

Committee changes

We are incredibly sad to announce that two of our long term committee members Mary Hunter, and our chair for the past four years, Diana Dunn, recently stepped down from the RSAS committee.

Diana and Mary have been two very active committee members who together were responsible for so many important things that the committee has done in recent years: organising the Christmas tree lighting event with the BA i360 each year, supporting the work on our gardens, fighting some of the terrible planning decisions on Clarence Square, securing brilliant prizes for our annual RSAS raffle, the list goes on...It is fair to say that they have left a huge gap with their departure.



Goodbye drinks for Diana and Mary – with thanks to the Hole in the Wall for delivering the drinks for our outdoor gathering to keep everyone safe!

Stepping into these very big shoes is Fran Coates, who has just joined the committee. Fran will be very well known to the garden volunteers already, and has got

off to a flying start by setting up a local community Whatsapp group - see more details on joining this group from Fran below.

Taking on the role of Chair of the Society is Julie Wright who will already be known to all our members as she has done a fantastic job as Secretary over the past two years.

I know everyone will join us in welcoming Fran to the committee and wishing Julie the very best in her new role!

WhatsApp groups, a positive to come out of lockdown?

Communities have become stronger during and after lockdown due to many localities establishing WhatsApp group links to communicate with each other.



We have one at Regents Court, the largest block on Regency Square and it is working very well to help us all get to know each other better, support each other, swap plants and furniture, tips for best WiFi/broadband supplier, help with heavy lifting, child sitting, parking vouchers, car sharing, shopping, lift to hospital. The list is endless.

We thought it would be good to set up a similar group for our local area. It covers the same area as the Society ie the three Squares (Clarence, Russell and Regency Square) and the surrounding streets. With that in mind we've called the group "Three Squares Plus."

If you would like to be part of the Three Squares Plus WhatsApp group please send a text message stating your name and your street or square name to **Fran Coates 07985594756**.

Christmas tree lighting event

We are aware that it is much too early to be talking about Christmas in November. BUT....! We are just so excited to announce that we are currently in contact with the BA i360 and the Artist Residence to see if we



can hold the annual Christmas tree light-up flight again this year!!!!!!

This has been a wonderful community event in previous years and was really missed by the community last year – another casualty

of Covid. But we are hopeful that it can be resurrected again this December. Please watch your inboxes for more details later this month. In previous years spaces have filled up very very quickly!

The Regency Square garden transformation begins!



In our last newsletter we announced huge plans for the transformation of the Top/North garden in Regency Square. Phase one of the plan was to tackle the most neglected part of that garden: the South border, where the Christmas tree planter sits.

The first part of the job was to produce an “artist’s impression” of the border. We are very fortunate that our previous Chair Diana Dunn is an artist. She produced a beautiful painted picture, reproduced under the heading above. This painting was the inspiration for Gill Wales (our lead gardener) to produce a detailed planting plan setting out which plants would work in the garden to achieve that vision. The planting plan was then sent to the head of City Parks for sign off. So a LOT of work was done before we ever picked up a spade!

Over summer and autumn the RSAS volunteer gardening team began work on saving the plants we could save from the South border, and weeding and preparing the ground for the absolutely mammoth task of planting over 150 new plants into that border.



We filled a LOT of bags of weeds!

By October, the ground was ready, and it was clear just how many plants we would need in order to replace what has been lost over the last few years....



That is a lot of empty space to plant!

We were incredibly lucky that the brilliant City Park Rangers team had agreed to help us with our big planting day as we knew it would be an enormous undertaking to get everything planted in just one morning. This roving team of volunteers had also given us a day of weeding earlier in the Autumn and it is fair to say that without their help and support on this project it would have taken many planting seasons to achieve what we’ve achieved this year.

On October 22nd, we began the big planting session. Group leader, Gill Wales, laid out where everything was to go and with military precision (and lots of cake!) the plants were unloaded from trucks straight into the ground in just one morning.



Everything planted according to the planting plan

We hope everyone has had the opportunity to see how this border has been transformed, and the difference it has already made to the look and feel of the garden. Next stop: the central round bed!

