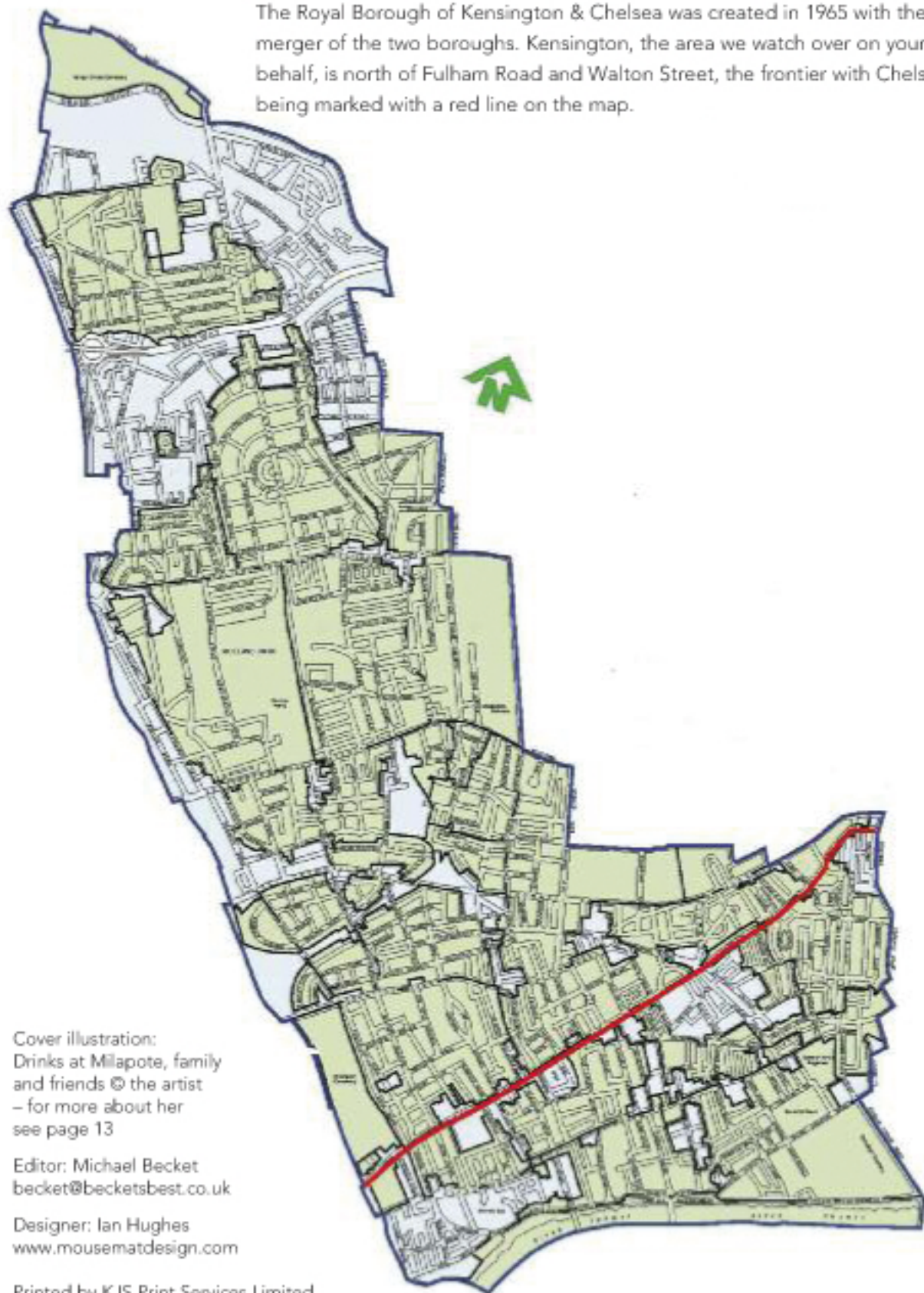


THE KENSINGTON
SOCIETY
2019–2020



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:
Drinks at Millapote, family
and friends © the artist
– for more about her
see page 13

Editor: Michael Becket
becket@becketsbest.co.uk

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www.mousematdesign.com

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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE
www.kensingtonsociety.org
2019–2020

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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23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE

kensingtonsociety@outlook.com

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President's report

Nick Ross

AMANDA FRAME, OUR SEEMINGLY indefatigable chairman, makes a powerful case in her report for a more collaborative approach to town planning. Hear-hear, hooray, hallelujah. Britain seems addicted to all things adversarial: in law, in politics and, as Amanda laments, even in planning. We are rightly aghast at the Chinese one-party system, or mystified by the Japanese obsession for consensus, but we ought to recognise how different societies are equally bemused by us. We seem so jaundiced to them with our hostile ways of coming to decisions. Surely, they say, cooperation and collective decision-making should come first; combat is a last resort. And, at least in planning matters, surely they are right.



Take a small example, then a big one.

A family buys a home with the hope of enlarging and remodelling it. After all, we all want to make the most of an expensive investment and our home is as much an expression of ourselves as are our clothes. Plans are submitted, established neighbours feel threatened. They object. As Amanda points out those objectors are often unrepresentative and mostly over 55. And anyone who has studied objection letters knows how angry they tend to be, as though a red mist has descended. Since there is usually just one applicant but several objectors, residents' associations go with the flow. Frequently they object too, regardless of the merits of the case, so that the applicant feels besieged. Councils go through a mechanical and process-driven procedure, leading to decisions which occasionally satisfy everyone but sometimes cause outrage, and so frequently are timorous. In conservation areas pastiche is the default design even when faced with inspiring modern architecture. (The subjectivity is such that in one case, my own home in fact, a contemporary design which was praised by English Heritage as "the perfect combination of old and new" was rejected by council officers as out of keeping.) Beyond conservation areas anything goes, often clichéd and with pitiable detailing. If an application is rejected the cost for applicants can be crippling. A process that should take weeks can leave a site mouldering for months, with costs rising in five-figure multiples for each redesign and thousands more for going-through-the-motions reports from acoustic, arboricultural, hydraulic or structural consultants.

How much more sensible it would be to have a formal consultation process first, to sit together, to seek agreement and to have an arbitration committee – a panel of architects and conservationists – to intercede if consensus can't be achieved.

Or take a big example, the sort Amanda cites of Newcombe House or 100 West Cromwell Road. Too often everyone comes away dispirited. Here again collaboration would surely be more effective. A system designed to be adversarial does not encourage

empathy. Worse, it blinds us to the needs of others. Developers need to make decent returns. That is their job, and rarely will objectors come up with the cash to offer alternatives. The community needs to protect its neighbourhood from impersonal eyesores, albeit (as exemplified by the Shard) the difference between an aesthetic masterpiece and a blot on the landscape is all in the eye of the beholder. And the Mayor of London, elected with a mandate to provide more social housing, faces NIMBYism everywhere and has a need, arguably a duty, to elbow everyone aside to meet the targets people voted for.


As Amanda points out, the process is fraught for developers and often makes a mockery of community participation.

So, other than whingeing or throwing our hands up in despair, what can be done? If we can't stop a monstrosity in our own back yard, what hope do we have of persuading Whitehall to transform the planning system? Of course, the answer is none. There are so many vested interests. There are too many competing priorities. National politics itself is wedded to adversarial, even tribal, ways of doing things.

But what about here in Kensington? Planning laws prescribe the basic processes and set the limits for what local authorities can do; but they are not so doctrinaire that an astute council could not innovate within the boundaries. Perhaps we can encourage RBKC to set up a commission of inquiry of its own – developers, architects, amenity group leaders and conservationists guided by a planning lawyer – to see how far it would be possible, within the rules, to encourage mutual understanding.


Yes, some developers will continue to be unscrupulous, yes some specifiers will always have bad taste, some stick-in-the-muds will always be objectors, and some projects will always turn out to be compromises of the worst sort, satisfying no one.

But while some circumstances conspire to make us angry, others encourage us to be considerate. Might RBKC be persuaded to explore the kinder option?



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Chairman's Report

Amanda Frame

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A year can make. We now are truly leaving the European Union. We have a new Prime Minister and a new cabinet. However, we still do not know what the terms of the exit from the EU will be. Nor do we know what direction the PM will take on multiple issues. We do know he is unlikely to lie down in front of the bulldozer at Heathrow. We will have more housing but where? While wondering where all the promised policemen will be housed, our police stations have either been sold off or remain closed.



The Mayor of London is blasting away with his own vendettas including his own goal for a cycle route through Notting Hill Gate and Holland Park Avenue to Shepherd's Bush, one of the busiest routes into London, costing the taxpayers £42 million. As well as having no appreciation of the quality of our built heritage, ignoring or ignorant of architectural concept, forcing taller and taller buildings. We, the residents of Kensington, seem to only be able to look on in horror.

The Kensington Society began in 1953 primarily to address the concerns of the residents about how Kensington was changing following the end of World War II and the rebuilding and development pressures facing London and Great Britain. It seems the pressures now are just as great. Our vision then was to "strive to ensure that our part of London retains its magnificent heritage of buildings, parks and gardens alongside the best of contemporary architecture and design".

If we are to have a vision for 2020, we could do no better than to continue with those aspirations of the past. However, the 1953 challenges were very different from the ones we face today. Over the years, governments have exercised ever-increasing powers over our lives with every increasing regulation, especially in planning. As a result, we have eyesores such as Notting Hill Gate and the Cromwell Road Holiday Inn and even our own Town Hall. What is coming with the mayor's approval of 100 West Cromwell Road and his damaging tinkering with the Kensington Forum will make those buildings appear mere back-drops.

Having seen such resulting monstrosities and understanding that short-term market needs and developer interest had become overly dominant, the government published in 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). We, the local communities, were promised more responsibility and more powers to form our own vision. We were assured of involvement and "clear citizens' rights" with support for communities to participate meaningfully in decisions.

What has happened since? In the last few years we have seen four major planning applications called in by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. Newcombe House had 727 objectors; Kensington Forum over 900 objectors; Heythrop College 183 objectors; 100 West Cromwell Road 58 objectors.

Heythrop College proposal was approved by the planning committee. All others were refused. However, all four have been called in as the mayor exercises his singular power to overrule our decisions and, in having his way, the eyesores will be replaced with even worse horrors.

What developer would take on such risks? It makes a farce of the concept of development planning and equally a mockery of community participation. Time is money and the delays and uncertainties push the cost higher, resulting in ever larger developments. We can oppose the proposals but the developer knows that in the end, with staying power and foreign moneys, they will be permitted to build even larger, taller and less sympathetic to the area than ever anyone thought. We must not forget that the current PM was the man who as the Mayor of London allowed over 450 tall buildings to be approved.

Research shows that the majority of those who engage, who comment on planning are over 55 and the response rates to public consultation is approximately 3%. We are there and can voice our opinion loudly. One could be disappointed if the result is to be totally ignored and overrun by powers which have no respect for your opinion and in the end question 'why try?' We did draw over 400 people into the Town Hall to hear the absurd proposal by TfL for its cycle route and the council listened. One can change the statistics. If there is a reason today for the Kensington Society it is that challenge.

We do have a vision for the future and there is hope that vision can be realised, but it is up to us to demand it, to lobby for it, work as a proactive, supportive partner with the councillors and the council officers, to vote in representatives who will not give false promises to act and make sure our voice is heard, respected and given the promised control over our own community.

2019 was challenging, 2020 continues those challenges while adding new ones. With the challenges comes opportunities. We cannot say "NON" to everything. Change is inevitable. However, with attention and effort we still can strive to ensure that what makes Kensington so precious to us is respected and valued. Our trustees, our affiliated societies and our members continue with this excellent effort. Where would we be without them?

At the end of last year, we received an email from Barnaby Willitts-King as he had some papers via his mother, Anne Willitts from his late grandfather, Dr Stephen Pasmore, which may be of interest to us. Well, what treasures we have found! We have the missing, first ever annual report for 1954 and the report for 1972. Also, the minutes from the very first meetings establishing the Kensington Society, notes on why and how the society should be formed and some wonderful books of photographs. Dr Pasmore's lecture notes ranging across all topics on Kensington; its history; who lives where and when; even why the streets were named as they are today. It is a large collection and contains so much information.

So, a new challenge; to take inventory of the papers, assess their historical value and to share with you all the wonders of Kensington in the past.

On 6 January 1998, Dr Stephen Pasmore said "It is time for me to stop. History is a pattern of timeless moments and the present and the future may be said to be contained in the past. You cannot look back on those moments without acknowledging your debt to the past."

Amanda Frame, Chairman, March 2020

The 66th annual general meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 29 April 2019

AMANDA FRAME, CHAIRMAN OF the trustees welcomed distinguished guests and members: councillor Emma Dent Coad, then MP for Kensington; Dr Simon Thurley, guest speaker; 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; General the Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington, vice president of the Kensington Society; and Sam Owen, director of Historic Royal Palaces. Apologies were received from Sir Angus Stirling, council member, the Kensington Society; councillor Marie-Louise Rossi, Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; Michael Bach, trustee of the Kensington Society; and Peter Mishcon, trustee elect of the Kensington Society.

The order of business was conducted by Nick Ross, president of the Kensington Society, who asked why such a strong society was necessary when we have elected councillors? It was, he concluded, a benefit – while residents see local issues, councillors see the bigger picture. He quoted two major planning issues: Newcombe House and Heathrow airport both of which have caused strong objections locally and both of which



Keynote speaker Simon Thurley plus president Nick Ross, chairman Amanda Frame, trustee Henry Peterson

need leadership from our councillors. We should not, he said, speaking of Grenfell, blame authorities but look to the future, calling for an update of building regulations and the urgent need for retrofitting of sprinklers especially in social housing and for RBKC to set an example.

Moving on to the business of the evening, the minutes of the 2018 AGM and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2018, set out in the annual report, were confirmed and approved nem con.

He then conducted the election of officers. Michael Bach, Michael Becket, Thomas Blomberg, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Sophia Lambert, Peter Mishcon, Henry Peterson, Mary Sheehan, and Anthony Walker put their names forward to serve as trustees in 2018/19 and were proposed and approved nem con; he noted that Holly Smith is standing down as trustee and thanked her for her years of support. 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 Simon Thurley who talked interestingly about the spread of London from its centre out into the surrounding villages from the 17thC onwards – enabled largely by the improvement of coaches as a means of travel – the introduction of springs, first simple leather straps and then steel. Two horses could provide a cost effective means of transport (for example of a wife, four children and a maid) and the proliferation of coaches led to a rapid improvement of roads round London. From the 1630s aristocrats began to build outside London – Holland House and then Kensington Palace are early examples of grand houses built away from the Thames. By the 19thC speculators were building stuccoed terraces for the moneyed middle classes, the product of raw capitalism. Planning controls, introduced in the 1930s, have been successful for longer than any other city but we are now faced with the biggest threat to the London skyline with 450 tall towers in the pipeline. We are, he said, in need of a proper policy, London-wide, and this is why large and vibrant associations such as the Kensington Society are important.



Henry Peterson





Audience with councillor Emma Dent Coad, then our MP, asking a question

Questions from the floor moderated by Nick Ross, were followed by Amanda Frame who thanked Dr Thurley and then gave her chairman's report. She talked about the changes, proposed and actual, within the council and their success or otherwise. She mentioned particularly the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee engagement with the public, and the rather less impressive lack of consultation on the revision to the council's constitution and the planning department's new code of conduct. Noting the society had done its best to mitigate these, she did however congratulate the council for beginning to change its culture and behaviours over the past year. Moving on to talk about several major planning issues, Newcombe House, the Kensington Forum site and Heythrop College, she pointed out the mess that the planning system is in currently, with approvals and refusals being called in by the secretary of state and the mayor. In conclusion, she thanked the trustees for their hard work on behalf of the society and local residents.

Henry Peterson, member of the society's planning committee standing in for Michael Bach, noted the importance of proposals in the north of the borough - White City, and north of Wormwood Scrubs Old Oak - which could mean a decade of planning blight. Targets for housing of 60 to 70 storeys could lead to the type of density found in Singapore or Hong Kong while there are no proposals for new roads. Car Giant, occupying 43 acres has withdrawn from the development leaving Kensal Canalside as the last brownfield area targeted for 3.5million new homes. We must, he said, have a closer look at the new workings of the council and warned that we are not as good as we were in scrutinising new developments. We need the large membership of the Kensington Society to work with the council and to take on the mayor and the GLA in defence of our neighbourhoods.

Nick Ross took further questions from the floor before thanking our speakers, the councillors and our MP and those attending. Members and guests were then invited to the mayor's parlour for a reception, hosted by the mayor, councillor Marie-Therese Rossi.

Minuted by Alison Sutherland



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Local artist: Emma Sergeant

by Michael Becket

LITTLE WONDER EMMA SERGEANT has been a successful painter – she won her first art competition at the age of six. And that provided the pattern for her subsequent life. Having a good artist for a mother certainly helped, especially in the encouragement provided. On holiday in Italy her mother prodded the young Emma into competing at a local drawing competition by promising “there’ll be ice cream in it”. Not just ice cream, but a cup for the winner – “I wonder where I put that”.

She was always sketching so it was fortunate the Camden School for Girls had a good art department and there were other courses with Inner London Education Authority of blessed memory providing struggling artists with an income by paying them to teach for the most part housewives painting and life drawing. As Emma Sergeant remembers, one taught her “respect for the material” and another encouraged “me to use my brain to create narrative and composition”.



