

# A RESORT TOWN TRANSFORMED: BRIGHTON c.1815–1840

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*Most of the elegant terraces, squares and crescents in modern Brighton and Hove were begun between about 1815 and 1830. The majority were built along the sweeping bay on which this resort stands. The first aim of this article is to summarise recent research which expands and revises major parts of Anthony Dale's Fashionable Brighton 1820–1860 (1947). This pioneering work formed part of a campaign to save Adelaide Crescent and Brunswick Town from demolition and to raise the profile of other coastal developments to help protect them. The second aim is to draw attention to the importance of other extensive, and expensive, improvements which were essential to the success of a high-quality resort town during this period, but which Dale did not discuss.<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTION

A great campaigner, who also founded the Regency Society of Brighton and Hove, Anthony Dale recognised that informing people as accurately as possible about why buildings erected so long ago still mattered could help win support for their protection. When writing his book, Dale used the limited resources then available about the history of Brighton and Hove, and he did this very successfully. But, since his book, a lot more evidence about the resort during this period has appeared, resulting in a substantial revision of its history.

In his account of the early development of

Brighton, Dale accepted the common view that it was a mere fishing village before the Prince of Wales arrived in 1783. More recent research has emphasised that Brighton was not a village but a town, albeit a small and poor one, which was regenerated by seaside tourism from the 1750s. By the time the Prince arrived it was already a popular, rapidly growing resort, aided by good access to London and starting to expand onto agricultural land.<sup>2</sup>

Dale thought that the development of the town before about 1815 had little influence on the location and scale of the projects that he described. But deeds and other sources have since revealed that the practices used to buy blocks of strips in the unenclosed open or common fields around the town – essential for future developments along the coast – were already well established by 1815. The depth and width of new houses on these sites were constrained by the cost of buying up and merging long thin strips of open-field land. Between the late 1770s and about 1810, such houses were acceptable to most visitors, who did not stay as long as they did after 1815, and were generally content with relatively small houses because they did not entertain at home. The season was shorter than it later became, and that reduced the rental income for investors.<sup>3</sup> A few larger areas of land assembled by determined developers meanwhile gave the opportunity to build two squares and one sea-facing crescent: Bedford Square (1801), New Steine (1790) and Royal Crescent (1795–6) (Figs. 1, 2), but assembling the land for such big



Fig. 1. Marchant's Map of Brighton in 1808 showing the compact resort before the 'Regency' boom.  
(Private Collection)

projects was a slow and costly process. Some villas along the coast, such as the Earl of Egremont's East Lodge, were also built on land assembled over a long period from several strips.

By 1815 the preference amongst wealthy visitors for entertaining privately was quickly replacing the older one of attending public entertainments, and required bigger houses. Many of the projects which Dale describes met this need, but they were still built by following the same costly land purchasing practices as before. But the high cost of assembling enough land

was overcome by the demand for larger properties, let for longer because the season lengthened and the number of visitors increased. The rising price of new and larger terraced houses persuaded Thomas Kemp of Kemp Town to go to the expense of co-operating with co-owners to enclose pastoral land surrounding the resort for development, and Thomas Scutt of Brunswick Town to sell valuable freehold farmland for the building of Brunswick Town. The two 'Towns' needed the large areas which these owners made available for development.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 2. Brighton in 1835 by John Bruce showing the impact of the investment in a coast road opening up the west side of the resort. (*Private Collection*)

Dale showed that Thomas Kemp, one of the key developers of Regency Brighton, was financially stretched by 1837 but not bankrupted. He did not, however, see the letters which suggest that Kemp lived comfortably abroad, aided by the wealth of his second wife (Frances Shakerley Harvey), or the complex deals he became enmeshed in for Hove and also north Brighton which increased his liabilities.<sup>5</sup>

As Dale demonstrated, Amon and Amon Henry Wilds, from Lewes, played a key role in Brighton's development, along with C. A. Busby (1786–1834). Busby, a pupil of Daniel Alexander, had few commissions until he arrived in Brighton. He was never in partnership with Amon Wilds. It was Amon's son, Amon Henry, normally known as Henry, with whom Busby briefly worked. Henry Wilds went on to design schemes whilst his father gave up development in 1825. Henry Wilds and C. A. Busby designed many new projects after the break-up of their partnership, but others also played more of a role than Dale realised. He correctly suspected that William Mackie, a Londoner, designed Regency

Square, but local men such as Thomas Cooper, George Cheesman and Henry Mew were also active. He also tried to identify the architects and builders of many of the chapels; that part of *Fashionable Brighton*, along with the section on chapels in his *Brighton Churches*, also needs to be revised in the light of more recent published work.<sup>6</sup>

The rest of this article identifies new interpretations of the developments which Dale describes, and then discusses other projects of this period which added to the appeal of the resort, without which the housing developments could not have flourished.

