



## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2020/21

### A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

#### **The seafront lanterns: shining a light**

Many of us have noticed in recent years the sorry state of the beautiful lanterns that line Marine Parade and Madeira Drive. The columns are rusting, and a large number of the spiked octagonal lanterns are either out or missing. The once-regular programme of maintenance and repainting seems to be in abeyance. In November last year, however, contractors began systematically removing the lanterns and replacing them with small, brutalist modern lights.

The Council explained that, after an inspection of all 80 street lights on Marine Parade and Madeira Drive, 20 lanterns (and their brackets) were found to pose a safety risk and to need immediate removal. Another 40 will be removed over the next 12 months. Meanwhile, the temporary lights will have to do their job, though much less gracefully. This seemed sad, but reasonable enough.

In mid-November, however, an extraordinary post appeared on Marketplace, part of Facebook. It offered a “wonderful opportunity to purchase a PAIR of original Victorian Brighton and Hove

lamps, these are 100% genuine and once adorned the seafront but sadly recently decommissioned. Would suite [sic] a number of wonderful ideas from the garden to the house a wonderful conversation piece never to be offered again, an absolute one off.” The price was £575.

Several worried Kemp Towners contacted Michael Bedingfield, a member of the KTS committee who also sits on the Conservation Advisory Group, asking what on earth was going on. Michael alerted the Council. At around the same time the Argus also began to investigate, and sent a reporter posing as a buyer. Council officers also turned up to reclaim the lanterns, and happily they are now in safe custody

Since then, KTS has not ceased to keep up pressure on the Council. On November 23rd, Councillor Phélim Mac Cafferty, the leader of the Council, wrote to the contractor demanding that the company must investigate what happened, assure the Council that it will never happen again, and make a public apology to the city. He

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reminded the company that it has a very lucrative contract for various works with Brighton and Hove, and accused it of “unforgivable, inexcusable neglect”.

What will be done to the lanterns is still unclear. Some 28 of the lamp-posts on the Esplanade, which date from 1893, are Grade II-listed and must therefore be preserved on site. Although the lanterns are the most striking to the eye, the columns are also proudly decorated with acanthus leaves and foliage sprays. Ideally, the other lights should also be in this style. The Council says it is bringing in both an independent lighting consultant and Historic England to work out “long-term solutions”. The lanterns had already been converted to LEDs, so the main problem is the restoration of the brackets and frames, which are actually fibreglass replicas of the original 1930s fittings in copper and brass. The men who are now removing them say they will be replaced by copper again, which should be longer-lasting. How long will it take? “Quite a bit of time.” The Council which is running a huge deficit, is similarly vague.

KTS is determined to keep the Council up to the mark and will maintain vigilance on this story in the months ahead.



# Kemp Town Society

## A Helping Hand

Last year's Kemp Town Society AGM agreed that the Society's chosen charities for 2021 are Martlets and Off the Fence, two organisations that are well-known locally for their work among people struggling with great crises in their lives--- and which now face a crisis in funding themselves.

Throughout the covid-19 pandemic Martlets has kept providing life-changing hospice care for local people with terminal illness and their loved ones. Most of the patients are supported in their own homes, while others choose to spend their final days at the hospice, or to stay as inpatients for symptom management. With the impact of covid Martlets has rapidly developed its use of technology, from helping patients make video calls to stay in touch with family and friends, to offering outpatients 'virtual' support services such as counselling, welfare advice and social activities. Martlets also provides a 24-hour telephone 'hub' advice line which allows patients and carers to call a special hotline at any time for medical advice and help with their symptoms.

At the heart of everything Martlets does is a vision of hope, purpose and possibility. The team are continually hopeful for a brighter future with fewer restrictions, where patients can see the nurses smiling - without a mask. But Martlets too needs help; it relies on community support for most of its funding, but was not able to run its usual fundraising events last year.



Off the Fence has similarly been struggling. This charity, based in Brighton, works primarily with the homeless. Its Antifreeze project was set up 20 years ago to prevent premature deaths among rough sleepers; it provides everything from hot food and sleeping bags to emergency and temporary accommodation, offers one-to-one support and runs courses and apprenticeship schemes. It also runs a Laundrette van and a Shower van, so that long-term rough sleepers can regain some dignity in their lives. Their Gateway Centre offers help and creative projects for women in crisis, and OTF also supports children who are having difficulties at school.

During lockdowns all workshops, drop-ins and face-to-face support had to be suspended, and the Antifreeze day centre had to close. OTF continued to do what they could by offering telephone support and going out into the streets, in the afternoons and evenings, to see "who may have fallen through the accommodation net".

Let's hope that, with our own fundraising events, we can give both these charities a helping hand in 2021.

