

Kemp Town Enclosures: garden management statement 2017



**Prepared for the Board of Kemp Town Enclosures, September 2017,
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gardener.**

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Design for Kemp Town published 1826

Historical context

These private town gardens, extending over 3.24 hectares,(7.5 acres) were laid out in the 1820s for the residents of the Kemp Town Estate by Henry Phillips, landscape gardener and Henry Kendall, surveyor as part of the wider Regency development of the Kemp Town Estate

The gardens form the focus of the Regency layout of the estate: Sussex Square to the north opening out onto Lewes Crescent at the southern end. The gardens thus comprise a semi-circle facing the sea with an adjoining rectangular plot to its north. Flanking either side of Lewes Crescent and also facing the sea are Chichester Terrace to the west and Arundel Terrace to the east¹. Both terraces were originally fronted by grass lawns between the Estate road and railings along the coast road boundary, but now the site of the lawn fronting Chichester Terrace has been replaced by an attractive and varied shrubbery.

Henry Phillips' planned scheme included shrubberies with untrimmed shrubs giving an informal appearance, mounded to provide privacy and protection for the plants. This followed the style of shrubbery planting as outlined in his book *Sylva Florifera*. 20,000 plants were subsequently ordered and planted under Phillips' supervision, including semi-mature trees, shrubs and flowering plants, and gravel walks were put down.

¹ The foregoing description of the gardens is from the Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest, Historic England 1995.

The original layout divided the central gardens into three spaces, each surrounded by roads and railings. The South Garden as we know it today was divided in two by a continuation of the Lewes Crescent carriageway across the gardens. The gardens committee quickly dispensed with this division, tearing up the carriageway, selling off the railings and joining the two southerly gardens into the present South Garden². The North garden survives as originally laid out but both the North and South Gardens have lost their central gate onto Eastern Road, once part of a north-south axis through the gardens envisaged when traffic on Eastern Road and the coast road was negligible by today's standards and residents might have walked through the gardens from the top of Sussex Square to the coast with the sea in view all the way.

The perimeter path that once followed the southern boundary with the coast road, and the southern gate on to the coast road, were lost when a strip of land was taken for road widening in the 1930's.

The North Garden has a perimeter walk set inside a ring of shrubbery and trees, mainly self-sown sycamores. Part of the ground was levelled to form a croquet lawn, later a tennis court, and during the second world war, a water tank for fire-fighting. It is now a central lawn. The growth of overhanging trees has gradually diminished the opportunities for successful planting of shrubs, herbaceous plants and annuals. A year or so ago, a piece of the south-facing lawn, open to sunlight, was dug out to create a flower bed at the request of people who use the North Garden and wanted to see more colour in the garden.

The South Garden is entered from gateways on west and east sides. These gateways lead onto paths which meet at a central shrubbery of the original layout, which became flower beds in Victorian times, later becoming neglected and overgrown with self-sown sycamores. This area now comprises a formal square garden enclosed by a yew hedge with a raised and planted bed, sheltered by the surrounding trees and shrubs. A woodland garden has been created in the shady conditions along the path from the square garden to the south.

As this path emerges from the woodland area it reveals a view of the sea across the wide lawn of the Lewes Crescent gardens. Here, at the sundial, the path divides to provide a perimeter walk, broken along the southern boundary by the loss of land for the road widening scheme. Recently this land has been returned by the Council. The railings reinstated and a grass strip mown between the railings and a vast euonymus and tamarisk hedge that has developed since the 1980's, screening the gardens from the coast road.

² Dale Antony, *Fashionable Brighton 1820-1860*, Oriel Press, 1967



Path from woodland garden to the South lawn and the sea

A path leads down to the tunnel which is central to the axis of the gardens. The tunnel passes under the coast road, providing a link between the gardens, the Esplanade, with a reading room beneath, long since abandoned, and the slopes down to the seashore below. All were once part of the Kemp Town Enclosures offering the Estate's residents an unparalleled realm of private seaside gardens and amenities.