## GROWTH AND STAGNATION

The transformation of Brighton took place during a very short period lasting from the end of the Napoleonic Wars until 1830. Brighton had flourished as a seaside resort during the Napoleonic Wars, the population doubling between 1801 and 1811 (Table 1).



TABLE 1  
Population of Brighton and Hove 1794–184

<i>Year</i>	<i>Brighton</i>	<i>Hove</i>	<i>Total</i>
1794	5669		
1801	7339	101	7440
1811	12012	193	12205
1821	22429	312	22741
1831	40634	1360	41994
1841	46661	2509	49170

The positive impact of the presence of thousands of soldiers, because of the fear of an invasion force landing in the large, shallow bay beside which Brighton stands, has been overlooked by historians. Dale and other writers over-estimated the impact of the well-publicised periodic presence of George, Prince of Wales (latterly the Prince Regent and then George IV) at the Royal Pavilion until his death in 1830. Family and friendship networks were more important in attracting visitors, and they established the resort in the first place.<sup>7</sup> Expansion tailed off about 1828, when the dramatic slow-down recorded in the census between 1831 and 1841 began. Many bankruptcies amongst builders and other businesses in Brighton from the late 1820s illustrate the degree of the slowdown of building and the decline or stagnation in the number of visitors, owing in part to fluctuations in the wider economy. When the resort revived after 1845, only a few of the projects of the 1820s such as Kemp Town were reinvigorated; most of the incomplete projects were left unfinished or restarted in a different style, such as Montpelier, revived in the mid-1840s in a simple Italianate style which soon became popular.<sup>8</sup>

The Royal Pavilion exerted little influence on the architecture of the resort, but it was certainly part of the leisure pattern of the influential elite who were either part of the household of the Prince Regent or guests at his social events. The comings and goings of the Prince, and of people associated with him, were frequently reported in the London press, and helped to keep Brighton in the public eye. But the movements of many other wealthy visitors were also listed, and the depression began long before the Pavilion was shut up by Queen Victoria.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1810 and 1836 the area of Brighton more than doubled, but the demand for easy access to the sea by visitors and wealthy residents reinforced the triangular shape typical of many resorts. The front lengthened either side of the old town, which became the business and leisure area, with light industry and other essential services mainly clustered on its north side, where the railway station was opened in 1840. Yet although Brighton had replaced Bath as the favoured resort of wealthy and influential people by the mid-1810s, it was still less than half its size, and the total population of Brighton and Hove did not overtake that of Bath until 1851.<sup>10</sup>

Developments in any resort had to take account of changes in the numbers of visitors, their wealth and expectations, length of stay and related preferences for accommodation and expenditure. Until the later 1820s, the number of wealthy visitors to Brighton continued to rise. How and when visitors used the resort changed with a notable rise in entertaining at home. By 1818 the season was shifting away from the June to early October peak to the later autumn, a trend which continued into the 1850s, and it lasted longer. If an account of the number of visitors in the season from 1822–23 is fairly accurate, then around 10,000 to 14,000 visitors were accommodated in the later autumn peak period and the length of the season made investment in houses to let, and related facilities, increasingly viable.<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 3. Regency Square in 1833, from a panorama drawn by Henry Wilds in 1833. The Square begins behind the houses facing the sea. The large house on the west side of the picture was owned by the Duke and Duchess of St Albans, but private ownership in this period was not common. Most were rented. (*Private Collection*)

#### NEW HOUSING PROJECTS

Developers quickly responded to the growing demand for bigger houses to rent and the related increase in prices. Over 500 were completed between 1816 and 1818, and in 1818 about 330 were being built. Older schemes begun before 1815 to the west of the old town centre, such as Blucher Square and Russell Square, speeded up. Blucher Square was completed by 1820 and Russell Square in 1824. In both developments the houses were smaller than those which followed.<sup>12</sup>

The building boom continued well into the 1820s. In 1826 C. A. Busby compiled a list of 489 houses and a shop, pointing out that the number was small compared with an estimated 8,000 buildings in the resort. Neither estimate included empty properties (Table 2). Most houses were funded either by capital from London or by local people and banks, the traders supplying building materials and giving generous credit times and the builders drawing on their own funds<sup>13</sup>

