



KEMP
TOWN
SOCIETY

*Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year!*

WINTER 2021/22 NEWSLETTER

The beach banks and trenches: a mystery explained

Among the puzzles that have sprung up ever since the Black Rock Development started (for which we are still extremely grateful – it's so good to be noticed!), perhaps the biggest is the array of parallel diagonal trenches and banks that have been dug into the non-tidal shingle between Black Rock station and the Volks workshop. The job is very well done; but what is it for? A ready-made set for a First World War film, perhaps? Or a cruelly challenging skateboarding course?

Neither, said a cheerful chap from Landbuild, as he and a couple of colleagues unfolded a giant Plan in the open boot of their car. These are the “wave formations” that will form the new, expanded reserve for vegetative shingle – five times the size of the previous one by the Western Breakwater, according to the Council. They are straight waves, rather than rippling or curved, because that's what the designer wanted. “I call them Nascar lines,” says one, referring to the road patterns in American stock-car racing. “Alien landing places,” says another. Nonetheless, they take a justified pride in them.

The lighter-coloured compacted earth between the shingle banks is seeded soil from the Breakwater “donor beach”. West of the Duke's Mound beach sign, the seeds are those of sea kale,

yellow horned poppy, Hobart rockrose and sea buckthorn, which have been specially grown at Kew, says the man from Landbuild; east of it, they are of coastal grasses.

A low fence will keep the public at arm's length. The main reason that vegetative shingle survived on the donor beach was because no humans trampled it – except that intrepid camper in the small blue tent, whom many will remember. Visitors will still have plenty of local flora to explore, with an ecology trail along the new boardwalk, and new access ways (already half-built, one at the bottom of Duke's Mound) from the boardwalk and Madeira Drive to the sea. The boardwalk itself is also being hammered up, three metres wide and, from the look of it, a seasonally appropriate winter-sky grey.

All in all, work is going on very fast along the south side of Madeira Drive, and I recommend anyone to take a stroll down there, along the new pedestrian path, and have a look. The north side is more problematic. The Council website confesses that a big mistake was made when they demolished the part of the Green Wall by the Volks office, with its splendid fig tree and Japanese spindle, without consulting Building Green, the voluntary community network that looks after the wall. But,

says the council with slight desperation, “both species are resilient to hard pruning, and, given the age and likely strong existing root network, will potentially recover as the root network is still in the ground.” Let’s hope so.

On the mound itself, the native chalk flora “are generally slow-growing...[and] will take some time to establish fully. In the meantime, the long-dormant seed-bed within the ground...has taken the opportunity to grow into a prolific coverage of thistles. This will require some intervention...”

No mention of the tamarisks, which are re-sprouting merrily, but again Landbuild can explain. Pulling out the stumps, on such a steep site, would have destabilised the bank, so they are

to be drilled out and “eco-plugs” put in. “The new habitat”, the Council says, “will start to emerge over the next few years.” Chalk downland wasn’t built in a day.

Many will fret that the money allocated to the Black Rock Development should have gone first to restoring the Reading Room, building the recreation and teaching facilities or strengthening the sea wall, though in fact work on the sea wall east of the station is now roaring away, from first light until night-fall. Nature, however, has such a leisurely timeline that it possibly makes sense to set that going first. As long as the funds aren’t drained by it.

Ann Wroe

Two cheers for the planning process



Rejected – this latest design for the Marina development

The Secretary of State’s surprise but welcome decision to refuse planning permission for the latest version of the Marina tower block development means that those of us opposed to the scheme have won the latest battle – but the war itself still looms ahead.

The developers now cannot proceed with their plan to build 1,000 new homes at the Marina in tower blocks up to 28 storeys high. It had fallen to the Government to make the decision after the City Council – while opposed to the scheme – had failed to make a formal decision. The planning process allowed the developers to appeal to the Secretary of State who would ask his planning inspectors to investigate and recommend a decision.

This report is a hard-hitting condemnation of the scheme. Quite apart from the adverse impact that the tower blocks would have on the “heritage assets” of the Kemp Town Estate and sea front and on the views from the National Park, the new homes themselves would be poor places to live, without adequate private or communal outdoor space. Most shocking of all, many of the new homes “would not receive sufficient daylight and/or sunlight” to meet modern standards.

These reasons for rejection are good news for those of us who have long feared that the modern developments lately proposed for Kemp Town would be over-built, overcrowded and over-looked to the detriment of residents both old and new. It is certainly hard to imagine that the proposed

developers of the Gas Works site will not be reading the report without some anxiety and rethinking their own scheme, which we believe will suffer from many of the same problems as the Marina proposals.

