

NEWSLETTER 343

Summer 2021

New look for summer!

It is all change at the moment, with local businesses opening up and life returning to Brighton after this last dreadful year. To celebrate, we've launched a new look newsletter!

As long time Society members will be aware, the last year has been particularly busy for RSAS with so many new community projects underway. As a result our newsletters have gotten longer, and some members found the old format harder to read. So we are experimenting with the format in the hope it makes the longer articles easier to read. As always, your thoughts and feedback would be very welcome!

AGM – postponed but not cancelled!

In our last newsletter we asked members for their views on what to do about this year's RSAS AGM. It is fair to say that there was not an enormous clamour to hold an immediate virtual meeting via Zoom!



So we will wait, and hopefully hold our AGM later in the year when it will be safe to do so.

But in the meantime, if there is anything that you would like to raise with the Committee, please drop us a line using our new Committee email address rsascommunity@gmail.com

BIG plans for our gardens

As members know, our volunteer gardening group, alongside the City Park Rangers team, has done some amazing work on Clarence Square and Russell Square over the last few years. RSAS is incredibly proud to have funded this work, which has made such a difference to both gardens. It has been particularly lovely to see families using these gardens again as they are now such bright, welcoming spaces.

But, for the reasons we explained in our last newsletter, the Regency Square gardens – particularly the North/Top garden – pose a much bigger challenge and need serious money to rejuvenate the beds. Over the last few years we have been waiting (and waiting...) for the Council to release the funding from the BAI360 "Section 106" planning requirements that it promised to RSAS several years ago. The money is just sitting there in a Council fund and should have been released to us two years ago to begin this work.

But we can wait no longer! We have spent the last few months of lockdown working with our brilliant gardening team to come up with a multi-year planting plan to take us up to 2025. And this plan has now been approved by City Parks Operations, who are supporting us in this important project – hurrah!

Our gardening team have become experts in what 'works' for the top/North garden in Regency Square, and the plan has been designed using this expertise. Our major planting season will be in Autumn (around October time) each year. This avoids the long summer without enough water for the new plants and reduces the risk of the new planting being trampled as fewer people use the garden over winter whilst the baby plants bed in. Smaller infill work will be carried out in Spring.

Another lesson our team has learned is that small amounts of new planting distributed across each of the borders/ beds gets lost. It is a drop in the ocean compared to the work needed. So instead we will repair one border at a time so that people can better

see the changes. This also means it will be easier to protect new planting from being trampled/dogs digging/plant thieves (see story later in the newsletter) as we can put in place protection measures across the replanted bed.

Each Summer we will produce an “artist’s impression” of how the replanted bed will look (we are v lucky that the RSAS Chair is a designer!) This will be turned into a detailed planting plan, which will be submitted to the City Parks Area Supervisor for approval. If funds allow, we also hope to produce banners of the artist’s impression to hang over the beds while work is underway, so everyone can watch the transformation.

The top/North garden in Regency Square has 4 distinct borders and one central bed, each in varying degrees of disarray. This autumn, we are hoping to tackle both the central round bed and the largest part of the south border as these are the two areas in most need of help.

The central round bed was created nine years ago. There are still some very healthy large plants in the middle of this bed, but otherwise it is in dire shape! It is also very visible, since it is right in the centre of the garden.



The central round bed

We intend to remove the unsightly weed membrane that is no longer doing its job and allow the edges of the bed to grass over. We will keep the healthy plants in the centre of the bed that are thriving, add a small number of new large-medium sized perennials to flesh this area out, and underplant the large shrubs with Spring bulbs. This will produce a smaller bed that will be much easier to maintain and would look brighter and tidier all year round.

The South border sits at the sea-end of the top garden and actually comprises two distinct borders, with a fence running through the centre. The main part sits on the top/North garden side of the fence (where the Christmas tree planter sits for those who are familiar

with the gardens) and is probably the most prominent bed in the top garden.

It looks neglected but there are plants that can yet be saved and obvious spaces that the volunteers have already cleared for infill. We think that tackling this bed will hugely improve the look of the gardens overall. But it needs a LOT of plants – we are looking at about 150 plants overall (small shrubs, ornamental grasses, large-medium perennials, small perennials, and Spring bulbs).



