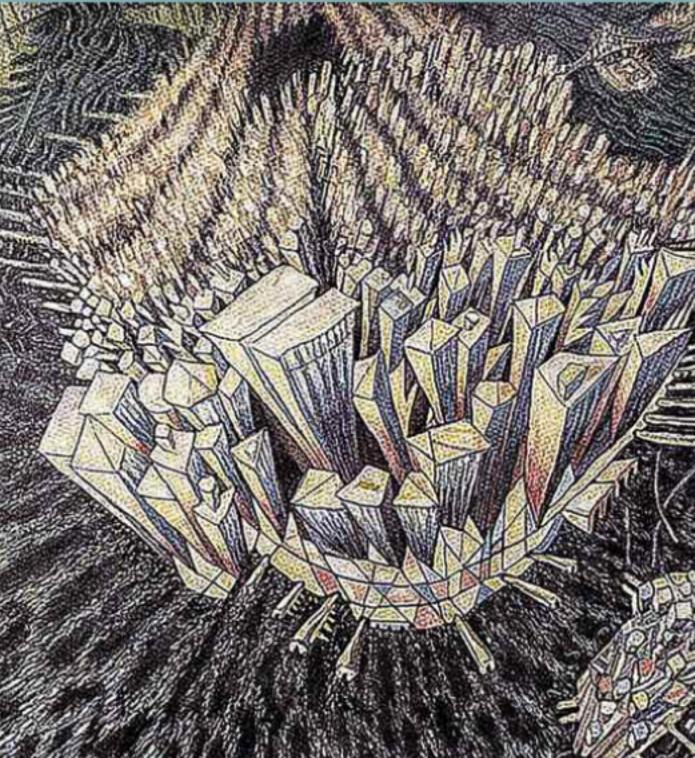
# KENSINGTON Society 2018-2019



## **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 illustration by Charlotte Johnson Wahl, © the artist – for more about her see page 20

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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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# President's report

#### Nick Ross

#### Global, national, and us... drifting apart or pulling together

THERE USED TO be an unspoken pact that, even if we took one step back for each two forward, life would relentlessly improve. Once the cold war was over, trade, travel and tourism brought people together and the world was becoming an ever-friendlier place. Wages would rise and the next generation would do better than we did and have healthier and longer lives. Here in Britain social barriers would progressively dissolve. Oh, and our homes would be sure-fire investments.

But with a long and seemingly endless economic slowdown comes disillusionment, nationalism and even tribalism. We in the UK we have escaped the resurgence of strong-arm and xenophobic rulers in places like Austria, Brazil, Hungary, the Philippines, Turkey or Venezuela. You may dislike our politicians but they are not the autocrats and narcissists who now run the world's three

superpowers. Yet we do share features of a wide malaise. We too are building walls. As the world's liberal economic order is challenged by cynicism and protectionism, here in Britain that disenchantment found its expression in Brexit.

And whatever your thoughts on the EU (here in Kensington we voted 69% Remain), surely no one could have believed our withdrawal would be so ill-considered and cack-handed. Even when it happens, whatever 'it' may be, tensions won't easily resolve. If you have strong views on Brexit, and many people do, they are unlikely to change. That pitches half of us against the other half of our fellow citizens in continuing and mutually uncomprehending resentment. Nor is there any sign of healing leadership. Polls suggest few of us have faith in our current crop of politicians. We are a sadly disunited kingdom.

At least here in Kensington we had a bit of a political clear-out. But that was precipitated by a tragedy so terrible, so wounding, that I am not at all convinced we can properly consider that our borough is any more united than the country as a whole. The antipathy unleashed by Grenfell may be less noisy than it once was, but it is still as deeply felt. Many in North Kensington think the council is run by toffs from the south. Some home-owners in the south prefer to distance themselves from those who live in social housing and a few – as we shall come to in a moment – quite openly seek to keep hoi polloi at bay.

It is easy to berate people for holding a view opposite to our own, but there is sometimes no wholly right answer: different goals may be laudable even if they are contradictory. We can see the struggle between different objectives played out on a larger stage as Sadiq Khan sees what he calls NIMBYism frustrating new social housing; hence his attempt to override local decisions over Newcombe House and the Kensington Forum Hotel. In taking the opposite line the housing minister, James Brokenshire, is increasingly intervening too.

If we are to live at ease with ourselves then the very tensions which push us apart require us to appreciate opposing views and seek more consensus; but are we prepared to be more open-hearted? How far should the Kensington Society go to try to reconcile opposing interests? In particular, how should we seek to square the circle between passionate local activists resisting change and the prospect of broad, often diffuse, community improvements? The answer depends in part on how narrowly we define our purpose.

Our main remit has always been to safeguard the built environment, and I for one am committed to that as much as ever. What's more I'm aware there are risks in losing focus. But surely – and especially in the present climate – the committee has been right to consider the bigger picture. Planning is not just about bricks and mortar but about community cohesion. We have a borough whose greatest need is in the north and yet the critics are right: its greatest power resides in the south. If the Kensington Society stands for anything, surely it must stand for Kensington together, Kensington in its entirety.

I offer three examples.

The first is opposition to the Crossrail 2 station in Kings Road. This is outside our patch and the proper domain of the Chelsea Society, but nonetheless is a useful illustration. Protesters complained that Chelsea's intimate village atmosphere would be replaced by an impersonal, homogenised high street. They had good cause when objecting to the first location (which would have replaced the Fire Station) but less so to the second on Sydney Street where it would be integrated into existing buildings. In truth some of the opposition was hostility in principle, against opening up the area which they 'love the way it is'. Perhaps I might have joined them if I lived there – we are all NIMBYs at heart. But public transport is not just for the poor, and certainly not to keep the masses away from posher parts of town, especially when there are major hospitals to serve as well as thousands of jobs at stake. The Kensington Society is always torn in controversies like this, seeking to take the high ground for the community as a whole, but reliant on membership which is parochial and personal and almost certain to resign if it senses betrayal. And almost every response to almost every planning application is 'we object'. I have no answer to this dilemma, but I do urge that members consider fairly the wider role the Kensington Society must play – and, above all, the importance of proportionality.

Proportionality was key to the society's unusual decision to lobby in favour of plans for a 17-storey new tower in Notting Hill Gate. As it happens, several local amenity societies agreed but campaigners like Simon Jenkins, and many local residents were aghast. The tower was much too big they said, and the price of flats would be too high (though coming from residents in multi-million pound homes that second objection might be harder to sustain). At his request I agree to meet one of the leaders of the protest in Hillgate Village to see if we could find common ground. We both agreed we would much prefer a lower structure. But did he concede that the existing tower, Newcombe House, has long been a crumbling 1950s eyesore and that almost anything would be an improvement? Did he recognise that a big new development tends to revitalise local areas – and Notting Hill could do with help? Did he accept that the proposed build was of exceptionally high quality? Was he keen on opening up the public spaces and the views through to the farmers' market? Did he care about step-free access to the tube, at least to one of the platforms? Did he accept that no developer could afford to retain the open spaces and farmers' market unless they built higher rather than

spread out and squatted on those spaces? Did he welcome that 23 of the new flats would be let at affordable rents and 15 more at so-called social rents? Was he relieved that, with a near-critical shortage of primary care NHS facilities in the area, a lot of space will be provided for state-of-the-art GP surgeries?

I was surprised at his reaction. No, he said. He was not much interested in any of these social amenities, not even the GP clinics or reopening of an expanded farmers' market. *Anything* was better than going higher.

What should the KS do in situations like this? As it happens we did not lose members over Newcombe House, but it was always a risk. And it is always easier to recruit supporters when people feel exercised and angry at a planning application, rather than when there is a difficult and nuanced judgment to sell.

The third example is public consultations like the current one about Heathrow flight paths. Frankly I take these soundings with a pinch of salt. We all know the policy is broadly settled in advance. On the other hand, maybe we should be just as cynical about the responses they elicit. I guarantee almost all will be objections. In this case, none of us wants planes flying near our homes. Yet we all want a prosperous London, which requires world-class infrastructure including airports. We all want to fly (more and more – the figures are incontestable). We all want to fly cheaply (again the data are incontestable). We all want convenience of a nearby airport when we do. We are kidding ourselves if we suppose these benefits can be achieved without some trade-off.

The great benefit of democracy is that it gives expression to our self-interest – but the flipside is that it does not require us each to balance those self-interests against communal interests. It does not insist that we reflect with best evidence or even proportionality. It does not require us to provide credible and evidence-based alternatives.

Having tried to balance the pros and cons I regard the third runway as good planning sense. I am pleased we Londoners have a truly world-class hub. Thankfully aircraft are becoming cleaner and quieter, and we in Kensington are a long remove from the noise immediately around the airport so we are privileged. So even if we managed to have the flight paths moved, we would be imposing our share of the burden on someone else. Of course, if the KS has better policies for London's flight paths, we should set them out. But just another angry 'no' is surely dispiriting, and wrong.

Do you agree? Or is it the proper role of a group like ours to default to opposition?

Finally, something much more down to earth: the issue of pavement billboards. We have opposed street clutter, and especially the rash of new phone kiosks which are little more than advertising hoardings. In the past the Society has also resisted attempts by shops and pubs to extend their curtilage into the roadsides with tables and chairs or folding marketing signs. But with old-fashioned telecoms losing out to cell phones, and our local retailers struggling to stay in business, should we be more sympathetic? We have already reviewed our policy on Aboards and, provided they are sited reasonably and taken in at night we no longer object.

Maybe in 2019 we should have more courage to say yes more often, especially where jobs, prosperity and community facilities are at stake. And maybe we should be willing to look further, beyond the built environment, to other issues which affect the community's quality of life. An obvious urgent problem is fire safety in social housing or, perhaps most important of all, airborne pollution which almost certainly results in more deaths every year than the ghastly tragedy at Grenfell. Is this beyond our remit? How should we square these circles? What do you think?

In all seriousness, the committee would like to know.

#### General Data Protection Regulations - has the Council taken a correct view of the law?

This time last year, UK citizens were experiencing a flood of emails warning us of the perils of the 2018 General Data Protection Regulations. We were asked online to sign a host of disclaimers and to read new 'privacy notices' sent to us by public bodies and other organisation with whom we had dealings.

Kensington and Chelsea Council took the decision last year to change its practices on how it publishes comments from individual residents on planning applications. From last May, all names and addresses included with such representations have been redacted from the RBKC online planning files, current and already decided. Previously the council had followed the approach used by most local authorities for data protection purposes. Signatures, phone number, and email addresses were removed or blacked out before comments for residents were placed on the council's website. But names and addresses were published.

The Kensington Society, and a number of individual residents, questioned this change of practice as being unnecessary and unhelpful. The council (under its post 2017 leadership) frequently commits itself to openness and transparency in its dealings with the public.

For those who monitor planning applications closely (or who want to check on a specific proposal) the lack of information on the names and addresses of those who are making representations is a significant clampdown on information which should be in the public domain. If one cannot tell from whom or where a representation has been made, and whether it be from near neighbour or from miles away, how much impact should it have?

The society argued at length with RBKC officers that publishing such information is part of a public task undertaken by the council and hence legally exempt from GDPR restrictions on publication. Our own survey of practices in other London planning authorities showed that a large majority have continued with their previous practice of redacting personal information (eg on individual health matters) while continuing to publish the name and address of those commenting on planning applications. All local authorities have (rightly) updated their online 'privacy statements' to warn the public on what details on individuals will be published and what will be removed.

We did not succeed in making our case with council officers. They claimed to have obtained external legal advice which supported the "cautious" position taken by RBKC on this issue.

False representations on planning applications are a genuine threat. In a recent case at Gateshead Council, officers picked up on what looked like bogus comments in support of a housing development. When the council asked some of the signatories of the letters to confirm their authenticity, 21 residents (about half of those contacted) said they had not sent the original letter. This is why it is important for the public to be able to see who is making representations on planning applications, on which the consequences of approval or refusal can be huge.

RBKC is currently saying that it may have found a way to revert to its former practice of publishing names and addresses of respondents to applications. This would rely on exemptions under the GDPR regulations for public bodies to place 'archive' material in the public domain. The society hopes this will happen, and that transparency for the public will soon be restored.

# Chairman's Report

## Amanda Frame

AVING RECOGNISED THE feelings of being down-hearted and uninspired, I looked back, as I have often done over the years, to past annual reports. When I joined the executive committee in 2005 I had the privilege of meeting Sir Ronald Arculus. Then as chairman, I had the challenge of lunching with him at the Muffin Man quarterly. I say challenging since up to the very end Sir Ronald never let an issue or concern for Kensington slip by his eagle eyes nor allow his mind to be idle. He taught me much about what this society can and must do.

He also reminded me that the society was here for three main reasons: to help residents know and understand issues which affect them in Kensington; to try to keep Kensington as civilised and liveable as possible by resisting bad development and encouraging the good; and to



Amanda Frame

offer a varied and informative programme of visits and events. I would add though to Sir Ronald's list, the active engagement with our members, councillors, officers and our MP on planning matters and on social issues.

I think he would be simultaneously proud and horrified at the challenges this society now faces. Starting on the positive, our events are successfully varying from workshops with officers on planning, to an evening in Kensington Palace and the Natural History Museum. All have been well attended with the workshop on planning departmental update from Sue Harris and her team attended by over 70 people.

All the trustees have self-selected tasks and when needed we all contribute. The planning committee last year tackled the Mayor of London's call-in of Newcombe House, the opposition to the proposals for the redevelopment of the horror on Cromwell Road, Kensington Forum, and lastly, opposition to the redevelopment and increase in scale of the Heythrop College site. Our attention has also been focused on the loss of 'houses in multiple occupation' to the market studio and AirB&B businesses.

At last, the government may be focused on the abuse of powers given to the telecom industry and the increase in size and number of advertisement kiosks disguised as telephones on our streets. However, the government is at the same time proposing to extend permitted development rights to both the change of use of retail units to offices and the building of additional storeys without needing planning permission. We have supported local affiliate societies in match-funding professional advice, including the Kensington Forum and the Heythrop College. All are concerns we are addressing through our council, our MP as well as the ministers of the departments in control.

The Notting Hill police station has been designated an asset of community value, but remains a 'hope' for redevelopment for a community use. However, without council encouragement and support, it is all words, no action and we fear the worst. The Princess Alice Memorial Garden has been replanted but the Town Hall forecourt remains an unsightly disgrace. The Academy pub remains empty and deteriorating with no action available from the council.

The council has numerous consultations ranging from buskers to the revisions in codes of practice. We have been very encouraged by the level of engagement and in some cases this engagement has proved to be valued by all, both inside the council as well as by residents. The pilot scheme on construction traffic management plans has identified much-needed changes in how construction projects are managed.

We have for many years and with increasing fury called for changes in the preapplication advice process. We have seen time and again (Dukes Lodge, the Odeon, Newcome House, Kensington Forum), pre-application advice encouraging the developments which the public oppose. The process is totally in isolation of the public – it is exclusively officers and developers. Never is the public allowed, much less invited, to meet with and express their opinions and aspirations for the development. As a result, the officers have no idea what the public expects. The officer's report appears to have been written more as a marketing brochure than a critique of the development.

As an example, the Kensington Forum application had nearly 900 letters of objections and 4 of support, yet the officer recommended approval. In all cases the planning committee refused the applications. Most of the refusals were appealed and, on the strength of the officer's report, were successful. Only Newcombe House was dismissed with the inspector only citing affordable housing as an issue.

However, we are now in new territory. The Mayor of London called in Kensington Forum, but we know not why. It was refused for very good grounds and the mayor has the right to disagree with the decision. He had previously called in Newcombe House and, following the mayor's direction, the applicant resubmitted a scheme with more affordable housing and he approved the revised application. Now the Secretary of State has issued a stop notice on Newcombe House, which means that the mayor cannot issue his decision until the Secretary of State decides whether he wants to make his own decision. If he does there could be another public inquiry. Again, we do not know why nor how long he will take to deliberate on what action he will take.

The process of pre-application advice without public consultation from beginning to end is flawed. After that an application is submitted, the public objects, no meetings are held with the public and the officers, the officer's report praises the application, the councillors in the planning committee refuse the application...and then...or now the mayor steps in. The system is a mess.

I am not surprised when I am told that developers and even architects will not work with RBKC.

This year, 2019, presents the same challenges as outlined above and I am sure there will be more and new issues. I cannot emphasise enough the support the society receives from our

trustees and I thank them for the enormous time they give to this society, this community and fulfilling our public benefit aims. We thank you, our members, for your support.

If lunch was today with Sir Ronald it would be a long one but he would greatly enjoy it. Amanda Frame, chairman

We all hurry through the town hall court yard on the way to meeting but I am sure you have noticed the poor condition the court. Perhaps we can get you to join us in pressing for improvements and repairs. Benches are broken, the wood chipping and cracking, the metal is rusting and large areas are flooded and freeze with the slightest cold. We have been told and told there is a problem with the

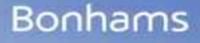


contractor and a tri-borough agreement. But it has reached a disgraceful condition. But one great improvement is the garden in the forecourt. Perhaps with the cold weather you have not noticed the changes for the Princess Alice Memorial Garden under the main cabinet chamber at the town hall. If you have not seen it, you will when spring comes. The Kensington Society working from a planting and design plan given to us by Kim Wilkie and coordinated by Katharina Labovitch, for the society, and Monica Castelino, RBKC Parks Officer, a new garden has been planted. The watering system has been repaired, new soil has been installed and the plants are all in. We just need some warmth.

#### AIR POLLUTION

Recent research has shown that air pollution of the sort being suffered in London – with Kensington being one of the worse places – causes a range of illnesses, leading to premature death, and affects the brain and physical development of children. Some schools have been forced to stop their pupils going into the playground because so many toxic gases and damaging particulates are emitted from nearby roads. The Kensington Society asked both King's College, which studies air quality in London, and the office of the mayor of London for a brief note to be included in this annual report about the condition of the air, what should be done about it, what was being done, and what the current outlook was. Or any combination of those factors. Both were too busy to produce anything.

The Kensington Society and local associations need help. We need people with an interest in the borough, plus knowledge of such subjects as architecture, accounting, conferences, social conditions, or environmental issues. Please participate: make suggestions, recruit people, join in the work of local associations and the society itself. We and the associations also need help with administration, so please come and help, and recruit more people to join.



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## The 65th annual general meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 21 May 2018

AMANDA FRAME, chairman of the trustees welcomed distinguished guests and members: Emma Dent Coad, MP for Kensington; Dr Barry Quirk, chief executive, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; councillor Marie-Therese Rossi, mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; councillor Elizabeth Campbell, leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; councillor Will Pascall, deputy leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; councillor Kim Taylor-Smith, deputy leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; leader of the Labour group of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, councillor Robert Atkinson; Nick Ross, president of the Kensington Society; and General the Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington, vice president of the Kensington Society. Apologies were received from Sir Angus Stirling, council member, the Kensington Society; Sophia Lambert, trustee of the Kensington Society; and Henry Peterson, trustee of the Kensington Society.

The order of business was conducted by Nick Ross, president of the Kensington Society, who opened by calling for 72 seconds of silence in memory of all those who died in the Grenfell Tower tragedy. He went on to point out that although the society was founded 65 years ago as an apolitical organisation that should not or would not limit its capacity to act as an unofficial opposition within the borough while always being aware of the dangers of mission creep.

Moving on to the business of the evening, the minutes of the 2017 AGM and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2017, set out in the annual report, were confirmed and approved nem con.

Nick Ross then conducted the election of officers. Michael Bach, Michael Becket, Thomas





AGM

Dr Barry Quirk

Nick Ross



Amanda Frame



**Michael Bach** 

Blomberg, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Sophia Lambert, Henry Peterson, Holly Smith and Anthony Walker put their names forward to serve as trustees in 2018/19 and were proposed and approved nem con. The trustees proposed the election of Martin Frame as treasurer which was seconded from the floor and approved nem con.

Nick Ross next introduced the guest speaker Dr Barry Quirk, the new CEO of RBKC, who talked about the challenges facing the council. Dr Quirk gave an interesting insight into the demographics of London generally, the evolution from the GLA to the borough structure and the future needs in terms of housing for those who live and work here, before moving on to talk more specifically of local borough needs; of the huge social divide evident in parts of the borough; how we also have the second highest number the UK, after Newham, in temporary in accommodation; and of the need to deliver joined up services to all residents. Finally he talked of the need to revise the culture so that services remain professional but are also seen to be more caring.

Amanda Frame thanked Dr Quirk and then gave her chairman's report. She congratulated Emma Dent Coad on being the first Labour MP for Kensington since 1977 and thanked her for her support of the victims of the Grenfell disaster, the enquiry into which started this day. Noting that 22 of the 50 councillors are new to the role, she looked forward to major changes in structure in the way the council works. Pointing out that much of the society's work was outlined in the annual report, she spoke about the RBKC pilot study championed by councillor Pascall into planning and enforcement being expanded from Chelsea into Kensington, the enlistment of awardwinning Kim Wilkie to design the planting for the

Town Hall garden, and the attempt to list the Octavia Hill drill hall. In conclusion, she thanked the trustees for their hard work on behalf of the society and the local residents.

