

NEWSLETTER 340

Summer 2020

RSAS Zooms onwards!

These last few months have been a strange experience for all of us as we adjust to new ways of doing things in a socially distanced way. And the RSAS Committee is no different, embracing the Zoom way of life!



The first RSAS Zoom committee meeting (including exotic backgrounds!!)

Even though you may not see us out and about quite as often, we are still here working away. So if there

is a local matter that is concerning you, please do get in touch. And of course, we are always looking for new committee members – so if you are interested please just let us know!

COVID-19 Community Initiative

We want to extend our enormous thanks to all the volunteers who put themselves forward to help the most vulnerable in our community over the last few months. We are proud that the RSAS initiative putting helpers in touch with those needing help was such a success.

For many people shielding comes to an end in August. However, we are aware that some of our most vulnerable members are still advised to avoid certain activities, and localised lockdowns, quarantine and self-isolation all remain a possibility, particularly over winter.

With that in mind, the RSAS Community Initiative will continue to run for those who need it.

So remember:

If you need help? With basic shopping, pharmacy collection, dog-walking etc.

OR

Can provide help? To those RSAS members who need it

Then please email us at rsascommunity@gmail.com or phone Mike Davies and Julie Wright on 01273 028787.

For more information about this initiative, please see our website.

An update from Gill Wales, leader of the volunteer gardening group

The lockdown ban on gatherings meant that volunteer groups across the city were forced to down tools on March 24. The society's gardening group was no exception.

At the time of writing, the council has not yet allowed volunteers to resume group activities – gardening groups will only be allowed to resume their activities once the National Alert Level is reduced to 2 (currently it's at 3). But those of us who can have continued to work solo in all three gardens: Clarence, Regency and Russell.

The gardening group formed last winter and had already put in 79 volunteer hours when lockdown hit. In Russell Square, we had cleared the ivy and brambles that had overwhelmed the garden's south border. In Regency Square, we had cleared four borders of weeds and dead shrubs, transplanting from over-crowded sections into newly cleared spaces. The City Parks Rangers' volunteers made a welcome return visit to Regency Square in mid-March, to lend a hand.



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

In April and May, the months of clearance work paid off. In Russell Square, cotoneasters and hydrangeas that had seemed beyond hope began growing again. In Regency Square, displays of daffodils were followed by deep pink tulips, intensely blue rosemary and ceanothus, scarlet poppies, yellow gorse and phlomis, bright orange marigolds. A clump of cowslips brought a touch of the Downs to the north east gate. Bees were feasting on the purple flowering hebes.



What a transformation! Russell Square, July 2020

Now, in mid-summer, the Regency Square garden is struggling. The grass is parched and yellow, as it is every summer, but this year the borders, too, are shrivelled, with many bare patches. Even the weeds have thrown in the towel.



Parch life: Regency Square East Border July 2020



Parch life: Regency Square South Border July 2020

The society spent £115 on new plants for Regency Square in the spring, and volunteers donated other plants and seeds, including wildflowers. All the new

plants and seeds are suitable for coastal gardens, but not one of them is currently doing well. A couple have disappeared without trace, believed stolen.

The society also spent over £50 on new plants for the Russell Square garden and these are all doing well. If Russell Square is a success story, what's gone wrong in Regency Square?

Like all of the city's seafront squares, Regency Square takes the full brunt of the weather. This year, a spring heat wave was followed by repeated batterings from 40 mph winds. Strong winds are as bad for a garden as heat, sucking the moisture out of the plants and drying the surrounding soil. In a normal garden, the plants quickly recover because their roots seek out reserves of moisture deep below the surface of the soil. But Regency Square is a car park roof garden, with only a shallow layer of soil sitting on concrete slabs. There are no deep reserves for the plants to draw on and no irrigation system to replace the lost moisture.

It's not all bad news in Regency Square. The garden is planted with drought tolerant, Mediterranean-style shrubs that should bounce back. Those that received a hard pruning from the council gardeners last year are putting on new growth. But when so much of the garden looks near-dead and neglected, it is especially vulnerable to damage from anti-social behaviour and careless trampling. We watch and wait and hope for the best.

Regeneration of Regency Square?