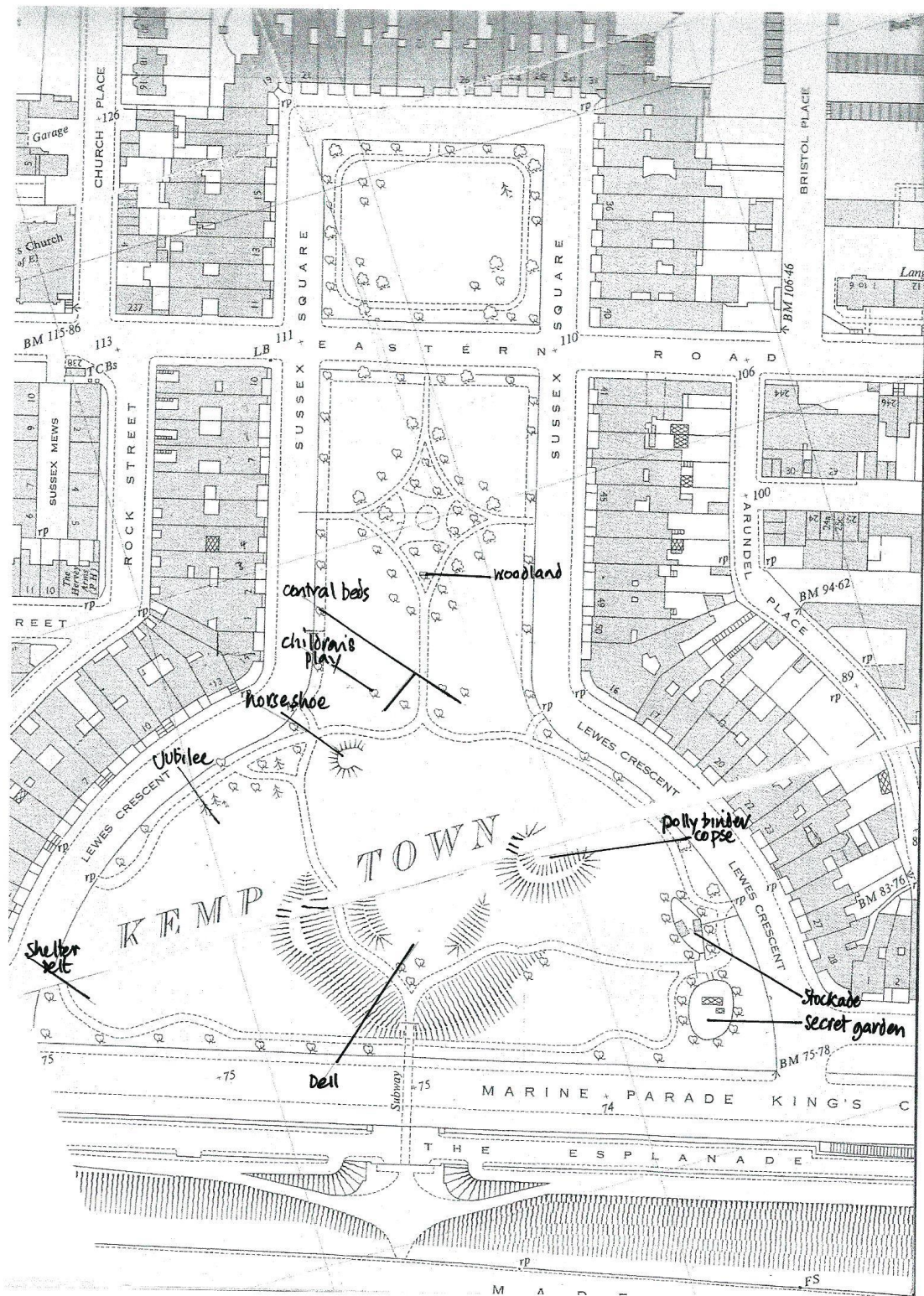
In 1995, the gardens, along with Duke's Mound, were listed in the Register of Historic Parks or Gardens by Historic England: Grade II. Registration does not confer any additional legal protection but designates gardens as heritage assets as set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework 2012. As such, when planning permission is required, the significance of a registered garden or its setting will be taken into account. New landscaping, planting and other works within these parks should respect their historic landscape design and seek to preserve and enhance their character.³

The gardens form part of the Kemp Town Conservation Area⁴ which includes the whole Kemp Town Estate. All the buildings facing the enclosures are listed Grade I. The tunnel entrance, including embankments, and the Esplanade cottages are listed buildings too (Grade II)⁵.

