

## ANNUAL REPORT MARCH 2022

### Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM has been postponed for the last two years due to Covid. We are delighted that we will finally be able to hold our 40th AGM at **7.30 pm on Tuesday April 5<sup>th</sup> in the Hilton Metropole**. This will also be our first hybrid AGM, where we offer the option for members to join us via Zoom if you cannot attend in person - just request the link by email to [rsascommunity@gmail.com](mailto:rsascommunity@gmail.com) We have no idea how easy this will be in practice – so we hope everyone will bear with us! – but we want to try and give as many people as possible the option of joining in.

For those attending in person, at 7.30pm Kevin Newman will give a talk on the history of the Metropole. This will be followed by a refreshment break. The Zoom online call will be opened at 8:45pm and the formal business of the AGM will commence, as set out in the agenda below.

### AGM Agenda

- Minutes of the 39th AGM held on 25th March 2019;
- Adoption of the RSAS Annual Reports from March 2020 and March 2021 (including any questions or comments from members on either of those Reports)
- Committee report for the year 2021-22
- Annual accounts
- Motion: To increase the business membership rate from £8.00 to £15.00. All other rates to remain unchanged
- Discussion: Possible changes to the Society's name and/or logo. Plus new website launch.
- Election of officers and Committee
- Members' questions and comments

Refreshments will be provided. Unfortunately this year we will not be running a raffle: given the unusual circumstances, and the challenges of holding our first hybrid AGM we have decided running a raffle as well would just be too much! The raffle will resume again next year.

### The Committee's Annual Report

#### Changes to the Committee

There have been big changes to the Committee over the past year. Diana Dunn stepped down as

Chair, Mary Hunter stepped down from the committee and Nicola Floyd is taking an extended break from the Treasurer role as she leaves the Brighton area for several months. We know you will join us in thanking them all for volunteering their time – we will miss their contributions immensely.

Julie Wright is acting Chair. We welcomed Fran Coates to the committee in this last year and two further new committee member, Sue Dawes and Hannah Murphy are standing for election at the AGM.

However, the work of the committee keeps growing so we believe that we could meet that challenge better with more members. Being a committee member need not be a large time commitment – one meeting a month for a few hours – and you really could make a difference to our area! And it's fun!

If you think you might be interested, any of our existing Committee members would be delighted to give you more information and you could even attend a meeting to see if it is for you.

### Better Communication

#### Centralised email address

While we know that most of our members know many of the RSAS Committee personally, we also know that it is sometimes annoying to try to work out who to contact for information on the Committee. With that in mind we have set up a centralised RSAS email account so that our members can contact all of the Committee at once.

This system appears to be working reasonably well and we have had good feedback from members that this is a much simpler and easier approach for members who need to raise issues with us.

So, if you do want to contact us about anything please do at: [rsascommunity@gmail.com](mailto:rsascommunity@gmail.com)

#### New WhatsApp group.

With thanks to new Committee member Fran Coates, we now have a new route for communicating amongst local residents: a (name to be announced at AGM) WhatsApp group for our local community. The idea is that this group will allow us to get to know each other better, support each other, swap plants and furniture, tips for best broadband supplier, help with heavy lifting, child sitting, parking vouchers, car sharing, shopping, lift to hospital. The list is endless.

We have had lots of positive feedback that this is a great idea, and we are trying to help those members who need additional tech support to join. If you would like to be part of the (name tba) WhatsApp group please text your name and Street or Square to Fran on 07985594756

#### Newsletter

We have continued this year with a revised format and frequency of our Newsletter in order to try and provide more in-depth detail on the issues in our area. Feedback so far has been very positive on these changes, but do let us know if there is anything we can improve.

We believe that the combination of day-to-day information via our WhatsApp group, combined

with deeper analysis (but in a less timely fashion) via our newsletter gives a good sense of what is going on in our area.