So far so good ... but the devil remains in the detail and the fine print. Firstly, the Marina developers have a final route for appeal still open to them. Secondly, the planning permission granted in 2006 for the original 40-storey development remains in place, meaning that in theory, the developers could turn up on site tomorrow and start to build their 40 floor tower in the sea. They have in fact already claimed that they would revert to this scheme if the Secretary of State threw out their revised plan, as he has now done.

As the 2006 planning approval included the blocks now already built, there is no time limit for the scheme’s completion. The Secretary of State’s report is also very complimentary about the earlier

scheme, which it believes is better designed, has a much lower density of homes and doesn’t do “unacceptable harm” to the local environment nor provide “unacceptable living conditions”. The report calls the original scheme “striking” and planned with “beautiful and slender curves” rather than the hard edges of the rejected scheme.

Will the 40-storey scheme therefore now go ahead? One strong argument against the possibility may be economics – the rejected scheme provided 1,000 new homes, against 658 new homes planned for the unbuilt stages of the 2006 scheme. A scheme with higher design standards and far fewer homes may prove economically unworkable for the developers.

Whatever lies ahead, it’s clear that – while welcoming the Secretary of State’s decision – we must and will remain vigilant for the future.

Keith Paulin & Simon Smith



Photograph: Sam Cartwright Photography

Brighton’s latest Blue Plaque unveiled

On October 28th a blue plaque was unveiled at 7 Ship Street to commemorate Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet and philosopher. It will be news to many that Tagore had a Brighton and Hove connection, but he came here at the age of 17, in 1878, to improve his English for a

future career as a barrister. His career took him into quite different territory, but his writing was undoubtedly influenced by his stay in England.

The family lived in a house they owned in Medina Villas, in Hove, but since the actual house number is unknown the plaque was installed instead on the former premises of the school he attended, now part of the Hotel du Vin. A large crowd turned out to applaud him.

Before he came to our part of the world, Tagore’s life had been mostly confined to the family compound in Kolkata. There, to climb up to the second-floor terrace and look out over the rooftops of the city, towards the distant sea, gave him “the thrill of high adventure”. The terrace was filled with tall palms and scented shrubs, all in pots; he dreamed that when he came to Medina Villas there would be “gardens, big big trees, flowers, fruits, open space...I found houses, roads, cars, horses and no sign of villas”.

Perhaps if he had come to our end of town he might have been less disappointed...

Ann Wroe

Joan Griffiths

1940-2021

Joan Griffiths, who died in October, was for several years the life force of KTS, sometimes filling all the posts at once. She was also a good friend, and a very persuasive one. It was she who initiated me into smoked-salmon and prosecco parties and into the mystery of bungaroosh, which was proudly displayed behind a glass panel in their lounge when she and Griff lived in Sussex Square. It was also she who convinced me, with one of her bright commanding smiles, that I should of course take over the Newsletter--which of course I couldn't refuse to do.

Besides classical music, modern art, history and gardening, she loved a good energetic walk, during which the chat and laughter would often eclipse the directions. There are parts of the local landscape--between Telscombe and Saltdean, Mile Oak and Devil's Dyke and round Chactonbury Ring--that still call up vivid memories of Joan and



I wandering in a happy dither, fortifying ourselves with satumas.

The article that follows, on Charles Kempe, was the last she wrote for the Newsletter. After she and Griff moved to Rottingdean Place she visited us rather rarely, and we missed her. But it's good to feel her ebullient presence in the copy which, with typical kindness, she left behind for us.

