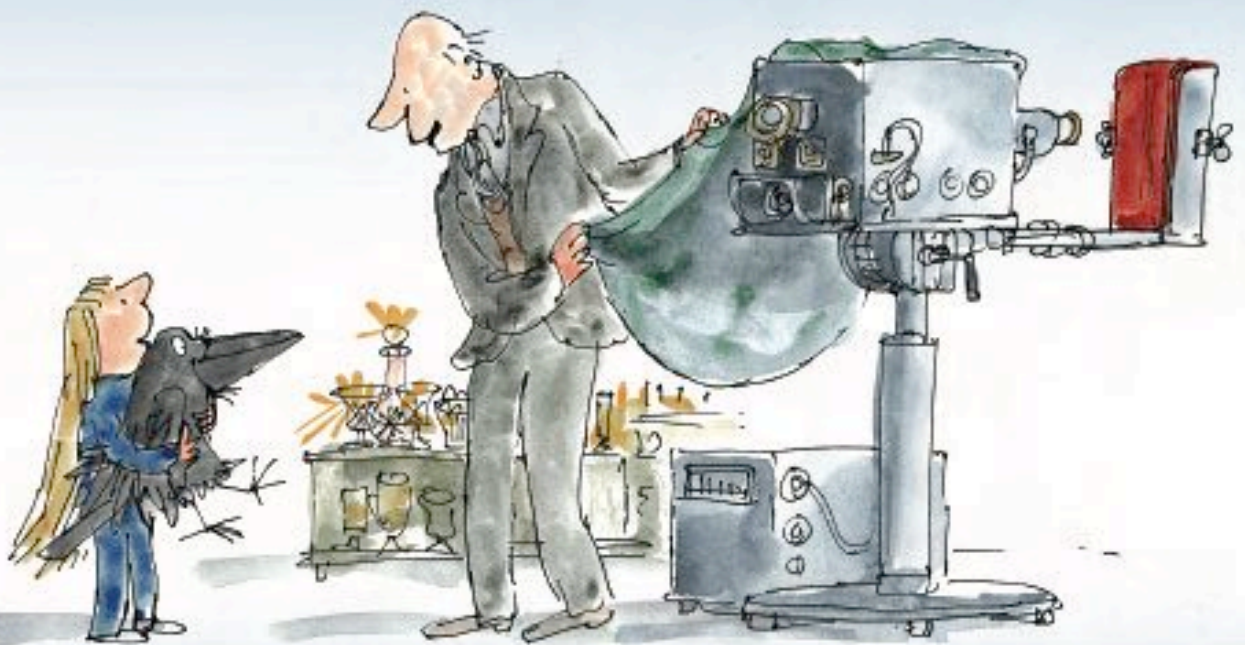


# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

2015–2016



Anthony Browne

## KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea was created in 1965 with the merger of the two boroughs. Kensington, the area we watch over on your behalf, is north of Fulham Road and Walton Street, the frontier with Chelsea being marked with a red line on the map.



Cover illustrations by  
Sir Quentin Blake,  
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– for more about him  
see page 14

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# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE  
[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)  
2015–2016

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The objects of the society are to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington for the public benefit by stimulating interest in its history and records, promoting good architecture and planning in its development, and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic interest.

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## PATRON

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO

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Nick Ross

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Michael Becket, *annual report editor*  
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Henry Peterson, OBE  
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Michael Bach: *chairman of the planning committee*

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## CONTENTS

President's note	4
Chairman's report	6
Annual general meeting 2015	10
<b>Sir Peter Hendy</b>	12
<b>Sir Quentin Blake</b> By Michael Becket	14
<b>Retailers</b> By Michael Becket	20
<b>Blue plaques</b> By Michael Becket	24
<b>Maps</b>	28
<b>New MP</b> By Victoria Borwick	33
<b>Kensington Palace</b> By Natasha Woollard	35
<b>Frestonia</b> By Michael Becket	38
<b>From cars to stars: Ladbroke Hall</b> By Richard Northedge	42
Planning reports	46
Where are workers supposed to live? By Michael Becket	55
<b>Leisure Centre</b> By Bobbie Vincent-Emery	58
Reports from affiliated societies	62
Statement of financial activities	76
Membership form	96



# President's note

## The Towers of London

AS AMANDA FRAME reports it's been a good year for the Kensington Society. Yet in 2016 we face some towering challenges.

London needs lots of new affordable family housing and what it receives is lots of new unaffordable flats for singles, many of them in high rise blocks. My guess is that some investors will burn their fingers. Well, that's market economics and the Kensington Society, like the planners, is mostly in reactive mode trying to make the best of what private enterprise throws up. If only there were stronger strategic plans of the sort the society has urged repeatedly. But market economics being what it is, the price of land has skyrocketed – and so have developers' ambitions. As we all know, Notting Hill Gate is the battleground for a skyscraping idea, now well-advanced, for twin towers at the junction of Notting Hill Gate and Kensington Church Street. It would be a fortress half as high again as the Newcombe House block it is intended to replace.

Several objectors have complained that the big towers might have come from outer space for all the reference they pay to the history and community of Notting Hill Gate. Yet the proposal has many virtues, not least an exemplary consultation process. It would replace a dismal example of 1960s mediocrity with much higher quality both in architecture and materials and it would greatly improve the public realm. Unusually, like the local residents' associations, the society has



supported the application.

Yet towering though this proposal is, it is dwarfed by plans beyond the borough boundary.

The Kensington Society has enough work to do with developments big and small on our own patch without campaigning about what goes on elsewhere. But one proposal in Westminster is so very, very big that we have to be involved.

Its impact will be felt not just across surrounding communities but across the capital.

After all, who wants a 65-storey, 224 metre, 735 foot tall skyscraper soaring above Paddington and visible from North Kensington down to the River? The answer is the veteran developer Irvine Sellar. If your first reactions were like mine you will have found the scheme not just disproportionate but one of appalling ostentation. Tall buildings are fine and can be exhilarating when clumped together as in Manhattan or Hong Kong. But Paddington Tower is not to be part of a gregarious collection; it is a lofty building out on its unsociable own. What so offended me, when I first saw the proposal, was how brazen it seemed when plonked into a low-rise townscape. The computer graphics make it seem delicate and gleaming but they can't quite conquer the impression that this will give London the finger.

Even so, I've done my level best not to be reflexive and to give the scheme the benefit of the doubt.

We know that monstrously out-of-scale buildings are often awesome and sometimes gloriously splendid. Think of the pyramids, and not just the Egyptian ones out in the desert but those like in Peru which acted as administrative and social centres. Europeans too lived with incongruous titans, including the one that took its name from looming over our own medieval city, the Tower of London. Such castles and palaces were intended to project power, and so, of course, were cathedrals. St Paul's was the tallest structure in the world for five centuries before the steeple was hit by lightning, and a hundred years later, after the rest of the Norman building was consumed in the Great Fire, Christopher Wren replaced it with something even larger. So maybe big buildings don't always stick out like a sore thumb. Maybe it's sometimes a matter of getting used to them. Oversized structures despised or ridiculed at their conception often come to define a city, like Eiffel's tower in Paris or Gaudi's masterpiece the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. Who's for knocking down the London Eye, the BT Tower or, come to that, Nelson's Column?

And in London maybe we are too timid, too unimaginative, too set in our ways. Elsewhere skyscrapers are all the rage. This year alone China will add six leviathans around *three times* the height of the Paddington proposal. More whoppers are soon to open in Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Bangkok, Seoul, Tangier and Mumbai. Another, more than twice the height of Paddington, is rising amid the history of St Petersburg and even dainty Copenhagen has just approved a mammoth pair of towers which will soon characterise the city.

Perhaps it's also a matter of who designs and builds them. There's no denying one thing about the Paddington Tower – the one factor above all that makes me waver: it's designed by Renzo Piano. Architecture like art is a matter of taste, of course, but in my book Piano is sublime. He is one of the very few people I might consider worthy of building a solitary skyscraper, which indeed

he has already done to stunning effect at London Bridge. The Shard has its detractors, not least Historic England with whom I rarely disagree, but to me it is magnificent, effortlessly transcending my doubts about disproportionate high-rise. Up close it is beautifully detailed – one of the hallmarks of Piano is his quest for perfection.

What's more the Shard, like the Paddington proposal, is an Irvine Sellar development. He ruffled feathers when he said, "the only reasons to go to Paddington today are to catch a train or to meet someone in hospital," but there's some truth in his description of the site as, "a 50s time warp". The Tower promises to streamline transport links, rebuild the tube station – not before time – and create a public square.

Yet even after reflection, and despite my admiration for the Shard, I can't shake off my doubts. Yes, it's Renzo Piano. The gossamer ribbon of glass they promise might not be so diaphanous after all. Computer generated images can be beguilingly misleading. Apparently the PR graphics made Vauxhall Tower look good but it is one of the most hideous and lonely stumps to sprout out of a city anywhere. And even great architects make mistakes, as with Rafael Viñoly and his ghastly Walkie-Talkie which disfigures views across the City. Unless Sellars, Piano and Westminster planners make this project perfectly right it will be an eyesore not just for Paddington but for us all. It might deliver on social amenity, it might even be a magnet for other investment but, above all, since literally it will be above all, it needs to inspire an exquisite sense of splendour from right across London – and I'm going to need a great deal of persuading that it can.

So, sorry Irvine and Renzo. This does affect Kensington and I suspect the society and all its members will take a great deal of convincing too.

[Just before printing this annual, word came through that communal objectors managed to get the proposal for the Paddington Pole withdrawn.](#)

# Chairman's Report

**Amanda Frame**

I always face writing the annual report with some trepidation. There is the obvious need to report the activities of the Kensington Society throughout the year. The planning committee activities are reported by the hardworking trustees and coordinated by the diligent guiding hand of Michael Bach. Traci Weaver's masterful coordination of the events has been enjoyed by many members. Thomas Blomberg has taken on the website and the newsletter and we have all enjoyed the improvements. Martin Frame continues to update and to improve the membership records as well as holding the reins on our finances which have never been better.

The all-important other actions we have been involved in throughout the year must be reported and that is the difficulty. I must be positive about the past and about the future.





## Learning from the past

This year many of the past annual reports were copied and placed on the website. They are individually word-searchable. This has allowed all of us to refer to the past actions of the society and to confirm a suspicion that the past repeats itself.

For years there had been considerable pressure from the residents to revise the weak basement policy in the 2010 Core Strategy. After three years of consultations, expert reports and draft proposals for a new planning policy and finally the examination in public, the planning inspectorate approved the policy at the end of 2014 and CL7 came into force in January 2015. Though a great improvement in some aspects, the policy did not have the teeth needed to control many of the construction problems such as increased traffic on our narrow streets, loss of residents' parking and noise disturbances.

## Too many unresolved issues

At the same time the basement policy was adopted, the planning department recommended the approval of both the Candy & Candy development at the Dukes Lodge site in Holland Park and yet another but larger application for the redevelopment of the Odeon and former post office site on Kensington High Street. However, instead of rubber stamping an approval, the planning committee did the opposite and refused both applications. Something had happened. A few weeks earlier the planning committee refused an application recommended for approval of the Curzon cinema on King's Road. There were too many unresolved issues for an approval to be nodded through. Suddenly the planning department was no longer running the show without question and without consideration of the local opposition – and, at last, the councillors were no longer rolling over to every recommendation.

Following the realisation of the potential damage those three developments posed for the borough and the growing disruption from basement construction even on the very streets where councillors lived, decisive action was taken. The retirement of the head of borough planning and development was announced.

## Time to ask the audience

Fortunately plans for the redevelopment of Newcombe House have proceeded, the Natural History Museum altered the direction of the Supplemental Planning Document and rethought the Cromwell Road frontage, Transport for London established a working group to address the future of the South Kensington Station and other project such as Allen House off Kensington High Street all involved the local societies and residents. Our voices and our concerns were

being heard. We were not NIMBY. We were constructive, flexible and realistic. Suddenly the future of our built environment was looking better.

Unfortunately the developers of the Odeon site came back with both a revised application which addressed most, but not all of our objections, and with an appeal against the earlier refusal. A six-day public inquiry was arranged for January. The Kensington Society along with Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Association (ESSA) have been accepted as a Rule 6 Party, which allows us to examine witnesses and make an opening and closing statement. We shall be supporting the council in the appeal.

Candy & Candy also appealed against the refusal for the Dukes Lodge site and the Kensington Society supported the local residents during the nine day inquiry which ended in November. There should be a decision, we hope a dismissal, in February.

### **New director of planning and borough development**

Graham Stallwood was selected as the new head of planning and borough development. We know Graham and respect his professionalism and he knew our problems with working with the department. Since he has taken over the role we have seen an improvement in our relationship with the planning officers. We can actually talk to them and discuss planning issues. There is much to do though. We still want local participation during the pre-application stage of major developments. We see no reason why we must resort to using the Freedom of Information Act to see the pre-application advice letters, the Architects Appraisal Panels comments or the financial viability assessment once an application has been made. Graham has indicated that these issues will be dealt with in 2016.

### **Looking ahead**

Speaking of 2016, it will be as busy as the past. The government is hell bent on removing many of the planning protections which have safeguarded Kensington and London as a whole. The planning department is under financial restrictions which mean that, though we would like more planning involvement, time is restricted. Permitted development rights are increasing, which remove the council's powers to control changes of use. We have been fortunate to not lose our ability to protect our offices, but even that may be short-lived. Only an Article 4 Direction, which remove the very 'freedoms' that the government has imposed, will protect some of them in the future. The council has proposed an Article 4 Direction which will remove the permitted development rights of basements under houses, which will in future require planning permission. These powers have also been used by the council to provide pubs with protection against proposals to change their use.

In addition, it appears likely that the government will ignore Londoners' opposition to the expansion of Heathrow and allow the increase usage and a third runway. This is on top of increasing road traffic to the point that the M4 and even Holland Park Avenue has turned into a parking lot most afternoons. Air pollution in London recently has been the highest in the EU with Kensington and Chelsea having six events in 2015 over the particles content matter of 10. Particle matter may be the air pollutant that most commonly affects people's health. And it seems no one in the government has considered the effect of more road traffic through the borough going to Heathrow.

The Mayor of London requires the borough to deliver a net increase of 733 additional homes annually for the next 10 years. De-conversions, such as converting a building divided into four flats into a single house, results in the loss of housing units. Any loss of a residential unit may now be challenged by the planning department. Some councillors are opposed to the restrictions on individual amalgamations when combining units. The council recognises that these losses are considerable and the policy will be under review in 2016 as part of the partial review of the Local Plan. This review has already begun and will continue through 2016 with the examination of the final set of policies to be adopted in 2017. There is much up for consideration and much to lose if we do not take this opportunity to help shape the future.

2015 has actually been a successful year. We have seen some planning management improvements and our working relationship with many developers is growing into a level of respect. 2016 will be challenging, mostly from the government. We do believe we have reached a stage where we can all work together with the backing of our members, councillors, and with the planning department to achieve our goal of preserving and improving Kensington for all.

The Kensington Society needs to double its strength to cope with the expanding workload. We need those with a passion for Kensington and architecture, planning, membership, accounting and admiration.

Please come forward with recommendations.

### **Need for more people to take part**

The district societies and amenity groups need more people – especially younger ones – to become involved with running the organisations. They need help in reviewing and commenting on planning applications, which is a constant and important activity. Anyone interested, or anyone who can suggest people who might be interested, please be in touch with the local group or the Kensington Society.

# The 62nd annual general meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 28 April 2015

**A**MANDA FRAME, chairman of the trustees, welcomed distinguished guests and members, Lord Carnwath; Maighread Condon-Simmonds, the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; Nick Paget-Brown, leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; Emma Dent Coad, leader of the Opposition; Sir Angus Stirling, Kensington Society council member and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Councillors. Apologies from General The Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington, Kensington Society vice-president and Lady Ramsbotham and Charles Lutyens, trustee.

The minutes of the 2014 AGM and the financial statement for the year to 31 December 2014, both set out in the annual report, were confirmed and approved nem con.

Nick Ross, president of the Kensington Society, conducted the election of officers. Michael Bach, Michael Becket, Hillary Bell, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Sophia Lambert, Henry Peterson, Holly Smith, Anthony Walker and Traci Weaver put their names forward to serve as trustees in 2015/16 and were proposed and approved nem con. Charles Lutyens offered his resignation. New trustee Thomas Blomberg was proposed and approved nem con. Nick Ross noted that article 18, subsection 8 of the society's constitution addresses the process for the appointment of the secretary and the treasurer. The trustees proposed the election of Martin Frame as treasurer and Traci Weaver as secretary. The proposal was seconded from the floor and approved nem con.

Nick Ross noted that the Kensington

Society is better every year and tries hard to be a participant rather than an objector. He stressed that we must be part of the planning process earlier and urged the society to be not just negative

Hilary Bell, Kensington Society trustee, introduced the guest speaker Lord Carnwath, JSC.

Lord Carnwath spoke of his long experience in planning law, with many anecdotes. He gave an insight into how decisions were made, often after much deliberation, such as the future of County Hall which was eventually sold after the abolition of the GLC.

Amanda Frame began by drawing attention to challenges from the government. These include permitted development which allows shops and professional and financial service premises to change to residential units without planning permission. Depending on



Lord Carnwath

the new government, we face further changes including the possible removal of RBKC's exemption from planning rules that allow offices to change into residential property without permission from local councils. Short-lets continue to be a problem, and the current proposal of a 90-day restriction is uncontrollable and unaffordable. The threat of a third runway at Heathrow Airport remains. Charles House development confirms our concerns that affordable housing is not protected - the government pushes for new housing, but we end up with luxury homes that are left unoccupied.

On the positive side, the change to the basement planning policy was a battle hard fought and finally won. The Construction Traffic Management Plan required in the new policy, still requires improvement as does control over noise, dust and vibrations. The Candy brothers' application for the demolition of a 1930s mansion block, Dukes Lodge, was refused by the Planning Application Committee. The Odeon application, which included the old Post Office, was also refused the same night. The application for a mega-casino in the front garden of the Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road was refused by delegated powers, but not before the society and the local committee forced the council to recognise the site's previous planning restrictions. The most worrying aspect, however, is that each one of these initiatives had paid pre-application advice. The advice from the council's planning department was favourable - though all were refused on strong grounds. This is a failure on the part of the council - not for not getting approval, but for recommending approval in the first place. You can never consult too early. Antagonism can be avoided with communication.

The society has had a number of success during the year, including our new website, a very good and often over-subscribed events

programme and our email alerts system. She thanked all trustees and affiliated societies for their hard work - most of which was focused on local communities and members.

Michael Bach, in his Planning Committee report found on page 46, noted the politics of planning - why do we do it and how do we do it? He emphasised that critique and objection is a necessity, but the society aims to be part of the process by being involved earlier and working with the council. This approach has meant that we are now able to have a significant impact on shaping our environment rather than be viewed as serial objectors.

Questions from the floor included development under gardens and whether the change in the name of planning to include development represented a change in emphasis. Nick Paget-Brown, leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, fielded both these questions and assured members that the council's underlying intent is to protect the unique character of Kensington.