Long term RSAS members will know that the RSAS Committee has doggedly pursued the promised garden regeneration funding from the Council courtesy of the requirements under the BA i360's

planning permission. Seeing the amazing job our team of volunteers has done on the Russell Square gardens, imagine how transformative the promised 1% of the BA i360's revenues would be to Regency Square? From the FOI previously submitted by RSAS, we know that the Council has received the money from the i360. So why are they still not taking steps to release this to us?

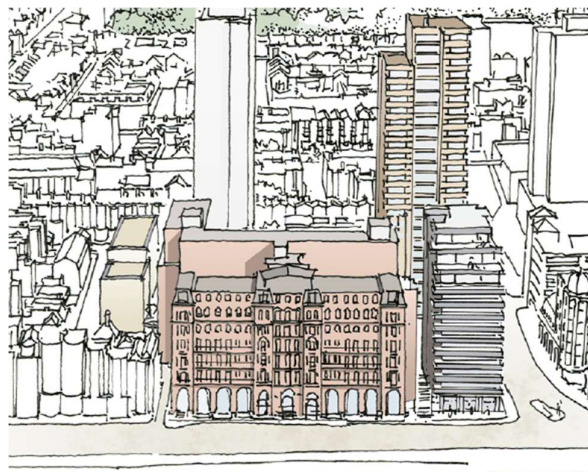
Proposed new hotel in Cannon Place

Members will be aware from previous newsletters that proposals were afoot for the development of some of the underutilised exhibition halls in the Metropole hotel. Disappointingly, these plans were hugely accelerated during lockdown, allowing little to no pre-consultation with the local community. Our planning officer and CAG representative, Mike Davies, undertook a heroic campaign to get the word out to our members and all the other interested bodies in Brighton to ensure the community's voice was heard in this important development.

The ownership structure of the development site is complex: essentially, the entire freehold of the Metropole site, including the land on which Sussex Heights stands is owned by a company called the Topland Group. The Hilton hotel is a leaseholder, leasing the Brighton Metropole Hotel from Topland Group under a 30-year lease from 2001. However, there is a 'break clause' in that lease in 2021, which is why there is now a flurry of movement to consider redevelopment of the site.

As we previously reported, in June last year the Topland Group hired First Base to look into the redevelopment of the site. We met with First Base in November 2019, who confirmed that many options for development were being considered from a

mixed use development, including housing along Queensbury Mews, retail and catering outlets along Cannon Place; to a redeveloped conference venue; to leaving everything as it is.



One 2019 Metropole Development Proposal from the First Base website

In June 2020 First Base was dropped from the project, and Topland appeared to scale back its plans for development. It hired local planning specialists Lichfields to lead development proposals for a new hotel on Cannon Place.

Disappointingly, the plans for the hotel were not widely disseminated: only a handful of local residents were leafleted, and made aware of the (very limited) consultation that Lichfields was carrying out on a hastily assembled website www.cannonplacehotel-consultation.com/



2020 Proposed Cannon Place Hotel

Despite this, RSAS, a number of other local bodies, and members of the community responded in detail to the proposed development. While, in principle, we are supportive of a development to improve the blighted area around Cannon Place, in our view the proposed development falls short in many ways.

We understand that Lichfields and Topland are keen to press on quickly with this major development, so we would be interested in hearing your views. Have a look at the website and tell us what you think.

A Sore Thumb!

Just now and again something sticks out like a sore thumb. Something that is so obviously out of place that we find ourselves asking "surely not?" A number of members have offered up that phrase in relation to the one single PVCu window installed in the whole of Regency Square.

"Surely not? We would not have been allowed planning permission. It's so obviously out of place in the Conservation Area. It's in a Grade II* listed building, for goodness sake. Where is the wooden

sash window, like every other window in the square? In fact, where has the original door itself gone?"



RSAS asked those questions back in October of 2019 via a request to the council for enforcement (case number 149370008). The newly installed window is at ground level in the former front doorway of number 54 and clearly visible on Google Street View today. There is no planning approval for such change on the

planning portal records, nor for the removal of the door in the first place.

The council enforcement case officers have been really restricted during lockdown and unable to make site visits until very recently. So it was such good news to see workmen installing a wooden casement window replacement just as this newsletter was going to publication!

We have gone from "A Sore Thumb" to "Thumbs Up" for a planning enforcement process that does actually give local residents a real say!