Ann Wroe

Charles Eamer Kempe: Artist in Glass

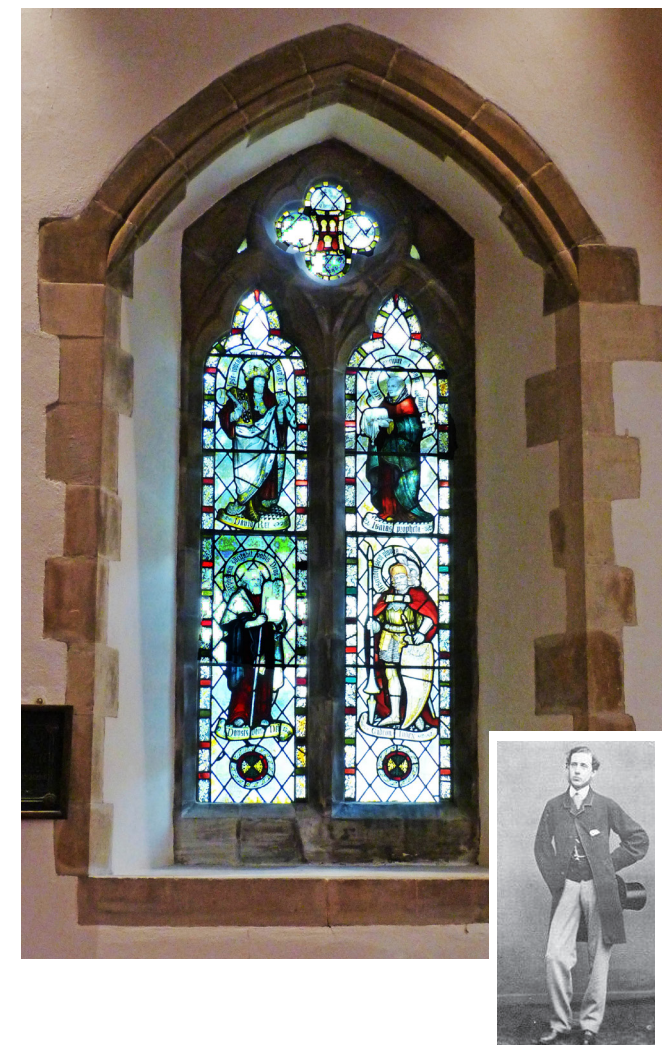
Charles Eamer Kempe, cousin to Thomas Read Kemp, was born at Ovingdean Hall in 1837. He attended Rugby and Pembroke College, Oxford, where he was influenced by the Anglo-Catholic Tractarian revival and even considered entering the priesthood. However, he realised that his severe stammer would make preaching extremely difficult; and decided that if he was not suited to minister in the sanctuary, then he could use his talents to adorn it.

He began to study architecture, learning the principles of medieval church art, particularly stained glass. In the 1860s, he collaborated with the architect George Frederick Bodley on the strikingly ornate designs for the interior of All Saints in Cambridge and the painted panels and reredos of St John's Tuebrook in Liverpool. A couple of decades later he again worked with Bodley in All Saints Danehill, East Sussex.

Having added an 'e' to his name, Kempe opened up his own studio in 1866 in London, supplying and creating stained glass, furnishings and vestments. The firm prospered and by 1899 he had over 50 employees. He used his own coat of arms as his trademark: a golden garb or wheatsheaf.

While working to find his own style, he undertook the restoration of medieval glass. He also used the services of the pre-Raphaelite artist Arthur Hughes to draw the designs. By the 1880s Kempe had evolved the dark colours and richly textured detail that characterized his mature work, taking inspiration from late medieval glass both in England and on the continent.

He was a shy man, though dapper, as our picture shows. He never married, but would entertain his clients and professional colleagues at his house at Lindfield, near Haywards Heath. He died suddenly in April 1907, aged 69, from lung congestion after a cold; he had refused to get medical help. He is buried in the churchyard at St Wulfran's, Ovingdean. The firm passed to his relative, Walter Earnest Tower, who could not resist changing the trademark to a black tower above the golden garb. The firm closed down in



1934 as a result of lack of orders during the Great Depression. Unfortunately, most of Kempe's records were destroyed after the closure.

Examples of Kempe's work in cathedrals can be found in Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, Hereford, Lichfield, Newcastle, Southwark, Wakefield, Wells, Winchester and York. Closer to home his work can be found in several churches in Brighton and Hove -- All Souls, St Augustine's, St James's, St Luke's Queen's Park, St Mary's, St Nicholas's, St Paul's, St Peter's, and, perhaps his favourite, our oldest church, St Wulfran's Ovingdean. And this list is by no means complete!

The fine window shown here is in the south wall at Ovingdean, with Kempe's trademark wheatsheaf in the upper trefoil. Look out for it as you visit Sussex churches, and relish the Kemp Town connection!

Joan Griffiths

Coming soon ... food, friendship and fun!



'It is Summer, 2022. The sun shines as I walk along Bristol Road in Kemp Town. In a space I've not noticed before, there's a lively gathering of people. Apparently, this is the Fitzherbert Community Hub that has just reopened after its refurbishment. There is an unusually wide mix of people of all ages and backgrounds, and I am immediately welcomed and invited to join in. I walk through the courtyard busy with locals chatting under the bright umbrellas. On entering the light hall, I see that lunch is being served. At one table are a group of elderly adults who have just finished their game at the Brighton Table Tennis Club. At another, a couple of young Mums with their children. I begin to wonder what all this is about.'