Members joined the committee for a drink in the mayor's parlour.

All photographs: **photoBECKET**



Left to right: Holly Smith Kensington Society trustee, Amanda Frame, chairman of the society, Nick Paget-Brown, leader of the council, Martin Frame treasurer of the society.



# Feature

## Sir Peter Hendy

**SIR PETER GERARD HENDY**, chairman of Network Rail, is the speaker at the annual general meeting of the society. He is widely remembered as the Commissioner of Transport for London (TfL). He started his career in public transport in 1975 as a London Transport graduate trainee and was swiftly promoted eventually reaching managing director of CentreWest London Buses Ltd, managing it under London Transport ownership. He led the company through a management buyout with staff involvement, and subsequent expansion. After the takeover of CentreWest by FirstGroup, Sir Peter became deputy director UK Bus for FirstGroup, responsible for bus operations in London and southern England, bus development, light rail and operations in Hong Kong.

In 2001, when Ken Livingstone was mayor, he was appointed managing director of Surface Transport for TfL, and in 2006, he became Commissioner of Transport for London. In that job he delivered London's Olympic transport plan. And he clearly has a nostalgic longing for his original job as Sir Peter owns an original and roadworthy London Routemaster bus.

In June last year Sir Peter was appointed

chairman of Network Rail with the brief of starting the new job with a review of the company's programme of investment. The Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, said "Sir Peter Hendy is someone of huge experience, who helped keep London moving during the Olympics, he will be a huge asset to Network Rail in overseeing their delivery in coming years." Mayor of London, Boris Johnson added "Peter Hendy has given 10 years of superb





service to London. He has helped oversee the biggest programme of investment in transport since Victorian times – from Crossrail and the Tube upgrades to the cycle superhighways. He delivered a near perfect transport plan during the Olympic and Paralympic Games and earned TfL the admiration of passengers from around the world. It is quite right that those skills should be deployed on the national stage. I look forward to continuing to work closely with Peter on projects like Crossrail 2 and rail devolution that are of colossal importance for London and the UK economy.”

The review Mr McLoughlin asked for was triggered by Network Rail’s “enhancement projects” having over-run in both cost and time. Sir Peter inherited plans that included more frequent and longer trains running faster, plus completion of Thameslink and Crossrail, and electrification particularly in the north of England. His

report, last November said the vast majority of projects were on time and on budget, but several projects including electrification were poorly specified at the outset. That was caused by inadequate planning in their early phases, and poor cost estimating partly because with no significant electrification for 20 years, Network Rail had limited information to support cost estimates. In addition the flexibility of regulation changed when Network Rail became a public body and so reducing access to government-backed debt which resulted in “disciplined capital rationing”.

His report added that Network Rail has revised cost estimates and finish times, set new sets of priorities and checked the accuracy of its forecasts and borrowing requirements. To make up the financing gap the company will sell around £1.8 billion of property assets even though that will cut income, and the Department for Transport has increased borrowing limit by £700 million. Even this is not enough for all the schemes, so some will be deferred to the 2019–2024 period. The plan is now up for consultation.

Sir Peter is the younger son of Jack Hendy and the Honourable Mary Best, youngest daughter of Philip George Best, 6th Baron Wynford. He is married to Sue Pendle, a human resources consultant who will also be at the Kensington Society AGM, and they have two children. He was knighted in the 2013 new year’s honours list, having been appointed CBE in 2006.

Sir Peter Hendy is the speaker at the 2016 annual general meeting on Thursday, April 14th.

# Feature

## Sir Quentin Blake

**I**F YOU WANT SUCCESS it seems you have to start early. You also have to be persistent, and work hard, long and prolifically. And oh yes, you have to have talent. But like so many people of ability and modesty Sir Quentin Blake claims luck had a hand in it. “It’s strange how sometimes one has the instinct to do the right thing; something that will go on having an effect throughout your life.”





He started submitting drawings to Punch when he was 16 and still at school in Sidcup – and they were accepted. He had been encouraged by the cartoonist husband of his Latin teacher, and “I can remember getting a letter from the art editor congratulating me on being the youngest contributor and I thought, this is alright”. But despite that success he doubted if he could earn a living by drawing.

So he read English at Cambridge and even went on a teacher training course at London University and was on the way to becoming an English teacher. But instead, as he puts it, “I preyed on my parents” and drew not only for Punch but also the Spectator. In his late twenties Quentin persuaded a friend to write a collection of folktales for children, *A Drink of Water* by John Yeoman.

That did it. His career was set. With a portfolio of drawings under his arm he targeted the Cape publishing company because he thought it produced good books, and instantly had a commission. He was receiving a fair amount of work but was frustrated that all of it seemed to be for black and white drawings and nothing colour, so he wrote his own book in 1969. It was *Patrick*, about a boy with a magic violin that produced all sorts of wonderful effects that had to be illustrated in colour. It is still, or again, in print.





His style was there almost from the very start of his drawing career. And it is as instantly recognisable as that of one of his heroes, Edward Ardizzone. Blake met him a couple of times and remembers being instructed in Ardizzone's lofty manner "Never make it too easy for the printer". In art he reveres Rembrandt, Goya and in drawing Rowlandson and Cruikshank, and his illustrator heroes include Daumier, Ronald Searle and Searle's friend, the Hungarian-born French cartoonist Andre Francois. Such was his admiration in fact that when a young man, Quentin Blake discovered Francois' address just outside Paris and went on a pilgrimage to meet him.

By the mid-1970s he was a prolific illustrator, and then in 1975 the publisher Tom Maschler introduced him to Roald Dahl who had written the text for a picture book. Dahl was a notoriously difficult man and fussy to the point of perfectionism, but the two got along so well it turned into a collaborative effort. "I didn't realise it was going to be a long term commitment." But very soon Quentin Blake would go to the Dahl home to chat about projects and what sort of pictures would be right, how the characters should look and be dressed, and so on, sometimes with the effect of changing the text. The resulting drawings captured the recognisable essence of *Matilda* and *The BFG*.

As a result he has illustrated pretty well all the Dahl books. One consequence is a set of 12 full-page illustrations for the *BFG* which have never been published. Dahl wanted more, so Blake gave him a set of chapter headings. That was all right but then he wanted pictures throughout the story as well. So Quentin Blake had to start from scratch. The full-page ones were out of character and were filed away. This year is the hundredth anniversary of Dahl's birth so that may be the chance finally to see the pictures into print.



Evidently taking no chances, Quentin Blake continued to teach illustration at the Royal College of Art, which he had started in 1965 and went on doing until 1988. In the 1970s he also appeared in a large number of episodes of the BBC children's story-telling programme *Jackanory*, for which he would illustrate the stories on a canvas as he was telling them. In 1993 he designed the five British Christmas issue postage stamps featuring episodes from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens and he still designs Christmas cards for a charity. He also relishes the less well-known series of classic he illustrated for the Folio Society over forty years, including *Voltaire's Candide*, the fables of *La Fontaine*, and *The Golden Ass of Lucius Apuleius*.

More recently, he has illustrated books by the comic actor and writer David Walliams. Of *The Boy in the Dress* admits "I got so involved in it that I did twice as many drawings as I was supposed to".

Put that together with the rest of his near-70 years of diligent work and there is a substantial archive. So much so it has its own separate flat in Earl's Court together with his secretary. Blake has willed that archive to the House of Illustration, a sort of gallery and museum he helped to start near Kings Cross. It is, at the moment, just down the street from the flat he lives in and which also contains his drawing studio. A third flat in the same street is for his painting. As he says he could not possibly afford such lavish premises at current inflated prices, even with steady royalties on the books he has illustrated – probably more than 300 by now – (especially Roald Dahl which is translated and selling well all over the world). Fortunately when he bought Earl's Court was seedier and the prices more reasonable.





A lot of Blake's recent work has been large displays for public places. Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in the Fulham Road has a Mental Health Centre for which some large murals were created – enlarged versions of drawings on the walls. Something he has done also for a number of other places, including Addenbrooke Hospital in Cambridge, the Unicorn theatre in Bermondsey, Hillingdon Hospital, a maternity hospital in Angers, France, and the children's library section of the French Institute in South Kensington, which has been renamed in his honour the Bibliothèque Quentin Blake. He has also illustrated numerous books for French publishers, has been awarded the Legion d'Honneur and had a house in western France but has had to sell that recently because it was becoming too much of a burden to travel there and keep it up.

Among the large public works Blake has also done a rather fine big drawing for the wall of an old people's home where one of the residents spotted with great glee that "you are encouraging all sort of things we are not allowed to do". Well, says Blake, at his age – he is 83 – he reckons he can sympathise and be a bit naughty that way. In 2007 he designed a huge mural on fabric, to cover a ramshackle building opposite St Pancras railway station. It shows a welcoming committee for passengers arriving on Eurostar.

These public projects pay little, and cannot really afford more, but Blake says he does take a fee, because the organisers should realise that even artists need to eat and may in future employ some who actually do need the fees rather more than he does. Besides, people never value anything they get for nothing.

But it was not for these public works he got his OBE in 1988, CBE in 2004 and a knighthood 2013, but these enterprising works of his seventies no doubt contributed to his knighthood in 2013 together with the general and joyful label of services to illustration.



He illustrated with words a book of his drawings, *Words and Pictures*. It is only partly autobiography with 50 years of his works, and mainly a guide to drawings and how to do them and general instruction on the subject of illustration. Apart from the entertainment, it shows how much thought and hard work go into what look like casual sketches. In 2012 he followed that up with *Beyond the Page*, about the work in public places he has produced since then. Both are published by the Tate, and cost £16.99 and £17.99.



# Feature

By  
Michael Becket

## Retailers

The Notting Hill Bookshop in Blenheim Crescent remains a target of pilgrimage by innumerable foreign fans of the Notting Hill film. That is despite being perhaps the inspiration for the shop in the film but never actually used for the actual action. For the filming, a totally different shop was constructed in Portobello Road next door to what was then a butcher, and the premises have since become a tourist souvenir outlet. The real bookshop is no longer even the travel retailer as depicted, but has long since changed hands and approach. It is now owned by Jane and Howard Malin who also own the Book Warehouse on Notting Hill Gate (that is currently under sentence of death as the building is about to be redeveloped). The take-over was fervently opposed by fans of the old travel bookshop, partly because of the downmarket associations of a remainders shop. But the tourists keep snapping and still looking for the emblematic blue front door – also not here but a door further down the street was sold some years ago for £20,000. Disregarding the tentative connections, Thirza Philpott has become one of London's most photographed women, but unlike the previous management, she is very patient about it. Some of the tourists even buy books, she says – the guides and easy-to-read books for children.



Manish Vara's father ran a DIY shop in Kent, and although he chose to read sociology and economics at university, retailing must have been in his blood because when he saw a hardware shop in the Fulham Road on the verge of going under, he decided to buy it. It was on borrowed money but as he points out the company was in such trouble he got it very cheap. It took two years to become profitable – which was evidently a tough period but he got through it. Since then he has rescued three other struggling hardware shops, and Skillman & Sons on Kensington High Street is one of his. It is a tiny shop but seems to have every possible thing you might want.

It is nothing clever, he suggests. The traditional hardware shops seemed like a dying breed because they were like the Two Ronnies sketch of Four Candles; dark, dingy and not very clean. They had not kept up with the changing times and were selling cheap tat, while “Internet shopping produced crap”. Yet now, he explains “people want quality”.

He is also proud of sourcing everything he can from Britain, especially tools. For example, most of the wide range of brushes

came from Germany – they were good, but he has finally found a pair of brothers in Chesham who are the fifth generation of brushmakers and still using the original machinery. He told them what he needed and they make them. Similarly, a cabinet-maker in south-east London was dissatisfied with available screwdrivers so made his own with handles a wood spheroid and changeable heads. Skillman now sells the stylish result.

If he cannot find a British supplier he will reluctantly accept a European one, and only if even that fails will he buy from America and Japan. But he is fiercely against stocking products from China.

And Mr Vara sticks to the one sure management method which ensures commercial success: he serves behind the counter for at least half a day at all his shops. It was also one of the secrets of Marks & Spencer's long success while members of the founding family still ran the business.





Riders & Squires was bought about twenty years ago by Stephen Alexander, which may sound a thoroughly British name but he is in fact half Argentinian and that is where he lives. The Thackeray Street shop, just behind Kensington High Street, is principally the UK outlet for the Argentinian Casablanca horsey gear, and is probably the only London shop selling riding equipment, with the possible exception of a small department at Harrods, says Raquel Vidal. She is actually from Venezuela, but then the young ladies staffing the shop are pretty international. Another is from Canada.

The range is pretty impressive for such small premises – ranges of helmets, polo mallets, boots, jackets, jodhpurs, saddles, bridles, whips, spurs, and so on. The prices are fairly impressive too, but then owning horses is not cheap and polo playing demands a fairly hefty income. Fortunately for the shop Kensington is blessed with a quite few wealthy people, and a pretty international group they are. Arabs, Germans, people from several Nigeria and Ghana and other African countries and so on. They are likely to keep on spending because “polo is addictive” reckons Miss Vidal.

It is not unusual to find a customer spending a couple of thousand pounds in half an hour, she explains. A saddle can cost between £700 and £1,400 and a pair of decent boots can set you back from £400 to £600. Then there is the custom-made helmet. Customers can produce the design on-line – polo players place a heavy emphasis on style, though not necessarily good taste – have their measurements taken in the shop and the details are sent to the makers in Argentina. When finished it comes back to Kensington and may then be forwarded to Germany or France.



Michael Denton's stock of antique lighting spreads across two large shops on several levels in Kensington Church Street and financial spread from sconces at about £175 to some pretty spectacular items at £80,000 or so. The most expensive chandelier Michael Denton can remember selling was a giant, costing about £250,000 and that was some ten years ago.

The specialism however was not always wonderfully elegant and elaborate light fittings. The original shop opened around 1900 by his grandmother and was a specialist bookshop – Kensington Church Street even then was a haven of antiques shops. In buying the contents of a library however, she found a chandelier was part of the job lot.

Unwillingly, she took it on her lap and was jolted across the cobbled London streets in a horse-drawn carriage back to the shop, but then hung it up there for sale. She managed to get 100 guineas for it, which was serious money at the time, and it swiftly converted her to the potential of chandeliers, although still only alongside her beloved books. But, with increased popularity and a good eye, the lighting part gradually took over and by the time she moved to the present premises at 166 Kensington Church Street that was what she sold.

Among her seven children Elizabeth and Marjorie increasingly helped with the shop and Elizabeth married another antiques dealer, Kenneth Denton, who had a shop in Marylebone High Street. After the war the Denton shop moved to just down the street at 156 Kensington Church Street, which has a little snicket at the back to reach the Crick shop through a courtyard. The shops are run together, still very much a family business with Elizabeth's son Michael now running the shops with his wife and daughter, another Elizabeth.

Business comes from personal recommendation, from interior designers and is international. One American woman

recently wanted to buy three lights but was embarrassed to find she did not have enough cash and the shop does not accept credit cards. Michael Denton told her to send the money when she got home. The woman was so overcome with such trust that with the money she sent not only a gushing letter of gratitude, but three greetings cards and a photograph of herself.



# Feature

By  
Michael Becket

## Blue Plaques

**SIR BENJAMIN THOMPSON COUNT RUMFORD (Reichsgraf von Rumford) FRS.**

**R**UMFORD at first glance seems the classic conman and charlatan, especially in his use of the title from the Holy Roman Empire. Clearly Historic England thinks so because on his blue plaque at 168 Brompton Road it calls him, among other things, “adventurer”. But the harder you look the more he keeps providing surprises. In fact, he turns out to have been a polymath of enormous intelligence and achievement – soldier, inventor, physicist, administrator.

Born Benjamin Thompson in Woburn, Massachusetts, in 1753, he was a shop assistant when aged 18 he charmed and married a rich and well-connected heiress named Sarah Rolfe. Her father was a minister, and her late husband left her property at Concord, then called Rumford. They moved to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and through his wife’s influence with the governor, he was appointed a major in the New Hampshire Militia.

He opposed the American revolution and recruited loyalists to fight the rebels. When a mob attacked Thompson’s house he fled to the British lines, abandoning his wife, as it turned out, permanently. He gave the British valuable information about the American forces, and became an adviser to both General Gage and Lord George Germain. While working with the British armies in America he conducted experiments concerning the force of gunpowder, the results of which were widely acclaimed when eventually published in 1781, as *New Experiments upon Gun-Powder, with Occasional Observations and Practical Inferences* (Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London 71: 229–328). Thus, when he moved to London in 1776 at the conclusion of the war, he already had a reputation as a scientist.

Rather surprisingly he returned to America in 1782 as





a lieutenant colonel in the loyalist forces. After the end of the war he moved back to London where in 1784 he received a knighthood from George III and was appointed to a senior position in the Colonial Office. He continued his researches into gunpowder and in 1779 he was made a fellow of the Royal Society.

In 1784 he moved to Bavaria where he became an aide-de-camp to the prince-elector Charles Theodore. During the eleven years, he reorganised the army, drained the marshes round Mannheim, established a common foundry and military academy, improved the breeds of horses and cattle, and created a poor-law system. Charged with finding the cheapest possible ration that was still a high-calorie, nutritious food, he invented Rumford's Soup, to feed the poor and prisoners: 1 part pearl barley, 1 part dried (yellow) peas, 4 parts potato, salt according to need, old sour beer, the soup to be boiled until thick and eaten with bread. It is not particularly tasty, but is palatable with long, slow cooking, is low-fat, with high protein and carbohydrate, protein from the dried peas, complex carbohydrates from the potato and barley, and simple carbohydrates from the beer. Thus, it was close to the optimum solution according to the knowledge of the day. It was often supplemented by corn or herring to supply vitamin C and D. He studied methods of cooking and disseminated information about nutrition and domestic economy.

As if that were not enough, he established the cultivation of the potato in Bavaria and studied methods of heating and lighting, including the relative costs and efficiencies of wax candles, tallow candles, and oil lamps. He also founded the Englischer Garten in Munich in 1789; it remains today and is known as one of the largest urban public parks in the world.

As a result of those achievements such was his acclaim that despite his opposition to independence he was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1789. He was also appointed head of the Bavarian war department and in 1791 Thompson was made a Count of the Holy Roman Empire and took the name Rumford for the new Hampshire home of his wife, becoming Reichsgraf von Rumford.

During a visit to England in 1795 he endowed the Royal Society with two Rumford medals plus two for the American Academy for research into his two favourite topics – light and heat – and endowed a professorship at Harvard University. In 1803, he was elected a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

The Munich, to which he returned after a year in London, was being threatened by both French and



Count Rumford

Austrians. The prince-elector fled, making Rumford generalissimo and leaving him in charge as president of the council of regency.

While organising the Munich arsenal he became intrigued by the heat generated by boring out cannon. That, combined with other experiments on gunnery and explosives led to an interest in heat. Rumford confirmed that no physical change had taken place in the material of the cannon by comparing the specific heats of the material machined away and that remaining, which led to his overturning the caloric theory of heat. He devised a method for measuring the specific heat of a solid substance but was disappointed when Johan Wilcke published his parallel discovery first.