Members can also make individual donations by following the links below.



<https://www.martlets.org.uk/donate/>



<https://www.offthefence.org.uk/donate>

[www.kempton-society.org.uk](http://www.kempton-society.org.uk)



## From Tyneside to Kemp Town

One of the best and most famous 19th-century views of Kemp Town now hangs in the Brighton Museum & Art Gallery, just a mile or so from the spot that inspired it.

Kemp Town From The Sea was painted by the marine and landscape artist John Wilson Carmichael in 1840. But who was Carmichael? And why was this view of Thomas Kemp's new estate, full of life and architectural detail, painted?



Carmichael was born in Newcastle in 1799, the son of a shipwright and himself an apprentice carpenter in a Tyne shipyard. Fortunately for him, his early interest in drawing was encouraged by his employers and by 1825 he had left the shipyard and set himself up as an artist with his own studio in Newcastle.

Within a year or two he had made his name with scenes of naval battles and was known locally as a painter of "industry, genius and enthusiasm"; a street directory of 1833 lists him as a landscape and marine painter and teacher of drawing. By now married with a young family, Carmichael was accumulating prestigious patrons, had a fashionable Newcastle city centre address and in 1835 exhibited for the first time at the Royal Academy.

The decades after the defeat of Napoleon were a golden age for British art, with both Constable and Turner at their peak. Turner, in particular, was much esteemed by Carmichael and exerted a great influence on his art. While Carmichael specialised in seascapes and naval scenes, as befitted his maritime background, he was also often commissioned to capture the fast-changing

landscapes and monuments of the growing industrial age.

In 1846 it was time for the artist and his family to leave the north-east and move to London and the centre of the art world. After being seen off with a lavish civic reception, he set up home on the edge of Bloomsbury, just off Tottenham Court Road, in a five-floor town house complete with servant.

Moving south opened up new landscape vistas and opportunities and it was in the next few years that Carmichael visited Brighton - following in the footsteps of Constable and Turner - to paint local views.

In 1848 he painted a view of the Royal Albion Hotel from the beach, having produced a preparatory drawing two years earlier from a spot just to the east of the current Palace Pier. The painting shows the centre of Brighton still as a flourishing fishing village, but with the trappings of tourism clearly encroaching on everyday life; the Albion Hotel had opened 20 years earlier and the railway line from London, which was to radically transform the city, had started carrying passengers in 1839.



A second local view further emphasises this period of major change for the city. A branch railway line to Lewes and on to Hastings had been completed in 1846 and included a viaduct over the small valley just outside Brighton station, the ambitious masterpiece of the line's surveyor and architect John Urpeth Rastrick. Carmichael's painting of 1848 captures the sweep of the

# Kemp Town Society

viaduct across the valley through what was then open countryside. The picture was a success for Carmichael, and was exhibited at that year's Royal Academy show.



The third of Carmichael's trio of Brighton pictures is of course the view of Kemp Town from the sea. This is sometimes dated 1840 but is perhaps more likely to share a later 1840s date with the other two paintings; Chichester Terrace was not completed until the 1850s but appears largely complete in the picture.

In addition, and intriguingly, Carmichael had met the 6th Duke of Devonshire around 1845 and had been commissioned to paint works for Chatsworth. The same Duke had purchased Number 1 Lewes Crescent in 1829 and continued to use it as a seaside home until his death in 1858; could this connection be the reason for Carmichael's visits to Brighton, and for his discovery of the new and fashionable Kemp Town Estate?

The picture captures a wealth of both architectural and everyday detail including early Victorian sea bathing in action - bathing machines with their "modesty hoods" both pulled up onto the beach and down at the water's edge.

Carmichael's move to London did not bring him the wider fame and wealth he would have wished for. Competition among artists there was fiercer, and although he continued to exhibit at the Royal Academy until 1859, his pictures were twice 'skied' - hung high in their room, out of general and easy sight. The family moved to smaller houses in less expensive parts of London and in 1862, when Carmichael was 63 and after the death from consumption of his son, the family left London for retirement in Scarborough where he died, probably from a stroke, in 1868.

The posthumous critical verdict on his work has focused on a lack of originality - his seascapes were "essentially all the same" - and too strong a desire to please his patrons rather than develop new approaches and compositions. The art market, however, is less dismissive; his Brighton beach painting was sold at Sotheby's in 2006 for the not inconsiderable sum of US\$42,000.

His other Brighton paintings are both in public collections. The London Road viaduct picture is part of the collection of the National Railway Museum in York; the view of Kemp Town belongs to Brighton's own Museum and Art Gallery and is currently on display on the first floor balcony overlooking the main gallery.





## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Last year, many members will have taken part in the first stage of public consultation for the redevelopment of the Brighton Gasworks site. The original timing was for a planning submission to be made in autumn 2020. The developers received far more feedback than anticipated and the timetable has been revised, enabling residents to continue to give feedback on the proposal.

In the main, the feedback has focused on the height of the development - 15 stories being considered out of scale in relation to the neighbouring buildings - and the percentage of affordable housing. This affects the density of the development and the proposed number of units, compared to its neighbours. With such a large-scale development, there is a risk of creating a microclimate, with unacceptably low levels of daylight and sunlight and the formation of wind tunnels.

Additional questions have been asked regarding the process for decontaminating the land and the impact of this on our health. Similar to the questions relating to the proposed Marina development, the broader infrastructure has been questioned, including traffic congestion, public transport, car parking and cycle lanes.

The developer, St William, assures us they are taking all feedback seriously and are now planning a second public consultation early this year. They are sensitive to Covid-19 and would like to hold this in person, subject to government guidelines. KTS

will be interested to see the updated proposals and intends to respond formally to them before the planning application is submitted in the Spring. We will keep you posted through the KTS website and look forward to seeing many of you at the public consultation, should this be possible.

To the south of this proposed development, we await anxiously the start of enabling work on Black Rock. This was originally fixed for March, then put back to September. The hope is that work will begin in the New Year, when we look forward to seeing the clearing of the site itself and also the refurbishment of The Temple and Reading Room - both in a desperate plight, after the effects of fire and rough sleepers have taken their toll. It remains an ambition of KTS to see the Esplanade restored to something like its former elegance and attractiveness.

Members continue to be robust in expressing their views about traffic developments, notably about Madeira Drive, where a kind of compromise involving one-way traffic has now been reached. There is considerable disquiet about the appearance of new cycle lanes and the congestion they cause by removing space for cars at key junctions. This is something that affects every town and city in the land as part of a government initiative and is thus beyond the remit of KTS, which seeks to promote safe walking and cycling within the conservation area.



## At work with the Regency plasterer

When I first moved into Sussex Square, never a day passed without seeing one of Neil England's vans parked up on the Estate, writes **Vanessa Minns**.

Neil, a master-plasterer, spent his working life restoring or recreating plasterwork of all kinds in historic houses and palaces all over the country. These include the Sir John Soane House in London and many important buildings in Brighton, among them the Pavilion, Brunswick Estate and our own Estate here in Kemp Town.

What follows is part of an article written by Neil included in "Plasterwork, Stucco, Cast Iron, Bricks and Bungaroosh", to be found on [www.kemptonstatehistories](http://www.kemptonstatehistories) and listed on the Estate page. It may help to explain the vertical cracks seen in rooms all over the Estate, where doorways and arches have been unadvisedly knocked through 19th-century walls in the past.

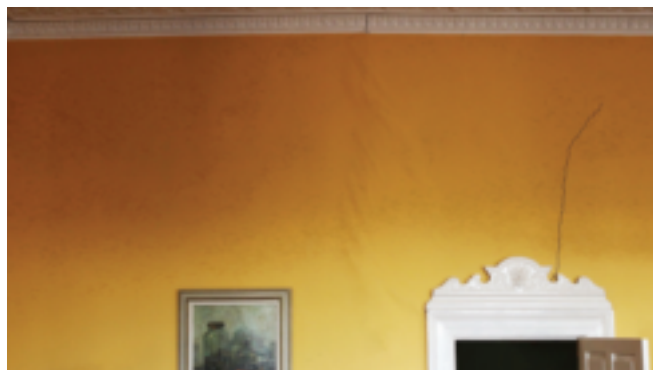
### Construction of interiors

'Stud walls, as we would call them today, were cut and fitted in the well-proven traditional method of the time with pit-sawn timbers forming powerful structural frames. The frames were installed as full load-bearing elements of the building and held high status within its construction.



*This photo clearly shows where the diagonal bracing has been cut (bottom left of the right hand opening) in order to install a new doorway. The supports were reinstated during restoration and the doorway removed.*