TABLE 2

Summary of buildings under construction by Busby in January 1826

Description	Number	%
Carcasses	280	57
Finished/nearly finished	52	11
Internal works	102	21
Basement	10	2
Shops in progress	15	3
No comment	29	6
Total	488	

From 1815, the number of architect-surveyors and architects also increased quickly. Before then most properties were designed and built by competent local builders or builder-surveyors such as William Tuppen. Samuel Bloggs, who described himself as an architect, was a rare outsider.<sup>14</sup> Although many now familiar names such as Charles Barry secured work, most of the major buildings and developments were still designed by local men.<sup>15</sup>

Inward investment, especially from London, became crucial for the funding of large projects which took longer to complete than the smaller earlier ones. The wealthy Hanson family, whose money from sugar importing financed Regency Square (Fig. 3), was the first to grasp the need for large houses in squares along the sea-front. The family had already bought strips of land east of Belle

Vue, their villa since the 1790s. They later sold land in the south east corner of what became known as Belle Vue Field to Thomas Attree for a house obscuring the view of the sea from the east side of what became Regency Square, suggesting that the idea of a square was a later development. Attree's house was designed by William Mackie, who also laid out the Square, as Dale suspected.<sup>16</sup> Begun in 1817, with covenants over the upkeep from 25 December 1818, the completed square was described in 1825 as 'tolerably uniform and of a very respectable design', most of the houses boasting bow fronts and green verandas. The majority were let to visitors, with whom they were popular.<sup>17</sup>

The generous open space and big houses made Regency Square a success and demonstrated that the higher cost of assembling larger plots could be



Fig. 4. Richmond Terrace overlooking The Level, Lewes Road, by Amon and Amon Henry Wilds. A large section of this terrace was demolished in the later nineteenth century for the Technical College. (*Photograph: author*)

recouped.<sup>18</sup> Marine Square on the east cliff, and the majority of other developments along the sea-front, were built over the fossilised arable field system, and followed closely behind Regency Square. But the two most impressive developments – Kemp Town and Brunswick Town – were built on substantial areas of freehold land whose respective owners had inherited these substantial holdings. Here the lower risks allied to not having to buy land also made such grandiose developments attractive.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the success of Regency Square, it was the north end of Richmond Terrace of 1820–22, designed by Amon and Amon Henry Wilds as a single architectural unit, which set the tone for most of the later Brighton façades (Fig. 4). It preceded the publication of the design for the façades of Kemp Town by Henry Wilds and Charles Busby, and so raises the question as to precisely what Charles Busby, with whom Henry Wilds was briefly in partnership with between May 1823 and June 1825, contributed to its design.<sup>20</sup> The site stood well to the east of the built up area. Thomas Read Kemp was clearly planning to develop his large area of land to the east of Brighton in 1822, but it was not until July 1824 that his ideas had crystallised enough for the press to describe the layout of the scheme. The scale of Kemp's plan was emphasised by using comparisons with projects which were probably well known to prospective buyers. Sussex Square was said to be bigger than Grosvenor Square in London, and Lewes Crescent's 800-ft. span was 200 ft. longer than the Royal Crescent in Bath. Both wings of the Crescent were intended to be 350 ft. long, but for these no comparison was given. The employment of the Corinthian order throughout the development, the abundance of open space, and flagged pavements wider than those of Portland Place in London, were also regarded as selling points. By then, the esplanade and the private tunnel connecting it to the main gardens had also been planned.<sup>21</sup> Kemp's decision to name the grand project after himself was not unique in a resort; other examples of about the

same date include Joseph Pitt's Pittville on the outskirts of Cheltenham.<sup>22</sup>

Unusually for Brighton, Thomas Read Kemp funded a single builder, George Stafford, to erect the carcasses of the houses in Kemp Town, thereby exposing himself to the risk of building slumps and bankruptcy, both of which occurred. Kemp employed Budgen rather than Busby or Wilds to manage his holdings in Brighton, and Budgen may have acted as the surveyor for the whole huge project. It is also possible that H. E. Kendall, father and son, who had designed Kemp's town house in Belgravia, were periodically involved. The younger Kendall worked for the Earl of Bristol on his house in Kemp Town, and he designed the seafront landscaping which played an important part in ensuring the long-term success of the development.<sup>23</sup>