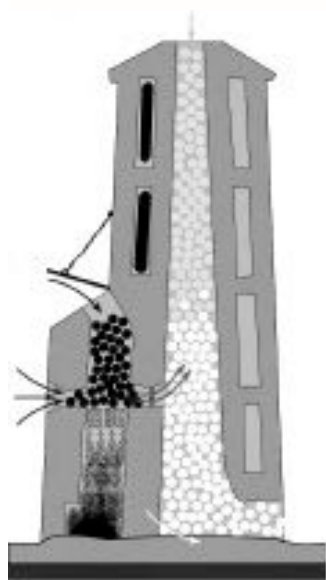
Thompson next investigated the insulating properties of various materials, including fur, wool and feathers. He correctly appreciated that the insulating properties of these natural materials arise from the fact that they inhibit the convection of air and that led to the invention of thermal underwear. But then he extended that to the unjustified and incorrect, inference that gases were perfect non-conductors of heat and later extended that to liquids. The idea raised considerable objections from the scientific establishment, John Dalton and John Leslie making particularly forthright attacks. Rumford's work became important in establishing the laws of conservation of energy later in the 19thC.

In addition to his wide scientific research Rumford was a prolific inventor, developing improvements for chimneys and industrial furnaces, as well as developing the double boiler, a kitchen range, and a percolating coffee pot following his pioneering work with the Bavarian Army, where he improved the diet of the soldiers as well as their clothes. The Rumford fireplace created a sensation in London when it was found to be much more efficient way to heat a room. He made them smaller and shallower with widely-angled covings so they would radiate better, and streamlined the throat, to "remove those local hindrances which forcibly prevent the smoke from following its natural tendency to go up the chimney..." It gave extra control of the rate of combustion of the fuel. Many fashionable London houses were modified to his instructions, and became smoke-free.

He improved kilns for producing quicklime by separating fuel from the limestone, so lime produced was not contaminated by ash from the fire. Rumford furnaces were soon being constructed throughout Europe. He became an even greater celebrity and his inventions were

very profitable and much imitated. As if that were not enough, he made a photometer and introduced the standard candle (made from sperm whale oil, to rigid specifications), the predecessor of the candela, as a unit of luminous intensity. He also published studies of the perception of colours, cited and generalised by Michel-Eugène Chevreul, as his "law of simultaneous colour contrast" in 1839. A prolific designer, he also produced designs for warships.

In 1799 he left Bavaria to return to London where, with Sir Joseph Banks, he founded the Royal Institution. They chose Sir Humphry Davy as the first lecturer. His assistant, Michael



Cross section of a Rumford furnace,  
with the fuel chamber at the left

Rumford's coffee percolator





Faraday, established the institution as a major research laboratory, which became famous for its public lectures popularising science. – a continuing tradition, now broadcast on television as well.

Still restless, in 1802 he moved to Paris, married Marie-Louise Lavoisier, widow of Antoine Lavoisier, one of the outstanding scientists of the 18thC who had been guillotined in the Reign of Terror. His American wife, the one abandoned at the outbreak of the American revolution, having died. That second marriage lasted only a year. It was in Paris he died in 1814 aged only 61 and was buried in the cemetery of Auteuil.

With such a catalogue of achievement, and world fame in his lifetime, he certainly deserves his plaque, but why is he not better known?

168 Brompton Road, SW3 1HW



Cartoon by James Gillray showing a Royal Institution lecture on pneumatics with Davy holding the bellows and Count Rumford looking on at extreme right. Dr Garnett is the lecturer holding the victim's nose.



A Blue Plaque for Sir Osbert Lancaster was unveiled at 79 Elgin Crescent. W11 2JE, the house where he was born and lived for six years. He was a cartoonist, theatre designer, illustrator, author, architectural historian and conservationist.



Matt Pritchett of *The Daily Telegraph*, right, who has given a distinguished long life to Osbert Lancaster's front-page pocket cartoons, talking to the mayor of the Royal Borough, Robert Freeman; part of the the audience for the unveiling of the blue plaque to Osbert Lancaster, cartoonist, theatre designer, writer of architectural books.



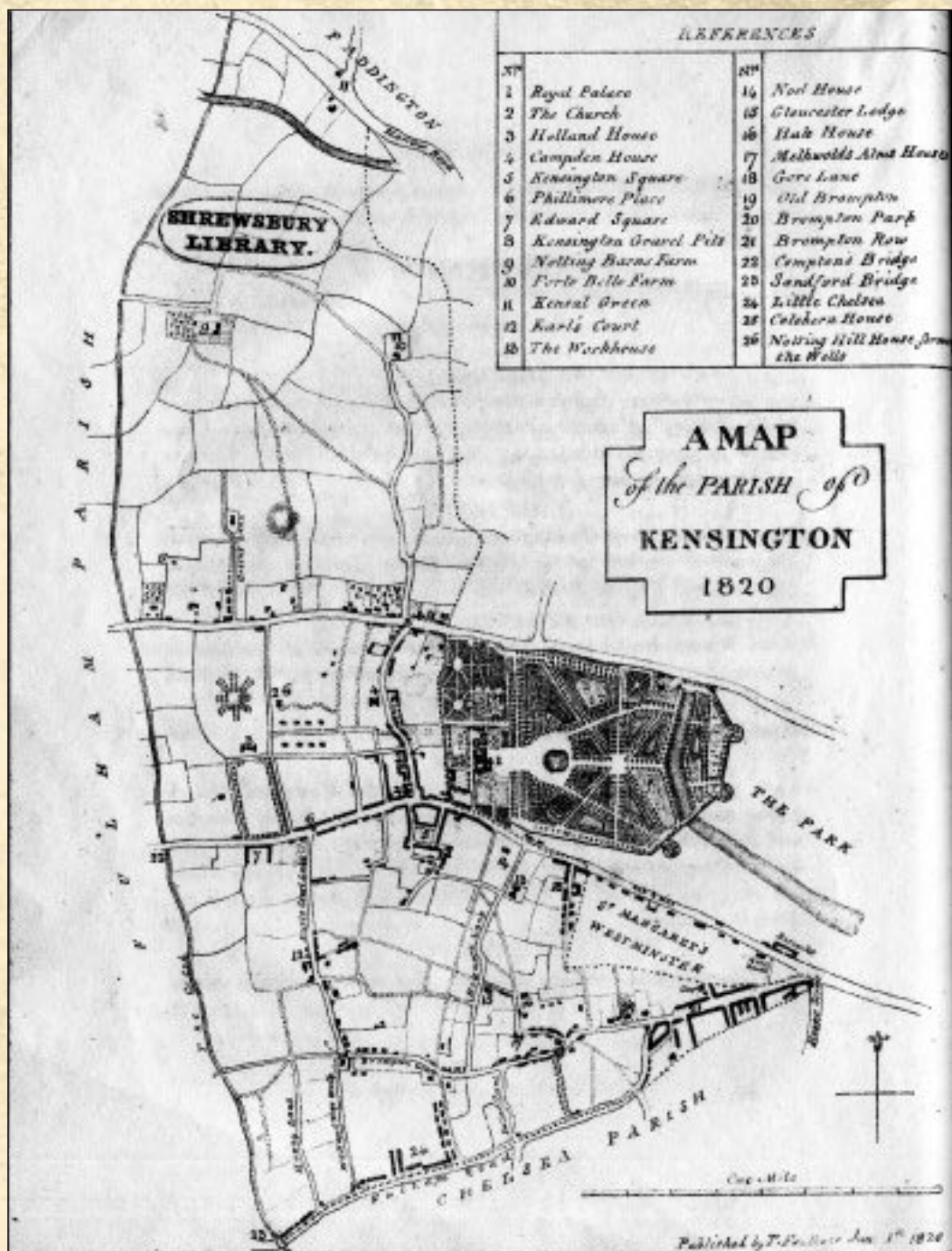
# Feature

## Maps



1741. Almost everything is farming land with a patchwork of fields from the Harrow Road down to Chelsea. Near the top of what looks like the line of what will be Campden Hill Road are the Kensington wells, probably where the Windsor Castle now stands. A few houses straggle around what was to become Notting Hill Gate at the top of Church Lane (later Kensington Church Street); and at the eastern end of what came to be called Kensington High Street. The Earl's Court is in place, but otherwise this is countryside. However, there are some oddities here as what later came to be called Portobello Lane and then Portobello Road is on the map leading nowhere; the one farmhouse in the north, seemingly on the site of what later maps show as Notting Barnes (or Barnes) Farm may have a footpath from Portobello Lane, although its main access is from Harrow Road. Counters Creek is not on the map but there is a Counter Bridge. Mr Greens seems to have a rather fine formal garden with his own lane roughly where Clarendon Road now is. The Farm Yard off Kensington High Street seems to be roughly where the Commonwealth Institute was later set though less visible now that it has been surrounded by shoeboxes full of flats.





1820. Counters Creek delineates the western boundary of Kensington, with Fulham Parish all the way up where we would have expected Hammersmith to be. The southern end of Holland Park is a tree-lined field topped by the house to the north of which is a star-burst set of tree-lined avenues. Notting Hill Gate is still called Gravel Pits and Notting Hill House stands where the wells used to be. Campden House seems to be on Church Lane (Kensington Church Street) near the top. The workhouse is a large building in what is now Queen's Gate and further south are Methworld's alms houses. In the north Notting Barns Farm and its kitchen garden and Portobello Farm are clear on this map. Counters Creek is just The Creek.



1827. In the north the farms remain in agricultural land. Houses have sprung up along what is by this time called Notting Hill, at least as far as Pembridge Road when it becomes Bayswater. Earl's Court is also spawning a spreading development and the Fulham Road is becoming inhabited. None of it is half as densely populated as Chelsea. Counters Creek is dismissed as a common sewer, running part of the way along the canal.



1841. Notting Hill Gate is still Kensington Gravel Pits but entrepreneurial activity has erupted into Notting Hill to the west with the arrival of the Hippodrome horse-racing track enclosing the hill where St Johns church will later be built and coming as far south as Ladbroke Road. However it skirted the potteries established on both sides of Pottery Lane of which the only relics are the name of the street and a lonely furnace in Walmer Road. Counters Creek sets another boundary to the course though south of what is now Holland Park Avenue it seems already to have been sent underground and become a sewer.

All maps © RBKC libraries





1852. The reproduction of this is not wonderful but it is clear the Hippodrome had a brief life and its place is taken by housing spreading north. Edward Salter actually increased his Notting Barns farm to 310 acres however, by 1880s it too was under housing.





1893. This seems more convincingly of the period stated with the two farms in the north still precariously in business and south of High Street Kensington all is built up to Earl's Court and though there still seems to be some open land south and west, further south still The Boltons are fully in place. South Kensington and its approaches from the east are also solidly urban.

# Feature

By  
Victoria Borwick

## New MP

**S**OME TIME AGO, a small girl in her blue and white school uniform, left her home, walked along the High Street, past Pontings, Derry and Toms, and Barkers and on to school.

Those iconic stores are long gone, but that girl still lives here, and now you have done her the honour of electing her as your MP.

I have grown up in Kensington, went to work from here for P&O, and with my husband Jamie we have raised our four children.

I enjoyed getting involved in my local community, and joined the local residents associations – my nearest being the Campden Hill RA when we were trying to save the school on the hill from becoming more expensive flats – and that was over 20 years ago! I became a school governor in North Kensington, and I have campaigned on all our local issues.

Having joined Parliament in May one of the first trials is to make your maiden speech which follows time honoured traditions: I would like to begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Sir Malcolm Rifkind. One of only five ministers to serve throughout the whole of both the Thatcher and Major premierships, Sir Malcolm has a long and distinguished record of service to our country.

A fierce opponent of injustice, Sir Malcolm is not one to be cowed or intimidated. In 1984, as a junior Foreign Minister on a historic visit to Poland - against the wishes of the then Polish Communist prime minister, General Jaruzelski - Sir Malcolm insisted on meeting the leaders of the Solidarity movement and laying a wreath at the grave of a Polish priest, who had been brutally murdered at the hands of his Communist oppressors.

Sir Malcolm is also a visionary and a forward thinker: Quick to identify Mikhail Gorbachev as somebody with whom the West could 'do business', he was instrumental in convincing Margaret Thatcher of the importance of a new approach in our engagement with the Soviet Union.

Sir Malcolm was much admired in the constituency, and I know that many people will have fond memories of him.

My own political career has been more recent. Having been elected to the council in 2002



to represent Abingdon Ward, with James Husband and Joanna Gardner we have been very grateful to all the residents associations, particularly ESSA our local RA in Abingdon ward and the Kensington Society for the tireless help they have given us on planning matters.

In 2008, I was elected to the Greater London Authority as a Londonwide Assembly Member and since 2012 I have served as the Deputy Mayor of London to Boris Johnson. This Londonwide experience has been fascinating, enabling me to travel far and wide and see good practice in many fields. I have particularly enjoyed my engineering visits, and am committed to encouraging infrastructure renewal. I was lowered through a manhole cover to inspect the sewers, as part of the work for Crossrail and I have made further visits to explore the sewers as part of the Thames Tideway renewal work. Who says being Deputy Mayor of London is not without glamour!

I am very conscious of what an area of contrasts Kensington is, with some of the most expensive property in the land contrasting with some of the poorest. We have the delightful traditional architecture of our famous buildings, terraced mansions and our leafy squares, then the contrast of the massive blocks of mostly concrete construction in the north of the borough. However the important point is the sense of community. Last week having toured many of the community centres around the borough I was very struck by the vitality and energy throughout Kensington. We are an area where people strive, start new businesses and demonstrate great creativity and it is that spirit of being a borough where you can live, work and enjoy your local area that makes Kensington the unique area it is.

The juxtaposition of designer shops, but one street away from our well loved market stalls, makes us a magnet for visitors. This is a constituency, not just for the rich and famous, but home for a melting-pot of nationalities all helping to make London the greatest city on earth.

Kensington has come a long way since the deprivation of the mid-nineteenth century piggeries and the potteries, which were some of the most evil smelling in London, now of course transformed into the stylish streets of Notting Hill.

When you talk about Kensington being a magnet for visitors we cannot forget that 12 million visitors flocked to our museums last year – how many of you have beaten a path with your families, to twirl the knobs and press the buttons, to reveal the secrets in the science museum. To explore the world of the dinosaurs and meet the much maligned Dippy in the Great Hall – now the Hintze Hall of the Natural History Museum, and visited the glories of the V&A, to name but a few of our cultural attractions.

For much of my career, I was involved with the art and antiques industry. The UK is now the largest importer and exporter of art globally, with most of the UK art and antiques trade taking place in our capital.

There are over 7,000 specialist art and antique businesses nationally, offering jobs and employment to thousands. Many dealers are based in Kensington Church Street and our famous Portobello. As the president of the British Antique Dealers Association I support our trade – hundreds of small businesses, many with knowledge passed from generation to generation.

There are a great many issues that will affect Kensington coming up in parliament and I am very grateful to the Kensington Society and to its members for helping me with briefings, so that we can clearly make the case for Kensington.

**Victoria Borwick, MP for Kensington. August 2015**



# Feature

By  
Natasha Woollard

## Kensington Palace

Many people will remember where they were on 31 August 1997 when they heard the news that Diana, Princess of Wales had been killed in a car crash in Paris. As the most photographed woman in the world, she was constantly in the news and naturally Kensington Palace became famous as the London home of the princess, along with her sons, Princes William and Harry. After her untimely death it became notorious as the location for the public outpouring of grief as thousands of bouquets of flowers were laid at the palace gates, eventually stretching far into the park and becoming a sight to behold in themselves.

It is these events of 1997 and Diana, Princess of Wales herself that is still the strongest association for today's visitors, so it always surprises people to learn that in the year when it became so famous for the sea of mourning flowers, Kensington Palace had already been open to the public for 98 years.

Still a royal home today, most famously to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and their young family, Kensington Palace dates from 1689 when the newly crowned (and only joint) monarchs, William III and Mary II, ascended the throne and purchased a house in the countryside outside London, commissioning Christopher Wren to develop it into the palace we know today. The king commissioned a wind-vane on the roof connected to a dial above the fireplace so he could always tell the direction of the wind and so know where the navy was likely to be heading and when the post would arrive. Surprisingly, it is still in working order.

Within five years Queen Mary died of smallpox and King William died 1701. Their successor was Mary's younger sister Anne. In the queen's apartment is the Queen's Closet where





Queen Anne and her childhood friend and confidante, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, had a terrible argument in 1711. Sarah and her husband were stripped of their high-rank positions and dismissed from court, which caused a shift of power between parliamentary factions.

Anne herself died in 1714 and despite giving birth to 15 children, none survived her. With no obvious heir, the search went for a Protestant candidate and George I of Hanover came to the throne. He shocked society by commissioning a young upstart called William Kent to replace plain wooden panelling installed by Christopher Wren with a vivid depiction of the king's court full of intriguing and unexpected characters. Along with the Yeomen of the Guard, Kent's painting includes the King's Polish page Ulric, Turkish servants Mahomet and Mustapha, Peter, a feral child found in the woods in Germany, and other children looking over the painted banisters. There is also a portrait of Kent himself wearing a brown turban and holding an artist's palette, with his mistress at his shoulder, looking down from the ceiling.

George I did not long enjoy the new décor as he died in 1727, with his son George II taking the throne alongside his consort, the erudite Queen Caroline. The next ten years of dazzling court entertainments marked the heyday of Kensington Palace, with Caroline inviting the leading thinkers of the age to discuss their ideas, from philosophers, writers, politicians and playwrights to scientists.

One of the distinguished works of art is the painting of Venus and Cupid by Vasari on the wall of the King's Drawing Room. Queen Caroline tried to have the painting with its flagrant nudity moved while her husband was away in Hanover. When he returned he furiously insisted it be put back. It hangs there still today.

Queen Caroline died in 1737 from a ruptured intestine and with the death of his wife, George II lost interest in the social entertainments of the court, and in the upkeep of Kensington Palace. His successor, George III, was more interested in the palaces of Kew and Windsor, and George IV designed Buckingham Palace to be a great palace of state, so monarchs moved away from Kensington Palace which now primarily housed their siblings and descendants.

However in 1819 a little baby girl was born at Kensington Palace who was set to change its fortunes for ever. Alexandrina Victoria was the daughter of the Duke of Kent, the fourth son of George III and so never expected to become Queen in her own right. However, with the death of the three uncles who were ahead of her in the succession and no legitimate surviving children, Victoria ascended the throne in 1837. Kensington Palace was important to Victoria not only as the place she was born, but also where she grew up, met Prince Albert for the first time, and became queen there, holding her first Privy Council meeting amongst nearly 100 male councillors in the palace's Red Saloon on 20 June 1837. And it was Victoria's affection for Kensington Palace which saved it from demolition at the end of the 19th century.

Then as now, the cost of maintaining historic buildings was high, and during Queen Victoria's reign the financial pressures from royal properties such as Kensington Palace, which was in parts in a poor state of repair, were contentious. One idea in the 1850s was for Kensington Palace to be the site of a new National Gallery, but keen to retain accommodation at the palace for her family, Queen Victoria intervened and managed to steer this idea away, eventually arguing for a survey of royal buildings to take place each year, to mitigate deterioration.