After school she applied to the Slade, a part of London University, but was turned down flat. Not because her portfolio was not good enough – they rather liked her work – but because she was “the wrong sort of person”. In a characteristic inverted snobbery of the 1970s they decided she was “far too middle class and privileged” and as a result she “would just not fit in” – her father was the legendary Sir Patrick Sergeant, City editor of the *Daily Mail* for 24 years and founder of Euromoney from which he retired in 2018 at the age of 94.

She cried at the rejection and went to the Camberwell School of Art, which “was the best thing that happened to me”. Little wonder, the school had produced such diverse talents as Tim Roth and Humphrey Lyttleton (though neither became artists), Gillian Ayres, Sir Quentin Blake, Maggi Hambling, R B Kitaj and Barry Fantoni. Her tutor there decided she was “talented but smug, and drove me hard”. He would say things like “that is quite nice but could you turn it upside down and do it better in half an hour”. It was an invaluable enforced discipline and improved mastery of technique.



Meanwhile the Slade's preferred pupil, presumably a suitable working class candidate, had been unable to take up the offer so the school offered the place to Emma Sergeant. She showed her good upbringing by not telling them to get stuffed, but refused. Which was just as well, as a year later she relented and joined because it still had the reputation as the best, and received her BA.

While still a student she did a huge portrait of her family, 7 feet by 6 feet, which in 1981 won her the National Portrait Gallery prize. It not only produced £10,000 but a commission to paint a notable for inclusion in the gallery. Laurence Olivier was picked but turned out to be too ill, so they chose Lord David Cecil instead. After that had been arranged, Lord Olivier said he may after all be just able to manage it, so suddenly she had two outstanding characters with which to erupt onto the art scene.

One would imagine everybody would be delighted a talented young girl was so swiftly recognised and getting appreciated. Not so. It is hard to imagine, Emma Sergeant said, the reaction of "a jealous, isolated and unpleasant people" who comprise the art world. It was not the waspish Brian Sewell in an article for the Evening Standard calling her picture muddled, but the envious pettiness of the people at the school. The art world is inbred, and catty and "The arts establishment won't even accept that conceptual art has run its course".

The school was about to be further irritated. A flamboyant American of her acquaintance ambled into Agnews, one of the most patrician and highly regarded galleries in London, and asked if they had any pictures by Emma Sergeant. No? When



Inspired by scenery round the house at Lipsko in Poland



Mujahedin painted in Afghanistan for UNICEF with proceeds from selling pictures going to refugee help



Witch doctor, Umtata, South Africa homeland of the Xhosa



England Rules, former racehorse now breeding stallion

everybody is talking about her and wanting them to paint their portraits? The gallery responded, contacted her and offered a show. Almost unheard of for an art student.

Later she was represented by the Fine Arts Society, which folded in 2018 after 143 years. That is part of the collapse of the London art scene, Emma Sergeant explains. It was caused either by a well-meaning but short-sighted move, perhaps prompted by the tale of Degas being asked how he felt when one of his pictures was sold for \$100,000. He responded “I feel as a horse must feel when the beautiful cup is given to the jockey”.

Alternatively, it may have been a vicious attempt by the European Union to kill London’s preeminent position in the world art market, she added.

A ‘droit de suite’ legislation requires every subsequent sale of a picture provides the original artist with a cut of the price. Although Emma Sergeant is pretty convinced she has failed to receive the money due in several instances, the move has had sufficient impact for the market in modern masters to move from London to Switzerland and New York.

Now she has no agent and no gallery, but a splendid studio in South Kensington which had previously been occupied by John Singer Sargeant – different spelling so no relation. Clients come from recommendation or seeing her work at exhibitions. She is planning more sophisticated modern marketing. Young artists get their exposure and clients via Instagram. Having won their loyal followers, when they do mount a physical show, thousands of interested people immediately know about it and attend. And presumably buy. Emma Sergeant is therefore wondering about moving into that electronic marketplace.

It scarcely seems necessary. She pops up everywhere. One of the 17 contrade in Siena – the clubs which manically pursue victory at the vicious Palio bareback horse race round the renaissance town square – built itself a new museum. At the instigation of a

Count Adam Zamoyski,
British historian, writer and
husband of artist Emma
Sergeant, with Doris.



client for her pictures, who has a house near Siena, Tartuca invited Emma Sergeant to inaugurate the gallery with a retrospective show of her pictures.

She has had several others shows, and not just of portraits, for which she is probably best known. Little wonder, as the list of sitters includes inventor of the hovercraft Sir Christopher Cockerell, another National Portrait Gallery commission, former foreign secretary Lord Carrington, actress Nastassja Kinski, the Duke of York, Jerry Hall, Daily Mail editor Paul Dacre, Viscount and Viscountess Rothermere, former minister Michael Portillo, Jeremy Paxman, and so on. Two trips to Afghanistan in 1985 and 1987 – less dodgy than now, but even then not exactly safe – produced a stunning series of faces.

About the time of that first Agnew exhibition the Queen commissioned a portrait of Lord Todd, one of the knights of the Garter and the royal collection bought one of her pictures from the show. Nine years later during a dinner at Christies honouring Prince Charles and his watercolours, she was asked to be tour artist on his trip to Egypt and Morocco – perfect for her lifelong fascination with Egypt's heretic pharaoh. That was followed in 1996 visiting Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgistan and Uzbekistan. "No doubt the Prince felt my Afghan portraits would make me a better candidate than most for Central Asia."

In 2001, "I was asked to do an exhibition to launch the new exhibition space at the then Prince's Drawing School, renamed the Royal Drawing School. For a theme I chose 'Scenes from a Hittite Court'. My cast of characters were King Suppiluliumas, a court dwarf (Bes), the storm god (Teshub), a pride of lions and a dancing girl – all, I thought, appropriate for a royal court in 1344 BC".

In addition, she was commissioned by its owner Caroline Mould to paint Bindaree, winner of the 2002 Grand National. That is an indication of her other love: horses. Emma Sergeant and her husband own a farm in Poland where they breed horses, which she paints, generation after generation. In addition, her success and talent enable excursions into other personal fancies. Such as those Scenes from the Hittite Court and Prince Charles wrote the introduction to the book of those pictures. She also had a fancy for painting gods which lacked a portrait, such as the Sumerians' Enki, Marduk and Inanna, shown at Agnews and Newhouse galleries. And dolphins, showing an array of those amiably enticing, grinning creatures.

Portraiture remains a staple, as well as a continuing fascination. "In portraiture you are depicting the spirit, the abstract but the added something you get from the person". She adds "Brits understand portrait painting" – they give artists latitude to produce what they see and get from the person, unlike many other countries where precise specification and depiction are provided. Such is the attraction that although she charges around £40,000 for a portrait, she sometime pays people with interesting faces to pose for her.

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.

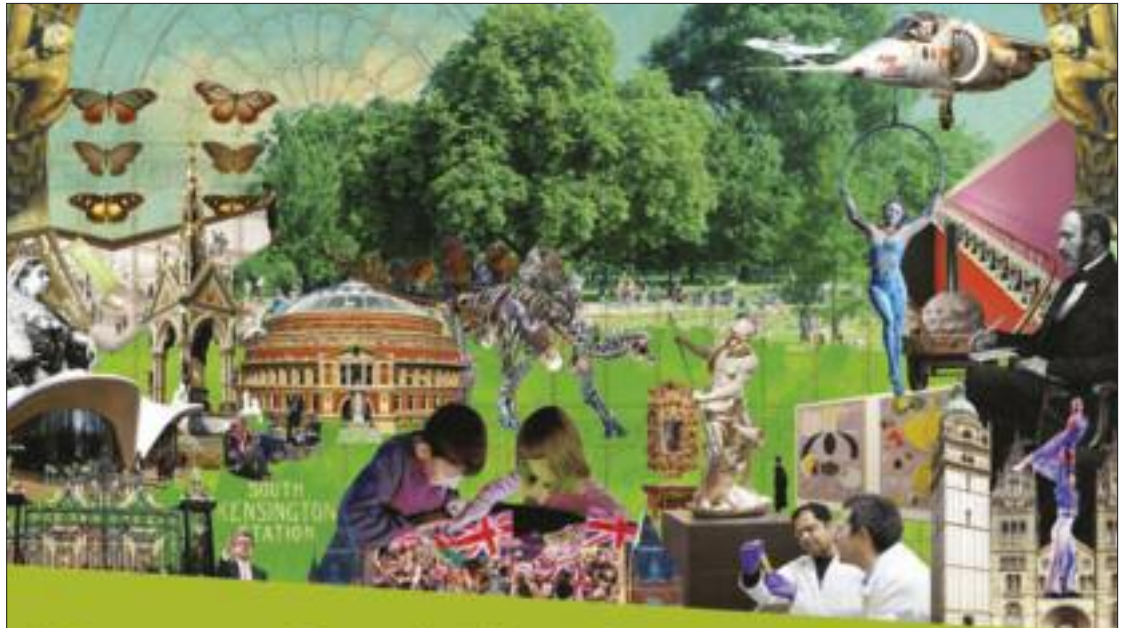
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Local retailer: Motorcycle Service Centre

by Michael Becket

JAMIE MACDONALD FELL IN love with motorbikes at the age of 12. His parents said if he started saving then, when he was old enough to ride they would contribute enough to get him a new bike – as it happened they did provide the majority of the cost. He is now 69 and owns not only more than 60 motorbikes but also the Motorcycle Service Centre which looked after his machines when he was a younger man working in the City.

He worked for the merchant bank Kleinwort Benson and later for Nomura. When he and a pair of friends were made redundant, they set up a financial business which looked after the administration of the off-balance sheet securitisation businesses being set up by most of the major banks. They were handling the processing of billions.

Jamie still rode his beloved bikes and struck up a close friendship with Robbie Le Roux, the mechanic who maintained his machines. Jamie became so keen on the business that he told the brothers who owned it that if they ever wanted to refurbish or improve the premises he could help with the finance. “I had been going there for many years and offered to help fund expansion or modernisation. But they were not financially sophisticated enough to realise how additional money might help.”

Robbie, however, had been working for MSC about 15 years and though they treated him well, he felt he was getting nowhere in career terms, and finally went off to work for Carcare of Kensington which had a small motorcycle maintenance side. “He got on very very well with clients”, says Jamie, and quite a number of them followed him to the new company. Jamie suggested he set up his own independent shop but nothing came of that in the eight months there. Then a new opportunity arose.

The brothers owning the Motorcycle Service Centre, aware of some customers drifting away, of the need for a good mechanic to take charge of the works, and of their increasing age, decided to test how far Jamie’s offer of help would extend. They had set it up in 1984 but now asked if he would be interested in buying the whole business.

The response was, certainly if Robbie could be tempted back to take charge. That temptation then being offered was full partnership in the business. Jamie would put up



The enlarged premises at 541 Harrow Road



The partners: Robbie le Roux and Jamie Macdonald

£400,000 for which he would get 54% of the company, and Robbie would contribute £40,000 for which he would get 46% plus a decent salary.

As always in business, timing is all. The offer to sell him the motorcycle company reached Jamie pretty well simultaneously with an offer to buy his own financial business. “We put in thousands to set it up and sold it for tens of millions.”

Contributing his share of the cash was a slightly bigger problem for Robbie. He had some savings, but had to sell his small collection of half a dozen classic bikes to provide his contribution. It is all right though, he says, because now he is buying back some of them, or equivalents. That collecting bug seems to be another factor uniting the partners.

That all happened in 2016. The plan is for the profits to pay back the purchase money for the two of them and Jamie estimates it is taking about five years to manage that. Once that is paid it will provide dividends which they will split in the ratio of ownership.

It is never going to make either of them rich. “We are making a tiny profit.” Despite the steady growth in two-wheel traffic in London “the business is a steady burner without a great deal of growth”. Just as well as “we could not cope with much growth”.

For one thing, there is the constraint on the size of premises. The business has extended to an adjacent site that can sell motorbikes and clothing which contributes about 15 to 20% of turnover, but may not be used as a workshop under the terms of the lease. Another constraint is the shortage of competent, reliable mechanics. At the moment there are four – plus an office manager and a part-time receptionist – and although Jamie has tried to recruit more, getting somebody good has proved elusive.



He now lives on a farm in Dorset where his wife – who does not ride motorbikes even as pillion passenger – is creating a museum for his vast collection. All the bikes work but only about four or five are licenced for road use.

Jamie comes up to London about twice a month, to see his grandchildren and to pop in to see everything is still well. And the two partners are still getting on well. It was almost startling that in separate conversations they referred to each other in almost identical words: “one of the things I like about him is that he is absolutely straight”.

It is also presumably helped by Jamie’s belief that this is the new form of capitalism, where workers are taken into greater participation and ownership of the business they help to prosperity. A further indication is that Harry, the son and nephew of the previous owners, is still there, acting as receptionist and administrator.



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THE WELLCOME GALLERIES

How Kensington Became Part of London

by Simon Thurley

THE ORIGIN OF THIS area of London is similar to that of many of other villages that are parts of modern London, in starting life nucleating round the houses of the super-rich. Maps of Kensington before 1800 clearly show that as well as the village houses around Kensington Church Street, there were a few farms and a small number of aristocratic or mercantile estates.

Houses for the rich were built because of a crucial advance in technology: the coach. The invention of the coach was a startling improvement as, for centuries, people had been trying to devise a vehicle that could move at a trot without pulverising its occupants. In the 1550s a new type of carriage appeared in England originating from Hungary. Instead of the passenger compartment resting directly on the axles, the new coach was slung on leather braces and by the 1620s, on occasion, on steel springs. These developments gave a much smoother and more comfortable ride. The first new coaches arrived in London around 1555, and by 1620 coach making was one of the most



Kensington in 1741 before the gentry arrived



1827 map of the Kensington area

lucrative industries in the capital. The finely carpentered carcasses were upholstered with luxurious silks and velvets costing perhaps twice as much as the £50 cost of the body work.

The proliferation of coaches led to a drastic improvement in the road network round London: for twenty to thirty miles outside the capital the roads were now good. By 1750 most trunk roads to London had become turnpikes and major provincial roads were going that way as well. For all the inattention and corruption, there were substantial improvements judging by the significant increase of haulage traffic, passenger coaches, and a national postal service. Between 1750 and 1800, the average journey times from London to other main cities dropped to between a third and a quarter.

By 1760 most major towns were linked by a daily mail service by stagecoach and private carriages and chaises became so popular they caused traffic jams in London and were starting to be taxed from 1747. Weekending in the country became feasible for prosperous urbanites. In addition, commuting became possible for people who preferred living in the suburbs or even the country.

The effect of the coach on the environs of





London was huge – it was now possible to go to Richmond or Greenwich for dinner and return the same evening and, of course, it was also possible to stay outside Westminster or the City in the calm and clean air of a suburban village whilst having all the attractions of the capital within easy reach. In fact, by the 1630s most aristocrats lived in the suburbs rather than the city.

These developments were generally westwards from the capital because the prevailing westerly wind blew permanent clouds of smoke towards the east end where the poorer people lived.

At first these houses were not architecturally distinct, a surviving example is Sutton House, Hackney, built for the rising Tudor statesman Sir Ralph Sadleir in c1535; it is



Sutton House



Holland House

barely distinguishable from any contemporary merchant's house or a small country mansion. But, from the 1580s, these houses began to develop a new type of plan known as the double pile. They were much more compact, and abandoned the linear planning of earlier houses with something spatially and socially more complex.

One of the earliest and most radical villas was Holland House, Kensington, built by one of James I's courtiers, Sir Walter Cope in 1606–7 and enlarged by him around 1613. There was no external architectural distinction between the high and low end of the hall: its facade was absolutely symmetrical with bay windows flanking a central door. The kitchens were in a basement. For people who visited this prominent house it must have seemed revolutionary – Cope's hall was a polite reception room, not a place to entertain estate workers and tenants in the medieval mode.

These urban and suburban mansions were important because they pioneered a new way of living, with different relationships between servants and masters, landlords and tenants. It was a cheaper, more private and practical way to live with warmer, more manageable rooms disposed in such a way that the family and guests could move about independently from the servants. These ways of living were reflected too in the much larger and more magnificent houses of the super rich.

One of those super-rich was Sir George Coppin who built the house that is at the core of Kensington Palace. His estate was bought by Sir Heneage Finch in 1619 and it was from his descendant, the second earl of Nottingham, that it was bought by William and Mary in 1689 as a private royal residence away from the vast, dirty and smoky Whitehall palace. It was from Nottingham House that a road was built to Whitehall so that the king to get from one to the other smoothly and quickly. This road became the first one in England to be lit artificially.

Before the invention of the coach and the improvement of London's suburban roads, all large houses were on the river Thames as this was the only way to get about quickly and safely. Kensington was thus a new sort of place, a place that was made possible by road transport, liberated from the Thames.

But the Kensington that is impressed on the minds and eyes of most people is the

Kensington laid out by the massive building explosion of the 19thC. The hundreds of streets of smart stuccoed terraces tucked in rows between the arterial roads that ran out from Westminster westwards. This Kensington was no aristocratic enclave – it was the product of the raw capitalism of the metropolis.

London was invented to make money. From Roman times Londinium was a money making machine, one of the richest and most successful cities in the northern Roman empire. That commercial success marked by great buildings of their age has continued through the history of London. Let us not forget that London was the first city in the western world since Rome in the second century AD, to have a million inhabitants. Sometime soon after 1800 London was the largest and fastest growing place on the planet. As it grew it faced an unprecedented series of problems. Industrialisation and urbanisation forced London to invent what we know as the modern city. London invented the police, the postal service and underground railways.