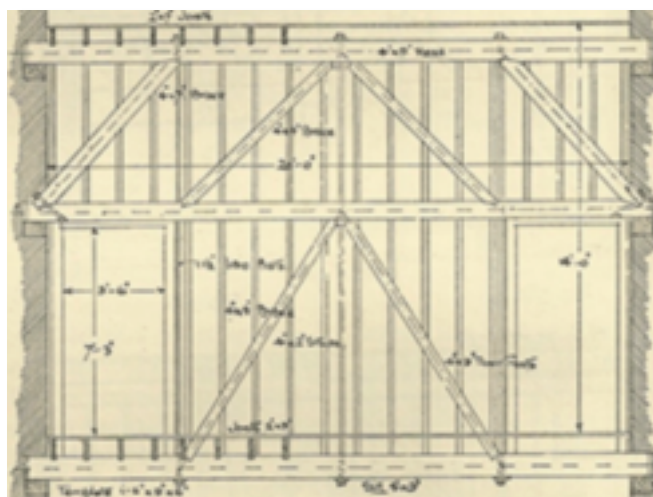
'During the construction of the interior rooms in a house, and prior to the floorboards being nailed to the joisting, a wedged post-bracing system was placed beneath the joists and the entire



*A typical internal wall crack*

middle section tensioned upwards. Thereafter, the floorboards and herringbone braces were nailed into the joists and the lathwork nailed to the joists beneath. The bracing was then removed and the un-lathed ceiling areas closed in, thus creating a tensioned floor capable of taking great weight without complaint or bounce. Little understood is the system of pre-bracing with the floors as has been evidenced during my time in these buildings.

'In modern times, mistakes are often made by assuming that these frames are merely stud partitions and piercing them to form doorways/ fire exits etc. Removing the diagonal bracings and stressed integrity of this feature causes the frame structure to reload and move away from the party walls, then to sag causing cracking and, in some cases, can cause full internal structural failure.'



*Drawing of internal wall construction showing diagonal bracing.*

Please send all ideas and contributions for the next Newsletter (in April) to [annwroe@economist.com](mailto:annwroe@economist.com) or [paulinkeith@hotmail.com](mailto:paulinkeith@hotmail.com), or drop them through the door of 14 Lewes Crescent. Thank you!

# Kemp Town Society

## Kemp Town Society Quiz October 2020

The winner of the 2020 KTS Quiz, of necessity an emailed affair, was Sue Craig, and the runners-up Pip Tucker and Frans Blok. Congratulations to them! And thanks also to those other plucky members who had a go.

Several entrants were kind enough to say that they found the quiz a useful learning experience, though challenging. Certainly competitors were required take to the streets and to look upwards, at the hopper on the north side of St Mark's or the clumsily joined acanthus leaves at the top of 50 Sussex Square - or downwards, at Handyside's name on the pillar box, or that mis-spelled Millenium (sic) plaque in the pavement by the parking ticket machine at Montague Place.

It was also good to see use being made of the Who's Been Living in My House? Website, that constantly growing archive of the 105 houses that comprise the KT Estate. As well as enabling one to find out who Cubitt's neighbours were in those



early days, or what holds bungaroosh together, it is a fascinating historical treasury. If you have photographs of your house to share, or stories to tell, do let us know.

It is difficult to determine when we will be able to meet again as a society, but our hope is that next year's quiz will once again be the convivial event we have come to enjoy in EF Language School.

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## The Secret Garden open for business in 2021

There have been exciting developments at the Secret Garden during lockdown, and the Trustees look forward to welcoming visitors to openings during spring, summer and autumn 2021 to enjoy the plantings and a range of events through the seasons.

The high point of the year will be the special exhibition next May. "In Nature", a celebration of trees and plant forms, will feature major works by three generations of sculptors and will include new pieces made especially for the garden. Events to take place will include tours and talks on the sculpture.

While the garden has been closed in the pandemic, the trustees have commissioned and overseen major work in the Loggia and its associated buildings. The Loggia has been renovated by Dylan Jones, who lives in Kemp Town and whose company, Flint+Lime, specialises in heritage building restoration. His work here has also included the restoration and redecoration of the Garden Room (to the left of the Loggia). He has glazed the original window in the wall separating the Garden Room from the tunnel, which is now

illuminated with natural light to dramatic effect.

The annual cost of maintaining the Secret Garden - before the expenditure on renovations - is about £10,000. The trustees are therefore now offering the garden as a venue for weddings and civil ceremonies (for which they have obtained a licence from the Council), with catering by the ever-popular local company, TABLE, who also provide refreshments at the garden openings. Two highly successful socially-distanced weddings have taken place, and there are already bookings for ceremonies next summer.

For more information about the Secret Garden, see [www.secretgardenkemptown.co.uk](http://www.secretgardenkemptown.co.uk)

### The KTS Garden Party 2021

It's never too early to mention that next year's Garden Party (covid willing) is on June 26th, and all ideas for pepping up the format would be very welcome.

Please send them to [annwroe@economist.com](mailto:annwroe@economist.com) or pop a note through the door of 14 Lewes Crescent. Thankyou!

**ADVANCE NOTICE... OUR 2021 AGM WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY MAY 1st**