

= Regency Square , Brighton =

Regency Square is a large early 19th @-@ century residential development on the seafront in Brighton , part of the British city of Brighton and Hove . Conceived by speculative developer Joshua Hanson as Brighton underwent its rapid transformation from fishing village to fashionable resort , the three @-@ sided " set piece " of around 70 houses and associated structures was designed and built over a ten @-@ year period by Brighton 's most important Regency @-@ era architects : the partnership of Charles Busby , Amon Wilds and his son Amon Henry Wilds . The site was originally Belle Vue Field ? used at various times as a military camp ( mentioned in Pride and Prejudice ) , a showground and the location of a windmill .

The square was a prestigious , high @-@ class development , attracting the social elite . The square gradually lost its prestige status after the First World War as hotels started to move in . The square 's central garden , originally private , has been council @-@ owned since 1884 and is publicly accessible , and an underground car park was built beneath it in 1969 .

Most of the buildings in and around the square have been designated Listed buildings : six blocks of houses are each listed at Grade II \* , the second @-@ highest designation , while five other residential buildings , a war memorial , a nearby inn and a set of bollards outside it have each been given the lower Grade II status . The house at the southwest corner is now numbered as part of King 's Road but was built as part of Regency Square , and is also Grade II \* -listed .

= = History = =

= = = Belle Vue Field = = =

Regency Square was built on one of the fields surrounding the fishing village of Brighthelmstone , the predecessor of modern @-@ day Brighton . The field was named Belle Vue Field ? probably in connection with the long vanished Belle Vue House , and lay to the west of the village . The field ran down to the seafront , and was a popular site for travelling shows , fairs , military parades and other gatherings . The field contained a windmill known as West Mill . A windmill was owned by Matthew Bourne in 1744 , but was not marked on Ogilby 's 1762 map . A windmill is shown on Lambert 's View of Brighthelmstone which is dated 1765 . The windmill stood in the field until 28 March 1797 , when 86 oxen dragged it 2 miles ( 3 @. @ 2 km ) uphill on a sled to the nearby village of Preston . It was re @-@ erected there and renamed Preston Mill . After several more namings , it was demolished in 1881 . Its machinery was cannibalised by the owners of nearby Waterhall Mill . A watercolour painting , now displayed at Preston Manor , shows crowds of people watching the mill 's removal to Preston .

By the late 18th century , Brighton ( as it was now known ) had begun to develop into a popular and fashionable seaside resort . Belle Vue Field became more important to the growing town in 1793 , when in response to the increased military threat from France , a 10 @,@ 000 @-@ man military encampment ( Brighton 's first ) was established there . The camp quickly gained a reputation as a place for women to find partners , and Jane Austen used it as a setting in her novel Pride and Prejudice ( written in 1796 and published in 1813 ) . The heroine Elizabeth Bennet 's sister is invited to Brighton and elopes with , and later marries , army officer George Wickham . The camp moved to another site in 1794 ; after returning to its former use as a fairground and showground , Belle Vue Field gradually lost popularity and was abandoned in 1807 , when such entertainments moved to The Level , a large expanse of grass inland north of Old Steine .

= = = Hanson builds the square = = =

A few years later , the field ( which had no common ownership ) was acquired by Joshua Flesher Hanson , a businessman . By this time , Brighton 's popularity was such that speculators were commissioning architects and builders to design and lay out large @-@ scale sea @-@ facing

residential developments to attract wealthy long @-@ term visitors or permanent residents . Royal Crescent was already thriving ; Clarence Square , Russell Square , Marine Parade and New Steine were being developed , and work had started on Bedford Square . Hanson decided to follow the trend but take it in a new direction : he divided Belle Vue Field into 70 plots , leased them individually and put strict covenants in place , demanding that each house be built in a specific style in order to ensure architectural harmony . In return , the leaseholders ( mostly private builders ) would have the right to buy , and would end up with houses much larger than average for the town , with excellent sea views and with exclusive access to the large central garden . Most leaseholders bought the houses as soon as they could , which was to Hanson 's advantage as he made money and had no ongoing responsibility for the buildings . Restrictions in the covenants included the requirement to erect a façade with an iron balcony , to clad the area below the balcony in stucco , to paint the façade at least every three years , to repair any damage , and to pay towards maintenance of the central garden . No stucco was to be applied above the balcony line .