### **New website, branding and name**

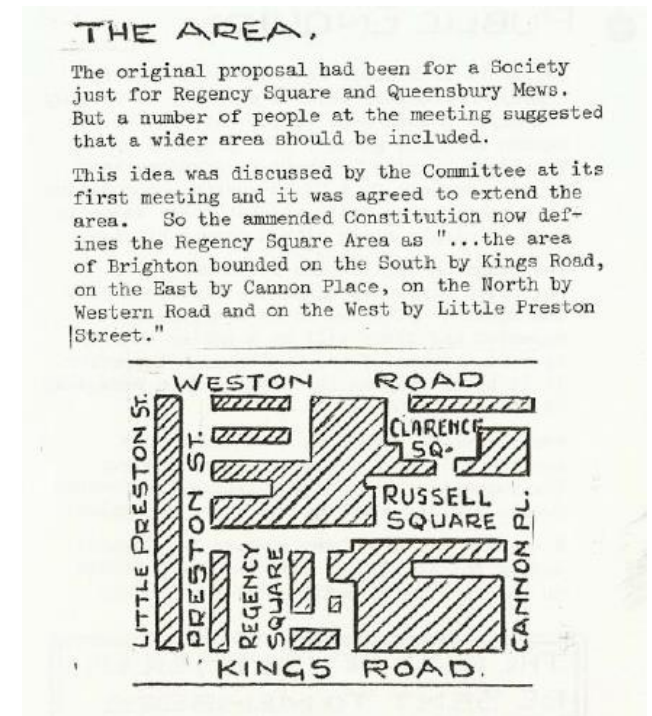
As we set out in last year's annual report, sadly, it has become evident over the last few years that the RSAS website is no longer fit for purpose. When the website was first built it was state of the art, but as we all know, these things have moved on a lot in the last ten years! While it still looks fine to visitors to the site on a computer, it is very hard to navigate on a mobile phone or tablet. The back-end software that runs the website is also now rather old, and limited in what it can do and how it can be changed.

With that in mind we commissioned a local business to undertake a rebuild of our website. The main aims were to improve functionality so that the Committee can provide more real time information to members, and to provide services that people have now come to expect from a website. So we want people to be able to join the Society and pay membership fees via the website and for the website to look good on mobile phones, etc.

We will unveil this new website at the AGM. No need to adjust your bookmark - the address remains [www.regencybrighton.com](http://www.regencybrighton.com)

Now, it has always been a long name. Our very first newsletter described how the Society came to be formed, relayed some of the discussions over what

Area it would serve and coined the name Regency Square Area Society. Here is an extract from 1979:



How many of us have tongue-tripped over the words in RSAS and forgotten what some of the initials stand for? And are we only interested in Regency Square? Are we really the "Regency Society"? Can you make it easier to remember and let the name represent all of us? These were questions posed to us by members.

And the winner is ...

**BE SURE TO COME ALONG TO THE AGM  
FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT**

## Planning and Conservation

Whilst RSAS's planning representative reviews around 200 plans in our Conservation Area each year, some developers and applicants don't play to the rules. Time and again outrageous changes to our street scenes are made without the building's owner going anywhere near the Planning Process.

RSAS has made sixty nine enforcement requests in the last three years – mostly successful. Some examples from the last 12 months include ...

- 👍 Stone Street, loading – trucks repelled in favour of residential amenity.
- 👍 Preston Street, Mr Fish and Chips at 86 – illegal land-grab terrace, out-of-character materials and excessively large signage – Planning REFUSED
- 👍 Castle Street, attempt to legitimise a roof bar on top of the snooker club – Planning REFUSED
- 👍 Kings Road, above Melrose Restaurant. Proposed 4-storey in-fill on 1790s building. RSAS led the way to 55 objections. Planning approval REFUSED.

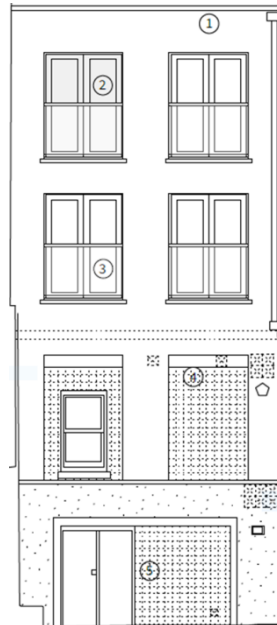
🗨 Kings Road, Brighton Beach Club - Has built two large areas of decking and made no planning application. Enforcement officer agrees there are infringements BUT NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN.

👍 Western Road, former Revelator Pub - Proposed a giant mural of otters as advertising on the side of the pub. RSAS asked the owners to respect the conservation area character and Harvey & Son Brewery DROPPED THE PLANS.

Wealthier applicants seem to still get their way...

- 🗨 The inheritors of the John Guest £500,000,000 plumbing empire put in reasonable proposals on Kings Road to amalgamate the Cecil and the Granville into one hotel. But they have also gained APPROVAL for hideous and overbearing developments at the rear – a large Spa development and new entrance for the hotel on small and quiet Queensbury Mews.
- 🗨 And Moretons Investments continue to push through plans that are APPROVED but then only loosely executed. This example is on Stone Street:

Plans approved for Moretons Investments



And what was built by Moretons Investments



👍 The Society welcomed our new neighbour Maldron Hotel Brighton - the new Cannon Place Hotel. It is being constructed to replace some redundant conference facilities at the rear of the Metropole Hotel and will become a great contributor to the life and vibrancy of our part of the city. Our successes have been in challenging the initial building design, pedestrian approaches and traffic management. It will significantly lift an area of universally disliked blank frontages and produce welcoming, attractive streetscapes.