Michael Bach, chairman of the society's planning committee noted three major issues that had arisen over the development proposed for the Heythrop College site, the potential for a massive development on the Cromwell Road Holiday Inn site, known as the Kensington Forum Hotel, and the problematic use of telephone kiosks for advertisement. 150 luxury retirement flats were proposed for Heythrop College, necessitating building a raft over the adjoining railway lines, on a site which is not readily accessible from any main road, besides constituting a loss to tertiary education in the borough and against the local plan policies. The Kensington Forum proposals, not yet lodged with the council, have been the subject of patchy meetings with the local community and appear to provide for the deconstruction of the existing hotel and its replacement with two tall buildings (one 10 metres taller than the existing) on a podium with a scant construction of a mere 46 flats. Altogether, the proposal appears to provide an increase of 50% density on the site. Finally the issue of telephone boxes.



Thomas Blomberg with Anthony Walker

Government policy, formulated prior to the introduction of mobile phones, allows telephone booths to be installed without normal planning permission requirements. BT and other telecom and advertisement businesses, most notably IC Decaux, have seen an opening and the result is an explosion of applications: over 100 applications in the last year. The new designs are structures with blaring LED advertising panels and a phone attached to the side. The result is increased street clutter and, in some cases, large and loud advertisements located merely metres apart. This society and the council have spent the last 20 years trying to reduce street clutter. With limited controls from government, the council, assisted by the society, is attempting to resist and has recently refused 41 sites, though of these 20 got through on

appeal. The society continues to work closely with the council to monitor and ameliorate planning proposals across the borough and support the council's representation to the government for change.

Questions from the floor concluded the business of the AGM before the mayor, councillor Marie-Therese Rossi, invited members and guests to the mayor's parlour for a reception.

Minuted by Alison Sutherland



Right to left: Michael Bach, Anthony Walker, Barry Quirk, Victoria Bartoluvic, Mary Sheehan, Thomas Blomberg, Greg Hammond, Janet Evans, Holly Smith



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## Jim Babbington retires

**S**OME MEMBERS WILL have come across Jim Babbington who is about to step down as head of the mayor's office at Kensington Town Hall after 20 years in the job. He admits that when he took up the role he had little idea of what he was doing. Time in the army, or the Church of England might have helped. A spell in the diplomatic service or as an event organiser would have been relevant and useful, but he had none of the above.

It was learning by mistakes. Early in his career an HRH came to dinner at the town hall. In those days there were funds to create impressive table centres and on that occasion the flower arrangement included tea lights. Early in the meal a waiter knocked the duke's menu, which fell onto a candle. As the flames rose, it had the potential to be a career defining moment for Jim, but with barely a flicker and without drawing breath, HRH used his napkin to smother the flames and disaster was averted. Tea lights have not featured in any events since then.

Before moving into the mayor's office Jim served as a committee clerk and recalls many evenings at meetings involving formidable Kensington residents. He has particular memories of the contributions made by Mrs Christiansen and Mrs Rudd who were particular forces to be reckoned with. He points out that nowadays there is less tweed and fewer pearls but the spirit of these formidable people lives on. Jim considers that two of the major parts of his job are to head off problems and to make connections. In a borough that is multi-faceted and enjoys immense diversity it is even more important to find ways in which the mayoralty can reflect the borough as a whole.

One of Jim's favourite evenings of the year is the ceremony to present the mayor's awards. Introduced in 2000, the award scheme recognises individuals who make an outstanding contribution to the life of the borough, usually in a voluntary capacity over a significant number of years. Each year the awards bring forward individuals who quietly make an enormous difference and he always finds it moving to hear of the winners' accomplishments and see their unseen works do not go unrecognised. "You don't need to scratch far beneath the surface to find an active, caring and close knit community" he says.

The risk of reputational damage is ever present. A member of the royal family had agreed to make two visits to a housing association, about six months apart. Refurbishment works were about to be done to improve the housing and to "design out" crime. The idea was to see the before and after. Sadly, the day before the visit, the estate caretaker heard that HRH was coming. He spent the entire night clearing litter, painting walls in the corridors and stairwells and scrubbing floors. HRH arrived to the smell of bleach and wet paint. The before and after visit became largely an after and after impression.

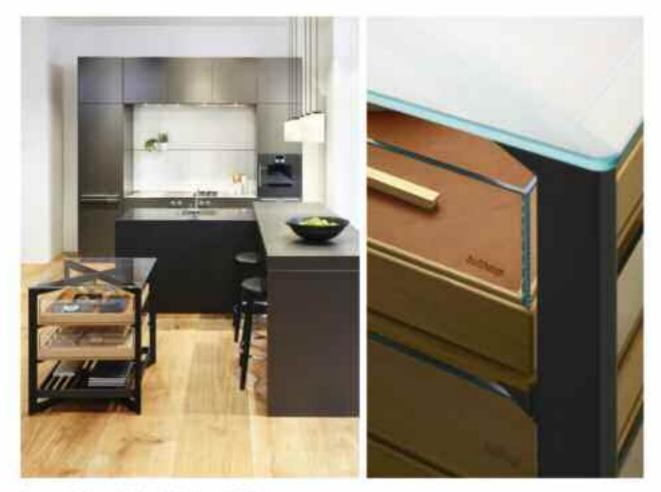
Apparently, only four people have done his job in the 80 years since the end of World War 2. He is not surprised, saying the work is addictive. It is not the events that are organised, or the

great ceremonial occasions or the engagements carried out by the mayor, it is the people that you meet along the way that makes it not just a job but what he calls a pleasure and a privilege.

On 14th March Jim Babbington will retire from RBKC. For those of us who have known and loved him throughout the years, we shall very much miss him. He has given us some great times. This Society wish him the best of times in the future.



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# bulthaup

## Local artist: Charlotte Johnson Wahl

#### by Michael Becket

**C**HARLOTTE JOHNSON WAHL cannot explain why, having been a successful painter for some fifty years, she is still known, if at all, as the mother of famous Johnson children: Boris, Rachel, Joseph, and Leo. After all, she has painted Joanna Lumley, Crispin Tickell, Jilly Cooper, Simon Jenkins, the writer Rachel Billington, and Andrew Knight among her hundreds of portraits, has had distinguished exhibitions, and is still selling well.

She is still painting, despite having been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 37 years ago, and currently taking 25 pills a day. She also had electrodes implanted in the brain to stop the really distressing constant twitching which made painting tricky. None of that stops her. She has never had a job, she explained, but has been painting since early childhood.



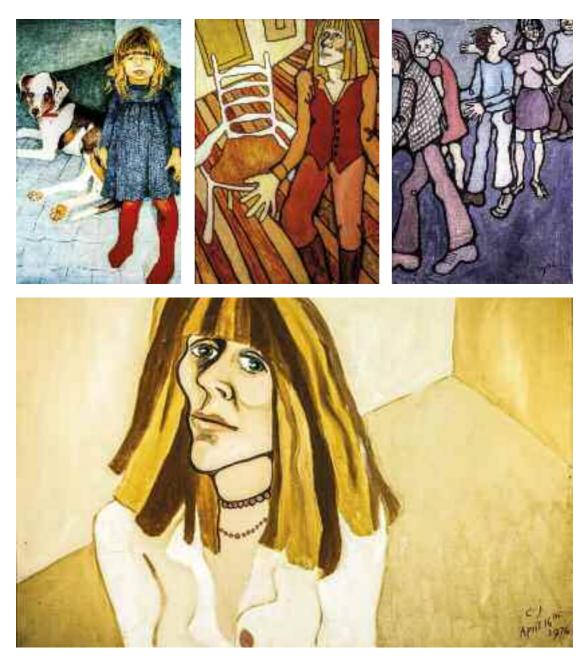


Even as a tot she had been drawing with such enthusiasm, and showing such clear early talent that at the age of five she was given a painting set for her birthday. Her father was Sir James Fawcett, legal adviser to the UN, general counsel to the International Monetary Fund and president of the European Commission on Human Rights, as well as a prominent legal academic, and her mother was Frances Beatrice, the daughter of Elias Avery Lowe, a Lithuanian professor of palaeography at Princeton, and Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter, who, for 25 years, was the official translator of the works of Thomas Mann from German into English. They both encouraged her art.

"I turned out to be good at it. Once I started I couldn't stop." Despite that, she has been far too busy ever to have formal art lessons. She was expelled from convent boarding school at 16 for gazing in fascination at a group of Teddy boys in the car park – "I never really knew boys" – and wrongly accused of whistling at them. She went to Westminster Tutors and then straight to Oxford. But then, that was a family tradition, as her three sisters and one brother all went to Oxford or Cambridge.

A formal dinner at All Souls organised by her father to celebrate the undergraduate Stanley Johnson's winning of the Newdigate poetry prize, placed her next to Stanley, who was evidently taken by her as "he pursued me". Successfully, as at the age of 21 she married him and soon Boris – called by his first name Alexander or Al by the family – was on the way. Stanley managed to get the coveted Harkness Fellowship taking him to America so she went with him.

She came back to Britain to finish her degree at Lady Margaret Hall. By which time she was already eight months pregnant with Rachel, her second child. Yet despite then having



small children and working hard to get her English degree, she was still painting continuously.

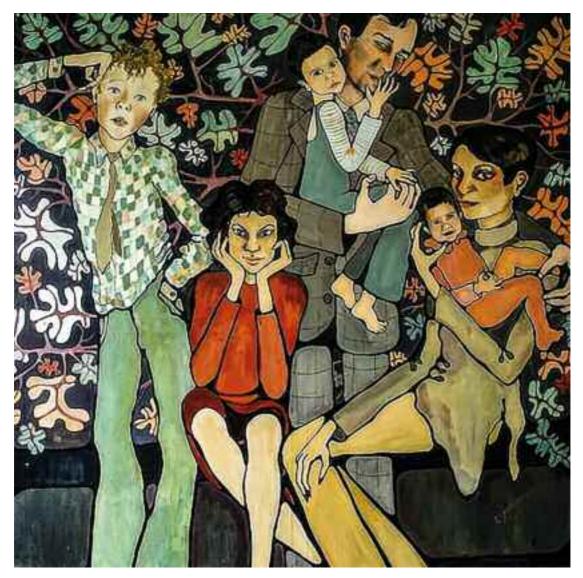
The family eventually moved to London, but in 1966 her husband got a job with the World Bank, so off to the to the US yet again. She loved it there but it was not to last. Four years later he got a job with the Conservative Research Department, so back to Britain, and then, as he had "always been an environmentalist" was appointed a director of Planned Parenthood. That was a bit of an embarrassment, she explains, as by then she was she was pregnant with their fourth child.

The gypsy life continued when in 1973 Stanley got a job with the Common Market and they moved to Brussels. By this time she had discovered "how unfaithful he had been" – often and extensively. A further inducement to abandon an unhappy marriage was meeting at a

Brussels dinner party Professor Nick Wahl, who was lecturing at the Sorbonne. There was an immediate rapport. It was an added factor in the decision to end an unhappy marriage, but she and Stanley did not divorce until 1979. She moved to a flat in Elgin Crescent and made a living painting commissioned portraits and society figures. At the same time "there were an incredible number of crossings of the Atlantic". It was not until 1988 she married Wahl, and added him to her surname.

It was back to the United States yet again. Professor Wahl was appointed a professor at New York University, they had an apartment in Washington Square, she loved her life and her husband, and "he loved the children" who thought him a perfect stepfather. He was diagnosed with cancer and in 1996 died in her arms aged only 67. She had already inexplicably fallen over in New York, but it was not until she had returned to Britain, that it was diagnosed as early-onset Parkinson's when she was just 40.

Throughout this life of turbulence, repeated changes of home -32 times during her first marriage - and producing four children, Charlotte never stopped painting. It seems almost a



compulsion. She "endlessly" painted her own children and the people around her, friends, family and dinner parties. She is spectacularly good with that most notoriously difficult of subjects, small children. Some are captured with not just their individuality but their energetic youth and unmistakeable personality. All her portraits have highly individual compositions, plus flexible style, posing and colours. It is evident she is, as she says, "trying to capture what is unique about them". Sketches are gradually built up to carefully-created specific structure. The result must also be "compelling and beautiful".

Her portraits may be stylised but convey the person so strongly one really feels as if meeting the person. It is clear she did not care for some of her sitters, and some of the others may have had second thoughts about being depicted with quite such insight.

Dominick Harrod, Sir Roy's son and economic correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, leans on something for support as he smiles with a post-lunch look. The diplomat Sir Ewen Fergusson gazes out with wary, concerned eyes, despite his conspicuous glass of wine. Similarly, Leonard Ingrams, founder of Garsington Opera, looks guarded and defensive. Sir David Gore-Booth may have been controversial, outspoken and been called an undiplomatic diplomat, looks pale and dull to Charlotte. Roy Jenkins looks just smug.

Now a little frail, she lives in the sheltered housing of Chartwell House in Ladbroke Terrace where her crowded drawing room is also her studio. Her children and 12 grandchildren are frequent visitors. She is proud of her famous children, but also still worries about them. "Joseph is having a hard time" in the government. Boris (Al) "is a very kind man, but difficult to pin down". He has inherited his mother's talent – there is a striking early self-portrait in her room – but, as she explains, he does not have time for painting these days.





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## A Grenfell story: Adriana's Café & Eatery

### by Henry Peterson

A DRIANA ZYMBERAJ CAME from Kosovo to the UK in the 1990s, one of many young people who decided to leave a country torn apart by war. She did not expect to settle here for good. Nor did she expect the further life changing events that took place in June 2017, when she and her family were living at Grenfell Tower.

Their flat on the 13th floor had by then been her home for sixteen years, with her partner Avni (also from Kosovo). Before that they had both worked as interpreters and caseworkers in Glasgow and Manchester, helping settle refugees from Kosovo. Avni took a masters degree at Manchester University. Together they refurbished and decorated their flat at Grenfell, and there brought up their two sons, Alk and Alt.

North Kensington proved to be a good set of surroundings for the family. Adriana and



Avni decided to stay in London. Their boys both went to Thomas Jones Primary in St Marks Road, and the older son Alk went on to Holland Park School. Adriana chose a job that fitted in with the school day, working at the St Helens Café in St Helens Gardens. The job went well. The café, with its outside tables on a wide pavement, was becoming a popular meeting place in the neighbourhood.

On the night of 14 June 2017, Alk was up late revising for his GCSE exams. The rest of the family had gone to bed. They were woken by their Portuguese neighbour knocking on the front door, to warn them there was fire in the building.

The family left, taking only their passports. They were amongst the first groups to escape the tower before it was rapidly engulfed in flames at the cost of 72 lives. That night the family found refuge with family members living nearby. After that, their accommodation became a series of temporary homes provided by the council, starting with one shared room for the four of them at the Premier Inn in Earls Court.

After being uprooted once from family, home and nation as a young student (Adriana was studying architecture at Pristina University) watching all possessions and their flat being destroyed must have been overwhelming. But Adriana and Avni did not give up. After the shock of the first few days had begun to subside, both chose to go back to work. The two boys (aged sixteen and nine

at the time) returned to school. Their parents did all they could to shelter the boys from the traumatic experience they had suffered.

At the St Helens Café, the management, staff and customers were all supportive. Adriana was encouraged to take as much time off as she needed. She told them work was preferable, in bringing some semblance of normality. Her partner Avni shared this view and also carried on working.

Thomas Jones Primary went the extra mile in providing support, searching out copies of all the photos they could find of both boys (even though Alk had by then left the school). These photos went some way to replace the family's record of the lives of the boys to date, all else having been consumed by the fire.

A few months after the fire, surviving residents at Grenfell Tower were invited back to see the interior of their flats and to collect any possessions that had escaped the flames. Adriana and Avni were shown a couple of cardboard boxes. One contained blackened kitchen equipment, which they rejected. The other included a stoneware vase, scorched on one side but still intact. This they took with them to their temporary accommodation, as a single reminder of the home they had created.

In November 2017, and again out of the blue, a further blow fell. The St Helens Café shut up shop overnight as a result of business problems. Adriana suddenly had no job.

This, she says now, was her lowest moment and the time when it was hardest to fight off depression and a sense that life could never recover. Many survivors of Grenfell continue to have such feelings, nearly two years on from the tragedy. Adriana and Avni decided instead to create a new part of life. They took on the challenge of re-opening the St Helens Café, in a new form.

Having been given the opportunity to acquire the lease, they looked at the prospects for retaining the existing fittings and equipment. This proved unviable, so with a loan, they undertook a complete refit of the premises, to their own design. Sourcing by themselves new equipment, tables, chairs and lighting, a complete refurbishment was carried out.

Nine months after the closure of the former premises, Adriana's café and eatery opened on the weekend of the 2018 St Helens Festival, last September. For this event (held most years) a short section of St Helens Gardens is closed to traffic and cars are replaced by stalls and a music stage, organised by ward councillors and the vicar of St Helens Church.

Since then old customers have been returning to the café, and new ones have joined them. The business employs half a dozen staff, half in the kitchen and half serving customers. Adriana has chosen a range of dishes, cakes and pastries which are almost entirely prepared, cooked or baked on the premises. Her regular customers include parents of children at nearby Oxford Gardens Primary and Bassett House School, as well as the many locals who appreciate a good cup of tea or coffee.

Local residents are glad to see more life and footfall return to St Helens Gardens, a handsome parade of shops that sits at the heart of this North Kensington 'village'. Many neighbours and customers at Adriana's café know some or all of her story. The tragedy at Grenfell Tower is far from forgotten, and the Silent Walk continues to take place each month, as a sombre reminder. There is a long way to go, for everyone involved in the government's and the council's approach to 'Grenfell Recovery'.

Adriana's contribution has been to show how personal strength and resilience can overcome challenges that would defeat most of us. After an 18 month wait, she and her family were rehoused last December. Alk is studying for his A levels before going to university in September.

Adriana has not tried to find repeat versions of the furniture and objects that were in their burnt-

out flat. Paintings of views of Kosovo she had collected previously, she does hope to find again. But otherwise, she says, it is better to move on. The skills and creativity that she and Avni have shown in remodelling their café is evident for all to see. Long may Adriana's café thrive.



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## Local retailer: Gallery 19

#### by Michael Becket

**G**ORDON FRENCH CAME from Australia in 1985 for two years to be a program director for Sky Television but seems to have overstayed his original plan. Gordon had already had a long career in the arts – beginning in the sixties as a set designer in the theatre, moving to television, then satellite television and onto cable television; but he never stopped painting and had long thought about opening an art gallery.

When the bathroom fittings shop on the corner of Thackeray Street and Kensington Court Place, just around the corner from his flat in Kensington Court, became available in 1995, he seized the opportunity. To provide the initial stock Gordon raided his own living-room walls for paintings and prints – both his own and ones collected over the years – and Gallery 19 was born.

Framing was a problem and the greatest expense so, within a year, Gordon transformed the basement into a framing workshop. Residents and local businesses became clients and an onsite bespoke picture framing operation swiftly grew. That business specialises in handcrafted Italian mouldings, with Gordon and Alex discussing designs with customers and with their professional framers, to come up with ingenious solutions to meet requirements and deadlines. Picture framing has become the gallery's core business.

The location is important. Thackeray Street is a street of independent specialist traders





tucked behind the busy High Street. Local residents supported the gallery from the beginning, perhaps because Gordon, his wife Sandra and daughter Alex – who as well as being the manager is a photographer whose work hangs alongside her father's under the name Alessia – are gregarious, chatty Australians with a reputation for mucking-in and are, as both a family and a local business, deeply embedded in the community.

For instance, they help organise the annual Kensington Court Resident's Association street party on Thackeray Street each September as well as The Friends of Holland Park annual art exhibition in the Orangery of Holland Park every Spring. The shop gives locals and loyal clients discounts, and additional trade comes from word-of-mouth recommendations. "People just pop in for a chat and we are happy to take neighbours parcel deliveries when they are not home."

The gallery's other main focus is architectural art – Gordon's specialism is the urban view. Not just a house portrait for the owner, though he does that too, but whole streets. He has painted the whole lengths of Kensington Square in beautifully precise detail and the shop now sells these – and other similar images – as giclee prints.

And Andras Kaldor, a Hungarian artist living in Devon, with the same preference for urban views but a different style, is also on the walls, including his paintings of European opera houses.

The gallery is not just paintings and prints. Timothy Richards of Bath produces plaster reproductions of major public buildings as models and decorative bookends. And there are also architectural models, maps, notecards, books, beautiful leather journals made in Florence, paperweights and photographs.

Everywhere however are Gordon's own pictures, including a good selection of his beloved Italy. Together with paintings of local buildings, plus early nineteenth century indenture documents with all their wonderful calligraphy.

Small independent businesses are being squeezed financially with online competition, rents and council tax being problems. Foreign investment in the area has resulted in a large number of flats remaining empty, as owners neither rent them nor visit regularly. Gallery 19 is affected by these threats and work with their retail neighbours to keep the village feel and character of Kensington alive. And the uncertainty of Brexit has also hit the business, especially in such a pro-European neighbourhood. But the gallery is aware its greatest strength is being a family business and feel "everything beautiful and well-made will sell".



