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THOMAS READ KEMP AND THE SHAPING OF REGENCY BRIGHTON c.1818–1845

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The story of the enterprises of Thomas Read Kemp (1782–1844) can only be understood within the context of Brighton's development as a resort. Before 1820, few architects were employed in Brighton. Henry Holland enlarged a lodging house to form the first version of the Royal Pavilion; Robert Adam modernised a large town house for 'Single Speech' Hamilton; and William Porden designed Mrs Fitzherbert's house.¹ Bath, Brighton's main rival, owes its present appearance to a series of architect-developers, first the Woods (from the 1720s to the 1770s), then Thomas Baldwin, John Eveleigh and John Palmer (mid 1770s to 1800) and finally, in the early nineteenth century, John Pinch. Although most of their schemes were not completed as planned, they gave Bath more cohesion than Brighton achieved, an image aided by the use of a good quality local stone. Landownership also played a major part in the shaping of both resorts. The willingness of landowners to make plots of enclosed land available for development played a significant role in the look of Bath; the scarcity of such plots in Brighton before 1822 ensured that its early development was very different.²

The decline of Bath as a major resort for visitors coincided with Brighton's rapid growth, beginning during the Napoleonic Wars and continuing until 1825–6. The large contingents of the military based in and around Brighton must have reassured many visitors. Jane Austen's Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* wished to go to Brighton to see the soldiers; Frances Wheatley's painting *Brighton Camp* romanticised

their harsh living conditions. The *Morning Chronicle* remarked in 1801 on the presence of the Prime Minister, William Pitt, at Rottingdean (east of Brighton), along with a number of friends of the ministry, contractors, and other people who stayed in Brighton and would have had something to lose if there was danger.³

With the Wars over, the long narrow terraces so characteristic of Brighton's suburban development since 1770 were too small to accommodate wealthier visitors who now wanted to use their homes for entertaining (Fig. 1). Regency Square, commenced in 1818, was the first large new scheme. The demand for housing is reflected in the increase in population, which doubled between 1811 and 1812 to 24,429 and then rose to 40,634 by 1831. Between 1821 and 1831 the number of houses also increased from 4959 in 1821 to 8625 in 1831. The many terraced schemes of this decade were more successful than those consisting of villas; more were built and more completed. Thomas Read Kemp became involved in both types of project, but for him neither was profitable.⁴

THE RISE OF THE KEMP FAMILY

Kemp's father, another Thomas (1745–1811), was a wealthy merchant of Lewes. He inherited copyhold and freehold land in Brighton and other parishes,⁵ and in 1775 married Anne Read of Brookland (Kent), the daughter of a wealthy grazier.⁶ In 1785 he moved

his family to Coneyborough in the parish of Barcombe, just north of Lewes. He also became MP for Lewes.⁷ In 1811, after his death, his son became MP for Lewes and inherited the family estates.⁸

Thomas and Anne Kemp had considerable ambitions for their son. In 1806 they made a substantial settlement on him when he married Frances, fourth daughter of Sir Francis Baring, Chairman of the East India Company and founder of Barings Bank.⁹ Herstmonceux Place in East Sussex was purchased for £56,000, and the newlyweds also occupied No. 15 Queen's Square (the modern Queen Anne's Gate), London.¹⁰ This marriage probably sowed the seeds of later financial problems for the young man, who was now mixing with people who were far wealthier than him. When he inherited the land in Brighton from his father, he owned less than 2,000 acres in Sussex, including his holdings in Herstmonceux and Brighton. No evidence of substantial assets in other forms such as cash or business investments has

emerged. This is why his land in Brighton became so important to him.

The Kemps were faced with making a profit out of farmland in the parish of Brighton which was still unenclosed. Many streets were built over the old fossilised field system of 'paul pieces' (strips of arable land) in furlongs within large fields called Laines. This layout forced developers to build long and narrow streets orientated south to north (Fig. 2). Urban development over land like this was not unique to Brighton; Portsmouth and Nottingham are other examples.¹¹ Thomas Kemp the elder began the process in the 1790s by enclosing arable and pastoral land to make larger plots for easier development, particularly on the west and northern sides of the town. He was fortunate to be the Lord of half of the Manor of Brighton-Lewes, which held more arable land in the parish than any of the other eight manors.¹² This gave him the opportunity to enfranchise any leasehold land he bought within his share of the Manor and sell it as freehold.¹³



Fig. 1. Brighton in 1835. Published by John Bruce, showing Kemp Town on the east, Brunswick Town on the west, Brighton (Queen's) Park, Ireland's Gardens (at top centre of map).