👍 Stronger Together? So how should we campaign on planning matters in the future to ensure we get the right result? The Society has played an active role in city-wide campaigns, and we have joined with 15 other Brighton societies "Stronger Together" against big developer and big money proposals at Brighton East Gasworks. This may become a template for future campaigns to give more say to our local communities.

## Our Gardens

### The new five year gardens plan

Following gains made in Russell and Clarence Squares in recent years, in the last Annual Report we reported on the sorry condition of the top/North garden in Regency Square. Despite a significant amount of person-hours being spent working on the top/North garden, it still looked bleak at times despite our gardeners' best efforts. Many of the borders were suffering from plant gaps

that were consistently colonised by weeds. We recognised that there would be no quick fix and to reverse the decline would take a considerable amount of time, effort and money. We also recognised that we could no longer wait for the Council to act.

To fix this problem, the Committee worked with the Head of the volunteer gardening team to produce a multi-year plan to tackle the immediate problems with the Regency Square gardens. We then sought, and got, approval from City Parks Operations. We set out the details of this plan in our Summer newsletter last year, and asked for RSAS members' support. As always, RSAS members' response was incredible: within days we had enough funding to cover the first year's costs!

#### The first phase of planting

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, which 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.

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.

In October we undertook the first big planting session. The brilliant City Park Rangers team helped us on our big planting day as we knew it would be an enormous undertaking to get everything planted in just one morning. While there will be huge amounts of work this Spring in terms of weeding and caring for the young plants as they spread out to their full size, the transformation of the South bed is already looking great.

The next phase of work is to tackle the central round bed, and work on that will begin shortly. As we set out in recent newsletters, the plan is to shrink this bed and turn it into something that would be much easier to maintain. As part of that plan, we had hoped that we could maintain some of the larger bushes that are already there, but recent inspections suggest that most of those bushes are on their last legs.

Instead, we are considering turning the central bed into a herb garden as an attractive option that would also be easy to maintain (and would smell amazing!) As a last resort we may have to consider grassing over the area.

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

#### Expansion of the gardening team

Another big upside of developing a new multiyear plan for the top/North garden in Regency Square is that it has galvanised all of our local gardeners. We have had an increased turn out of volunteers to help in most sessions which has been great. But we still have work for plenty more! If you'd like to join or if you would like a bit more information contact us at [rsascommunity@gmail.com](mailto: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!)

#### FOI/S106 funds

The Committee has not 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. This money would go a long way to repair structural defects in those gardens such as the pavements, steps, bins, etc and would complement the planting work of the RSAS volunteer gardeners.

With that in mind we submitted another freedom of information request to the Council to see exactly how much money the Council has received under this fund. As at 1 September 2021 there was £71,523.48 sitting unused in that fund. The Committee had an initial meeting with our MP Caroline Lucas where we raised this issue and we intend to take it up with our local Councillors shortly.

## Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour remains an ongoing problem in our area. The Committee has continued to meet with our Police Constable Support Officers (PCSOs) to discuss these issues and the advice to residents remains the same as always: residents should report every incidence of anti-social behaviour and drug taking as this will ensure that police resources are properly allocated in our area. The Committee has found that the easiest way to make these reports is to either

(i) send an email to [101@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:101@sussex.pnn.police.uk) or

(ii) use the forms on the Sussex Police website <https://www.sussex.police.uk/>

The Committee will continue to meet regularly with our PCSOs over the coming year, so if there is a problem that you need us to bring to their attention, please contact us.

### Noise

One of the biggest problems we have had to deal with in the area over the past year has been the significant increase in anti-social noise complaints. From buskers on the sea-front, to pubs operating outside their licensing hours, to groups gathering on residential streets, to commercial deliveries at unsocial hours, to full scale raves on the seafront the number and variation in noise complaints this year has been unlike any previous year.

We have tried to bring all those residents who have been negatively impacted by the various problems together so that collectively we have a stronger

voice. Often residents don't realise that they are not suffering alone, and a complaint from several residents increases the likelihood of a complaint being taken seriously.

Many of the noise issues over the last year have been quickly resolved by a polite approach from RSAS because most of the commercial businesses in our area want to have a good relationship with neighbours – they are local businesses after all! But we have also worked extensively with the Environmental Health team, the police, the Licensing team, and our Councillors as necessary.