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## Heritage of London Trust

by Dr Nicola Stacey

THE HERITAGE OF LONDON TRUST is London's only independent heritage charity working across the city to rescue lost or forgotten heritage sites. Its restoration projects stretch from Hounslow to Havering and have dazzling variety. They include street clocks, drinking fountains, Victorian lock ups and 17thC dovecotes, 1930s theatres, cinemas and pubs. They might be listed or unlisted – and need only be of historic or architectural interest, in need of help and able to be enjoyed by the public.

HOLT was founded in 1980 by the GLC which had realised that much of London's heritage at risk was reaching the point of no return: beyond repair and ripe for demolition. Since then the charity has completed nearly 700 restoration projects. At any one time we have around 40 active projects. Funding comes from private sources, charitable trusts and businesses: anyone who is interested in London's heritage and keeping the character and charm of the city's streets.

The trust gives grants for restoration work and advises on all aspects of the conservation process, recommends conservators and helps push projects through to completion. Grants generally range between £5,000 and £15,000. These are seldom intended as total project costs but provide the critical first funding to ensure a project's viability. We do as much outreach as possible. We give talks in schools and frequently set up local residents' groups so that projects have their own local champions to help with maintenance and care.

How are projects chosen?



Restoring Brixton's historic market barrows

Around half the projects chosen come to HOLT from the public, the other half are initiated by HOLT's team. We encourage anyone to contact us with a project idea and keep the selection process simple. A phone call and some photos, followed by a site visit and if the project is thought suitable, an online application form. We often help with background research ourselves.

We look for sites of particular historical and architectural significance. Perhaps a site has particularly interesting associations or is a fine example of craftsmanship. It might be a rare survivor of its type, or has an intriguing story.

We prioritise heritage at risk – sites which really need help. Occasionally we will support a project on the basis it is particularly iconic of London, even if it has a good team behind it. Often the projects we support are believed completely beyond repair, but with careful conservation find a new lease of life.

Occasionally we consider non-built heritage. In 2016 we restored Brixton's historic market barrows – much loved and used cart barrows that had been passed down through generations and on which traders set up stall. More and more were being consigned to scrap as their iron tyres fell off and there were no wheelwrights in London to repair them. We set up a workshop in a Brixton railway arch and a conservator worked through the summer to get them back on the street.



**Restoring Brixton's historic market barrows** 



A 17th century dovecote

Public and community benefit are key criteria. We need sites to be publicly accessible and to ensure that restoration work is sufficiently comprehensive to make a difference. There is no point restoring a memorial if you can't read who it is commemorating. We ensure that every site has reasonable opening hours if it is not freely accessible.

Once projects have met these criteria they are taken for consideration before the board for approval. A grant lasts for three years and it is committed but only paid out on satisfactory completion of work. Our team stays involved throughout the life of the project to support and help organise project launches at the end. We have wonderful turnouts of every faith, age and background – showing what a huge contribution heritage makes to a vibrant city life.

#### The light fantastic

The stained glass windows at St John the Baptist, in Holland Road were in a poor state – they had holes plugged with plastic bags and rusting iron frames. But the design and craftsmanship were exceptional, and included a fine Pelican in her Piety by the Victorian stained glass workshop Clayton & Bell. Clayton & Bell's entire premises in Regent Street were destroyed during the Second World War, including its archive, so the Pelican is an important survival. The window was restored by stained glass experts Chapel Studio in Hertfordshire, in summer 2017. It has been a delightful glass restoration project.

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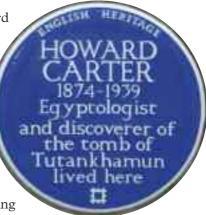
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### Blue Plaques Howard Carter

#### by Michael Becket

ONLY TWO THINGS are generally known about Howard Carter, and one of them is wrong. Yes, he did discover the tomb of the boy-pharaoh Tutenkhamun, but no, he did not succumb to the curse of the pharaohs. Nor did the rest of the crew or other people with him at the time.

Carter was born in Kensington in 1874, the youngest of 11 children of Samuel John Carter, an illustrator and minor painter, and Martha Joyce Carter (née Sands). Young Howard was a sickly child and as a result was partially tutored at home, with his father teaching him to draw but not a lot else. His minimal education bothered



him all his life, and his notorious abruptness has been said to stem from this insecurity. Carter spent much of his childhood with an aunt in the Norfolk market town of Swaffham, the birthplace of both his parents. Nearby was the mansion of the Amherst family, Didlington Hall, containing a sizable collection of Egyptian antiques, which sparked the young Carter's interest. Another tale has it that his interest in Egypt was stirred when his father painted a portrait of a well-known Egyptologist.

After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 Egypt became a strategic link to India and the far east so the British increasingly dominated it. By 1882 Britain had become a de facto ruler of the country with Evelyn Baring (nicknamed Overbaring) running it. Egypt became a British protectorate in 1914. With so much European interest focused on the troubled country, there was also a sharp rise of interest in Egyptology.

When he was 17 the Egypt Exploration Fund, either on the prompting of Mary Cecil (Baroness Amherst of Hackney) or through his father's contacts, Howard Carter went to help an Amherst family friend, Percy Newberry, in the excavation and recording of Middle Kingdom tombs, at Beni Hasan. Almost from the start, Carter improved ways of recording tomb decoration. In 1892, he worked under Flinders Petrie for one season at Amarna, the capital founded by the pharaoh Akhenaten, Tutenkhamun's father-in-law.

From 1899 he worked for the Antiquities service until 1905 when a nasty fracas between French tourists and Egyptian guards prompted his resignation. After a couple of problem years he was lucky enough to be introduced to George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, 5th Earl of Carnarvon, an amateur archaeologist who had been advised to live in warmer climates for his health, who employed Carter to supervise excavations of nobles' tombs in Deir el-Bahari, near Thebes. They worked together for the next 17 years. In 1914, Carnarvon received a licence to dig in the Valley of the Kings at a site where Tutankhamun's tomb was suspected to be and gave the job to Howard Carter. World War I caused a pause but did not explain the continued failure to produce results. By 1922 Lord Carnarvon lost patience and gave Carter an ultimatum: he had one more season of funding to find the tomb.

Within months, on 4 November 1922, a water fetcher boy rootling around with a stick came across a stone step. Carter's crew soon found a flight of steps that led down to a sealed door, and a secret chamber. Carter wired Lord Carnarvon to come to Egypt and on 26 November Carter, with Carnarvon, his daughter Lady Evelyn Herbert, and others in attendance, using a chisel that his grandmother had given him for his 17th birthday, noted in his diary, "With trembling hands, I made a tiny breach in the upper left hand corner... widening the hole a little, I inserted the candle and peered in... at first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle to flicker. Presently, details of the room emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues and gold – everywhere the glint of gold. For the moment – an eternity it must have seemed to the others standing by – I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand in suspense any longer, inquired anxiously 'Can you see anything?', it was all I could do to get out the words

"Yes, wonderful things". Sure enough, the tomb was full of the treasure – the now world-famous collection of gold and marvels.

It took many months to catalogue the contents under the "often stressful" supervision of Pierre Lacau, director general of the Department of Antiquities of Egypt. On 16 February 1923, Carter opened the sealed doorway and found that it did indeed lead to a burial chamber, and he got his first glimpse of the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun. The tomb was considered the best preserved and most intact pharaonic tomb ever found in the Valley of the Kings. The only journalist allowed on the scene was H V Morton of *The Times*, and his vivid descriptions helped publicise the event. The other journalists were kept in their hotels, much to their extreme annoyance. It

did not take long for them to file their entranced reports.

The find became an immediate worldwide sensation. A scholarly, historian and archaeological interest became global fascination. However, even then it was not plain sailing. Lord Carnarvon and Carter fell out, probably over a disagreement on how to manage the supervising Egyptian

**Howard Carter** 

authorities, and it briefly closed excavation. Lord Carnarvon soon apologised to Carter and work started again. But, a couple of weeks later Lord Carnarvon contracted blood poisoning while in Luxor and died in Cairo on 5 April 1923. Lady Carnarvon retained her husband's concession, allowing Carter to continue work, but the curse of the mummy began to be whispered.

Carter's painstaking cataloguing of the thousands of objects in the tomb continued until 1932, most being moved to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. There were several breaks in the work, including one lasting nearly a year, caused by Carter's objections to excessive control of the excavation by the Egyptian Antiquities Service. The Egyptian authorities eventually agreed that Carter should complete the tomb's clearance.

After that he returned to London to be a part-time agent for collectors and museums, including the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Detroit Institute of Arts. By 1924 he had toured Britain, as well as France, Spain and the United States, delivering a series of illustrated lectures. Those in New York City and other US cities were attended by large and enthusiastic audiences, sparking American Egyptomania.

Despite being involved in the greatest archaeological find of his time, Carter received no honour from the British government. However in 1926, he received the Order of the Nile, third class, from King Fuad I of Egypt. He died of Hodgkin's disease, lymphoma, aged only 64, on 2 March 1939, by then living at 49 Albert Court, next to the Royal Albert Hall. Few people attended his funeral. He was buried in Putney Vale Cemetery. His epitaph reads: "May your spirit live, may you spend millions of years, you who love Thebes, sitting with your face to the north wind, your eyes beholding happiness", a quotation taken from the wishing cup of Tutankhamun, and "O night, spread thy wings over me as the imperishable stars".

#### The curse

This however was not the end of Carter's story. It acquired a new life as the curse of the mummy/pharaoh. Hieroglyphs were not deciphered until 1822, so early reports of curses on the tomb were fears about tampering with the dead. The first associated with mummies goes back to 1699 and others followed in the 19thC, but they multiplied after Howard Carter's discovery.

The curse is supposed to afflict anyone who disturbs the mummy of an ancient Egyptian. Pseudo-scientific explanations produced theories ranging from bacteria to radiation, the most popular being ancient moulds or fungi. F DeWolfe Miller, sceptical professor of epidemiology at the University of Hawaii observed, "Given the sanitary conditions of the time in general, and those within Egypt in particular, Lord Carnarvon would likely have been safer inside the tomb than outside".

Soon after the tomb was opened it was reported that Carter's pet canary was eaten by a cobra, representative of royalty, an invasion by the spirit of dead kings. In fact, the canary was not eaten by a snake but given to a friend. Then mysterious deaths of his team and visitors to the tomb were rumoured. The first death was of Lord Carnarvon. He had been bitten by a mosquito, and later cut the bite accidentally while shaving. It became infected and blood poisoning resulted. Two weeks before Carnarvon died, Marie Corelli, the romantic novelist, wrote a letter published in the *New York World* magazine, in which she quoted an obscure book that confidently asserted that "dire punishment" would follow any intrusion into a sealed tomb. That generated predictable journalistic excess. The superstitious Benito Mussolini, who had once accepted an Egyptian mummy as a gift, ordered its immediate removal from the Palazzo Chigi.

Other supposed victims of the curse were George Jay Gould I, a visitor to the tomb, who died in the French Riviera on 16 May 1923 of a fever following his visit; Prince Ali Kamel Fahmy Bey of Egypt died 10 July 1923, shot dead by his wife Marguerite Alibert; Colonel The Hon. Aubrey Herbert MP, Carnarvon's half-brother, became nearly blind and died on 26 September 1923 from blood poisoning related to a dental procedure intended to restore his eyesight; Sir Archibald Douglas-Reid, the radiologist who X-rayed Tutankhamun's mummy, died on 15 January 1924 from a mysterious illness; and Sir Lee Stack, Governor-General of Sudan, died on 19 November 1924, assassinated while driving through Cairo.

Two problems undermine the curse: the absence of such warnings in the tombs, and the lack of evidence of effects. In fact, one study showed that of the 58 people present when the tomb and sarcophagus were opened, only eight died within a dozen years. Howard Carter died of lymphoma in 1939, 17 years after the event. According to Herbert E Winlock, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, of the 22 people present when the tomb was opened in 1922, only six had died by 1934. Of the people present at the opening of the sarcophagus in 1924, only two died in the following ten years. The ten people there when the mummy was unwrapped in 1925 all survived until at least 1934. In 2002, Mark Nelson, a medicine scholar at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, said of the Westerners at the breaking of the sacred seals in the tomb, or opening of the sarcophagus, or opening of the coffins, or unwrapping of the mummy, the average age of death was 70 years. The last survivors included the American archaeologist J O Kinnaman who died in 1961, 39 years after the event and Lady Evelyn Herbert, Lord Carnarvon's daughter who was among the first to enter the tomb in November 1922, lived for a further 57 years to die in 1980.



Lord Carnarvon with his daughter Evelyn and Howard Carter

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## Addison Hall Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School

### by John M O'Donnell

ADDISON ROAD IS not short of dominant buildings, but one stands out, because of its red brick. It cannot be missed. It forms part of the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, which now has its major buildings across the road. Originally, however, it was the main building for the school and is now, known as Addison Hall.

The interior is not as glorious as its outside; it could best be described as a rabbit warren of classrooms and corridors. Classrooms that are no longer equal to those that are across the road in the school's more modern buildings. It does, however have a substantial hall, known in its time as the Great Hall, with good sound qualities, best heard when the school's Big Band has its annual concert.

The name Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School gives some indication of how the school came into being. It was in effect founded to celebrate the memory of the third Catholic Archbishop of Westminster – Cardinal Herbert Vaughan. Amongst its first trustees was the Duke of Norfolk and £20,000 was raised by public subscription including a significant donation from the Oblates of St Charles to establish the school.

It opened in 1914 as a small public school with 29 boys, whereas today its number is around 950 pupils and its 6th Form is mixed. In the twenties it formally became with the agreement of the then Board of Education an independent day school and in 1944 with the



Butler Education Act its then trustees transferred it into the state system to become a grammar school.

During the late forties and early fifties Addison Hall started to fall into disrepair and parts of it were closed to staff and pupils as dangerous, particularly the Great Hall. By the early sixties the school had outgrown Addison Hall and the first of what eventually became four new buildings, across the road, was built and opened in 1963.

Academically, the school is rated by The Times amongst the top 100 state schools – it became a comprehensive in 1977. Throughout its history those in charge appear to have developed an ability to take new changes in educational theory and merge the best parts into the existing structures, no mean feat, thereby ensuring that traditional values are not lost.

Some 93% of students in the last academic year gained the magic 5 A-C GCSE's or the equivalent, including maths and English. In the last academic year, 14 pupils moved on to Oxbridge, most others going on to Russell Group universities. In addition, it has a reputation for meeting special educational needs. That has produced more applications for boys with special education needs than there was room for.

The foundations for academic achievement were laid when the school became a grammar school. A look at the names of the then pupils suggests that these were predominately the sons of the Irish who had emigrated to England prior to or during the Second World War to work in the factories or serve in the armed forces. They were the 11-plus generations. In time the registers show their own children and even grandchildren beating a path to the doors of the Vaughan.

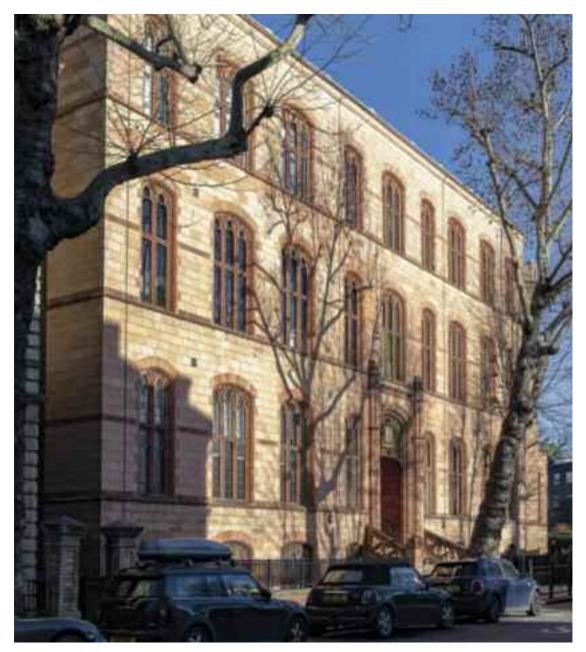
The school has been fortunate in its long-serving head-teachers who had vision and strategic ability. There have been five since 1944. At the same time parents have been supportive of the school and contribute through what is now called the Vaughan Foundation. This and the governors in recent years funded the building of additional classrooms to ease the pressure on the existing split site.

Since the school was established, it has offered extra-curricular activities. Its music department has not only pupils studying music, but it has a choir and a Schola, together with a substantial orchestra and big band. Both choir and Schola have sung all over the world through school trips and recorded several CDs. Its orchestra and big band give regular concerts. An annual musical production performed by the departing upper 6th Form aided with help from other performances' sell out.

The art department has annual exhibition of the A Level work. The technical design department generates enough enthusiasm for pupils to go on working there after school hours. In fact, the Head of Department advises visitors that such pupils have to be dragged out or else the school, would never close for the day.

At the time of the previous Labour government there were plans for rebuilding and modernising schools through its Building Schools for the Future programme. As part of this programme considerable debate occurred over the future of Addison Hall. One suggestion was to demolish and rebuild, to what someone in the planning meeting described as a glass edifice. The other proposal was refurbishment of the interior. As the programme was cancelled, when there was a change of government, this issue was never resolved. It might have to be resolved one day if funding were to become available to modernise the Vaughan on its existing site. The school has provided Catholic priests but has also encouraged pupils to take up leadership roles, not just in the administration of the diocese but in the life of parishes. I doubt, however, the original trustees ever envisaged that its future pupils would have over twenty first languages. The school like the Catholic Church in Great Britain has become multicultural and pupils are drawn from all over London.

Addison Hall has seen changes, which can be best summed up by a former old boy advising metaphorically another old boy on the birth of his new son – I have put his name down for the Vaughan. So, Addison Hall may be cramped and badly designed for a modern school but there is still no shortage of parents wanting to send their sons to the school or their daughters to its sixth form.





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### Dora Ho**use** The Royal Society of Sculptors

### by Greg Hammond

**D** ORA HOUSE IS an unusual name for an unusual building. Located at No 108 Old Brompton Road, it is very different from its surroundings and is named after the wife of its last individual, Cecil Thomas. He bequeathed it to its current occupants, the Royal Society of Sculptors, in 1976. Untouched by any modernising hand and lacking such basics as hot water and central heating, the society's reforming director, Caroline Worthington, describes her £5 million appeal to restore the building as being its "last chance".

Exceptionally for South Kensington, the building behind the ornate later facade is Georgian. Some of this early history can be imagined from the dark basement. This was once a flat where the hard work of pre-modern living can be



visualised from the ancient range and other domestic fittings still present. In front of these are filing cabinets housing the Society's archives and the remnants of previous sculpture exhibitions unclaimed by their artists. But the chief Georgian glory of the house was revealed when a 2017 storm blew out the boards covering a fireplace in the hallway to reveal its beautiful original Delft tiles, now on view to all visitors entering the building.

Dora House's familiar facade was the result of a re-modelling in 1885-6 by the Scottishborn architect William Flockhart. It was Flockhart who added the Dutch-style brick and stone gables to the front of the building, consciously creating a 'William-and-Mary' style. His work can also be seen in the beautiful plaster ceilings, panelling and ornate fireplaces in the principal reception rooms. But the most remarkable survival from the Flockhart alterations is the wooden 'shed' that abuts the full width of the back of the building and is now the main exhibition space for the Royal Society of Sculptors.

Originally this 'shed' had a glass roof to provide perfect lighting conditions for its intended purpose as a photographic studio. This was no ordinary photographic studio, but a satellite base for the expanding business of society photographers Elliott and Fry. Joseph Elliott and Clarence Fry founded their business at Baker Street in 1863. When the new South Kensington studio opened with its ornate (and no doubt expensive) Flockhart embellishments, including the "EF" and "1886" still visible on the gables, Elliott and Fry were on their way to creating a significant business empire.

An online glance through the National Portrait Gallery's Elliott and Fry collection shows many well-known names from Victorian society: Rudyard Kipling, J M Barrie and Robert Baden-Powell are all 1890s examples that could have been taken in the Old Brompton Road studio. The cost of a sitting was a guinea, double the price of the best theatre seats. The location of the studio in Old Brompton Road reflected South Kensington's emergence as one of expanding London's most fashionable districts.

Elliott bought out Fry's interest in 1887 but the Elliott and Fry name continued until a 1963 takeover. At its peak the company employed a team of photographers and owned three studios, a printing facility in Barnet and four storage facilities for negatives. Elliott and Fry disposed of the Old Brompton Road studio in 1919. The new occupier, and eventual owner, was Cecil Thomas and it is he who is the key link in making the building what it is today. Recognising its significance in "relisting survey" of 1968 by the Minister of Housing and Local Government designated Dora House as grade II.

Cecil Thomas was a sculptor. Born in 1885, he is best known for coins, medals and memorial sculpture. Although the coins are now out of circulation, his designs for the last pre-decimal sixpence and florin coins would have been in everyone's change from 1953 until the old-style 10p pieces – as the florin had become – were withdrawn in 1993. He had actually won a competition to design the whole set of Elizabeth II coins at the start of The Queen's reign but only the two designs were used. Thomas was offended and declined a commission to design the first decimal set in 1971. Memorial sculpture became a sadly big business in the years after the Great War and Thomas developed a reputation as a top exponent. His most high-profile pieces include the effigies of Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, in Canterbury Cathedral and Bishop Edward Talbot in Southwark Cathedral.