Do bear in mind that the plants will spread. Although it may look like there are some “gaps”, all of the plants have been carefully set out to have the right amount of space to grow into. We have also re-planted the daffodils and added tulips – to brighten up the spring.

So please, if you are a secret gardener, please don't be tempted to plant anything in this border. Every space has been carefully planned.



With thanks to the whole team!

Keeping the plant thieves out!



As we reported in our last newsletter a group of thieves stole some of the plants that we planted last Spring in the Regency Square garden. This is why we felt it was necessary to put netting around the newly planted bed for now and to ensure CCTV coverage. We really didn't want to have to do this, but with £1,000+ of new plants, we need to keep them safe. The netting will also help to remind people not to accidentally walk on the bed while the baby plants are bedding in.

However, if you happen to see someone at that bed – **especially** if they seem to be removing plants – please do take photos/video if you safely can and contact us at rsascommunity@gmail.com so we can make sure any theft is reported to the police.

Thank you for your generosity!



Of course, NONE of this would have been possible without the incredible generosity of our RSAS members. Every penny spent on the South bed's transformation – from the soil-improving compost to the tools to the plants themselves – came from our very generous members. With that in mind, we want to give special thanks to Helen Parkinson and Tony Evans who we add to the growing list of people who have made incredibly generous donations that have made this project possible.

If you would like to donate to this garden project (or to our garden fund in general), or if you know of any grants/schemes/funding opportunities, please do get in touch via email (rsascommunity@gmail.com) or doorstep any member of the committee. All funds that are donated to the gardens will be ring-fenced so your money will go directly to improving our local area.

Want to join in?

If you would like to do some gardening in one of our squares, please think about joining some of the volunteer group sessions.



The group was started by residents who were 'secret gardeners' but who realised they could get more done if they worked together. Because the Regency Square garden is one of the largest on the seafront restoring and tending it is a BIG undertaking that requires a co-ordinated approach and, above all, liaison with City Parks.

If you'd like to join or if you would like a bit more information drop us a line at rsascommunity@gmail.com. Even if you can only join our sessions every now and again, or if you can only join a session for an hour here and there, we would love to see you. We promise it's enjoyable and rewarding (and an amazing work-out when we're weeding!)

Remember you don't need green fingers, because the group leader will guide you. Whatever your ability there's a job in the garden for you!



Everyone can find a way to contribute

Alternatively, if you want to just come along to see what one of our gardening sessions is like, pop by on the first Sunday of any month and have a chat with our group leader Gill Wales. The next Sunday sessions (weather permitting) will be on November 7, December 5 and January 2.

What about Russell and Clarence Square?

Well we're very glad you asked! The RSAS volunteer gardeners carry out work in all three public gardens in our area: Clarence Square, Regency Square and Russell Square. RSAS funds all the official volunteer gardening work, under group leader Gill Wales' supervision.

Our volunteer gardening group has done some amazing work on Clarence Square and Russell Square over the last two years, which has made such a difference to those gardens. In fact one of the volunteer group's first priorities was to rescue the shady border in Russell Square from a carpet of ivy, and we've carried out similar work in Clarence Square.



Ivy in Russell Square's overgrown south border, March 2020



What a transformation! Russell Square, July 2020

Before we began this major project in Regency Square we first made sure we had enough funding to keep up the good work in both Clarence and Russell Square. So please be assured that the gardens in Clarence and Russell squares have not been ignored. Money (and time) has been set aside for planting, tools and anything else needed for the general upkeep of those gardens. So once Gill determines that new planting is needed in those gardens the funds will be there.

Interestingly, historically less money has been spent on Regency Square over the years, which is why this huge project is needed now. All three gardens – Clarence, Regency and Russell - were given a make-over by the council 20 years ago, but most of the budget was spent on Clarence and Russell Square. There were good reasons for this, but it meant that even back then the community had to raise funds to make over Regency Square!

