

## KTS Chairman's Report 2025

Conservation rightly remains at the heart of what the Kemp Town Society stands for. For the fourth year in succession, the future of the Gasworks site has been a concern for residents of East Brighton in general and members of KTS in particular. In May 2024 the St William £280 million proposal for the development of the site was turned down by the council for reasons of scale and over-development (495 new homes) - in fact for the very reasons that KTS had articulated in its own submission to the council, and which is still to be found on the website. The matter is now subject to a public enquiry, being held over 8 days at Brighton Town Hall. Once this is over the planning Inspectorate will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Elsewhere, there has been construction progress on the southern perimeter of Kemp Town: the enabling works on the Black Rock site are near completion, with a new road leading to the Marina; work has begun on the first 28 Madeira Drive arches, with Duke's Mound being strengthened; and, since November, the derelict Reading Room has been transformed into a hugely successful café, which looks set to attract even more customers as the weather grows warmer. This looks set to be one of the most successful new destinations in Brighton.

The 2024 report ended with the assertion that the following year would not be as busy as the Bicentenary year just passed - which it has not been – with certain events on a smaller scale.

Accordingly, the Garden Party metamorphosed into the smaller scale Midsummer Night's Drinks, from 6-9pm on 21 June, the longest day. All keyholders on the estate were invited, regardless of whether they were members or not. The bar, run by Debra Erskine and her team, was as popular as ever, and the crowds were well entertained by the excellent Jamboree Jazz Band. The weather was not so warm as it had been in the afternoon for the set-up, and the late evening chilliness was a factor that led the committee to decide to revert to the tried and tested formula of a 12-4 event for this coming summer, complete with a raffle and other attractions, when the Garden Party will take place on Saturday 28 June. The organisers are devoting much time and energy to recruiting a team of helpers, without whom of course it simply cannot go ahead.

Most recently, the popular Kemp Town Quiz took place on 14 March at EF, to whom we are most grateful for making the facilities available. A new quizmaster, David Potter proved a worthy successor to Robert Snell, and 38 quizzers (a record) cheerfully participated. The Seen from the Street Competition took place in June, organised again by Maggie Tattersall and three patios or porches were selected and duly photographed for the Newsletter. The criterion that the winner must not be a previous winner is becoming difficult to sustain; the rules will need to be modified this year. *Kinderfest*, the 3rd event in as many years aimed at younger residents on the estate and organised by Lucy Dean, moved from the North to the South Garden on Saturday 14 December. A goodly crowd gathered to enjoy the band and the assortment of Christmas fare on offer, but Father Christmas (aka Jeremy Browning) was less busy in his grotto than he was expecting to be because of the relative scarcity of Kinder.

At a time when many groups such as our own struggle to find individuals prepared to serve on the committee and commit to ensuring that all these events happen, we have been lucky to have such a dedicated and hard-working team. We have recently welcomed Professor Anne Boddington, resident of Sussex Square and an academic and fund-raiser, who takes on the conservation brief from Michal Beddingfield as he prepares for his new role of High Sheriff of East Sussex.

Michael has been a great asset to KTS for 5 years, with his extensive knowledge of planning issues. The Council's Conservation Advisory Group (CAG) too will be sorry to lose such a conspicuously effective member. In future KTS will serve the group in an advisory capacity when a local planning issue is involved. Jayne Paulin, who has served as secretary and trustee with such distinction for 9 years stands down from the committee at the AGM, but will continue to maintain the Membership Database for the time being from the Registered Office, 9 Sussex Square, and to help with Companies House and Charity Commission submissions. She will be appropriately thanked for her outstanding service at the AGM. Jeremy Browning, who can turn his hand to most things, continues as our Treasurer and webmaster and will in the coming months be involved in updating and revitalising both the KTS website and its companion Who's Been Living in My House. Ann Wroe is a most loyal and resourceful committee member. Not only is she inextricably associated with the Garden Party, she also edits, along with Keith Paulin, the Newsletter, which 3 times a year presents an admirable blend of articles relating to Kemp Town, its buildings and characters. Please keep the articles coming! Debra Erskine, an 'outsider' in that she lives off the Estate, is highly involved in the life and purpose of KTS and makes the shed in the North Garden her own when preparing for an event. Vaughan Rees, clubbable and wise, and without whom meetings would be the poorer, does a fine job as Deputy Chairman.

The membership currently stands at 150 households. The raising of the minimum annual donation to £15 two years ago means that the charity is a going concern, and the proposal to discontinue the services of an accountant each year will further improve the finances. Nevertheless, more members are still required, and that will be a focus for the coming year so as to ensure that KTS can promote its triple concerns of Conservation, Community and Culture.

Simon Smith  
March 2025