Thomas both lived and worked in the Old Brompton Road house, the wooden photographic studio now used as his





Three figures in marble by Turid Gyllenhammar and on the window ledge ceramics by Anne Butler

workshop. The second floor and part of the first were let, at one period to the Modern Movement architect Kit Nicholson. Nicholson's assistant was his former Cambridge student Hugh Casson, later distinguished in his own right, who was quoted as saying that they "loved the Dutch house (as we called it) and were very happy there". The Royal Society of Sculptors still lets the upper floors to provide one of their two major sources of income, their 650 current members' subscriptions being the other.

Cecil Thomas' wife, Dora, died in 1967. It is not clear exactly when her name was appended to the house. However, the Dora Charitable Trust had already been established to protect the long-term future of the house before Thomas' death in 1976 when the house was gifted to the Society. Thomas had already allowed the Society, which did not have another base, to use one of his rooms as an office for which he was honoured with their gold medal.

The Royal Society of Sculptors has existed, with various minor name changes, since 1904, and with the Royal Warrant awarded in 1911. Records of every member are in the archives though a certain Henry Moore is missing, his application having apparently been rejected because his work was "too modern". Current director Caroline Worthington says she has challenged the Henry Moore Foundation to find the rejection letter "in the hope that he didn't burn it". In principle the Society is open to anyone who is a practising sculptor, though the peer selectors will likely exclude those Worthington describes as "Sunday chippers".

Worthington took on the post of director in 2017 because the Society "needed turning round". Her vision is that people think about the Society and Dora House as "the home of sculpture" and "the place to meet sculptors". Without an adequate maintenance budget, the

house has been gradually deteriorating since its handover in 1976. For  $\pounds 5$  million the exterior would be restored so that it is not "letting the street down" and the interior would be "a welcoming space for people to see sculpture, fit for purpose for staff and visitors". Various funds, including the Lottery, are being approached for help.

In the meantime, Worthington wants people "to know that the Society is open", with "an exciting programme of good and interesting stuff to see and people to meet". As well as seeing Dora House itself, visitors can hope to see a periodically changing piece of sculpture in front of the building. A recent example was Elizabeth Frink's *In Memoriam III*, a monumental work created in 1983 as a tribute to those who have suffered for their beliefs. Special events are also held. A 2018 Peoples' Postcode Lottery funded project linked a Chelsea primary school with a Wandsworth dementia care home, bringing children and the elderly together through a sculpture project. The Sunday exhibition at Dora House was an uplifting day with happy children showing their work to their parents, and the older folk enjoying a day out with their carers.

The high point of 2018, however, was the Royal Society of Sculptors' inaugural summer exhibition. One third of the members applied to exhibit their work, with the £1000 Masons Company Prize at stake for the best work in stone. Thirty works were chosen to appear. My personal favourite was a lump of Kilkenny limestone, carved broadly into the shape and design of an elongated hand grenade, but four times larger. I stared at it for ages from different angles and was quite relieved to discover that this work, which won Guy Stevens the prize, was entitled *We don't understand what it is.* The 2019 summer exhibition is sure to be equally exciting, so do make time for a visit to Dora House.





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# Local retailer: Altimus

#### by Michael Becket

**I**T SEEMS PERVERSE to transfer your shop to an area where the maximum number of competitors are already trading. But nobody could have forecast just how overwhelmingly dramatic the result of the move was about to be.

Altimus, retailer of up-market sportswear, planned that counterintuitive move. It shifted from very nice corner premises at 138 Kensington High Street a hundred yards further west to 176, specifically to be surrounded by five other shops selling sports clothes and kit: Brigham Mountain Sports, Columbia Sportswear, Khatmandu, and Sports Direct.

Jay and Kriss Chaggar, the brothers who own the shop, obviously reckon if there is room for five shops in that specialism, there is room for six. Actually it is more positive than that. Jay reckoned that specific stretch of Kensington High Street is where people go if they are looking for fell-boots, and hiking kit. Presumably this is the same psychology that attracted doctors to Harley Street, goldsmiths to Hatton Garden and newspapers to Fleet Street.





They moved in just before Christmas 2017 and the gamble proved worth the risk. Turnover was a third up on the old site despite being in smaller premises. Then disaster struck and struck again.

Hardly had they moved in when it seems their desirable products attracted not just customers but thieves. Within a couple of weeks of opening at 2 am, a stolen Range Rover with a plough-like battering ram welded onto the front, drove across the pavement, straight through the front door and into shop. The police were there in minutes but it had taken just 60 seconds for the well-trained and organised eight hooded men to grab  $\pounds$ 80,000 worth of Canada Goose jackets and a few other classy winter wear and roar off into the night.

It was planned and executed with professional care. The robbers concentrated on expensive goods. A Canada Goose coat sets you back  $\pounds 1,000$ . The front of the shop was of course a demolished wreck. The move had taken longer than planned, partly though discovering asbestos in the premises, so additional closure for three or four weeks to rebuild the front was not ideal for the new business, especially as 70% of its trading is in the winter.

Undaunted, the brothers put up a hoarding to cover the front and, knowing it was more vulnerable than the normal shutters, hired a security guard. A couple of weeks later the gang returned in the middle of the night, this time on motorbikes and armed with clubs which had nails protruding from them. The guard put up a valiant fight but six months later is still recovering from his injuries. The attack was not just grievous bodily harm but attempted murder.

Back to square one. Now the shop has an impressive array of unobtrusive protection against a further return. Those precautions were however no hindrance to a man who ambled in, tried on a Canada Goose coat and, calmly removing a machete from his trousers, said he was leaving and any man who tried to stop him would have his head chopped off.



Enough to make one wonder about being in the right business, but surprisingly enough the brothers are not paranoid. They are partly reassured the police have arrested six of the eight original ram-raiders who will be getting really heavy sentences for going out tooled up to inflict such serious injuries.

The business prospers, as Jay explained, because the concentration of specialists attracts the customers. Ones in the market for top of the range kit go to Altimus. More especially as it is backed up by clinical analyses of feet and supplying not just the most suitable boots but inserts to help correct any problems. A rather generous compliment was paid them by Harrods of Knightsbridge, the only other stockist for some of the specialist up-market gear, calling them the Harrods of Kensington.

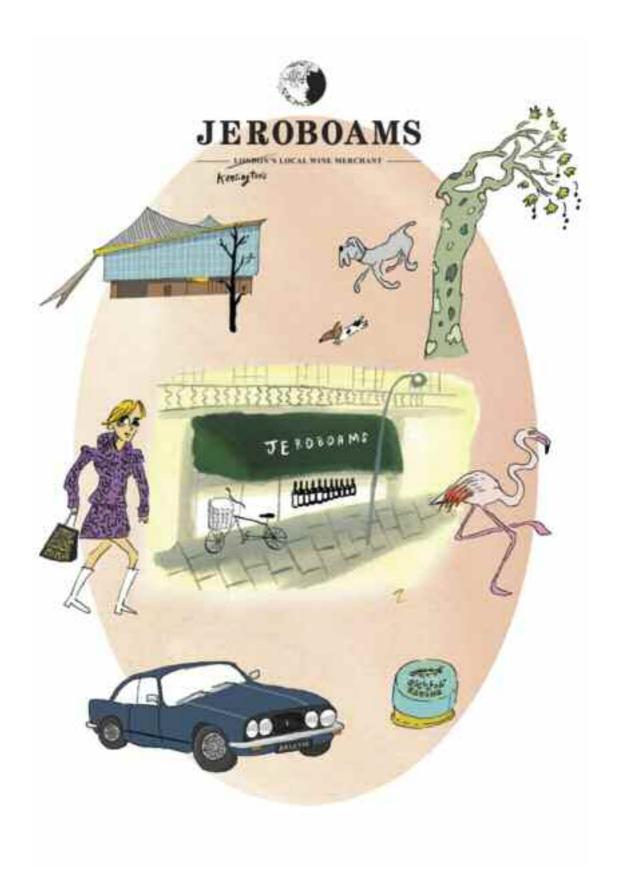
The brothers, both qualified podiatrists, used to have shops in Reading, Milton Keynes, Hull and Uxbridge but sold them to open in Kensington. They thought it would be another retail venture on a high street with "a mobile international customer population, but it has turned out to be "a real stable family-oriented proper community". As a result, they now stock what customers say is needed and apparently word has spread.

Even at that level, reckons Jay, they need to do more. After all, much of the stock can probably be bought cheaper on the internet. To attract customers going to a shop demands something extra. "We focus on more than just the product." The shop does not just sell footwear, it offers podiatry, osteopathy and physiotherapy as well as what Jay calls a biomechanical assessment.

All that comes at a price. You can pay up to £1,000 for a pair of orthotics to put in shoes though the price can include a series of steadily changing inserts gradually to create the right balance or adjust for idiosyncratic feet or posture – "how you stand or walk, and to correct physical differences" – until the optimum is reached. When they charged less for the initial version people felt a bit better and did not return – now they have paid a large amount up front and they keep at it to the end of the treatment "to get their money's worth".

Despite such prices, Jay explains modern business is not just about making a profit. He and his brother do free foot treatments once a month for homeless people sent to them by the Centrepoint charity.





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16 KENSINGTON COURT PLACE LONDON WE 5nj TELEPHONE 026 7831 7222 EMAIL: info@gallery (h.com WEB: gallery (h.com **D**OING JUST ONE thing at a time seems not to appeal to Simon Thurley. He is a historian, archaeologist, curator, writer, broadcaster, museum director and heritage crusader – "although not necessarily in that order" and not necessarily as separate pursuits, despite all those would seem fairly taxing activities to most people.

That he would become a historian or something of the sort was evident early. "By age seven I was helping out at Roman digs near my home ... and childhood holidays invariably involved ticking off stately homes and cathedrals". From that his trajectory has been consistent, as well as rapidly upwards. Educational choices led him in the same direction: BA in history from Bedford College, MA in art history from the Courtauld Institute of Art, and PhD on English Royal Palaces 1450–1550.

By that time his penchant for multi-tasking also became evident. While doing work for his doctorate, he became Inspector of Ancient Monuments for English Heritage, later becoming Curator of Historic Royal Palaces, and director of the Museum of London. That thesis and the accompanying research also later matured into a book, Houses of Power about the construction and function of royal Tudor palaces and the monarchs who produced them. Other books have been Men from the Ministry: how Britain saved its heritage, and The Building of England which is a history of architecture in England from 410 to World War 2.

He also presented a history programme on BBC London for three years and on television Flying Through Time. In addition, he presented Channel 4's six-part series Lost Buildings of Britain, for Channel 5 The Buildings that Shaped Britain, and for Granada a six-part history of London. From time to time he also appeared as consulting expert for the Channel 4 series Time Team.

For 13 years Thurley was chief executive of English Heritage, the government-backed body that regulated and maintained many of Britain's ancient monuments. He left following the split into a charity which retains the name, and Historic England which is a heritage adviser

Not that he is at a loose end as a result. Both houses of parliament have plans to move out of their building which increasingly needs urgent repair. Thurley is one of four independents with representatives from both houses on a board to run the budget, and organise the scope of the restoration. It is not his only task in that line. The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, one of Britain's oldest theatres, closed in January this year for an 18-month refurbishment, part of which will restore the front of house to its Regency splendour, and Thurley is chairman of the steering group keeping an eye on the restoration work.

He has launched a website about royal palaces, covering around sixty buildings as well as information about individual monarchs and their architectural activities. The Royal Collection Trust has invited him to write the first official history of St James's Palace, in collaboration with his friend Michael Turner, Deputy Surveyor of Works of Art for the Royal Collection Rufus Bird.

And just to fill in some spare time, he is also organising an exhibition going to China about the Treasure Houses of England: Chatsworth House, Blenheim Palace, Harewood House, Burghley House, Hatfield House, Holkham Hall, Leeds Castle, Beaulieu Abbey, Woburn Abbey and Castle Howard. The exhibition is about the houses and the extraordinary families who have lived in them. It is history and a chronicle of contemporary aristocratic life, to show the buildings are not just museums but still homes and part of contemporary British life. Paintings and drawings by Rembrandt, van Dyck, Raphael, Lucian Freud and Poussin will be shown with Flemish and English tapestries and French and English furniture and silver, plus Chinese, Sèvres and Meissen porcelain, lacquer and gold boxes. To show everyday life, it also includes costume and jewellery, garden statuary, historic vehicles, antique sporting guns and a range of exhibits from 'below stairs'.

He has also set up a company to advise owners of historic houses on their buildings and collections, with the help of other experts. He is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, and a trustee of the British Library and of the Society of Court Studies, an academic study group he helped to found 25 years ago. In addition, Thurley is the Gresham Visiting Professor of the Built Environment.

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2011 birthday honours for services to conservation
Visiting Professor of the Built Environment at Gresham College
Honorary Fellow and Visiting Professor of London Medieval History at Royal Holloway, University of London
Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London
Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (FRHist.S.)
Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA)
President of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (2005–2008)
President of the Huntingdonshire History Society
Chairman of the Society for Court Studies
Council of St Paul's Cathedral
Trustee for the Canal and River Trust
Founder of the European Heritage Heads Forum (EHHF)

#### Publications

The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: A Social and Architectural History, 1993
Hampton Court Palace: The Official Guidebook, 1996
Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments 1240–1698, 1999
Hampton Court: A Social and Architectural History, 2003
Lost Buildings of Britain, 2004 (accompanying the Channel Four TV series)
Whitehall Palace: The Official Illustrated History, 2008
Somerset House: The Palace of England's Queens 1551–1692, 2009
Excavations at Oatlands Palace 1968–73 and 1983–4, 2010 (with Rob Poulton and Alan Cook)



### by Michael Becket

BEGGING IS CONSIDERED undesirable by the state, being humiliating for the beggar and intimidating for those they approach. The Vagrancy Act 1824 S3 made it illegal and carries a fine. Public Order Act 1986 S5 makes it a crime to cause harassment, alarm or distress and also carries a fine. Under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, courts can issue community sentences, rather than fines, to persistent offenders aged 18 or over. Anti-social behaviour orders may be obtained in Scotland or Northern Ireland. In England and Wales the option is for Public Spaces Protection Orders, and local authorities can also take out an injunction under the Local Government Act 1972

Buskers

The alternative is to produce entertainment, which then transforms begging into busking, which is legal, at least for those over 14, though some local councils have byelaws prohibiting street performers, while others licence them. Some places also require a permit for electronically amplified sound and limit the volume, and common law limits the hours when noise is allowable, also with variable curfews. And if the performance draws too large a crowd in an inconvenient spot, the performer can be prosecuted under the Highways Act for causing an obstruction. Busking is prohibited in the City, but most London boroughs allow it without a licence, but can use the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to deal with noise from buskers. Transport for London provides permits for musicians in the Underground stations.



#### Busking? It's a pain in the ear drums

by John Cookson, Chairman, Old Court House Residents' group

It was a summer about ten years ago. An elderly lady in our Kensington High Street mansion block was caring for her terminally ill husband. She was distressed saying she couldn't open her windows that hot afternoon because of the loud, incessant twanging by a young man playing an electric guitar outside Whole Foods.

No worries, I thought. I'll have a word, explain to him the upset being caused and he would go twang somewhere else.

Not a bit of it. This budding Eric Clapton yelled at me: "Am a busker. You can do nuffink, so blank off."

Well, in the decade since busking has blossomed in the borough with 'musicians', causing untold misery to families living within earshot, many of them playing the same tune over and again. There's one nuisance harpist in South Kensington who performs only "My heart will go on," from the movie Titanic. Imagine having to listen to that dirge hour after hour. South Kensington florist Linda Boyce said: "We regularly ask them to turn their music down."

And there's now a sinister "busking" scene in Kensington High Street. It's controlled by east European mafia gangs, so every pound dropped into a concertina players' pots is funding organised crime. Kensington Police tell me they net around £300,000 a year.

After years of being accommodating to buskers, Kensington and Chelsea is at last cracking down, after 1,200 complaints a year, using Public Space Protection Orders to create buskerfree zones. Will Pascal, the council's lead member for streets said "Our goal is not to limit



artistic creativity but to enhance the quality of life." Let's hope he's referring the quality of life of residents!

Musical transgressors will face fines, but when I mentioned the scheme to Kensington police the news went down like a bum trumpet note at the Last Night of the Proms. "How are they going to enforce it?" asked one officer. "When a similar scheme was launched in Camden, police only got abuse from the public when they tried to ticket illegal buskers."

I'm thinking someone in Hornton Street has perhaps not thought things through.







The council in 2018 carried out a consultation exercise on buskers, following complaints it had received about noise. But it seems only 202 residents of the whole borough bothered to respond to its questionnaire. That apathy suggests it is either not very serious or not a widespread problem. That was a tiny sample and a self-selected one, which makes it statistically so unreliable that drawing valid conclusions from the submissions is pretty well impossible. The council has nevertheless done a valiant job of analysing the responses with a wide range of percentages about various points, but that cannot hide the general apathy on the subject.

It was followed up on 21 January 2019, when Rachel Merriman, Senior Community Safety Officer on the RBKC Community Safety Team sent an email to councillors in Earl's Court ward:

"As you know, the council is in the process of implementing a PSPO to tackle nuisance and antisocial behaviour caused by street entertainment and busking across the borough. Counsel has advised that we are on the right track and that based on the work undertaken and evidence provided so far (mostly complaints data), a PSPO would be a proportionate response.

However, he has also requested that we seek some additional impact statements from residents, businesses and elected members in affected wards. With this in mind, if you felt able to provide a short statement based on your experience it would be appreciated. The statement should include the location of the busker or street entertainer, the type of busking (which instrument, is it amplified etc), how does it impact on you? How effective do you think the council currently is dealing with this issue?"



## First Aid Course: Heart Attacks

#### by Michael Becket

WHEN COMPILING THE 2018 events diary, few would have thought to include a first aid course on cardiac resuscitation. However, the first course, when offered, was oversubscribed so we held a repeat course. Since then our member affiliates have followed suit.

The interest and concern is well justified, as although men's death rate from heart attacks and strokes halved between 2001 and 2015, it is by a long chalk the largest killer. In women, who traditionally have been proportionately less prone to those afflictions, it has also fallen by half, so much so that Alzheimer's has overtaken it as the biggest cause of female deaths.

First aid cannot cope with Alzheimer's but Ray Wallen from the London Ambulance Service, could and did deal with heart attacks in a way that managed to cover the technical information and the practical procedures, and still inject humour.

Ray spent 28 years in ambulances so his experience is extensive, but he was only six months off retirement so his latter years with the NHS had been spent in teaching. He held courses for new recruits – fairly protracted – as well as to concerned citizens, such as those of the Kensington Society – which was meant to be two hours long but went on quite a bit beyond that.

In a large percentage of the cases when someone seems spark out on the floor, looks asleep, the cause is a heart attack. The first thing to do is shout at them to open the eyes, and shake the shoulder to get a response. No reaction means the rescuer should shout loudly for help. Ray recommends to shout "Fire!" as that usually gets more of a response than just a Help! Ask who ever comes to call 999 immediately.

The next task is to learn whether the seriously ill person lying on the ground is breathing.



If no breath is detected swift action is needed, the most urgent of which is to call the ambulance, even before attending to the patient.

If there is breathing and "If you can easily see there is anything like chewing gum in the mouth take it out", Ray advised. "If they have false teeth but those seem firmly anchored, leave them alone. Young people sometimes have braces on their teeth which can come loose, so take those out, lick them and put them aside", he said. It took a moment or two before somebody spoke up. "Lick them? Why?" "Ah, yes" said Ray "because they generally have some crisps still on them." A moment's pause while that sinks in, and then "Just testing if you are awake."







The more conventional procedure is:

Check for danger before helping the casualty. Then check if the person is conscious and can respond. Shout "Are you all right?" or "What is your name?"

Failing to get a response, check the airway is unblocked.



• to open airway, one hand on forehead, the other under the chin tilting the head back gently; this will probably cause the mouth to fall open slightly.



• put face close to the mouth, hand on the stomach for 10 seconds to check for breath. If the person is breathing put the casualty in the recovery position. If not breathing or gasping, breathing only occasionally, start cardiovascular resuscitation (often called CPR for cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

Put unconscious but breathing person in recovery position. Check the surface on which they are lying is safe

• stretch nearest arm out at right-angles to the body with the palm upwards; take off glasses and put them on the palm



• take the further arm by grasping the thumb and pull hand till it is resting against the cheek nearest to the rescuer with the rescuer's hand underneath.





• bend the further leg up to right angles

• retaining the person's hand against the cheek pull the raised thigh to roll the body towards you; gently pull out your hand from under the cheek.





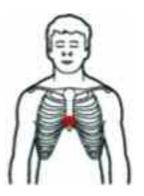
• tilt head back again with hand on forehead and other under chin

If nobody has called 999 do so now and keep checking for continued breathing

If the person did not respond and is not breathing properly or at all, the heart might have stopped beating.