Although there is no documentary evidence confirming the architects , all sources attribute most of Regency Square 's buildings to the father @-@ and @-@ son partnership of Amon and Amon Henry Wilds , who moved to Brighton from nearby Lewes in 1815 and became two of Brighton 's most important architects ; they were extremely prolific , and were responsible for defining and developing the town 's distinctive Regency style . Although they worked extensively with fellow architect Charles Busby during the 1820s , historians agree that he was not involved in the overall design of Regency Square , at least not in its early stages : the buildings " appear to lack his distinctive flair " and are not as impressive as those at the Kemp Town estate to the east of Brighton , which all three men were involved with . Some of the later houses may have been the work of Wilds senior and Busby , however .

Building work started in 1818 and continued until 1830 , although most of the square ( except numbers 1 and 47 ? 49 ) were complete by 1828 . The long construction period affected the uniformity of design hoped for by Hanson , as did the fact that building plots were sold individually and at different times : even a strict covenant could not force the owners into designing identical houses . A passageway ( Regency Colonnade ) was built at the northeast corner to connect the square to the neighbouring development of Russell Square , which was built at the same time ; the contemporary Regency Inn ( now known as the Regency Tavern ) faced both the passageway and Regency Square . St Margaret 's Church , an Anglican chapel of ease designed in the Greek Revival / Neoclassical style in 1824 by Busby , was the local place of worship .

Bands often played in the square 's central garden or on King 's Road at the southern end of the square . Meanwhile , residents were upset in 1866 when the West Pier , designed by Eugenius Birch , was built opposite the square 's central garden : its entrance booths affected their sea views . Otherwise , there was little for residents to worry about until the 1880s , by which time Hanson 's covenants were about to expire . Unusually , he had set a 71 @-@ year time limit on the covenants rather than granting them in perpetuity , and on 25 December 1889 they would expire . Residents would then lose their rights to use the gardens , among other things . Five residents , led by solicitor Somers Clarke ( unrelated to the Brighton @-@ born architect of that name ) , attempted unsuccessfully to purchase the gardens and extend the covenants by an Act of Parliament ; two years later , though , the passing of the Brighton Improvement Act 1884 achieved the same aims . Brighton Corporation took ownership of the gardens , and householders signed new deeds confirming they wished for the covenants relating to their houses to be extended indefinitely .

= = = 20th century = = =

From the beginning , Regency Square was a prestigious , high @-@ class development , and it is still considered to be " one of Brighton 's best sea @-@ facing squares " . By the mid @-@ 20th century , most of the houses had become hotels , and in early 1969 a surface @-@ level car park was planned for the Brighton Corporation owned central garden ; this was changed to a 520 @-@ space underground car park which was created using the cut and cover method in which the garden was dug up , the car park with roof constructed , and the lawns and flowerbeds restored . Richard

Seifert 's 334 @-@ foot ( 102 m ) , Modernist 24 @-@ storey residential block , Sussex Heights , was built in 1968 on land immediately to the east of the square , and was criticised for affecting the character of the square because of its contrasting style and height . During the early 1970s the hotels sought permission from Brighton Corporation to erect neon signs advertising themselves ; after negotiation with the Regency Society , a Brighton @-@ wide conservation group formed in 1945 , the Corporation made the square and the surrounding area into a conservation area in 1973 . Conservation area status gives the council firmer control over planning permission and changes to buildings or street furniture , especially in respect of their effect on " the character and appearance of the area " . The original conservation area has since been enlarged twice to its present size of 80 acres ( 32 ha ) .

= = Architecture = =

Almost all buildings in and around the square have been designated Listed building : six blocks of houses are each listed at Grade II \* , while the other buildings , including a set of bollards , have each been given the lower Grade II status . The house at the south west corner is now numbered as part of King 's Road but was built as part of Regency Square , and is also Grade II \* -listed .

The six Grade II \* parts of the square , plus the former St Albans House , were listed on 13 October 1952 . The west side was listed in two parts : the three houses at numbers 2 ? 4 , and the sixteen houses from number 5 to number 20 . The northern side 's central section , numbers 26 ? 37 , forms another listing . On the east side , numbers 51 ? 56 , 57 ? 59 and 60 ? 66 are each listed at Grade II \* . Apart from St Albans House , all of these listings include iron railings attached to the exterior . Numbers 38 ? 46 Regency Square were listed at Grade II on 20 August 1971 , while the rest of the square 's houses were listed at the same grade on 26 August 1999 in four separate listings : numbers 22 ? 25 , 46a , 46b and 47 ? 49 . All listings except numbers 46a and 46b include attached railings , and the listing for numbers 38 ? 46 also includes a carriage arch .

A small block of flats , Abbots , stands at the southeast corner of the square . Built by architecture firm Fitzroy Robinson & Partners in 1961 ? 62 to replace a hotel of the same name , it was considered " quite good " by architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner .

= = Grade II \* listings = = =

## 2 ? 4 Regency Square

These three four @-@ storey houses ( now the Beach Hotel ) have double bow fronts , and were considered by Nikolaus Pevsner to be more austere in their detailing than most Brighton houses of their era . Number 2 , a former home of social reformer William King ( whose two @-@ year stay is commemorated by a blue plaque ) , is built of brick which has been painted over ; the others are stuccoed . Each house also has a basement and a dormer window . The ground floors are rusticated and have arched doorways set into Classical @-@ style porches with both Ionic and Doric columns ? the latter in the form of antae . The tripartite bay windows are neither full @-@ height nor continuous : only the first three storeys have them , and they are offset to the right on the first and second floors . The first @-@ floor windows sit between a curved cast @-@ iron balcony and a verandah @-@ style canopy supported on decorative brackets . On each house , the third floor has three small flat @-@ arched sash windows ; the centre window sits below a small cornice supported on corbels .

## 5 ? 20 Regency Square

These sixteen houses form the greater part of the square 's west side . Although there are differences in height and detail between individual houses , they were designed at the same time and maintain " the longstanding tradition of the terraced townhouse " which had been developed " by Henry Holland [ ... ] in his own speculative enterprises at Hans Town and Sloane Street , London " . Numbers 7 , 8 , 11 and 15 are entirely stuccoed ; number 18 retains its original unpainted yellow @-@ brick upper façade ; and all other houses have painted brick to their upper storeys and stuccoed ground floors with rustication . The roofs are mansard @-@ style and laid with slate . Each

house has dormer windows ; numbers 5 ? 13 inclusive rise to four storeys , while the other seven houses are one storey shorter . All houses except number 12 have a single bay window , mostly in tripartite form . Number 12 has three windows to each floor . The entrance porches , reached via staircases , are either Doric or Ionic in form , with columns and entablatures . They have arch @-@ headed doorways set into them . Small cast @-@ iron balconies run across the terrace at first @-@ floor level ( although number 5 's has been lost ) , and some houses have canopy @-@ style verandahs as well . A nearly continuous cornice ( absent on numbers 13 and 19 ) spans the terrace ; some houses also have a second cornice above this . Several houses have fanlights with coloured glass , and other non @-@ standard details include decorative stucco panelling at number 5 ; paterae ( circular motifs ) , triglyph @-@ decorated friezes and other Classical @-@ style ornamentation in some of the porch entablatures ; original window @-@ guards of iron ; a blocked doorway flanked by pilasters at number 20 ; and many original sash windows .

#### 26 ? 37 Regency Square

These 12 houses , arranged along the sea @-@ facing north side in the form of two wings flanking a four @-@ house centrepiece , are the focal point of the square , forming " a kind of palace front " topped with a pediment displaying Regency Square in prominent black lettering . Pevsner described this feature as " not [ being ] enough of an accent to pull the square together " . The terrace is a five @-@ part composition : the end " wings " ( formed by numbers 26 ? 27 and 36 ? 37 ) are of four storeys , stuccoed and with tall parapets pinched upwards to form small pediments ; the central section ( numbers 30 ? 33 ) , also of four storeys and built in yellow brick , and topped with the inscribed pediment ; and numbers 28 ? 29 and 34 ? 35 , rising to three storeys and forming a link between the central and outer sections . Numbers 30 ? 33 have a two @-@ window range , rather than the single window on each of the other houses , and have four pilasters running the full height of the façade and terminating at the parapet in circular antefixae . The entrance porches are of the Ionic order . Each house has a canopied cast @-@ iron balcony at first @-@ floor level . There is rusticated decoration at ground @-@ floor level .

#### 51 ? 56 Regency Square

The east side of Regency Square is architecturally less consistent than the west side . Numbers 51 ? 56 were designed as a symmetrical composition : the two houses at the centre stand forward slightly and have a more prominent pediment . Each house has four storeys and a single bay window on the ground and first floors ; other common features include rustication on the ground floor and Ionic @-@ style porches with recessed flat @-@ arched doorways and arched fanlights . There are cast @-@ iron balconies at first @-@ floor level ; number 52 's has a canopy above it . Some windows are sashes , and numbers 52 , 53 , 54 and 56 have dormer windows in their slate roofs .

#### 57 ? 59 Regency Square

These three houses may also have been designed as a single composition , but this effect has been lost . Numbers 58 and 59 are of five storeys ; number 57 has four storeys and dormer windows . The parapet rises into an intricately decorated pediment above number 58 , with palmette scrollwork and semicircular antefixae . Each house has an Ionic @-@ columned porch with a straight @-@ headed door and semicircular fanlight . Numbers 57 and 59 have canopies and first @-@ floor balconies ; number 58 has only a balcony . The three houses are the only ones on the east side to have full @-@ height bows , and number 57 is unique on that side in retaining its original unpainted yellow @-@ brick façade .

