



A WORD FROM THE CHAIR....

The reports in this Newsletter show that 2017 has been a busy year, focusing on specific projects within the gardens, such as new beds, and other key repairs and maintenance.

We have welcomed Andrew Doig, as a new member to the Board. His knowledge about gardening is greatly appreciated and he has been working closely with our gardeners as set out in his report on other pages. Very many thanks, as always, to our team of gardeners and our volunteers, the Voles, for making the gardens look so spectacular and uplifting.

Having achieved the enormous task of replacing Southern Railings, we now want to turn to more projects in the gardens themselves. We would very much welcome ideas and suggestions.

This will be the last Newsletter to be printed and distributed by hand around the Estate. In an age when almost everyone has access to a computer, it seems almost Luddite for us to communicate with everyone as if the new technology did not exist. Those few residents without a computer will surely have neighbours who can help keep them in touch.

We already have an excellent website (kte.org.uk) full of information about the history and background of the estate and the gardens, a large gallery of pictures, along with AGM and the annual garden reports. It is our intention to update the website on a regular basis, so to stay up to date with what is happening you only need to log on.

It can also be used as a forum to exchange ideas. Andrew, for example, is very keen to thin out the self-seeded sycamores that now dominate parts of the gardens, but recognises that such a move would be very controversial. What do you think? If you have not already check our website, I would urge you to do so.

We are rapidly approaching the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Kemp Town Estate and gardens in 1823. The Board will be considering how this momentous anniversary should be marked and ideas are greatly welcome. **Mark Harper, Chairman**

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The 2018 KTE AGM will be held at the Steiner School at 1030 on Saturday, January 20, 2018. Please try and attend and make your views known.

Looking back and going forward with the gardens

Were Thomas Read Kemp to visit the Estate today, what would he make of the gardens bequeathed us? How far have things changed since they were first laid out? Has their character been retained and how far does it matter? These are questions I have been exploring with Jeremy, our head gardener, in order to provide a kind of stock-taking report for the KTE board.

Our gardens, laid out in the Regency style, are listed, Grade II, in Historic England's register of significant heritage landscape assets. When the gardens were created in 1823, the English Landscape tradition exemplified by Capability Brown's picturesque, sweeping vistas for aristocratic estates, was giving way to a more intimate romantic style on a scale in keeping with the buildings of the urban estates and suburban houses springing up at the time for the new middle class. Our gardens expressed the emerging style with its island shrubberies and copses set in wide open lawns, viewed from serpentine paths offering the genteel residents of the day their walking circuits. The flint faced entrance to our tunnel reflects the flint grottos popular at the time and there was even a romantic rustic wooden summer house in the south west corner of the Lewes Crescent lawns until demolished in 1935.



An uninterrupted visual connection between the house facades and the gardens before hedges and trees

Much has changed since 1823. In 1900 the gardens committee invested in 1000 evergreen shrubs, the ancestors of much of the hedging which today encloses the gardens, particularly on the more exposed southern and western boundaries. The committee was responding to the effects of the salt-laden wind that blasted across the gardens, stunting all living things before it and making residents beat a hasty retreat from the wind. Up until this point there had been a continuous visual connection between the

palatial facades of the houses, unimpeded across the carriageway (no parked cars or traffic to interrupt the view in those days), and through the open railings to the lawns and shrubberies: a fairly stark but continuous composition unifying the facades with their garden setting, or looking at it the other way around, setting the gardens against their grand backdrop of white stucco terraces.

This has been lost completely and would have been wonderful to see, but turning the clock back now would mean opening up the gardens to the sight of cars parked all around the boundaries, not to mention exposing us once more to the coastal winds. I'd have to say to Mr. Kemp, the hedges may not have been part of your plan but we need them today.

The hedges were a conscious decision by our forebears to shelter the gardens but the heavy tree canopies that have developed since are the product, not of design but of accident. From the second world war onward until, perhaps the 1980's, the gardens were run on a shoe string budget. During this time, sycamores and holm oaks self-seeded and elms suckered to build up the tree canopies which today surround the North garden and dominate the central part of the South garden. Of course these trees provide more shelter from winds and greater privacy from the roads but at the same time they have deprived the beds below of the moisture and sunlight needed to grow flowering plants to the extent that these are almost excluded from the North Garden.



Sussex Square before trees dominated

I imagine that T R Kemp visiting today might be miffed that his grand terraces are now, in summer at least, completely hidden away behind the tree canopy that lines Sussex Square. I'd have some sympathy with that view.

I am going to be talking some more with Jeremy about how the gardens develop from here. There are always choices to be made, choices which the Board needs to oversee on behalf of residents. It would be good to hear from you if you have a particular view you would like to express about the gardens.

Andrew Doig, KTE board member.

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GARDEN REPORT



The highlight in the garden for me this year has been the new extended rose bed which was created last autumn when a huge *buddleia* was removed. It came into flower in the spring with a spectacular show of tulips (see left) and it continued flowering with one thing after another all the way to December. The bees and butterflies loved it too and I think it has really improved an area that used to be filled with a tired old shrub.

The square bed in the middle of the woodland had a bit of a make over with the addition of

some yellow flowering *rudbekia*, which cheered it up through the summer. But the bed has always been a challenge partly because the *trachycarpus* in the centre has sucked up so much moisture and put half the bed in shade, so this Autumn I decided it was time to remove it. I've also added a huge amount of compost, so hopefully it will be looking better next year.

The north west corner has seen some improvements, with the addition of a new bench and some new planting. A fine new bench and table has also been donated for the Secret Garden.