This is a real emergency and CPR must start immediately. Get somebody to call an ambulance. If the ill person is not breathing, action is urgent because after five minutes without breathing irreversible brain and tissue damage will make return to normal life impossible.

Kneeling next to the chest, put the heel of the hand on a line from the armpit to the centre of the chest (the heart being mostly in the centre, contrary to popular belief)



- the right spot is just two fingers towards the head from the sternum (the dangling part of bone suspended just below the lowest level of the centre meeting-point of the ribs).
- straighten arms, lean forward and push the heel of the hand down vertically on the breastbone and chest by 5-6cm (2-2½in), and release, at about 30 times at a rate of about two really hard presses a second – regulated on the course by keeping to the rhythm of the Bee Gees' appropriate song of Staying Alive. This activates the heart, and diaphragm compression also activates the lungs.



• put the other hand on top of the first and lock the fingers



Do not worry about bruising, or even breaking ribs. Carry on giving 30 chest compressions for as long as you can, or until help arrives. If anybody else appears on the scene, take turns. If there is anybody else about, get them to look for a defibrilator – they are sometimes in supermarkets, shops, and some Underground stations.

If the casualty starts breathing normally again, stop CPR and put them in the recovery position.

## Choking

If someone appears to be choking, ask: "Are you choking?" If the person can speak, he is not choking. Either way, shout in an aggressive and demanding way Cough! If the person cannot cough or make any noise:

- 1. Support the upper body with one hand and lean the person forward.
- 2. With the heel of the hand give up to five sharp blows between the shoulder blades, checking after each whether the obstruction has come out



- 3. Check the mouth and if there is anything there get them to pick it out.
- 4. If that has not worked, quickly stand behind the person, link hands with the lower hand a fist between the belly button and the bottom of the ribs and give up to five inward and upward sharp thrusts.



If they're still choking, call 999 or 112 for an ambulance.

Once you've called, continue steps 2 and 3 – back blows and abdominal thrusts – until what's in there has cleared, help arrives or they become unresponsive.

If they become unresponsive at any stage, open their airway and check their breathing.

If they're not breathing, start chest compressions and rescue breaths (CPR -

cardiopulmonary resuscitation) to try to release whatever's stuck in there.

Illustrations from British Heart Foundation (bhf.org.uk), text is a paraphrase of the Ray's instructions and extracts from the British Heart Foundation booklet *Heartstart: Life Saving Guide*.

#### www.goodsamapp.org

• provides a link to people trained in resuscitation, including CPR and use of defibrillator; it has a map showing where defibrillators are sited and connects to emergency services

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## by Thomas Blomberg

#### Council report on short lets out of date long before published

On 11 December 2018, the short term holiday lettings working group within the council's scrutiny committee presented its draft final report about short lettings in the borough.

It is in many ways a good report, highlighting the explosion of short lettings in London and RBKC following the government's lifting of the London short let ban in 2015, and the many problems this has caused for neighbours, landlords, the hotel industry and the taxman. Not surprisingly, the report calls for a compulsory registration and licensing scheme for short let hosts, their service agents and the web letting platforms they use, and hopes that a group of affected councils, together with the London mayor and other stakeholders, will be able to lobby the government successfully to put this into law.

However, there is one rather big problem with the report: it's very out of date, so the problem is much worse than the authors of the report think.

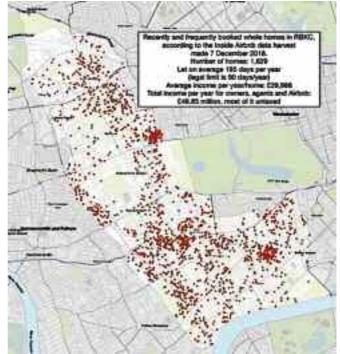
The report looks at the growth of the short let market in RBKC and London between April 2015 and March 2017, and bases its more detailed analysis on figures from a data harvest done by the Inside Airbnb consumer group on 4 March 2017, which was almost a month before the working group was set up. At that time, Airbnb offered 2,598 whole homes (flats or houses) in RBKC, whereof 793 were frequently let (i.e. above the 90 days limit set in 2015).

During the almost two years that the group worked on the report, there were apparently no attempts to see if the situation had changed.

Short Lets

However, a quick revisit to Inside Airbnb two days before the presentation of the RBKC report, showed that they had just posted a new London data harvest from 7 December 2018, which showed how very out of date the report's figures were: the number of whole homes offered by Airbnb in RBKC had by then almost doubled, to 4,439, and the number of frequently let whole homes had more than doubled, to 1,629 (i.e. 30% of all whole homes).

And although Airbnb is the largest, it's far from the only lettings



platform on the web offering short lets in London, making the actual number of whole homes available to short let in RBKC to be in excess of 6,000.

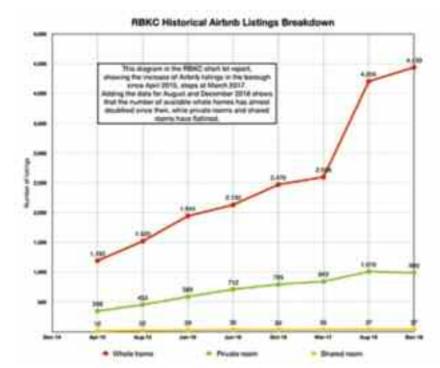
According to the Inside Airbnb's analysis, those 1,629 frequently let Airbnb homes in RBKC are on average let 183 nights per year, i.e. twice as often as legally allowed. Their average rental price is £171/night and they generate an average rental income of £2,499/month, or £29,988/year. Together, these 1,629 homes generate some £49 million per year – largely tax free and without any oversight. Of those 1,629, more than half (938) are available to book more than 245 days per year, which shows that these homes are obviously not lived in by the owner. These 938 generate £32.5 million per year, i.e. two thirds of the £49 million the 1,629 make.

The RBKC report talks rather warmly of some of the larger service agents (i.e. companies or individuals acting as hosts on Airbnb on behalf of the flat owners) making efforts to sanitise the market and follow the rules, but service agents handle more than half of those 1,629 frequently let homes that are in breach of the rules – and the company specifically mentioned at the presentation of the report as "a good company", has most of them.

Inside Airbnb spent the summer and autumn of 2017 concentrating on data for other cities around the world, but if the council's working group had contacted the enthusiasts behind Inside Airbnb, they could probably have received fresh data harvests during that time. And in April 2018 Inside Airbnb began publishing new London data on their website again, one harvest every month up to 4 December 2018 – but nobody working on the RBKC report seems to have revisited the Inside Airbnb website since the working group was set up.

The working group could also have used other sources, such as the frequently advertised commercial site AirDNA, used by professional hosts eager to get tenants, which creates even more detailed data sets for specific short let areas, not only for Airbnb activities, but also for their competitors HomeAway and Booking.com.

This diagram in the RBKC short let report, showing the increase of Airbnb listings in the borough since April 2015, stops at March 2017. Adding the data for August and December 2018 shows that the number of available whole homes has almost doubled since then, while private rooms and shared rooms have flatlined.



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# Planning Reports

## Overview

In looking back at last year, there has been a phenomenal level of activity. As the old adage says two steps forward and one back, still though one step is a step forward. We would have thought with all the uncertainties, there would have been fewer major planning applications, but not so. There have been more large applications than in the past few years and these now seem to be in a state of confusion. There are major planning policy changes proposed from the government and from the mayor in his new London Plan. The property market has changed and with the bottom falling out of the top-end of the housing market, the emphasis has moved to smaller units, but these remain for the luxury market.

We have been encouraged by the increase in consultation and involvement in policy development, although we still look forward to earlier engagement on planning applications. We would have expected the approach of the Planning Department to have come under more scrutiny. The council will be updating its Statement of Community Involvement which should set out how it will engage with residents at various stages of the planning process. However, there are still major concerns to be addressed.

## Major planning applications

We fear that we are in a mess, especially with major developments. Although each case has a different reason for being in difficulty, there appear to be some common factors: the pre-application advice process and the lack of early community engagement, leading to refusals, appeals and delays and, most recently, the "bombshell", call-ins by the mayor and, even, the possible intervention by the secretary of state.

## **Pre-application advice**

All major planning applications go through a pre-application advice process, where the applicant meets and negotiates privately with planners to be given advice on how to produce a scheme that will receive the planners' support. Quite separately, and usually later, the developer may choose to consult residents, although often it is no more than presenting what they believe has the planners' support; it is not really an attempt to adapt or respond to public opinion.

When the application goes to the Planning Committee, no matter how many residents object to the scheme, the case officer, the same one who advised the developer in the preapplication process, inevitably writes a positive report, which often reads more like a prospectus by the developer rather than a balanced appraisal of the scheme. What has happened in the last few years is that a string of major applications have had a positive recommendation from the officers and it has fallen to the Planning Committee, having heard the objections, to refuse the applications. Unfortunately, many of these cases have subsequently been lost on appeal, handicapped by the positive council officers' report. The major failures of the last few years include Dukes Lodge, the Odeon cinema site and now two current schemes: Newcombe House and Kensington Forum Hotel.

The main problems with almost all these cases (Newcombe House was an honourable exception) are the lack of public engagement, the degree to which the planning officers are persuaded to commit themselves to schemes and their supportive reports. We believe that there needs to be an independent review of what happened in these cases, especially the three latest ones: Newcombe House, the Kensington Forum and Heythrop College.

## Newcombe House

Newcombe House demonstrates some of the problems. In 2011 Brockton Capital bought the Newcombe House site. It engaged in the pre-application advice system, paying nearly  $\pounds$  300,000 for the service. The pre-application process was primarily between one of the council's planners and the developer. There was no consultation by the council with the residents.

The first application was submitted in December 2015. Having received a refusal in March 2016, Brockton appealed in May 2016. In June 2017, the planning inspector's decision was announced. He did not accept the council's main grounds for refusal, but dismissed the appeal for the sole reason of lack of sufficient affordable housing. Brockton resubmitted an application in September 2017 with increased affordable housing. In January 2018, with 751 objections and 188 support letters, and with the Planning Department's recommendation to approve, the application was refused by the Planning Committee for the

same reasons as the previous refusal, even though these had not been supported by the inspector: height and design.

In March 2018 the Mayor of London called in the case for his own decision and worked with the developer in total isolation with no public consultation as required by the National Planning Policy Framework, to develop an alternative proposal with more affordable housing and an increase in overall size of the development. In September 2018 the Greater London Authority planners presented to the mayor a revised scheme, giving objectors nearly 30 minutes and supporters 12 minutes to present their views. It was approved by the GLA. It appeared that Brockton had approval for the redevelopment. Then in November 2018, the secretary of state placed a "holding direction" on the application to give him time to decide whether he wished to intervene. We await his decision.

Who would take on this site and produce a scheme which both meets all the residents Newcombe House



demands and is economically viable? The point to make about this case and the difficulty we are in, is the length of time it has taken and what impact it has had on the confidence about future developments in RBKC.

## **Kensington Forum Hotel**

The Kensington Forum Hotel, the Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road, along with Newcombe House, had previously been designated in the council's 2010 development plan as an "eyesore". The existing 29-storey building, completed in the mid-1970s, was pushed through by the Greater London Council because of a shortage of hotels in London and the availability of government grants, breaking all the then policies on density, height and views. The 906-room hotel was universally disliked because of its height, bulk and impact on its surroundings.

Over the years we, along with the local societies, have met developers, the most recent was the proposal for a casino. In 2015 Queensgate Investments, bought the site and came forward with a scheme for a complete redevelopment. It did hold a few presentations to the residents, which mainly centred on the re-establishment of the garden square. Only in the very last stages did it present a model of their proposal with two towers. To say the least, we, along with the amenity societies and residents' groups in the area, were appalled.

Throughout this time the developer was engaged with the Planning Department in the preapplication advice process. When the application was finally submitted, we asked repeatedly for copies of the notes of these meetings. Finally, through a Freedom of Information request, we were given a one-page letter, which had been sent on 23 March 2018 by the planning officer to the developer, stating that the letter was "to provide feedback on the scale and massing of the PPA discussions to date and provide comfort for your client to move forward with the detailed design state and other elements of the scheme". In effect, the planning department was blessing the proposal. The funds for the development were finalised a few weeks later. As before, these pre-application discussions consisted of meetings solely between the council and the developer with no public engagement by the council with residents.



Developers often illustrate project applications with wide-angle photographs to minimise size. As an example, these pictures of the Kensington Forum site from Victoria Road were taken with a 24mm, as used by developers, and a 50mm lens showing the normal view.

On 22 June 2018 an application was made, three months after the planners had sent their "comfort letter". What is "the scale and massing" which the planners supported? One 30storey tower with 749 luxury rooms and another 22-storey tower of 340 serviced apartments (tourist accommodation), with the exclusive spa and gym, restaurants, bars, conference facilities, a 1,500-person events ballroom and the servicing required. The third building, 7 storeys, was to have 46 flats, 26 market and 20 affordable units. The garden square was to be re-established at the size as required by the London Squares Preservation Act 1931, hardly a gain. In total the 30-storey tower would become the tallest in the borough (102m/335 feet tall), the middle tower would become the fourth tallest (82m/269ft), and the bulk of the development would be more than 60% increase on what has always been considered to be an overdevelopment, two and half times larger than Newcombe House.

There were nearly 900 objections and only 4 letters of support. Not surprisingly, the Planning Department recommended approval. On 27 September 2018 the Planning Committee, after a six and half hour debate, refused the application. On 5 November 2018, similar to Newcombe House, the mayor decided to call-in the application, so that he "will act as the local planning authority for the purposes of determining" the application. He cited among other issues the "important contributions to the delivery of enhanced visitor infrastructure", paying little attention to the impact that the height, bulk and massing that the scheme would have on the area and on views. In other words, despite his own policies for assessing tall buildings, he appeared to question the Planning Committee's decision. The case will be heard by the mayor in April.

## Heythrop College

Heythrop College, as a residential college, was identified by the Council as a low-value, social and community use, to be protected by the council's own planning policy CK1. CK1 states "The Council will ensure that social and community uses are protected or enhanced throughout the borough and will support the provision of new facilities". The policy was designed to protect such community uses following the losses of the Vicarage Gate care home and the Princess Louise Hospital, both to high-value housing.

The developer of the Heythrop College site argued that, because the proposed "extra-care housing" would be much the same as a care home, it did not need to provide any affordable housing. It went one step further and argued that the proposal was a "community use" and therefore would comply with the CK1 policy.

We disagree. The proposal puts a price tag of  $\pounds$ 3m for a one-bedroom and  $\pounds$ 5m for the starter two-bedroom flat, which does not meet the requirement of CK1. It is clearly not a low-value social and community use the policy was designed to protect from high-value uses such as housing. The proposal would include all the facilities that luxury housing schemes require, such as 1 Kensington Road and the Holland Green developments, a swimming pool, spa, gym, cinema and a restaurant; all of which would be paid for by a large additional service charge.

The application, made on 3 September 2018, included more than 240 documents. Besides the "extra-care housing", there was the reinstatement of three townhouses on Kensington Square, which resulted in the requirement for five affordable housing units, of course, not within the confines of the main development or gardens. The site had proved too small, so the proposal included decking over the underground line and constructing 5 buildings ranging from 1 to 8 storeys, and expanding the development from a floorspace of 9,947 m<sup>2</sup> to one of 28,944 m<sup>2</sup>, nearly three times that of the current buildings.

The first application was withdrawn in April, just prior to the May election. A second application was submitted in September with minor changes. An interesting change was that the flats would be offered to rent rather than for sale, with the starting price for a one-year lease being £156,000, large service charges on top and only 2.5 hours of care a week, so exempting them from providing any social or affordable housing.

With an officer's report recommending approval, 183 objections and 24 supporters, it was approved by the Planning Committee on 27 November 2018.

The problem is a large development of 142 homes priced for the very top end of the private housing rental market, with only 3% as affordable housing. Both the council's and the Mayor of London's policies seek greater diversity of provision, especially in such large schemes like this.

We all recognise the housing needs for older people. But does the government? The government has allowed a coach and horses to be driven through the housing needs for the elderly which allows developers to claim exemption from any affordable housing obligations. Care homes are not classified by the government as homes but "residential institutions". This allows them to be exempted from the affordable housing requirements.

## Lessons

What these three cases have in common is the lack of community engagement. The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the need for early, proportionate and effective engagement with the local community. This is just not happening.

As for Heythrop College, the government must act to correct the misclassification of "extra-care housing" as being in the same class as a care home. It is housing and should be required to make provision for a wider range of housing for older people than a scheme which meets the needs of only the wealthiest 0.01%. People who can afford £156,000+ per year probably have other choices. Taken together with a scheme in Chelsea by the same developer, there would be some 200 of these luxury "extra-care housing" units in RBKC. If the developer does not create older people's housing for a wider market, it will be a waste of such an important site and contrary to the council's own policy, CK1.

The overall result is a mess: secretive pre-application advice where officers endorse proposals without knowing what residents want, no genuine early engagement with residents by the council or the developers, inevitable conflict of interest and the Planning Committee trying to respond to public concerns, leading to appeals and, now, intervention by the Mayor of London and, possibly, the secretary of state.

By ignoring the recommendations of the NPPF, which were designed to save time and reduce conflict, the result in these major schemes have been the opposite. Public confidence in this process is at an all-time low. Residents are angered when they see large-scale developments supported by planning officers without taking proper account of local opinion and the council's own development plan. Residents often feel that they are not only fighting the developers, but the planning officers of their own council. Developers, who pay large sums of money for advice and receive support from the officer, must also feel they too have been misled when their proposals are refused.

Residents want a significant change in procedure, a more open, independent and responsive process, with due consideration both ethically and morally. Urgent change is required. With over 900 residents objecting to an application which has the Planning Department's blessing, residents now insist on a process that does not disregard the residents' opinions and involve them in fighting fruitless, rear-guard actions.

Developers, whilst more than happy not to have early engagement with the public, are finding that even when recommended by officers who write supportive reports, are having their applications refused. Not surprisingly, many developers and even architects will not now venture into Kensington.

#### Amanda Frame and Michael Bach

## Major developments

## The Kensington

Known until recently as the Odeon, the cinema on the south side of Kensington High Street opposite the Design Museum started life in 1926 as the Kensington Kinema, one of the Joseph Mears circuit which included Twickenham Kinema, Richmond Kinema and the long-since demolished Sheen Kinema It was built with 2,370 seats spread between the stalls and circle, and had an imposing neo-classical façade with a deeply recessed entrance and an impressive foyer with grand staircases on either side. It was one of the early steel-framed buildings and had a first floor restaurant looking out over Holland Park.

In July 1940 it was renamed the Majestic Cinema to avoid identification by German parachutists. It was then closed and taken over by the government for storage. There were several close misses by enemy bombers, including direct hits by flying bombs on the Lyons Teashop on the opposite corner.

The Majestic was taken over by Odeon Theatres Ltd and reopened as a cinema in October





1944. In 1965 the seating was reduced to 1,894, retaining the stalls and circle areas. The restaurant was refurbished and became the Holland Restaurant, thus maintaining the link with the Park. The space was divided to become a three-screen cinema in 1976, four screens in 1980 and six in 1991. A comprehensive refurbishment was carried out in 1998 while retaining the exterior.

A planning application was approved for the redevelopment of the cinema site alone, involving the demolition of the auditorium but retaining the front portico and creating a deep basement to house new smaller auditoria. In place of the original auditorium, a block of large mansion flats was proposed. There was strong opposition, especially as the proposals necessitated felling two mature trees along the street frontage.

The next application included the post office and sorting office to the east of the cinema and with a frontage on the Earls Court Road. In addition to this, the then owner assembled a site to include another property on that frontage which is Whitlock House. A larger and more comprehensive development was now possible but was strongly resisted by local residents and a strong following of cinema enthusiasts. This application divided the access to the cinemas between the Earls Court Road, where the pavement is very narrow, and a limited number to two screens facing on to the forecourt in Kensington High Street. Many residents considered this would not be a safe access point, particularly when large audiences were expected or popular children's films were to be promoted.

A further layout was submitted with access to the cinemas through what had been the post office but retaining the original cinema foyer as the access to the housing, including the flats within what had been the auditorium. Consent was granted but the developer decided to continue with an appeal against the refusal of the application which relied on access to the cinemas from Earls Court Road.

Local amenity groups, led by Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Association and the Kensington Society, formed a Rule 6 group to oppose the appeal. This enabled them to submit their own case and to cross-examine the appellant and his team.

The end result was that the inspector ruled in favour of the appellant, thus in effect leading to three consents for a new cinema: first one which used just the original site, and then two using the larger site, the main distinction being that one had the cinema entrance further down Earls Court Road and the other had it located on the High Street.

A relatively new developer took over ownership of the site during the latter part of 2018. This is Lodha UK, part of the Lodha Group which operates on a world-wide basis. It purchased its first property in the UK in 2013 and it is committed to working closely with adjoining owners. Lodha completed the purchase of the Odeon and the adjoining post office sites in 2018.

Its objectives are to:

- provide a better residential unit mix and more housing, including affordable housing;
- retain a single cinema entrance from Kensington High Street;
- deliver an improved cinema experience;
- provide greater street level animation;

and to increase the vibrancy of Kensington High Street, all within a similar envelope to that of the consented scheme.