At the close of the 19th century she made an agreement with the prime minister and chancellor that she would give up two royal properties on condition the government would restore Kensington Palace; Parliament eventually voted to budget £23,000 for this, in return for the state apartments being opened to public visitors for the first time. In 1898 *The Times* reported that the palace had been threatened with being torn down, but now there would be restoration of the second floor State Apartments and the Orangery with its lawns. *The Times* was

clear about who should take the credit for this: “Her Majesty’s subjects ought to be grateful to her for having strenuously resisted such an act of vandalism”.

The state apartments were opened to the public by Queen Victoria herself on 24 May 1899, her 80th birthday – what became her last visit to her birthplace. Following her death in January 1901, Kensington became a royal borough in commemoration of it being the place of her birth.

In the twentieth century Kensington Palace found itself the home of the London Museum for a brief time in 1911–13, closing for fear of damage by suffragettes. It remained closed during the World War 1, although it reopened again in 1923, eventually settling on an opening schedule of weekends in the summer season. The state apartments were open to visitors over two periods during WW2, but the palace did suffer some damage during the Blitz, and re-opened in 1949. Between 1951 and 1976 Kensington Palace continued to house the London Museum, which eventually moved to new premises in the Barbican where it still is.

It was in the 1980s that Kensington Palace started to become the visitor attraction we know today. Visitors find the state rooms surprisingly empty – that is because they were used for audiences and meetings. Courtiers and visitors stood in the presence of royalty so there was no need for furniture.

The Prince and Princess of Wales moved into Kensington Palace in 1981 following their wedding, but in 1996 they were divorced, and Diana, Princess of Wales continued to live at Kensington Palace, drawing attention to the once sleepy palace on the edge of the park.

However in 1997 this attention went stratospheric when following Diana’s death, the sea of flowers were laid at the Gold Gates and an already-planned exhibition of some of her dresses opened to huge public interest; the palace welcomed record numbers of visitors. Between 2010–2012 Kensington Palace underwent a major transformation project to improve its entrance, visitor facilities and displays.

Since 2012 we have annually welcomed a record 400,000 visitors a year to the transformed Kensington Palace.

*Kensington Palace is open all year round except 24–26 December. Find out more at [www.hrp.org.uk](http://www.hrp.org.uk)*

**Natasha Woollard, Head of Kensington Palace**



# Feature

By  
Michael Becket

## Frestonia

**I**N 1977 **SQUATTERS IN FRESTON ROAD**, at the north-western boundary of Notting Hill, declared independence from the British state. Facing the prospect of their homes being demolished by the Greater London Council, the community opted out and declared its 1.8 acres a separate country, The Free and Independent Republic of Frestonia (similarity to Freedonia in the Marx Brothers's film *Duck Soup* was not coincidental). It comprised not just Freston Road, now just behind the West Cross Route up to the A40, but triangle of land including communal gardens covering Bramley Road and Shalfleet Drive. They even put in a claim for United Nations recognition.

It could not happen now. Squatting in residential property is illegal and entails a jail sentence. In addition, the police have become harder – they would enforce legal eviction orders with muscle, battering rams and may even be armed. Forty years ago, people would become upset if their homes had been sequestered but occupying a collection of abandoned buildings was not considered a heinous crime. Geoffrey Howe, Margaret Thatcher's longest-serving Cabinet minister including as chancellor of the exchequer, even wrote a letter of support, saying, "As one who had childhood enthusiasm for Napoleon of Notting Hill, I can hardly fail to be moved by your aspirations".

Notting Hill then was, at the southern end, a collection of bohemians, ambitious young people on a tight budget and fourth generation inhabitants. At the northern end it was a mixture





of crumbling slums, as well as a Rachman land of derelict property inhabited by West Indians, drug dealers, the unemployed plus a mixture of the very poor and the very criminal. It was also a ferment of race war with occasional riots. Now that is called the counter-culture, then it was called destitution and oppression.

Photographer Tony Sleep was one of the microstate's squatting residents and documented it in black and white. He said "the whole area was in a political turmoil of minority rights, race hate, pressure groups". It was not just a slum but parts were "an industrial area full of breakers yards... a lot of gangsters. There was dereliction and poverty everywhere". Looking back however it can be seen as a mixed-race mixed-class focus of counter-culture London. The energy of that produced a range of 'alternative' ventures with hippy shops, magazine publishing, wholefood bakeries and so on which actually reduced the grimness of the area.

The fashion was for local authorities to condemn Victorian terraces and move residents into the 1960s towers of concrete – Erno Goldfinger's Trellick Tower has a preservation order on it, presumably to act as a warning. Some graffiti explained local feeling, such as "if crime doesn't pay, how come architects are rich"?

Condemned houses were often left empty to decay while waiting for their turn to be demolished to make way for another tower. But, in the meantime, they provided a squatting opportunity for the homeless. Squatters included working-class residents of the area as well as actors, artists, and later on a sprinkling of alcoholic gentlemen of the road plus assorted louche flotsam. Electricity was a problem. The electricity board wanted a deposit, which most squatters did not have, and would connect only to a circuit that conformed to safety regulations, which would need even more money they did not have.

Photographs © Tony Sleep





An ingenious solution was for a house with a legal supply to let neighbours plug in extension cords, mains cables were strung across the road lifted to clear the double-decker buses passing underneath.

The squat had endured four years when the Greater London Council decided to evict them, not because it needed the land for immediate redevelopment but because squatting seemed wrong. It wanted to knock down the houses and leave the rubble until plans had been drawn up for building on the sites. As Tony Sleep put it, “The GLC decided that it was intolerable having 120 people living in these damp old dirty houses and it would be a much better idea to knock them all down and make us homeless”. The first reaction was squatters adding Bramley to their names so they would appear to be one large family which in theory would have to be re-housed together.

But then Nick Albery – a cultural agitator, and later a Green Party candidate for the area – had the idea of independence, inspired by the classic 1949 comedy film *Passport to Pimlico*. In that an unexploded World War 2 bomb detonates after the war, exposing an old document declaring Pimlico part of Burgundy and its residents honorary Burgundians – a separate identity locals take to with enthusiasm. The Freston squatters screened a rented 16mm copy of *Passport to Pimlico*. Then Albery, chairing a meeting of many of the 120 residents, asked if they should do something similar. The vote was 94% in favour, and 73% wanted to join the European Economic Community.

Albery’s idea was swiftly elaborated by playwright Heathcote Williams who was made ambassador to Great Britain, and David Rappaport, the actor who starred as Randall, King of the Dwarves in Terry Gilliam’s *Time Bandits*, and became Minister of Foreign Affairs. A two-year-old child named Francesco Bogina was the Minister for Education. Nick Saunders who wrote *Alternative London*, a counter-cultural compendium of trendy things in the 1970s and went on to open Neal’s Yard, was another founding member. Nicholas Albery, who died in a car crash in 2001 aged 52, was an intellectual hippie, and founded the Institute for Social Inventions in 1984, with Edward de Bono, Anita Roddick and Fay Weldon among its patrons, to collect non-technological innovations from around the world and give £1,000 annual awards for the best ones. He was another minister.



On 31 October, 1977, independence was declared. There are certain things every sovereign state needs and the Frestonians were quick to get themselves up to international standards. They introduced postage stamps, that replaced the Queen with Gary the Gorilla though that may be an apocryphal later elaboration. They created a visa stamp used at a little table by the frontier to stamp passports. “People managed to send letters around the world using Frestonia stamps. God knows how, but they worked... they were actually recognised by the Post Office”, recalled Tony Sleep. They commissioned a

national anthem and ended up with three of them. There were even plans to introduce a currency. At one stage they became so carried away they planned to generate their own power supply and set up a radio station.

For culture, the Frestonian National Theatre produced the London premiere of Heathcote Williams' *The Immoralist* in the People's Hall. In a later legal dispute about an unauthorised performance of that play, Heathcote Williams won a ruling from the English courts that Frestonia was for this purpose not part of the UK. Frestonia had its own newspaper *The Tribal Messenger* and an art gallery called *The Car Breaker Gallery* from



which emerged the performance art of the Mutoid Waste Company and artists Julie Umerle, Brett Ewins and Brendan McCarthy. Professional lighting was donated by Sandy Nairne, later to be director of the National Portrait Gallery.

Richard Adams, a Frestonia resident, invented a coat of arms for the community, bearing the motto *Nos Sumus Una Familia* – We are One Family – and the state applied to join the United Nations while warning that peacekeeping troops might be needed to keep the GLC at bay.

It was not easy, however. The winters were hard, resources were scarce, and police protection disappeared into the UK. So there was a regular intrusion by drug pushers and other criminals. In fact, break-ins were so frequent that Tony Sleep started stacking bricks next to his bed in case he needed a midnight projectile.

The stunt had been picked up by the news media and before long the world was watching. Thanks to that international attention, the GLC found it distinctly difficult to start full-scale demolition but was still determined to redevelop the site. With TV crews from New Zealand and Japan surrounding the area the then (penultimate) leader of the GLC, Sir Horace Cutler, agreed to talks. There was a public enquiry which recommended a mixed use area providing living and working space. Residents formed the Bramleys Housing Co-operative Ltd, which negotiated with Notting Hill Housing Trust for continued residence and acceptable redevelopment of the site. Albery, Frestonian Minister of State for the Environment, said "Frestonia was eventually rebuilt.... with foreign aid from Great Britain".

Some Frestonians did not care for such compromises nor the loss of independence and moved away. The replacements were not just hippies and struggling professionals but often drunks and druggies. The remaining Frestonians failed to maintain the ideals of the Frestonian "nation" which consequently went into decline. In its place, a more conventional local community reinstated the usual hierarchies.

The Bramleys Housing Co-operative still manages the properties owned and built on the site by Notting Hill Housing Trust and a few are children or grandchildren of the original Frestonians. In 1980 Ear Studios took over *The People's Hall*. A large new office development, also named Frestonia, now occupies the adjacent site at the junction of Bramley Road and St Anns Road occupied by the design company Cath Kidston Limited. A second large office development was erected at 125/135 Freston Road in 2001. The Louise T. Blouin Institute, aiming encourage creativity and encourage international amity, is in Olaf Street, off Freston Road. Major developments in the 2000s include the headquarters of Monsoon Accessorize and TalkTalk at the rear of 91-121 Freston Road. As Tony Sleep puts it, "It's still different from the UK".

# Feature

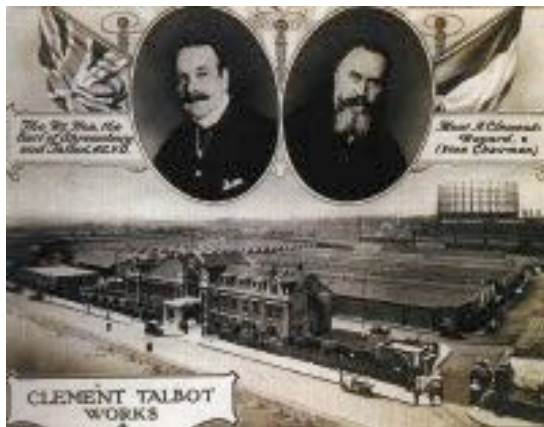
By  
Richard Northedge

## From cars to stars: Ladbroke Hall

**K** EEN-EYED VIEWERS of old episodes of *The Bill* might spot a police car speeding along Barlby Road. Had the television cameras been there in 1913, however, they could have caught an even faster vehicle: the first car to cover 100 miles in one hour was made in a factory in this part of north Kensington. For

more than half a century, classic Sunbeam Talbots rolled off the production line but now the models gracing the building are catwalk stars like Elle Macpherson. Pop stars shoot music videos there; even royalty now dines in Ladbroke Hall, as the ornate property was named after the Second World War.



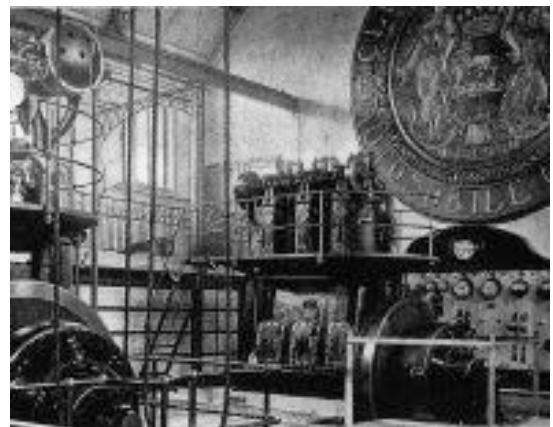


Different generations find new uses for this listed Edwardian building. Like the Yellow Rolls-Royce with successive owners, or Grand Hotel with its revolving door of colourful guests, Ladbroke Hall survives all fashions. Its visitors' book reflects the changing history of a hectare of W10 tucked between Wormwood Scrubs and Ladbroke Grove, south of the Grand Union, north of the Westway.

The Victorian development of Notting Hill had not crept north to the Great Western Railway at the start of the 20th century. Much of the open land was owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury's family and it seemed a natural base for the business that began importing cars produced by Adolphe Clément in France. The 20th earl, Charles Chetwynd-Talbot provided finance – plus his name and family crest – for the venture.

The duo was joined by Charles Garrard, an English engineer who had manufactured bicycles in Paris with Clement and who produced an electric car in the 1890s. Garrard moved to Charles Square and supervised construction of the building in Edinburgh Road, as Barby Road was known in the 1900s.

Although motoring was still novel in 1903, the Clement Talbot car company had big ambitions, immediately commissioning an impressive building for what was one of Britain's first purpose-built car plants. It was constructed in baroque style with Doric pilasters and Ionic columns and architect



William Walker clad the concrete frame in brick with stone cornices.

The black-and-white marble floored entry hall leads to a balcony with wrought-iron balustrade and impressive staircases overlooking two double-height barrel-roofed halls. But rather than use them as showrooms, it seems at least one housed generators to power the separate workshops behind.

By 1905, Talbots were being made in Kensington rather than imported from France. They were not cheap though: an 11 horsepower vehicle capable of 40mph cost £365 – about double the average UK annual wage. A 24hp version nearly twice that. A 7hp model at £242 was introduced and adverts boasted: "The new high-powered Talbots are the finest examples of motor construction ever placed before the public and we invite intending purchasers to inspect them at our works".

Prospective buyers coming to Edinburgh Road could see "tonneaus, side-entrances, limousines, landaulettes, omnibuses, etc". But besides style, Talbot sought speed. The cars were winning rallies at home and abroad, and in February 1913, Percy Lambert climbed into a single-seater streamlined 25hp Tourer and drove from the factory to the Brooklands racing circuit.

He spun round the Surrey track at an average of 103mph – the world's first car to do a ton. His record was beaten within weeks by a Peugeot with a much larger engine. In October 1913, Lambert sought to regain his



title, but on his 21<sup>st</sup> lap, a tyre burst and he skidded off the Brooklands circuit at around 120mph, leaving him dead.

The Talbots' performance guaranteed sales despite the tragedy. Production rose above 50 vehicles a month and the building was extended west in 1913, then again in 1917. But by then, war was raging. A workforce of almost 2,000 was switched to working on engines for the even newer technology – aeroplanes. It also produced the first of Churchill's new 'tanks'.

Car production resumed after the war and Talbot was bought by Darracq, a British-firm making cars in France. In 1920 they acquired Sunbeam, which had started as a Wolverhampton-based bicycle firm. Sunbeam-Talbot Darracq won top prizes at Le Mans but racing was expensive and the firm collapsed in 1935. It was bought by Rootes, owner of the Hillman and Humber marques and production continued at Barlby Road.

Production was switched to armoured cars and servicing Spitfire engines in the Second World War. A post-war car plant close to central London made little economic sense and Barlby Road became Rootes' service centre. Rootes was taken over by Chrysler in the 1960s and Peugeot bought the business in 1970.

Ladbroke Hall was run down but by 1987 Thames Television needed new studios for The Bill. The series had been filmed at Wapping but

with Rupert Murdoch's new print works there under siege by unions, actors in police uniform were no longer welcome. Sun Hill police station moved west and the villains followed, with the Talbot factory and its boardroom also providing locations for car-dealer Arthur Daley in Minder.

English Heritage listed the property in 1989 and four years later, Notting Hill Housing Association proposed redevelopment that included a doctors' surgery and new homes behind what had been Talbot's workshops. The TV days were not over, however. Anneka Rice, the hyperactive ITV presenter, devoted a whole 'Challenge Anneka' programme in 1994 to building a community children's television studio in Ladbroke Hall.

Richard Barton of Avanti architects says: "Her challenge was to convert the space over a weekend. What they didn't show was that we had done a lot of work first on the structure and drainage. I was rung up after the broadcast by Kensington's listed-buildings officer asking what was going on".

The borough gave the project an environmental award but development presented problems. "The offices were shabby and in the state they had been in the 1950s. There was a lot of partitioning put up during or after the war. The entrance up to the main hall is an extremely grand affair with the proportions of a church – but if you tap the pilasters, they're hollow. They're basically fake."





A property company acquired the main building and local designer Adam Dawe rented the central space with the main hall and its huge roundel depicting two art-nouveau women flanking the cars' logo – the Shrewsbury family crest. “It’s hard not to fall in love with something like that,” he says. He set up Sunbeam Studios in 2005, allowing photo-shoots for fashion magazines and advertisers plus functions such as weddings and charity fundraisers. As neighbouring tenants moved out, Dawe bought the freehold in 2005 and lets surplus space.

Maintenance is a major task but the building is now totally powered by renewable energy. “I



want Ladbroke Hall to be a creative hub with like-minded businesses there. It leads to a more interesting and vibrant place,” says Dawe.

Tatler, Vogue and Elle have photographed models for their covers there, including Eliza Cummings, Victoria Beckham and Kim Kardashian. Pierce Brosnan and Katherine Jenkins have posed for adverts. Johnny Depp and Hugh Grant are among those snapped by the likes of Stella McCartney, Annie Leibovitz and Mario Testino.

U2 have graced the building; Genesis made a documentary there; Paloma Faith and Rihanna recorded videos; Paul Weller posed for an album cover. But Barlby Road had an earlier place in pop history. In 1962 an unknown group called The Who hoped a gig at the Rootes social club would lead to a BBC appearance: the broadcaster rejected them as “insufficiently experienced”.

Even royalty visits. The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge plus Prince Harry recently held a charity dinner at Sunbeam Studios.

The ‘Talbot’ name last appeared on a new car in 1978, but the motor marques are not lost to Kensington. Besides the Rootes Hall, Talbot Hall and Shrewsbury Room within Sunbeam Studios, the new housing behind is in Hillman Drive, Shrewsbury Street, Rootes Drive and Sunbeam Crescent. The history is not forgotten.

See vehicles from the past and transport of the future at Imperial Festival on 7–8 May: [www.imperial.ac.uk/festival](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/festival)



# Planning Reports

## Culture change:

It may seem strange to start off the planning report of a local civic society with a critique of government policy rather than our local successes, challenges or advances. We could focus on our successes in securing policies to protect offices and pubs, limiting the damage caused by basement developments, securing better practice on construction sites and a change in practice which will make the planning process more resident friendly.