In the creation of this place the state played its role. Do not believe for a moment that planning started with the Town and County Planning Acts of 1932, or even with the metropolitan board of works in 1855. Planning has always been a matter of democratic concern. London by the late middle ages was one of the densest cities on earth. It was clear to everyone that for it to work there had to be some control over what people built, and where. The city imposed regulations on house builders from the late 13thC, regulating the height of buildings, the thickness of party walls, issues of drainage, encroachments and the like. Many of these were more like building regulations than planning law, but the proclamation of 1580 enacted into law in 1592 forbade any new building within three miles of the city and forbade the subdivision of houses. This was the birth of planning control as we know it. Controls that were reinforced just under a century later in the aftermath of the Great Fire of London and have been refined and developed ever since.

Londoners have always regarded their buildings as a crucial component in the quality of their lives and have had a consensual planning system to protect people's rights and freedoms. This is not new, it is why it has been successful.

But all is not rosy nor has it ever been. London has always faced threats, plague, fire, bombs, the machinations of the post war planners. And it faces threats today. One threat is the seemingly completely uncontrolled desecration of London's skyline. There are now around 450 tall towers in the planning pipeline, of which most are marked for residential use and some for student accommodation. Despite uncertainty due to Brexit, the capital saw construction start on almost one tall building a week. While the majority of the proposed buildings will have 30 floors or fewer, 27 will have 50 floors and above. There are close to 100 tall buildings under construction,

Despite the planning powers of the mayor of London and the various policies of the London boroughs, there is no planned approach to these buildings, no proper consideration of what they are doing to the face of London and no thought going into the impact they have on our heritage. Kensington is one of those parts of London defined by its low-rise residential nature – one hopes that it, together with the other residential areas do not get overwhelmed by the tidal wave of steel glass and concrete. That the very fine grained nature of London's villages, that we all so love and admire, does not get expunged by a fad that will pass and I think will be regretted.

Blue Plaques

John Stuart Mill

by Michael Becket

John Stuart Mill

By a mighty effort of will

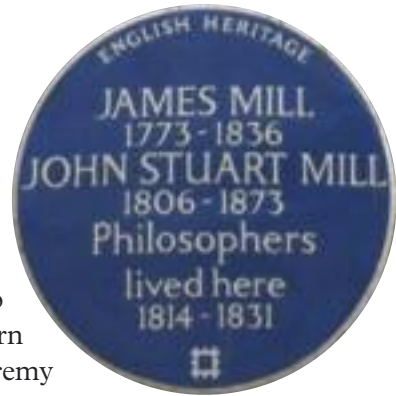
Overcame his natural bonhomie

And wrote the Principles of Political Economy.

JOHNS STUART MILL SHOULD have grown up to be an extraordinarily twisted and confused man. Thanks to his philosopher/historian/economist father, the boy's upbringing was an experiment in social engineering to create a genius, which would nowadays have earned stern intervention from social services. With the help of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill devised an education of concentrated stress. For a start, the boy was not allowed to mix with children of his own age.

Fortunately he was a precocious child. Taught Greek at three, by the age of eight he had read Aesop's Fables, Xenophon's Anabasis, and the whole of Herodotus. He had dipped into Lucian, Diogenes Laertius, Isocrates and six dialogues of Plato. In addition, he had read extensively of English history and had been taught arithmetic, physics and algebra. Then they decided he had reached the age for adding Latin, Euclid and algebra and he should read more history. Plus, of course, a proper classical education of all the ancient authors. By ten he read Plato and Demosthenes with contemptuous ease.

To round him in the arts he was then set to reading and writing poetry. One of his earliest compositions was a continuation of the Iliad. His spare time from study was employed in reading books on science, plus some fiction, such as Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe. By twelve they judged him ready for formal logic, prefaced by reading Aristotle's books on the subject – in Greek, of course. He then progressed to economics, reading Adam Smith. His reading of David Ricardo was helped by the great man taking the boy on long walks to explain the basics of economics. Delving through the subject entailed keeping careful notes which his father used as help in his book Elements of Political Economy.



18 Kensington Square

At fourteen he spent a year in Montpelier but that was no time-wasting holiday – he attended courses on chemistry, zoology, logic as well as taking a course in higher mathematics. On his way to and from the south he stayed in Paris for a few days in the house of the renowned economist Jean-Baptiste Say, a friend of his father, where he also met Henri de Saint-Simon.

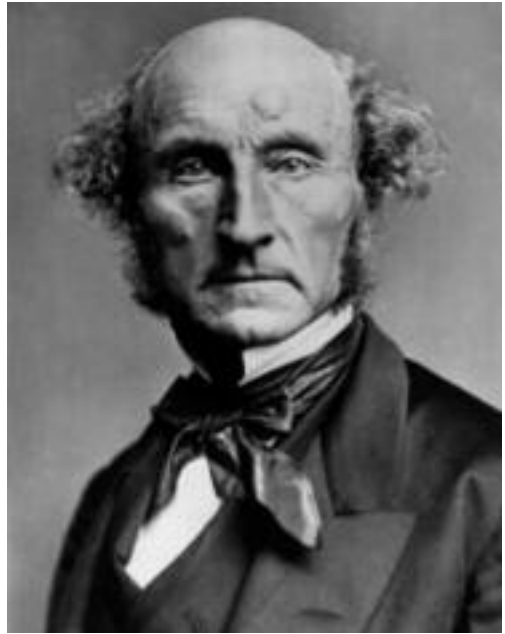
Aged fifteen John Stuart Mill undertook the study of Bentham's writings on legal evidence. These prompted a life-long work of reforming the world to increase human well-being.

Predictably, at twenty he had a nervous breakdown, producing intense depression. Rest and reading poetry helped and the depressions gradually lifted. Apart from that brief set-back though he survived his upbringing with remarkable equanimity and despite it was no ivory-tower theorist even when dealing with the most abstract of philosophical topics. He engaged with the world. He also avoided dogmatism and polemic, preferring thoughtful analysis. Mill serves as a model for thinking about human problems in a serious and civilised way.

Oxford and Cambridge universities were only for Anglicans, and Mill, as a non-conformist – later an atheist – was ineligible. So at 17 his father secured him a junior position in the East India Company and he attended lectures on jurisprudence at University College in London. He rose in the ranks, eventually to occupy his father's position of Chief Examiner and retired on a reasonable pension at 53 after the company had been nationalised.

At the age of 24 he met Harriet Taylor, wife of a pharmacist, and for 21 years they had what has been called a close and intimate friendship, though most commentators reckon it was chaste. When her husband died they married which caused an estrangement from his mother and sisters. Harriet was very bright and was a significant influence on his work, including advocacy of women's rights. Tragically, after having waited so long, they were married only seven years when on a trip to Europe she fell ill and died at Avignon. For the rest of his life, Mill spent half a year at a house in Avignon so that he could be near her grave.

Aged 59 he stood as parliamentary candidate for Westminster, and in accordance with his principles he would not canvass or pay agents to canvass for him, but was elected. In 1865 the Kensington Society was formed. A discussion group for middle-class educated women who were barred from higher education in this period, it met not far from Mills' home at the Kensington Square home of Indian scholar Charlotte Manning. Following a discussion on suffrage, a small informal committee was formed to draft a petition and gather signatures, led by women including Barbara Bodichon, Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett. Mill agreed to present the petition to Parliament provided it could get at least 100 signatures, and the first version was drafted by his step-daughter, Helen Taylor.



He took an active part in the debates preceding the passage of the 1867 Reform Bill, and was the first person in the history of parliament to call for women to be given the vote. Mill's proposed reforms of parliament included proportional representation, the single transferable vote, and extension of suffrage. At the same time he was rector of St Andrews University and wrote *In Considerations on Representative Government*. Still refusing to compromise his principles, he failed in his attempt at re-election in 1868.

Mill wrote widely on logic, utilitarianism (his father's profound belief), religion, psychology, education, political liberty, logic, epistemology, economics, social and political philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, and current affairs. "No one has ever been so right about so many things so much of the time as John Stuart Mill" reckoned Adam Gopnik, in *The New Yorker* of October 2008. A few days after Mill's death, Henry Sidgwick claimed, "I should say that from about 1860–65 or thereabouts he ruled England in the region of thought as very few men ever did: I do not expect to see anything like it again."

He made his philosophical reputation with his *System of Logic*, which provided the definitive account of the philosophy of science and social science for the remainder of the century. This was followed by *The Principles of Political Economy* in 1848 which was the dominant British textbook in economics, and at Oxford University it was the standard text until 1919, when it was replaced by Marshall's *Principles of Economics*. Mill's partially finished *Autobiography* was published, with additions by his step-daughter, Helen Taylor in 1873. She also supervised the posthumous publication in 1874 of his *Three Essays on Religion*.

His most significant and lasting work is *On Liberty*. Mill defined social liberty as protection from the tyranny of political rulers or tyranny of the majority. Mill would have had no truck with health and safety nannying, with laws enforcing car seat belts or motorcycle helmets. "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community against his will is to prevent harm to others. His own good, physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because in the opinions of others to do so would be wise, or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil in case he do otherwise." Nor with the state interfering in commercial transactions. "The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection."

People can be advised but should be allowed to make their own mistakes. "Each is the proper guardian of his own health whether bodily or mental or spiritual." It is kind to offer help, but not to compel. "Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter. ... But neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years, that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it. He is the person most interested in his own well-being; the interest which any other person, except in cases of strong personal attachment, can have in it is trifling, compared with that which he himself has; the interest which society has in him individually (except as to his conduct to others) is fractional, and altogether indirect."

The limit is only the effect on others: “The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited: he may not make himself a nuisance to other people.” He was also passionate defending free speech, even to say things we dislike.

Mill died in 1873 of erysipelas in Avignon, where he was buried alongside his wife.

MILL’S WARNINGS ON FREEDOM AND GOVERNMENT

“There needs protection against tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them.”

“There is no one so fit to conduct any business or to determine how or why it shall be conducted as those who are personally interested in it. This principle condemns the interferences, once so common, of the legislature or the officers of government with the ordinary processes of industry.”

“I am not aware than any community has a right to force another to be civilised.”

“The individual is not accountable to society for his actions, insofar as these concern the interests of no person but himself. Advice, instruction, persuasion and avoidance by other people if thought necessary by them for their own good are only measures by which society can justifiably express its dislike or disapprobation of his conduct.”

“Nothing is more needed for the complete removal of the evil than that wives should have the same rights and should receive the protection of the law in the same manner as all other persons.” (Talking of “the almost despotic power of husbands over wives”)

“The general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind.”

“There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence: and to fund that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against political despotism.”

“The vilest and most degrading of all trades, because more affectation and hypocrisy and more subservience to the baser feelings of others are necessary for carrying it on than for any other trade from that of brothel keeper upwards. =of journalism=

“The only freedom which deserves the name is that of preserving our own good in our own way so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it.”

“Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends than good men should look on and do nothing.”

“We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still.”

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Churches

by Nicholas Mellor
with additional material by Bobbie Vincent-Emery

THERE ARE 61 PLACES of worship in Kensington with a surprising concentration of diverse faiths around St James's Gardens. A synagogue, a mosque, a Sikh gurdwara, a Roman Catholic church, and an Anglican church are all within a quarter of a mile of each other in the Norland area of Kensington.

The church of St Francis of Assisi in Pottery Lane, is a church where young Catholics from 27 schools go for their first communion. It was one of the centres where Muslims and Christians gathered to mourn for the victims of Grenfell tower.

Pottery Lane took its name from the brickfields at its northern end, where Avondale Park now lies. High-quality clay was dug there from about 1818 and fired in a large kiln. A restored red brick 'bottle kiln' facing the park is still there. In the mid-1800s Pottery Lane was the main route into one of London's worst slums and known as "Cut-throat Lane". Pig-keepers forced from Tottenham Court Road and Marble Arch also moved in.

The 1845 Irish potato rot forced emigration and many left their land for Notting Hill and Notting Dale. There was no Roman Catholic church, so in 1859 Henry Augustus Rawes, looked for a site on which to build a church for the "poor and populous district of Notting Dale".

Rawes considered two sites for the church, and chose Pottery Lane rather than one near St. John's church on Ladbroke Grove, because the rich could always come down the hill to church, but the poor would almost certainly not go up it. John Francis Bentley the architect of Westminster Cathedral, designed the church. The interior decoration of delicate luminous paintings was designed so that the decorative details did not



The Anglican Church



The Mosque

“overwhelm the eye or distract the mind”. Three years later an adjoining plot of land was acquired to erect the presbytery and the school. In 1983 the church was restored to its original simplicity. The church was listed Grade II* in 1969 and the presbytery listed II in 1984.

The presence of the church did not improve the area which was called the Notting Dale Avernus or Mouth of Hell in the early Victorian era when the inhabitants were mainly beggars, cab-runners, loafers, thieves and prostitutes. But pigs gradually disappeared, and waves of building improved the housing. With limited local authority support, the churches and public schools provided the best practical and moral assistance. Harrow and Rugby schools both established missions to help the poor, and their legacy continues to this day.

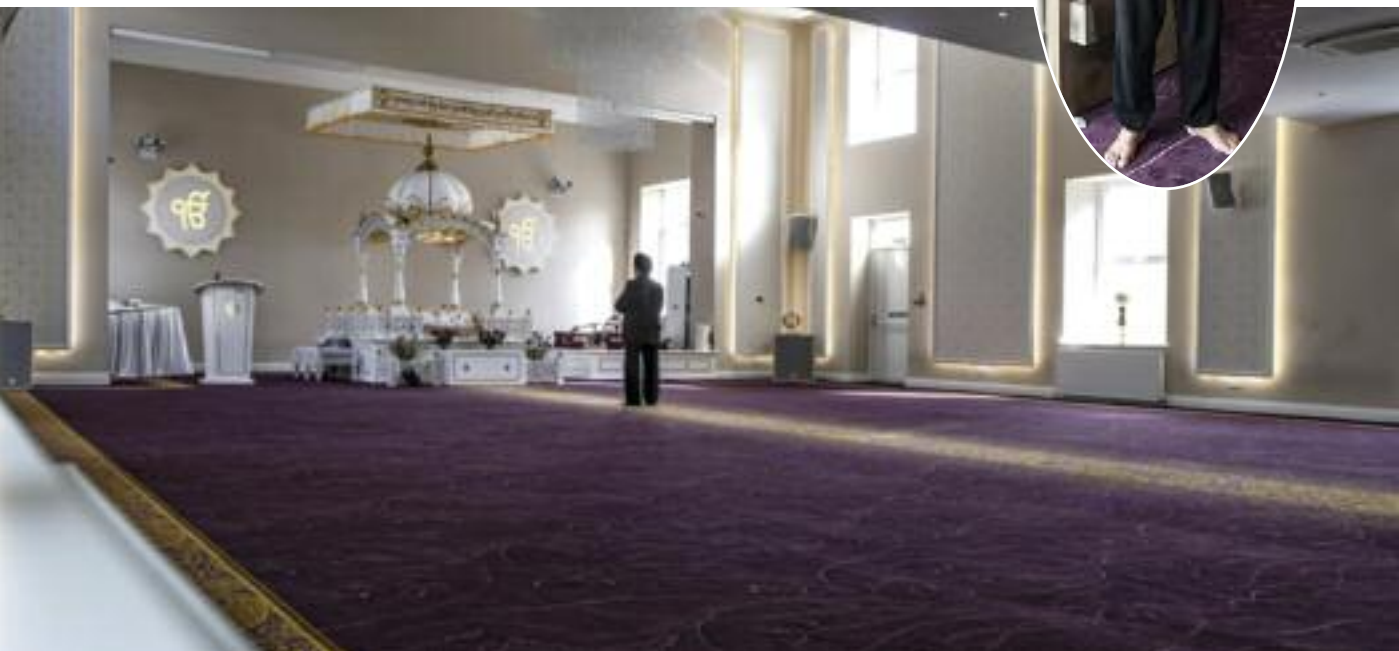
Mr Varley, a Baptist businessman, built a hall in Penzance Place on the north east corner of St James's gardens in the 1860s so he could preach to the people of the neighbouring potteries. Later the building became an industrial warehouse, but in the

last twenty years it has reverted to a religious use and is an Iranian Shia Mosque. In 1974 the late Grand Ayatollah of Iran, Golpiegani, helped establish the Islamic Universal Association in London and the mosque became its headquarters. This mosque marks Muharram and the Day of Ashura with a march down Holland Park from Hyde Park to commemorate the death of Husayn ibn 'All and his family. The chief mourner on the 2019 march was the grandson of the Grand Ayatollah Golpiegani.

In the late 1840s, the Norland Estate granted Charles Richardson, a property developer, permission to build the St James's Gardens houses. He provided private communal gardens and donated the site for St James's Church to the Church



The Synagogue



The Gurdwara

Commissioners. Lewis Vulliamy designed St James's in 12thC Gothic style and it cost just under £5,000 to build (£600,000 today). The church was consecrated in 1845 and listed Grade II in 1984.

St James Norlands church has an impressive organ, a strong musical tradition and is used for concerts. It was the place where a children's opera was founded in 1971 by local Holland Park parents led by Serena Hughes a music teacher, and the conductor Nicholas Kraemer. They wanted to stage an opera for young people each December with a large cast of children and young people. One of their first was Benjamin Britten's *Noyes Fludde*; they even commissioned new works. Although rehearsals still take place at St James's Norland Church, since 2003 the main performances have been in a professional venue.

The largest congregation using St James's is no longer residents of the gardens. It is a Pentecostal movement, founded by Pastor Wayman Mitchell in the small town of Prescott, Arizona in the 1970s, called the Potters House Christian Fellowship which exists in 112 nations. It is a fellowship or movement rather than a denomination and known for its music and song. The congregation is led by Pastor Yomi Kutu, originally from Nigeria and his wife from Sierra Leone.