The main and smaller South borders

Next year (autumn 2022) we will work on the smaller part of the South border, which actually sits at the top of the middle garden in Regency Square (alongside the car park vents). This smaller part has cobbles underneath making certain types of planting difficult, so will require specialist planting. However, with the right plants this area will be significantly improved.

The East and West borders sit on each side of the garden, and both need a lot of work – we estimate around 100 new plants will be needed for each of them. Our plan means we will tackle one of these borders in autumn 2022 and the other in autumn 2023.



The East and West borders

In Autumn 2024 we will undertake work on the North border. This is the border that sits at the “top” of Regency Square next to the entrance of the carpark and is the border that needs least help. While it continues to need weeding and tidying, it is the bed with fewest gaps and so currently looks least neglected.



The North bed

Finally, in Autumn 2025 we will do a further 'infill' planting season to replace any plants that have not thrived in the previous planting seasons across all the beds.

Of course, whilst this work is underway, we will not want to lose the gains we have made in Russell Square and Clarence Square over recent years. So our volunteer gardening team will continue to maintain and enhance those gardens, and RSAS will continue to fund this work.



Yep! It's going to be very expensive! Based on our best estimates right now, we are looking at about £4,500 in total – more if we cannot borrow certain items (like chicken wire to protect newly planted beds) from City Parks. But we think it is worth it to make sure that all three of

our heritage squares look their very best.

RSAS will be funding this work entirely through donations, fees and fundraising. We have already had some incredibly generous donations and we especially want to thank Niall Habba and the Telemarketing Company, one of Regency Square's longest standing businesses; our ward councillors Tom Druitt and Alex Phillips, who have supported our plans throughout; and the Healeys who are long term RSAS members and supporters. Thanks to their generous donations, we are confident that work will be able to begin this autumn.

If you would like to donate to the garden project, or if you know of any grants/schemes/funding opportunities, please do get in touch at our new all-purpose 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.

Garden volunteers needed!

Just as important as funding, the new garden planting plan relies on our volunteer team of gardeners. They are an amazing bunch of people, but they really really need more recruits. If you like the idea of getting out into the fresh air to help please get in touch (rsascommunity@gmail.com).



Below, Gill Wales, who leads the gardening team, sets out what to expect if you join the team. Spoiler alert: you don't need to have green fingers, just time and enthusiasm!

Garden volunteering – what to expect.

We help look after all three public gardens in our area: Clarence Square, Regency Square and Russell Square. Regency Square takes the lion's share of our efforts, because it's the biggest and most in need of support.

Most of the time our job is to weed the borders, boundaries, paths and steps. It's not glamorous but it is satisfying and important, because it helps the garden plants thrive and survive. Autumn is when we'll be digging and planting.

Do you need any knowledge or experience to join the garden volunteers? No, you just need to like plants and gardens.

We work as a group, with a trained leader and with permission from the council's parks and gardens department (City Parks). We aim for one or two half days a month (less often in the winter). You don't have to come to every session, but it's best to be realistic about whether you have the time. If time is limited, there are other ways of helping the gardens, including litter picking through the council-run Tidy Up Team.

Volunteer gardening update

As well as helping the committee to produce and cost our long term planting plan, and shepherding that plan through Council approvals, our volunteer gardening team also found the time to do some gardening in recent months! Gill gives an update on the latest work below.

The late spring rains were good news for weeds and wild grasses, which put on a rapid growth spurt in the gardens. A single afternoon's weeding in Clarence Square yielded five large sacks of weeds and brambles. And revealed that ivy was gaining a hold among the shrubs in the south border.

This is exactly what happened in Russell Square in recent years: ivy overwhelmed the border, starving the flowering plants of light, creating an atmosphere of gloom and decay. In the spring of 2020, it took the volunteers upwards of 30 hours to clear the ivy in Russell Square, so it's good to tackle it early on in Clarence Square.