However, it is the threatened changes in government policy which are destabilising our communities, whether through giving owners greater freedom to change the use of properties without requiring planning consent, or the proposed housing and planning legislation, which would accelerate the gentrification process, by the sale of housing association properties and the enforced sale of council housing, and reducing the supply of affordable housing in the borough. The money raised from sales in Kensington will be spent elsewhere.

## Government: PDRs and Housing and Planning Bill

Kensington is at the sharp end of the impact of changes in government planning policy. The government is determined to break down the barriers between uses to allow just about anything to turn into housing. Fortunately in 2013 the council, strongly supported by the society, secured a borough-wide exemption from the proposed freedom to enable offices to be converted to housing, without requiring planning permission or the requirement to provide affordable housing and financial contributions to social facilities.

In October the government announced the proposed abolition of this exemption. This is totally inappropriate, damaging to our local economy and a contradiction to the alleged commitment to local decision-making. It was subsequently announced that the council could draw up an Article 4 Direction, which would allow the council to remove the rights to change offices to housing, although this will be heavily scrutinised by the Secretary of State. In Kensington, because of the high value of housing, the market would eliminate most of the offices and many of our local businesses within a few years. We will be supporting our MP, Victoria Borwick, and the council, to secure the future of premises for small firms and the voluntary sector in the borough.

Other changes, however, have been introduced already, such as the freedom to change shops into estate agents or restaurants without requiring consent, which is already revealing increasing concentrations. The government's response is that the council can always use Article 4 Directions to stop this process, but only justified if the process has gone too far, by which time it will be too late. Finally, the government proposes to encourage launderettes to change into



housing, restaurants or gyms. The government, as a matter of principle and with little concern for collateral damage, has decided to leave it to the market.

## Changes at the local level

### Basements

2014 ended on a high note with the approval of the council's new basement policy, which effectively bans double basements and restricts the building of basements under gardens to no more than 50% of the garden area. The policy only sets the main lines, however, and the next step is to draft a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to give guidance on its detailed implementation. This has been a laborious exercise, taking up most of 2015. The council issued a draft for consultation in February, which attracted a large number of responses. It was not a bad document, but a number of concerns were expressed about lack of clarity and omissions. The council then went out again to consultation successively on two new drafts and we hope the final document will emerge in early 2016. At least we cannot fault the council on its desire to ensure proper consultation – which *inter alia* involved convening a number of round-table meetings with the main parties, including of course the Kensington Society.

In April, the council took a step that the Kensington Society and many of its affiliated associations had been urging upon it for some time – an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights of basements “under the footprint” of the house. Hitherto, no planning permission has been needed to build a basement directly under the house. And without a requirement for planning permission, the council is unable to insist on an acceptable construction traffic management plan or construction method statement. The new Article 4 Direction is expected to come into force in April 2016 and after that all basements will need planning permission.

The council has also over this last year shown itself very willing to take enforcement action against developers who do not abide by the terms of their agreed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). Now anybody who spots breaches of a CTMP can phone or email the council in the knowledge that something really is likely to be done about it, which was not always the case in the past.

### Code of Practice for Construction

Noise is for most the number one annoyance from basement excavation and we have been extremely impressed by the readiness of the Environmental Health section of the council to grasp the noise nettle. The society hosted a workshop on construction noise which was well attended and very informative. In parallel with the lengthy gestation by the planners of a new SPD on basement construction, the environmental health experts have been developing an excellent code of practice on construction noise, including setting noise limits and providing for reduced hours for noisy work. Again there was full consultation and the new code should be issued at the same time as the basements SPD. The Code on Construction Noise applies to all construction but it should be particularly useful in mitigating the effects of basement excavation.



### **Increase in the borough's housing target**

A significant change at the local level has been the new housing target set by the Mayor – requiring the borough to increase the net additional units completed each year from 585 to 733. Whilst the council has granted planning consent for a large number of new flats over the last five years, the level of completions has been considerably lower and, in addition, both redevelopments and conversions have resulted in significant losses due the increase in the size of new units. These schemes have proved doubly damaging – the net number of additional homes produced is insufficient and a significant proportion of the new housing has been bought as investments or “trophy homes”, which are unaffordable and do not meet the needs of people who need to live in the borough or even London.

The council is concerned about the losses – such as buildings changing from a number of flats to a single house – and the unbalanced mix of sizes of new flats and houses toward the luxury end of the market. The council is now proposing to change from the previous emphasis on large units whether through new developments or deconversion of buildings in flats to single houses. The changing economic climate may help this change in emphasis.

### **Neighbourhood planning, Nursery Lane, Latimer Road**

The outcome of the examination of the St Quintin and Woodlands Draft Neighbourhood Plan (for an area of north Kensington) demonstrated the potential of this relatively new part of the national planning system. At a public hearing last September, the neighbourhood forum argued its case against developers Metropolis Property Ltd, who had applied to build 21 town-houses on an undeveloped backland site within the defined neighbourhood area. This land has been used since the 1960s by Clifton Nurseries as an offshoot to its well-known garden centre in Little Venice.

The independent examiner supported the proposal in the Draft Plan that new housing should instead be built on brownfield land, above existing warehouse and light industrial premises at Units 1-14 Latimer Road. The council's existing ‘enterprise’ policies resist such development, allowing only B1 office use in the sections of this mixed-use street designated as part of an Employment Zone.

Subject to support at a local referendum, the neighbourhood plan policies for Latimer Road will supersede those in the Local Plan. The contested site and two other backlands were accepted as meeting the national criteria as Local Green Space, giving them strong protection against development.

This outcome has thus lived up to the government's promise that neighbourhood plans are a “powerful tool”, allowing local people to decide what sort of development they want where in their area, provided that the neighbourhood plan's proposals “generally conform” to the Local Plan and allow for as much or more development overall. The local referendum is scheduled for February 2016, and will be the second in the borough following on from the Norland Neighbourhood Plan.

### **A more resident-friendly approach to planning**

A succession of larger developments have been rejected – see below – largely because developers and the council have not engaged with residents at an early stage in the project. The society has pressed both the council and developers to improve the process through earlier involvement, better access to the council's advice, the views of the Architectural Advisory Panel and the

viability assessment at the point that the application is made. Earlier involvement, better access to information and greater transparency will improve both the quality of developments and the quality of decision-making. We welcome the council's commitment to these improvements but in the meantime will continue to press for improvements. We now need to agree a new compact to embody them in day-to-day practice.

### **Saving our Pubs**

We regret to say that pubs continue to be under threat, especially around the Notting Hill and Norland area. The freeholders of the Academy in Princedale Road and the Kensington Park Hotel in Ladbroke Grove want to abolish the pubs and turn the building over to other uses. Local residents applied to the council to have the threatened pubs registered as Assets of Community Value, which gives some protection against change of use. In both cases, the council accepted the applications. In both cases there were appeals by the freeholders against the council decision.

In the case of the Academy, where the appellant was the Wellington Pub Company, the appeal was finally dismissed, and a subsequent planning application for change of use was refused.

A decision was due later for the Kensington Park Hotel. In both appeals the freeholders brought big legal guns to bear, perhaps fearing the precedents that could be created if the appeals failed.

Another local pub, the Ground Floor Bar/First Floor Restaurant in Portobello Road, closed in October – here, the licensees went voluntarily but only after the freeholder, a property company registered in Guernsey, intimated that their lease would not be renewed when it came to an end in 2016. We have supported the Ladbroke Association's application for the pub to become an Asset of Community Value. Please let us know if you hear of any pubs near you. under threat

### **Enforcement**

The enforcement action taken by the planning department continues to improve. Since Luke Perkins took over early 2014, the team has increased by 33%, with a 23% increase in cases investigated. 190 enforcement-related notices served, including 102 allegations of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) breaches. Action against London Projects Ltd and Cranbrook Basements Ltd ended in court with fines for advertisements without consents.

Despite its historic and architectural significance of the grade II\* listed Royal Crescent, 12 properties were identified as being in a poor condition. Owners were warned that legal notices would be served if they did not improve and maintain their properties by early 2015. Nine legal notices were served and by November 2015 work on eight of the nine properties was completed. The vigilant action by the Norland



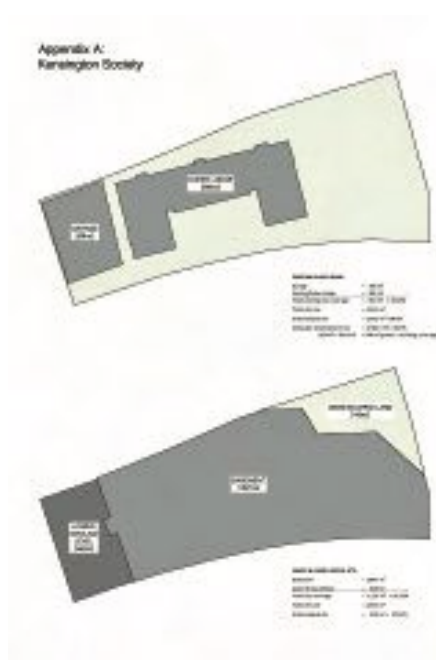
Conservation Society and the Kensington Society along with excellent assistance from the enforcement team has now, after many years, seen the restoration of 186 Holland Park Avenue, though we continue to fight the multiple applications for scaffolding advertisements on the west elevation facing the roundabout.

Other major successes include action taken against the red-and-white striped house in South End, which must now be repainted white, and Albert Mews where the planning committee decided to seek the demolition of two houses.

Recognised by the Department of Communities and Local Government, the RBKC has the most active enforcement team in the nation. If you have any concerns about enforcement, construction activity, out of hours, traffic obstructions and so forth, email [planning@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@rbkc.gov.uk). You will be both surprised and impressed with the response.

## Major Cases

If major developments fail to secure planning permission it is usually because there are major unresolved issues. Two major cases were refused on the same night in January – Dukes Lodge and the Odeon Cinema – and the Holiday Inn Casino, which was refused by officers under delegated powers. All are going through planning inquiries.



### Dukes Lodge, 80 Holland Park

This is a luxury housing scheme by the Candy brothers, replacing a 1930s block of 27 flats, but despite two and half times the floorspace, including multiple basements covering about three-quarters of the site which would involve excavating a hillside, it would produce only 24 flats. The case was a major challenge to the council's recently-adopted basement policy, and, because it would involve fewer flats, it was contrary to both the London Plan and the Local Plan. It would also have an adverse impact on both the surrounding conservation areas and, in particular, have a very direct impact on neighbouring properties in Aubrey Road. This scheme was supported by the officers, but the society and local residents persuaded the Planning Committee to refuse consent. The society then joined with local residents as a Rule 6 Party to fight the public inquiry. The result was due in early February.

### Odeon, Kensington High Street

A new application for the larger site including the post office and sorting office and an office block on Earl's Court Road was refused in January, by 11 votes to 1, for a comprehensive development of the site with the entrance to most of the cinema screens in Earl's Court Road, the historic cinema portico converted into a foyer for just 35 flats, and an additional layer on the penthouse. This decision was also against the officer's recommendation and showed that the

councillors on the planning committee had listened to the objectors.

By May the developer had produced a revised scheme in which the entrance to the cinema was reinstated to Kensington High Street and, following a combination of feedback from the council and pressure from the objectors, it submitted a new application to retain the cinema portico as the entrance to the cinema. That preserved both its historic presence and maintained the flow of people on Kensington High Street, although the post office would become the new entrance to the luxury flats, so removing the last retail element from this part of the frontage. The penthouse was reduced in height to what had already been granted consent under the previous standalone development. This proposal was approved by the Planning Committee in July and ratified at the end of September with the finalisation of the S106 agreement.

We believe the scheme approved in July (ie the third scheme), although it did not meet all our concerns, does consist of a development which pays respect to the local context and would reinforce the vitality of this part of the High Street by reinstating the cinema on this frontage reusing the existing façade as the main entrance. It is understood, however, that the developer is looking for development partners, as, with a changing housing market, there is a possibility that even the approved scheme may not be built.

### **Holiday Inn Casino, Cromwell Road/ Ashburn Gardens**

The proposed casino would occupy the open area in front of the hotel facing Cromwell Road. Together with local residents the society objected to its impact on traffic and parking but particularly the reduction in the extent of Ashburn Gardens, which is a London square garden protected by the London Squares Preservation Act 1931. This development was refused by the council under delegated powers. The developer appealed. The society will join local residents as a Rule 6



party to fight the public inquiry scheduled for early 2016. Meanwhile the developer is trying to obtain consent for a land swap by offering to transfer a few scraps of land in return for developing on open land that is part of the site covered by the 1931 Act. We are pressing the council to use its powers under this Act to make clear that the opportunity for land swaps was exhausted with the development of the hotel in the 1970s.

### **99–121 Kensington High Street and 1 Derry Street**

The owner of the former Derry and Toms (who also owns Barkers and several houses in Kensington Square) proposed to refurbish part of the former department store, now occupied by Gap and to move the entrance to the offices in 1 Derry Street from service yard to creating a new entrance from 25 Kensington Square. The society supported local residents to resist the new entrance which, when the office development was originally allowed, was specifically conditioned as not to be used for access. Office workers currently enter the offices directly from



Kensington High Street Station. The proposal was to allow visitors to enter from the square. This application was successfully resisted. The applicant has now appealed.

## Evolving projects

### Newcombe House, Notting Hill Gate

The society has been engaged with this project for at least two years and, with local amenity societies and residents' associations around Notting Hill Gate, produced an alternative brief for the site. This was well-received by both the developer and the council, with proposals for a public square, a GP surgery, new shops, offices replaced and provision for future step-free access to the ticket hall of Notting Hill Gate station.

The council's SPD for Notting Hill Gate took a long time to be agreed, in part due to uncertainty about the height of any new building on this site.

The society met the development partners to assess the planning application. We considered the developer had produced highly-responsive scheme, thoughtful and urbane architecture as well as delivering considerable public benefits. We will, therefore, be taking the unusual step of supporting this application.

We recognise that the height of the new building – significantly taller than the current building – would be a significant issue. However, after looking at least 40 different views agreed by the council we considered that in the vast majority of views, especially long views, including those from Kensington Gardens, the tall building would have little or no impact. Closer up, the building would be dominant in the streetscape, but in many cases it would appear slimmer and more elegant than the existing building and, from some angles, fits in well. We have emphasised however, that this should not justify any further tall buildings.

The group does have some reservations in relation to servicing, where we think a servicing management plan will be needed and to parking where, because of its excellent public transport, the development should have no car parking, except disabled parking for the surgery.

### South Kensington Station

After more than a decade of confrontation with local groups over massive and inappropriate redevelopment proposals for the tube station, Transport for London (TfL) is willing to listen to local opinion and to consult as its new proposals comes forward. This is a major advance and since the autumn regular meetings have been held with TfL at which the Kensington Society and local groups are represented.

TfL's new plan to put improvements to the tube first, after years when commercial redevelopment drove the agenda, is a major breakthrough. The aim now is to expand capacity at this busy station. The first phase of work will involve improvements to the listed booking hall. Designed by architect George Sherrin in 1903, this potentially attractive top lit space is architecturally integral with the arcade of shops, South Kensington's best-loved feature. In all former schemes the booking hall was to have been swept away.

TfL's plans involve bringing the north platform of the District and Circle Line back into use for eastbound trains and the construction of an enlarged access deck and new stairs to both platforms. The society will continue to press for lifts to both platforms to provide step-free access.

TfL is also developing plans for adjacent buildings. Here, the society is clear that the

shopfronts in the listed arcade should be properly reinstated together with the earlier 19thC shop fronts in Thurloe Street. Indeed, TfL's plan to "façade" the Thurloe Street is inappropriate. This block is valuable to the Conservation Area, retains many internal original features and there is no case for demolition. The argument that the entire terrace needs to be demolished to provide a pedestrian access from the tube into Thurloe Street through one of the existing shop units does not convince. The block should simply be renovated as small shops with flats above (as at present). There is more scope for development at the bullnose, but not more than two storeys and along Pelham Street. Here again a limit on height is critical.

Development at South Kensington needs to run with the grain of the area in scale and style. Retention of small shops is of paramount importance. We have long argued that South Kensington is not Fulham Broadway and after many years, maybe TfL is at last grasping this.

### Natural History Museum

Over the last year the society has participated in a working group with the Natural History Museum. Over 5.5 million visitors visit the museum a year. Originally the museum's plans only addressed the East Lawn. However, through the process it was realised that an overall strategy was needed. Along with internal changes proposed, an ambitious transformation of its outdoor spaces along Cromwell Road was developed.

An existing wildlife garden will be expanded to cover a space three times its current size. This dedicated green space will create sustainable new habitats and allow visitors to feel closer to nature within the city.

The museum held several public meetings throughout the year. We were impressed with how the team responded to the comments and varied the design to incorporate many of the helpful suggestions.

The team was selected through a competition and consist of Niall McLaughlin Architects, with Kim Wilkie. The timetable is to begin works late 2016, continuing throughout 2017/18

### Heythrop College

Tucked away behind Kensington Square, this is due to close at the end of 2018. The site has been in educational use for 150 years. The council has prepared a planning brief for the site which emphasises the need to maintain educational use rather than housing, the need to retain the student housing, the severe constraints on access – the only vehicular access is via South End – and the need to protect the gardens and sports facilities. The society, as well as local residents, would prefer a university and would resist a primary/preparatory school which would result in unacceptable traffic generation in Kensington Square and/or South End. The final draft SPD recognises these constraints.

## Looking ahead

### Local Plan Review

The council is embarking on a review of the Local Plan, covering most of the subjects not covered by the previous partial reviews, identifying possible sites for development and posing questions about the options and issues for the main themes. This is currently out to consultation including sessions on all the main issues. Please participate and help form your future built environment.

## Conservation Area Proposals Statements

The council is replacing all the Conservation Area Proposals Statements (CAPS) with new Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) for the borough's 36 conservation areas. The ambitious three-year programme is well under way with several completed and the majority in progress. The council aims to have most of them adopted in mid-2017. This will provide developers, residents and planning officers a better and more up-to-date understanding of each area, but unlike the CAPS there will be little about identifying opportunities for enhancing the conservation area – which was one of the prime duties in the conservation area legislation. Nevertheless, much is being learnt about our conservation areas that should help ensure that heritage issues are fully reflected in planning decisions in conservation areas.

## Neighbourhood planning

The government is including measures on the Housing and Planning Bill to speed up and further simplify the neighbourhood planning process. Last October 100 such plans had reached the stage of a referendum and this figure has increased to 126 in the last couple of months. There are over 1,000 more in the pipeline across England.

There are fewer such plans in preparation in inner west London than in some other parts of capital (75% of Westminster is now designated for preparation of plans by different groups). The Hammersmith Society and Fulham Society have been encouraging local resident and amenity groups to look at the potential of neighbourhood planning, including for King Street, Hammersmith. Resident groups in and around the Old Oak area (north of Wormwood Scrubs and the site for the proposed HS2 and Crossrail interchange) are working up proposals for an Old Oak Neighbourhood Plan.