#### 60 ? 66 Regency Square

These seven houses are also a symmetrical composition : the three in the middle are set forward and have a tall parapet topped by a very shallow pediment . Like the rest of the east side , the houses have Ionic porches with flat @-@ arched doors and round @-@ headed fanlights . The ground and first floors have three @-@ part bay windows topped with cornices . Except on number 63 , a narrow canopy sits between the first @-@ floor window and the cornice . Another cornice spans the full width of the terrace above third @-@ floor level . The slightly recessed houses on each end ( numbers 60 ? 61 and 65 ? 66 ) have pairs of dormer windows .

#### 131 King 's Road

The former St Albans House was designed in 1828 by Amon Henry Wilds alone and was fitted out by William Izard . A shopfront was fitted in the early 20th century , and the ground floor has housed a restaurant since 1930 . Contemporary with the shopfront was the round @-@ headed entrance on the King 's Road elevation , with an archway supported on fluted columns , a dentil @-@ patterned cornice and ornamentation including scrollwork and a panel inscribed St Albans . The building has five storeys , three windows facing King 's Road and the sea , and a five @-@ window range to Regency Square . It is stuccoed and slate @-@ roofed . The shopfront is topped by a thin cast @-@ iron balcony . The right @-@ hand ( east ) side of the King 's Road façade has a full @-@ height tripartite segmental bay window with architraves to each window . The Regency Square elevation also has a three @-@ light full @-@ height bay window ; all other windows are blocked .

= = = Grade II listings = = =

## 22 ? 25 Regency Square

Numbers 22 ? 25 Regency Square ? at the northwest corner of the square on a short road leading to Preston Street ? include the building ( number 67 ) on the corner of that street , which absorbed the house built as number 21 Regency Square . Attributed to Amon and Amon Henry Wilds , these bow @-@ fronted terraced houses were built in about 1818 . Number 67 Preston Street is of three storeys and has a shopfront facing west into that street ; alongside that is a porch with rusticated decoration and an arched doorway . The Regency Square ( south ) façade has blocked windows at first- and second @-@ floor level . The four houses facing Regency Square are of three storeys , except number 25 which also has an attic storey . They are of brick faced with painted stucco . Each house has a chimney on its slate roof . Each has an entrance staircase with iron railings , a rusticated ground floor , a single bay window to each storey , an iron balcony at first @-@ floor level , a cornice and a parapet in front of the roof . At numbers 22 to 24 , dormer windows cut through the parapet .

## 38 ? 46 Regency Square

Numbers 38 ? 46 Regency Square run alongside the northeast side , and are contemporary with the houses at the northwest corner . The Wildses are believed to have designed them . A carriage arch runs between numbers 42 and 43 . Together with numbers 22 ? 25 and the Grade II \* -listed centrepiece of numbers 26 ? 37 , the houses form an approximately symmetrical three @-@ part arrangement when viewed from the south . Each house is of stucco @-@ clad brick , and all but number 40 have slate @-@ covered roofs . All houses rise to three storeys and have dormer windows ; number 43 has two bay windows on each floor ( except the ground floor , where the space is taken up by the carriage arch ) , but the other houses have only one . Each house also has a balcony , a cornice and a parapet ( topped with a balustrade in some cases ) .

## 46a Regency Square

Number 46a Regency Square stands partly in the square and partly in the passageway opposite the Regency Tavern . It is a two @-@ storey stucco @-@ faced cottage with three windows on the first floor and a fourth in a recessed wing on the east side . The flat roof sits behind a parapet . The ground floor has a broad single window flanked by decorative panels . A cornice runs between the two storeys , and projects forward over the right @-@ aligned entrance .

## 46b Regency Square

Number 46b Regency Square is squeezed into a narrow corner between numbers 47 ? 49 and the Regency Tavern . It has three storeys , a single @-@ window range and much ornamentation . The ground floor , with its wide arched window and prominent cornice , may be a 20th @-@ century alteration . Above it , pilasters with banded rustication rise to the level of the parapet . They are broken at second @-@ floor level by a small balcony with balustrades . The window above this has a round arch , a moulded archivolt , a keystone with acanthus decoration and thin pilasters topped with capitals in the form of leaves .