The elegant home of the Sephardic Jewish community in West London is the Spanish and Portuguese Holland Park Synagogue. Sephardic Jews from Salonika, Istanbul and parts of the declining Ottoman Empire travelled to London to build a better life for themselves and their families in the early 1900s. By the beginning of World War 1, about 700 families had settled in the Shepherds Bush area and in 1928 they built the synagogue in the south west corner of St James's Gardens.

The stained glass windows above the gallery flood light onto the raised central dais occupied by the rabbi and the honorary officers of the synagogue. They face the embrasure holding the copies of the torah, and during the Saturday service wear Edwardian style top hats.



Members of the church walk outside the Anglican church.



Leon Sassoon recounting the history of the synagogue to the group led by Nicholas Mellor on the church walk of these places of worship, organised for Kensington Society members.

On the wooden pews around the dais are prayer books with prayers in Hebrew, English and Ladino, an old form of Spanish, spoken only by the older members of the community. The expulsion of Jewish families from Spain in 1492 scattered Sephardic Jews across the south and east of the Mediterranean, and they retained their language. Many of the worshippers at the synagogue have more recent ties to Libya, Egypt and Iran, and some of the younger generation cannot read Hebrew.

Former members of the Sephardic community are commemorated on the Etzchayim, the Tree of Life on the wall of the synagogue. Every year on the anniversary of their death the candle on a brass plaque engraved with their name lights up. A stone on the wall of the synagogue names the members of this Sephardic community who died in the Second World War fighting for the United Kingdom. In contrast, beside the book recording the deaths of members of the community, are rows of baby buggies waiting for the children at the nursery school held in the synagogue hall.

In front of the memorial stone is the security guard who is on duty whenever the synagogue and buildings are in use. That this place of worship needs security guards in the 21stc is a disturbing echo of the plight of the Sephardic community in Salonika in the 15thc. The guard's presence was prompted by the terrorist attacks in France, although neither Leon Sassoon, president of the synagogue, nor rabbi Lavi have had any reports of anti-Semitism in this area. On one occasion a man came into the synagogue, went down on his knees, touching his forehead to the floor. When the then rabbi's son asked him what he thought he was doing, the man replied "I am here to teach you infidels how to pray". He was gently escorted to the door and left peaceably.

In the spirit of Fr Rawes and Mr Varley, the Salvation Army established a mission - citadel - in the neighbourhood, at Norland Castle on Queensdale Road. In 1940 the building was destroyed in a bombing raid during the Blitz-but rebuilt twenty years later. Now it is the home of a Sikh gurdwara.

The Khalsa Jatha, British Isles, was formed in 1908 to promote religious and social activities among the Sikhs. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, founded by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) as a movement of tolerance in India. Great Britain has close to 500,000 Sikhs - the largest number outside India.

In 1911 the Jatha acquired a house in Putney, and two years later the movement bought the lease of 79 Sinclair Road, Shepherd Bush, where it remained for 63 years. As funds were raised, the Jatha bought Norland Castle, and in 1969 moved into the building where the Central Gurdwara (meaning the house of Guru) Khalsa Jatha still stands. The domes were added in the early 1990's while a further programme of refurbishment began in 2000.

Each gurdwara has a Darbar Sahib where the scripture Guru Granth Sahib, is placed on a takhat (an elevated throne) in a prominent central position. The raagis (who sing ragas) recite, sing and explain, the verses from the Guru Granth Sahib, in the presence of the congregation. People from all faiths, and those who do not profess any faith, are welcomed in Sikh gurdwaras. In the Langar, the Sikh community kitchen, vegetarian food is cooked and served by the volunteers from the community.

The people involved with all these places of worship remark with relief and admiration on the tolerance and harmony of this environment enabling the people of such diverse backgrounds to pursue their faiths and ways of life in peace and harmony.

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Notting Hill Carnival

by Michael Becket

EXTENSIVE RACISM IN THE 1950s sparked racial battles, especially in 1958 when 400 people rampaged through north Kensington, attacking homes and businesses belonging to West Indian people, and in 1959 after an Antiguan carpenter, Kelso Cochrane, was murdered. Trinidad-born Claudia Jones, editor of the West Indian Gazette, tried to mitigate racial tensions with a West Indian song and dance festival in 1959 in St Pancras town hall. It later transferred to Porchester Hall and the Lyceum ballroom until 1964 when Claudia Jones died. Rhaune Laslett, a half Amerindian, half Russian English social worker, had been organising a steel-band display which was amalgamated with the Jones legacy.

The combination worked well when the Russell Henderson steel band walked up and down Portobello Road in 1966. A crowd followed the band, later expanding into a major demonstration of imagination by the black population. It grew to resemble Caribbean carnivals.



But it did not have local authority permission, so the police, often openly hostile to West Indians in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in Notting Dale, tried to stop it. The Mangrove restaurant, run by Trinidadian civil rights campaigner Frank Crichlow, was the meeting place for carnival organisers, and it was raided by the police twelve times between January 1969 and July 1970. A protest march demanding “hands off the Mangrove” ended in violence and the arrests of nine protesters, including Crichlow, on charges including conspiracy to start a riot. All were acquitted of incitement and five of them on all charges, with the judge unprecedentedly commenting on evidence of racial hatred.

The parade survived for August bank holiday. A small area of north Kensington spent much of the year making flamboyant, colourful costumes for each block to parade behind its all-steel band, competing for a prize in imaginative clothing and musical skill. Then BBC Radio London cottoned on, talking it up in 1973 and 1974, with Capital Radio joining in 1975. That produced a large influx from the rest of black London and then, as word spread, from all over the country.





The huge influx of strangers included criminals and racists. Riots broke out in 1976 when 3,000 police, ten times the number of previous years, failed to keep order and indeed probably provoked it by unbridled use of stop-and-search without cause. The police claimed violence erupted after they tried to arrest a pickpocket, who was defended by the surrounding crowds. More than 100 police and 60 other people ended up in hospital.



Despite such violence, the numbers continued to grow eventually to a reported 2.5 million – almost certainly an overestimate – making it the largest street festival in Europe, and probably second only to Rio de Janeiro. The crowd enticed crooks: pickpockets thrived, drug-dealers flourished, ‘steamers’ robbed people, and fights broke out every evening. Caribbean young men, angered by police harassment, started riots. It was unwise to be around All Saints Road after 6 pm.



Newspapers and broadcasters reported extensively on the violence and thefts, and there was talk of the carnival being banned. But despite the problems, and thanks to support from some influential people, including Prince Charles, it was never officially stopped. When he was mayor of London, Ken Livingstone planned to move it to Hyde Park, but that was comprehensively dismissed by almost everybody. Survival may in part be thanks to an estimate by the London Development Agency that it contributed £93 million to London's economy in 2002. Against that was the cost of policing, estimated at £6 million.

From 1987 the police rethought their tactics. Their presence at the carnival became ever more numerous – to perhaps 11,000 – which reduced crime and, as racism abated, the unrest also died down.

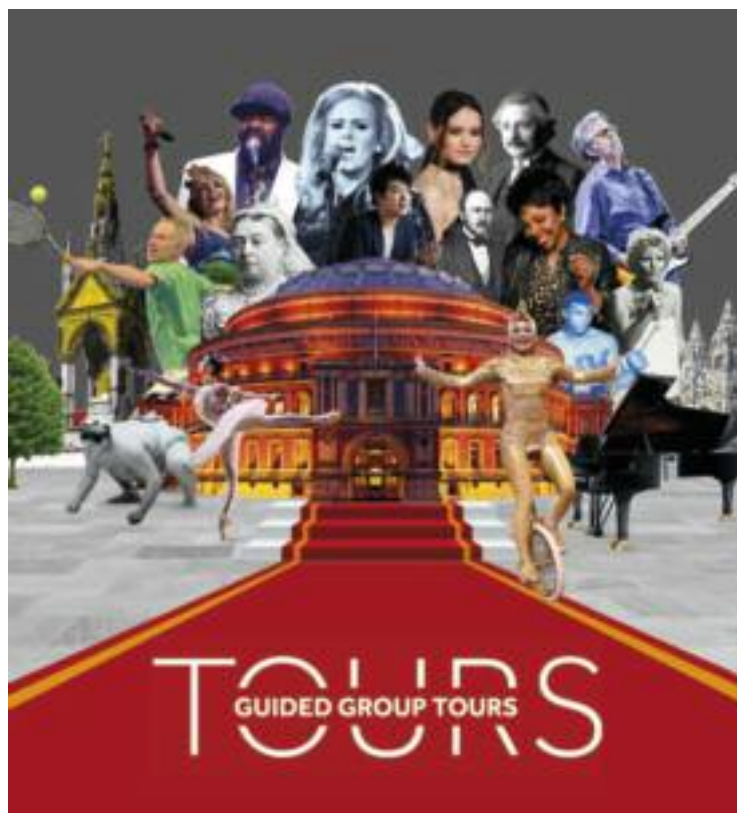


The carnival has also changed. It has succeeded so well in integrating the Caribbean community that carnival is now essentially just a great party with a large portion of the parade composed of white people. There has been a steep decline in the number of all-steel bands, their place having been taken by lorries with over-amplified music through massive loudspeakers which make the viscera vibrate. The diminishing black community is not entirely happy at white people taking over.

Gentrification, intensified by Notting Hill becoming ridiculously fashionable, has also sent prices sky-rocketing, which has undermined the traditional bohemian atmosphere of the area. Quite a few local residents today are hostile to the crowds, noise and smell of the carnival, and graffiti is unfortunately a growing problem. But most agree that it is one of Kensington's – and indeed London's – great events.







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Spoof: The Albert Hall

by Matt Griffin

APRIL FOOLS' DAY HAS always fascinated me. As a cheeky prankster in my childhood the idea of having a 12-hour window every year to play tricks on people makes 1 April almost rank up there with Christmas as a beloved annual tradition. From the routine one "mum, the neighbour's car is on fire" lies of my youth to the more ambitious "Can't believe I've made it on to the next series of Big Brother" Facebook posts as a student, it's been a joy discovering what people will still fall for on the day that everyone's expecting to be tricked.

Naturally getting a proper grown-up job in the marketing team at Kensington's Royal Albert Hall didn't put me off this puerile behaviour – in fact, it simply gave me a bigger audience. My job allows me to draw from the venue's unrivalled programme of events past and present to promote this unique hall. Our archives tell stories of everyone from Winston Churchill, Emmeline Pankhurst and Nelson Mandela to Rachmaninoff, Eric Clapton and The Spice Girls.

It is through these cultural icons and the events they've created that we can bring the story of the hall to life, but occasionally there are some stories that I feel just need to be told, regardless of whether or not they actually happened. Fortunately 1 April every year gives my colleague Rick Burin and me the opportunity to explore them, and so we get to work on making up our own stories as part of a devilish plot to prank the great British public.



Matt Griffin

Here is a quick overview of the last six years of fake news:

- **2014 – The Retractable Roof**

We announced plans to install a retractable roof to transform the auditorium into a “multi-climate event space”

- **2015 – The Hall vs The Beatles**

A carefully photoshopped letter from our then-CEO Ernest O’Follipar (anagram fans assemble) angrily demanded an apology for The Beatles’ “now they know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall” lyric in A Day In The Life and suggested new wording referencing the Proms, only for John Lennon to offer a curt reply telling us where to go

- **2016 – The Small Hadron Collider**

Seeing that we are a round building, we partnered with CERN to turn our corridors into a scaled-down version of their Large Hadron Collider in the hopes that “some science would happen”

- **2017 – Tweets Live**

We announced a strange event in which the greatest Tweets ever written would be performed with a live orchestra. The format did not make sense then and it does not make sense now, but it went down well with our Twitter followers.

- **2018 – Queen Victoria’s Time Capsule**

In a straight-faced video, we reveal the bewildering discoveries found inside a time capsule that had been unearthed during our building works, starting with an old key and a Victorian penny, before upping the silliness with further contents, including a Dire Straits VHS cassette and a pixelated item deemed too indecent to display in this day and age

- **2019 – The Great Rotation**

We are going to use the Bank Holiday weekend to rotate the building 180° to even things out a bit – how hard could it be?

Rejected ideas have included us hosting an exhibition of the worst gig photos taken on smartphones, and how an eventually successful US presidential candidate was planning to relocate the venue to Acton so he could build London’s largest golf course.

Planning the details of these japes tends to start in around February, when Rick and I get our heads together, usually over a walk in Hyde Park, and kick around a few ideas for features. Once we have a fully-formed idea we usually run it past the CEO – the last thing we want is accidentally to pre-empt something that is actually going to happen.

Happily for me there has been a willingness to allow me and my team to try new things with our content. We are aware of our responsibilities in looking after how the hall presents itself to the world and the difference between being cheeky and being provocative, and as a result there is always an anticipation from many of our staff to know what we have planned for next April Fools’ Day.

We have a lot of fun carefully writing these stories (all of which can still be found in full on the hall's website), and reading the reactions from the thousands of readers on 1 April, which are usually a fun mix of amusement from those who get it and bewilderment from those who are fooled; but it's the delayed reactions that I most enjoy.

Highlights include the time a regular contractor at the venue asked me in conversation when we were going to start that retractable roof project he had read about online, some two years after we posted the 2014 story. Or perhaps when one of our regular PR advisers had taken the 'Time Capsule' story as fact and was confused as to why we were not pushing this extraordinary story harder in the press.

But it is the Beatles letters I mocked up on Photoshop in the late March of 2015 which continue to command the most attention. They are often referenced as fact in press articles about *A Day In The Life*, we have had requests from exhibition curators to display the letters and, most curiously of all, a Royal Albert Hall tour guide was recently heard referencing the letters as fact to a tour group. Half a decade on it remains the most read story on our website – a fact I treat with as much despair as I do pride!

With my marketing hat on, these pranks play a small part in our ongoing efforts to show the hall's personality. Whilst some may only know us from the flag-waving images from Last Night of the Proms, the Royal Albert Hall is a venue with a hugely diverse programme and audience, with a dedicated team of staff who are motivated by the desire to see more people come through our doors and experience the magic of one of the world's most spectacular venues.

The venue was built almost 150 years ago for everyone, and our audience now extends beyond simply people able to come to our auditorium. So if you are not able to come to a show here, or the televised shows are not for you, then we hope you are still able to enjoy our silly stories every April as much as Rick and I enjoy creating them.

Fake news has never been so fun.



2016. The Small Hadron Collider



2017. Tweets Live



2019. The Great Rotation



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Kensington Chamber Orchestra

by Carenza Parker

IT'S OFTEN SAID THAT music is the greatest unifier and nowhere is this more evident than on Tuesday nights in Penzance Place, when Kensington Chamber Orchestra (KCO), meets to rehearse – about 50 people, with ages spanning from students to pensioners, with a large majority of the players having clearly dashed from work. The orchestra's members boast an equally diverse mix of jobs, ranging from lawyers, doctors and teachers, to publishers, accountants, artists and cooks. But each week, any differences become quickly irrelevant, as everyone in the room is united through their shared passion for music.

“Every orchestra has its own character”, explains KCO's principal conductor Tom Seligman, a professional conductor who divides his time between London and Berlin. “It's an alchemy of the people involved, their attitude to music-making, their shared experience and what they aspire to, and I can truly say that KCO has a mixture that is unique: the standard of music-making is extremely high, without feeling exclusive, yet despite the seriousness of purpose, the atmosphere is incredibly friendly and social.”