#### **Anthony Walker**

## 100a West Cromwell Road

This is a complex site running to the northwards beside the railway line from West Cromwell Road to Beckford Close, and continues as a narrow piece of land with town houses leading to the north. At the southern end beside the West Cromwell Road it widens out to a roughly square shape, on part of which Tesco has a long lease for a large store. Shaftesbury Place housing is situated in the same building and above Tesco, and both are in active use but are not part of the site currently being considered.

There have been several planning applications for the site including a current consent which provides 254 homes, the majority of which are flats, in a long block beside the railway line, 11% of which are affordable housing. In the consented scheme a circular tower marks the most southerly point and it includes a creche and also a leisure centre.





The development fund manager Meyer Bergman, and the property developer Londonewcastle, are working with architects John McAslan with the declared intention of improving the consented scheme. The RBKC Local Plan Policy CA7 seeks a minimum of 450 homes on the site at 100/100a West Cromwell Road, of which the developer's target is that 35% be affordable housing. The objective is to provide new public realm with access along the full length of the site and this is provided on a raised, landscaped deck which is some 20m above the access level at the Cromwell Road end.

The masterplan for the site displays a line of buildings along the western side of the site, broken up into a series of three main buildings to avoid the 'slab' of buildings in the consented scheme. At the northern end this breaks down into a lower and narrower row of housing which is part of the affordable provision on the site. At the corner with Beckford Close there will be a three or four level amenity block which is designed to include a 20m pool and gym.

At the opposite end of the landscaped deck there is another, smaller, block of three floors which will provide access from the plaza in front of the existing Tesco, and will house a range of commercial spaces to serve both local business with flexible accommodation, and the community itself.

This is an evolving vision of a masterplan which has been through a number of phases while the concept is developed. There are concerns about how easy the access to the landscaped podium will prove to be, although this is balanced by the advantage of a larger number of flats formed within the same amount of built accommodation. The walkway is potentially very attractive and is sunlit in the morning but will it be as attractive in the afternoon and evening and will walking up there as dusk falls be a welcome experience? Will the gaps between the buildings perhaps create wind funnels?

The commercial space has been reduced and is described as 'flexible workspace' which it

is understood can be rented, possibly even by the hour. This sounds as though it could provide a positive contribution to the character of the area, however the façade facing the plaza in front of Tesco is very fragmented and it is debatable how much the commercial uses will contribute to the character and appearance of the surroundings.

The developer has now submitted their application for this site. The Society will be considering this scheme and commenting to the Council shortly.

**Anthony Walker** 

## Assets of Community Value

## The Academy – the continued story

You may have read the news in our autumn newsletter about the lack of progress with the Academy pub. To recap, the Wellington Pub Co, the owners, wanted a residential development. Fast action by Norland Conservation Society with a successful application for an Asset of Community Value (ACV) listing, put a spanner in the works. The owner challenged the ACV designation, but the court upheld the designation in its entirety. At the same time the council extended planning protections for pubs.

In April 2017, the Wellington Pub Co entered into a binding agreement to sell the pub to Academy Holland Park Ltd, a company whose business is dealing in real estate. What followed was a series of planning applications. Finally, having promised to develop the site and lease the refurbished pub to an operator, a proposal which satisfied the local residents, was granted planning permission in June 2018.



In August 2018 the Academy Holland Park Ltd, put the property on the market, and then withdrew it. Now we hear that land adjacent to the pub (forming part of the planning approval but not part of the ACV) is up for sale.

Sadly, having been closed since August 2016, the pub remains a sorry sight with a broken entrance door and a deteriorating building. We have plans and hope in the next newsletter we can tell you of action taken.

Mary Sheehan

The Academy pub

## Notting Hill Police Station

In November 2017, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) announced that, after public consultation on plans to save  $\pounds 400$  million, Notting Hill Police Station was one of 41 stations in London to close.

Following partial closure early in 2018, the front office at the station is now closed and it is understood that the building is virtually empty.

The Kensington Society joined with many to campaign to prevent the closure, but to no avail. However, to save the building from property development and to retain the building for community use, we were successful in nominating the property as an Asset of Community Value. This listing lasts for five years to November 2022 and acts as a warning to future buyers. Should MOPAC decide to sell, community interest groups have an opportunity to bid during which any sale by MOPAC is put on hold for six months and the local community has the right to offer to buy the site. With the ACV in place any future use of the building is restricted.

The Kensington Society has met local representatives, councillors and NHS to discuss possible community uses if the site were redeveloped. NHS London is very interested in the possibility of relocating several GP surgeries into a purpose-built facility which would enable the provision of enhanced services including a dental surgery and a care centre for senior citizens. We also hope that a police presence can be included in any future use.

Action is needed. However, time and resources are a limiting factor and we are looking to the council for help.We will not give up and hope to report progress in the autumn newsletter. Mary Sheehan



Notting Hill police station

## The Westway Trust's 23 acres beneath the Westway

The trust has been doing some rethinking of its earlier proposals to develop a series of new buildings at 'Portobello Village' (where Westway crosses above Portobello Road). There has been further in-depth consultation with local people, many of whom hold strong views about the 23 acres managed by the trust should be used.

Plans are advanced for a development of 12 housing units at Acklam Road. This scheme involves Octavia Housing Association and will include social housing. Rather than replacing the Portobello Arcade, this existing set of retail units will be refurbished. Plans for an arts and cultural space at Acklam are at an earlier stage.

The trust has worked up proposals for a purpose-built equestrian centre, to replace the currently unused stables and riding arena adjacent to Westway Sports Centre. A detailed planning application for the project has been submitted to the council.

#### **Henry Peterson**

## **Changing Plans**

During 2018 the government revised its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out its planning policy for England. Both the mayor and the borough are required to take account of it when preparing development plans. The NPPF, however, has little specific to say about London, let alone the kind of circumstances that we face in Kensington.

The mayor's London Plan, on the other hand, is the strategic part of the "development plan" for RBKC, whilst the local part is the council's Local Plan. The mayor published his draft new London Plan for consultation in November 2017 and the examination in public was set up last September. The hearings, which started in mid-January will run through into May. The panel will report to the secretary of state in autumn and the inspector will inform the mayor of changes needed before it can be adopted.

The main implications of the new London Plan for Kensington is the increased pressure for higher density development to meet London's need for housing, especially affordable housing. We are concerned the new London Plan does not have strong enough policies on tall buildings and density, but ultimately what matters is how the mayor interprets these when assessing large developments. This is already causing concern with the cases he has called in for his own decision, such as Newcombe House and Kensington Forum. Whilst the London Plan does recognise the council's limited capacity to produce the required extra housing, there will be further pressure to increase the density of development on what sites can be found, especially small sites.

The borough's Local Plan had its examination in autumn 2017. The inspector had doubts about whether the borough could secure enough additional housing. The council has been waiting over a year for the inspector's final report, but we already know there will need to be an early review of the housing policy and the council's estimate of how much additional housing could be produced over the next five years. Meanwhile the London Plan, recognising that after Grenfell, with most proposals for redeveloping the council's housing estates delayed, the borough has limited capacity for additional housing.

'However, just as with the mayor's interpretation of the London Plan, we have concerns with how the council's planners have interpreted our policy (CK1) for protecting low-value social and community uses, its failure to secure affordable housing and its limited support for our tall buildings policy. Michael Bach

## Permitted development

The other major government consultation this year was the proposed increase in "permitted development rights", which would allow shopfront uses in town and local centres to change offices, hot-food takeaways into housing, and allowing even greater freedoms for changes between shops, banks and cafes. The society objected strongly to these proposals, which might be appropriate in run-down areas, but in Kensington would merely generate changes of use that would reduce the number of shops. We pointed to Kensington High Street, where banks and cafes were already free to move in without needing consent. The society considers these changes should be subject to local control, as one of the few mechanisms for shaping the future of our centres.

Another proposal was to create rights to build extra storeys on buildings for additional housing. Fortunately, for now, the proposals would exclude conservation areas and listed buildings, but, subject to their height in relation to their surroundings, would allow additional storeys on blocks of flats and offices. The society considers this proposal is totally inappropriate without full planning controls and that such developments should be subject to planning consent.

The one area of agreement, however, was a proposal we strongly back on the review of permitted development rights of telephone companies to install telephone kiosks in our streets and to tighten controls on advertisements.

**Michael Bach** 

## Opportunity Areas

## Kensal Gasworks – The last remaining undeveloped land in our borough

The large tract of land known as Kensal Gasworks is one of the few remaining undeveloped sites in central London. Securely fenced off from the neighbouring Sainsbury's at the northern end of Ladbroke Grove, it remains a little known part of the Royal Borough.

As a development site, it is larger than those developed at Paddington and Kings Cross (while smaller than the HS2/Crossrail site at Old Oak, across the borough boundary in Hammersmith).

Proposals for development at Kensal have been slow to come forward. There are several landowners involved, and much of the land is contaminated. Access is poor, with a single entrance/exit from an already congested roundabout on Ladbroke Grove. The Grand Union Canal and railway lines cut off other obvious access points. The Council has long lobbied for an additional Crossrail station on this site, badged as 'Portobello North'. This project now looks unlikely to happen.

The Council is now consulting on the future of this large piece of land. The last such exercise was back in 2013, when 3 options were suggested with housing numbers ranging from 2,000 to 3,500 new units. Delivery of new homes on this site is a key element in meeting RBKC housing targets, as set by the Mayor of London.

The rusting gasholder structures on this site have long been a feature of views from the canal towpath. These are shortly to be dismantled, as a further stage in preparing the land for development. One of the earlier set of proposals to come forward may well be from Sainsburys and their development partners Ballymore. These are likely to involve building a



new superstore, potentially with housing above, while leaving the existing store in place until a new one is opened.

The Council is considering a pedestrian/cycle bridge to the site, crossing the railway line from Barlby Road in order to improve access. Kensal House will remain, as a significant Grade 2 housing estate designed by Maxwell Fry. The future of Canalside House is less certain, as the Council has aspirations to improve the junction layout where this building stands.

The biggest issue in the consultation is likely to be the number of housing units to be built on the site. Back in 2013, the Council suggested three options ranging from 2,000 to 3,500 new homes. Not for the first time, the planners at the GLA have latched on to the higher figure and this is currently proposed as a 'minimum' in the new Draft London Plan.

There have already been vociferous objections to the housing targets included for individual Opportunity Areas in the new London Plan (of which Kensal is one). Evidence that the areas involved have the necessary 'development capacity' to meet these targets is slim in many cases. The resultant densities are far above those treated as a maximum in the current London Plan, and lead almost inevitably to clusters of residential towers

The Borough has a few such tower blocks dating from the 1960's and 70's (including Trellick and the shrouded remains of Grenfell). But this part of London has very largely been spared. Old Oak (north of Wormwood Scrubs) is destined to see 'super-densities' of 600 units/hectare and towers of 40 storeys and above (as have begun to appear at North Acton). The Isle of Dogs (another Mayoral Opportunity Area) now has residential towers under construction of 70 storeys. This is twice the height of Trellick Tower.

With no Crossrail station and continued low public transport accessibility, the 3,600 housing figure for Kensal Gasworks is not a sound starting point for detailed planning at Kensal Gasworks. But it looks as though North Kensington residents will have to fight hard to prevent this target dictating what happens next. When the opportunity exists to plan a new part of North Kensington from scratch, there is a real risk of repeating those other examples of urban renewal in London which future generations will come to regret. And there will not be another chance in this Borough.

## Old Oak

The Draft Local Plan prepared by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation is due to be examined in public in April 2019. A key issue at this hearing will be the realism of OPDC proposals to meet a target of 24,500 new homes, first set back in 2015.

This target has not changed, despite the emergence physical and financial constraints that have reduced the area on which housing can be built. The third draft Local Plan proposes a housing density of 600 units/hectare on the land owned by Cargiant at Old Oak North. This is a density acknowledged as requiring urban forms (i.e. tall buildings) which are new to London and equivalent to those in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Plans for the new HS2 station at Old Oak Common proceed, with contractors Balfour Beatty/Vinci appointed. The station, with its interchange to the Queen Elizabeth Line, is due to open in 2026.

**Henry Peterson** 

## Earl's Court/West Kensington

There have been a number of major changes in the last year. The change in the top-end of the housing market led to slow sales of the one completed development on Lillie Road. The developer realised a need for a rethink of the larger scheme covering an area between Lillie Road, North End Road, Talgarth Road and, roughly, the West London Line. The site is mainly in Hammersmith, except for the forecourt and main building of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre. During 2018 the Exhibition Centre, which has been the focus for major exhibitions for nearly 80 years, was demolished, leaving a massive wasteland. London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is seeking to retain the three council housing estates, which the previous council administration had sold to Capco.

Changing circumstances have led to Capco to receiving offers for the site. There are also suggestions that a new master plan will be needed for the remaining site, minus the estates, but the mayor will need to agree to a lower housing target than the 7,000 homes previously agreed.

## Michael Bach

## Issues:

## **Telephone Kiosks**

2018 saw an onslaught of applications for new telephone 'kiosks', with Kensington High Street and Notting Hill Gate being the focus for a large number of applications. You would think we already have too many telephone kiosks, especially since so many people have mobile phones.

In the 1980s, before mobiles, the government wanted to encourage competition in the public telephone market and allowed the installation of telephone booths without the need for planning consent. The result was an inundation of our main streets. Some of these companies folded and we have been left with many telephone kiosks that are now unused eyesores.

The new generation of telephone 'kiosks', are little more than a vehicle for large digital advertisements. The competition is no longer between telephone companies but between

advertising agencies. As the government's policy has not changed with the times, the new kiosk structures still do not require formal planning consents and the only planning controls are the advertisements judged solely on terms of their impact on amenity and whether they affect traffic safety, including obstructing pedestrians.

This has meant the council has given consent for some of the less intrusive models, such as BT/Inlink columns with smaller advertising screens but refused more intrusive models.

The real issue in this advertisements war is the cumulative effect of illuminated digital advertising panels by J C Decaux on almost all bus shelters, BT/JCDecaux advert/phones (now being traded off for new BT/Inlink columns) and the avalanche of other advertisement/phone providers (New World Payphones, Maximus Networks and Euro Payphones). The council is trying to limit the damage, but it is difficult if the issue of 'need' cannot be questioned and A new telephone point grounds for refusal are limited.



Westminster Council challenged an inspector's decision in the courts and recently received a favourable judgment that prior approval for a kiosk should have been refused because the application, which included an advertising screen, did not qualify for this process, as the structure served a "dual purpose", both telecommunications and advertising. The inspector's prior approval decision was quashed. This should help our council to resist such applications.

At last the government has recognised the problem, although solely because the number of appeals has overloaded the Planning Inspectorate, at one stage there was a backlog of over 1,000 kiosk appeals. The latest government consultation asks whether these should now be subject to normal planning controls, needless to say the society and the council support such a change.

Michael Bach

## **Exhibition Road and South Kensington Station**

Please refer to the Brompton Association excellent report on pages 98-99.

## Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

During and immediately after World War 2, many houses in Kensington were subdivided to create small flats or bedsits. Known as HMOs the property usually are not self-contained but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. They provided 'entry level', affordable privatelyrented housing, especially for single people or couples. Indeed, they were recognised as a valuable contribution to the mix of housing in Kensington, especially Earl's Court and Notting Hill. In recent times, housing associations have taken them over and they have provided affordable homes for older single people.

Until 2010 the council was committed to resisting the loss of HMOs, but under the 2010 Local Plan this protection was watered down, making an exception where the conversion produced self-contained studio flats as long as their continued use as housing was secured by a legal agreement.

In the last year, however, we have seen a large increase in permissions for HMOs to change from bed-sits into studio flats. The council has designated HMO as sui generis which means there is little or no housing protection. We agree that some of the existing HMOs are little more than broom cupboards. The renovation should not be allowed to change the use from small, affordable rented housing to expensive market-rent studios for short-term or even one-night rentals for tourists.

A quick check through the estate agents in the area where we have seen the most changes, especially in Earl's Court and Notting Hill Gate, shows these studios renting at £260 to £365 a week and many are now on the Airbnb market. They are changing from housing to tourist accommodation. The council is aware of the growth of this type of tourist accommodation at the expense of housing. This is yet another major leakage of housing no longer available to long-term residents or even low income workers.

This year we will be pressing the council for effective protection for HMOs.

**Michael Bach** 

## Community Infrastructure Levy and Neighbourhood CIL

We find that many of our members either do not know of CILs or are unfamiliar with the process.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a tax introduced by Gordon Brown's government in the Planning Act 2008 and came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Development may be liable for a charge by local planning authorities which decide to levy it. That is not automatic. In London all but a handful of planning authorities have introduced a CIL regime, including RBKC. Each council has to decide on the level of tax and publish a scale of charges and the areas where they are applicable. Not all councils have opted to raise the extra tax.

For London a separate CIL charge was initiated by the mayor of London across the whole of Greater London on April Fools' Day 2012, to meet the rising cost of the Elizabeth Line (alias Crossrail). It is payable on developments over net additional floorspace of 100 square metres. For residences the charge can be levied on a single house or flat of any size, unless it is built by a self builder. It exempts medical premises unless attached to the consultant's or practitioner's home. Also exempt are educational developments, social housing and charitable developments that meet the relief criteria. Mezzanine floors of less than 200 square metres inserted into an existing building, are not liable for the CIL unless they form part of a wider planning permission that provides other works as well. Other developments in the RBKC pay  $\pounds 50$  per square metre.

From 6 April 2015 a CIL was levied by RBKC itself, on new development floor space in the borough to pay for "development in the area". The types of expenditure on which the levy may be spent in the area where it is raised can include things other than infrastructure, provided it supports development needs. That means it can include new or improved transport links, flood defences, schools, hospitals, parks, cultural facilities, a district heating system. The local authority must show the expenditure is needed to support development of that area.

The differential rates imposed in RBKC are on residential (C3), extra care housing, hotels, and student accommodation, but not commercial property, and range from £125 to £750 per square metre depending on area and usage. In the 2017/2018 tax year CIL generated £4,948,148 of which £247,407 was spent, all on expenses, and there was £1,131,820 left over from previous years.

In introducing this form of development tax, the government specified that 15% of total CIL receipts be treated as 'Neighbourhood CIL'. Each planning authority is required to consult closely with local communities as to how this 'neighbourhood pot' should be spent. There is greater flexibility on how this portion of CIL receipts can be used. In areas with a completed and adopted neighbourhood plan, the percentage of Neighbourhood CIL rises to 25%. There are two such areas in the Royal Borough (Norland, and St Quintin and Woodlands). RBKC has yet to set up arrangements for consultation on neighbourhood CIL, whereas half of London Boroughs now have such mechanisms in place.

See extract below from RBKC's recent consultation document:

2.8 CIL Regulation 123 also restricts the pooling of s106 contributions so that no more than five developments may contribute to the same item of infrastructure. However, the government's Planning Practice Guidance also makes clear that for provision not capable of being funded by CIL, such as affordable housing and other non-infrastructure obligations e.g. training, local planning authorities are not restricted in terms of the number of obligations that may be pooled, however, they must have regard to the wider policies on planning obligations set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)2.

**Henry Peterson** 

# Reports from AFFILIATED SOCIETIES, 2018

## ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ACRA)

The long and winding road.

For the past five years our residents and garden association have been fighting to ward off successive planning projects involving the site currently occupied by the Holiday Inn Kensington Forum hotel. Initially it was supposed to be transformed by the owners into a 365 days, 24-7 Mega Casino. That project was meant to go to the Bristol Inspectorate, but was withdrawn due to our persistent objections.

This time the new owners aspire to doubling the volume of what already exists on the site. Local residents are up in arms, and with the help of 19 nearby residents' associations and the able support of the Kensington Society our efforts were rewarded and the project was rejected by RBKC Planning Committee at the end of September 2018.

Unfortunately since then the decision was called in by the Mayor of London and we are eagerly awaiting the outcome of GLA's decision while at the same time lobbying fiercely to have the project rejected.

Everyone must surely have realised by now that the planning system, right from the national level to LPAs is skewed in favour of developers. This is most unfair, as we are bank-rolling the lot, but are basically paying someone to poke us in the eye with a stick at every turn. Of course we can't right all the wrongs immediately, but doing so must be our medium term goal.

Another project in our area that may interest you is the state of 24 Harrington Gardens, a Grade II listed building that in Victorian times was the family home of the world famous architect family Peto, where the current owners some years ago cut out the middle section of the existing roof, (without ever making a planning application) and installed a modern style roof terrace. We feel that letting this pass would be a very bad example to others. Residents went to great trouble to supply the council with all the necessary evidence and the matter was taken to court. We have since been informed that a reinstitution notice against the owners has been served, and we await decisive action from the Council Planning Enforcement Department.

Many thanks to all of those who supported us, and we shall only be too happy to reciprocate the support.

Finally, thank you to RBKC for defending its decision to turn down the Forum application and taking the mayor's 'call in' to Judicial Review. We are hoping that the High Courts will pass a landmark decision in favour of RBKC, thus showing that the mayor should not have the power to impose unfair political decisions on residents.