³ Brighton & Hove City Council website: Planning: Registered Parks & Gardens, 2017

⁴ Brighton & Hove City Council, Kemp Town Conservation Study & Enhancement Plan, January 1992

⁵ Brighton & Hove City Council website: Summary list of historic buildings see 'The Esplanade, Kemp Town'



Management of the gardens

In keeping with their origin in the Regency period, the character of gardens is maintained in the fashion of the time. The English landscape garden tradition exemplified by the work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was, at that time, giving way to a more intimate and picturesque style mirroring developments in landscape painting at the time.

'Capability' Brown had given his aristocratic clients vistas of lawns, adorned by groups of trees, sweeping down to newly-made lakes with glimpses of classical temples and bridges seen from a grand country house. This style was being succeeded by gardens of a more intimate scale, reflecting the huge growth of urban and suburban living from the start of the 19th Century. Here gardens and buildings were more closely associated and both of a smaller scale. The Kemp Town gardens of 1828 were designed to complement the white stucco terraces of the new Estate that surround them and form their backdrop. The design of the gardens is part of the transition in gardening styles of the period.



Serpentine paths, shrubberies and natural groups of trees

The emerging style was essentially naturalistic and romantic, with loose shrubberies bordering open lawns and enjoyed from serpentine paths providing walking circuits around a succession of spaces each delivering a picturesque view. Natural groups of trees were positioned in shrubberies or rose from the grass as if glades by the forest edge. The edges of garden spaces were sometimes assigned to a contrived 'wilderness', a romantic but highly managed illusion.



Monterey cypress against the backdrop of white stucco

Many of these features are represented here, particularly the serpentine paths, the shrubberies and tree set in lawns. Until the Great Storm of 1987, in true Regency style, a group of Monterey cypress stood in long grass by the western side of Lewes Crescent, their canopies of dark green needles making a strong contrast with the white stucco behind them. The Regency fashion for garden follies was represented here by a rustic wooden summerhouse which had been an original feature of Henry Phillip's layout. It stood in the south-west corner of the gardens until it rotted and was demolished in 1935.⁶ The choice of flint facing over the tunnel entrance provides a reminder of the flint grottos of the period.

The changing style of gardening during the period was also driven by a desire to embrace the new and exotic plants which became available in the late nineteenth century, brought home from around the world by British plant hunters exploring the flora of the world in the wake of British conquest or trade. In a short space of time, the palate from which planting schemes could be drawn exploded with new introductions from around the world, many of which grow happily in Britain and which today we take for granted as garden plants. Many of the new introductions required a more intimate scale of gardening to display them than the English Landscape style afforded. Regency gardens included flowering perennial and annual plants as well as larger shrubs.

Growing conditions

The gardens are arranged on a site facing the sea, just 40m below and 400m to the South. While the sea moderates extremes of temperature, exempting the gardens from the worst frosts inland, the seaside setting brings with it exposure to strong, salt laden winds which desiccate and damage plants and trees. Providing shelter from the winds is a major consideration in gardening here. It is also important to the enjoyment of the gardens by residents.

These clifftop gardens are grown on a thin chalk soil which is very free draining, so water is not long retained and the soil dries out quickly. In a dry summer only the most drought tolerant plants will survive and while some watering can be done to secure new planting, it is not practicable to grow plants that need a lot of attention. Plants selected

⁶ Dale, Antony, The history of the Kemp Town Gardens, Brighton 1964

for the gardens have to be drought tolerant, wind tolerant, salt tolerant and able to tolerate an alkaline soil too.

