



SUMMER/AUTUMN 2022 NEWSLETTER

The Esplanade Temple's resurrection

Of all the neglected bits of our too-long neglected part of Brighton, none is more so than the Temple at the end of the Esplanade. Shabby, grimy, dilapidated, covered from floor to roof with graffiti and squashed by a brutalist walkway, its future seemed to lie only in quiet demolition. Now, however, it has been re-roofed (with bitumen, rather than the original lead), the tags have been cleaned off and a bulldozer has been at work, gouging out the ground for utilities that will link it to the refurbished Reading Room. Resurrection indeed!

With work also now well underway on the Reading Room, this particular part of Thomas Read Kemp's great seaside estate can look forward to a positive renaissance over the coming winter. Several local cafés are in the running to take over the refurbished properties, with the winner of the bidding process due to be announced soon – watch our web site and Facebook page for the latest news as soon as we have it.

The Temple was built in the 1850s, originally as a means of blocking up the collapsed tunnel once used by Mr Bush (he of the original Bush Inn, now the Daddy Long Legs restaurant) to service his brewery, on the site of the French Convalescent Home. It doubled as a shelter from the elements, but the name suggests there may have been more to it than that. The most famous Temple in Brighton at the time was Thomas Read

Kemp's extraordinary house, now a girls' school, in what is now Clifton Hill but was then open fields. Kemp is said to have designed it, with its square base, dome and tall arched windows, from the (extremely hard to follow) specifications for Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings.

Our little Temple, like Kemp's house, was short on cedar beams, flower carvings and interior layers of gold, but its arches certainly echo those on Kemp's main windows, and the dentil band below the cornice—its only decoration—is, according to Vitruvius, a nod to timber rafters. Kemp himself had nothing to do with the building of our Temple, having agreed only to the building of the original tunnel. But perhaps it was a local joke?

However that may be, the Temple on the Esplanade fulfilled the purpose of most custom-built temples of the time. Like those on the Terrace at Rievaulx, or at Stowe, it made a picturesque, even elegant end-piece to a walk, and sometimes a last hurrah of civilisation before woods or wild country intervened. When it was built, at the end of a pristine and almost austere Esplanade bare of plantings, Black Rock beyond was rough turf, cliffs and rockpools extending out to sea. It is now the far more barbarous Marina; but soon, if all goes well, we may be able to turn our backs on that, lift a convivial cup and contemplate the sunset sky.

Ann Wroe

The David Morris Patio Garden Competition 2022: the winners, and a new look for 2023



The winning porch at 4 Clarendon Terrace

Prizegiving for the competition took place on June 25th in the South Garden. This year's winner was Caroline Minogue of **6a Lewes Crescent**, a runner-up in our inaugural year. Caroline has to cope valiantly with a dominant fig tree, which has to be pruned out of the windows of the KTS Chairman's flat! But she has made a happy garden beneath it, full of plants which are good to look at from the street above and a delight to pass through to the basement door.

The runners-up were Marie-Claire Metraux of **Flat 6, 33 Sussex Square**, and Holly Fernando of **Flat 2, 10 Chichester Terrace**. Marie-Claire has a very shaded outside space, and in the short time she has lived in the flat she has had to learn quickly what thrives or dies there. The garden she has created is a gentle, pleasant place. Holly has proved that just because you don't grow flowers doesn't mean that you can't make a good-looking garden, and her herbs and tomatoes would be the envy of any allotmenteer!

This year porches were allowed to enter, and though there was only one entry it was one that has deserved recognition for a long time: the wonderful collection of potted plants at **4 Clarendon Terrace**, which raises everyone's spirits.

The judges, to whom warm thanks are due, were James Aynsley, Cheryl Dickens and Andrea Baker, winners in 2021. But there were very few entries this year, and it's clear that a rethink is needed. The competition was introduced during the pandemic as a bit of fun for the housebound, and certainly boosted morale in those hard times. Now that people have returned to working outside home, they may be less devoted to cultivating the view outside their windows. But the real deterrent to entries is a simpler, more commendable one: most basement gardeners on the Estate are producing beauty (or nutrition!) for its own sake, and dislike the very idea of competing with each other.

Kemp Town Society

From now on, therefore, this will be a simple award, not a competition. In the old days, the KTS committee would simply select every summer the garden they most liked, or which had shown most improvement or initiative, and knock on the door to present a bottle of champagne. No formal entry, no formal prizegiving, no rules, just a bit of fun and a token of appreciation, with every garden eligible.

This year the judges strayed a little way down that path by recommending several more mature patio gardens which had not been entered, but

were interesting models for others. These were **24A Sussex Square** (established plants, well-tended over time, with interesting wall art); **14 Sussex Square** (stocked with plants well-suited to shade, and with wonderful Agapanthus); and **7-8 Clarendon Terrace**, full of plants that are well looked after and will bloom from spring to autumn, making both bees and bypassers happy. And not least, among the porches, **20 Lewes Crescent**, which looked great even when the scaffolding was up!