THE PARISH OF BRIGHTON, 1792

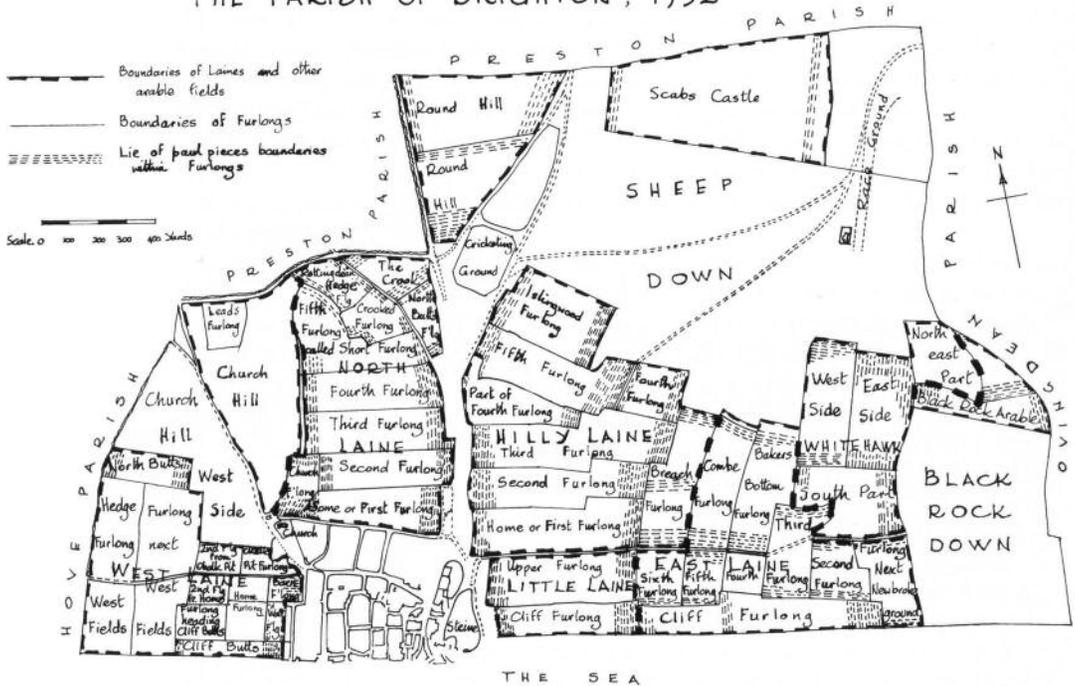


Fig. 2. The parish of Brighton's Arable and Pasture areas in 1792.
Copied from a terrier map by Ron Martin.

Thomas Read Kemp read theology at Cambridge and, influenced by his wife, joined an evangelical sect led by Harriet Wall, the eldest of the Baring sisters, and the Rev. George Baring, her brother. This sect sought to interest wealthier members of society in its beliefs.¹⁴ In 1816 Kemp resigned his Parliamentary seat to devote more time to preaching,¹⁵ and preached in Brighton from 1813 at St James's Chapel.¹⁶ In 1817, Amon Henry Wilds designed and built Trinity Chapel for him in Ship Street in an Egyptian style.¹⁷

In 1817 Kemp and his wife built a villa known as The Temple, just north-west of Brighton. Also designed by Wilds, it stood on the land enclosed by Kemp's father in the 1790s (Fig. 3). Then in 1819 Herstonceux Place was sold, and in 1823 the Ship

Street chapel was sold too, Kemp having lost interest in the evangelical sect.¹⁸ He meanwhile resumed his Parliamentary career, as MP for Arundel, and in 1823 he bought Dale Park, just west of the town, but this was sold in 1826 when he regained his Lewes seat.¹⁹ From 1826 he never owned another country estate. He continued, however, to keep a house in London and in 1827 he decided to build a villa, No. 24 Belgrave Square (now the Spanish Embassy), which went up to the designs of H.E. Kendall, senior, on the Belgravia Estate then being built by Thomas Cubitt.²⁰



Fig. 3. The Temple (Now a Girls' High School).
 Drawn by G. Earpe and Engraved by H.A. Ogg published c.1835.

EARLY PROJECTS IN BRIGHTON

The Temple was the start of Kemp's unsuccessful development of the pasture land north-west of Brighton enclosed for villas by his father in the early 1790s. It was followed before 1820 by another Grecian-style house, Hampton Villa, to the south-east, detailed descriptions of which suggest that it was quite substantial (Fig. 4).²¹ Meanwhile, before 1820, Kemp's sister Mrs Sobers built the large Western Villa or Lodge further south, at the corner of Western and Montpelier Roads.²² But by the late 1820s Kemp had abandoned the idea of building villas in this area and was selling land for the construction of Montpelier Terrace.²³ A projected development of c.1819 for smaller detached and semi-detached villas

along the stretch of road north of St Peter's Church (see below) to the parish boundary with Preston proved equally unsuccessful, though some houses were built and a few still remain.²⁴

Kemp also invested in visitor facilities intended for the wealthy. In 1822 he became a director of the Chain Pier (Fig. 5), immortalised by, *inter alia*, J.M.W. Turner and John Constable, and agreed with the other Lord of the Manor of Brighton-Lewes to assign a suitable space for it on the cliff face; he also agreed to relinquish manorial rights over the foreshore underneath it, and to the area below the cliff that was required for access.²⁵ This venture was not profitable, and nor were projects for the development of two large private gardens, Ireland's Gardens and Brighton



Fig. 4. Hampton Villa 1824, provenance unknown.