While efforts are made to create shelter from the winds, creating shelter also means creating shade from the sun and if shade tolerance in a plant were to be added to the other factors above, the list of plants suitable for the conditions here would be very small. Trees and shrubs that give shelter will also take a lot of moisture from the beds, so the premium sites in the garden are the ones that have sun as well as some shelter from the wind, but at the same time situated not too close to trees and shrubs. Such optimal sites are rare indeed

Creating better soil conditions is a major consideration and tonnes of mushroom compost are added to the beds every year, in addition to the compost made on site. This improves moisture retention and plant nutrition. However, adding compost to improve the soil, can cause some plants eg sedums, to grow too lush and tall only to be knocked over by the wind

The challenging environment of the gardens here also mean that some plants may grow but live shorter lives than they would in other more conducive conditions. Plants frequently die off and need to be replaced

Funding and oversight of the gardens

Since they were laid out in the reign of George IV, the gardens have been overseen by a committee drawn from residents of the 100 houses of the estate and funded by an annual charge paid by residents who use the gardens. This creates a strong sense of ownership by residents and the gardens are managed in response to their needs and preferences. In recent decades the gardens have enjoyed renewed popularity and their use has intensified and become more varied. Residents use them for jogging, dog walking, ball games, children's play or just sitting, sunbathing or having picnics or drinks with friends at sunset. They are also used to mark the great occasions of their lives, from wedding parties to birthday parties and the memorial of loved ones. The management of the gardens has always sought to respond to residents' changing use of the gardens while preserving their essential character. The committee reports to an AGM well-attended by residents.

The gardens are maintained by a gardening team led by Jeremy Mouldsdales. Jeremy oversees the work of part-time and sessional gardeners, lawn and hedge cutting contractors, tree surgeons and a weekly session of volunteer gardening by estate residents. The cost of maintaining the soft landscape is £61,250 pa (2017/18).



Late 20th Century: note significantly lighter tree cover than today.

Trees

The thin soil combined with the strong winds is a challenge for most trees. If trees get too big, especially conifers which hold their needles year-round, they tend to blow over as the soil is too thin to support them. A regular survey of the trees is carried out to identify specimens that are vulnerable and a programme is in place to prune and reduce trees where necessary. The aim is to have good safe specimen trees that are not too big. They should be of overall benefit to the garden, aesthetically, horticulturally, and environmentally.

Most of the trees present today are self-sown, for example the sycamores and holm oaks, or have suckered from other trees, for example the elms. Few are ornamental trees but are instead forest trees and they have established themselves during the long period of neglect between the outbreak of the second world war and the revival of the gardens from the 1980's. They stand along the perimeter beds of the gardens and in the central bed of the South Garden that has become the woodland garden. The original scheme would have featured small groups of ornamental trees grouped in lawns or in shrubberies.

These perimeter trees have been disappearing slowly over the years as they are felled because they have become diseased and dangerous, or because of the damage they have caused to the perimeter railings and their plinths.

Over the last few years as Dutch elm disease has spread into Brighton quite a few elm trees have been lost from the gardens and it is possible that all may be lost in the coming years, including a rather magnificent specimen in the woodland garden. The loss of many of the small overcrowded elms has been a benefit in opening up the woodland garden, but to lose some of the more established specimens would be a pity.

Trees have proven valuable in providing shelter for plants and garden users from fierce seaside winds. In 1990 a series of parallel rows of trees were planted in the south-western corner of the Crescent's garden specifically to shelter the garden from the prevailing south-westerly winds. The effectiveness of this shelter belt is limited to a small area of the South lawn within its lee.



Winter tracery of sycamore trees around the perimeter of North Garden

In places, particularly around the North Garden and the woodland area, tree canopies have grown and spread to cast into shade shrub and herbaceous beds beneath them that now struggle for want of light, nutrients and water. As a result some beds have been expanded beyond the overhanging trees in order to make them viable for planting to meet the demand for colour and variety. Over time, this changes the layout and character of the gardens, making the gardens more shady, with ever wider and drier beds beneath. A case could be made for reducing the dominance of the tree canopy instead by selective felling of self-sown sycamores, allowing sufficient light for the renewal of the existing shrub and flower beds below.