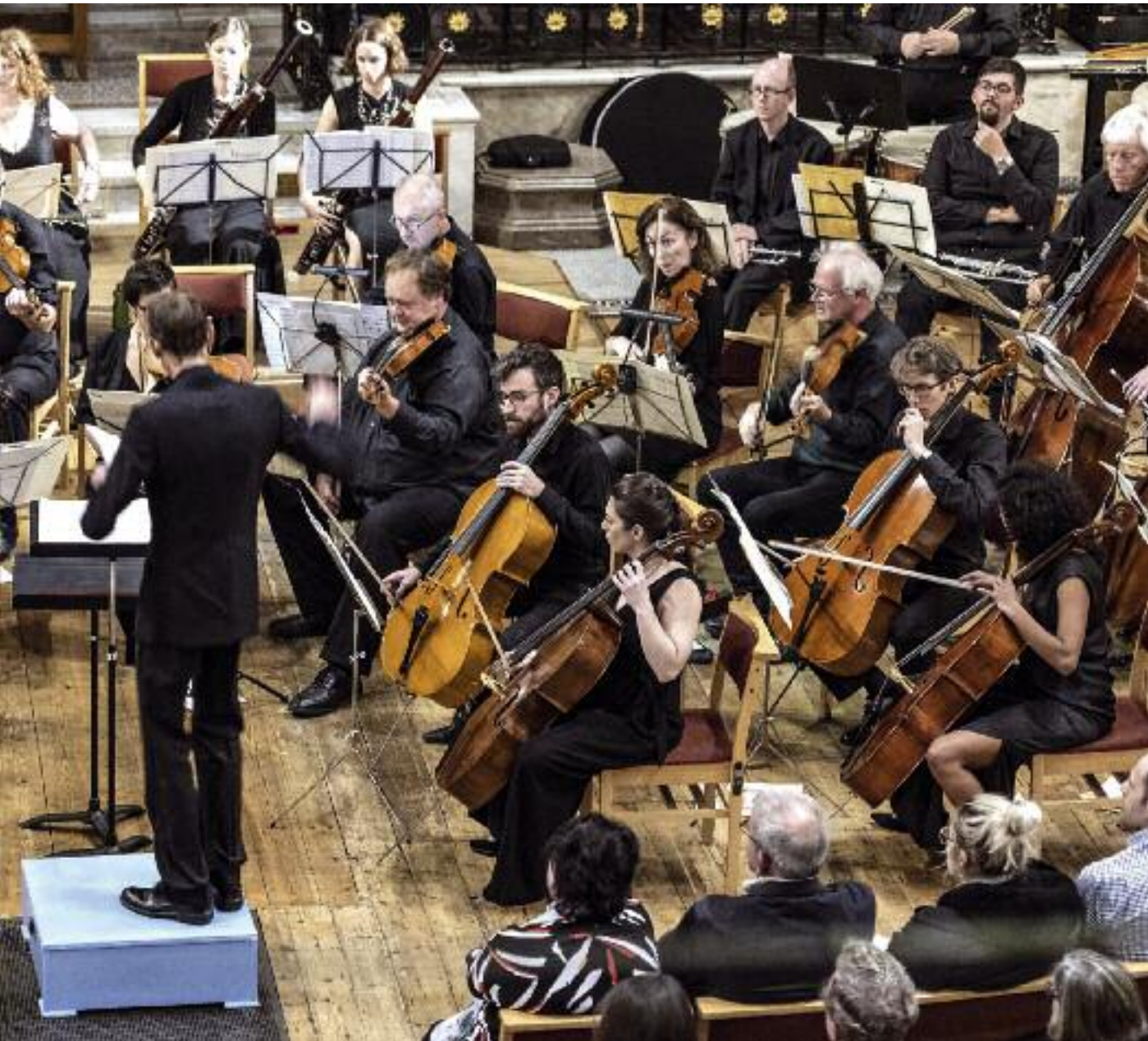
Kensington Chamber Orchestra was founded in 1935 and was initially called the Informal Chamber Orchestra, largely because the players gave concerts wearing everyday suits and dresses, rather than the customary evening dress. The name was changed to its current title in the early 1990s, as by then the orchestra was regularly rehearsing in churches and schools within the borough. In the late summer of 1935 Bernard Robinson, a physicist by profession but also an inspired – and inspiring – musician, sent a letter to his musical friends, proposing to form an amateur orchestra. He wrote: “Amateur musicians often complain that they do not enjoy orchestral playing because of the lack of finish common to most amateur orchestral performances – due largely to the presence in the orchestra of many players whose enthusiasm outruns their technical and musical ability. As an experiment to see if this criticism must necessarily apply to all amateur effort, I am proposing to form in London in the autumn a small chamber orchestra, to meet regularly for the rehearsal of standard symphonic works of the smaller kind.” His enthusiasm was well received, and the orchestra quickly flourished.

To ensure the orchestra maintained the highest possible level of music-making, Robinson set down a few guiding principles, most of which still stand: the primary purpose of the orchestra is simply to enjoy the music in rehearsals and subsequent public performances; all members undertake to attend all the rehearsals and to give them priority over other engagements, and expenses are shared under a general subscription. These days KCO gives about four or five public concerts a year, rehearsing weekly for roughly six weeks in advance of the concert day. “I always look forward to our rehearsals”, says violinist Eve Weatherill, a biochemistry research scientist. “It's great to be able to completely concentrate on something other than work – and escape the trials and stresses of life in the lab through playing great music in the company of fun, like-minded people.”

KCO is always keen to welcome new musicians to the orchestra, and this is often done through word of mouth, or by individuals contacting the orchestra directly through the website, www.kco.org.uk. There is no audition process, but instead players are accepted on a trial basis, with the conductor, leader and section leader making the final acceptance decisions. “I worked in Russia for several years where the amateur music world is very small, so there wasn’t a huge amount of choice when it came to finding opportunities to play”, explains violinist Henrietta Ford, a music administrator. “When I moved to London a few years ago, my priority was to find an orchestra to join. I was so happy to find KCO; I was made to feel really welcome from the first rehearsal and now it already feels like I’ve playing with them for years.”



Many of the orchestra's members have indeed been playing together for years, and this sense of connection is another reason Seligman finds working with it so rewarding. "We understand one another well", he says. "We meet anew for each project, with a slightly different configuration of personnel, but we are always drawing on our shared experience, never starting from scratch, which makes it so much more satisfying. In our core classical and early romantic repertoire, it takes a while to understand the special way in which the music needs to 'speak': it's really like learning a language, with a very particular accent and articulation. And you don't want to be learning that language from the beginning every time you meet." Seligman, in conjunction with the orchestra's committee, decides the programmes for each concert roughly a year in advance.



Since its inception, KCO has always encouraged and supported young soloists and composers at the start of their careers. The late Fritz Lustig, who joined the cello section in 1952, recalled his first rehearsal with the orchestra when Bernard Robinson, unable to conduct that evening, had to send a deputy, a young man in his mid-twenties who was determined to become a professional conductor: his name was Colin Davis. Several of the early members similarly went on to become professionals themselves, such as the clarinettist Jack Brymer, who played with the orchestra in 1938. These days, the orchestra usually includes a concerto in each programme, with recent performances from violinist Michael Foyle, pianist Yasmin Rowe and soprano April Fredrick. Forthcoming concerts feature the brilliant Latvian pianist Antonina Suhanova and French violinist Charlotte Saluste-Bridoux.

KCO has also had the remarkable benefit of two very fine composers being playing members: Alan Charlton, who died in 2018, and Danyal Dhondy, a young composer now based in Paris, but who still comes back to London for rehearsals. “KCO is a huge part of my musical life”, says Dhondy. ‘I’ve been playing with the group for numerous years now, and it was such a thrill to hear my music performed by the orchestra. Having played with them for so long, I could write music knowing – probably – who would be performing it, and also write according to the strengths and weaknesses of the ensemble. For a composer, that is really special.”

KCO has also commissioned new music, most recently from Ian Stephens, who wrote a Clarinet Concerto for the Orchestra, which was performed by his wife Mandy Burvill in May 2019. This process, says Seligman, is hugely exciting for everyone. ‘It’s always special to be part of that process: I love working with composers to fine tune their ideas and ensure that they will be realised in practical terms just as they imagine them. And of course, for the Orchestra, it’s a thrill to be part of the creation of totally new works.’

Like numerous small charities, the orchestra undergoes a constant balancing act to ensure financial survival. It is funded by members’ subscriptions and ticket sales, and overheads are kept to a minimum. They recently launched a Friends of KCO scheme, which for £5 a month provides supporters with benefits such as prime seat reservations and free drinks. Regular large audiences often comment on the warm atmosphere of the orchestra, which comes as no surprise, says cellist Sarah Rogers. “KCO is so much more than a group of people playing music together. It’s family; belonging; my people. Whether it’s friendship which produces the transporting musical experiences, or the incredible opportunities for high class music-making that knit people together, I don’t know. But what I do know is that it provides huge highlights of music and friendship throughout the year, and this strength of connection transfers to our audiences who all feel it too. Music really does unite us all.”

www.kco.org.uk

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George Clarke

by Michael Becket

GEORGE CLARKE, THIS YEAR'S keynote speaker, is an architect and television presenter best known for property programmes on Channels 4 and 5.

He was born in Sunderland in 1974 and brought up in nearby Washington. Both his grandfathers were builders and, after spending school holidays in and around building sites, he decided to be an architect from the age of 12: "There was nothing else I ever wanted to do. When most of the kids were playing with building blocks and pieces of Lego, I was actually on building sites." Leaving school at 16 he found a job with a local firm of architects, and studied for a BTEC in Building and Construction before getting his degree in architectural studies from Newcastle University, followed by a post-graduate diploma from London's Bartlett School of Architecture. Whilst he was a student, Clarke supported himself financially by renovating people's homes in his spare time.

After graduating in 1995, Clarke trained and worked with FaulknerBrowns Architects in Newcastle upon Tyne, before joining Sir Terry Farrell, in both London and Hong Kong. In 1998, with partner Bobby Desai, he formed his own company, *clarke:desai* – clients included Simon Fuller and Jamie Oliver. Three years later Clarke left to set up George Clarke & Partners, with 25 staff. "I now want to start a new company that isn't just about architecture, but also covers all aspects of the design, build and property development business." The firm has been mainly involved in renovation and refurbishment as well as designing new build.

Between 2001–2003, Clarke was a visiting lecturer at Newcastle University, and is currently a visiting lecturer at the University of Nottingham's School for the Built Environment. He set up a charity Ministry of Building Innovation and Education (MOBIE) to train young people in designing homes and has designed a course in partnership with Teesside University.

Clarke's television career came about by chance. He had approached a literary agent after being asked to write a book about architecture, not realising the agency also represented television presenters. He presented *Property Dreams*, and was invited to a screen test for a new Channel 5 programme called *Build a New Life in the Country*, which had been struggling to find a suitable building professional to front the show, and got the job. He also presented *The Restoration Man*, and *Ugly House to Lovely House*, before being commissioned to present *The Restoration Man* for Channel 4. Clarke has been a regular feature on TV, including *Dream Home Abroad*, *The Great British Property Scandal*, *George Clarke's Amazing Spaces*, and *Old House New Home*. He hosted the first series of *Amazing Spaces* back in 2012, and the series has gone on to include *Shed of The Year* 2015.

Clarke harks back to the Addison Act of 1919, sparked by the need to house returning soldiers from the First World War. "Homes fit for heroes" was the slogan backed by politicians across the spectrum. The idea of state sponsorship of housing transformed

housing provision in Britain, placing a duty on councils to provide homes for people most in need. The ambitious plan was 500,000 new homes built with government subsidy was not achieved, just like government housing targets ever since, but the 213,000 homes that were built laid the foundations of a new system. The many of the houses along Wilsham Street and within Notting Dale in Kensington were built at that time for the heroes. Such policies ought to be revived, he says, with emphasis on well-designed and pleasant community areas.

His tastes and interests are wide-ranging – architecture, painting, photography, furniture, art, clothing, motorcycle and bike design. For him, the vital key is whether they have been designed with integrity.

He has also written several books, including *Build a New Life: by Creating Your New Home*. In 2012, Clarke was appointed adviser to a scheme turning empty properties into homes. In 2014, he became the youngest person to be awarded honorary membership of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the following year received an honorary doctorates from Leeds Beckett, Wolverhampton and Northumbria universities. Clarke is a patron of the Civic Trust Awards scheme.

He lives in Notting Hill, near the Grenfell Tower, with his wife Katie and has three children from a previous marriage. Clarke has redesigned the 1910 home into a modern interior while restoring the exterior to its original appearance.





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Being an MP

- Felicity Buchan

ELECTION NIGHTS ARE A pretty traumatic introduction to being an MP. Felicity Buchan did not know the result of her paper-thin margin of victory until about 4.15am. Then she “went immediately into facing the media”, being whisked off to confront phalanxes of television cameras, waiting for her reaction. They came not just from the BBC and other British TV but from foreign stations as well. It was partly because Kensington, having become not just a marginal seat but, to general astonishment, had previously turned Labour, though also by a tiny margin. It was partly fascination with how a Remain constituency would vote. And it was partly that being in central London it was easily accessible to broadcasters.

After about an hour of that concentrated attention, she finally managed to get home. Only to be confronted with piles of messages, including one already from the Conservative Whips Office.

Understandably enough she did not wake till nearly noon, but then immediately the work of being an MP began. For a start she had to hire her own staff. Cleverly, she “contacted the MPs who had lost their seats and asked about their assistants”. Their staff were inevitably out of work. She chose Jemma Offley, who had been Zac Goldsmith's assistant until he lost the seat at Richmond Park and was promptly given a peerage. Felicity also got from the induction people a computer and a tablet, both to be paid for, to help keep in touch.

An office, however she did not get. That takes time. For a start it is all deeply hierarchical – the longest serving members and grandees get the best ones, and when they go everybody moves up. The latest arrivals get some pretty grotty premises, often with no access to natural light and a decrepit heating system. Felicity had been allocated a site, just under the main Commons chamber, but as with all property chains “it is a matter of waiting for everyone to move” and she was right at the end of the line. In addition, there are now “so many more Conservative MPs, so they have to negotiate with Labour for their allocated offices”. There is an accommodation Whip but it still takes at least a couple of months. During the wait the new arrivals make the best of being shuffled into unused committee rooms.

In the meantime, it is a matter of learning the ropes. Long-serving MPs reckon it takes seven years to know your way about, but this was Felicity Buchan's third attempt to get into parliament, and as a result “I know quite a lot of MPs and ministers quite well” including the neighbouring Chelsea & Fulham MP, Greg Hands. “They, senior MPs and the Cabinet, have all been incredibly welcoming.” They have also explained procedure and protocol. Officials such as Black Rod are helpful as are the doormen, who also know the shortcuts across the rabbit warren of the parliament buildings.

There is also a more formal induction process. For three days after she was elected the Whips Office brought the new members up to speed and handed out a fat booklet of background instruction. The Whips seemingly never sleep. By 6am Felicity has an email

from them on the usual daily briefing meeting. Attendance is not compulsory, but useful for a novice. It sets out the agenda for the day.

In addition to the formal requirements of being a legislator, constituency representative, and scrutineer of government policy, MPs have a bewildering array of parallel opportunities. Felicity, for instance, wants to take part in a range of cross-party organisations. There are the select committees on which all parties are represented, and in addition there are hundreds of All Party Parliamentary Groups – these a sort of debating society hoping to hammer out some strategic direction to suggest to government, and she rapidly joined the one dealing with knife crime. There is also the informal group of fifty environmentalists caucus which has full-time staff.

The implication is that an MP does not spend all the time in the Commons chamber. They might be, as she explains, at one of those groups or committees, doing some research on a subject of interest, or attending to the constituency. She maintains they are not lazy.

Catering also helps. It is quite normal to sit down to lunch, as she did very early on, and have one Cabinet minister across the table, and another sitting beside her. It is a “wonderful opportunity to raise issues – obviously not specific cases but general policies and aims”.

Some of the requirements of being in parliament are intimidating. Demands come from constituents, party, colleagues, and the media. One new MP calculated that in his first 10 months he received over 39,400 pieces of communication: 24,000 e-mails, 9,600 letters, and 4,800 telephone calls. On top of this he dealt with 2,183 individual constituents’ cases. And that is in addition to the demands of the job itself, intellectual and physical. When there is a division – and if it is a three-line Whip everybody has to vote – you have only eight minutes to get there. No matter where you are in the building, or what committee is in progress, a sprint is in order. “It is all very well if you are twenty and fit, but if you are older and in high heels it is bit of a challenge.”

The hours, though less onerous than once they were, are still fairly long. Felicity gets in around 8.30 am and on some days the official sitting finishes at 2.30 pm and sometimes not until 8.30 pm.

Elaborate procedures need to be mastered about asking parliamentary questions, written and oral, and supplementaries. There is also the difficulty of being able to speak in the Commons by catching the speaker’s eye. Felicity Buchan succeeded in that fairly early.

Having experience or friends helps. Some of the serving members she knows from her years of trying to become an MP, but some are her contemporaries from Oxford, where she read law. She was a member of the union but her interest was debating rather than political ambition. That came later, though she had long had an interest in politics.

First however she went into banking, with Bank of America and J P Morgan, mainly raising funding for major corporations. After 18 years of that, she became a volunteer at a children’s charity in north Kensington and a governor of Bousfield Primary School in South Kensington. She says the switch was because she wanted pay back to society, which she adds is also the reason for becoming an MP. “If you think you can make a difference and have skills” there is a need to get involved. With Grenfell in her constituency, she is taking as priority, building regulations, social housing, and fire protection.

On the EU she was “about the same as the referendum, I was 48% remain and 52% Brexit”. When finally it came to the leaving, she was pressing for a deal which “protected the needs of European citizens in Britain” and for something that would “protect the services sector, which is so important for Britain”. Especially financial services, about which she knows first hand, and she reckons is widely represented in Kensington residents.





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Obituary

John Scott

by Chris Fagg

JOHN SCOTT 23 JANUARY 1935–13 JANUARY 2020

JOHN SCOTT, A DISTINGUISHED and dynamic contributor to the conservation and environment of the borough, died just a few days short of his 85th birthday. As Founder of the Notting Hill Gate Improvement Group, John hit the headlines with a number of creative proposals for the area.

A long-established resident of a double house just off Westbourne Grove, John Scott was known not only as a major figure in the property world, but also as a collector of Victorian and early 20th century domestic decorative arts and crafts, a subject long overlooked by collectors until the 1970s.

Born in Cheshire to a prosperous family with strong connections to the property world, he was educated at Radley College, in Berkshire, where he distinguished himself at rugby. In 1954 National Service took him to Malaya as an officer with the Gurkha Brigade, where he played rugby for the Malaya Combined Services XV and for Malaya in Malaya v. Thailand. In 1957 he went up to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, to read Law, graduating in 1959. At Oxford he gained his first Blue in 1957, going on to play for England v France on 1958 and for Cheshire in 1959–61. He remained a lifelong supporter of Oxford University Rugby Football Club. In 1964 he served as a crew member for Sovereign, the America's Cup challenger.

After Oxford, the law led him, not unexpectedly, into property development and, despite having to navigate the upheavals chronic to the sector, finally established himself as chairman and managing director of Brathew Ltd.