You can find a history of the three gardens, from their 19th century beginnings to the landscaping in 2001, with lots of old photos, on our website at https://regencybrighton.com/our_garden_squares/in_the_beginning/

A new tree for Clarence Square

Recently the tree in the centre of Clarence Square came down in the wind. It was in a fairly poor state having suffered from dry summers and had a lot of its bark stripped by vandals. This has left a sad hole in the Clarence Square garden, and we know neighbours on that Square are keen to replace it, perhaps with some palm trees.

Funding a new mature tree is very expensive: it is not just the cost of the trees themselves, but also the excavation costs to dig the soil to enough depth to support a mature tree. Committee member Nigel Massey is going through the process of getting the necessary permissions and looking into funding replacement trees. He will be contacting members and neighbours on Clarence Square over the next few weeks with a plan for crowdfunding.

As soon as we have the money and permission in place RSAS will organise to have the tree replaced. Similar to the Regency Square garden fund, any donations that

members or residents wish to make towards this project will be separately ring-fenced just for this project.

If you would like to contribute please email RSAS (rsascommunity@gmail.com) and we will send you details of how to make a donation earmarked for this purpose.

Freedom of information request...again!

Finally, on the funding of our gardens, please don't think that the committee has forgotten that the Regency Square gardens are owed a significant amount of money from the Council under the conditions of the BA i360's planning approval. Members will be aware that we have been trying to get this money released from the Council for some time now. This money would go a long way to repair other defects in those gardens such as the pavements, steps, bins, etc and would complement the planting work of the RSAS volunteer gardeners.

As the next step in this process we have – again – submitted a freedom of information request to the Council to see exactly how much money the Council has now received under this fund. We will share the results in the next newsletter.

No more motorbikes

Members have been unhappy with motorbikes parking on the South/bottom Regency Square garden for many years.



Hopefully a scene from the past...?

Although complaints have been made to the Council regularly and frequently about this problem, our new Chair Julie Wright has managed to sort the matter out once and for all! Julie has spent the last few months working with the relevant Council departments to get signage in place to make it clear that parking in the gardens is not permitted. Hopefully you will have seen these new signs now and the positive impact they are having.



New signage all around the South/lower garden in Regency Square

Some years ago RSAS organised to have 3 (fully lockable) motorbike bays installed around the Square. However, these bays are often full. With motorbikes now unable to park in the Regency Square gardens we understand that members and neighbours with motorbikes are finding it more difficult to find somewhere to park. RSAS is working with the Council to find a new motorbike parking space to address the problem

Lots of planning wins for our area!

We are so fortunate in Brighton to have 32 separate Conservation Areas. Each is an area considered to be of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

RSAS is busy ensuring the Regency Square Conservation Area has its unique character preserved or enhanced. Every new planning application is reviewed and infringements taken up via our place on the Conservation Advisory Group to the council. Some unauthorised developments do not even get seen by the planning department and only through our diligence are council enforcement requests made.

Here is a round-up of some of the more recent concerns in our area – to look them up, just enter the BH reference in the planning portal <https://planningapps.brighton-hove.gov.uk/online-applications/> and press SEARCH.

131 Kings Rd above Melrose Restaurant (BH2021/00852)

Concern: Proposed 4-storey in-fill to replace a 1790s building. Adversely affecting both a listed building and the Conservation Area. RSAS led the way to 55 comments of objection from our local community.

Outcome: Planning approval REFUSED.

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86-87 Preston Street, Fish & Chips (BH2021/02433)

Concern: Fish and Chips were retrospectively seeking approval for already installed huge garish signage in no way in keeping with all other businesses in the area.

Outcome: Planning approval REFUSED; plus case officer enforcing against the proliferation of A-frames clogging up the pavement.

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86-87 Preston Street, Fish & Chips (BH2021/02434)

Concern: The owner doctored the Land Registry plans with a red ink pen to try to claim ownership of the pavement.

Outcome: Retrospective planning approval for unauthorised patio and seating area REFUSED.

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26 Kings Rd, Brighton Beach Club (ENF2021/00390)

Concern: Has built two large areas of decking across the public pathway and made no planning application.