The current policy is not to replace trees lost in the perimeter beds for the sake of maintaining or restoring the light and views into the gardens which are valued by residents of the surrounding houses and also to prevent further damage to the railings. Similarly, where trees are taken down elsewhere they are generally not replaced. The exception to this rule is the central embankment above the tunnel where the Council's tree officers are keen to maintain the shelter belt and may require replacements to be planted. Smaller flowering trees may be used to replace trees lost from sites away from the railings.

Surgery to all but the smallest trees within the Conservation Area requires the consent of the Council. A professional survey⁷ of all the trees in the gardens has resulted in a two-year plan to cut back trees which are diseased, leaning or otherwise dangerous. This plan does not address the overshadowing of planting beds. It envisages the removal of only one tree.



The facades and the landscape connected visually before the rise of traffic and car parking. Monterey cypresses make their contribution to the scene.

⁷ Aspen Tree Care, Lewes, March 2017

Hedges

Perimeter hedges formed no part of the original scheme. There was once an uninterrupted visual connection running between the facades of the houses, their railings, the hard landscape of the street and the central gardens through the perimeter railings. However, that was before the advent of extensive car ownership. The hedges have proven valuable for screening out parked cars and motor traffic along the adjoining carriageways and have made possible herbaceous planting in this windswept seaside location.

In 1900, one thousand evergreen shrubs and trees were planted in the gardens together with 50 variegated hollies given by a resident and in 1923 a wholesale replanting took place of the euonymus buttresses inside the railings. 100 cuttings had been taken yearly for some years in order to make this possible. This was the last occasion upon which this operation, that would have been repeated periodically throughout the history of the gardens whenever necessary, was carried out on a large scale.⁸

The hedges make an essential contribution to sheltering less robust plants in the gardens and making sitting out more comfortable. They are mostly evergreen, euonymus, eleagnus and the like, which give wind protection year-round but on the eastern side of the gardens, which does not face the prevailing winds, there are some stretches of deciduous shrubs between buttresses of evergreen hedging.



Buttresses of evergreen hedging on the eastern side of the South garden

The current policy is to retain the hedges, keeping them cut to a height a little above railings. Gradually all the hedges are being cut back well clear of the railings so that they may be kept trimmed along their outward facing sides and the railings made accessible for painting or, eventual, replacement.

Planting

The shrubberies of the original concept include herbaceous perennials with spring bulbs and summer annuals providing colour and interest. The annuals fill spaces left by

⁸ Dale, Antony, The history of the Kemp Town Gardens, Brighton 1964

casualties or created by new planting schemes which have yet to fill out to their intended potential. In the nature of things, when trees become dangerous or shrubs become ancient and woody, they are replaced by new planting schemes and this is how the gardens are renewed, not to a rigid plan of new planting, but organically in response to the life cycle of plants.

So it was that in 2012 when the macrocarpa trees overhanging the western boundary of the Lewes Crescent gardens had to be taken down, the opportunity was taken to create the Jubilee garden at that site, with hedge plants renewed, the perimeter path reinstated and an island bed created of herbaceous plants and spring bulbs. Similarly, as diseased trees were taken down on the western side of the woodland area and new light reached the understory, the opportunity was taken to replant the area with native woodland species including a display of foxgloves and a ground cover bed of arum lilies, hellebores and other shade loving plants.

When a vast old buddleia shrub was taken down to the east of the woodland garden in 2016, a new wider bed was created with fresh herbaceous planting and shrub roses that would thrive in the relatively sheltered environment there. It is possible that as further tree surgery is carried out there will be further opportunities for new planting.

A balance is being struck between creating naturalistic planting and a more ordered look. Allowing existing plants to self-seed and spread in swathes can help to create a naturalistic look while avoiding a complete jumble of different plants growing together in a disordered way. This involves choosing on a daily basis which seedlings to weed out and which to let grow, and this is almost as important as choosing what new plants to establish.

The exposed conditions in the gardens has led to a practice of planting new shrubs closer together than is normally suggested because they can then protect each other from the winds as they grow. Once established, they are then thinned out to allow specimens to grow to their natural size and shape.