26-28 Clarence Square – the final outcome

Committee member and Clarence Square resident Nigel Massey has been working tirelessly for months to try to resolve the truly baffling planning issues with 26-28 Clarence Square. Members will recall this involved a Planning Department direction to

vandalise the existing heritage railings to create utterly unnecessary and impractical bin access.

Nigel, with the support of our local councillors Tom Druitt and Alex Philips, organised one last push to resolve the matter via a Zoom meeting with the planning department.

It is fair to say that the meeting was a disappointment, with the planning department determined at all costs to maintain that the building works were a "*new development*" and not a "*conversion*" against all common sense and semantics of the English language! They appeared more interested in trying to support their terrible decision than fixing the problem it has created.

The good news is that it appears the new owners have no interest in purchasing and installing the bins, so unless the Council intends to take enforcement action – which the Society would vigorously oppose – then it seems the matter is resolved (for now).

Responding to planning applications – how you can get involved

One of the things that RSAS has learned over the years is that the more a community voices its opinion on planning matters the more likely the planning department are to listen. Sometimes the volume of responses really does matter!

With that in mind we were incredibly pleased to see that Jeremy Mustoe from the Brighton Society, who is steeped in planning matters, has written a very useful guide on the most effective way to comment on and raise objections to planning applications.

Even those on the committee who are used to writing to the Council on these issues on behalf of

our members found that we learned oodles from Jeremy's guide. If you would like to check it out for yourself, the guide is at: <https://www.brighton-society.org.uk/how-to-comment-effectively-on-planning-applications/>

Still Upside Down!

The owners claim "the project and Brighton as a town has seen a huge PR and Marketing boost worldwide." The Brighton version is one of four in the UK by Upside Down House UK Ltd. They have an interesting approach to Planning Permission by declaring their installations as temporary, with the promise to remove them after 12 months and reinstate the land to its former condition. However, as the temporary term draws to an end a new Planning Application is submitted asking for the installation not to be considered as 12 month temporary after all. Their latest application asks for extension until January 2023 – and has already been granted by the council.



Now somewhat a familiar Brighton sea front guest, the Upside Down House appears to be a hit with most people we have asked. They say it is a bit of fun and not out of place amongst Brighton attractions since opening in May 2019.

Suzanne's local history column

Well known local historian, and still missed RSAS Committee member, Suzanne Hinton has written a fascinating new article on 11 Clarence Square and its residents. Below she provides us with a taster...

In 1923, Mr. or Mrs. Huband of 11 Clarence Square advertised in French newspapers for a French, Protestant, tutor / piano teacher for a little boy. The lad, Paul, must have been an excellent pupil. By the time he was 18, Paul Huband had won a gold medal for his playing and had given a piano recital on the BBC's National Programme by June 1939 aged just 23. He went on to be the Head of BBC Music in the North and finally Managing Director of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Paul's father, Cecil Huband ran a photographic supplies shop at 23 Duke Street and the family moved from a flat "above the shop" to Clarence Square in 1918 where they stayed until 1938. They then made the move all the way to 9 Clarence Square. Cecil and his wife Annie lived there until Cecil's death in 1961. The house seems to have passed into other hands in 1966 when Annie died.

If any readers knew the Huband family, please do get in touch with the Society with your memories.

To read more about Paul Huband, see <https://suzannehinton.uk>

Meet our new area PCSOs

Members will be aware that we have our own allocated PCSOs for the Regency Square area. However, it is now time to say thank you and goodbye to Rebecca Lovell and Katie Bothwell and

say hello and welcome to Caroline Batchelor, Mike Douglas and Jack Herbert.

Committee members Julie Wright and Mike Davies had a socially distanced meeting with Caroline in May to discuss the rising levels of anti-social behaviour in the area during lockdown. Caroline stressed that policing in the area is data driven so it is essential that all local residents report all anti-social behaviour that they witness. Even if the police are unable to respond there and then your reports will go onto police systems and help to form a picture of what is happening and its impact, which will then enable appropriate resources to be allocated to the problem in the longer-term.

Reports should contain as much information as possible about what is happening, who is involved (descriptions if you do not know who they are), vehicle registration numbers, time of incident, its impact on you or others and how you have been harmed by the behaviour and any concerns about the vulnerability of anyone involved.

Caroline suggested that the best way to report non-emergencies is to either email 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or via the Sussex Police form on their website www.sussex.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/. You can also make non-emergency reports by calling 101.