Maggie Tattersall



Seen from the street – Caroline Minogue's winning patio garden at 6A Lewes Crescent



Chairman Simon Smith with – left to right – winner Caroline Minogue and runners up Holly Fernando and Marie Claire Metraux



Holly Fernando's runner up garden at 10 Chichester Terrace

The Big Jubilee Picnic, June 5th 2022



After two sad absent years, the Kemp Town Garden Party returned with a bang on June 5th, celebrating the Queen's glorious 70 years on the throne. There were more parties than usual, more games than usual, more musicians than usual (especially if the Morris Men were counted in) and the chairs, tables and, most alarmingly, the wine all almost ran out. We also raised a record amount from the raffle.

The weather was only so-so, but dry and warm enough to sit about in, and in the afternoon the sun almost shone. Best of all, the sense of joyous community mingling after months of restrictions was evident everywhere. If it were not such hard work, we should find excuses to do this more often!

Moving the Garden Party to the Jubilee weekend was clearly the right thing to do – even if it meant that as early as January we were having to scrounge far and wide to find a loo to hire and bands to perform. The best aspect of changing the date was that it encouraged outrageous dressing

up in every variation of red, white and blue, as well as Union flag-and-bunting overdrive, which is what Kemp Town is surely all about.

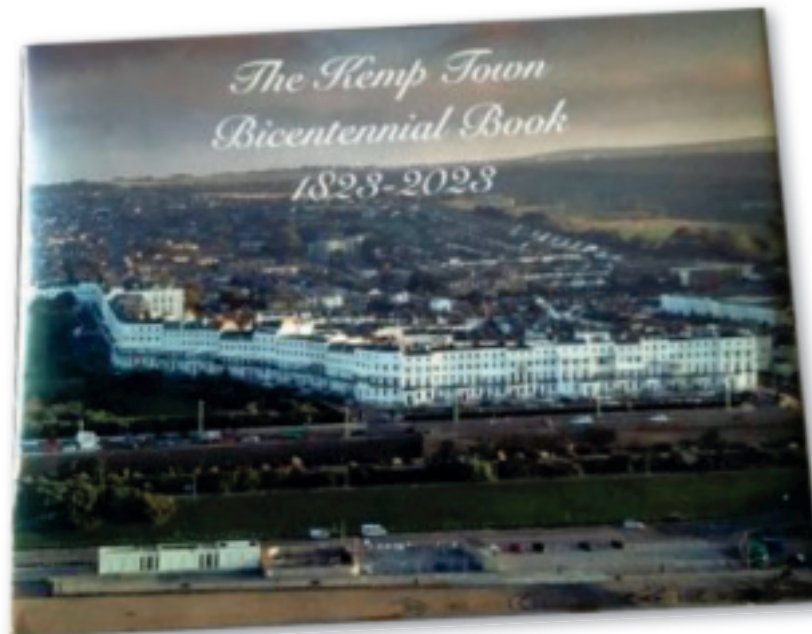
A special vote of thanks should go to Lucy Dean, chief party organiser, who also kept the children so happily occupied on the day (an exhausting task!); to Tania Webb of Marmalade, who provided Jubilee cakes so stunning that everyone was taking pictures of them before they were attacked (which was not long); to the two new bands, who played tirelessly (Dave Morgan's trumpet voluntary for the National Anthem was an especially memorable moment); to Vanessa Minns, for providing the doll's house that was the star of the raffle; to Maggie Tattersall, doyenne of the food stall; and to all the gazebo-shifters, stallholders and bartenders, including two who had come all the way from Dublin to help.

Preparations are now well under way for celebrating the bi-centenary of the estate next year in a suitably spectacular way.

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The Kemp Town Bicentennial Book 1823-2023



This handsome volume is the first of several that will celebrate, in various ways, 200 years of Thomas Read Kemp's dream development. It falls into two parts. The first traces the history of the built environment on the Kemp Town Estate from first designs to the present day, with lavish use of prints and archive photographs and a spirited, witty text by Russell Miller, a resident of Arundel Terrace and once a journalist on *The Times*. The second part focuses on the heart of the Estate, the Enclosures, with exceptional photography through the seasons by Janine Nahapiet, a resident of Lewes Crescent, and practical reflections by Jeremy, the head gardener.

This is a book full of great characters, from the famous (or notorious) residents to the cheeky beggar-women of the 1850s, the statuesque schoolgirl-archers of Roedean (once in Sussex Square) and the part-time gardener whose sole job was to sit all day by his incinerator. It was also startling, for this reader at least, to hear of Kemp's style of entertaining, with little silver-

wheeled chariots to take the wine round; to learn that his memorial tablet is hidden behind a cupboard in St Nicholas's church; and to see how dreadful the Estate looked in the 1950s, with the buildings grimed with soot and the Enclosures sulking inside a chain-link fence. A particularly nice touch is the double-page spread at the end of dedications on the benches, linking lovers of the Gardens (as we all are) over the years.