Outcome: Enforcement officer agrees there are infringements and looking for remedy.

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123-126 Kings Rd Granville/Cecil (BH2021/02932)

Concern: that this application is actually about building a very large hotel on tiny Queensbury Mews! Simply, the applicants have bought the Cecil & Granville hotels and want to develop the site to be one large hotel with a spa and put its main entrance on Queensbury Mews. RSAS has encouraged comments of objection to these proposals that would be so detrimental to quiet Queensbury Mews.

Outcome: TBD

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113-114 Western Road, former Revelator Pub (BH2021/03098)

Concern: Proposing a giant mural of otters as advertising on the side of the pub in the Conservation Area. RSAS has asked the owners to respect the conservation aspects and decorate in character as per all other premises.

Outcome: TBD

Nightmare noise on the seafront

Over the summer many members and neighbours had a truly terrible time as illegal raves were taking place in the event spaces on either side of the BA i360. Hundreds of young people were gathering with sound systems and amps and partying into the early hours of

the morning. Residents on the seafront were unable to sleep even with all their windows closed as basslines reverberated through their homes.

Once RSAS became aware of the extent of the problem we organised a meeting between residents, the head of Environmental Health at the Council, the police Sergeant responsible for our area and Alex Phillips one of our ward councillors. While we wish we could say the problem has now been solved, the best we can say is that it has gone away **for now**. We will continue to work with the members who have been affected until the matter is properly resolved.

👍👍👍👍 to great neighbours

We are lucky to live in an area where most commercial businesses care about the local residents (and vice versa!)

We received complaints from members who were being disturbed by some noisy builders, parking behind the Hilton Metropole hotel and dumping rubbish. One email to the Hilton Metropole's new Director of Operations, Katja Harjanne, and the problem was resolved. Many thanks to Katja!

👎👎👎👎 to not so great neighbours

No Catch have recently moved into the area, offering vegan fish and chips. Unfortunately, despite the business' focus on ethics and sustainability, so far they have not proven to be great neighbours.



Neighbours have complained about their commercial van blocking access to houses, blocking access to the pavement forcing pedestrians onto the road, and

dumping rubbish onto the pavement at the business' back door.

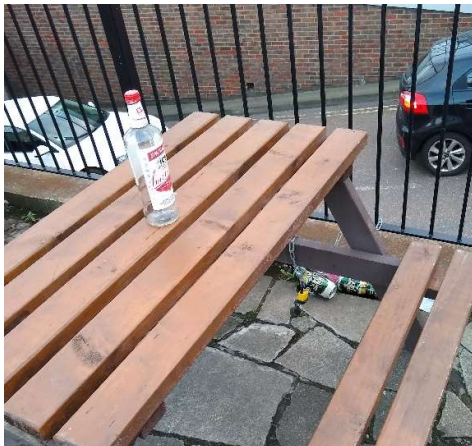


Very unneighbourly

The persistent parking issue has been reported to the Council and is now being monitored as a frequent offender, and Council officers are also monitoring the rubbish dumping situation. Let's hope these were just teething troubles as the business settled in, as by all accounts the food is delicious.

The picnic tables on Regency Square

We've had complaints about the picnic tables that appeared a few months ago on Regency Square. Members have highlighted that they have become a focus of anti-social behaviour, with street drinkers using them as a meeting place, leaving behind broken glass and rubbish after overnight drinking sessions.



The morning after - not a good look for one of our Squares

The individual responsible for organising to install these tables had not consulted local residents, nor sought the relevant Council permissions to install these tables in a public park. The likelihood of these benches becoming a focus point for ASB was all too predictable.

However, we have been in touch with the Regency Restaurant – who are always great neighbours! – and they have come to the rescue. They will have the tables removed and redeployed elsewhere. Many thanks to Emilio and the team!