Caroline also stressed that if an offence is taking place there and then, or if you or someone else is in danger/ it is emergency, you should report this immediately via 999.

And talking of anti-social behaviour....

Litter in the Clarence, Regency and Russell square gardens has been worse than ever since the easing of lockdown restrictions.



Not the way to feed the birds

Our three gardens suffer every summer with litter, especially bottles and cans, cigarette butts and sweet wrappers. Local volunteer litter pickers report that, as lockdown restrictions have eased, there has also been a daily tide of take-away cartons and condiments sachets.



Lunch packaging just discarded in the garden

The litter doesn't always come from garden users. Volunteers routinely find bottles and cartons shoved through the fences from the roadside. In Regency Square, they have recently had to retrieve broken

bicycles dropped over the fence into the shrubberies.

Nor is it limited to certain types of garden user. Soiled nappies are sometimes thrust into the bushes or between the slats of a garden bench.

Even worse, Regency Square's north border is being used as a toilet, leaving trails of soiled loo paper and sanitary items as evidence. Judging by the smell of urine emanating from the car park's central stairwell, the north border is not the only part of the garden to be abused in this way.

These problems are not unique to our squares. In June, the council's Tourism, Equalities, Communities and Culture Committee reported that the same problems are on the increase in all the city's green spaces.



Alas, the brief hiatus on graffiti tagging that occurred in the early stages of lockdown appears to be over.



Graffiti on the corner of Russell Square



Graffiti on Preston Street

The Brighton Society is concerned about the escalation and spread of graffiti in our city and the absence of effective action in tackling graffiti by the Council and the police. They have decided, therefore, to host a series of Zoom meetings this year to discuss and share experiences about graffiti with local civic groups in order to work together to find positive solutions for removing graffiti from our streets.

The main purpose of these meetings will be to form a city-wide action team that is made up of representatives from wards that are affected by graffiti. The outcomes from the meetings will contribute to a future strategy that aims to eradicate unwanted graffiti from the streets of Brighton and Hove.

Nigel Massey attended the first meeting in May on behalf of the Society. There were two major conclusions that came out of the meeting. Firstly, there needs to be more political engagement and a genuine will to tackle this issue other than talk without action. Secondly, we need a greater police commitment to arrest and conviction.

What's missing?????

One eagle-eyed resident sent us the picture below during lockdown. Can you spot what isn't there?



Can you see it yet?

Yes, for the first time that many of us can ever remember the Regency Square gardens were (briefly) devoid of motorbikes. What a difference it makes to how the garden looks!

As long-term members will know, the Society campaigned for, and the Council installed, dedicated motorbike bays – with security locks – on the square. Motorbikes have to drive **over** these bays to park in the garden. So why do they keep doing it?

One more reason we need the Regency Square regeneration money, as plans included obstacles to prevent motorbikes from using the gardens in this way.

Food, glorious food!

Prior to the pandemic, one of the things that many of us loved about Brighton was being able to eat out in a different local restaurant every night of the week

if you felt like it. Below our Social Secretary Ani Watson laments those carefree days...

When we moved to Brighton from the countryside a couple of years ago, a big factor was our seduction by the thought of enjoying all the excellent and exciting eating opportunities to be had down here. I joyfully thought any cooking skills I had would be relegated to the back burner! But who would have reckoned with lockdown keeping us all at home and cooking madly every day for the last few months?!

This has been a strange time but there have been a few enterprising establishments that have kept producing quality food for those who want it. Many places opened their kitchens to produce quality 'take away' meals and meals for 'finishing' at home which has been a joy if you were able to get one but you had to be quick to place your order before they sold out each week.

The Facebook group **Support Local: Independent Shops Delivering in Brighton and Hove** (https://www.facebook.com/groups/1558345741007742/?sorting_setting=CHRONOLOGICAL) has been fantastic for finding and supporting true local gems during these difficult times.

Now things are easing and restaurants and pubs are trying to open their doors whilst putting in place all the safety measures required of them. It's not been easy for any of the hospitality industry so hopefully now they will see a light at the end of the tunnel and we, too, will get to enjoy the pleasures of eating and drinking outside our homes whilst helping them get back on track.

Bon Appétit!

With Ani's thoughts ringing in her ears RSAS Committee member Mary Hunter decided to undertake some research!

