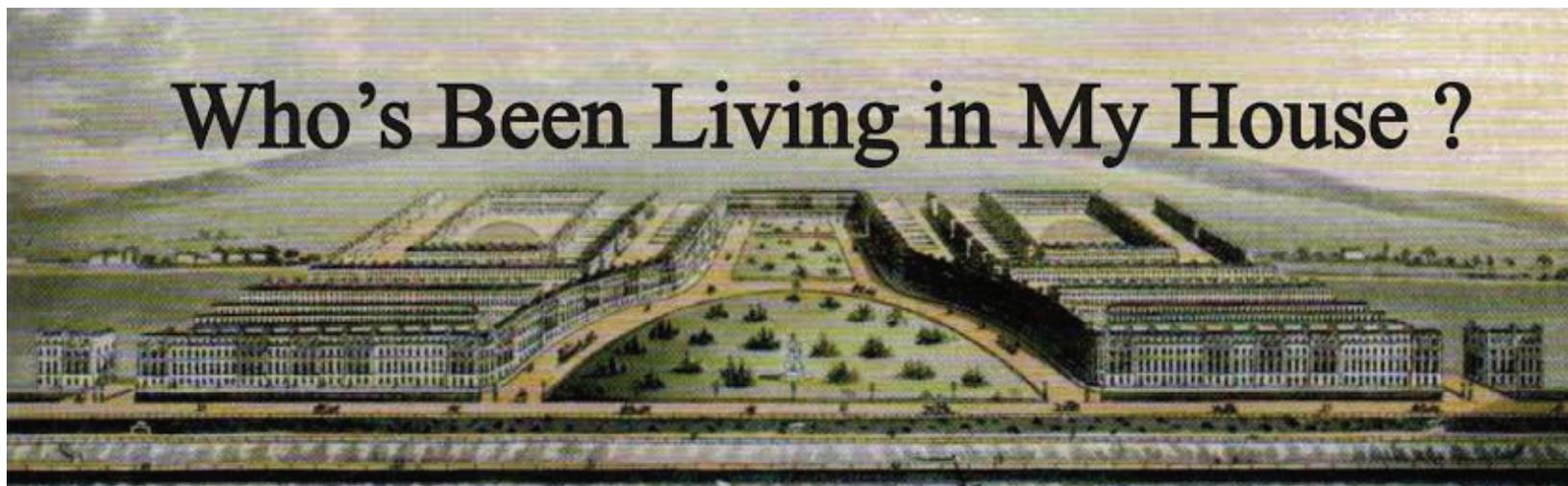
refurbished container has been placed on Madeira Drive to be a focal point for information and interaction with the public about the Terrace. It is unclear how often it will be open, but it was used during the half-marathon. The Council is issuing periodic newsletters, but I believe that updates on the work need to be disseminated more widely.

"As for the three crowd-funded arches, the Council is working through the assessment, contracting and planning issues involved in getting them refurbished and operational. Its plan is to refurbish the three arches at the pier end of the Terrace. These are structurally somewhat different from the rest of the Terrace, and I understand that they would involve the fewest structural issues with the Terrace as a whole while the work is carried out. A date for starting that work is still not clear.

"Recently a publicity campaign and petition were launched by Jax Atkins and Derek Wright (who have done a lot of good fundraising in the past), asking for three arches near Concorde to be refurbished first. This is structurally more difficult, however, and could seriously compromise the viability of any overall plans for refurbishing the main length of the Terrace. A committee of the Council is scheduled to consider the petition this month.

"The second bid for Heritage Lottery Funding to assist with the refurbishment of the entire Terrace failed. The Council plans to re-apply, but I am not hopeful that it will succeed and I believe that, in any event, there will need to be primary reliance on private investment to refurbish the entire structure."

Who's Been Living in My House ?



Water Supply to the Kemp Town Estate

The first requirement for any settlement at all is, of course, a constant supply of fresh water. Here in the South Downs a lot of our water is obtained from adits deeply formed below the chalk. Wells were sunk and various-sized pumps used to bring this water to the surface. The huge beam engines at the former Goldstone Pumping Station pumped up most of the water for Brighton from the 1870s from adits approximately 200 feet below the surface.



Well at 2 Sussex Square

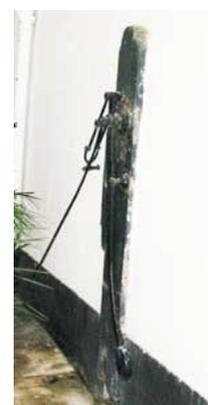
Piped water was not brought to the Kemp Town Estate until 1834. As yet, there seem to be no surviving documents concerned with the water supply to the houses on the Estate or indeed the Gardens before that date. However we do have evidence of two or three precious wells, and indeed drains, in separate properties. Recently I was lucky enough to be given photos of one of them.