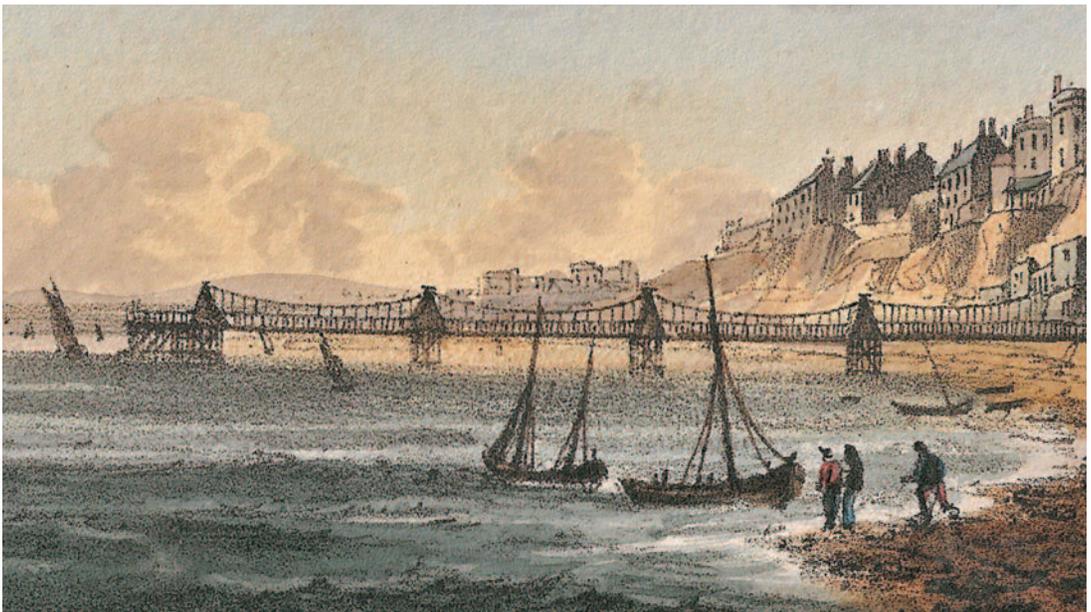


Fig. 5. The Chain Pier.

A polygraph showing the site before the cliff was shored as it is now c.1824. Provenance unknown.

(now Queen's) Park. Ireland's (or Royal) Gardens (Fig. 6), of approximately ten acres, was opened in 1822 when Kemp underwrote the landscaping with £2,000; from 1849, Wilds incorporated part of the Gardens into the gardens for Park Crescent.²⁶ Queen's Park, opened in 1824, was laid out over an area of Hilly Laine (Fig. 2) in which only Kemp, Thomas Attree and Philip Mighell held paul pieces, Kemp having by far the largest share. By August 1824 the park had been landscaped with clumps of trees, and the roads and entrances were constructed. In December 1824, spaces for detached villas were advertised, offering views of the park, the downs and the sea. But the land for villas did not sell and Kemp had trouble collecting the rent. Attree finally bought the land owned by Kemp and Mighell, and in the early 1830s he built a villa to the design of Charles Barry to try to push the development along. But it was not successful, and only a few plots were sold.²⁷

From about 1820 Kemp became involved in high-profile activities in Brighton. He became a patron of the Dispensary and supported other public fund-raising events.²⁸ He also gave and sold land for public needs, such as land for the Jewish Cemetery in 1825.²⁹ The same year he conveyed land in East Laine for the Sussex County Hospital and Sea Bathing Infirmary (now the Royal Sussex) to the newly formed body of trustees of which he was one. The trustees agreed to treat the value of the land as a donation towards the costs of the project.³⁰

Kemp recognised the value of a railway line to London, and became a Director of the Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire Railroad Company and then of the London and Brighton Railway Company. But again he did not benefit, though his heirs did.³¹ He also backed the promotion of the Brighton Water Company in 1826.³² By the late 1820s he was well established in the town. He helped to organise the Regatta in 1828, and in 1829 he bought stags for the Brighton Hunt and gave land for the new kennels when the old ones were lost to development.³³

THE GENESIS OF KEMP TOWN

In 1822 the freeholders and leaseholders of the farmland on the Downs near Brighton finally agreed to divide and enclose the pastoral areas, amounting to 632 acres:

TABLE 1: SHARES of the PASTURE LAND, 1822

Thomas Read Kemp and Frances	335 shares
Charles Scrase Dickens of West Stoke House, Elizabeth his wife and son also of West Stoke House.	83.25
John Whichelo of Bristol Esq.	50.25
Nathaniel Kemp of Ovingdean	41.00
George Hoper of Lewes (Ackerson land)	8.50
Isaac Tree Rich of Brighton and Mary	6.00
Philip Mighell of Brighton	2.00

The table shows how dominant the Kemp holding was. In 1845 when the Tithe Commissioners tried to assess how much of this land had not been built on, Kemp was thought to still own 484 acres.³⁴

In the short term, Kemp was entrusted by the other owners with the freehold of about 105 acres, all of which was to be conveyed to the Commissioners for the use of the town. The land included the Old Steine, the Northern Inclosures (just south of St Peter's Church), the Level, the Race Course, the Cricket Ground and the old bowling green (Fig. 1).³⁵ In 1823 Kemp also conveyed to the Commission for Building New Churches, on behalf of the same owners, three acres of land called Richmond Green for the construction of St Peter's Church (then called the New Church), a much needed chapel of ease for the parish church of St Nicholas. The main roads into the town were slightly diverted so that they joined further south in order to position the church where it now stands (Figs. 1, 7).³⁶

Without the enclosure agreement of 1822 Kemp



Fig. 6. Ireland's Gardens by R Havell.

Looking down from the north-west. Hanover Crescent to the east, by A.H. and A.Wilds.
Published as frontispiece in E.W. Brayley, *Topographical Sketches of Brighthelmston*, London, 1825.



Fig. 7. St Peter's church with spire.