Friederike Maeda, Chairman Ashburn Courtfield Gardens Residents Association

## THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

As well as the usual menu of basement 'digs', licensing applications and traffic/parking matters, The Boltons Association has focused considerably this year on crime issues.

Starting about two years ago and growing in severity and intensity, the Boltons conservation area – in common with other parts of London – has suffered from the depredations of mopedenabled crime. This initially took the form of car break-ins by lads on stolen mopeds. That has been ongoing, but there was also a disturbing trend towards moped crime escalating to street robbery and assault.

The association sought to address this via liaison with the local Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, plus conducting informal evening resident patrols to observe, record and report. These actions morphed into the creation by local residents (who were members of The Boltons Association) of the Redcliffe Watch Group and its dedicated RWG WhatsApp Group, whereby residents of the Boltons conservation area who have CCTV that can incidentally pick up images of pavement/carriageway activity (as opposed simply to a camera focused simply on the front door of the premises concerned) commit to reviewing their CCTV system when requested to do so, with a view to capturing intelligence in respect of a particular date and time regarding alleged perpetrators. This can then be provided directly to the police (ie, in virtually real time) for alleged perpetrator apprehension/identification purposes – not just for 'moped-enabled crime' but also for burglary and confidence frauds.

When RWG's moped crime intelligence gathered by residents' CCTV was shown to police, it was used by the latter to make a case to Operation Venice (the Met's London-wide moped crime initiative) for resources being committed in the form of Scorpion Teams being deployed in the Boltons conservation area for three weeks last summer. We understand that 17 arrests were made – and that there has been a significant fall-off since in the number of moped crimes in the area. The activities of RWG, using CCTV and patrols, have continued since.

This strongly suggests that where local residents mobilise to co-operate intensively with their local Safer Neighbourhoods Team, and use CCTV to provide worthwhile intelligence that the police can use to secure specialised resources, then something effective can be done to reduce moped crime.

Redcliffe Watch Group was recently invited to make a presentation on this to RBKC, together with the police who had been involved. A follow-up meeting has also been held since – to discuss ways in which the RWG concept might be introduced elsewhere in the borough.

Lastly, there is a WhatsApp Group operated by residents who wish to share crime prevention and support information with their neighbours. This is called Safe Neighbours SW10 – and has a thriving participation.

Calvin Jackson Calvin.Jackson@CharterChambers.com



## **BROMPTON ASSOCIATION**

This time last year Transport for London announced they had found a development partner for South Kensington Tube Station (Native Land) and would be working with architects Rogers Stirk Harbour to bring forward development proposals. We, along with the affiliated local societies and the Kensington Society, have consistently argued for a conservation led approach to the station site and in particular the retention and refurbishment of the block on the south side of Thurloe Street, an unlisted building which makes a very positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and complements the listed station. We have also argued for small scale residential development, not retail, along Pelham Street.

A year on, we have seen no plans but there are very worrying indications that TfL and Native Land are not listening, despite hours and hours of meetings and consultations with TfL prior to their appointment of Native Land. In fact, it seems as if TfL intend to go back on the brief which they, in discussion with the local groups and the Kensington Society, worked so hard to formulate.

On other fronts, meetings with the same local groups have been held with the Wellcome Trust, a major landowner in the area. Concerns about redevelopment of Wellcome owned properties in Pelham Street remain an issue as does the possible extension of cafes and tables and chairs into the Brompton Cross area which would have a serious negative impact for residents. We are pleased however that a recent potential tenant who would have been wholly unwelcome to residents has been refused the tenancy.

Meanwhile, the V&A and its Director Tristram Hunt has continued to argue for Exhibition Road to be pedestrianised, treating the hundreds of residents who actually live 24/7 in and off Exhibition Road as a tiresome inconvenience to be 'managed' to facilitate institutional annexation of the public realm for the Museums' own increasingly commercial purposes. Right from the outset of the Exhibition Road Project in 2004 RBKC, reflecting the needs of the local community, gave clear assurances that Exhibition Road would remain open to traffic as an essential north south route for residents and its many other users. We are grateful to Cllr Pascall for his continued assurances. The Exhibition Road Cultural Group which represents the museums and the other institutions has been actively supporting pedestrianisation. Our representations along with the Kensington Society to the Cultural Group have been steadfast in insisting that the guidelines established in 2004 are maintained and not ignored.

We are also grateful to our own local Councillors for listening to the concerns of local residents and to Cllr Pascall in his lead role for Streets, Planning and Transport for chairing a number of meetings attended by all the representatives of the residents' associations, to discuss the issues. Dixon Jones, the architects commissioned by the Council to design the layout of Exhibition Road fifteen years ago, have been commissioned to come up with suggestions for added security and look better than the temporary granite blocks hastily put in place to deter vehicular terrorist attack following the Westminster Bridge atrocity. There is however concern that Dixon Jones are ignoring repeated resident

feedback as they appear wedded to their vision of turning these structures into hundreds of new seats – which will result in the road turning into an open-air concert venue for buskers and encourage more litter and antisocial behaviour.

We also note with concern the increasing commercialisation of the museums – with entire floors now being converted to commercial event spaces and very significant increases in day and night commercial events planned for the future. We, again along with the residents' associations, were also baffled that the V&A could seriously propose installing eleven up to 10m tall 'marketing' banners on their Grade 1 listed façade – as this goes to press an application still to be heard by the Council. While we all understand that public sector cuts require the museums to seek other sources of income, no private enterprise would be permitted to operate in this manner nor open a commercial event space in such a predominantly residential area. We also consider that the museums need to become far more 'assuming' the contractor has obtained the necessary permits and complied with the law because they never do) and to take responsibility for all aspects of their users' behaviour and not assume their responsibility stops at their door.

We have supported the Council's extension of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which takes in the Brompton Road. Fast cars, overcrowded pavements late at night and noisy pedicabs continue to blight residents' lives. We have had some success in restricting hours for tables and chairs placed on the pavement and we are very grateful for the support of our Ward Councillors over the many local issues which continue to concern us.

Sophie Andreae DSG, FSA, IHBC Chairman, Brompton Association

## **CLARENDON CROSS RA**

2018 began with a spate of motorcycle-enabled robberies in Clarendon Cross when a number of our local shops and galleries and a couple of residents' properties were targeted. Usually one or two motorcyclists would arrive late at night with concrete bollards to ram front doors or windows and go on to steal computers and laptops. The attacks, similar to those occurring across London at the time, shook our normally quiet community, so CCRA coordinated a meeting with the local safer neighbourhood police team, the retailers and Cllr David Lindsay to discuss what could be done to prevent further incidences. Many of the retailers invested in tougher security, the police provided extra patrols at night time and measures were taken by the council to reduce the number of motorcyclists driving across the pedestrian area between the shops and Julie's restaurant which remained closed for another year.

An unprecedented amount of major building work continued along Portland Road throughout the year and considerable disruption experienced by residents with early morning deliveries being made routinely outside of the Construction Traffic Management Plan permitted hours, the road being blocked, concrete pours being routed across





pavements, multiple parking suspensions, noise, dust and a general sense of our community being invaded by contractors.

Building works are a fact of life but it has become evident that the council's insufficient monitoring of practices and enforcement when codes are breached, has resulted in contractors getting away with no meaningful sanctions to deter them from continuing to disregard the terms agreed in CTMPs, byelaws and general consideration for the local community. Coordinating with the Norland councillors and the borough's enforcement team, CCRA has rigorously reported breaches and campaigned for more effective patrols by officers as well as stiffer sanctions, especially for persistent offenders.

While, it has felt like an uphill struggle to get anywhere, we are heartened to know that RBKC is embarking on a new code of construction to address the main issues of complaint from residents and we only hope that this can be rolled out effectively and have a positive impact. In the meantime, it appears to be business as usual with multiple residents' parking bays being suspended routinely, early morning deliveries and roads being blocked with no coordination, banksmen or advanced warnings.

Carolyn Arnold, Chairman

## EDWARDES SQUARE SCARSDALE AND ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

ESSA Trustee Barry Munday was recently installed as Master of the Architects Livery Company and to celebrate that, he led a 'Kensington Safari' from one end of the High Street to the other. Starting at Leighton House, former home to Lord Leighton and now the only purpose-built studio-house open to the public as a museum, it houses a remarkable collection of paintings and sculpture. ESSA recognises its importance and supported a significant application to provide more display and storage space. From there the 'Safari' went on to the Design Museum, allowing time to explore the building and to look at some of the permanent displays. Following lunch and talks about buildings in Kensington High Street and areas around Sloane Square we

visited Japan House, a delightful shop and exhibition space. We then went on to visit some of the lesser known parts of the V&A which, with a three-storey display, includes a complete 17th century frontage from a timber building in Bishopsgate. This diversity of activities and buildings provided a very lively event, ending at the Polish Hearth Club for an excellent dinner.

Mansion blocks have always played an important part in the ESSA area and, following a successful talk about the development of shops and related buildings, we are planning a similar exploration related to different forms of housing in the area.

Julian Childs, one of the founder members of the ESSA Mansion Block Group, sadly died last year and is much missed by our members. He organised many of our events and was largely responsible for the growth in the number of management teams who joined the group. We have been fortunate in that this role was taken over very successfully by Lloyd North, another ESSA Trustee, and Lloyd will be responsible for running the next Mansion Block event which will focus on identifying the many legal snares in the management of mansion blocks. Last year Stuart Priestly of the RBKC Community Safety Team, together with a colleague, led a discussion to identify security risks in these blocks and the various ways to deal with them. The strength of the group lies in the opportunity to exchange information and to find solutions.

There is of course a continuing role in monitoring planning applications and proposals and in commenting on them and currently there are several major projects emerging. Among these proposals for the Odeon are re-emerging with, as we understand it, an entrance to the cinema on the High Street frontage; another significant development is 100 West Cromwell Road which has some very interesting aspects. ESSA has resisted the over-development of the care home at Avon House, and also fought to prevent the development of a closet wing on a building in Stratford Road which was not in accordance with the approved drawings and conflicted with local policy.

> Anthony Walker, Chairman ESSA can be contacted at essaW8@gmail.com

## EARDLEY CRESCENT RA

Residents have continued to progress on issues such as waste, crime and the future of our two development sites, Earls Court Exhibition Centre and the demolished Tournament pub with ward councillors and council officers.

Following the largely successful trial with Paladins, the crescent has just received six black on-street waste containers and the residents' association is considering the issues surrounding the latest planning application for the Exhibition Centre site and researching the possibility of better use of CCTV on the crescent.

After a period of limited activity, the ECRA has been revived with a newly-elected committee of eight dedicated resident officers in areas such as waste, crime, environmental health with Paul Schaack and Evita Zanuso as co-chairs. The ECRA

thanked Mark Balaam (now honorary chair) and Venla Freeman for their long service to the association.



## Evita Zanuso and Paul Schaack eardleycra@gmail.com

## THE EARL'S COURT SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

ECSRA's main focus during 2018 has been on persuading the council to strengthen its planning and refuse enforcement procedures as we feel prosecutions would act as a deterrent. Rubbish hotspots remain, with residents raising 90 dump complaints during the year.

Residents are having problems with street drinkers camping on their doorsteps and ECSRA has been liaising with residents and the police to find a solution. PC Andy Clough asks residents to "give us a rough time frame/days in which the street drinkers congregate. We'll then come down and deal with them. If they are persistently ignoring our warnings we can then look at giving them community protection notices which would make it an arrestable offence".

Graffiti increased during the past year and there also appears to be a reduction in the pressure washing of pavements. A resident, just returned from Paris with its graffiti-blighted streets and unkempt pavements, remarked that "RBKC was as bad". The graffiti is probably down to reduced police numbers – the pressure washing due to cash restraints at the council. RBKC's graffiti team needs the property owner's written consent before removal. Consent forms can be downloaded from https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/environment/environmental-health/fault-report-graffiti-and-flyposting. If targeted and not the owner of the property, residents should forward the consent letter to the managing agents or the freeholder to complete and return. Once RBKC receives the consent it will instruct its contractor to remove the graffiti.

The location of the cycle lanes in Earl's Court Square, which residents feel are dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, is another cause for concern and ECSRA will keep lobbying RBKC and TfL for improvements.

ECSRA's BBQ, held in Earl's Court Square Garden, commenced at 5pm this year to allow young families to join in the fun. Last year's DJ, Infinity, arrived at 7pm and soon all ages were disco dancing until 11pm.

A "Greek in the Square" members' evening was held in Earl's Court Square Gardens last September. A team of committee volunteers put up a fairy-lit marquee where members were able to mix, mingle and dance to background music from The London Bouzouki Player (kindly

sponsored by John D Wood).

The year ended with the "Lighting of the Christmas Tree" in Earl's Court Square Garden with mulled wine, mince pies, cookies



and canapés. Carols were sung by "Live to Sing, Sing to Live" and our gold and silver lit tree was festooned with chocolates for the children.

## Chrissie Courtney, Chairman

## EARL'S COURT GARDENS & MORTON MEWS

The Earl's Court Road end of our street continues to be exercised by loud and often amplified busking outside the underground station. Also, this end of Earl's Court Gardens is rightly worried by a development at 209–211 Earl's Court Road, which is the Fuller's owned pub, The Blackbird. Despite much opposition to the planning application from residents of Barkston Gardens and Earl's Court Gardens, permission was granted for a tall rear extension. Unauthorised air conditioning units to cool cellars and accommodation have been positioned on its flat roof. We have already witnessed, at the rear of properties in both Earl's Court Gardens and Barkston Gardens, the unauthorised conversion of flat roofs into elevated terraces and the installation of unauthorised air conditioning units so this development at The Blackbird needs to be monitored closely. A number of elevated terraces and roof-mounted air conditioning units have been installed in Earl's Court Gardens houses, despite express planning conditions to the contrary. This is a worrying trend in the street and for the borough. The Planning Department should counter this during construction rather than enforce after completion, for which there seems little appetite in Hornton Street.

Chelsea FC home match fixtures continue to attract large numbers of fans to both The Blackbird and The Courtfield. The large police presence is reassuring but many residents find such a throng intimidating and the amount of post-match rubbish is an unwelcome postscript. Rubbish generally continues to be an issue for the area – from fly tipping to rubbish being left on the pavement on non-collection days.

The area in Earl's Court Gardens outside the back of the Health Centre has been improved by ten large planters but they had to contend with the hot summer, some plant theft and, sadly, the inability of some passers by to distinguish them from rubbish bins. Idling vehicle engines in parking bays continue to plague us. Traffic wardens advise that it is

not within their remit to issue fines which seems a wasted opportunity.



Hopefully, 2019 will bring more resolve from our Planning Department to protect our RBKC environment generally from iceberg houses, elevated terraces, sound nuisance from air conditioning units, bedroom developments in precious rear gardens and opportunist licensing applications. Diesel fume pollution from two of the borough's most busy roads, Cromwell Road and the Earl's Court Road, to our north and west, must be addressed. On our boundaries, we follow the Holiday Inn saga beside Gloucester Road and the whole Capco Earl's Court development stalemate with a certain amount of trepidation.

J N Green

## EARL'S COURT VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

In June, Earl's Court Village held a summer party in Providence Patch, the private garden owned by approximately nine houses which back onto it. The flowers were a ravishingly wonderful backdrop to the residents' gathering. Between the tickets and the raffle, £265 was raised and presented to St. Cuthbert's Day Centre.

Our crabapple trees in Wallgrave Road received a much needed pruning and also following another request, the council gave the pavements an unusually good clean.

We had another successful subscription income from the residents for the village flower baskets which will brighten our streets for another year. The houses that were recently painted at the entrance to Redfield Lane make a bright and pleasant entrance to the village.

Our application for more resident's parking spaces was positively responded to, resulting in three more.

This is not to say that we are without challenges. We have noise, dust and pollution from lorries, vans, skips and cutter grinders, digging away with every development and new basement.

There was good police action during the summer which put a couple of drug dealers behind bars, making a significant difference to the streets.

#### Philippa Seebohm, Chairman.

## THE FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK

At last the landscaping in the centre of the park is finished. The south terrace of Holland House has been paved in colours that echo the brick and stone of the house and looks splendid. The approach road no longer runs through the café and the terrace of the café itself is a much more attractive space, though slightly stark and we are pressing for trees in planters and for hanging baskets.



It is sad Historic England has had to place Holland House on its At Risk Register due to the dilapidated state of the house and much overdue conservation.





The last conservation work was in 2008 and the subsequent Conservation Management Plan stated a survey should be carried out every seven years, with conservation work as required. A survey was eventually done in 2018, after pressure from The Friends, and work scoped out. Stage 1 was due to start in autumn 2018, but it didn't and you can see crumbling stonework, missing balustrades and rotting window frames. The Friends are pleased that conservation work will now have to be carried out so that this fine example of Jacobean architecture is treated with the respect it deserves.

Also on the priority list is progress on the longterm tree strategy, to counteract constant tree loss. We produced a guide to the notable trees of Holland Park in December 2016. Of the 65 trees listed, 7 have gone or are peaky.

Erosion is another challenge taken up by the Friends. Areas of bare earth and compaction are increasing due to concentrated footfall and new cut-through paths among the trees.

It is good news that council officers and the Friends made a successful application to the Mayor of London's Greener City Fund. The result is a schedule of activity for 2019 to restore the West Woodland Enclosure, which had been damaged by over use. Once restored, there will be managed access for small groups to learn about nature. The recent drainage work needs adjustment to ensure water is channelled into the enclosure as

intended and does not run off into the sewerage system.

There is still no solution to path surfacing that avoids inappropriate black tarmac.

We commend the great progress in the park during 2018, but we must not let up in our work to ensure our safe, green, park is preserved for the physical and mental health of future generations.

#### Jennie Kettlewell, Chairman

## **GOLBORNE FORUM**

We have coordinated the selection and installation of The Golborne Friendship Bench which also commemorates our founding Chair, Susie Parsons, and which is sited at the corner of Golborne Road and Elkstone Road – a lovely example of street art. Committee members have been on the selection panel of the Portobello Wall art installation from its inception. We have been keen to ensure that Athlone Gardens was not lost to the bulldozers of the Wornington Green development and also watch with the eyes of a "critical friend" the plans from RBKC and Catalyst Housing for the reprovision of The Venture Centre and Children's Adventure Centre in the rebuilt development.

Planning issues are a key discussion topics for the Forum and we encourage local residents and representatives of all residents associations in Golborne ward to join us and have a combined influence on proposed development and improvements in the area. This is of particular importance as the review of the social housing provision in the borough and this ward are currently reviewed. There is also increased interest in developments in sections of Golborne such as Kensal Road. All of this and other areas of interest brought to the forum make this an interesting and rewarding forum to be a part of.

The Golborne Forum organises The Golborne Festival which takes place in the summer each year on Golborne Road. This community event always proves popular and is the result of the hard work of a small group of forum volunteers – more involvement by members and others would be welcome. More details can be found in Golborne Life newsletter, and the Golborne Life web site www.golbornelife.co.uk.

## **KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

Committee Room 1 in the town hall on 27 November 2018 was packed to overflowing. There wasn't room for everyone to get a place – a fitting symbol perhaps of the council's policy for affordable homes. The Planning Committee was meeting to decide on the proposed development of Heythrop College. Most of us there were among the 200 residents who had objected to the application, which we thought too big and too exclusive, its construction too disruptive and its community benefits too few. We had high hopes our opposition might persuade the committee's five councillors to reject this totally inappropriate development (already described by Michael Bach). Only the week before I had attended one of several post-Grenfell meetings held by the Leader of the Council to find ways of improving communication

between the council and its residents. The email from the Community Engagement Team described its purpose: "We know we need to listen more and do a better job of including local people in our decisionmaking. To help make this happen, we are looking at how our decisions are made and how we involve people in the decisions that affect them."

In Committee Room 1, clearly no-one from the RBKC was listening. The planning officer wholeheartedly recommended this grotesque application. Our objections were either ignored or brushed aside. The developers painted a rosy picture of a project providing much-needed care for Kensington residents in their twilight years, rather than an all too familiar Kensington luxury ghetto with some care thrown in. As four out of the five members duly waved the application through, the whole process seemed like a foregone conclusion.

With this decision, once again the Royal Borough demonstrated its tin ear to its residents' feelings. Post-Grenfell we are all conscious of the borough's inequalities. Most of us would like to see this improve. So how can the Royal Borough defend a £541 million project of 145 luxury homes and just 5 affordable flats as a good deal for its citizens? In a borough where there is a ceaseless battle to protect social and community uses for the less well-off, how can a Planning Committee greenlight a development unaffordable for 99% of its residents? But then the mood of most of the committee could be summed in a question asked by one of them: "Aren't the rich entitled to extra care?"

## John Gau CBE, Chairman KCRA

## THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

We have major concerns about the Government's proposals to merge various class uses, alongside long term worries about the future of the Barracks, the state of Brompton Road, the proliferation of cafes, air pollution and then of course the proposed expansion of Heathrow.

On Brompton Road there is encouraging news. As a result of continuing concerns about its decline, we welcomed the Cadogan Estate's initiative to convene a meeting of freeholders, developers, retail agents, amenity societies and Ward councillors from WCC and RBKC to explore potential for a Business Improvement District (BID) for Brompton Road. Progress is due to be reported shortly.