The Fitzherbert Community Hub (FCH) has grown from a unique partnership between four local charities that have come together to reduce food poverty and social isolation in Kemp Town. They are the Brighton Table Tennis Club, the Real Junk Food Project Brighton, Voices in Exile and St John the Baptist Catholic Church. Each has a track record of success in community support. 'Welcoming and nourishing all with food, friendship and fun' is their mantra and this has informed every aspect of the reformed space.

These are difficult times for many people in East Brighton, more so because of Covid-19. Food poverty and social isolation are on the increase, the demand for support for asylum seekers and refugees has grown and exercise and

sport are more important than ever. The FCH is being developed to address all these issues in a sustainable and enduring way. When it is up and running, it will open on weekdays providing numerous activities, beverages and hot meals prepared by the Real Junk Food Project on a 'pay as you feel' basis (12,500 meals planned for the first year).

Thanks to the generosity of several charities, the Catholic community and local philanthropists, we have raised the money to start renovation in the new year. However, we need additional funds to complete the project. We require money to equip the kitchen, purchase crockery, cutlery and furniture for the building and courtyard and provide sound-absorbent finishes to assist those who are hard of hearing



Will you help to raise this money? We have just launched a crowd-funding appeal. Please consider donating. Thanks to the generosity of local philanthropists, every £1 raised will be matched by them. Several charities and local businesses have also shown their support by offering prizes.

The link for the crowdfunding site is www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fitzherbert-community-hub. To find out more about the project visit www.fitzherbertcommunityhub.org.uk.

The Fitzherbert Community Hub will be a welcoming space for everyone in Kemp Town. We hope you will feel invited and wish to be part of this innovative community project.

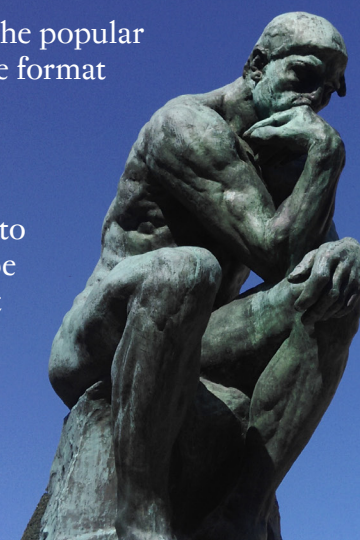
Janine and Herb Nahapiet

Dates for your diary - 2022

Quiz Night

After two fallow years, the popular KTS Quiz returns in its live format on **Friday 4 March 2022, 6.30 for 7**, at EF Language School, 1-2 Sussex Square.

Snacks will be supplied to each table, and there will be a cash bar. Please note that we will be using the large space on the 1st floor and that there is no lift.



Tickets at £10 each will be available on the night, or in advance from:

secretary@kemptown-society.org.uk

Do try to get a team of six together, or otherwise we will allocate you to a table.

Making a welcome return as Quizmaster is the indefatigable **Robert Snell**.

Don't miss it!

The Garden Party – changing the guard

The Party's sad enforced absence over the past two years has focused minds on improving it, and there's no better way than starting at the top! That's why we're delighted to welcome Lucy Dean as the new organiser.

Lucy is full of energy and good ideas. In particular, she wants to make the Party more sustainable and eco-friendly; to bring in more children, with more activities for them; and to encourage helpers and stallholders to get together and discuss ideas more often, and earlier in the schedule, than under my rather last-minute old regime.

The easiest way to keep regularly in touch is online, so Lucy will be using the dedicated Garden Party email account (kemptowngardenparty@gmail.com), to contact helpers.

Please contact her with any ideas and offers of help. And, most important, put next year's date firmly in your diaries: **Saturday June 25th, 12 noon-4pm, North Garden**