## 47 ? 49 Regency Square

Numbers 47 ? 49 Regency Square are believed to be the last buildings completed ; Charles Busby was probably involved in their design , as they are noticeably different from the rest of the square .

All three have a single canted bay window to each of three storeys , topped with an architrave supported on pilasters with capitals . Each house also has a cornice and parapet . Number 47 's doorway is straight @-@ headed , but the other two houses have round @-@ arched entrances .

#### War memorial

A memorial commemorating 152 members of the Royal Sussex Regiment who died in the Second Boer War stands at the south end of Regency Square 's garden , facing King 's Road and the sea . It was erected in 1904 , and takes the form of a square pedestal topped by an entablature and pediment . Originally of Portland stone with some bronze and stucco , the bronze parts have now been obscured . A bronze trumpeter stands on top of the entablature . Local architect Sir John Simpson designed the memorial and Charles Hartwell sculpted it . The memorial 's unveiling ceremony , conducted by William Nevill , 1st Marquess of Abergavenny , was on 29 October 1904 .

#### Regency Tavern

The Regency Tavern 's main façade faces north into the passageway leading to Russell Square , and has a six @-@ window range . The side wall , facing into Regency Square , has two windows to each of the three storeys . The frontage is mostly original but has been augmented by modern iron columns . All but one of the windows are original sashes ; those on the first floor of the Regency Square elevation have architraves which join the sill of the second @-@ floor window directly above . There are stuccoed panels between these windows as well , and some of the north @-@ facing windows also have panelling in their spandrels . A tall parapet rises above the cornice .

#### Bollards

Two cast @-@ iron bollards in the passageway outside the Regency Tavern are also listed at Grade II . They were erected in the mid @-@ 19th century , and are fluted along their length . One has the name of its local founder at the bottom . On 31 December 2012 , one was broken and was replaced with a smaller plain bollard instead of a facsimile , causing controversy locally .

= = Social aspects = =

Regency Square was a prestigious , high @-@ class development , attracting the social elite . The square gradually lost its prestige status after World War I as hotels started to move in , and by the mid @-@ 20th century , most of the houses had become hotels . During World War II air @-@ raid shelters were built on the square , and an underground car park was built beneath it in 1969 .

Number 1 Regency Square , later known as St Albans House and now numbered 131 King 's Road , is " historically the most interesting house in the square " . Amon Henry Wilds designed it for the Duke and Duchess of St Albans , and William Izard laid out the interior in 1829 . The house was one of the most important social venues in Brighton between 1830 and the Duchess 's death in 1837 . She was born Harriet Mellon in 1777 , became an actress , married banker Thomas Coutts in 1815 , and inherited his fortune when he died in 1822 ? thereby becoming England 's richest woman . After being courted by many men , she met and married William Beauclerk , the 9th Duke of St Albans , and they became regular visitors to Brighton . In 1830 , they moved permanently to 1 Regency Square and renamed it St Albans House . For the next seven years , it was the venue for lavish balls with hundreds of upper @-@ class guests , extensive feasts and falconry displays by the Duke , who was the Grand Falconer of England . St Albans House had an adjacent riding school which supposedly had the second largest unsupported interior space and the second largest dome in England , behind Westminster Abbey and St Paul 's Cathedral respectively . ( Part of the Bedford Hotel now occupies the site . ) Two other famous characters paid an unintentional visit to Regency Square at the end of the 19th century : Oscar Wilde and his lover Lord Alfred Douglas crashed their horse and carriage into the railings of the gardens . Local newspapers reported the story with interest , but Wilde dismissed it as " an accident of no importance " ? possibly a punning allusion to one of his best @-@ known plays .

Since the 1930s , many of Regency Square 's dwellings have been converted into hotels and guest houses , either individually or across more than one house . The Beach Hotel occupies numbers 2 ? 4 , the three dwellings north of St Albans House . Hotel Pelirocco occupies numbers 9 and 10 ; the Royal Pavilion Townhouse Hotel is at number 12 ; and the West Pier Hotel ( at numbers 14 ? 15 )

and Topps Hotel ( numbers 16 ? 18 ) also occupy the west side of the square . There are four hotels on the north side : the Regency at number 28 , the Prince Regent at number 29 , Artist Residence at number 33 and the George IV Guest House at number 34 . The east side has Adelaide House ( number 51 ) , Brighton House ( number 52 ) , Hotel Una ( numbers 55 ? 56 ) , and the Queensbury Hotel ( number 58 ) . Since c . 2000 the former Keehan 's Hotel at number 57 has been the West Pier Project homeless hostel , operated by Brighton and Hove City Council and accommodating about 40 people ; it will close in late 2015 and will become a hostel for former servicemen .