According to Scott himself, his interest in collectables started with the unsystematic acquisition of Georgian drinking glasses, most of which proved to be fake. However, a meeting an expert directed his attentions to the neglected artefacts of Victorian decorative artists and designers, an area just beginning to come to the notice of collectors in the early 1970s. Examples included objects that, as Scott himself put it, "My mother would have paid the dustmen half a crown to take away." J Gordon Cooke formerly managing director, of the Fine Art Society said John Scott became "an authority on



John Scott and former councillor
Christopher Buckmaster

British decorative arts from 1830 to 1930, a period when progressive British architects, designers, craftsmen and manufacturers produced works of genius”. The sale of his remarkable collection was a major highlight in the gallery’s rich exhibition history

John was the founder of Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group using his property expertise to liaise with local landlords in development of the area. The group planted trees, installed sculptures, and persuaded shopkeepers to improve their windows. The lasting and most highly visible legacy of John Scott’s local activism lies in the combined public lavatories and flower stall at the western end of Westbourne Grove. The borough had published plans for an abysmal replacement loo across the road from his home. In fury, he commissioned the architect Piers Gough to design a better one, and then persuaded a strangely reluctant authority to build it. To the brief for a new facility, he and the local amenity society added a flower kiosk, large clock, generous benches, trees, refurbished water fountain and horse trough paid for by subscription, mostly from John.

As Piers Gough explained “after many delightful and hilariously outspoken dinners, the result was the flamboyant turquoise glazed brick Westbourne Grove Public Lavatories. Inspired by John’s predilections, its ceramic finish and triangular geometry made reference to the work of Christopher Dresser and its canopy roof to the Art Nouveau of Hector Guimard’s Metro stations – but the whole ensemble is spankingly post-modern. Opened with a flourish by the poetic Lucinda Lambton, it stands on an entirely new island pavement in the middle of the road”.

He was upset when what was so obvious to him was pushed aside, normally by RBKC, whose representatives were often the recipients of his sharp tongue. If he never achieved all that he wanted, but his legacy lives on. He was granted the Mayor’s Award in 2009 but never received the national honour which many felt he deserved.



The public lavatories and flower stall at the western end of Westbourne Grove

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Planning Reports

Changing planning context

It has been increasingly difficult to keep up to date with the pace of change in planning changes in government policy, the new London Plan, increasing mayoral interventions and the adoption of the long-awaited revised Local Plan, for which a complete review is promised within three years from a start date of September 2018.

Government planning policy

In the last year we have seen the adoption of a revised National Planning Policy Framework as well as more relaxation of planning policy. These revisions include allowing changes of use without the need for planning consent, especially for changes of use in shopping centres. This is further bad news for the high street by making it more difficult to maintain shops in primary shopping centres with the increasing number of cafes and estate agents being able to move in.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has been promising a new Planning Green Paper to relax planning controls further with yet another attempt to allow additional storeys to existing buildings. We may be protected due to the number of listed buildings and 75% of the borough being within conservation areas. However, there will now be a White Paper in Spring which could further undermine the council's ability to manage development pressures. This would involve another fight with the government to avoid more 'one-size-fits-all' changes being imposed rather than enabling the council to tailor changes to local conditions.

Mayoral planning policies

The London Plan provides the strategic framework and policies for London boroughs when they produce their Local Plans. The new London Plan is in its final stage and with the Secretary of State.

The Mayor of London was also given powers to assess major planning applications and, where they affect the implementation of the London Plan, if the proposed decision was contrary to the London Plan, the mayor could direct the borough to refuse permission. Successive mayors have used the power to direct refusal sparingly.

In 2008 the mayor was given an additional power to 'call in' cases where the borough proposed refusal. Successive mayors have used this power almost exclusively to grant consent, despite the borough's proposed refusal.

This new London Plan will influence our Local Plan: it is already happening to major developments which have been 'called in' by the Mayor of London (Newcombe House, Kensington Forum Hotel, 100 West Cromwell Road) and, following this call -n, even by the secretary of state (Newcombe House).

It is becoming increasingly difficult for residents to understand, who is making the decision, and why applications are allowed that local residents and the council have

opposed. As can be seen, the mayor's main interest is achieving more genuinely affordable housing and gives less priority to managing the height of tall buildings.

London Plan

Every new Mayor of London wants to leave their mark and establish their priorities, which means that they want a new London Plan that expresses their own vision for how London should develop. However, the process from start to final adoption of the plan often takes years.. Sadiq Khan's new London Plan will not be approved before the purdah when the shutters come down for the Mayoral and GLA elections on 7 May 2020. We will have to wait until after the elections.

The main issues in the new plan for London boroughs generally arise from pressure to provide much more new housing which will increase the density of developments. There is less concern about where the development is proposed and more about these developments ensuring more housing on the site than previously envisaged.

There is equally a problem with housing targets for Opportunity Areas, for Kensington, especially Kensal, Earl's Court and, just northwest of the borough, the Old Oak Opportunity Area. There is considerable concern minimum housing targets have become unrealistic due to significant changes in local circumstances. Earl's Court/West Kensington OA is reduced in size. Cargiant has pulled out of the Old Oak development. A Crossrail station for Kensal remains a dream. Development activity can be halted if major public transport improvements fail to come forward.

The implications for Kensington and Chelsea of the revised London Plan include a much-reduced target from 733 net additional homes per year to 488, reflecting the lack of sites and pressure created by the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The final target has been further reduced to 448 net additional units per year. The government and the GLA are focusing on how many additional homes are completed. However delivering additional housing is not just about granting planning permission, but ensuring developments are actually built.

Another change was to the policy on tall buildings. Rather than identifying where tall buildings should be concentrated, it states this should be left to boroughs to decide. In practice, however, where the council has refused a scheme, especially Kensington Forum Hotel and 100 West Cromwell Road, the mayor has overruled the Local Plan's tall building policy.

RBKC's Local Plan

After the examination in public of the draft Local Plan in late autumn 2017, the amended Local Plan went into limbo. Following the Grenfell tragedy there was considerable pressure to change the tone, to abandon some proposals to redevelop council housing estates and to make further changes to the housing chapter. The government, declined to release the document until it incorporated these changes and the council committed to an early review. Last summer, following agreement with Grenfell United, the secretary of state released the plan, and it was adopted by the council in September, with agreement the review would start immediately, and a revised plan be adopted within three years.

The society welcomed this breakthrough. It meant that the entire plan could be reviewed instead of the previous piecemeal slicing. Further changes to policies or new

policies altogether could be incorporated including housing, tall buildings and managing the impact on local communities of traffic, air quality and noise caused by construction. There is a need to strengthen the policy on protecting low-value social and community uses from high-value uses such as housing.

The clock is already ticking for the three-year deadline for adopting a new revised plan.

Mayoral Developments

Mayoral decisions

In 2019 we had more than our fair share of major development battles. All involved the Mayor of London's intervention and, in one case, the secretary of state.

Newcombe House

This project in Notting Hill Gate has been dragging on for years. The original application was refused and following a public inquiry, the appeal was dismissed, but on the sole ground the inspector considered more affordable housing could be achieved. The developer produced a second scheme, as advised, which increased affordable housing. The Planning Committee again refused the application subject to the mayor's views. The GLA called in the application and, working with the developer, increased the density. The new scheme which the mayor proposed to allow, was subject to agreeing the conditions. However, before the agreements could be finalised the secretary of state called in the case for his own decision.

The latest iteration, therefore, was a public inquiry in November 2019. At that the society maintained its support for the scheme on the basis that it produced significant public benefits, which outweighed the harm that it might cause.

One of our trustees, Peter Mishcon, gave evidence on behalf of the Kensington Society and the Ladbroke Association.

The inspector has indicated she is unlikely to issue her recommendation before March. However the secretary of state's decision could take another couple of months.

Kensington Forum Hotel

This tall, mid-1970s hotel dominates a wide area from Kensington Gardens to the Thames. The current building was proposed to be replaced by two very tall buildings, 30 storeys and 22 storeys, resulting in buildings of double the volume, the tallest in the borough. Despite RBKC officers supporting the scheme, the Planning Committee refused consent on 27 September 2018, after hearing from a team of residents' groups, including the society. This decision was subject to the views of the mayor.

The mayor called in the case in November 2018. Again the developer working with the GLA agreed a change in number and type of affordable housing, increasing it to 62 units, all





Proposed Ashburn Place façade – east side



Ashburn Gardens façade – existing west side

genuinely affordable housing. This increase in units would be achieved by adding a further two storeys on the southern end of the seven-storey podium facing Courtfield Road.

The revised scheme was presented at a mayoral hearing on 21 June. The objectors, including the council and a team of residents' associations from both sides of Cromwell Road and the society, were all allowed to speak. However, it was clear from the mayor's questions his overriding concern was to secure an increase in affordable housing rather than the impact of tall buildings and the resulting harm to the conservation area.

Immediately following the hearing, the mayor approved the scheme and signed the S106 the very same day. This quick action was most likely due to the secretary of state's obvious interest in the scheme. As a result of this underhand approach and the manner in which the scheme was approved, the council decided to challenge the decision through judicial review.

On 27 September a High Court judge allowed the application for judicial review. The case will now go to court in April. If that case succeeds, the mayor's permission would be quashed. We fear he will then make the same decision. If the secretary of state decides to call in the scheme, that could lead to a public inquiry.

Heythrop College

Heythrop College, behind Kensington Square, has been used for the last 160 years chiefly for education. The last being Heythrop College. It is the last surviving large educational site in the borough and is protected by the council's policy to retain such sites for social and community uses.

In consultation with the locals, the council produced an excellent planning brief for site in 2016, emphasising the low-value social and community use to be protected from

high-value uses, such as housing. The brief noted that the site has very restricted access through South End, and future use should be education. If allowed, extra-care housing could complement the main use for the site, and a modest amount of residential use might be appropriate if it enabled the main use to continue.

The site was sold to Westbourne Capital in 2017, which produced a scheme for an enlarged site by proposing a £58million deck spanning the underground lines south of High Street Kensington Station. The proposal would remove all education uses, proposing instead 146 units of luxury “extra-care housing”, with no affordable housing and refurbishing of listed buildings facing Kensington Square. The “extra care” units were to sell for £3 million for one bedroom and £5 million for two bedrooms.

The first application was withdrawn in April 2018, and a new revised scheme produced in September 2018. This new application was much the same as the first, with 142 extra-care flats and a wide range of facilities. In addition, three buildings on Kensington Square would be converted into large private single houses, which in turn would require the creation of five intermediate affordable flats (80% market rate) by the South End entrance to the site. No affordable housing was provided.

The developer had persuaded the council this extra-care housing scheme should be classified as a social and community use and did not therefore require affordable housing. The society, many of the local RAs and the mayor did not agree and required the applicant to provide a significant proportion of affordable housing.

Main changes from the first scheme related to the height of some of the new buildings. Despite strong objections by the society, other local associations and about 180 local residents, the planning committee granted consent on 27 November 2018.

The Mayor of London in April 2019 directed RBKC to refuse consent citing the lack of sufficient affordable housing. Westbourne Capital appealed in May. This was an unusual case, in that the council was effectively supporting the applicant at the public inquiry, while the GLA, with the society, together with the local resident associations and a resident of South End, Mrs Lisle-Mainwaring, supported refusal.

The society, along with local RAs, disputed the appellant's contention this luxurious retirement housing could replace the loss of social and community use, such as education. We also opposed the harm that the development would have on



Heythrop College

listed buildings and the conservation area, the loss of about 30 mature trees and a sports facility.

The other major objection was to the impact of the development on the local area with all traffic access only possible via South End. The five-year project, which would see 100 lorry trips per day in the peak period, would have a huge impact on the narrow residential roads through which they would pass.

The inspector reports in late March.

This case is a fundamental challenge as to how serious the council is in protecting our remaining social and community uses, how strongly it pushes for affordable housing, as well as recognising that while a CTMP seeks to manage traffic it cannot remove the problems caused by the sheer volume of the traffic generated.

100 West Cromwell Road

On 5 February 2019 a planning application was submitted for a large and complex development proposal for the Tesco site on Cromwell Road.

The proposal was for a wall of seven buildings along the railway and the tall marker building of 22 storeys above the podium on the corner, a feature of previous proposals for the site. The buildings are designed to be predominantly residential with 427 units, as well as community and leisure facilities. The application increased the height and volume of the previous approved scheme. (The seven buildings were not part of the former scheme)

There were approximately fifty objections, including the Kensington Society, ESSA and the Earls Court Society, with Historic England expressing concerns over the impact of the tall buildings on both listed buildings in the area and on the conservation areas which surround the site. The council refused the application mainly opposing the excessive scale, the poor quality of the public space and the feeling of enclosure.

The mayor called it in and, again without any meaningful public consultation, made changes to the proposal. The height of the tallest building in the south west corner of the site fronting West Cromwell Road, was increased to 29 storeys above the podium, which, at 112m, would become the tallest building in the borough. There would also be increases in the height of the other buildings and a reduction in the quantity of commercial space and some other changes. However he did insist on some benefits by adding a gym and swimming



pool promised to be open to the public, a simple give-away.

The Kensington Society discovered that within the documents there were no fire safety plans. The floor plan for the building was the same core as Grenfell Tower core with one staircase, and no fire lobbies although it did have two lifts.

We retained through our own funds a building regulations consultant to review and comment on the fire safety measures. He produced a report damning the lack of information. Particularly he noted the lack of a sprinkler system and no means of fire control on the west side of the seven buildings facing the rail line.. Nick Ross presented the Kensington Society's objection and the GLA responded that, of course, there was a fire strategy but had not felt it necessary to be submitted. Most important was confirmation that all buildings will be fitted with fire protection sprinklers.

Subsequently the mayor revised his Local Plan fire policy D12 which has incorporated the recommendations of our building regulations consultant.

Another cause for concern remains, however. The child play area, minimal in the first application and revised in the second application was to be on the podium, accessible via lifts from the parking below and open to the public at all times. This is not a safe area for children. The sad issue is that planning policies have not caught up with current child safety issues. The developer replied it will be overlooked and it meets current policy which may only change after a child is in danger. We will continue to push for changes in the policies relating to planning in development with proper child safety.

It appears the mayor has had his way again and a taller, denser and meaner development will be built in Kensington. At a 'representation' meeting on 3 February Jules Pipe, the deputy mayor, considered the application and the content of the conditions including the revised and improved fire safety regulations. Consent was granted.

2019 into 2020

South Kensington Station

The latest plans for development around South Kensington station were on display 27–28 February at Imperial College, showing progress since last summer. The previous plans were criticised as significantly taller and bulkier than the 2016 development brief.



TfL/Native Land's proposal for enlarged Bullnose.

The latest plans are more developed, yet have made only minor concessions to our concerns. The Bullnose previously six storeys has been reduced by one storey. It still dwarfs the original arcade and bull's blood tiled Piccadilly Line building. The other buildings, especially along Pelham Street, have increased in size and height. We accept the need for development around the station, however still have strong reservations about the current proposals.

Segregated cycle lane – along Holland Park Avenue

In May TfL announced plans for a two-way segregated cycle lane between Kensington Palace Gate and Shepherd's Bush. This was part of its wider plans for a network of cycle 'super highways', already partially built, which when finished is proposed to have 12 highways converging on central London like the spokes of a wheel. The Notting Hill Gate/Holland Park Avenue route is part of the run between central London and Acton. TfL's published budget for the scheme is £42m.

There is no denying that the more people can be persuaded to walk or cycle, the better for the environment and as well as for health.

As we know from reports of accidents, cyclists are vulnerable to collisions with motor vehicles as well as with pedestrians. A segregated lane may be argued for cyclist safety. There was, however, immediate and vociferous opposition to the TfL plans from people



living on or around the chosen route. Some did support it and were critical of what they saw as nimbyism.

The Kensington Society supports cycling and approached this consultation with an open mind. However, it soon became clear the scheme would cause numerous problems for walkers and users of public transport and was also likely to have perverse environmental effects. It would have meant removing a bus stop in Holland Park Avenue and putting other bus stops on 'islands' between the pavement and the cycle lane. Pedestrians crossing the road would have to negotiate both the cycle lane and the road. This terrified many people, especially the elderly, because of the speed of cyclists down Holland Park Avenue and the propensity of rogue cyclists to shoot red lights.

Kensington Society trustees decided the society should arrange a public meeting at which residents could question TfL. We received full cooperation from the council. TfL was initially reluctant, insisting that it would come only if written questions were submitted in advance. In the end, however, it agreed to take all questions from the floor.

The large attendance of over 400 people packed the Great Hall. After the initial presentations by TfL, before questions could start, the recently appointed RBKC lead member for transport, Councillor Johnny Thalassites, made the surprise announcement that council had decided, because of the strong views of residents and businesses, that it would not support the scheme. This was met with uproarious applause from the audience, but to the visible fury of the TfL speakers, who appear to have had no warning. The whole tone of the meeting changed though it did not prevent many pertinent questions to TfL. Unfortunately, the meeting was badly chaired (by a professional nominated by TfL who we later discovered was a cyclist lobbyist) and ended in some disorder.

Update: where we are now

TfL did consult the wider public and, said it had amended the scheme. At City Hall on 27 January Will Norman, the mayor's first Walking and Cycling Commissioner, presented the five changes, along with what were said to be the consequences. The meeting was attended by representatives of the society and local residents' associations (the liaison group) along the route. Mark Chetwynd, Chief Transport Policy Officer, James McCool, Transport Planning Manager, and Sue Foster, Interim Director of Planning and Place, from the council also attended as did representatives from Better Streets for Kensington.

The liaison group was asked by TfL to consult their members and respond. The Kensington Society sent out an alert with another by 1 March.

On 6 February, the liaison group met Councillor Johnny Thalassites and Mark Chetwynd to explain that the five proposed changes made no difference to the problems with the scheme: compounded rat runs, increased bus delays and congestion, while levels of pollution in key areas were increased by 3%.

Councillor Thalassites said he would like to follow residents' wishes, however he needed the organisations to collect their members' opinions.