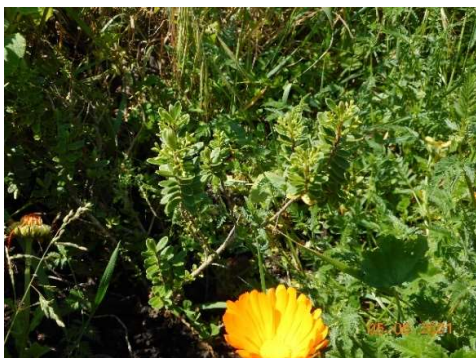
Flowering plants quickly become overwhelmed by invading grasses

Back in the autumn, we reported that the Norfolk Square Gardening Group had arranged with Plumpton College to distribute some young Hebe plants to local gardens. Our group took delivery of four. One of these is now happily settled in the sunny side of the Russell Square garden. Look out for its pink flowers soon.



The new Hebe in Russell Square

The other three are especially suited to exposed and windy sites, so we planted them in the south border of Regency Square's top garden. These varieties are slower growing and still quite small.



Hebe Anatoki slowly settling in to Regency Square

Among the plants funded by the society last Spring were some Kniphofias. At the time of writing, one of these has produced its first flower.



Kniphofia's first flowering in Regency Square

At the end of April, we were very pleased to receive a return visit to Regency Square by the City Parks Rangers volunteers. Especially since they brought with them five crates of Lampranthus cuttings. Commonly known as Trailing Ice Plant, Lampranthus grows well in many gardens, public and private, along the seafront.

The Rule of Six meant that only one of our group could join the Rangers volunteers in this session. We spent the best part of a day working on the narrow border alongside the car park vents, clearing three big rubble bags of weeds and stumps, and planting Lampranthus cuttings. At the time of writing, most of the cuttings have 'taken' but they are still small and vulnerable to people clambering over them.

Work will continue over the summer, to keep the weeds and wild grasses from swamping the borders in Regency Square. We target our efforts by concentrating on clearing weeds away from the shrubs and plants that we want to protect. If a 'weed' or wild grass is attractive and not causing a problem, we leave it alone, especially if it's useful to bees and other wildlife.

And a final request regarding our gardens: Some secret gardeners have planted sunflower seeds, tomato plants and other garden plants in the Regency Square borders. If you are a secret gardener, ***please*** be careful not to disturb the young stock recently added by authorised volunteers.

New signage

Our three garden Squares are particularly attractive to visitors over the Summer and that tends to attract some unwelcome activities: BBQs burning the grass, tents, rubbish, fly tipping, etc. The signage around our Squares is not very clear about what is/is not permitted, nor is it particularly welcoming for visitors to the Squares.

Over the last few months RSAS has been working with the Council to replace this outdated signage. We hope that by highlighting that these are community gardens, funded and cared for by volunteer gardeners and RSAS that people may be encouraged to take more care when visiting our community spaces.

Look out for these new signs going up in the next few weeks.



As part of our push on clearer signage we are also (again!) working our way through the myriad of Council departments to address the issue of motorcycles parking

on Regency Square. Members will be aware that RSAS previously organised to have 3 (fully lockable) motorbike bays installed around the Square. But, despite this, the problem has returned again. We are working with the relevant Council departments to try to get signage and proper enforcement (including clamping/towing offenders) in place.

Anti-social behaviour

We have some shocking news to report: in broad daylight a group of thieves stole a number of plants from our gardens. They walked into Regency Square, dug the plants up and walked away with them. These were mature plants, which are not cheap to replace. Fortunately, a member of our community saw them, and this theft has been reported to the police. The thieves also trampled all over a newly planted border causing further damage.

Really, who could possibly think this was an ok thing to do???



The bare patch after thieves stole plants from Regency Square

Several people have complained about the unsightly 'newsletters' that are frequently attached to the railings around Regency Square and have asked us

what can be done about them. Fly posting is illegal, and you can report it to the Council here: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-problem-and-request-clean> Once reported the Council will usually send someone to remove the items from the railings. We want to emphasise that these notices and the individual responsible for them are not associated with RSAS in any way. RSAS always ensures that we have the appropriate permissions before we put anything up on any of the Squares that we are responsible for.

One piece of very good news to report: the Committee was in touch with Churchill Square Shopping Centre about the unsightly graffiti on its external walls. The manager then organised a repaint with an anti-graffiti paint. Almost immediately the walls were tagged again, but the Centre had someone out the next day to clean it off. 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌 for really great neighbours!

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/.