The spire was never built as Barry failed to persuade the Parish Vestry to agree to it.
Published as an aquatint *View of Brighton's New Church* c.1824.

Town could not have been built. Already in November the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* could report that ‘Two elegant new squares are talked of to skirt the East and the West of the town.’³⁷ But there was still no inland access by road enabling travellers to avoid the winds along the cliff tops in the winter. So between c.1818 and 1824 Kemp bought land in East Laine, a large arable field east of the town where he had inherited considerable holdings intermixed with those of other owners. He then laid out what is now Eastern Road, leading from the edge of Brighton to the future Kemp Town.³⁸ This new inland road also opened up the land that Kemp owned in East Laine for development (Fig. 2). His intentions for this area are indicated not only by him bearing the cost of extending the road but also by the construction of St George’s Chapel in the centre of unsold land.

Designed by Charles Augustin Busby, it cost Kemp £11,000 and the additional cost of a private Act of Parliament.³⁹ The Sussex Hospital (Fig. 8) and St Mary’s Hall, a school for the daughters of impoverished clergymen, also went up on Kemp’s land in East Laine.⁴⁰

Kemp chose Busby and Wilds as his architects for the design of his grand project, and they were responsible for the spectacular arrangement of a crescent (Lewes Crescent) overlooking the sea-front, continued east and west by terraces, and opening up into a square (Sussex Square) to the north. Busby was inexperienced in work of this scale, and was not yet well known; Wilds was a local builder who, like many of this period also produced designs for his clients. The development was originally intended to have 250 houses and mews on its forty-acre site



Fig. 8. The Royal Sussex Hospital, as designed by Charles Barry. Published in John Bruce *History of Brighton*, 1835 facing p. 69.



Fig. 9. Kemp town, Brighton erecting on the East Cliff, on the estate of T. R. Kemp Esq. MP.
Drawn, engraved, printed and published (sic) by J. Bruce. Aquatint c.1826.
 Reprinted c.1830 in Bruce, *Select Views of Brighton*.

(Fig. 9), but Kemp did not appoint an experienced surveyor or architect to supervise their construction. Having drawn up the plan, Busby went off to work for the Rev. Thomas Scutt, for whom he laid out Brunswick Town (see below), and Wilds became involved in other projects.⁴¹ Kemp meanwhile decided to pay builders to build the carcasses of the houses to and then to sell them to the builders at a fixed price. This was probably the least profitable option he could have chosen.

In 1822 Kemp was paying the wages of at least two hundred workmen to level the site and to construct the houses.⁴² The cost must have steadily increased, as he bore the expense not only of the building work but also the landscaping and the esplanade to the south of the main road along the seafront. In 1823 he enclosed the gardens in three sections with iron railings and paid Henry Phillips, a local botanist and landscape gardener, to lay them out.⁴³ By 1824 there were carcasses awaiting buyers and no evidence of interest in them. Kemp had already borrowed £42,000, secured on the land in his marriage settlement and in Kemp Town.⁴⁴

In November 1824 a fire damaged an unfinished house, No. 3 Lewes Crescent, and a few days later an adjacent house was blown down in a 'tremendous storm'.⁴⁵ In spite of such setbacks, most of the carcasses were ready for sale by January 1826.⁴⁶ Kemp therefore offered them for completion on 99-year building leases with an annual ground rent of £150 and an option to purchase the freehold within ten years for £2,500. But there were few sales, and, with his capital severely reduced, Kemp was forced to borrow £28,000 from his wife's relatives, the Barings.⁴⁷

The carcasses, or shells, of the houses were put up by a local builder, George Stafford, who was directly employed by Kemp and paid by him as building progressed. But in 1826, not long after the completion of the houses, he went bankrupt and Kemp was forced to give bills of exchange to his creditors. By October 1826, Kemp had advanced £51,179 for work on the houses and esplanade, but was still owed £15,856. Kemp got the buildings back, and a small amount of the capital, but was left in 1827 with large numbers of unsold carcasses.⁴⁸



Fig. 10. View of Brunswick Town and adjacent buildings adjoining Brighton. Drawn, engraved and produced by J. Bruce and C.A. Busby 1829. Aquatint. Published in Bruce's, *Select Views of Brighton*, 1829. The building north of Brunswick Town is Scutt's house and the domed building to the right is The Temple.

Kemp now decided to sell The Temple, which was let as a school, and to move to No. 22 Sussex Square, Kemp Town. An account by a French visitor, Comte Auguste de la Garde, in November 1827, gives the impression of a man who is trying to sell houses by showing how lavish a lifestyle could be led there.⁴⁹ Sales picked up in 1828, when Matthias Wilks of Tandridge (Surrey) bought a house on the south-east corner of Sussex Square, and Kemp's sister Mrs Sober contracted to buy No. 23 Sussex Square for £3,150.⁵⁰ By May 1828 Kemp had sold seventeen carcasses on to William Cubitt, the builder of Belgravia, fifteen to Joseph and Matthias Wilks and eleven to Nehemiah Wimble of Lewes, but he still remained the largest proprietor, with 47 houses and sites.⁵¹ By 1829, No. 2 Sussex Square was ready for occupation, and so were Nos. 9–11 Arundel Terrace, the eastern continuation of Lewes Crescent, and a house in Chichester Terrace, to the west of the

crescent.⁵² The Marquess of Bristol bought two houses in the north-west corner of Sussex Square in 1829 and then large plots of land from Kemp, including all of the pasture from his house to the Preston boundary at what is now Bear Road.⁵³ More land on the cliff to the west was sold in 1829 to Hallett, a local businessman.⁵⁴