No sooner had Kemp got his huge project under way, than the development of another big scheme on the lower-lying land west of Brighton was announced in February 1824. This was Busby's brainchild, and his ability to successfully design and control a large scheme emerged here. The development, in the parish of Hove, was already called Brunswick Town by 1830 (Fig. 5). The landlord was the Rev. Thomas Scutt, owner of Wick Farm, 250 acres of enclosed freehold land abutting Brighton's western boundary. Busby first wanted to develop about 25 acres of exhausted brickfields on the coast. A substantial part of this project was completed, and it probably paid off some of the debts Scutt inherited, partly from legacies bequeathed in his father's will. Although Henry Wilds' name appeared on an early bird's-eye view, produced during his short-lived partnership with Busby, the surviving evidence from prints and press commentary shows that he was not involved, his name mentioned because the project was conceived during his brief partnership with Busby.<sup>24</sup>

Charles Augustin Busby's work in Brighton was reappraised in 1991 by Neil Bingham, who suggested that part of his design for Brunswick Town was influenced by his trip to America.<sup>25</sup> Busby's layout



adroitly ensured that Wick House retained its view of the sea by aligning the northern entrance to Brunswick Square with the house, ensuring that Scutt's house was an eye-catcher and that vital access to the sea was given to land north of the square. This was successfully developed in a simplified late 'Regency' style as Upper Brunswick Place – two long and elegant bow-fronted terraces – when the resort's economy improved in the later 1840s. For Brunswick Square, the main part of the development, Busby departed from the increasingly common use of palace façades for terraces. His distinctive bow-fronted façades work well on the sloping land, a challenge with which he dealt by varying the width of plots and inserting smaller houses where the key changes in level occurred. Busby's plan concentrated services to the east of the Square, where a market, town hall and other facilities were built, mostly designed by him. In Waterloo Street (begun c.1824), St Andrew's, the innovative chapel of ease designed by Charles Barry, shops and smaller houses were built. To the west, construction

of Lansdowne Place, which includes elegant semi-detached villas, and Lansdowne Square had begun by 1830 to Busby's designs.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of much publicity in the local and London papers, the development of Kemp Town soon lagged behind Brunswick Town, with 102 houses still awaiting owners in January 1826, as highlighted in Busby's list of new developments. Closer to Brighton town centre, and contiguous to older buildings, Brunswick Town sold quickly, although the claim that purchasers could make 6.5 per cent on a house for seasonal visitors is surprising. Enough deeds have now appeared to prove that a major reason why the 'Town' was built quite quickly was that established builders took plots, often financed by investors from London. At least one investor employed William Ranger, a well-known contractor, to act as surveyor checking the quality of building work.<sup>27</sup> Scutt followed the common practice of conveying the freehold of plots once the house was completed to the agreed design and standard to the builder or prospective owner

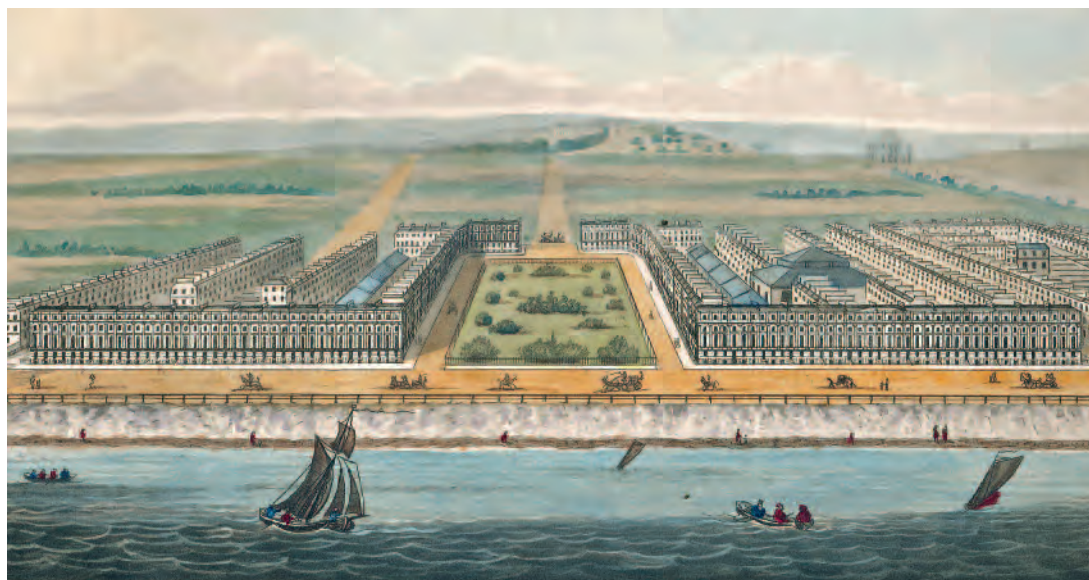


Fig. 5. The intended scheme for Brunswick Town. Published in 1826 by M Duborg. Wick Villa is the eye catcher and 'The Temple', first owned by Kemp, is to the east. (*Private Collection*)



who had raised the capital needed to erect the house; Busby as his surveyor was also involved in most transactions.<sup>28</sup>