### Fly tipping

Fly posting and fly tipping have become much more of a problem over the past year. 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. You can report a problem in need of clean up here: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-problem-and-request-clean>

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.

### New signage

Committee member Ani Watson has also been working on a project to help address anti-social behaviour by improving the signage in our three gardens. The police have informed us that it is difficult to move along anti-social groups drinking in our gardens as (unlike other gardens in Brighton)

we did not have signage prohibiting such behaviour. Ani has been working with all of the different Council departments to address this problem and get these signs up in time for Summer. The first result has been new PSPO signage in all 3 Squares.

The Committee also ensured that our area was included in the new "no dogs" signs sprayed on the ground at entrances to green spaces.

As part of our push on clearer signage the Committee has also got the Council to take the problem of motorbikes parked on Regency Square seriously. Although complaints have been made to the Council regularly and frequently about this problem, our Chair Julie Wright has managed to sort the matter out once and for all last year. Julie spent several months working with the relevant Council departments to get signage in place to make it clear that parking in the gardens is not permitted.

Members will be aware that RSAS previously organised to have 3 (fully lockable) motorbike bays installed around the Square, so there is no excuse for parking on our green spaces.

## RSAS COVID-19 Community Initiative

Throughout the pandemic we have matched those in need in our community with those able to give help. Thank you to all those who responded to our initiative. Our thanks also to Committee members Julie Wright and Mike Davies for setting up and running this scheme. For now (and we hope for good) we have put the initiative on pause.

However, if any members do need help, for pandemic related reasons or some other reason, please email us at [rsascommunity@gmail.com](mailto:rsascommunity@gmail.com)

### Social Events

The Committee was delighted that we were able to host the annual Christmas tree lighting event again, in conjunction with the Artist Residence and the BA i360. The flight on the BA i360 filled up faster than any previous year (and we had a huge waiting list!) so apologies to any members who missed out on a spot.

Huge thanks to the BA i360 for providing a free flight to the local community to enable this event. Huge thanks also to the Artist Residence for funding our tree again. Their generosity makes it all possible.

### Thanks....

....to everyone who has supported the Community over the year, and especially those who continued to provide donations to enable us to fund our work during the pandemic. Without the interest and enthusiasm of our members and volunteers, nothing would be possible!

***Julie Wright, Chair***

### Society Contacts

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

✉ [rsascommunity@gmail.com](mailto:rsascommunity@gmail.com)

**You can also contact us via:**



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



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



<https://twitter.com/RegencySquareAS>

## Committee Elections

The following are standing for election:

- Chair: Julie Wright (Stone Street)
- Acting Secretary: Annabel Watson (Clarence Square)
- Treasurer: Julie Wright (acting); Nicola Floyd (Queensbury Mews)
- Planning: Mike Davies (Stone Street)
- Clarence Square: Nigel Massey (Clarence Square)
- IT and Gardens: Fran Coates (Regency Square)
- Member: Sue Dawes (Kings Road)
- Member: Hannah Murphy (Regency Square)

Further nominations are invited for the committee and all three officers. Nominations must be made one week in advance of the AGM. You may nominate any member of the Society or you may nominate yourself.

Please email [rsascommunity@gmail.com](mailto:rsascommunity@gmail.com) if you wish to make a nomination.

## Annual accounts

### Income & expenditure for the year ended 28 February 2022

INCOME	£(out)	£in
Subscriptions (incl forward subs)		13.00
Donations		141.39
Functions and other		0.00
Interest		0.54
<b>Total General Fund income</b>		<b>154.93</b>
Gardening Fund		2,873.25
Christmas Tree Fund		480.00
Bicentenary Book Fund		256.51
<b>Total Income (incl gen fund) for the year</b>		<b>3,764.69</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Postage, printing, IT, etc.	14.39	
Insurance	63.53	
AGM/functions	0.00	
Other Gen Fund Expenses	21.00	
<b>Total General Fund expenses</b>	<b>98.92</b>	
Gardening Fund	1,388.43	
Christmas Tree Fund	620.81	
Bicentenary Book Fund	0.00	
<b>Total expenditure (incl gen fund) for the year</b>		<b>(2,108.16)</b>
<b>OVERALL SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) THIS YEAR</b>		<b>1,656.53</b>