The slow progress of Kemp's house in London indicated that he still had financial problems, so he gave back some of the London plot to Thomas Cubitt and paid him for work there with land in Kemp Town, on which he proceeded to build houses.⁵⁵ In 1828 the sixth Duke of Devonshire bought the carcass of No. 14 Chichester Terrace from Kemp, and in March 1829 No. 1 Lewes Crescent from Cubitt, who completed No. 1 Lewes Crescent and did all the interior work within it for £9,293.⁵⁶ The two houses were on a wedge-shaped plot, and although the Duke used them both they

were laid out as two separate houses with a connecting door and a large detached kitchen to keep the smell of cooking out of each. The accounts of this splendid bachelor's home give a clear idea of how a wealthy person finished such a house. Mahogany was used for the handrail of the stairs and the seats of the two water closets, one for the Duke and the other for his guests. The stairs and door jambs were Portland stone. In the drawing room, statuary marble chimney pieces were installed and in the dining room and parlours, black and gold ones. Cubitt's men even unloaded wagons of furniture from Chatsworth. During the early 1840s this house cost over £1,000 a year to run excluding major work on it: a considerably smaller sum than the Duke spent on Chatsworth, Chiswick or Devonshire House in London.⁵⁷

BRUNSWICK TOWN – A RIVAL

By the mid 1820s Kemp was faced with competition at the western end of the town in the form of Brunswick Town, projected less than a year after Kemp Town. Busby designed the scheme for the freeholder, Rev. Thomas Scutt. Here, in contrast to Kemp Town, Busby supervised the sales of plots and purchasers undertook the construction of houses. Busby's authority was established by ensuring that conveyances included his name as well as Scutt's and the purchasers'.⁵⁸ Kemp did not appear to grasp the value of taking the same approach at Kemp Town.

Kemp supported a plan in 1825–6 to build another square immediately west of Brunswick Town, which would have rivalled Kemp Town. Kemp contracted to buy the land for £60,000 from Thomas Scutt in 1825 and to complete the transaction in December 1829. When the scheme foundered, Isaac Lyon Goldsmid bought the land, instead paying Scutt £55,525 and in due course, the Goldsmid family built Adelaide Crescent on the site.⁵⁹

Proximity to the town centre, better funding and

TABLE 2: KEMP TOWN & BRUNSWICK TOWN
state of Construction in 1826⁶⁰

	Kemp Town	Brunswick Town
Finished	1	4
Nearly Finished	12	0
Basement level	2	7
Carcase	44	24
Not Slated	10	16
Glazed carcase	4	1
Roof not on	1	0
Upper Floors laid	0	2
Lathed and glazed	0	1
Plastering	10	7
Lathed	0	8
Plastered	6	11
Ready to Paper	2	2
No comment	10	9
	<u>102</u>	<u>92</u>

management all helped to push Brunswick Town ahead, even though in January 1826 Kemp Town was further advanced.

The houses in Brunswick Town sold more quickly than those in Kemp Town, and resales of houses in Brunswick Town appeared in the local press before new houses in Kemp Town were sold.⁶¹ By the end of the 1820s, the Square and the seafront terraces shown on the drawing of Brunswick Town (Fig. 10) were probably complete, and in 1830 a large group of the fifty or so 'proprietors' paid for the Brunswick Square (Brighton) Improvement Act.⁶² Thomas Scutt vested in the Commissioners the roads and open spaces and the right to enforce covenants over properties he sold, such as the height of railings.⁶³

A private Act could also have been secured for Kemp Town but Kemp did not initiate it. Instead, in May 1828, Thomas Goodall convened the first meeting of the Kemp Town Proprietors, who closed the road through the gardens between Lewes Crescent and Sussex Square and paid Henry Phillips to plant that land. At their next meeting they set up a

Committee of Management with seven members including Kemp and Cubitt. A standard rate to pay for improvements was agreed in June 1828 and a competition was held for the design of the esplanade under the cliff with a link tunnel under the main road into the gardens. It was won by H.E. Kendall, the architect of Kemp's London house, and his son, who was working on the two houses bought by the Marquess of Bristol in the north-west corner of Sussex Square. But the whole project – a major work of civil engineering – took twelve years to complete, due mainly to the difficulties associated with raising funds.⁶⁴

In 1830, Kemp Town was still described as unfinished, its dilapidated state blamed on a severe winter.⁶⁵ The slowness with which Kemp Town developed impacted on the services offered locally, on sales of second hand houses and on the funding of public works. In 1825, the owners of the Gas Works just to the east of Kemp Town advertised land for the construction of 52 second and third rate houses with shops. John Vyvyan of Notting Hill Place designed a key part of this scheme, but, due to the lack of interest, only part of it was built.⁶⁶ The lack of business at the Bush Hotel bankrupted its first proprietor in 1826.⁶⁷ From the early 1830s there was a small market in second hand houses which reveal how lavishly furnished some were, but new owners were not easy to find. In 1834, Thomas Potter MacQueen tried to sell No. 31 Sussex Square, described as one of the largest houses in Brighton. Its luxurious contents included a drawing room with green silk damask on the walls and gallery hung with four Canalettos, a Correggio and a Guido Reni. After some months, he offered to rent the property.⁶⁸ In 1838 so few houses had been sold that it was not possible to raise enough funds from residents in order to extend the sea wall for which they should have paid. After lengthy discussions, the Brighton Commissioners decided that the town should meet the rest of the cost due to the need to protect the seafront road.⁶⁹