All the houses in Brunswick Square and Terrace and in Brunswick Street were sold by 1830, when Scutt withdrew from further development. He had agreed to sell land west of Brunswick Town to Thomas Read Kemp, who finally paid only for a small area before the deal fell through. Isaac Lyon Goldsmid then bought the remaining 216 acres for £56,025. Scutt's decision to sell the land was well timed, for even experienced speculative developers such as Busby were caught by the resort's increasingly sluggish economy, and he was bankrupted in 1833. Scutt retained a few properties to let, and retired to his new estate at Clapham in the valley of the River Cuckmere, near Seaford in Sussex.<sup>29</sup>

Before he withdrew from Brunswick Town, Scutt ensured that the private Act of Parliament required to set up Town Commissioners was secured. He paid the costs and the Commissioners subsequently refunded him. The first Commissioners included

Busby, George Basevi (father of the well-known architect) and William Bodley (probably the father of the architect George Frederick). The group soon appointed Thomas Clisby, a local surveyor, as the Town's first officer, and between 1830 and 1832 quickly grasped basic but important urban management issues such as grassing and fencing green spaces, street lighting, cleaning and washing, collecting rates and being prepared to enforce when rules were not respected. By the end of 1832, they had an embryonic police force and gardeners, and were exercising the power within the Act to borrow money using the rate income as security. Whilst Kemp Town had an effective gardens committee, it did not have its own commissioners.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile Goldsmid employed Decimus Burton - who had redesigned his villa, St John's Lodge in Regent's Park, London - to bring a fresh look to his two projects. Burton used a simple Italianate style for Adelaide Crescent and mainly Gothic for the eighteen villas of Furze Hill in 1832. Both schemes soon foundered because the recession

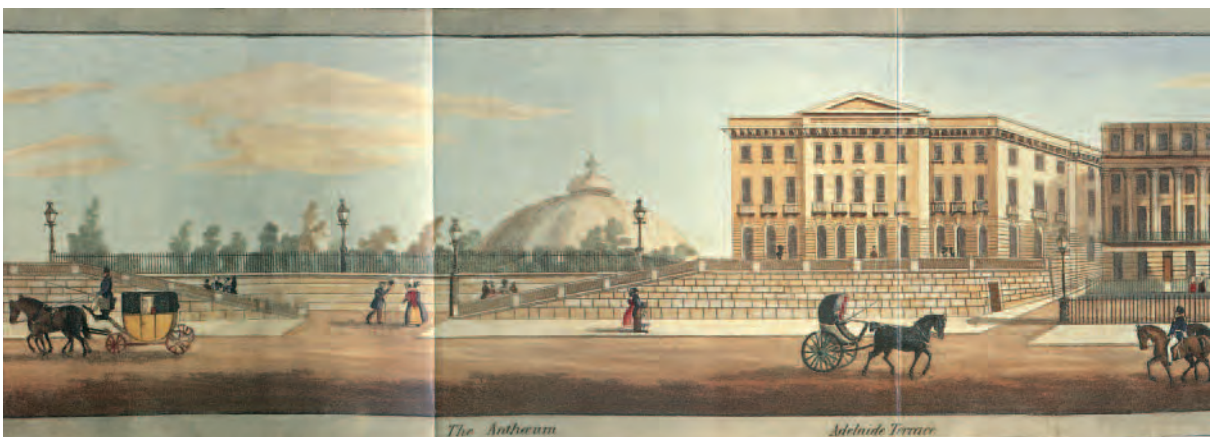


Fig. 6. The start of Adelaide Crescent and the Anthaeum in 1833, from Henry Wild's Panorama of 1833, (Private Collection)



Fig. 7. Major Russell's original villa in Portland Place, by Busby.  
(*Drawn by N Whittock. Engraved by R. Winkles. 1829; Private Collection*)

bit harder. Only the eastern end of Adelaide Crescent was built (Fig. 6) and perhaps three of the villas (including one for Goldsmid, demolished in the 1920s) on Furze Hill, north of Brunswick Town, in spite of its superb sea views. Given the potentially high value of all the land near the coast, it is surprising that Goldsmid allowed Burton to design a crescent without a central access road dividing it into two sections, for the huge crescent cut off the sea view and easy access from land to the rear.<sup>31</sup> Goldsmid may not have had a plan for the land behind the crescent because he allowed the development of a garden scheme by Wilds and Phillips with a large greenhouse, the Anthaeum.<sup>32</sup>