The five changes to the original scheme, according to TfL, meet some of the concerns expressed in the consultation, but insisted each had a trade-off factor. The changes are:

- Abandon the ban on the left-hand turn at Royal Crescent. Trade-off: no pedestrian crossing at Royal Crescent.
- Retain the Norland Square bus stop. Trade-off: buses stop the lane of traffic for (TfL

estimate) 26 seconds, causing additional congestion.

- Retain the parking and delivery bays outside Holland Park shops. Trade-off: one fewer pedestrian crossing in Holland Park Avenue than planned.
- Retain two mature plane trees on Holland Park Avenue at the bottom of Campden Hill Square. Trade-off: no right-hand turn from Holland Park Avenue onto Ladbroke Grove.
- Retain all but three of the trees on Notting Hill Gate's central reservation. Trade-off: no parking bays or tradesman's drop off on the south side of Notting Hill Gate opposite Leyland builders' merchant.

The liaison group agreed that, despite the proposed changes, the scheme still brings too many disbenefits to other road-users and to the local community. It is still unacceptable. The £42m would be better spent in other ways such as step-free stations. In particular, the revised TfL plans have not addressed the main issues raised by residents, as the proposed cycleway would still result in:

- **Less healthy streets** due to increased congestion, pollution and noise – TfL predicts considerable diversion of vehicles down neighbouring residential streets, which would increase pollution in those streets too.
- **Road safety risks** as pedestrians would need to cross fast-flowing cycle lanes to reach island bus stops and shops; pedestrians and cyclists would have to share pavements where the cycleway crosses from HPA south side to Royal Crescent pavement; and cyclists travelling at speed down Holland Park Avenue would risk colliding with slower cyclists and people entering from side roads.
- **A worse environment** for bus users and pedestrians (in particular the less mobile) due to fewer bus stops and greater gaps between them, and increased bus journey times in a congested single lane traffic lane; and also due to the relocation of pedestrian crossings, narrower pavements, a reduced number of bus stops, and unpopular island bus stops.
- A risk of more **shop closures** as customers avoid the increased congestion, and shops in Notting Hill struggle to receive deliveries. The retail environment is, as we all know, extremely fragile and construction lasting a year or so could well put more shops out of business.
- The cutting down of even **three established trees** reduces the wind-break effects and carbon-absorbing benefits the trees were planted for.
- There could also be problems with the **loss of a major arterial route** out of London, linking with the M40 and A316/M3. The Oxford Tube bus, for instance, could well decide to change its route if congestion is too bad. Drivers coming in from the west may well divert down Kensington High Street, increasing congestion there.

TfL's research indicates the increased use for segregated lanes is merely 3%. Nor has it encouraged any significant increase in "family" cycling or cycling by the less well off.

Is it worth the "trade-offs"? We think not.

So what happens next? RBKC is the highway authority for the roads in question, so TfL needs its agreement. We must continue our pressure on our own councillors, the cabinet members, our new MP, and officers. The mayor does have reserve powers to take over as highway authority, but these have never been used and use of them now would

be very controversial. While we await events we must still be active in opposing this scheme.

In the meantime, we have been collecting our members' opinion of the changes. All oppose the scheme. There is an election soon and though the Kensington Society is apolitical we are very much against many of the mayor's use of his powers. Let's hope he does listen to the local opposition and is not driven by the cycle lobby.

Telephone kiosks

After years of more and more new digital advertising screens attached to telephone kiosks, this scourge has been brought under control, but very few of the old redundant telephone kiosks have been removed.

Since Westminster City Council established that both the telephone kiosk and the advertisement screen need separate permissions there has been a slowdown. As a result, applications have almost all been refused and, after appealing, have lost. In 2019 a total of 50 appeals in the borough, of which 30 were in Kensington, failed on appeal.

This is good news not only for us – particularly in Kensington High Street and the King's Road – but also for the Planning Inspectorate who a year ago had over 1,000 appeals for these kiosks in their backlog of appeals. The few telephone “column” applications by BT Interlink have been granted consent on condition that redundant kiosks be removed.

Unfortunately, the removals have not happened. About a year ago BT put notices in various telephone kiosks in the Kensington High Street area saying they would be removed, but they are still there today. Similarly, the three kiosks opposite Gloucester Road station are out of order. If the council is serious about revitalising our high streets they need to ensure they are removed. We will be following this up with the excellent enforcement team.



Opportunities and the Future

Our local Opportunity Areas – one step forwards two steps back in 2019

There are a three major Opportunity Areas in and on the borders of Kensington, amongst 29 such areas designated by the Mayor of London as part of the London Plan. These are the planned locations for a large part of the mayor's housing ambitions in his new London Plan, and as sites where housing densities can be ‘intensified’.

The London Plan fixes ‘indicative capacity targets’ for new homes and jobs in each of the Mayoral Opportunity Areas. The targets set for the three locations most affecting Kensington are:

- Earls Court/West Kensington 6,500 new homes and 5,000 new jobs

- Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) area 25,500 new homes and 65,000 new jobs
- Kensal Canalside 3,500 new homes and 2,000 new jobs

While these figures are badged as ‘indicative’ targets, once included in the London Plan they become fixtures. As more detailed Local Plans are put together by the boroughs (and by Mayoral Development Corporations) targets often prove unrealistic or at the mercy of events, as has been the case in two of the above areas.

Earls Court and West Kensington

A similar situation has arisen at Earls Court/West Kensington. After a decade of masterplanning along with demolition of the Earls Court exhibition centre, the Capital and Counties redevelopment stalled. The value of Capco’s holding at Earls Court is said to have dropped in value from £800m in 2015 to under £400m by June 2019.

The 25 acre site was acquired in November 2019 by Delancey. While the site has an outline planning consent dating back to 2013, Delancey now promises a ‘new approach’.

As part of this new way forward, Hammersmith & Fulham Council agreed to refund the £100 million which Capco paid in 2009 to acquire the West Kensington and Gibbs Green housing estates as part of the original site assembly. A decade-long



threat of demolition and decanting has been lifted from the tenants and leaseholders of these two estates.

It remains early days for that part of the Opportunity Area that lies in Kensington. Meanwhile a large tract of cleared land continues to lie vacant in central London.

Kensal Canalside

Destined for 3,500 new homes and 2,000 new jobs, most of this smaller Opportunity Area has never been developed. Bounded by train tracks, a canal and a cemetery, the site has always been almost inaccessible by road. The large Sainsbury store located on its eastern edge at Ladbroke Grove is the only area of activity.

The council commissioned a pre-feasibility study for a Kensal 'Eco-Quarter' as long ago as 2009 and has now set up a dedicated website, with a series of online polls to seek views from those living and working in the surrounding area. There is little clarity as yet to the type of housing that will emerge. The target is at the top end of three options that RBKC considered back in 2013 and high densities result. A mix of towers and 8-12 storey blocks looks inevitable, built at densities new to the Royal Borough.

Vehicle access to the site remains an issue, as does the availability of public transport for incoming residents. While the council lobbied hard for a Crossrail station at Portobello North it is several years since this was last on the agenda. There are no roads that join the western part of Kensal Canalside to Old Oak, across the West London Line. With plans now abandoned for Old Oak Park, it seems unlikely that funding for a new east/west connection will be found.

Old Oak and Park Royal

The OPDC is a Mayoral Development Corporation and planning authority for parts of Hammersmith, Ealing and Brent. The OPDC area lies just to the west of North Kensington and includes the site of the planned Old Oak Common Station where HS2 and Crossrail will meet at a new rail interchange.

Previous annual reports and newsletters have covered the faltering progress made by this development corporation since it started life in 2015. In December 2019 OPDC announced it was abandoning its proposals to acquire and regenerate the 45 acre landholding owned by Cargiant at Hythe Road/Scrubs Lane, in North Hammersmith.

These major sites at Old Oak North were to have been the first phase of significant housebuilding in the OPDC area. The abandonment has come as a relief to many. There are planning consents already granted on a small handful of towers along Scrubs Lane which (if built out) will become an isolated legacy of the corporation's earlier ambitions.

Two steps back

All in all, the events of 2019 have demonstrated the challenges faced by the Mayor of London, the boroughs, and London's development industry. Is part of the problem that 'masterplans' become over-ambitious and too grandiose? Might there be forms of low cost or 'meanwhile' housing, with a 10-year lifespan, which could have already been built and occupied at all three of these Opportunity Areas? Should the mayor and London's planning authorities take a more imaginative approach to regeneration?

Such ideas were suggested to the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation back in 2015/16, and were slapped down. The proposals were to use the speed and

flexibility of England's most localist layer of the English planning system – neighbourhood planning – to get some early development in place. The Earls Court Society has had similar thoughts. Post Grenfell, some North Kensington community activists looked at the potential for short-term housing on the unused land at Kensal Canalside.

For many a young Londoner (or one of the growing army of HS2 construction workers) modular low rise housing with a 10-year lifespan could offer a preferable alternative to the options of a £700 a week flatshare, an HMO shared by a dozen people, or a long commute. Their housing priorities may well be a basic built form, good wifi and internet connectivity, a bike store outside and a food stall around the corner. Permanence of their dwelling, or of their immediate surroundings, are lower order issues.

This is how the original local communities arrived and grew in these parts of North Kensington, Hammersmith, and Acton – in housing built by the same workforces who dug out the Grand Union Canal and laid the tracks for the Great Western Railway.

If the Dutch can do self-build housing at scale, why cannot we? We plough on instead with a housing market and planning system widely recognised as dysfunctional. There is little or no chance of 'favelas for the 21st century' bringing new life to these Opportunity Areas any time soon. Another stack of planning documents and developer/consultant reports will be emerging instead. The Kensington Society will review progress on the ground in a year's time.

The Grenfell Public Inquiry

Phase Two

The Grenfell Public Inquiry re-opened in January for its second phase but almost immediately ran into delays. Most of the companies at risk of being found culpable of failings leading to fire joined in legal submissions arguing for blanket indemnity from criminal prosecution from the attorney general, before their employees would be willing to give evidence.

The inquiry's chairman Sir Martin Moore Bick reluctantly agreed. As he said in responses to Mike Mansfield QC (acting for the bereaved and survivors) the law gives witnesses the right not to incriminate themselves and, to the extent that it can be invoked, allows them a measure of control over the course of events.

Former attorney general Geoffrey Cox did not decide on this request for an indemnity. His replacement Suella Braverman is expected to pronounce on the subject in early March, to allow inquiry hearings to resume.

To its credit, Kensington and Chelsea council did not support the indemnity request from manufacturers, construction firms, and the architects. Most of the written submissions from these firms attribute responsibility to another party in the complex web of entities involved in the project.

The council's latest written submissions make two



main points. On the one hand RBKC is keen to establish that in legal terms the Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) was an arms-length management organisation and “effectively a managing agent” with full responsibility for carrying out the refurbishment project.

On the other hand, the council has been forthright in acknowledging significant failings by its own Building Control team. In a few short sentences in its written submissions, the council accepts its staff failed to have relevant procedures, to chase up drawings, keep adequate records and (most significantly) to identify that the cladding materials were not of limited combustibility and had been installed with insufficient or no cavity barriers.

As the inquiry moves slowly onwards recent government data has revealed that more than 21,000 households are still living in flats wrapped in the aluminium composite panel cladding that allowed the flames to spread so rapidly at Grenfell Tower. The figures published show that of 450 high-rise residential buildings in England with combustible cladding, 315 as yet have had no works to remove it, with 76 of these buildings having no plans in place to do so. In many cases, no solution is emerging as to who meets costs of replacement, leaving leaseholder in unsaleable properties.

Lessons learnt from these major applications

Pre-Application Advice

We have been increasingly concerned for a number of years about the use of the pre-application advice process. Pre-application advice by officers often leads to a commitment to make a positive recommendation before the officers have any contact with residents. We have seen, especially for large schemes, pre-application advice encouraging developments which the public opposes. It is an exclusive discussion between officers and developers. The officers have no idea what the public expects nor are they aware of the local objections which are based upon local knowledge. Their report on the application therefore often appears to have been written more as a marketing brochure than a critique of the development.

This leads to applicants believing that this promise of support will be delivered in their report.

Most refusals are appealed and, on the strength of the officer's report, the developers have successfully used the reports as arguments to support their appeal. Most are allowed. This process has been highly unsatisfactory for all concerned, bringing intense frustration. Appeals are expensive for every party, especially for the council with excessive officer time at high cost.

We were pleased that Councillor Spalding brought the issue to the Environment Select Committee last June and it has been highlighted in the Statement of Community Involvement adopted on 12 February. It is recognised as an issue where improvements are needed to achieve early engagement with the community and endorsed by the Lead Member for Planning and Transport, councillor Johnny Thalassites. The document does not really clarify the nature of this early engagement and it appears a solution has not been fully found. This practice must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Tall Buildings – do we need a stronger policy in RBKC?

Is the council serious about limiting tall buildings in Kensington and Chelsea?

The tallest buildings in this borough, were built in the 1960s and 1970s and most of these were for social housing, such as Trellick Tower (98m/32 storeys), Grenfell Tower (67m/24 storeys), and a cluster in North Kensington (Whitstable House, Frinstead House, Markland House and Dixon House, all 58m/21 storeys).

In addition, a small number of other tall buildings also date from the same period, including Kensington Forum Hotel (84m/27storeys) the product of a government scheme to encourage hotel building in the early 1970s, and Campden Hill Towers (54m/18 storeys) and Newcombe House both the product of a GLC road widening scheme in Notting Hill Gate.

The Greater London Development Plan (GLDP) 1975 adopted a policy identifying areas where tall buildings would be inappropriate, those that would be sensitive to tall buildings, and those where such buildings would be inappropriate. This policy was applied to conservation areas, and restricted construction in Kensington and Chelsea, since 75% of the borough is covered by conservation areas.

The first challenge to the policy was the application for two towers on either side of Chelsea Creek. The one in Chelsea (85m/25 storeys) was refused by the council, supported by the mayor (Ken Livingstone), and recommended for refusal by the inspector, – the secretary of state approved the scheme. This tower is currently approaching completion.



With growing pressure for tall buildings, the council produced a supplementary planning document in 2010 called Height of Buildings, which like the GLDP classified the borough as before. The only area considered appropriate for tall buildings was close to Latimer Road Station. The society considered that the wording of the plan was too permissive and, at the next opportunity (in the 2015 Consolidated Local Plan), succeeded in having the policy deleted.

Despite this, proposals came forward for Newcombe House and now the Kensington Forum Hotel which challenge our tall buildings policy.

London Plan – tall buildings policy

The London Plan covering the whole of London, has addressed the issue of tall buildings in various editions since 2004. The London Plans, under Boris Johnson, preferred a “plan-led approach” – identifying sites in local plans. It produced a proliferation of approvals for tall buildings across London. The good news during that time was that there were no proposals in Kensington and Chelsea.

It was hoped that when Sadiq Khan became mayor that this approach would change

In fact, he has continued to support tall buildings through mayoral call in the same way as in the Johnson/Lister era.

The latest London Plan, likely to be adopted later this year, no longer suggests locations for tall buildings. It does however have more detailed criteria for their assessment. The recent examples however demonstrate the mayor's single-minded pursuit of increased provision of affordable housing, with little consideration of the impact of tall buildings.

Change at the Council

In 2017, following the Grenfell fire, the new leadership team at the council committed to a programme of change and improvement in its dealings with local residents.

A 'governance review' was undertaken in 2018. The council's management structure was overhauled with a number of previously separate departments brought together under a new team of five executive directors reporting to chief executive Dr Barry Quirk.

Over the past year, this programme of change has continued. Keeping up with change in an organisation as large and complex as RBKC is never easy. Below are some aspects of the council's new way of working that we think will be of interest to members of the society.

Organisational changes

- The directorate headed by Sue Harris as Executive Director of Environment and Communities brings together for the first time most of the council's functions and services relevant to our work on planning and amenity in the borough.
- These include planning, transport, environment, waste, parks, 'cleaner and greener' services, culture, community engagement and community safety.
- Housing remains part of a separate department – albeit that planning and housing staff are said to be working more closely together.
- Some of these services that were previously shared or 'Bi Borough' with Hammersmith (such as transport) have now reverted to being under sole RBKC control.

One of the points raised by many residents during the governance review was the difficulty people encountered in finding out who is responsible for which council services. The council now publishes more details and an organisation chart on its website (search under How the Council Works).

Comings and goings

Interim Director of Planning Sue Foster finished her stint at the council at the end of March. The new permanent Director of Planning and Place arrived at the same time, moving from a similar role at LB Newham.

The council's recently appointed Head of Culture (Verena Cornwall) has been consulting residents on a new culture plan for the borough. 'Place' is also part of Verena's brief, including co-ordination of RBKC actions to bring more economic and cultural vitality to Kensington High Street.

A new Director of Community Engagement will be heading up the team of staff who carry out consultation and outreach work from the town hall. As part of the same directorate as the planning department, there will be more joint working on major

planning consultations. As covered elsewhere in this annual report, the council has redrafted and republished its Statement of Community Involvement on planning matters.

The planning department underwent a significant restructure at the start of the year. The teams working on planning policy and on enforcement have been strengthened, and the various groups of staff within Sue Harris's directorate who work on enforcement issues are (gradually) becoming more integrated in their operations (i.e. planning, noise nuisance, parking, street scene).

Governance and decision-making

Following its Governance Review, RBKC made significant changes to its arrangements for scrutiny of council decisions, before and after decisions are formally made. The society has always argued for early consultation with residents on initiatives or changes to the way the council works. There is now much more consultation activity, although this has yet to become as co-ordinated and consistent across departments as it should be. Clashes of consultation events are not unknown.