THE TIDE OF INDEBTEDNESS

The editor of the *Brighton Gazette* commented on 26 January 1826 that a national depression was affecting employment and the banks.⁷⁰ Kemp tried to offset his costs at Kemp Town by using his other land to raise capital. He mortgaged land, including part of Montpelier, to his local agent and sold land.⁷¹ In 1832, at about the time of his second marriage, to Frances Harvey (née Shakerley) – his first wife having died in 1825 – he borrowed £24,000 from his former brother-in-law Henry Baring, secured against his first marriage settlement and other assets he had used in 1824. His failure to keep up the interest payments forced Baring into filing a bill in Chancery against the trustees of the marriage settlement (which included other Barings) to register the debt. At this point Kemp owed at least £66,000 to the Baring family and had mortgaged houses in Kemp Town.⁷² The problems he faced are well illustrated by the rate book for 1834 which recorded that only 36 of the 105 houses were inhabited, compared with 71 in 1846.⁷³

Kemp was still an MP in late February 1837, but only a day after a Parliamentary vote he said that the family was leaving the country for the sake of his health.⁷⁴ In April 1837 he resigned his seat and moved abroad with his second wife, their son Frederick and his daughter by his first marriage.⁷⁵ One of his other daughters, Fanny, remained at Belgrave Square until 1839, when the houses there and in Kemp Town were let. Kemp returned to England only once, over the winter of 1840–1.⁷⁶

Kemp's complicated affairs now resulted in legal action in the civil courts, most of them begun by people seeking to recover debts. On 17 May 1841, Sir Thomas Baring wrote to Kemp and set out the results of a meeting with the Receiver appointed under Chancery proceedings instigated by the Barings in order to relieve the trustees of Kemp's first marriage from having to interfere with his financial affairs.⁷⁷

The sums due from sales of land to the railway company, to the parish for a cemetery and to Hallett

and Attree, two local businessmen, were considered sufficient to pay off the balance of Kemp's arrears. Baring recommended that the rental of Kemp's property still in the hands of the receiver should be used to pay off a debt to William Campion, to pay interest on Henry Baring's loan of £23,000, to pay a sum into the trust for his children in England, and on outstanding legal fees. Baring also suggested that the rest of the property held in trust be distributed between Kemp's children, an idea which Mr Faithful, the family solicitor, also supported because the children had little left to inherit. From this, Kemp would not receive a penny.⁷⁸

The Barings forced the sale of more land in January 1842, indicating just how extensive Kemp's holdings still were and the extent of his indebtedness to them. The auctioneer clearly exaggerated the value when he claimed the land was worth £150,000, given the fact that houses and land in Brighton were not in demand: a situation which did not improve until the later 1840s. In Kemp Town, Kemp still owned Chichester House, which was let, four unfinished houses on the east side of Lewes Crescent, and four more in Sussex Square, one of which was occupied by his agent Mr Harris. He also owned most of Henry Street, all of Albion Mews (both off St James Street), land near Jubilee Street, the Race Course and the surrounding land (some 272 acres), several farms, land along Montpelier Road and along Queen's Road, Lilleywhite's Cricket Ground on Montpelier Road, and Hodson's Mill.⁷⁹ In December 1842, more land was put on the market. This time the assets included his house, and land in Rock Mews. The advertisement claimed that land now in the area still called Montpelier had been laid out as a villa suburb close to the station, with its principal frontage on Montpelier Road.⁸⁰

Kemp had considerable debts in addition to mortgages. In 1843, a fashionable tailor called Becker went to court to claim about £1000 due to him. As Kemp did not appear, Becker obtained a writ of outlawry against him. The Kemp family produced

evidence that they were abroad and unaware of the case, but Kemp remained liable for the debt.⁸¹ Then, during the morning service on Sunday 14 January 1844, a proclamation of outlawry was posted on the doors of the parish church at Brighton, Kemp having neglected to respond to an action brought against him by Sir William Pilkington and his wife.⁸² Even after he died, more cases emerged. In 1847 his sister, Mrs Sober, went to court to recover her rights to No. 23 Sussex Square, mortgaged by her brother without her knowledge.⁸³

Kemp died in Paris at No. 64 Rue du Faubourg de St Honoré on 20 December 1844, and was buried in Père-Lachaise Cemetery.⁸⁴ His widow returned to Kemp Town in the late 1840s and lived in the former family home until 1851, but then moved to Tunbridge Wells where she died.⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

Why did Kemp find himself so short of capital and income when he still owned a considerable amount of land in the parish of Brighton which he might have used as security for mortgages? In July 1845, of the 538 acres of pasture and arable land surveyed by the Tithe Commissioners, Kemp's land (by then inherited by his widow) amounted to 484 acres. The answer seems to lie partly in his refusal to put more of the risk of development at Kemp Town onto others in the way that Scutt and Busby did at Brunswick Town, partly in his existing indebtedness which made him a poor risk. He also failed to benefit from the boom of the early 1820s and became one of the many victims of the town's failure to grow; the population increased by only six thousand between 1831 and 1841, and only a few hundred houses were built. The railway stimulated growth from the later 1840s when the population rose sharply.⁸⁶ For Kemp this was far too late.