Because the gardens were so long neglected, many of the beds have become infested with perennial weeds that are difficult to eradicate, the worst offenders being bindweed and ground elder. There is no way to get rid of these once they are established except by digging out the bed, leaving it fallow for at least a year and spraying any weeds that appears. This is quite a drastic solution and is not something resorted to so far, but could be an option in the future for some areas badly affected by perennial weeds.

In keeping with the naturalistic style of the gardens there are no dramatic colour schemes, but on the other hand the shape, colour and texture of foliage and flowers is considered and balanced harmoniously in each new planting. Opportunities are taken to extend the range of perfumes that can be enjoyed in season. Perfumes are more readily noticed in the sheltered areas and so scented plants are more likely to be planted in these areas. The eleagnus hedges, for example, provide wafts of heady scent and so

too does the wild garlic in the dell leading down to the tunnel. *Euphorbia mellifera*, the honey spurge, offers its powerful annual honey scent in sheltered spots.

Lawns

The lawns are an important feature of the garden style. The lawns of the Lewes Crescent gardens have long been used for active pursuits including until lawn tennis until well into the 20th century. Today they are well used for walking, sunbathing, for picnics, events and for ball games. An experiment with providing barbecue facilities was discontinued when complaints about smoke and cooking smells were received from adjacent houses.

In recent years, all the lawns have been brought up to a good standard by regular mowing and by an annual weed and fertilizer treatment.

The North Garden



The central lawn of the North garden, looking North East.

Originally, the North and South gardens had gates facing each other across Eastern Road, then a quiet road, so that residents could walk easily from the North garden down through the South garden and to the Esplanade below via the tunnel. With traffic on Eastern Road long since making this route unattractive the gates are gone and the North Garden isolated as a separate garden, now with its own character. Quieter than its southern neighbor, the garden is reminiscent of London squares, with a terrace of houses on three sides and bordered by a perimeter belt of trees with shrub beds below surrounding an open central lawn.

The tree belt is mainly of self-sown sycamores, which dominate the streetscape outside and enclose the gardens inside, particularly in summer when a deep shade is cast over the perimeter beds, draining the soil of moisture and making it impossible to grow anything other than shade tolerant shrubs and ground cover. There was originally a bed in each corner of the central lawn, but these too have become overshadowed by the perimeter trees and by other trees grown in the beds.

In response to the lack of space in which to grow flowering plants, a bed was dug out of the lawn on the sunny north side recently to create a flower bed.

There is scope for thinning the surrounding canopy and thinning out the press of trees whose canopies vie for the same patch of light, in order to produce a less crowded and more ordered look, restoring light to the beds below and restoring some residents' views into the gardens. Such a move would require the consent of the Council under tree preservation law and, more controversially, the consent of the residents, amongst whom opinions on the trees are divided.



New herbaceous bed in a sunny position.



Croquet on the North Lawn

The South Garden:



South garden: entrance to the Dell, long before the maturity of holm oaks planted on the embankment

Bank above the Dell

A deep bank of mature evergreen trees has developed on the bank above the Dell providing shelter from the coastal winds to the area in its lee.

The Dell



The Dell: path down to the tunnel

The deep depression that leads down to the tunnel from the South lawn and the bank that has been thrown up from excavating the tunnel creates a distinct environment. Heavy cover of the embankment by mature evergreen trees encloses this shady place and in this setting, evergreen shrubs and ground cover clothe the scene in dark green, with touches of fresher green in spring and summer from the few deciduous shrubs, eg cornus and philadelphus.

The horseshoe

A small and intimate sheltered area in a horseshoe shape enclosed by an original half-height flint wall, surrounded and topped by shrubs, ivy and goji berry plant. This is a much favoured spot in which to enjoy the sun, out of the wind. The area has one bench inside the enclosure and another in its lee. The central grassed area is surrounded by a small bed of perennial shrubs eg hebe and daphne. The soil remains curiously dry despite liberal additions of compost and so the range of plants that will thrive here is limited. The scope for tidying up the, sometimes unruly, enclosing foliage is limited without the near-impossible eradication of the ever invasive and expanding goji berry plants.