The council's proposals for reviewing the Local Plan may well prompt further proposals for neighbourhood plans if residents consider that they do not like the policies and proposals made for their area or if they want to change the current policies.

2016 has started with a bang with several planning inquiries, the review of the local plan, new SPDs and large new applications, such as Newcombe House. The pressure does not seem to be easing.

**Chairman: Michael Bach**

**Planning Committee: Amanda Frame, Anthony Walker, Henry Peterson,  
Sophia Lambert and Thomas Blomberg**



# Where are workers supposed to live?

Affordable housing is acquiring mythical status like the unicorn. Councils used to be the main providers but were displaced by housing associations – though if the government insists their tenants can buy their homes, a substantial cash flow for further construction will dry up. The other source should be commercial developments where local authorities can insist part of the profit is put into low cost accommodation. However, authorities around the country either willingly connive by approving housing developments that have only a tiny proportion of buildings containing low-cost accommodation – presumably in the hope of larger council tax receipts – or are taken for an expensive ride by wealthy property companies.

The Greater London Authority set a target 50% of new builds, which is so palpably overambitious that nobody has paid the slightest attention to it. Most councils like to set a preferred level in the thirties percentages, and even that is generally ignored.

Sometimes initial permissions following ‘Section 106’ negotiations include provisions but the developers then renegotiate by producing a Financial Viability Assessment purporting to show that such a level would make the scheme unprofitable. That includes a calculation suggesting the affordable number is too high, and on occasion it relies on claims about problems with the site itself, such as the need for decontamination (even when that has already been done at public expense).

These calculations are almost never dismissed, despite the companies making huge profits. Councils fear to lose the development altogether and so fail to meet their target homes level. They do not respond by expressing sympathy for the impoverished company but insisting that perhaps it should try harder and the requirement must stay. With no staff of their own qualified to scrutinise such complex arguments, councils submit the plan to outsiders for verification.

Those checkers are generally surveyors, or estate agents with surveyors on the staff, assumed to be impartial advisers. At the very least that method has a potential conflict of interests. After all, who are likely to be the biggest clients of such firms? If not at the time of the scrutiny, then later. It is certainly notable that developers’ assessments are almost always ratified.

When that happens, the council lacks the expertise or financial resources to question the conclusion. There is no offsetting mechanism for insisting on a share of

the total revenue from the project for the council, just in case the buildings do make a handsome profit. Nor is there the facility for a reassessment during the life of the building works to adjust the results in view of soaring property prices.

Even if a council decides to stand firm or not to reduce the affordable levels as far as the builder wants, the chances are the decision will be appealed. The government's Planning Inspectorate then all too often countermands the council's social conscience.

Another problem is that neither the financial viability submission by the company nor the outside assessor's comments on it, is available to the public, and often not even to the elected councillors. The claim for that is commercial confidentiality. Such a claim is hard to justify on any common-sense basis and councils could insist on transparency, but seldom do. Islington has said it will. On the rare occasions assessments have been brought into the open, the assumptions and calculations have seemed distinctly questionable.

When social or affordable housing remains part of the scheme it can be moved off site altogether and into some less salubrious neighbourhood. Alternatively, it tends to be shunted off into an unappealing corner of the site with separate entrances and facilities, on the implied grounds that sight of poor people deters the rich who buy at market rates, and as a result would depresses prices. On the few occasions there has been an investigation that appears not to be the case.

Sometimes the developer will offer a lump sum payment to the council not to build any affordable housing, on the assumption the money will be spent by the council itself erecting homes for the less well off. The money is seldom enough to create the volume of affordable housing envisaged in the original plan, especially as few councils have the land available for such work. Many councils do not ring-fence the cash so it goes into overall income.

For example, the huge Earl's Court area redevelopment currently has only 11% affordable, mostly 'intermediate', and none at social rent (see box for what the terms mean).

The inevitable conclusion is that, as London gets hollowed out by the feverish construction of luxury homes for foreigners to launder their ill-gotten gains and to provide an investment for the rich from dictatorships like China and Russia, there will be nowhere for the workers. Where are waiters, shop assistants, teachers, policemen, nurses or dustmen going to live? How far will taxi drivers, electricians, cleaners, firemen and office workers have to travel to work at high cost and over long times?

## **Definitions**

Insofar as the government has a definition, it is "social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market".

That is obviously too vague to be helpful, especially as there are different types of

social housing, such as supported housing, affordable rent and housing let to high income social tenants. According to the government's Homes and Communities Agency, "there is no specific definition of affordable housing, but it should be below market rent".

Tenants of most councils or housing associations used to pay a 'social rent' of 40% to 60% of average rents in their area but the ceiling has been raised. After the financial crisis, government grants for building affordable homes were cut by 75% from £2.5bn in 2010-11 to £651m in 2013-14. To keep up numbers of homes built, the numbers were manipulated. Some housing associations charge 65% of the market rent on properties with three-bedrooms or more, and landlords are allowed up to 80% of a normal market rent in the local authority area. This makes Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea affordable to oil sheikhs, hedge fund managers, and Chinese billionaires.

In central London an 80% affordable rent can be more than £2,400 a month which is pretty unaffordable to most of the population – on the assumption rent should be no more than 30% of income, it would imply a salary of around £100,000. However, in places like Oxford or Brighton an affordable rent can be £1,000 per month for a three-bedroom property, which still requires annual pay of £40,000. So an 'affordable rent' would be out of reach of people even on the average UK wage of £2,200 per month. In London, you can qualify for a three-bedroom affordable rental on an £85,000-a-year income, which would include MPs. In the United States and Canada, a commonly accepted guideline for housing affordability is a maximum of 30% of a household's gross income.

The shortage of affordable homes has also helped inflate the government's housing benefit bill. That was assumed to fall from the current £24 billion as people in housing-need moved from private rented accommodation to affordable rented homes. As this is currently being prevented, the housing benefit bill will reach £25 billion by April 2016, according to the Treasury.

Another definition is for social rent, which has an eight-page formula in various portions of a publication by the Homes and Communities Agency, called Rent Standard Guidance. It is not an easy read. For hardy souls prepared to tackle the puzzle, it is available in full at [www.gov.uk/housing](http://www.gov.uk/housing), then click on Regulation, then on Regulatory Framework Requirements, and finally on Rent Standard Guidance.

Yet another category is intermediate housing which is, as the word implies, something half way between affordable and commercial market rates, to allow people on low wages a chance to get a foot on the housing ladder. One method is the shared ownership model by which people buy a share of a home at a rate determined by an independent surveyor and rent the rest. They can increase the bought portion and eventually can grow to own it. This is called staircasing. Under the shared ownership rules it can be expensive.



# Feature

By  
Bobbie Vincent-Emery

## Leisure Centre

**T**HE VICTORIAN LANCASTER ROAD BATHS, demolished in 1979, had a public laundry, washing baths, and the four swimming pools which included a 33m main pool, a women's pool, and the men's 2nd class and 3rd class pools. An academy secondary school has now been built on that site.

In the mid-1970's the Kensington Leisure Centre on Walmer Road with a 33m swimming pool and a smaller second warm pool and a gym, replaced the old swimming baths. That building was subjected to a millennium refurbishment and demolished a couple of years ago to be replaced by the current Kensington Leisure Centre on the same site which opened in March 2015.

The most aggrieved users of the new facility are the adult swimmers. There was room to build a 50m Olympic-sized pool, or even replace the old 33m pool, but against most fitness swimmers' wishes and in contradiction to repeated promises, a 25m infinity-edged pool was built, and none of the pools have diving boards.

Originally RBKC proposed a swimming pool for the school that the public might use and no gym, so the local community is relieved the council managed to grope its way to the final decision to provide an additional 20m pool, a smaller one, a gym, multi-use courts, two squash courts and sauna/steam room and fitness studios.

The shortcomings in the council's consultation process however, have led to a building with facilities that do not meet the needs of some of its users, and deter others.

At the planning stage, it was so difficult to find out what leisure facilities were to be built, that one of the swimmers sent the lead councillor an extract from Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Arthur Dent was trying to see the plans displayed by the local planning office. He found them "on display in the bottom of a locked filing cabinet stuck in a disused lavatory with a sign on the door saying 'Beware of the Leopard'".

The swimmers' changing and shower areas are ridiculously inadequate. This is infuriating for those who spent hours at the last-minute drop-in sessions looking at the floor plans and talking to the design 'experts'. The ladies' changing room has only one shower cubicle and an open area with three shower fittings. The shower buttons provide water for only 40–60 seconds – the men's showers were at 4 secs. Interesting contortions are necessary to keep the shower button pressed and the water flowing. Shampooing one's hair with one hand is not easy.

The shower limbo dance takes place in full view of everyone in the changing room. The only disabled shower cubicle is just that – most of the time *it* is disabled. The gym female changing room has six shower cubicles, more

showerheads and more privacy. The minimal shower facilities for women swimmers are mirrored in the male swimmers' changing room.

The next worst design mistake is the slippery tiles around the pool. The main pool does have easy access steps, but even for people not unsteady on their feet, the walk from the main pool entrance to those steps is treacherous.

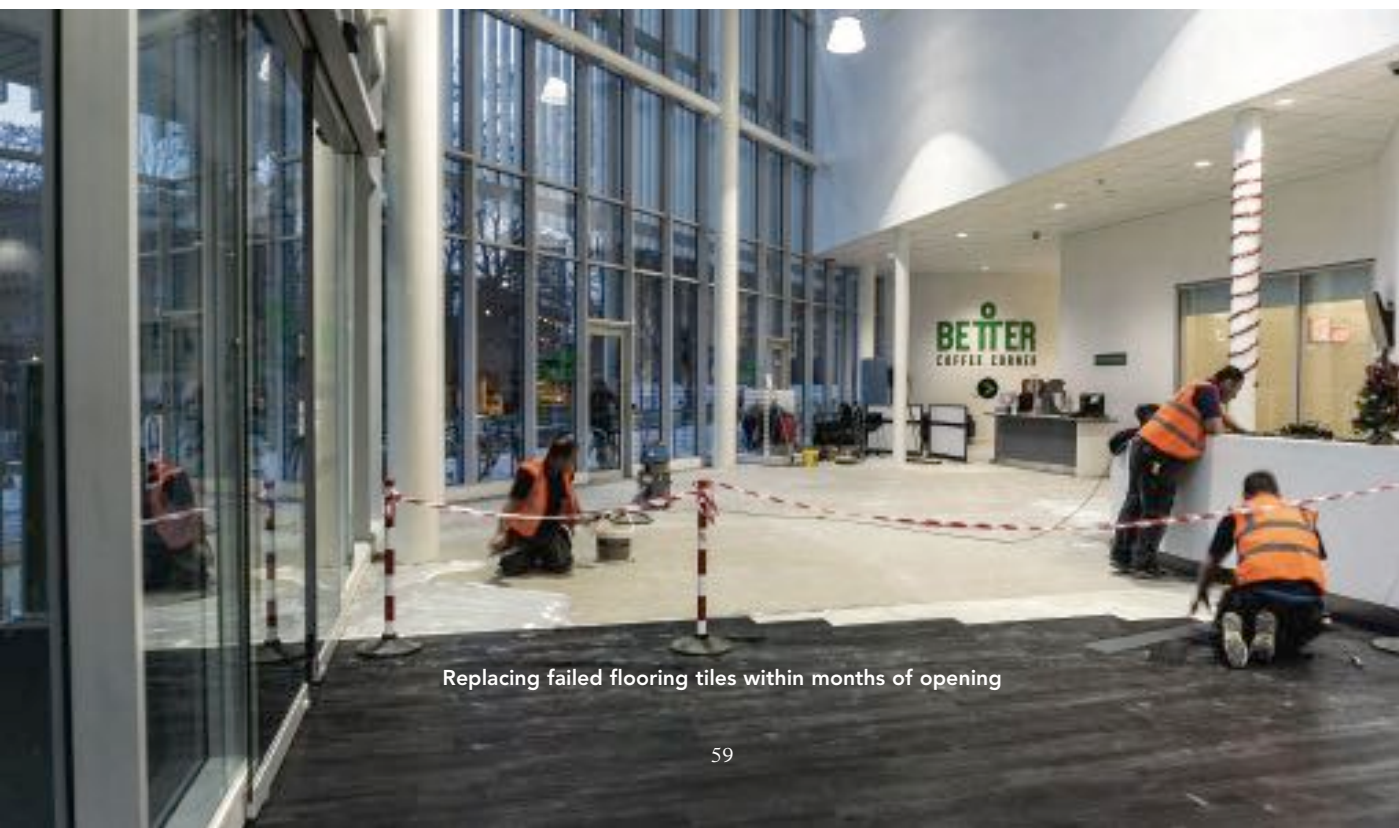
The third worst design mistake may be the vertical windows in the main swimming pool area. It has been suggested that the sunlight from these windows is the cause of the green algae growing on the tiles and grouting in the main pool. It has been a long unresolved problem. Not an inviting swimming environment. Most swimmers like the infinity pool design, but others complain about the noise of the water slapping against the gully around three sides of the pool.

The barn-like gym with 120 stations is liked by some but other gym users prefer to exercise in a smaller space, and have gravitated towards Porchester Baths which provide a series of smaller exercise areas.

There is also a problem about some of the machines' having access to the television screens.

The final design of both the swimming changing rooms and the gym, completely ignore public feedback on the proposed layout of facilities within the Leisure Centre. Many women made it clear that they valued privacy in showering and did not want to expose their mastectomy or caesarean scars in public showers. Gym users with a lot of weight to lose mentioned their embarrassment if they had to exercise in front of a large group of younger, leaner men and women.

The lower than expected membership of the Leisure Centre may also have something to do with the lack of parking spaces. The metered car park beside the previous facility has been lost. There is no car park, and this disadvantages the disabled and those who cannot walk far. The nearest tube stations are not step-free and there are no nearby bus stops. The warm pool, now open in the early morning and used by arthritic residents has not been widely publicised. Even those who used it when the Leisure Centre first opened



Replacing failed flooring tiles within months of opening

seem to have drifted away. Possibly queuing with their walking sticks in the changing room and waiting for the shower cubicle deterred them from continued membership.

LA architects, which specialises in sports and leisure buildings, was appointed by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Its philosophy is stated as believing “Architecture is more than the look of the building, each project is designed to best serve the users of the facility, and it is they who are our real clients”.

LA architects, or the councillors at Kensington and Chelsea chose a design with blank street-side walls which do not entice visitors. The vast empty space of the entrance area and the daunting spiral staircase to the gym are off-putting. There is a lift, but it is not prominently signed. The big signboard by the spiral staircase on which most facilities are listed, does not mention a lift.

The lack of a crèche, which the previous leisure facility had, does not help in attracting young mothers to take advantage of the swimming, gym or spa facilities. The bouncy castle that has appeared on one side of the sports courts hall is good idea but does not replace a properly supervised crèche. There is a little community warmth provided by a successful small cafe with drinks and snacks on the left of the entrance area.

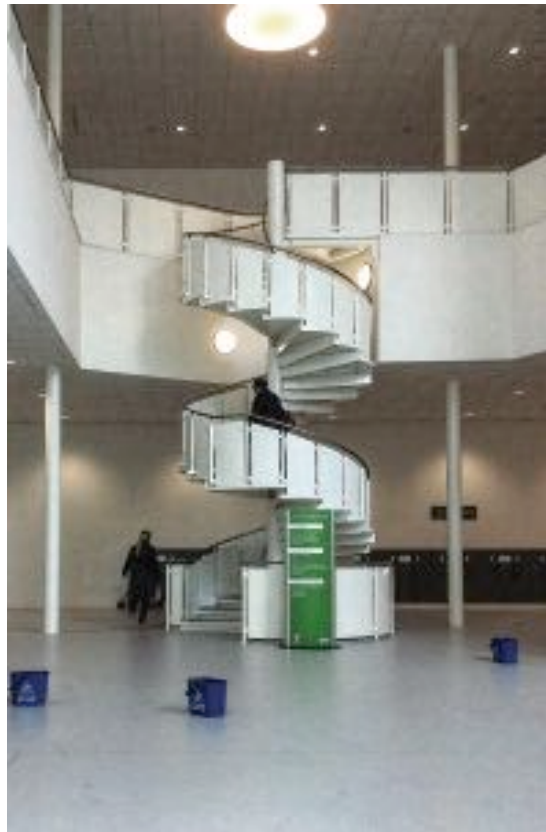
The flooring in the vast reception area was so badly done by the contractors that it has had to be removed and replaced within eight months of the opening of the Leisure Centre.

In the two years when there were no swimming facilities, and the council did not make the promised arrangements for swimmers to use the Holland Park School swimming baths, swimmers repaired to other baths in the tri-borough area (Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham). One was Porchester Baths in Bayswater. Some early morning swimmers and gym users have returned there because

they prefer the 33 m pool and its gym facilities to the new Kensington pools and gym.

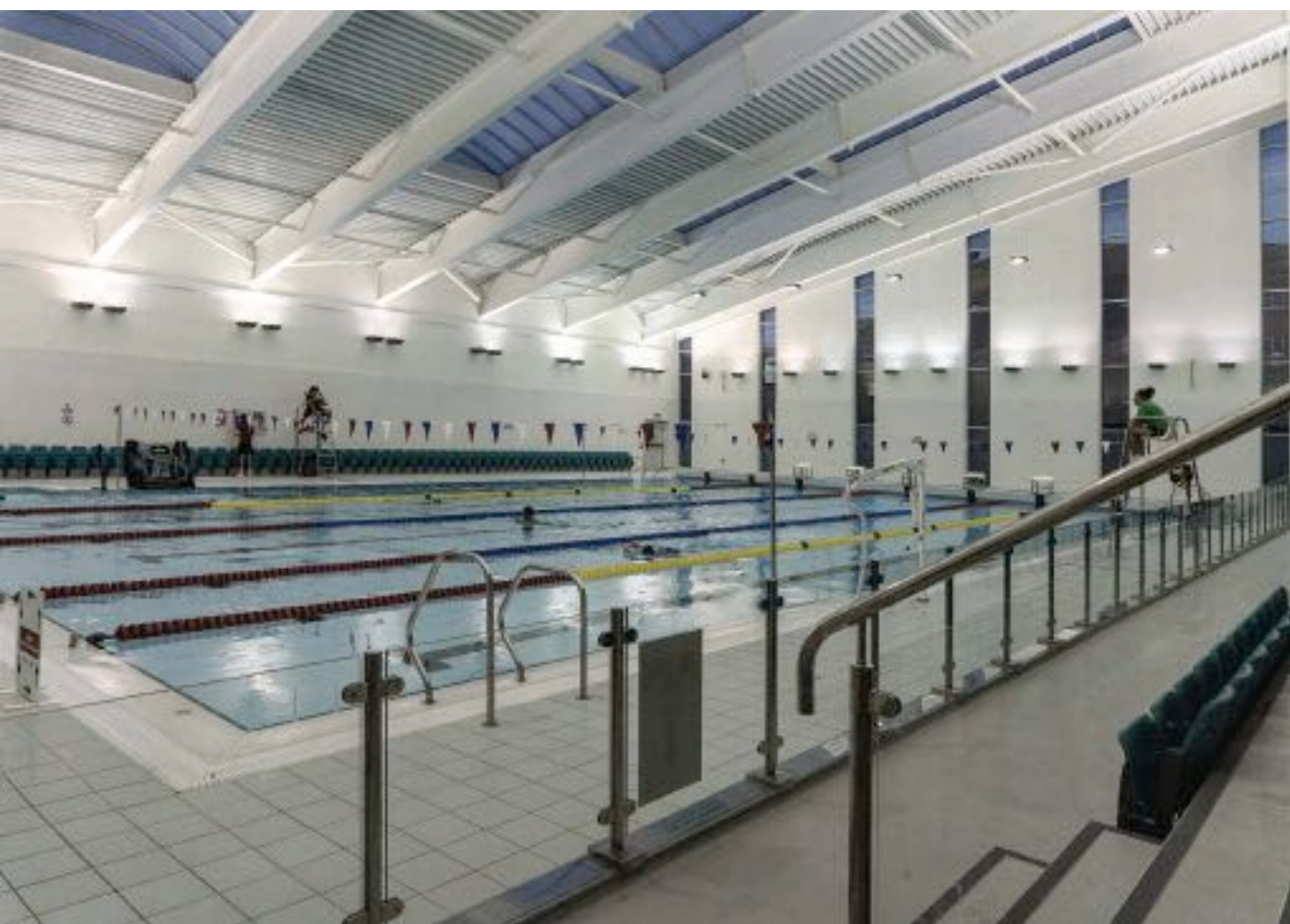
Porchester was built in the 1920's but its changing rooms in both swim and gym areas have recently been refurbished. The original green tiles in the pool are not green by way of algae. The showers are more numerous than in Kensington and they have good water pressure with a lever tap allowing users not just to set temperature but to keep the water flowing until they turn it off. The gym facilities are divided into smaller, more comfortable areas with refurbished shower and changing facilities, and the small lobby contains an elegant statue.