When the light-well paving was being resurfaced four years ago at 2 Sussex Square (now part of the EF Language school) workmen were astonished to discover a large hole adjacent to the wall between numbers 2 and 3. This proved to have been a well 16.5 metres deep, which could have been used by both properties from each side of the party wall, but which had been surfaced over - presumably once piped water was available.

This is the only well on the Estate of which I have a photograph, although there are rumours of possibly two more. In the light-well at 36 Sussex Square, and similarly positioned, there remains the upper part of a large cast-iron hand pump marked Gubbins Plumbers Brighton. It is tempting to imagine the 18-year-old footman Edward Smith, recorded in the 1851 Census as living at No 36, spending some energetic hours every day, noisily pumping up enough water to supply the 13 people living there. A drain, passing from the house under the front area and vault to the centre of the road, also still exists at this property.

If you have any further watery clues in your own property, please do send even the smallest detail to the Contact Us address on the website: www.kemptonstatehistories.com or www.kempton-society.org.uk.

Vanessa Minns



Pump at 36 Sussex Square



Pump handle

EVENTS FORTHCOMING

The AGM of the Society will be held at 10.30am on Saturday May 4th at EF, 1-2 Sussex Square.

The **Friends of St George's Church** are busy planning their programme for 2019-2020, offering some firm favourites: in June 2019, a Book Day with a Bring-and-Buy book sale; a film on an artist, chosen from Phil Grabsky's collection, "Exhibition on Screen"; a coach outing, possibly to Wisley, and hopefully, more music from Afghanistan. New directions include an introduction to samba drumming from Silver Sounds - hear it, then try it; and a lecture on garden design to whet the appetite for 2023, the 200th year of the Enclosures. On a planetary scale, we highlight the threat posed by sudden, disastrous depletion of insect life. Contact us at friendsofstgeorgeschurch@gmail.com if you want to work with us on these events.

On weekends and Bank holidays in May and early June, starting on **May 5th**, the **Secret Garden** (which is entered by the double gates from Bristol Gardens) will be hosting a major exhibition by the sculptor **William Pye**, called "Sculpting with Water". Nick Dwyer, the plantsman, has been working hard through the winter to make sure that his plantings will both complement the sculptures and be at their best and most colourful in May.



Slots are still open for volunteers to man the welcome desk. Visit info@secretgardenkemptown.co.uk for details.

Open Garden Day: Be there!

As many of you know, on **Thursday June 6th** the Enclosures are opening under the **National Garden Scheme**. This is a really important occasion for the Gardens, our community and the National Garden Scheme. There has already been great interest in the opening and George Plumtree, chief executive of the NGS, is hoping to come himself.

Volunteers are needed to help as guides for the scheduled tours, to prepare beforehand and tidy up

afterwards, to be generally available in the Gardens during the afternoon, and to help alongside the NGS at the entrance. Everyone will be briefed and given notes well ahead of the opening. Volunteers are not expected to be deeply knowledgeable either about the history or the plants - Jeremy and Patrick will be around to deal with that!

If you'd like to help, please contact [Herb Nahapiet](mailto:herbnnahapiet@gmail.com) (herbnnahapiet@gmail.com).

Deck yourself for the *Hats* Garden Party!

Saturday June 29th, 12-4 North Garden

Design and wear an extraordinary hat (or just dig out that old panama - anti-wind precautions advised), and join us for an afternoon of jazz, Pimm's, free food, books, children's games, bric a brac, beautiful accessories, the Raffle and stalls showcasing local artists.....

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS to help set up on Friday June 28th from 2pm (muscles not necessarily required)

- to clear up afterwards on Saturday (ditto)
- to make cakes, jam, etc, for the Cake Stall (bring them along on the day)
- to donate second-hand books to the Book Stall



(collection can be arranged, or bring on the day)

- and especially to donate intriguing, beautiful and costly **RAFFLE PRIZES!** (Please let Rupert Bagihole (rupertbagihole@yahoo.co.uk) know about these well before June 29th, so that they can be collected and mentioned on the display lists).

We're especially looking for people to take over the Raffle from Rupert and Cathy next year. Please contact Rupert straight away on the e-mail above if you would like to shadow him and learn the ropes!

Please send all contributions and ideas for the next newsletter to Ann Wroe: annwroe@economist.com, or Flat 3a, 14 Lewes Crescent. Thankyou!