Last October, the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan, which has been supported throughout by the Knightsbridge Association, was backed by an overwhelming 93% of those voting in a local referendum. Turnout of 376 people (19.2%) was good for a referendum in London. Westminster 'made' (i.e. adopted) the Plan on 11 December.

The Plan is therefore now part of the statutory development plan for Westminster and will be used alongside the council's own planning documents and the Mayor's London Plan in determining planning applications in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area. The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum was the first of 17 forums in Westminster to reach this stage. Details at knightsbridgeforum.org.

The Knightsbridge Association will now have a say, with the Forum and Westminster, in the use of the 25% neighbourhood

portion of the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) monies raised from developments in the neighbourhood area. Priority projects include restoring heritage assets, improving utilities, tree management plans and measures contributing to a clean, safe and quiet neighbourhood. The Forum has also been given the green light to progress '85' neighbourhood actions.

Our congratulations go to Simon Birkett and his large team for three years of hard slog in bringing the Plan to fruition.

The consultation on proposals for Sloane Street was completed. The KA had expressed concern about several of the aspects of the scheme and we await news of exactly which parts of it will be carried forward. Meanwhile, RBKC also undertook a review of Exhibition Road which is not working entirely satisfactorily and again, we wait to see what improvements will be proposed.

RBKC also carried out consultation on busking which because of amplification and repetitiveness has been affecting residents, offices and retailers alike and is at present unregulated.

Knightsbridge continued in 2018 to look like one huge development site, with construction at the Berkeley (33–39 Knightsbridge), 55–91 Knightsbridge and the K1 site fronting Brompton Road all going full tilt. We look to the whole area being re-invigorated when all have been completed by 2021.

### **Carol Seymour-Newton**

## LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

We have had the usual steady stream of planning applications over the past 12 months, but there are now very few for basements – although a number of basements that received planning permission earlier have yet to be built, so we shall no doubt continue to be plagued for some time by the noise, dirt and dust involved in this sort of excavation work.

As in most other parts of the borough, there has been a number of applications from telecoms companies wanting to install new telephone boxes – or rather pillars or 'units' designed not to provide us with telephone facilities that we do not need, but to earn revenue from the illuminated advertisements that are incorporated into the units. The council consented last year to a whole lot of applications from BT, mainly we believe because BT was promising as a quid pro to remove a lot of the smelly and dirty old BT phone boxes. But we are strongly opposing any further new 'units' and we welcome the fact that the government has at last woken up to this problem and proposes to make it harder for telephone installations to obtain planning permission.

During the year we acquired our first Grade I listed building, in the form of the architectural historian Charles Jencks's 'post-modern' house in Lansdowne Walk. The original house is a typical early Victorian



villa, but Jencks has added an interesting side extension and above all completely redesigned the interior so that it is, in the words of Historic England, "a built manifesto for Post-Modern architecture, in which the architectural design, decoration, colour and artwork are invested with multiple layers of meaning". The house is not yet open to the public, but we hope will be in the future, as it has planning permission to function as a museum.

Sophia Lambert, Chairman

# NEVERN SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

As a residents' association bounded by three Red Routes: Earl's Court, Warwick and Cromwell Road, air quality is high on the agenda, and as an association we were active in the anti-idling campaign led by Liz Ashley and Philip Roberts and the petition presented to the council last year. One positive outcome is that the council is now sending out information of idling with Residents' Car Parking Permit renewals but much more is needed to be done.

The other issue of major importance to the area is the future of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre site, which looks as if it will remain dormant for this year as a revised masterplan is worked on, but it is not the only development. There is another large-scale development at Tesco's with 460 units and it is proposed a 22-storey tower on the plinth in the forecourt and the rest along the railway line – the overall intensification of the area is going to place enormous pressures on our already overstretched infrastructure.

Persistent problems for residents have been construction traffic, proliferation of massage parlours and food outlets failing to install extraction and air conditioning systems that met targets.

Many will have seen the new Zada Hadid J C Decaux advertising pavilion on West Cromwell Road, and although not to everyone's taste, has made an enormous improvement to the area north of Longridge Road and with the replanting by TfL in the Spring, the area will be finished off in style.

#### Linda Wade, Chairman

## NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The main challenge for Norland Conservation Society has always been to achieve a successful balance between conservation and development, aiming to avoid the detrimental effect that small incremental changes can have over time on the context and character of listed buildings, and the Conservation Area as a whole.

Because of the way planning works, decisions on applications are frequently decided in a piecemeal way, one at a time: the overall context and effect on the street scene, and whole terraces, squares and crescents often overlooked.

To make this point, and attempt to change the approach, our planning team met Graham Stallwood, Director of Planning for RBKC, together with Will Pascall, cabinet member for planning (and much else), to express concern about interpretation of planning policies which, increasingly seem to favour development over conservation. Although NCS's Neighbourhood Plan and the council's conservation policies are intended to protect the area, they are not keeping up with development pressures. Our particular concerns are the size and dimensions of rear extensions and garden buildings, and roofline alterations and additions, particularly in relation to listed buildings.

At present, we risk losing up to 20% of our unique rear gardens and irreplaceable open spaces: more and more applications for large garden houses and rear extensions are putting pressure on them, and this will inevitably alter the character of the conservation area. NCS would welcome working with other societies to try to strengthen planning policies to restrict the growth of back garden developments.

Speeding traffic and rat-runs through St James's Garden's north side have been deterred by pinch points and traffic humps. It remains to be seen whether this will have a detrimental knock-on effect to St James Garden's south side. Meanwhile residents near to Westfield shopping centre will get extended residential parking hours to counteract the effect of shoppers' cars parking in residents' spaces outside controlled hours.

> The Academy pub remains closed with no indication when work will begin or indeed who the current owners are. In November the pub's Asset of Community Value status will end and NCS is talking to the

council about its possible renewal.

NCS's lecture in 2018 was a fund raiser for The ClementJames Centre. Thanks to generous support from its members NCS raised £2,000 towards installing a sensory room for traumatized young people.

In May Sir David Attenborough unveiled a blue plaque erected by English Heritage on the former house of Sir Hugh Greene in Addison Avenue. Sir Hugh retired as Director General

of the BBC in 1969, the year that the Norland Conservation Society was founded, the first conservation area in Kensington and Chelsea.

2019 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Norland Conservation Society. Founded by Clive Wilson and Gordon Michell in 1969, NCS continues to campaign for the character, diversity, and health of Norland Conservation Area.

## Libby Kinmonth, Chairman NCS

structure )

SOCIETY

founded 1969

50

Anniversar

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## THE ONSLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION:

With the retirement in 2018 of Richard and Eva Skinner, longtime and dedicated mainstays of the ONA Committee, the remaining trustees and our active members have very big shoes to fill! 2018 has been a transition year as we redistribute our efforts onto the shoulders of more members. We are seeking other residents who are interested in helping us to 'protect and enhance the residential and environmental character of the Onslow area of South Kensington.' We continue to monitor planning and licensing applications which involve housing and commercial premises, equipment installations, table and chair installations, major infrastructure projects like the South Kensington tube station, and more. In a recent small but important victory, we prevented a local restaurant from extending its licensing hours until midnight, so neighbours can sleep better at night. We also continued to join with other neighbourhood societies to object to projects that would be detrimental to the larger area, such as the proposed three-tower behemoth to replace the Holiday Inn on the Cromwell Road. We were pleased that the RBKC Council agreed with objections given by us and many other residents' associations and unanimously voted against the plan. Unfortunately, Mayor Sadig Khan 'called in' the plan for further review and has the power to reverse it; we should know more soon.

We also attend the Wellcome Trust and South Kensington Estates quarterly residents meetings to keep abreast of new developments, and are in regular contact with representatives of the Victoria and Albert, Science and Natural History Museums as well as our local councillors and ward officers.

Our website ona.org.uk contains more details about our objectives and activities. Our AGM is scheduled to take place



on March 28 at the Institut Francais at 6 for 6:30 pm. Our annual garden party in Onslow Square on Wednesday 26 June – last year's party was our biggest ever! For more information or any questions, please email onslowna@gmail.com

#### **ONA Trustees**

## PRINCES GATE MEWS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Basement developments continue to cause distress and anger in the mews as contractors treat associated CTMPs as of no relevance to the way they work. In particular, the banksman appears to have become an endangered species – perhaps even extinct – so rare now are sightings in the mews despite 7metre-plus vehicles regularly reversing round blind right angle corners into narrow pavementless streets. We are grateful to the hard-pressed council team for the series of Enforcement Orders they have imposed on our wide range of repeat offenders, for behaviour such as that illustrated, who were quite put out to be told they couldn't hoist rebar over pedestrians' heads.

Multiple properties have remained building sites now for years (in one case 14 years and counting) and we wonder why hoarding permits continue to be renewed and allowed to obstruct the highway when no work has been undertaken on site for months or even years on end.

A new development (no pun intended) this year has been a series of applications seeking

to replace traditional windows in front facades with massive glass panels reaching to ground level. These claim to be large windows but in reality are designed to be basement roof lights. Happily, the council has agreed that such giant (3m by 4m) expanses of glass have no place in our traditional mews and conservation area. We mention this to put others on their guard against this trend – as well as the increasing and worrying trend for developers to seek to build basements out under the public highway.

# ST HELENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION AND ST QUINTIN AND WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

The St Helens Residents Association covers the western part of St Helens ward and the southern part of Dalgarno ward. In 2013, we applied to have our area designated as the St Quintin and Woodland neighbourhood area. The StQW Forum shares the same membership as the residents association, of 420 members. In 2016 our neighbourhood plan was successful at a local referendum. The policies in this plan, drawn up at many a local consultation meeting, are now used by RBKC when deciding planning applications in our neighbourhood.

We are now beginning to see some longer term impacts of the policies in our neighbourhood plan. There is development interest in bringing forward mixed use schemes in Latimer Road, potentially adding much needed new housing in sections of a street where former RBKC planning policies restricted uses to office and commercial only. This had left the street with vacant office space for many years, and we now hope and expect to see new uses and more vitality being added. The Playground Theatre, which opened in 2017 in a former light industrial building, continues to thrive.

Imperial College continues to build a cluster of very tall buildings on its site on Wood Lane, across the borough boundary. We do not come across many people who admire the architectural quality of these buildings. They look (as is the case) as if designed by different architects and the resultant 'campus' does not compare well with how Oxford University has approached the redevelopment of the large site at Walton Street.

Local residents are also having to wait a very long time for the main 'community benefit' negotiated with Imperial by Hammersmith & Fulham Council back in 2102, at the start of this development. The earliest possible completion date for a pedestrian/cycle underpass beneath the West London Line, linking Oxford Gardens/Latimer Road to Wood Lane, has been put back again to summer 2020. This new piece of infrastructure would much improve access from North Kensington to the Central Line at White City and to bus routes along Wood Lane.

We applied successfully to the council earlier this year for our neighbourhood forum to be re-designated for a further five year period. There are now a dozen neighbourhood plans in force across London (including that in Norland ward) and we continue to give help and support to other forums including that at Old Oak.

The task at Old Oak, of challenging a Mayoral Development Corporation that is determined to build out the area north of Wormwood Scrubs at 'hyper-densities' hitherto unseen in London, remains formidable. Tower blocks of 40–60 storeys appear inevitable. In the meantime, residents in our area remain very glad to be living in a part of North Kensington laid out by the St Quintin family over a century ago, with wide streets of well built and easily adaptable Edwardian housing.

If only our offspring could afford the rents and house prices, we would be confident of the future of this part of the borough as



a continued friendly, mixed and neighbourly community – even if increasingly surrounded by high rise development.

### Henry Peterson, Chairman

# St Helens Residents Association and St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

This has been a stormy year with two really major applications that could severely affect our area – Heythrop College and Kensington Forum Hotel. But 2019 gives the prospect of getting a 20mph limit – one of our long-term aims.

## Heythrop College

The proposal to redevelop Heythrop College – a site that has been in educational use for nearly 160 years – has been hanging over us since summer 2017. Despite the council's policy to protect such uses, especially from residential development, the developer, Westbourne Capital, has proposed a luxury "retirement" housing scheme which, apart from all the "standard" facilities of luxury housing schemes, provides an element of care. The scheme would provide 142 flats.

VRARA opposed the scheme, as did some 200 local residents, not only for the change of use to yet another luxury housing scheme, but also because of the increase in scale as a result of building over the railway line, but also because of major construction traffic implications of a five-year building project with the only access being via South End, over 600m from a main road through a quiet residential area.

We were extremely disappointed by the Planning Committee granting consent for this scheme. We hope that the council will build in more safeguards in the construction traffic management plan.

## Kensington Forum Hotel

This hotel – a 30-storey building on Cromwell Road – dominates the skyline for many of the streets in our area. The proposal to demolish the existing hotel and replace in with two towers has galvanised a wide range of residents' groups both north and south of Cromwell Road. People may not like the current building, but the proposed development would be far worse. Nearly 900 objections were received by the council. VRARA made a significant contribution to fighting fund, objected to the proposal as it would affect our area and were part of the team that addressed the Planning Committee. We were extremely pleased that the committee refused the scheme. Unfortunately this is only the first battle. The Mayor of London has intervened, so could allow it, but if he did not, there would still be an appeal by the applicants.

## 20mph speed limit

One of our long-term ambitions has been to get a 20mph zone covering our area. At last the council is consulting on the possibility of introducing 20mph limits on local roads. We are pleased that St Alban's Grove has been short-listed, but disappointed not to have been chosen for an area scheme. St Alban's Grove would be part of the access route for the Heythrop

# WARWICK ROAD ESTATE LEASEHOLDERS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2018 saw many changes affecting the Warwick Rd Estate, the most significant of which was the demise and wind-up of the poorly-functioning K&C Ten ant Management Organisation; and the start of a new phase of direct management by RBKC of its council stock.

Later this year, RBKC will conduct a public consultation of all council residents on how they wish their housing to be managed in the future, but preliminary indications suggest that most residents will elect to continue with the current set up as this represents the path of least resistance and will involve the least effort on their part.

From the many meetings I have attended since RBKC took over direct control of housing, the impression I've received (favourable) is it is trying hard to instil a new culture within housing, and modernise some of the antiquated practices of the TMO.

Because of Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment laws, initially, TMO staff had to be transferred, but of those that survived the change, most are now aware of the new expectations of management, and subject to greater scrutiny to improve service delivery and the customer experience. My understanding is that the majority of old staff have moved on (or been dismissed) and so there are a lot of new faces within the new structure. And mostly, new heads of departments. This should help in transforming the culture for the better within the new set-up.

Such changes bode well for the future, and the possibility of a more client-centred service offered by RBKC which is both more cost-effective, efficient, and empathic.

The only pity and regret, is that it took a terrible tragedy like Grenfell to act as catalyst to these changes. Changes that could have been initiated a long time ago, had those in power within RBKC listened to the many complaints about the TMO and acted upon these.

Unfortunately, the reality is, that in the Royal Borough, prior to the Grenfell fire, social housing and the lot of those that called it their home, was at the bottom of the heap in terms of priorities or concerns.

Still, as we move forward, it is probably best to focus on the improvements being made rather than the ills of the past, and in this spirit, WRELA looks forward to continue working with RBKC for the benefit of the residents on our estate, and the wider local community.

Hervé Nourisson, Chairman



# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY – CHARITY NO. 267778 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

Income	2018	2017
Donations and legacies	£	£
Membership subscriptions	10,110.00	10,234.73
Donations and legacies	2,059.00	1,877.00
Gift Aid	3,344.01	2,100.28
Total donations and legacies	15,513.01	14,212.01
Charitable activities		
Events	4,140.00	2,355.00
Annual report advertising	8,000.00	8,025.00
Total charitable activities	12,140.00	10,380.00
Investment income		
Bank interest	337.20	204.14
Total income	27,990.21	24,796.15
Expenditure		
Charitable activities		
Newsletter	1,540.13	1,582.69
Events	8,567.11	5,360.85
Annual report	9,293.61	7,220.39
Planning	6,538.45	12,205.98
Membership	1,309.52	764.18
Charitable	1,394.30	196.00
Total charitable activities expense	28,643.13	27,330.10
Other		
Insurance	349.29	348.36
Examiner	660.00	0.00
Total other expense	1,009.29	348.36
Total expenditure	29,652.42	27,678.46
Net income/(expenditure)	(1,662.21)	(2,882.31)
Total unrestricted funds brought forward	86,786.57	89,668.88
Total unrestricted funds carried forward	85,124.36	86,786.57

# **BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2018**

	2018	2017
	£	£
Current assets		
Debtors		
Accrued income and prepayments		
Debtors	0.00	28.66
Gift Aid	200.00	0.00
Insurance	227.72	226.68
Total accrued income and prepayments	427.72	255.34
Cash at bank and in hand		
Nationwide Building Society	75,000.00	75,000.00
Barclays Bank	11,931.06	11,781.23
PayPal	578.91	500.00
Total cash at bank and in hand	87,509.97	87,281.23
Total current assets	87,937.69	87,536.57
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Deferred income		
Subscriptions and donations	0.00	30.00
Events	0.00	220.00
Creditors		
Accruals	2,813.33	500.00
Total deferred income and creditors	2,813.33	750.00
Total net assets	85,124.36	86,786.57
Funds of the charity		
Unrestricted funds	85,124.36	86,786.57

## Approved by the Trustees 17 January 2019

Signed: Martin Frame Martin Frame, Chartered Accountant Treasurer and Membership Secretary Date: 17 January 2019

The Kensington Society

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

The total income for the year was £27,990.21, which is an increase of £3,194.06 from last year. Subscriptions and donations remained static, but gift aid increased by £1,243.73.

The annual report expense (net of advertising income) was £1,293.61; planning expense concerning QC legal opinions was £6,538.45 and charitable donations increased by £1,200.00 to manage the replanting of the Princess Alice garden at the Town Hall.

The balance sheet remains strong with unrestricted funds of the society of £85,124.36. £75,000.00 is on deposit with the Nationwide Building Society. These funds provide a strong financial base and they are necessary for the secure future of the society.

The Society wishes to thank all the members who have generously subscribed  $\pounds$ 10,110.00, donated  $\pounds$ 2,059 .00 and participated in the society events during the year.

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS For the year ended 31 December 2018

### • Charity registered address and number

The Kensington Society's registered address is 23 St James's Gardens London W11 4RE and its registered charity number is 267778.

• Accounting policies

These accounts have been prepared based under the historical cost convention in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities – Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102).

### Income

• Recognition of incoming income

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

- The charity becomes entitled to the income;
- The trustees are virtually certain they will receive the income; 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 income.

### • Tax reclaims on gifts and donations

Incoming income 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 expenditure.

# KENSINGTON SOCIETY

#### Membership

#### Charity No. 267778

Title:	
Address:	
City and Postcoder	
Email:	
Mobilet	

How did you hear of us? Reneval Friend, Planting issue, Other

*Gift aid it* Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money to The Kensington Society made today or in the past four years or in the future.

I confirm that I have paid or shall pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gaine Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the Charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not quality. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every 41 shall give after 6 April 2008. You can cancel your Gift Aid docheration at any time. Please let us know if you change your memory address or so longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Ameument tax return or ask HMRC to adjust your tax code.

X Signature:

Date:

Bank Standing Order

Bank Name and Branch:	
Bank Address:	*********
City and Postcodet	
Sort Code: Account: A/c Name:	************
Please pay Bardays Bark Notting Hill Gate cort code 20-47-34 for the credit of The Ker	nsington Society
account 20519138, reference *	mmediately and an annual
payment of £ on 1 January until further notice.	
This cancels any other previous standing order to The Kennington Society.	

X Signature:

Date:

\* The membership reference mander will be allocated when we receive your membership form. Please check that your hack address and not such are given allow as this form will be sent to your back for precissing. The back will nearly your original signature. Please prot to The Kessington Society, 25 % Junio's Gardens, LONDON W11 480. For further information email kennegrommeters? outlook com or call 030 7193 5243. Thank you.



# ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT KENSINGTON?

## Do you cherish where you live and want to ensure that what is wonderful about the Royal Borough is both loved and protected?

# Then join us.

Your membership of the Kensington Society is most appreciated. We do need more members to give greater weight to our negotiations with the council, developers and others. And there are more opportunities to support us.

If you have the time and the interest, why not join us on one of the committees or on a specific project:

- Membership and events
- Accounting and finance
- Special projects such as Save the Police Station and other Assets of Community Value
- Website and blogging
- Newsletter and annual report writing and research

We need more people to participate in the work of the society. We would like to broaden the range of experience and expertise and to widen and deepen the subjects we consider. That might mean setting up sub-committees to look at subjects such as air pollution, crime, transport, schooling, and sponsorship such as competitions and awards.

It is not a full-time commitment that is needed. What **is** needed are individuals with a specific interest and some time to meet and take forward that enthusiasm for the betterment of Kensington.

Email us and let's talk: kensingtonsociety@outlook.com





# The Knightsbridge Estate. Possibly Knightsbridge's most sought after destination.

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