### Balance Sheet as at 28 February 2022

<b>General Fund</b> at start of year	5,868.38
Net Income / (Expenditure) for the year	56.01
General Fund at 28 February 2022	<u>5,924.39</u>
<b>Gardening Fund</b> at start of year	58.42
Net Income / (Expenditure) for the year	1,484.82
Gardening Fund at 28 February 2022	<u>1,543.24</u>
<b>Christmas Tree Fund</b> at start of year	(249.33)
Net Income / (Expenditure) for the year	(140.81)
Christmas Tree fund at 28 February 2022	<u>(390.14)</u>
<b>Bicentenary Book Fund</b> at start of year	(499.72)
Net Income / (Expenditure) for the year	256.51
Bicentenary Book Fund at 28 February 2022	<u>(243.21)</u>
<b>Total funds (liabilities) at 28 Feb 2022</b>	<b><u>6,834.28</u></b>
Cash at bank	6,832.97
Cash in hand	1.31
<b>Total assets</b>	<b><u>6,834.28</u></b>

## Treasurer's Report

This has been another very unusual year for the Society's finances as the Committee again took the decision to suspend annual subscriptions and roll forward everyone's RSAS membership free of charge until March 2022. We know that RSAS fees are small, but we still felt that it was the right thing to do. During the pandemic we wanted to be able to support local residents and businesses and did not want our fees to be a barrier to anyone who needed help.

Several members insisted on paying fees or providing donations to help us to continue with our work, and for this we were immensely grateful. Those fees and donations were enough in total to cover the Society's basic operating costs. It also helped that the basic costs of running the Society were reduced, since we could not hold any of our usual in person events, such as the AGM.

We have reinstated subscriber fees from 1 March 2022, though we intend to continue to allow all new members to enjoy their first financial year of membership for free. We will also continue to operate a hardship fund for anyone who cannot afford the annual fee.

We would love to be able to operate the Society as a permanently free resource for the local community, but we do incur costs to run the Society: we have to pay for our website and hosting, we need insurance for the events that we hold throughout the year, we pay the costs associated with our gardens, we pick up all of the ancillary costs of the Christmas tree event each

year, etc.... All of our committee members work on a volunteer basis, so every penny from members goes directly to running the Society.

As noted in the agenda for the AGM, we would also propose increasing our business membership rates from £8 per year to £12 per year starting from 1 March 2023. The reason for this is because we want to continue to keep fees low for the majority of residents, and much of the work that we do is a help to local businesses. In addition, almost all of our very generous business members give us significantly more than the basic £8 subscriber fee, so we anticipate that this would impact very few members in practice.

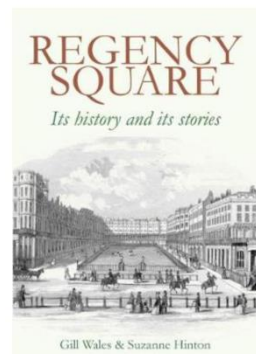
Our volunteer gardening group continued to operate over the past year, and we continued to fund their activities. Looking after the Clarence, Russell and Regency Square gardens is an important part of the Society's role.

As discussed in this annual report, this year we launched our new multiyear plan for the top/North garden of Regency Square. We anticipate that this project will cost approximately £4,500, and it will be funded entirely through donations, fees and fundraising. Thanks to the generous donations of RSAS members, we have already been able to get work underway on the most problematic (and hence most expensive to fix!) South border, and we have funding in place to tackle the central round bed.

It is important to note that every penny that was spent on the South border's transformation – from the soil-improving compost, to the tools, to the

plants themselves – came from our very generous members. 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](mailto: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.

We will also continue to pursue the money that is owed to our area under Section 106 of the BAi360's planning permission.



People continued to buy our Regency Square bicentenary book, written by Gill Wales & Suzanne Hinton, over the last year, and we are immensely grateful to Suzanne who continues to give her time to manage sales of the book for us. A partnership for sales with the BA i360

combined with the ability to give authors' talks once again meant £256 of sales this year. As such, it looks likely that the Society will break even on the book sometime in the next financial year. And while the purpose of the book was never about making money, it does appear that we might even make a profit from it over the coming years! If you would like to buy a copy of the book please do get in touch with the Committee.

Finally, we were able to hold our annual Christmas tree lighting event again this year. With huge thanks

to the BA i360 for providing us with a free flight for members, to the Artist Residence for funding our (huge!) Christmas tree, and to Sussex trees for generously ensuring our tree is at the very top end of the range. As occurs every year, RSAS picked up all the ancillary costs of the event (replacing lights that were broken or damaged, paying for the singer at the event, etc)

We do have some large outstanding costs coming up, including payment for the new website, new signage across our gardens and obviously the continuing work on transforming the top/North garden of Regency Square. We have budgeted for all of these costs and we are confident that we can continue to meet our operating costs and fund these projects at the same time.

I know that I say it every year, but we are always amazed at the generosity of our Members – and it is your generosity that has kept RSAS running for more than 40 years.

Many thanks!

***Nicola Floyd, Treasurer***