Kemp inherited land and the desire for the lifestyle of a gentleman from his father, Thomas

Kemp. Faced with the need for income to maintain an expensive way of living, he decided to venture into urban development. He lacked any experience of business and failed to employ someone to manage his schemes. Rather than spread the risk as rivals did, he tried to fund the building work himself, and this led to his nemesis. But although he failed to profit from his many speculations, schemes with which he was associated survive. He also determined the layout of substantial areas which were not developed until far later. Without such people taking risks, towns such as Brighton would not have developed such a rich legacy from this period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 S. Berry, *Georgian Brighton* (Chichester, 2005) provides an overview. M. Jones, *Set for a King: 200 years of gardening at the Royal Pavilion* (Brighton Museum and Libraries, 2005) has a series of diagrams showing the development of the Pavilion.
- 2 Berry, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–28. P. Hembry and W. & E. Cowie, *British Spas from 1815 to the Present* (London, 1997), pp. 60–61.
- 3 Berry, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–72; *Morning Chronicle*, 26 August 1801.
- 4 Census data.
- 5 National Archives, PROB 11/872, /895, /1527. The citation of inheritance is clearly laid out in East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO), SAS-ACC 1044, Queens Park. For additional Kemp inheritances, see ESRO A50, 22–24; A63, 169–174; A61, 599. J. Farrant, 'A garden in a desert place and a palace among the ruins': Lewes Castle transformed, 1600–1850', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* CXXXIV (1996), pp. 169–178, gives a short account of family inheritances.
- 6 ESRO, SAS-ACC 1044 ; AMS 5736/14, 20 October 1806; AMS 5736/15, 14 April 1809.
- 7 C. Whittick, 'Coneyborough' in J. Farrant, *Sussex Depicted* (Lewes: Sussex Record Society, 2001), p. 154; ESRO AMS 5440/404, 26 May 1807.
- 8 *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* (hereafter *SWA*), 6 May 1811.
- 9 *SWA*, 14 July 1806.
- 10 *SWA*, 4 May 1807, 6 July 1807; ESRO, AMS 6314/2, 2 July 1807; ESRO, SAS-ACC 1044; *Boyle's Court Guide*, 1815 and 1816.
- 11 C.W. Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England 1740–1820* (London, 1974), pp. 121–8.
- 12 ESRO, SAS-N 567, 568, 571; AMS 5728/1/1-23; DB/B/68/4/1; AMS 6176/1/1-9.
- 13 ESRO, ACC3412/3/636 (c1790); ACC 5179/30; A5179/30; PAR255/10/1/2; PAR 255/58 (Burial Land Grant). *SWA*, 10 June 1793.
- 14 *The Times* 24 April 1816; G. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 109, 111.
- 15 ESRO, AMS 5736/19.
- 16 F.E. Sawyer, *Churches of Brighton (c.1875)*, p. 116.
- 17 *Baxter's Brighton Guide and Directory*, 1822, p. liv; ESRO PAR 262/4. The chapel was refaced in 1853.
- 18 ESRO PAR 262. Sold 1825–26.
- 19 For Dale Park, Farrant (ed.), *Sussex Depicted*, p. 275; British Library, Add Ms 5674, f.31; *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 26 January 1829; *Brighton Herald* (hereafter *BH*), 24 January 1829.