The horseshoe garden



Jubilee garden right, the reinstated perimeter path and the replanted shrub hedge

Jubilee garden (2012)

When some large *cupressus macrocarpa* pines had to come down because of wind damage to them and the damage they were doing to the garden plinths and railings, the opportunity was taken to create a new bed, and reinstate the path that once followed the perimeter of the Lewes Crescent lawn. Here shrubs and herbaceous plants were closely spaced to provide mutual shelter from the wind that scours this side of the garden. With some careful support the planting was successfully established and can now be thinned out.

At the same time the scrappy shrubs making a hedge along this section of Lewes Crescent were taken out and replaced with new shrubs, including *griselinia littoralis*, appropriate to the role of enclosing and screening the gardens from the seaside winds and the cars parked along the carriageway.

Central bed



Eastern section of the central bed

This bed is in two parts, either side of the central path. The Western section is devoted to a children's play area beneath some fine white poplar trees. The Eastern section, despite being exposed to the full blast of the wind from the South West is something of a display bed. It is backed by a huge evergreen holm oak with some low shrubby branches and by a *cupressus macrocarpa*, kept trimmed to a low lollipop shape. Here canna and fennel, flower in summer amongst shrubs including phormium,



Tree cover | South Garden in summer



Alliums flowering in the Square bed

Square bed

Hidden within the woodland garden and sheltered by a massive belt of trees is a formal garden, with a square central bed now planted with dahlias and rudbeckia and surrounded by a low hedge of muehlenbeckia. Gravel paths border the bed with a seat on each side, set into yew hedges. The hedge on the north side is semi-circular. The bed is reasonably sunny from midday until late afternoon and well sheltered from wind by the yew hedges and the trees behind them.

Woodland garden

Just to the South of the square garden two paths converge beneath a canopy of trees. The tree cover has been thinned in recent years and the opportunity has been taken to plant beneath with woodland species eg arum, hellebore and foxgloves.



Foxgloves in the woodland garden

Rose garden

Either side of the central path, a deep bed of roses, lavender and other shrubs is lightened in spring by a display of tulips. The beds extend northwards either side of the woodland garden with less showy shrubs and plants eg eryngium, nepeta and teasels

Polly Binder cove

Named after Pearl Binder, Lady Elwyn Jones, the illustrator and one-time resident of 18 Lewes Crescent, this sheltered garden sits in the lee of an original landscaping earthwork. The earthwork is topped by trees, including a fine wych elm and some white poplars. An intimate space has been created with mown grass paths behind the deep bed that provides a year-round colourful display to the path around the main lawn. Highlights of the year include the red cornus stems in winter, the spring bulbs and summer's flowering shrubs

On the exposed south side of the earthworks wild flowers are encouraged. Two seats provide elevated views across the perimeter hedge to the sea, for those prepared to brave the wind.



Tulips in the Polly Binder cove



Spring tulips in the rose garden



Rose garden in full flower



Wild flowers on the exposed south side of the copse.



The Secret garden looking north east.

The Secret Garden

Part of the original scheme, this oval shaped space once housed the gardener's cold frames and greenhouse, all now housed in 'the stockade' immediately to the north. The enclosed and sheltered nature of the space is achieved by an original half-height flint wall, now much deteriorated and hidden in part by the shrubs that surround it. A separate euonymus hedge of recent date, set back from the flint wall, almost completely surrounds it and could enable the flint walls to be exposed and rebuilt at a future date without losing the garden's role as a place of refuge from the wind in all seasons. A bench overlooks a central lawn surrounded by a herbaceous border.

Chichester Terrace garden

Originally a lawn running between the seafront railings and the carriageway of Chichester Terrace, this garden was made into a shrub border when, in the late twentieth century the railings, missing since the second world war, were replaced. It is very long and deep as a border and necessarily absorbs a lot of the gardening team's time. The effect has been marred by a later decision to create echelon bays for parked cars right next to the border. The cars obscure the view of the border from the lower floors of the houses and from the pavement.