Ann Wroe

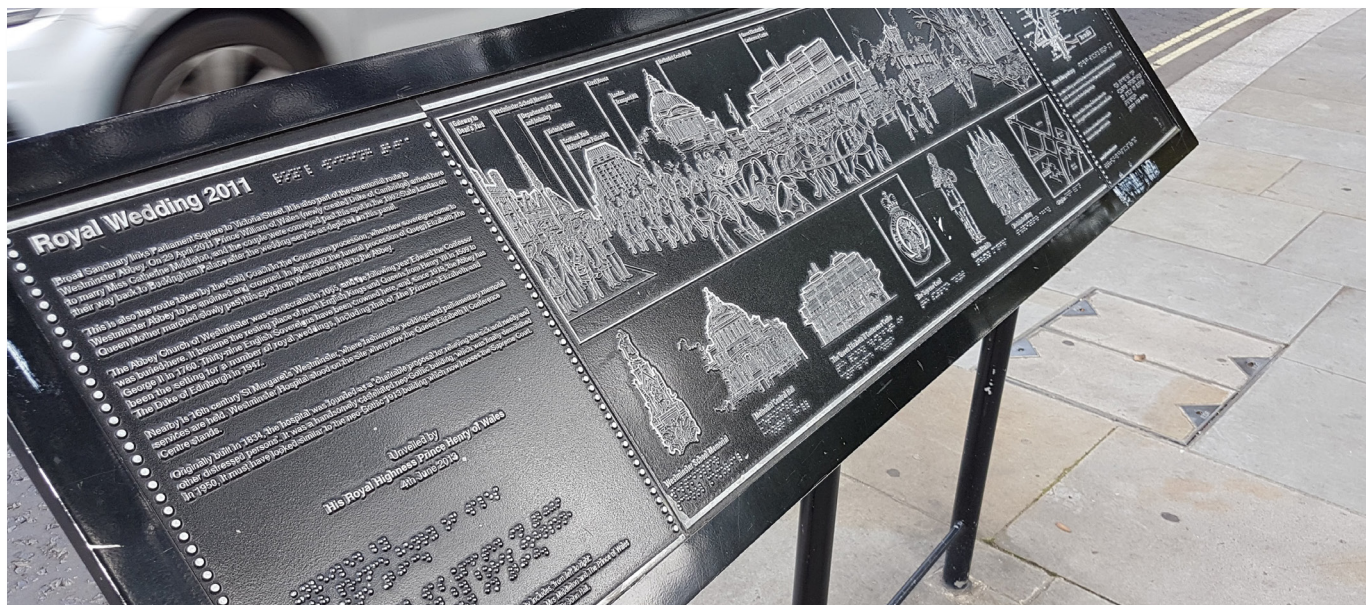
AGM 2022

Our last Annual General Meeting may seem only a recent memory but we are now planning for our 2022 meeting and returning to our usual timetable of gathering, in early May to review the events and finances of the previous calendar year.

Our 2022 AGM will be held on **Saturday May 7th** starting at **10.30 am** and hosted as usual by EF Language School, 1-2 Sussex Square.

Full details of the event and agenda will be in our **Spring 2022 newsletter**.

2023 Bicentenary commemoration plans



Similar lectern outside Westminster Abbey

2023 will mark the bicentenary of the Kemp Town Estate and we have several projects in hand to celebrate this landmark.

Plans are already advanced for the installation of a plinth and lectern on the south pavement of Marine Parade, facing across the road to the Estate, as mentioned at the recent October AGM.

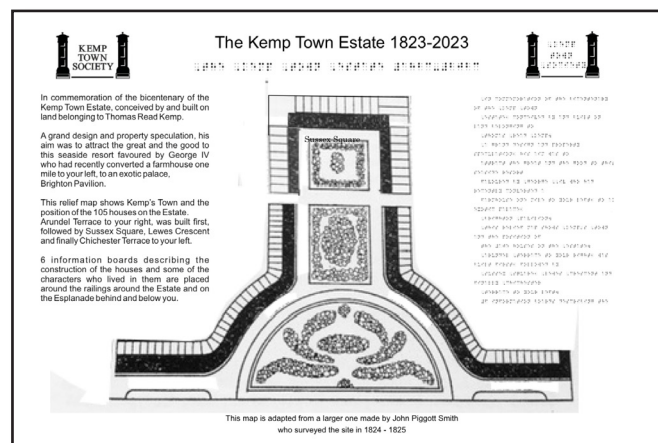
The bronze-coated metalwork lectern will display in etched low relief the earliest known map of the Estate, made in 1824-5 by the surveyor John Pigott-Smith (1798-1861) within just a year or two of the start of the Estate's construction. Pigott-Smith included it in his large and detailed map of Regency Brighton and its environs, which may have been a speculative venture designed to capitalise on the growth of the town as a resort of high fashion. A copy of the whole map was dedicated to George IV and presented to the King, and remains in the Royal Collection.

Accompanying the reproduction of the Estate map will be a simple text marking the bicentenary, giving a brief outline history of the building of the Estate and referring viewers to the information boards around the Estate which we designed and installed last year. The text will also be duplicated in Braille, and the small plinth on which the

lectern will stand will be made of Portland stone to relate it materially with the Estate's Portland stone doorsteps.

The lectern will form a lasting commemoration of the bicentenary and designed to stand up well to the salty air of its seafront site. Funding will come from the generous bequest made to KTS from the estate of the late Alex Bruce.

It is hoped to erect the lectern in the spring of 2023, subject to planning permission from the City Council.



Lectern design based on the earliest known Estate map