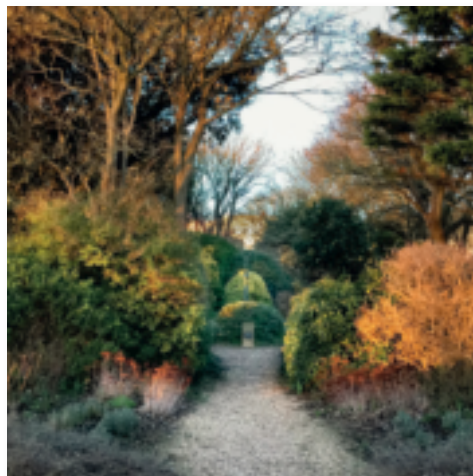
Historians will quibble at a few points, such as the assertion that Busby and Wilds designed the Estate, or that the Duke of Devonshire bought 14 Chichester Terrace; there is no evidence for either. But this is not an academic treatise; it is a celebration, and a very welcome one.

Ann Wroe

Text and design by Russell Miller; principal photography by Janine Nahapiet

Produced by Kemp Town Enclosures; available at the Kemp Town Bookshop, £30

An Invitation to Look and Wonder



Perhaps the greatest pleasure of the Bicentennial book is the stunning photography of the Gardens and the present-day Estate by Janine Nahapiet. Janine will be known to many as a keen Vole and as the organiser of the very successful opening of the South Garden under the National Gardens Scheme. Here are her thoughts about her favourite hobby.

“Photography is an invitation to look again and wonder. It makes me notice things that I wouldn’t otherwise; for example, the beauty of ice on a puddle on the way to the Marina...

My father was a very keen photographer, and a good one too. I have a strong childhood memory from the age of 6 or 7 of my father blacking out the kitchen, getting the slightly smelly chemicals into the developing tray and dipping in a piece of paper, from which a picture would emerge. It was magical. You would swish it round and hang it up to dry, and there it was; something totally new.

At 8 or 9 I was given a Brownie 127 and started to take my own pictures, and got interested in it. After I was married and living in Holloway, I went to evening classes in it and has a few photos in exhibitions in Camden Library. My biggest influence was the work of Bill Brandt, whom I’d come across in my teens. I grew up in Yorkshire, and he took pictures of communities I knew; towns like Halifax and Sheffield, pictures of Durham miners. This gave me an interest in dilapidated and run-down things, gritty subjects,

which were not just snapping but also social commentary.

When people ask me, ‘What sort of photography do you do?’ I don’t know how to answer. I like landscape, and I like portraits, when I have to strike up a relationship with the person; for example, a baker in Cuba, whose face against his white work clothes reminded me of a Vermeer, or a little girl there, who started to befriend me when I was talking to her grandmother.

I like abstracts too, and have experimented with folding photographic prints to make new forms. My husband Herb is a jazz musician, and his experiments with improvisation and tonality are similar to what I am doing with light and forms. You make a visual rhythm and then a pattern, which is what the human brain likes and responds to.

I also like to put the modern against the old as, for example, new glass against the girders of the Eiffel Tower. In Menorca, I did a project looking at the development of a community as a reflection of its geography.

My camera is a Fuji XT3. I don’t take lots of photos, like a press photographer; just several. When I photographed an olive tree in Italy, with the sun just breaking through, that lovely Impressionist effect lasted for just three shots. Then it had gone. I like to say, ‘Chance favours the prepared mind’.”

Kemp Town Society

News and Announcements

Committee

Thank you to those who have already kindly responded to an earlier email about seeking new committee members to replace one or two who are retiring and to expand the team to meet an increasing workload. If you are interested in working more closely with KTS, please contact the Chairman.

Brighton Heritage Open Days 2022

England's largest festival of history and culture returns to Brighton and Hove from 9th to 18th September with a wide range of tours, walks and talks exploring the city's heritage.

Full listing of events can be found at www.heritageopendays.org.uk

Kemp Town's Secret Garden

Our glorious summer may be drawing to a close but there's still time to visit Kemp Town's best kept secret – the Secret Garden will be open every Sunday, from 11am to 5pm, until 26th September.

Originally the private garden of Lawrence Peel – brother of Prime Minister Robert Peel and owner of 32 Sussex Square – the walled garden can now be enjoyed by all. Entrance is free and wheelchair accessible, and there's a pop-up café for refreshments.

The garden is at the junction of Bristol Place and Bristol Gardens with the entrance in Bristol Gardens.



Pillars to Receive Makeover

Over the coming weeks the 9 pillars along the southern boundary of the estate will be redecorated, and their concrete bases pressure-washed, as part of a KTS bi-centenary project. Members will already have received an email about purchasing a memorial plaque to be placed on one of the 32 available faces of the plinths. This could be a fitting way to memorialise a past or present resident.