You've probably noticed that the hedges have been looking very well cared for lately. Andy has done an amazing job keeping them regularly cut, while Ben has focused on looking after the lawns.

We've had some new members join the 'Voles' - our group of garden volunteers, who do a tremendous amount to keep the gardens looking good. You are very welcome to join us on a Tuesday morning if you are interested.

We've had a bit of a problem with holes dug in the lawns, I think by foxes, but might be the badgers. Anyway, whoever is doing it is very persistent. We try filling them up with soil, reseeding them with grass, covering them with wire mesh etc, but they keep on digging! It seems there is not much we can do to stop them, so please be aware when you are walking in the grass that there might be holes in unexpected places.

Something we are going to tackle this winter is the southern boundary hedge on the south east lawn. It has always been very difficult to cut because it is so huge (it is 8m wide and 3m high in places) but this year it has got out of hand and we haven't been able to reach the top of the hedge at all.

You can see the line of growth sticking up in the middle that we haven't been able to reach, so we are going to take the drastic step of slicing a few meters off the width. In the long run it will make the hedge more dense and stronger, but it will look a bit bare for a year or two before it reforms a green leafy side again.

Jeremy Mouldsdales, Head Gardener

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

2017 has been a busy year for projects and maintenance work in the gardens. As the work has accounted for a significant proportion of our annual budget, we thought it would be useful to give you an overview of where some of your fees from the garden rate have been spent.

As you will all be aware in 2016 we negotiated with the Council to reclaim the ground along the seafront, rebuild the brick plinth and reinstate the railings to the original design in cast iron. This was probably the largest and most costly project KTE has ever undertaken.

On completion of the railings work, we installed in July this year a large wooden gate to allow access for cutting the grass between the railings and the road frontage, whilst hopefully also reducing the risk of children getting through the hedge, or getting stuck in the railings!



We appointed Gyvory Self, structural engineers, to carry out a survey of the tunnel and identify renovation works in advance of the arrival of heavy trucks carrying materials for the rebuilding of the Royal Sussex County Hospital. The works included repointing all of the brickwork in the tunnel and was completed in the spring. We now have a report from an independent engineer confirming the tunnel is in good condition; this puts us in a good position in the event of any damage arising from the increased traffic above the tunnel and the possibility of having to make insurance claims!

We commissioned Mark Whittle to cut back the rust and repaint the railings surrounding the North gardens. During the long summer Mark got to know many of the neighbours and the consensus seems to be that he has done an excellent job in difficult circumstances. The rust, exacerbated by the salt air, means we cannot get the railings back to a perfect finish but regular maintenance keeps the rust at bay and the railings looking presentable. We also arranged for 58 cast iron finials to be welded back on to the tops of the railings to make good the "missing teeth" effect which detracts from the appearance of the railings. The old railings and damaged plinth will continue to present us with ongoing challenges.

In the autumn we installed 3 dog waste bins to encourage the minority of dog owners who were not clearing up after their dogs, or who were leaving bags of dog waste around the gardens! We have appointed a contractor to empty the bins on a regular basis. We also painted a further section of the railings in the south-west corner.

Over the course of the year we have commenced planning for maintenance work which will be undertaken during 2018. Some of the stonework on the plinths in Chichester & Arundel Terraces has started to crumble and we are in discussions with a specialist contractor and the conservation officer to undertake repairs in the spring. We have also been exploring the replacement of a steel shed inside the Stockade which houses the large mower. A resident has generously offered to donate funds to complete this project. We have again commissioned Mark Whittle to undertake further painting of the railings for the upcoming year on the west side of the south gardens and this work will be completed during the spring. **Steve Harwood, KTE Board Member**

MONEY MATTERS



I am pleased to report that the current financial year which commenced in April has proved much less costly with both income and expenditure in line with the agreed budget for the year.

The only unanticipated capital cost has been approximately £1400 to instal a large wooden gate for child safety reasons in the southern hedge adjacent to the new railings. We have spent around £7500 on routine repair,

maintenance and painting of various railings around the Gardens during the summer, as planned.

The other costs include administrative, gardeners' wages and the upkeep of the gardens including the purchase of plants and specialist tree surgery. In addition, in the early months of 2017 it proved necessary to replace the grass cutting tractor ahead of the Spring/ Summer mowing season. The cost of almost £10,000 was met from reserves specifically built up for this purpose.

There is always the chance of sudden unexpected costs during the winter months arising from weather damage in our exposed position but we have adequate reserves to cover such eventualities.

Work is underway in preparing the budget for the next financial year starting in April, with anticipated expenditure on repairing some erosion damage to the railing plinths in front of both Chichester and Arundel Terraces. Repairs to the plinths around Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent will be required in the future but the timing will have to be linked to the repairs to the adjacent cobbles.

Also next year we want to look at the cost of replacing the rented Portaloo in the gardeners' compound with a permanent eco solution.

Full details of income and costs for the year are set out in the Certified Accounts which will be presented to the Annual General Meeting in January, along with the budget for the year commencing 1st April 2018. Current indications are that the increase in the garden rate for freeholders will be limited to inflation. **Ian Clegg, Treasurer, KTE Board**

DOG DAYS



Dog owners are reminded that all dogs using the gardens must be registered at Jonathan Rolls' office. The fee this year has been increased to £25 pp (per pooch) to cover the cost of installing the waste bins (by the entrance to the tunnel and the double gates on the east and west sides) and having them regularly emptied (surely one of the world's most unenviable jobs).