During the month of August, the Government will be giving the hospitality industry a boost by offering to pay 50% (up to a maximum of £10.00) towards the cost of a meal in restaurants and pubs.

To give our members an idea of which local restaurants will be participating in the Government's scheme, what times and days our local restaurants are now opening, as well as which are offering a take-away service for those of us who can't dine out, Mary has put together a brief "print out and keep" guide **at the end of this newsletter.**

Mary carried out her research in July, and some establishments were still awaiting further Government guidelines before taking a final decision on whether to participate in the government scheme. In these uncertain times offers may change from week to week so if your favourite restaurant doesn't appear do contact them as the situation may well have changed.

Final thoughts....

RSAS membership remains free for this year, so if you know of anyone who would like to join, please pass along this offer and ask them to contact any member of the Committee.

We are also very grateful to all our members who have made donations, and rolled their fees forward after we took the decision to suspend subscription fees during these uncertain times. Our members' generosity never ceases to amaze us!

Thank you all, and stay safe and well

The RSAS Committee

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Some cheery sunflowers in Clarence Square, just because they're cheery!

Bon Appétit!

Details of local eating options, opening times, delivery, and whether they are participating in the government £10 eating out scheme in August.

	In £10 scheme?	Other offers?	Outdoor service?	Take away service?	Opening times	Contact info
	Yes	Special 3 course menu for £20.00	Yes	Yes (Deliveroo)	08.00 - 22.00 daily	01273 325014
	Yes, subject to further info		Yes	No	11.30 - 22.30 daily	01273 326520
	Yes, subject to further info		Yes		12.00 - 21.00 daily	01273 206523
	Yes	20% discount for members of i360 residents scheme	Yes	Yes (Deliveroo)	10.00 - 20.00 daily	0330 800 1360
	Yes	£10 lunch box £5 breakfast roll Drinks pitcher	Yes	Yes (Deliveroo)	All day in August Mon - Wed 09.00 - 16.00	01273 730320
	Yes		No	Yes (collection only)	17.00 - 23.00 daily	01273 328775
	Yes	Take-away lunch box 12.00 - 15.00	No	Yes (Deliveroo)	Mon - Fri 12.00 - 15.30 Sat - Sun 12.00 - 22.00	01273 727246
	Yes		Yes	Yes for pies (Deliveroo)	Mon - Fri 12.00 - 15.00 & 17.00 - 20.00 Sat-Sun 12.00 - 21.00	01273 325652

	In £10 scheme?	Other offers?	Outdoor service?	Take away service?	Opening times	Contact info
	Dependent on date of restaurant reopening		No	Yes (Deliveroo)	Mon - Thurs 12.00 - 21.30 Sat 12.00 - 22.30 Sun 12.00 - 20.00	01273 325500
	Awaiting info from govt.		Yes	No	12.00 - 16.00 & 18.00 - 22.00 daily 14.30 - 16.30 for afternoon tea	01273 929488
	Awaiting info from govt.		No	Yes (Deliveroo)	12.00 - 21.30 daily	01273 325124
	Awaiting info from govt.		No	Yes (Deliveroo)	14.00 - 22.00 daily	01273 329989
	Yes		Yes	Yes	Mon - Thurs 17.00 - 21.00 Fri - Sat 12.00 - 21.30 Sun 12.20 - 20.00	01273 933620
			Yes	Yes (collection only)	Mon - Fri 12.00 - 15.00 & 17.00 - 20.00 Sat 12.00 - 21.00 Sun 12.00 - 20.00	01273 323289
	Yes		No	Yes (collection only)	12.00 - 23.00 daily	01273 725806
	Awaiting info from govt.		Yes	Yes	09.00 - 16.30 daily	0738 772891 9

	In £10 scheme?	Other offers?	Outdoor service?	Take away service?	Opening times	Contact info
	Yes		No	Yes	12.00 - 14.00 & 17.00 - 20.00 daily	01273 241226
		10% discount for orders over £20.00	No	Yes	17.00 - 21.30 Thurs - Tues (closed Weds)	01273 323224
			No	Yes	12.00 - 22.00 daily	01273 328028
		15% discount for NHS staff	No	Yes (Deliveroo)	17.00 - 22.30 daily	01273 757424
			No	Yes	12.00 - 14.30 & 17.00 - 23.00 daily	01273 755715