Anti-social behaviour



In response to a story in our last newsletter, more residents have been in touch about the unsightly 'newsletters' that are often cable tied to the railings around Regency Square. Once again, the committee wants to emphasise that these items are not associated with RSAS in any way. Fly posting is illegal, and persistent offenders will be fined. You can report your concerns directly to the Council

here: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-problem-and-request-clean>

Once reported the Council will send someone to remove the items from the railings.

In a similar vein, neighbours on Russell Square have been plagued by fly tipping. The photo below, taken **after** the clean up from the bin strike show the extent of the problem residents are facing.



Frequently, the rubbish that is dumped is builders' waste that should be disposed of by the commercial company carrying out building work. City Clean responds quickly to the online 'request a clean up' form, but there is little evidence of any fines being issued or action to prevent fly tipping from occurring.

If you do see someone fly tipping, and you can safely take photos/videos, or if you have evidence identifying offenders, you can report them by calling 01273 292929. Fly tipping is a crime.

We are aware that the amount of general anti-social behaviour in the area is on the increase again as the days get shorter and winter sets in. We are aware, in particular, of incidents relating to the area at the front of the recently vacated Granville/Cecil hotel. The committee is following up with the new owners.

To help with the concerns about ASB in our area, Sussex Police have launched a new online tool called **StreetSafe**. StreetSafe allows you to anonymously tell Sussex Police about areas in our neighbourhood where you have felt or feel unsafe. This could be due to environmental issues, eg street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism or because of behaviours you've experienced eg being followed or verbally abused.

You can make a report anonymously on StreetSafe at:

<https://www.sussex.police.uk/notices/street-safe/street-safe/>

It is very important to note that 'StreetSafe' is not for reporting crimes – these should be reported in the usual way.

Finally, we always emphasise that it is essential to report all anti-social behaviour incidents to the police, no matter how small. The police have been clear with us: resources will be deployed based on intelligence/reports. So if we do not report these incidences, the police will not be able to deploy the necessary resources. You can report via an email to 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or via the Sussex Police form on their website www.sussex.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/.

Holidaying in Brighton in the 1930s

The Society is very grateful to Richard & Brenda Healy for donating four Brighton and Hove Official guide books from 1930-1935, and a book from 1876 called "Views of the Devils Dyke."



What a fashionably resort Brighton was back then with polo in Preston Park! Regency Square and the West Pier are prominently featured, with lots of adverts for local hotels and boarding houses. We will be bringing you snippets from this historic treasure trove in future newsletters.



If you would like to borrow these engaging books for research purposes, or just for fun, please get in touch via rsascommunity@gmail.com

And finally...

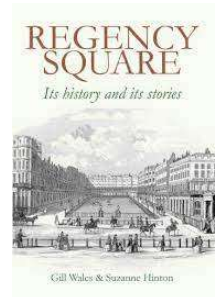
A little plug for the Regency Square bicentenary book!

When RSAS first commissioned "Regency Square, Its History and Its Stories," to celebrate the bicentenary of Regency Square, we knew it would be a brilliant book. Local historians Suzanne Hinton and Gill Wales are renowned for their detailed research and engaging writing.

However, the costs involved in producing and having a book professionally printed are not small, despite Suzanne and Gill graciously giving their time for free. It was always a risk for the Society to fund this book – no matter how certain we were that it would be a huge success!

So it is with enormous pleasure that we can tell you that we are well ahead of schedule in book sales to recoup our costs – in fact we have paid down almost 90 percent of the costs already! This is even more remarkable as many of our sales channels were unavailable to us over the last 18 months – Suzanne and Gill have only recently been able to resume their brilliant history talks, where we would usually sell some books, due to the pandemic.

If you need another little stocking filler for Christmas, we do still have copies available to buy. As RSAS members you can still enjoy the special price of £10. Drop us a line at rsascommunity@gmail.com if you would like a copy!



Thank you all, and stay safe and well

The RSAS Committee

Society Contacts

To contact any member of the committee please use our committee email:

✉ rsascommunity@gmail.com

You can also contact us via:

 <https://regencybrighton.com/contact/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/regencybrighton>

 <https://twitter.com/RegencySquareAS>