- 20 H. Hobhouse, *Thomas Cubitt* (Didcot, 1995), p. 134. The house is still standing, but has been much altered. Also in S. Bradley, and N. Pevsner, *London 6: Westminster*, New Haven and London, 2003), p. 740.
- 21 ESRO ACC 5500/1/74; *SWA*, 10 July 1820; *Brighton Gazette* (hereafter *BGaz.*), 11 November 1824; *The Times* 30 December 1842.
- 22 *Morning Chronicle* 22 February 1825.
- 23 *BH*, 18 July 1829, 7 November 1829; ESRO, Acc 6627; J. and J. Ford, *Images of Brighton* (Richmond on Thames, 1981), p. 117.
- 24 *SWA* 12 April 1819, Cottage style plan; ESRO, HOW 23/27, 1 July 1825; *BGaz.*, 30 March 1826, 25 July 1837. In 1838 Kemp was the plaintiff in a case in Chancery in which he sought to recover the land: *London Gazette* 27 July 1838, p. 1704; National Archives, C13/1549/47.
- 25 *BH*, 23 February, 18 and 25 March 1822.
- 26 *Brighton Gleaner*, 1822, p. 124; *Baxter's Directory of Brighton*, 1824, p. xxxvii.
- 27 *BGaz.*, 26 August, 30 December 1824.
- 28 Lists of donations in *BH*, *BG*; *Baxter* 1824, p. lix.
- 29 A. Dale, *Fashionable Brighton 1820–1860* (Newcastle, 1967), p. 62.
- 30 *BH*, 16 March 1826, p. 3.
- 31 *The Times*, 27 January 1825; *BH* 18 December 1830.
- 32 *Brighton Guardian* (hereafter *BG*), 19 January 1826.
- 33 *BH*, 27 April 1829.
- 34 ESRO, AMS 6610/4/1–3; National Archives, IR18/10204; *BH* 14 April 1838; *Proceedings of the Commissioners in relationship to the rights of inhabitants over certain parcels of land referred to in the deeds of 1822 on the division of the Tenantry Down* (Brighton, 1848).
- 35 *Copies of deeds relating to the division of the tenantry downs in the parish of Brighton in the year 1822* (Brighton, 1878), pp. 248, 256; *BH*, 25 November 1824.
- 36 *BH*, 15 November 1823.
- 37 *SWA*, 11 November 1822.
- 38 ESRO, HOW 27/27, map c.1824. Comparison with terrier maps of the town shows how Kemp cut straight across the paul pieces when needed.
- 39 Anon, *The Fashionable Guide and Directory to the Public Places of Resort* (London, 1840), p. 30.
- 40 ESRO, HOW, Budgen 81.
- 41 RIBA Drawings Collection, SD68/10(1–3).
- 42 *Brighton Gleaner* (1822), p. 316.
- 43 A. Dale, *The History of the Kemp Town Gardens, Brighton* (Brighton, 1964), p. 3.
- 44 Dale, *Fashionable Brighton*, p. 66.
- 45 *BGaz.*, 9 December, 16 December 1824; *The Times*, 22 November 1824. *BGaz.* 22nd November 1824.
- 46 *BGaz.*, 19 January 1826.
- 47 ESRO, SAS-N/757, /758; National Archives, B3/4738, 1828.
- 48 *BGaz.*, 19 Jan 1826; *BH*, 2 Oct 1827; National Archives, B3/4738, 1828. In his evidence to Stafford's bankruptcy proceedings Kemp asserted that Wilds was the original architect on the estate and was replaced by Busby.
- 49 Dale, *Fashionable Brighton*, pp. 57–61; *BH*, 20 Oct 1827.
- 50 ESRO, SAS-B/171, with a rare plan of the estate attached; J.A. Dunlap, *Reports of cases decided in the High Court of Chancery* (London, 1852), pp. 154–161; *London Gazette* 8 August 1848, p. 2951.
- 51 Hobhouse, *Cubitt*, p. 366.
- 52 *BH*, 24 October 1829.
- 53 Suffolk Record Office, HA 507/2/527, /528.
- 54 ESRO, HOW 27/23, Budgen Account Book.
- 55 Hobhouse, *Cubitt*, pp. 106, 109, 126, 134; ESRO, HOW, Budgen 84–89, March 1829.
- 56 *Derby Mercury* 11 March 1829; Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth, Brighton House accounts.
- 57 Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth, L/114/105.
- 58 N. Bingham, *C.A. Busby* (London, 1991), p. 80.
- 59 *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 12 February 1825; *Morning Chronicle* 22 February 1825. The story about Thomas Kemp's purchases referred to is incorrect; he inherited most of the land; *Morning Chronicle* 15 April 1830; Dale, *Fashionable Brighton*, p. 150.
- 60 *BGaz.* 19 January 1826 (figures compiled by Busby).
- 61 *BGaz.* 19 January 1826, 1. 26 January 1826, 1. The second house was next but one to the Duchess of Dorset to east side; *BH* 31 January 1829.
- 62 *BH*, 7 November 1829; ESRO, Land Tax, Hove; *BG.*, 30 March 1826.
- 63 GEORGII IV. REGIS, Cap xvi. 3rd June 1824.
- 64 *Morning Chronicle* 16 June 1828; A.M., 'A forgotten gardener: Henry Phillips, 1779–1840', *Garden History Society Newsletter* XIV (1971), pp. 2–3; Dale, *Fashionable Brighton*, pp. 83–84, and Dale (1964), p. 3, both citing the minutes of the Kemp Town Committee.
- 65 *Morning Chronicle*, 15 April 1830.
- 66 *Morning Chronicle* 10 May 1825; RIBA Drawings Collection, SD71/8, 2–4, Black Rock scheme (Vyvyan's drawings).

- 67 *The Examiner* 5 November 1826.
- 68 *BH*, 15 February 1834, 19 April 1834, 22 August 1835.
- 69 *BH*, 31 March 1838. The Commissioners decided to go ahead anyway, but not without debate.
- 70 *BGaz.*, 19, 26 January 1826.
- 71 ESRO, HOW 27/24.
- 72 Dale, *Fashionable Brighton*, p. 55; National Archives, C13/1574/8, C14/337/B64, C14/452/S123.
- 73 National Archives, as above; Dale, *Fashionable Brighton*, p. 77. The rate books cited seem to have been lost.
- 74 *BG*, 22 February 1837; *B. Gaz.* 23 February 1837. Another report said that they were leaving due to the health of his wife: *BH*, 11 March 1837.
- 75 ESRO DAN 438, 31 January 1839, DAN 400 Kemp 12 September 1839.
- 76 Dale, p. 68, no source.
- 77 National Archives, C108/32, C128/2, C14/337/B64.
- 78 ESRO, DAN 451, 17 May 1841.
- 79 ESRO ACC 5500/1/74.
- 80 *The Times*, 30 December 1842.
- 81 *The Times*, 7 November 1843; *Morning Chronicle*, 18 October 1844; 30 November 1844.
- 82 *The Era*, 14 January 1844.
- 83 Dunlap, *Cases in the High Court of Chancery* (1852), pp. 154–161; *London Gazette*, 8 August 1848, 2951; National Archives, C14/746/S54, C108/32/C128/2.
- 84 Obituary, *Gentleman's Magazine* 1845, pp. 441–443.
- 85 Census 1851. She died in Tunbridge Wells in 1861.
- 86 Census.