However, we want to tell you about a new initiative to report anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the community. A new Community Safety Casework Team (CSCT) has been set up in the Brighton & Hove City Council to address ASB and hate incidents. If a person or group acts in a way that causes you distress or alarm, that frightens, upsets or worries you or is causing harassment you can use this service to report it. This includes abuse (including verbal abuse), bullying, shouting, swearing, threats or threatening behaviour.

To report ASB and hate incidents to the Team please:

- Phone 01273 292735 (voicemail only) or
- e-mail communitysafety.casework@brighton-hove.gov.uk or
- visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-anti-social-behaviour-or-hate-incident-your-neighbourhood

Western Road – All Change Please

Many High Streets up and down the country have lost familiar retail names. Shop signs are swapped for 'To Let' boards. Foot-fall is, well, falling. Except perhaps in

nearby Western Road? We have seen a flurry of new planning applications covering shopfront development and other commercial proposals. Here are some examples:

179-181

No change of occupants but extensive work. In short, the small plain mosaic tiling on the first and second floors had started to fall off the building, causing a danger to pedestrians. You may have seen the significant scaffolding as work was undertaken to remove the tiles and replace with a special render.



Through the Conservation Advisory Group and RSAS, Gardenia BS10B15 paint was successfully advised to match conservation colours.

187

The parade of shops stretching from Deichman Shoes, through Closs & Hamblin and H&M to number 187 has remained at three storeys high since Western Road was widened in the late 1920s. The most recent occupant of 187 at the corner with Regent Hill was Hong Kong based ladies fashion retailer 'Esprit' who closed all its UK outlets last year. The new owners of the building will keep the shop space but have proposed adding a very much out of keeping extra storey on top for 3 floors of offices.



This followed pre-application meetings with the council held before the pandemic. RSAS has advised there is no longer call for offices and for the building to retain its 1928 splendour at the same height as its parade of neighbours.

188-191

Just lifting our heads as we walk along Western Road we see so many decorative and intact upper floors. Former 'New Look' will only keep its 1930 façade after intervention by RSAS and our neighbours the Montpellier & Clifton Hill Association.



It will now become part of the Sports Direct empire by changing to 'Flannels', however their plan was to redecorate the whole building in branded dark grey, including blacking out the upper windows.

OK, 'Flannels' will still install 2 large digital advertising screens at ground floor but the new owners valued our conservation advice and now propose to "preserve and restore" the upper floors.

Communications Hubs and Advertising Displays

And finally we are being asked to expect personalised experiences as we travel through our city. 'Smart' data and geolocation will be combining to advertise to you ... yes, just to you.

So-called 'communication hubs' are proposed along our streets in planning applications we are now seeing. New advertising displays will react to data gleaned from our aerial transmitters (that'll be our phones!) to work out where we have been and our likely shopping needs.



And 'bingo' – there on the advertising display will be an offer to visit a shop subscribing to the service. Your very own personal experience beckoning you from our pavements and bus shelters ... All Change Please!

Adopt-A-Street

In May the Tidy Up Team launched an important (and fun!) new initiative called Adopt-A-Street. Under this initiative volunteers are asked to look after a street in their neighbourhood. You can adopt a street as an individual or a group, and the five aspects of the programme are:

1. To carry out litter picking and associated activities at least once a fortnight.
2. To do a street survey at least once a quarter.
3. To report any issues in the street to the relevant council department.
4. Recognition that the street is part of the programme on a special map and with special signs.
5. To Encourage others to get involved in the programme.

In order to Adopt-A-Street you first need to join the Tidy Up Team by filling out the form here:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/jobs/volunteering/apply-volunteer-tidy-team>

Who spotted Harry Styles?



Great excitement in our area back in May as Harry Styles was spotted filming for his new movie "My Policeman," based on the book by Bethan Roberts. We will all be going to see the movie in 2022 just so we can spot our houses!

RSAS wants to thank the production crew for their donation to the Society,

which we will put towards the new signage costs to make sure that all three of our Squares benefit.

In the meantime, you can see some more filming from the movie on Regency Square at

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1389685651868721152>

or

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1389671085797433344>

The Queen(sbury Arms) is dead...



...long live the Hole in the Wall! Yes, long term RSAS member John has departed for a life of retirement, relaxation and travel. In his place we welcome Jim and his new team, who have reverted back to using the pub's older name.

While some things have changed (lovely wooden flooring, and lots of light), many things stay the same – including some of the old theatrical posters, and a very warm welcome!