#### SMALLER DEVELOPMENTS ALONG THE COAST

Smaller projects also attracted wealthy visitors. Busby was responsible for the development of Major Russell's scheme for Portland Place, where by late 1824 the scheme of fifty terraced houses, given coherence by the use of a palace front on each side of the road, helped to infill the large gap between Kemp Town and the eastern edge of the town, and probably competed with it because it was closer to the town centre. Busby used Major Russell's large villa as the centre point for the development (Fig. 7); it was sadly burnt down in 1825 before it was finished. Russell was uninsured, and three houses replaced his, helping to screen Portland Place from smaller housing being developed to the north of it. The development attracted a few private owners such the Earl of Abergavenny.<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 8. Oriental Place by Henry Wilds 1825–26, with the unbuild Anthaeum in the Oriental Garden.  
(*Aquatint by G Hunt. 1825; Private Collection*)

West of Portland Place, and similar in style to Regency Square, the more modest Marine Square (also on the eastern cliff), was begun in 1820 to the designs of Henry Wilds, who also advertised the sales of plots. The sales of the land, assembled over four years from strips of farmland, were handled by the owner, Thomas Attree, a local lawyer. The carcasses of 24 houses were complete by 1826. Attree, who retained ownership of the lawn whilst the development was being completed, inserted covenants into the conveyances of building plots to enable enforcement of standard facades, building materials and finishes.<sup>34</sup>

In 1825 Busby and Henry Wilds designed the small but once attractive little development of Cavendish Place to the west of the town, where Count de San Antonio's villa (now much altered) looked down to the sea over a conveniently level

plot.<sup>35</sup> Then in 1825–6 Henry Wilds teamed with Henry Phillips, a local botanist, to promote Oriental Place, a distinctive version of the sea-facing square. Here they used a large glass house instead of a villa as the focus, as a means of promoting a botanical garden with buildings in the 'Mughal' style; the garden proved unsuccessful, and only two houses were built, one of which, the so-called Western Pavilion, survives (Fig. 8). Wilds and Phillips claimed that the influence on their design for the garden's buildings was not the Royal Pavilion, by then transformed by John Nash, but the Cave of Elephants on the island of Salsette, and was thus derived, like much of the external detailing of the Pavilion itself, from books of engravings of Indian buildings, no doubt in order to give their Oriental theme credibility.<sup>36</sup>

The smaller plots of land between the larger projects along the coastline were infilled with streets



of terraced houses such as Bloomsbury Place, begun in about 1822, and Burlington Street a little later on the east cliff. Bloomsbury Place was finished before 1830, but Burlington Street, begun in the late 1820s, was partly complete by 1830 and over half of the west side remained undeveloped until the 1860s.<sup>37</sup>

### INLAND SCHEMES

Most of the inland projects were smaller than the coastal ones. The Wilds's delightful Hanover Crescent, begun in 1822, was one of the few wholly completed, and Norfolk Square – an attractive development just a little inland on the west coast by Thomas Cooper – was nearly completed.<sup>38</sup> Montpelier, one of Thomas Read Kemp's schemes, began as an area of villas, of which only the Gothic Villa survives, albeit much altered. Terraced housing along Montpelier Road was begun in the later 1820s, and the project revived mainly in the Italianate style in the later 1840s.<sup>39</sup>

The largest inland scheme was Brighton (now Queen's) Park, another brainchild of Kemp. It was laid out with a spa and villas by 'Mr Stanford' in 1824 and was then bought by Thomas Attree, who commissioned the young Charles Barry to design one of the few villas to be built. But, despite the sea views and spacious layout, Queen's Park did not attract buyers, and, like Furze Hill in Hove, it failed as a residential project, although the park itself survives.<sup>40</sup>

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The influence of public investment in capital improvements and better management of the streets from the 1810s played a significant role in the resort's appearance and safety. Brighton's Improvement Commissioners and ratepayers undertook major projects, of which the most important for tourism were the development of a continuous sea-front road



Fig. 9. The coast road, built on arches across the front of the old town, made movement within it easier and enabled for the first time direct access from the west to the eastern suburbs, from a panorama by Havell, 1824; (*Private Collection*)

and promenade, the North Steine gardens, gas lighting, much improved street cleaning, and the employment of watchmen to ensure public safety.