The Kensington facilities are run by GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited which calls itself Better), a charitable social enterprise, which all agree does a good job. It also runs the Westminster facilities, which include Porchester Baths.



Persistent roofing leaks





# Reports

From  
**AFFILIATED SOCIETIES, 2015**

## **ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

2015 has been an extraordinarily busy year for our organisation: apart from "business as usual", meaning keeping a lookout for all manner of planning transgressions and having them remedied whenever possible, we have been keeping a watchful eye on the ever metastasising super-bright LED advertising panels that seem to be cropping up everywhere from bus stops to larger sized panels (some in excess of 100m2) alongside the A4 Cromwell Road.

We are working in close co-operation with nearby sister organizations and new kid on the block: Ashburn Gardens Square Garden Association. Together with the latter we have been doing our utmost to raise awareness of and fight against plans by the owners of the Holiday Inn Kensington Forum Hotel to build a casino in the middle of our residential neighbourhood that would be a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year operation, and would bring up to 1,500 extra people a day into the area. Our efforts bore fruit when the application was resoundingly refused by RBKC's Planning Department in March 2015. There has since been an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate and the case will go to a public Inquiry some time in April 2016. Residents have registered their interest in the proceedings and we are determined to defend our neighbourhood. We are fortunate and very grateful to have the help and support of the Kensington Society in our hour of need. No doubt there will be much to report on the outcome of this case in next year's issue.

**Friederike Maeda**

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## **THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION**

There has been intense basement activity this year in Seymour Walk - a narrow cul-de-sac of picturesque Victorian and Georgian houses running off the Fulham Road. The Boltons Association has assisted the Seymour Walk Residents Association (helped in turn by the Markham Square Residents Association) in relation to liaising with RBKC on the 'rash' of permitted development basement applications in Seymour Walk. Put simply, the carriageway is too narrow for skips,



so some creative and constructive thought has gone into how to make life as bearable as possible for residents while construction work is taking place. Our activities have included a meeting with the chair of RBKC's Planning Committee, the new Director of Planning and Borough Conservation and our ward councillors.

The Boltons Association's autumn meeting hosted a speaker from Capital and Counties Properties, who told us about the Earl's Court Development.

**Calvin Jackson, Chairman**

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## BROMPTON ASSOCIATION

The association has been consulted on the inspirational new proposals for the Natural History Museum (NHM) which, along with the Kensington Society and other local groups, it warmly supports. This will help relieve the queues and over-crowding. The scheme will also provide the NHM with a new lower ground floor café, shop and courtyard linked to the museum tunnel. The green space of the East Lawn – which our association has long championed – will be retained above.

Together with plans to restore the main hall of Waterhouse's great building and improve access routes within the building, the NHM is at last taking the kind of convincing and holistic approach for which we have long argued. Curiously, RBKC planners seem somewhat equivocal about this imaginative new scheme basing their views to date on a poorly conceived and now outdated SPD issued at a time when the NHM had wholly other, and insensitive, ambitions. Regrettably, the borough's Architectural Appraisal Panel has not helped. To the best of our







knowledge panel members live outside the borough; unlike residents they may not understand the background or full context.

Plans for South Kensington station are at an early stage but we continue to argue for the proper restoration of the shopfronts in the station arcade and for the retention of the terrace in Thurloe Street which we consider makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. We have demonstrated to TfL how the 19thC shopfronts along this terrace should be designed and reinstated.

Opposite the V&A and working with a grant from RBKC and supported by the Thurloe Residents' Association, we commissioned Kim Wilkie to redesign the small but highly visible triangle of land on which the Yalta Memorial is sited. This green area is currently a mess and during last summer became the haunt of groups of beggars moving into the area from Hyde Park Corner. The next step is to secure funding to turn the scheme into reality. The completed project will significantly enhance the area.

Licensing, tables and chairs, supercars, lorry parking on the pavement in Exhibition Road and street cleaning continue as issues, as of course do basements and construction traffic. The now notorious huge hole in the ground behind 31 Brompton Square is still there. A revised planning application is expected. We continue to wait with anticipation.

**Sophie Andreae DSG, FSA, IHBC, Chairman**

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## THE CAMPDEN HILL RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Campden Hill Residents' Association works for the community and endeavours to address the concerns of our members. These concerns can be submitted to us at any time throughout the year and also discussed in person at our AGM.

Our area includes Holland Park and we have representation on the RBK&C Advisory Committee. The Park's new sign-posting is currently under discussion and will be installed in 2016.

We have close ties with Holland Park School, whose students provide valuable assistance at our annual Garden Party.

Community use of the school's facilities is something that we have been championing for several years. It is hoped that a structure and plan will soon be in place that meets the needs of all concerned.



The CHRA also works with the Safer Neighbourhood Team and has close contact with our local police. Writing of recent severe budget cuts, and a slight rise in crime statistics, our representative reflected that, “we seem to have gone from Rolls Royce policing to something that might be closer to say, a rather used Golf”.

**David White, Chairman**

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## **CLARENDON CROSS RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION**

A new associate member of the Kensington Society in 2015, Clarendon Cross Residents’ Association covers the Clarendon Cross area with members living principally on Portland Road, Princedale Road, Pottery Lane and Penzance Place. At the heart of our community is the Clarendon Cross ‘village centre’ with its shops, galleries and the famous Julie’s restaurant.

Given the nature of our area and the diverse range of residents and businesses, we focus our efforts largely on building and retaining a sense of community and encouraging good relations between residents and businesses, as well as raising awareness of our wider community and some of the local charities and groups that work there.

2015 began on a positive note with local pub ‘The Academy’ in Princedale Road being awarded Asset of Community Value status, following the tremendous efforts of the Norland Conservation Society, supported by local residents, councillors and the Kensington Society.

At the same time we saw the ‘temporary’ closure of Julie’s restaurant to allow for its first, proper, refurbishment since opening in 1969. The closure has continued rather longer than hoped, largely as a result of issues with a separate development to the rear of the restaurant. We look forward to seeing Julie’s reopen its doors later this year and the buzz that it provides the area return.

With the new basement policies adopted by RBKC in January 2015, we received increasing numbers of approaches from builders and architects to comment on their draft Construction Traffic Management Plans (CTMPs) for proposed projects incorporating basements. Whilst we have welcomed the consultative process and opportunity to comment on behalf of the community, it has also increased our workload considerably. The seminar delivered in May by the Kensington Society with guidance on reading and commenting on CTMPs was extremely helpful in dealing with this new task. The main area where we seem to have an impact on is reducing the number and time period of resident parking bay suspensions during building works. The level of noise and construction traffic through our narrow streets remain blights nonetheless!

Socially, following our AGM and drinks in April, we ran another successful quiz night at the Academy Pub in the summer and were pleased to be invited by the local retailers to be involved in their annual Christmas Party event in December with late night shopping, mulled wine, food and even reindeers! A great event, which brings the community together at the end of the year.

**Carolyn Arnold, Chairman**



## THE EARL'S COURT SOCIETY

The society includes 12 local residents' associations and thus represents many thousands of local residents in the area.

Ward councillors (from EC, Abingdon, Courtfield, Redcliffe) and Post Office managers arranged a public consultation, on 8th September at St Cuthbert's, attended by 120 residents. The main points raised were that the Post Office forward business plan does not take into account the large number of visitors, residents, commuters and businesses, that RBKC policies require local community facilities in "walkable" distance, ie within 800m, and Kensington High Street branch will not be able to cope.

We were distressed at the anti-social behaviour in Earl's Court Road over the summer. Ward councillors and John Walker (chair Safer Neighbourhood committee) worked with police and RBKC. One perpetrator was sent to prison for breaching his conditions. We are working on getting PSOs in place (formerly ASBOs). There are two excellent long-term solutions being introduced but, like all government legal processes, these will take time – a Public Space Protection Order may be possible.

The Old Brompton Road junction triangle has been planted as a demonstration garden. The mayor will open our social housing community gardens. New pedestrian crossings at Finborough and Old Brompton Roads are being implemented by Transport for London following lobbying by Redcliffe ward councillors.

The Zaha Hadid sculptural advertising structure has been approved but the new Cromwell Road planting scheme will be delayed due to a change of funding until next year.

A report by the Health & Safety Executive confirmed there are zero asbestos problems on the demolition site and it has no concerns over its removal. We continue to hold monthly neighbours' meetings with CapCo and Keltbray, the main demolition contractor, about noise, nuisance and environmental health.

The 16-week illegal refuse-dumping project has completed with a 30%





reduction in illegal dumping. We are asking for the project to be rolled out across RBKC, with a revisit to EC every few weeks for further 4-week blitzes. 71,200 tonnes of illegally-dumped refuse were lifted. The council investigated 1,582 bags, and found ID for 140 people. Fixed penalty notices were issued to 70 people. 1,227 prostitutes cards were also taken down.

**Malcolm Spalding**

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## **EARL'S COURT SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ECSRA)**

ECSRA is entering the new year with a celebratory win. It has won £2,500 from Western Riverside Waste Authority/RBKC in their Golden Ticket prize Recycle Right draw for organisations and community groups. Our thanks to Heidi Bradner for all her hard work in achieving this. The ECSRA is very proud of its refuse collection/recycling team of volunteers, led by Heidi, who liaise with Streetline/RBKC to rectify the ever-constant problem of fly-tipping on the square. The executive committee of the ECSRA is visiting the Western Riverside Recycling Centre to see first hand the financial and environmental benefits of recycling. We have invited Karen Crozier, RBKC's Cleansing and Enforcement Manager, to speak at our AGM as we feel that this is such a hot topic in the square. Karen Crozier will also be able to explain why some things are harmful and counterproductive to put into recycling bags and members will be able to raise recycling/refuse collection queries with Karen at the AGM, which is being held at The Bolton, 326 Earl's Court Road, on March 3rd 2016.



**Christine Powell**

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## **EARL'S COURT VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ESCVA)**

### **Improving the Environment**

**The ECVRA** have been trying to solve the vexing problem of empty cans, bottles and take-away debris being thrown into a small well at the junction of Kenway Road and Redfield Lane. The committee decided to plant the area and, happily, it seems to have encouraged people to take their litter away with them.

### **Christmas Lights**

A party was held in Kenway Road to celebrate the installation on lamp posts in the Earl's Court Road of Christmas trees with



sparkling lights and we are grateful to the local business community, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Transport for London, CAPCO and our three councillors who supported the project.

**Philippa Seebohm**

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## **EDWARDES SQUARE SCARSDALE AND ABINGDON ASSOCIATION**

The last twelve months has been hectic, not least with the increasing number of repeat CTMP applications for the same sites.

Applications for the Odeon site have taken up a lot of our time and we now have Rule 6 status for the appeal which, by the time you read this, will have been held and we will be awaiting the outcome. There is an acceptable proposal which was approved in July last year but the developer is fighting for what we consider to be a totally inappropriate proposal in which most of the cinema entrances are from the narrow pavement in Earl's Court Road.

We welcome the number of developers who actively seek our advice at an early stage and this has included proposals for Allen House and Avon House in Allen Street.

On the horizon is the redevelopment of the Warwick Road Depot which is just on the edge of our area and will have a significant impact on us all.

**Anthony Walker**

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## **FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK**

Holland Park faces huge challenges from council budget cuts, climate change and ever increasing popularity. We encourage use of urban green spaces but must be wary of people using the park as a place of business (such as some trainers and children's party organisers), charging their clients but paying nothing towards the upkeep of the facilities they enjoy.

Opera Holland Park is now a charitable trust and we are exploring with them, the council and architects, better use of the Holland House site, with the terrace open to the public for longer each year and a more visually attractive alternative to the summer tents.

We are working with park management to make facilities and planting more resilient; to protect the woodland habitat and the historical assets; and to guard against commercialisation in the park. Development of a long-term strategy for the treescape involves a proactive tree health plan. Every effort will be made to prevent short-term budget cuts having a detrimental effect in the long term.

**Jennie Kettlewell, Chairman**



## KENSINGTON SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Our association has been kept busy on several fronts over the past year. First the redevelopment of the NCP car park on 19-27 Young Street is well under way. We have been meeting regularly with Grainger who was selected to transform the council-owned site into residential flats for both sale and rent, to provide feedback on traffic management and keep noise, dust and vibration disruptions at a minimum. We are delighted that to this effect a full-time traffic marshal and additional logistics manager have been hired to manage the flow of traffic in Young Street.

On the southern side of the square, Heythrop College has announced that it is closing its doors and RBKC has published a Supplementary Planning Document for consultation. Preserving the tranquil nature of the site and its historic character, retaining social and community use while ensuring a good mix of use are all key objectives, keeping in mind that access to the site is quite constrained. We will be commenting on the SPD as well as closely monitoring the forthcoming planning applications.

The association has been also quite busy with objecting to plans to modify access to 99-121 Kensington High Street, including Derry Street and Kensington Square. The applicant has now filed an appeal to the original application, which was refused on multiple grounds thanks to our concerted efforts. Indeed it would have led to the loss of a historic building fabric, harming the setting of nearby listed buildings and conservation area, and unacceptably increasing noise pollution and general disruption to the living conditions of the residents. It would also have been a clear breach of existing planning conditions such as limiting the use of 25 Kensington Square access for emergency purposes only.

We continue to work closely with planning consultants in this formal and legally driven process. Protecting the amenity of the residents and the character of one of the oldest London squares however, is paramount; a worthwhile but time consuming endeavour.

**Frederique Alexandre**

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## THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

The Knightsbridge Association has been in consultation with Cheval Properties and the Knightsbridge Estate on two major redevelopments, where important Edwardian facades are to be retained. Work has begun on 55-91 Knightsbridge but delays have occurred through a lack of agreement on the CTMP, this has now been resolved. The Knightsbridge Estate will be submitting plans shortly to RBKC for K1, the section from Hooper's Court going east to Sloane St. The proposal is to retain the façade and redevelop the interior with a mixture of residential units, offices, shops and a restaurant. The proposed plans also include step-free access and air cooling to the tube station below. We noticed a slight increase in basement applications to WCC before their new rules on basement developments came into force. The association has actively supported the setting up of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood





Forum (KNF) ([www.knightsbridgeforum.org](http://www.knightsbridgeforum.org)), which received official approval from WCC this summer. The steering committee, comprising local residents and members of businesses and the institutions, has now been set up under the chairmanship of Simon Birkett. The committee is discussing the next stage: the neighbour plan. The KNF held a drop-in public consultation on 26 and 27 February at Imperial College to seek local residents' views on the plan.

**Carol Seymour-Newton**

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## LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

The Ladbroke Association has had a busy year with an avalanche of planning applications. This no doubt reflects a number of factors, including the improvement in the economy and the current tax incentive to extend rather than move. The avalanche has included a steady stream of applications for basements, and more recently a number of applications for certificates of lawful development for plans to build basements "under the footprint of the house", before the rules change in April this year, making it a requirement for these basements too to have full planning permission.

The results of all this activity on the planning front are only too clear on our streets, almost none of which are without hoardings and lorries carrying away spoil. The question everybody is asking is will this ever stop or are we condemned to eternal rebuildings and major refurbishments and streets that are never clear of noisy, dusty and obtrusive building work.





Like most parts of the borough, we have had our fair share of past famous residents and there are a number of blue plaques on our buildings. A determined resident has for some time been pressing English Heritage to put a plaque up for the cartoonist and architectural historian, who was brought up in Elgin Crescent on one of our communal gardens. English Heritage finally agreed, and the plaque was unveiled this summer, an event that the Ladbroke Association was happy to celebrate with an event in the communal garden, attended by several members of the Lancaster clan.

**Sophia Lambert**

## **NEVERN SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

2015 has been an interesting year for the association, with the start of the demolition of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre, and as with any site of considerable complexity, it is hard to know quite what the space is going to look like when completed. Given the fact that it is a 20-year over the 77-acre site (the site straddles two local authorities), it is anticipated that a lot will change.

However, one of the joys of Earl's Court is that sandwiched on either side of Earl's Court Road is that we have a series of wonderfully maintained garden squares that are literally oasis of calm for the many families that live here.

One issue that has emerged over the course of this last year is that of poor or uneven water pressure, and to that end a small committee has been formed including Thames Water officers to try and identify the source of the problem, see whether or not there is a solution to improve the situation, and that information gained can be incorporated into the design for the development area.

**Linda Wade, Chairman**



## NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

In December 2014 The Academy pub at 57 Princedale Road became the first pub in Kensington to be listed as Asset of Community Value (ACV). The Academy is one of the last remaining pubs in Norland Conservation Area. During 2014 and 2015 NSC, supported by many local residents, campaigned to prevent change of use first to a gallery and then to a restaurant.

Finally in September NCS appeared in court at a tribunal hearing as second appellants to the council's first. NCS hired a barrister to prepare its defence against the appeal by Wellington Pub Company (which owns 800 pubs in the UK) that the ACV listing of the first and second floors of the Academy was unlawful and ultra vires. The court judged in favour of the council and NCS and The Academy pub's ACV status remains intact on the whole building.

In the future every pub owner in the UK who applies to turn the residential floors of a pub into private flats will be referred to this ruling if, like NCA residents, local residents are fighting to save their pub.