What a difference a year makes!

In the middle of April this year a transformation took place in Preston Street. Following the government lifting of restrictions enabling pubs and restaurants to serve food and drink in the open air, local businesses responded by covering the pavements with tables and chairs to accommodate customers desperate to meet with friends and family, albeit in the cold spring air. Normally having to fight through the throng would be very annoying but we were all so pleased to see the buzz back to this usually vibrant area after months of lockdown, that we celebrated with them. Hardly a seat remained vacant.

More good news for our local hoteliers: the staycation market has taken off with bookings reportedly though the roof. Up to 80 % of availability is already booked in Brighton.

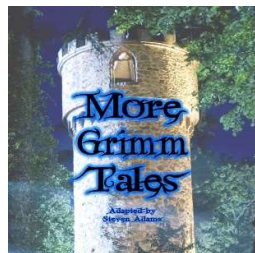
Many people are concerned that their businesses will be affected by a downturn in overseas visitors but to put this in perspective, in the pre-pandemic years, of the 11million visitors to Brighton only 500,000 were from outside the UK, with 85% of all visitors being day trippers.

On a further positive note, research has shown that in the South East, Brighton and Hove has produced a remarkable level of growth in new business development in the entrepreneurial and digital sector as well as professional and financial enterprises. Also many previous commuters to London have now either moved their business to Brighton or have become more Brighton based, investing more into the local economy.

So, although the pandemic remains an unknown and worrying factor, Brighton and Hove appears to be in a very strong and optimistic position for future recovery.

The Little Theatre's Summer programme

For those who are itching to get back into Brighton life again, the Little Theatre has a fantastic summer programme up and running – especially for those who are looking to entertain the children or grandchildren!



More Grimm Tales is running from 29 June until 3 July. Full of deliciously dark turns and twists, the tales come to life in all their glittering, macabre brilliance — a delight for children and adults alike!



And then from 11 until 14 August David Woods' adaption of Roald Dahl's classic, the Twits, will be playing. With a circus style setting, this childhood favourite promises pure slapstick family fun.

In order to make the venue Covid safe, the Little Theatre currently has restricted seating capacity in its auditorium – so book early. They will also be operating a table service in the bar. You may also notice a few other changes around the venue, including extended intervals and also a more 'airline style' calling of rows in order to seat visitors safely.

Staying safe online

In the era of Covid, scammers have been finding many new and insidious ways to part people from their money. With so many of us still living so much of our lives 'virtually' staying safe online has never been more important.

With that in mind Which? the consumer body has launched a new – free – email service revealing the latest scams, as fraudsters take advantage of the coronavirus outbreak.

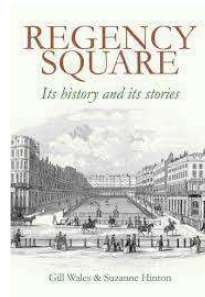


Several of the Committee have been using this service for a few months ago and have found it really useful. If you would like to read more about it, and sign up for the alerts, just follow this link:

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/04/which-launches-scams-alerts-as-fraudsters-exploit-coronavirus-crisis/>

Regency Square bicentenary book

Just a reminder that “*Regency Square, Its History and Its Stories*,” the history book written by local historians Suzanne Hinton and Gill Wales for Regency Square's bicentenary, is still available to buy. It is, without doubt, the most thorough and engaging history of Regency Square that you will find.



As RSAS members you can still enjoy the special discount price of £10. Drop us a line at rsascommunity@gmail.com if you would like a copy!

Final thoughts....

We are really pleased that so many of our members are now vaccinated, and we are hopefully coming to the end of this difficult time. Our community support initiative is still open and available just in case, and RSAS membership remains free for this year. So if you know of anyone who would like to join the Society, please ask them to contact any member of the Committee, or email us at rsascommunity@gmail.com

We are particularly grateful to all of our members who have insisted on paying fees/donations to us in the last few months despite our suspension of fees – your generosity in these difficult times allows us to keep all our local community projects up and running.

Thank you all, and stay safe and well

The RSAS Committee

Society Contacts

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

✉ rsascommunity@gmail.com

You can also contact us via:

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

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

🐦 <https://twitter.com/RegencySquareAS>