The town had flourished as a resort since the 1750s without a seafront road, but the volume of traffic seeking to travel between the east and west ends of the resort as it grew led to congestion in North Street, the only continuous east-west route. By the late 1810s local people had realized that the expense of a sea front road with sea defences had to be met from the rates. Grand Junction Road (renamed King's Road) was built in stages from 1818 (Fig. 9). It opened up easy access from the west side of Brighton to the fashionable Steine and the town centre, and was a key to the success of the grand sea-facing projects built on that side of the town. Changes in how the resort was used also made the sea-front road an important leisure investment, because airings on horseback, in carriages and on foot beside the sea had by now become fashionable. The Commissioners also slowly encased the crumbly chalk cliff east of the Steine in order to prevent erosion getting any closer

to the houses along the top, and improved the road surface on the cliff top. This also became a carriage drive, encouraging further investment in houses.<sup>41</sup>

By 1815 visitors and local people who depended on tourism were very critical of the state of the North Steine, the valley north of the Royal Pavilion, and called for improvements. Between 1816 and 1820 the gardens (now Steine Gardens) were formed by the Town Commissioners, who relied largely for funding on public subscriptions. The land was cleared of flints and rubbish, and was landscaped and bounded by low walls topped with railings, with access controlled with four gates. Once the landscaping had settled in, the gardens became a popular subject for prints (Fig. 10). The Level, to the north of Charles Barry's St Peter's Church (Fig. 2), was given to the town in 1822, and was simply landscaped by the addition of trees under the supervision of the local gardener Henry Phillips). Further much-needed civic improvements included a bigger workhouse on a site above the parish church (by Mackie, 1820–1822); a grander Town Hall in the centre of the old town for the Clerk to the Commissioners and his expanding team of officers; and a replacement Market (both by Thomas Cooper, 1829–31).<sup>42</sup> These helped contribute to the town's increasingly confident and modern image.

#### NEW AND IMPROVED LEISURE FACILITIES

Brighton's businesses were already responding by 1815 to changes in the use of temporary accommodation and the expectations of higher-quality hotels. More visitors rented apartments in hotels for short stays or whilst finding a rented house or lodgings to rent for several weeks. The new hotels such as the York (1819) and The Royal Albion (Amon and Henry Wilds, 1824), both of which have survived, were designed for this market. The Royal Hotel in New Steine on the east cliff, which began as



a group of linked houses, was rebuilt in 1820 to meet rising expectations. The Pavilion Hotel, still standing just west of Castle Square in Steine Lane, and also created by amalgamating houses, was modernised and refaced in 1824. The Norfolk Hotel (opened by 1824) began as a villa to which houses were added. As the suburbs spread, so hotels appeared too; the popular Bedford (Thomas Cooper 1828–9: since demolished) was a good example.<sup>43</sup>

The resort's economy still depended heavily on expenditure on both luxuries and necessities by visitors. Luxury shops and libraries ceased to be seasonal because more visitors came in the quieter and cheaper periods in order to recuperate from illness or to save money. Demand for goods all year resulted in investment in large retail outlets such as Hannington's in Castle Square, formed as was often the case by joining older buildings together and adding a modern facade. Bigger social occasions were increasingly held in homes rather than at assembly rooms, affording a new market for florists and gardeners because plants were often leased for such occasions.<sup>44</sup>

As the resort spread along the coast, new leisure facilities such as libraries and baths were established. Ambitious new or enlarged libraries offering musical recitals proved popular. So too were music salons such as Wright's, which occupied the southern corner of New Road just north-west of the Pavilion. In 1833 the Wrights established the Newburgh Rooms in Cannon Place to provide for fashionable people in the suburbs on the west side of town. They ran musical events and assemblies, sometimes featuring music with local references in the titles, such as the 'Charles Street Walk'. The little-known Corinthian facade of the elaborately furnished Newburgh Rooms by Henry Wilds still clings to the back of the Metropole Hotel. Further east, Tuppen's and the New Steine Libraries also offered musical entertainment.<sup>45</sup> Long-established sea-water baths also received face lifts or were rebuilt and in some instances renamed. Creaks, Lamprell's,

Mohammed's and Molineaux's Turkish Baths were rebuilt or improved, and new baths added to the suburbs, such as the Artillery Baths on West Cliff. The distinctive curved southern end of Lamprell's Baths appears in many views of the coast after 1824.<sup>46</sup>

Yet many leisure facilities struggled. Brighton had a succession of theatres from the 1770s, but the managers had difficulty making them pay, even though the season lengthened. When the Theatre Royal in New Road closed at the end of the season in January 1819, the manager said that he had not made a profit from his five-year lease even with the annual benefit, and had given up. It did reopen but it continued to struggle. Lessees and owners recognised that the need for periodic modernising was a disadvantage of being close to London and attracting a market used to the standards of the capital's theatres, despite the possibility of using famous London-based actors.<sup>47</sup>