In recent years the garden team have sought to simplify the planting and to make it accessible for weeding and, as elsewhere in the gardens, to keep the shrubs clear of the railings.



Chichester Terrace garden looking West

Arundel Terrace garden

The residents of Arundel Terrace made different choices for the lawn and carriageway in front of their houses. When the railings were replaced, the original lawn was retained and when the parking control scheme was introduced residents opted for parking parallel to the carriageway. These choices result in a more open and simple garden: a lawn with fewer cars parked in front of it. A euonymus hedge was established along the railings, but unfortunately placed too close to them to allow for their painting and repair. A second hedge is now being established on the inside of the first hedge to succeed it eventually.



The lawn at Arundel Terrace

Seating

The popularity of the gardens for sitting out, enjoying picnics and summer evening drinks has risen dramatically in recent years and in response more benches have been provided such that there are now very few places where new benches could be accommodated without the gardens losing some of their naturalistic look.

Wildlife and ecology



Ox eye daisies: south slope of Polly Binder copse

Wildflower areas have been introduced on the south-west slope of the embankment over the Dell and on the south-facing slope of the Polly Binder copse. Here crocuses, cowslips, scillas, ox-eye daisies and wild marjoram are being established. Longer grass in these areas attracts insects such as meadow brown butterflies. In areas of new planting, species are chosen to attract butterflies, bees and other insects.

Work to hedges and trees is planned to avoid, whenever possible, bird nesting season.

Foxes have long been resident in the gardens. Their presence is not a nuisance except where food is left lying around or pets are buried or more frequently where funerary ashes are deposited provoking foxes to dig around. Badgers have a sett in the bank above the Dell area with more recent digging near the Horseshoe. Rabbits, once a problem in the gardens, with their penchant for nibbling emerging plant growth, have been absent since an outbreak of disease a few years ago. The presence of squirrels is evident in damage to trees where their habit of stripping bark has killed off branches. The tree survey has identified significant damage by squirrels and proposes lopping to prevent those branches affected from falling.

While woody prunings are burned or taken away from the gardens, all the green product that will compost is recycled in heaps dotted around the gardens. Four compost heaps provide significant quantities of home-made compost to nourish the shrub and flower beds.

Children's play

A play area for small children has been successfully established concealed within a shrubbery in the South Garden. The bark chippings beneath the play equipment is renewed every few years.

Managing renewal and change

Much of the attention of the Enclosures Committee has to be focused on the challenges presented by the ageing infrastructure of the gardens: the crumbling stone plinths, the cobble stone gutters that surround them, the rusting railings and so on. Meanwhile the management of the soft landscape which focusses on the lawns, the trees, hedges, shrub and plants continues in an organic way responding to challenges and opportunities presented by nature. The guiding principles are that the character of the naturalistic and romantic Regency style should be respected, while serving the residents' enjoyment of the gardens.

Since the gardens were originally laid out, nearly 200 years ago, in the Regency period, change and adaptation to meet contemporary needs has occurred in almost every era, yet the overall character survives.

When tennis became a popular game in the 1880's, courts were laid out in the South Garden, involving the levelling of the gently sloping lawns to provide level platforms for play. This was a departure from the character up until that point and it caused furious controversy amongst residents, but tennis was played in the gardens for decades afterwards, thankfully without permanent damage to the character of the gardens. A croquet lawn laid in 1890 lasted for the next 45 years.

Perimeter hedges were not part of the original plans or characteristic of Regency gardens, however the ravages of the prevailing south-westerly winds and the increasing intrusion of the motor car made a perimeter hedge essential both for growing plants and for enjoying the gardens without the disturbing sight of moving traffic and lines of cars parked close by the railings.

In the same spirit in recent times, alterations have been made to accommodate the changing interests and needs of residents with provision being made for play by small children, for encouragement of wildlife in the planting and management of grass, trees and hedges and increasingly to accommodate residents' need to commemorate loved ones in the gardens that they once used.

For nearly two centuries, change has been accommodated in the gardens to meet changing needs and circumstances, but the essential character of the gardens survives.
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