When not in the pub, NCS is working with the council's enforcement team to de-mystify



Article 4 Directions for homeowners who do not know what this implies. The letter will be piloted in the NCA and if the response is successful will be followed up throughout the borough.

We are still trying to convince the council that a 20mph speed limit in NCA is needed if an accident is to be avoided.

Finally racing of another category – on 15 March NCS's annual lecture, Jeremy Edge told the story of Notting Hill's Hippodrome and charted the race course's brief glory and final demise from 1837 – 1841.

**Libby Kinmonth**

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## ONSLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

This association had an uncomfortable month in the middle of the summer holidays when an application was submitted to RBKC under the Permitted Development rights from Holy Trinity Brompton, Onslow Square, for an underground excavation of St Paul's church. Being unused to

this type of application, the association had to resort to external legal assistance to produce a successful reason why this legislation was not legally correct for this type of development to the church in





Onslow Square. Our position was made that much more difficult, in that the advice given by the RBKC planning officer to the applicant, was that such an application under this legislation would be successful.

The matter of pre-planning advice continues to be an issue that we think should involve local residents and associations, and not just be recommendations from the RBKC planning department without any reference to the neighbours. Further, any printed advice should be available to the public as part of the documentation, with each case before the case is considered by the planning committee.

The council has made a borough-wide Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights in relation to basement development. This will come into force on 28 April 2016.

**Eva Skinner**

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## **ST HELENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

Much of the year has been dominated by the activity of our sister organisation (with the same membership), the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum. While it has been an long process and a lot of work, we are persuaded that a neighbourhood plan can make sense and bring results for areas with development sites that have an uncertain future. The planning report from Michael Bach, elsewhere in this annual, provides an update on our neighbourhood plan.

Concern over very tall buildings remains an issue. The new campus at Imperial West, with bulky and unattractive 12–16 storey buildings alongside Westway, loom over the western end of Oxford Gardens. The proposed 35 storey residential tower, granted planning permission after a lengthy planning battle by our association, is not yet under construction.

Imperial College could have followed the example of Oxford University, where the new School of Government in the heart of the city is a building of serious architectural quality, on a site redeveloped at a height and density which the citizens of Oxford will appreciate. Instead, we are seeing a wasted opportunity and a badly overdeveloped site immediately across the borough boundary in Hammersmith.

The association has also been turning its attention to the proposals for Old Oak, north of Wormwood Scrubs and the site of the proposed HS2 and Crossrail station. While construction remains some years away, decisions will be made in 2016 which will have huge effects on this part of West London. The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation published the first draft of its Local Plan in January.

A planning application from Cargiant and London Regional Properties, to build 7,000 new homes at Old Oak, is likely to be submitted almost before first round public consultation on the Local Plan concludes. Not for the first time, the statutory plan for the area will be playing catch-up rather than leading the process of development.

These developers have so far proved more willing to engage in serious local consultation than is often the case. For this we must be grateful. The several small residential communities in and around



the Old Oak area are currently working up proposals to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

While it will be a couple of decades before this new part of London is fully built, the big decisions on its future will be decided within months rather than years. North Kensington residents need to be alert to what is being planned on their doorstep and the implications for the transport, highway, and infrastructure of the wider area.

**Henry Peterson at [info@stqw.org](mailto:info@stqw.org) or [sthelensasn@aol.com](mailto:sthelensasn@aol.com).**

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## **THURLOE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

### **Residents Disappointed by Lack of Engagement by Elected Officials and Government**

After years of trying to work with local officials and reaping very little, area residents are weary.

- Residents call police to report anti-social behaviour as they have been told to do – nothing happens and complaints are ignored;
- Residents object to planning applications and attend planning hearings – applications are waved through with barely an acknowledgement of the harm to quality of life;
- Residents contact noise and nuisance officers to report significant noise (bagpipers, drummers, supercars etc) – they are told very nicely that there is nothing that can be done;
- Residents spend all day in a licensing hearing for a club that has had significant brawls outside in the early morning – the club still keeps its late hours and residents are told that they live in a big city;
- Residents ask for help from government, but many officials are so focused on personal projects or commercial and business interests, that residents' quality of life falls by the wayside. Even when local government does attempt to make life better for residents, its efforts, whilst well-meaning, are often poorly executed.

Residents value the borough and don't want to relocate en masse. What to do?

The only way forward is direct action! Residents and resident associations must work to unite the community around issues that affect us in order to compel local officials to not only listen, but act. We can no longer wait patiently for local officials to do something – they won't unless they made to do so. Only then, will our quality of life improve!

**TRA team**

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## **VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

The dark shadow of the De Vere Gardens development (aka One Kensington Gardens), completed in March, still looms over the area - nine months on it is less than half sold and 95% empty.

The year has, however, been dominated by the completion of repaving of the surroundings, raised tables at the entrances to our



area from Kensington Road – the last should be completed before Easter – and, finally, the public art proposals.

The latter proved controversial because it might involve the loss of the flowerbed on the island at the junction of Launceston Place and Victoria Grove and because of the contemporary designs. The funds provided by developers, if not used, will be returned.

Two long-running cases reached the appeal stage – 15/16 Albert Mews and 19 South End (aka the stripey house). The latter went to a public inquiry as well as a court case resisting the council's enforcement against the "paint job". We are very impressed by the council's enforcement team.

Basement projects are more under control, especially improved controls on traffic impact and working hours. We have secured considerable "compliance" with no Saturday working and, wherever possible, no skips.

A very full agenda – and much the same in 2016?

**Michael Bach**

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## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING, NURSERY LANE, LATIMER ROAD**

The outcome of the 'examination' of the St Quintin and Woodlands Draft Neighbourhood Plan (for an area of North Kensington) demonstrated the potential of this relatively new part of the national planning framework. At a public hearing last September, the neighbourhood forum argued its case against developers Metropolis Property Ltd, which had applied to build 21 town-houses on an undeveloped backland site within the defined neighbourhood area. This piece of land has been used since the 1960s by Clifton Nurseries as an offshoot to its well-known garden centre in Little Venice.

The independent examiner supported the proposal in the Draft Plan that new housing should instead be built on brownfield land, above existing warehouse and light industrial premises at Units 1–14 Latimer Road. The council's existing 'enterprise' policies resist such development, allowing only B1 office use in the sections of this mixed use street designated as part of an Employment Zone.

Subject to support at a local referendum, the neighbourhood plan policies for Latimer Road will supersede those in the Local Plan. The contested site and two other backlands were accepted as meeting the national criteria as Local Green Space, giving them strong protection against future development.

This outcome has thus lived up to the government's promise that neighbourhood plans are a 'powerful tool', allowing local people to decide what sort of development they want where in their area, provided that the neighbourhood's proposals 'generally conform' with the Local Plan and allow for as much or more development overall. The local referendum is scheduled for February 2016, and will be the second in the borough following on from the Norland Neighbourhood Plan.





## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

<b>Income</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Donations and legacies</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Membership subscriptions	9,287.00	9,347.00
Donations	1,826.00	3,051.00
Legacies	1,000.00	921.40
Gift Aid	2,715.82	2,361.20
<b>Total donations and legacies</b>	<b>14,828.82</b>	<b>15,680.60</b>
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Events	4,132.29	6,930.00
Annual report advertising	5,770.00	5,770.00
<b>Total charitable activities</b>	<b>9,902.29</b>	<b>12,700.00</b>
<b>Investment income</b>		
Bank interest	247.64	247.65
<b>Total income</b>	<b>24,978.75</b>	<b>28,628.25</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Newsletter	1,399.50	1,729.97
Events	3,142.52	10,414.40
Annual report	7,642.45	7,168.20
Professional fees	4,845.96	11,723.69
PayPal fees	53.96	8.28
Charitable subscriptions	80.00	80.00
<b>Total charitable activities expense</b>	<b>17,164.39</b>	<b>31,124.54</b>
<b>Other</b>		
Insurance	321.51	333.38
Professional fees	0.00	500.00
Membership expenses	1,405.79	161.58
<b>Total other expense</b>	<b>1,727.30</b>	<b>994.96</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>18,891.69</b>	<b>32,119.50</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	<b>6,087.06</b>	<b>(3,491.25)</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds brought forward</b>	<b>70,895.13</b>	<b>74,386.38</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds carried forward</b>	<b>76,982.19</b>	<b>70,895.13</b>

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015 £	2014 £
<b>Current assets</b>		
<b>Debtors</b>		
<b>Accrued income and prepayments</b>		
Interest	62.42	62.42
Insurance	223.99	203.60
<b>Total accrued income and prepayments</b>	<b>286.41</b>	<b>266.02</b>
<b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>		
Scottish Widows Bank	62,000.00	62,000.00
Barclays Bank	15,180.91	10,402.39
PayPal	290.06	161.72
<b>Total cash at bank and in hand</b>	<b>77,470.97</b>	<b>72,564.11</b>
 <b>Total current assets</b>	 <b>77,757.38</b>	 <b>72,830.13</b>
 <b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>		
<b>Deferred income</b>		
Subscriptions and donations	30.00	390.00
Events	60.00	1,045.00
<b>Accruals</b>		
Professional fees	685.19	500.00
<b>Total deferred income and accruals</b>	<b>775.19</b>	<b>1,935.00</b>
 <b>Net assets</b>	 <b>76,982.19</b>	 <b>70,895.13</b>
 <b>Funds of the charity</b>		
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>76,982.19</b>	<b>70,895.13</b>

Approved by the Trustees on 21 January 2016.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

The total income for the year was £24,978.75 which is a decrease of £3,649.50 from last year. The two non-comparable items in the 2014 figures were the income from the Kensington Society 60th Jubilee of £2,700 and residents' societies' contributions to professional fees of £1,250.

Gift Aid received was £2,715.82, an increase of £354.62. Gift Aid is claimed from subscriptions and donations received from members and non-members who have signed the gift aid form. This increases the value of these gifts by 25%.

As the income is less than £25,000.00 by £21.25, no examination of the accounts for the Charity Commission is required saving £500.00 of professional fees.

The annual report expense (net of advertising income) is £1,872.45. Charitable activities professional fees were incurred for advice on planning issues. In total this amounted to £4,845.96.

The balance sheet remains strong with the funds of the Society increasing to £76,982.19 from £70,895.13. £62,000.00 is on deposit with the Scottish Widows Bank. These funds give a strong financial base to the society's activities and it is expected that they will be maintained at this amount.

The society wishes to thank all the members who have generously subscribed £9,287.00 and donated £2,826 and participated in the events during the year.

### Notes to the accounts

- **Accounting policies**

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historic cost in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102) which is effective from 1 January 2015.

### Income

- **Recognition of incoming resources**

These are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when:

The charity becomes entitled to the resources;

The trustees are virtually certain they will receive the resources; and

The monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

- **Donations**

Donations are only included in the SoFA when the charity has unconditional entitlement to the resources.

- **Gift Aid tax reclaims on subscriptions and donations**

Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the SoFA to the extent that claims have been made.

- **Volunteer help**

The value of any voluntary help received is not included in the financial activities.

- **Investment income**

This is included in the financial activities when receivable.

### Expenditure and liabilities

- **Liability recognition**

Liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to pay out resources.




*The Kensington Society would like to express our gratitude and thanks to:*

- Lord Carnwath, Justice of the Supreme Court and RBKC resident, for his fascinating speech at the 2015 AGM.
- The Mayor, Councillor Maighread Condon-Simmonds, for her use of the Mayor's Parlour for the reception following the 2015 AGM.
- Jim Babington and Julia Gordon-Lennox of the RBKC Mayor's office whose support of the Kensington Society over the years has been invaluable.
- Robert Adams, Denise Frost, Matthew Perry, Tracy John and other members of the RBKC conference and events team who ensure that all Kensington Society events run smoothly
- All our advertisers and supporters.

*For the wonderful and informative people who helped with the events series of 2015:*

- Graham Seel, author of 'King John and Underrated King', for his enthralling talk about Charles Sims' highly controversial painting.
- Robert Stephenson who provided an outstanding private tour of the Brompton Cemetery and its park, gardens and catacombs.
- Christopher Saunders, brother of Dame Cicely Saunders – founder of the modern hospice movement, who offered his personal view of this inspirational woman.
- Shirley Nicholson and Heather Farwell for making the Linley Sambourne house come alive.
- Julian Trill, senior officer of RBKC's noise and nuisance team, for his interesting and engaging talk about Construction and Building Site Noise and the council's new policy.
- John Norman, organ consultant and lecturer, for his captivating talk about organs, Sam Barber, organist of St John's, for his beautiful music following the talk and Jamie Singleton for his spirited discussion about the funding of the St John's organ restoration and other lottery projects.
- Geoffrey Roome, Kensington Society member and long-time Notting Hill resident, for organising the brilliant organ event at St John's Church as well as providing information about the Church's permanent Notting Hill exhibition.
- Barbara Weiss for her thought-provoking talk on proliferation of tall buildings in London and the Skyline Campaign.
- Dave Walker, RBKC local studies librarian, for his enthralling private tour of the deepest sub-level of the Kensington Central Library.

*And to everyone who has assisted, encouraged and backed the Society throughout the year!*



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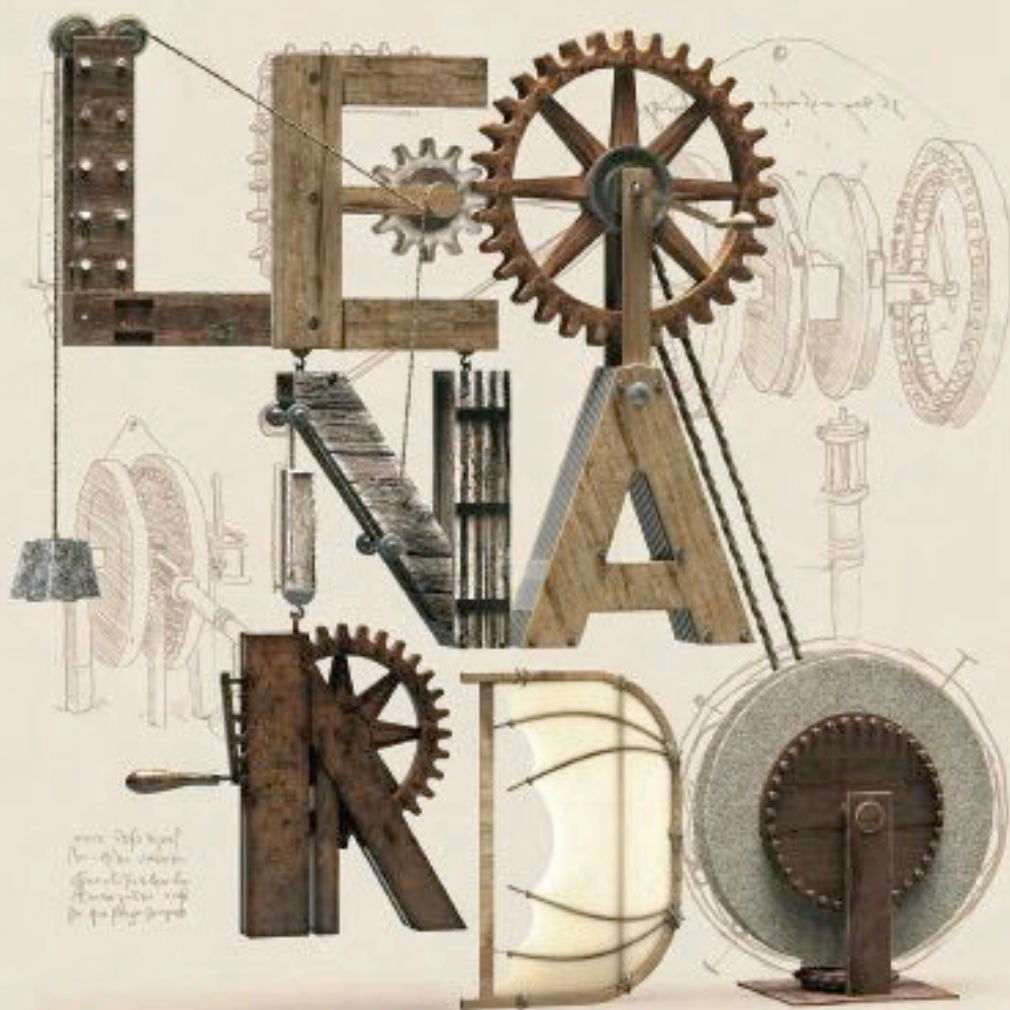
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Photographs in this annual of Sir Quentin Blake, retailers, unveiling of the Osbert Lancaster plaque, swimming pool and leisure centre, and current pictures of Frestonia were by **photoBECKET**, a wedding, social and portrait photographer in Kensington.

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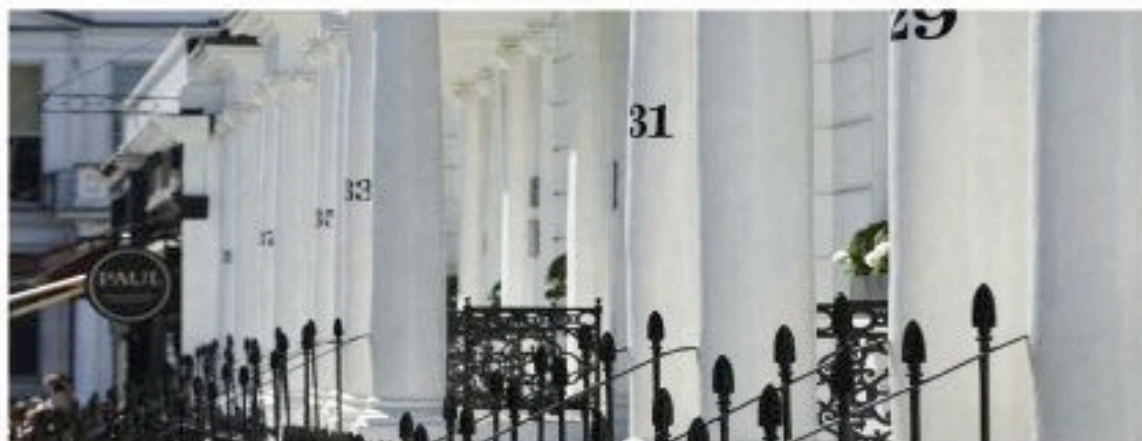
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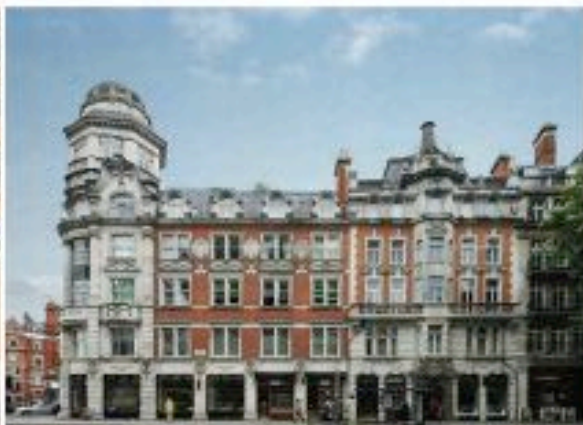


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