The amenity value of the public gardens and the seafront promenade was appreciated by visitors who commented upon the improvement. Yet Ireland's Gardens, at the northern end of the Steine (part of which is now the grounds of Park Crescent) and Brighton (now Queen's) Park, with its scheme for villas around the edge to the east of the town (Fig. 2), failed to attract enough visitors to run as private gardens, even though they offered a wide range of activities such as a cricket and other sports.<sup>48</sup> The lack of demand for such places also explains why Henry Wilds and Henry Phillips's elaborate Oriental Gardens did not attract enough shareholders and were sold without the greenhouse being built.<sup>49</sup> The Anthaeum in Hove, north of Adelaide Crescent, another greenhouse scheme by Wilds and Phillips immediately fell down and was not rebuilt.<sup>50</sup>

Brighton's racecourse was regarded as another key amenity, but it had to be supported by Duke of Richmond and other local owners. In 1826 the value of expenditure in the town by visitors who went to Brighton to attend the races was estimated at £40,000, yet the underwriting needed from





Fig. 10. Bird's eye view of the North Steine (also called Steine Gardens) in 1839. (*Private Collection*)

supporters remained substantial.<sup>51</sup> The amphitheatre, or Circus, built into Carlton Terrace in about 1810 facing the North Steine and backing on to Circus Street, was intended for equestrian demonstrations, but it failed, only to be resurrected as a bazaar and subsequently as an art gallery. Its location, well to the north of the town centre, was probably the main reason for its failure. Gideon Mantell's museum also failed to attract enough interest and closed.<sup>52</sup>

#### THE SEARCH FOR A FUTURE

Brighton was not only a resort town; it was also the terminus of the fastest cross-Channel route to Paris. By 1817 the long established ferry service to Dieppe

carried 2,500 outbound passengers, and about 2,000 inbound. But by the early 1820s vessels had grown larger and were anchoring farther out.<sup>53</sup> The Chain Pier – the most ingenious and famous landmark of this period in Brighton – was built in 1823–4 in order to help retain the ferry service and also to serve as a promenade; the ferries, now steam-powered, used the staging point at the southern end.<sup>54</sup> It was the brainchild of Captain Samuel Brown, who had already built the Trinity Pier at Leith in Scotland, and the capital was raised as shares, some then held by wealthy visitors with houses in the town such as the Earl of Egremont. A more popular subject than the Royal Pavilion, the pier owed much of its fame to artists such as John Constable, J. M. W. Turner and the countless printmakers who helped to promote it.<sup>55</sup>



Fig. 11. The Chain Pier after the 1833 storm, by John Bruce. (*Private Collection*)

Frequent damage from storms helped to keep it in the public eye (Fig. 11), but the cost of repairs played a major role in its inability to make a profit.<sup>56</sup> The future depended not so much on ferries as on railways.

The combination of high demand by wealthy people and a great inflow of investment ensured that Brighton stayed well ahead of both inland and coastal rivals even through hard times. The 1830s and early 1840s were uncertain years for Brighton. Most projects were either completed slowly, or stopped completely, and unemployment rose. The promise of a railway from London offered relief, but many of the townsfolk opposed it at first, believing that it would lower that vital social tone which the investment was maintaining. Support grew rapidly nevertheless from the mid-1830s, and two of the major Brighton landowners, Isaac Goldsmid and Thomas Read Kemp, joined the board of the railway company. Both men were well aware of the importance of good access to the new line and wanted stations in specific locations to promote their own land. So Brighton Station, to the north of the

old town (in its present location), gave access to Kemp's land to the east and west, and the original Hove Station gave Goldsmid good access to his properties to the west.<sup>57</sup>

The opening of the Brighton-London railway line in 1841 failed to immediately rescue the resort.<sup>58</sup> But revival came in the mid-1840s, when some existing schemes were completed and new ones such as Powis Square and Montpelier Crescent were begun in the then old-fashioned 'Regency' style. This style was soon edged aside by the Italianate used in Clifton Terrace, Park Crescent and Montpelier villas.<sup>59</sup> The strong 'Regency' imprint on the seafront remained nevertheless because of the popularity of the large houses, and it shapes the identity of Brighton even now, giving the strong impression of an essentially Regency town. Had Anthony Dale not marshalled the defence of these buildings so well, most would have been replaced after the Second World War and the longest and most stylish seaside resort landscape in the country would have been lost.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ENDNOTES

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