A new set of committee arrangements for scrutiny were introduced in summer 2019. A central Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets a work programme for the year and undertakes certain statutory reviews of council activities, such as budget scrutiny and the borough's crime and disorder strategy.

This central overview committee also allocates priorities for scrutiny by four new bodies, which the council has called select committees. These cover adult social care, environment, housing and communities, and family services. They operate more like their parliamentary equivalent, and can issue calls for evidence and include outside experts in reviewing specific topics. A recent session on palliative care in the borough involved a wide range of NHS staff and care providers, answering questions from a large audience of the public.

The changeover from the previous system of scrutiny committees was not supported by the council's 13 Labour councillors. The winding up of the Grenfell Scrutiny Committee and its replacement by a Grenfell Community Assembly was a specific concern. As result the Labour group on the council decided not to take up places on the new select committees or on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Codes of conduct

The Kensington Society was influential in suggesting areas where the council's Code of Conduct on Planning needed tightening up. This code applies to councillors and officers. The role of planning officers in working closely with developers on planning performance agreements and pre-application advice, prior to drafting recommendations to committee, was raised as a concern by many of our members. The potential for officers to become over-committed to the successful passage of a planning application is always a risk.

The society proposed wording to clarify roles for councillors and officers on pre-application discussions, lobbying, site visits and offers of hospitality. The revised code forms part of the council's revised constitution adopted in July 2019.

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Reports from AFFILIATED SOCIETIES, 2018

ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ACRA)

And the Beat Goes on ...

As during the past several years, ACGRA's main efforts in 2019 have been directed towards rebuffing attempts by the Kensington Forum Hotel to build a huge Hong Kong style skyscraper of forbidding and wholly disproportionate dimensions in place of the existing hotel tower. You may recall that the project was refused planning consent by RBKC, but before you could blink was called in by the London Mayor. After a hearing in June 2019 the Mayor overturned the original council decision. The matter has now gone to Judicial Review, on the grounds that the Mayor acted improperly, which means that currently I cannot give you further details, as it is sub judice. However, you will probably have seen the excellent article on the project in the recent Ken Soc newsletter. May I take this opportunity to thank RBKC, the Kensington Society and our neighbouring RAs and Amenity Societies for their staunch support in our hour of need!

Other projects in our neighbourhood include a variety of matters:

Pushing for full enforcement on a Grade II listed building that was once a showpiece of high-Victorian architecture, documented in the RIBA Archives, and that then had all the original features ripped out (without any consent!) and then had a large chunk of its roof chopped out and now sports a large roof terrace .

Other more mundane issues include:

Where will the new electric car chargers go (loss of respark)? Do any consented BTjunction boxes have freehold rights? How can we keep the world free from more out-sized LED advertising panels? How to curb the worst excesses of short-let tourism? Even small changes can bit by bit change neighbourhoods (e.g. installing polished stainless steel and plexi-glass guard rails on a flat roof in a mews street that is otherwise still almost pristinely original ...) Ahhhhhhh ... an RA's work is never done !

Friederike Maeda, Chairman



THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

During the present century the Boltons conservation area has seen many basement 'digs', but it came as a surprise to the association recently to have our first set of three properties in a row (in Cresswell Place) potentially being 'basemented' contemporaneously (two having already received planning approval and the third currently going through the application process). This has necessitated the association looking holistically at the relevant CTMPs, to discuss with applicants how deliveries/spoil removal can be choreographed so that affected neighbours can use their front doors and garages. It also adds a whole additional dimension to party wall/escrow payment issues.

The association's wish to promote a joined-up stance to basement construction (and other major works – such as, lowering the level of back gardens) has meant that in respect of every significant CTMP in our covered area we now seek to host meetings between the applicants and affected neighbours concerned – so that potential/ongoing developments nearby can be taken into account at the same time. For example, the Cresswell Place basement digs require consideration in light of the major applications under way in respect of 15/30 The Boltons and 1 Harley Gardens, together with the work currently in progress at 82 and 84 Drayton Gardens. We seek to ensure that ingress and egress routes adopt a common 'shipping lane', as opposed to running the risk of large vehicles meeting each other going in opposite directions down a residential street.

Although it is a time-intensive process to set up and host such consultation meetings, we feel that the results can be highly beneficial – not just in terms of vehicle movements but also in promoting the adoption of protocols concerning no skips being left on the highway and the use of skinny conveyor gantries (thereby avoiding portakabins being placed on top of over-pavement gantries). For the first time ever, we have recently agreed a written undertaking with a basement applicant – which goes into considerably more detail than the CTMP concerned – covering the size of vehicle for deliveries/spoil removal and, indeed, the specific experience and reputation of the contractor that will carry out the works concerned.

The overall aim of course is to work with applicants to seek to ensure that development works will run smoothly and with due consideration for affected neighbours. The response to our CTMP initiative has been one of appreciation from applicants, planning consultants, building contractors and affected neighbours – based on the premise that intensive forethought at the CTMP stage can save having to resort to enforcement action as the works progress. We actually wish we had adopted this stance earlier, as there continue to be some troublesome development works whose CTMPs were put in place up to three years ago or even longer.

I would lastly mention that 2020 is the 50th anniversary of the association. We are hoping to mark the occasion suitably at our mid-summer garden party – held by kind permission of Rev Jenny Welsh in the church gardens of St Mary, The Boltons (Thursday 11 June 2020).

Calvin Jackson, Chairman



CLARENDON CROSS RA

During 2019 we felt some respite, as a community, from the exceptionally high number of construction sites that we had to endure in 2018. However, there are always those sites which consistently flout the byelaws and CTMP terms by allowing deliveries outside of permitted hours and we're still doubtful that the council's enforcement team have sufficient resources or teeth to serve meaningful sanctions on offenders, but things have definitely improved to a degree.

One refurbishment project that we were all delighted to see complete towards the end of 2019 was Julie's on Portland Road which reopened in November, just in time to celebrate its 50th anniversary. This iconic restaurant remains under the same ownership as when it first opened in 1969 and has been given an extensive, but sympathetic, make-over retaining the spirit and some of the key pieces of the original interior. The pedestrianised area between Julie's and the shops and galleries of Clarendon Cross has more of a buzz about it again, especially in the evenings.

The opening of Julie's coincided with the completion of some work carried out by the council to reduce the number of cyclists and motor cyclists using the pedestrian area as a short cut. CCRA co-ordinated a meeting with the relevant council officers, our Norland Councillor David Lindsay, business owners and residents to agree on the best solution to deter, or at least calm, the cyclists and motor cyclists, following a dangerous near miss when a young child was almost hit by a motor scooter. A combination of iron bollards and railings were put in place and, along with Julie's exterior tables and chairs, acting as a natural barrier, appear to have done the trick.

We are keen to work with the council and other bodies to encourage cycling and walking across the borough, especially by improving and promoting the cycle ways that run through our residential streets. However, in the early summer of last year we were shocked to learn of TfL's proposals to build a dual direction cycle lane along Holland Park Avenue as part of its CS10 route from Shepherds Bush to Notting Hill Gate. This would reduce the capacity of Holland Park Avenue to, effectively, one lane in each direction though it already suffers congestion at peak times.

It became clear the proposals were primarily designed to improve the lot of commuter cyclists. Having received a significant number of objections from local residents, Cllr Elizabeth Campbell, leader of the council, stated that it opposed the proposals at a special meeting at the Town Hall organised by the Kensington Society in June. TfL outlined some tweaks to the original proposals in response to the consultation feedback but our combined groups do not feel that they have really addressed the key issues and detrimental impacts on our communities so we continue to work together to stand up for our members to represent and communicate their views and concerns both with TfL and the council.

Carolyn Arnold, Chairman



EARL'S COURT GARDENS & MORTON MEWS

With much help from the RBKC Community Gardening Team, we have begun to spruce up the community planters at the western end of the road. They have proved effective at “designing out crime” in that corner although, unfortunately, they have also become convenient receptacles for rubbish and cigarette butts. It is hoped that, with a different planting scheme in summer 2020, we may be able to “design out” that problem as well.

We continue to face a persistent problem with overt drug dealing and taking in the alcove behind the NHS surgery’s rear exit. This is an opportunity for another straightforward “design out crime initiative” which we hope will be undertaken by the new NHS provider when they take over the GP surgery from Greenbrook in April.

Even in a climate of heightened awareness of toxic air, one local resident has been regularly using an open log brazier. The result is smoke and odour nuisance in neighbouring properties. We note with interest the Kensington Society’s mention of air pollution in the 2018-2019 annual and hope that greater powers will be granted to the Council to address this and other sources of air pollution.

Noise nuisance from busking outside the station has improved since the introduction of the Council’s “Busking and Street Entertainment Policy” although some continue to flout the regulations. With idling engines, it is hoped that the pilot programme of the new Community Safety Warden scheme (beginning in Earl’s Court in February) will help to tackle some of this anti-social behaviour in a faster and more flexible manner. Pavement waste disposal is an additional problem, exacerbated by the use of more properties as short term lets.

Through the Earl’s Court Society, we continue to resist applications for very late licenses as well as unsympathetic alterations to the shopfronts in Earl’s Court Road which has seen an increase in tacky, lurid sometimes flashing signs in a race to be the brightest and brashest.



EARL'S COURT VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

There have been some pleasant successes and some heavy challenges in the village.

After the hollyhocks were dug up in Wallgrave Road by an over-zealous council operative, the enforcement department authorised their Greening department to grow on some seedlings, which some grateful residents duly replanted, and the new hollyhocks are now growing well.

The flower baskets around the lamp posts in the roads are looking colourful. They are paid for by contributions from some of the residents.

There are two or three new basements carefully completed. However, one developer took the Council to appeal for refusing him post-dated planning permission. The works had been done differently from the original plans, and completed without permission. The Council won the appeal.

Our standards of litter free streets have been badly let down at one expensively refurbished block of short let bedrooms, which has the rear access in Redfield Lane. The seemingly very inadequate rubbish storage and collection has led to a rat infestation. We have similar concerns regarding another row of rental flats/rooms in Kenway Road. They have been bought by a Chinese outfit.

Graffiti is blighting nearby streets and an anonymously owned block. There is the shadowy presence of Drug pushers and their customers.

Philippa Seebohm, Chairman

THE FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK

It is pleasing that there is now a robust plan for conservation of Grade-1 listed Holland House. By the time you read this, we hope Planning and Listed Building consent will have been granted and the work scheduled for autumn 2020. The scope of work includes not only the roof and facing of the buildings but also the surface of the upper causeway above the café arches and structural repairs to the old dairy. The Friends lobbied over many years for this work to be carried out and are delighted that this fine example of Jacobean architecture is finally being treated with the respect it deserves.

The Florentine tiles in front of the café were conserved in 2019 and it is hoped that the tiles along the upper causeway will be conserved in 2020, both paid for by the Friends. The little tiled dairy, previously used as a café store room, has been handed back to the park with the intention of carrying out extensive conservation of the tiles, probably in 2021. Then it can be decided how best the room can be open for public viewing.

It is good news too that restoration has been carried out in the West Woodland Enclosure, which had been damaged by over use. Dead and dying trees have been removed and many new trees planted. Currently it looks bare and somewhat over- managed, but we hope spring





Holland House © Stale Eriksen

will bring new growth that will help screen the sight of the busy road. When ready, there will be managed access for small groups to learn about nature. Progress too on managing erosion, with three areas fenced off until the undergrowth re-establishes itself. Next on the list is to activate the long-term tree strategy so that we leave a legacy of a wonderful treescape.

The park currently has no information boards to explain the history of Holland House, those that lived there or what they did to create the elegant pleasure grounds, filled with fine sculptures and stonework. To fill this gap, the Friends now organise History and Decorative Art tours led by Blue Badge guides.

We commend the progress that has been made in the park over the last year and look forward with real hope that this excellent work can be continued so that the park remains a safe, green space for the enjoyment and wellbeing of future generations in our local community.

Jennie Kettlewell, Chairman



KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

I retired as chair of the KCRA last year, but was asked by my successor, Linda Hamilton, to represent the association in our campaign to stop the Heythrop College development. The final decision about this controversial project will be known by the time the Kensington Society's annual report is published. But whatever the result, I should like to highlight a troubling issue that the Heythrop saga all too clearly exposed – the lack of residents' involvement in large developments like this one.

Of course, developers claim to consult residents by exhibiting their plans and holding meetings. But by the time they do this, they have already spent months closeted with officers from the council's Planning Department, essentially coming to an agreement about what the officers feel the Planning Committee will approve. Residents play no part in this process. By the time residents get to look at the planned development, it is essentially a fait accompli. And if council officials approve the project, it is rare indeed for the Planning Committee to reject their advice. That was certainly our experience with the Heythrop Development. Despite 200 objections, the committee ignored residents' well-argued concerns.

Then, when the Mayor of London rejected the proposal and the developer appealed, the only way residents could get their case heard, was to raise the not inconsiderable funds that were needed to be represented at the public inquiry. And when it opened, what did we find? The council had instructed their planning officer not defend their decision. To make matters worse, a constant refrain from the developers when confronted by our arguments was to say that there was no problem, it had all been agreed with the planners!

Many of us in recent months have attended meetings where the council Leader and others have promised to 'listen' to residents. In the recently published Statement of Community Involvement, Cllr Thalassites says "As a council, we are committed to listening to local residents and businesses; and just the same, we are committed to ensuring that people have a real say in the planning decisions that matter to them in their local area." That was certainly not our experience with the Heythrop planning process. It is surely time that the RBKC started to deliver on this commitment.

John Gau, CBE

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

The association continues to be concerned over the seemingly unstoppable degradation of Brompton Road, much of which suffers from encroaching café monoculture, referred to in last year's report, and an increasing number of tatty tourist cum currency exchange shops – from Knightsbridge Green (within Westminster) to Brompton Square.

At one point a major part of what used to be the flagship Burberry store on the corner of Knightsbridge/Brompton Road



was occupied by one enormous tourist/currency exchange outlet. Thankfully this has gone, but the alarm bells rang when an application for a 714 seater restaurant on the same premises – basement, ground and 1st floor – was submitted. This has now been withdrawn and we wait to see the next proposal for this site.

In late December the topping out ceremony of 55-91 Knightsbridge (immediately to the east of the Park Tower Hotel) took place, and more recently the Knightsbridge Estate's K1 development along Brompton Road celebrated in similar fashion. This includes a new access to Knightsbridge Tube Station in Brompton Road (moved from the corner of Sloane Street) and step free access in Hooper's Court, opening up an old lift shaft to the station – no date yet for these two accesses to be opened.

Thanks to the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in December 2018, which covers the Westminster part of our area, CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds are available from all developments, and the association submits suitable projects to WCC for approval. So far these have been allocated to restoring heritage lamps/railings/pillars along Rutland Gate and the current project, restoring the Hole in the Wall (divides Rutland Mews West/Rutland Street).

Many of the residential roads were dug up during the year to allow the roll-out of high-speed fibre broadband, championed by the KA in 2016–17.

Fly-tipping is a current scourge in our neighbourhood, resulting from an increase in the number of short term rentals in the area. Current regulations allow councils to fine occupiers, but there is a legal block to fining an owner.

While making owners responsible for tenant's behavior is not a perfect solution it could help to redress this chronic problem. All 32 London boroughs have an interest in finding a remedy – or some partial mitigation – and a co-ordinated response, working through London Councils and the London Waste and Recycling Board, could avoid a plethora of different enforcement strategies.

Following important national consultations currently underway – Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) measures to accelerate consistency in recycling, plus an additional consultation by HM Treasury on a Plastic Packaging Tax – we look forward to their implementation – though sadly, this is unlikely before 2022.

We have responded to numerous consultations including on RBKC Third Local Implementation Plan, Busking and Street Entertainment, Westminster City Plan 20-19-40, the Royal Parks movement strategy, the Royal Albert Hall public realm improvements, Heathrow Airspace Questionnaire.

This year saw the inauguration of the Great Exhibition Road Festival, which welcomed some 60,000 visitors over a weekend in June. A return is planned for 2020.

Of major significance are the outline proposals for development in and around South Kensington Station which, since TfL's appointment of development partners Native Land, appear to be going completely against the Development Brief, published by TfL in 2016 following full consultation with local groups and RBKC.

Carol Seymour-Newton, Chairman



LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

Much of our committee's time has been spent on planning applications. A few years ago, our main concern was over applications for basements. That time has passed, and now we are mainly getting applications for extensions or extra floors as people try to enlarge their living space – often as an alternative to moving to a larger property with all the expense that that entails. We do not usually object when new dormer windows are proposed, so long as they are in character with our Victorian buildings and not too prominent when seen from the street. But we are concerned when extra floors are proposed on a terrace part of whose attraction lies in its regular roofline. Rear extensions are understandably popular, but they can pose problems with overlooking and disturbance to neighbours, especially if they are topped with an open terrace. This can be a particular problem in our many communal gardens.

One increasing problem is light pollution – from large plate glass windows on rear elevations; very strong lights to illuminate steps and doors; lights in gardens; and bright LED lights in shops. At present, the council has no policy on light pollution and we are urging it to develop one.

Like other associations along the route of the proposed segregated cycle way along Holland Park Avenue and Notting Hill Gate, we have been preoccupied with the possible effects on residents of extra traffic blocks, pollution and risks of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians. This is, however, a subject on which we are to some extent conflicted. The majority of our members, as far as we can tell, are appalled by the prospect of a separate cycle lane. A minority, however, are strongly in favour, arguing that cycling will need to play a much bigger transport role in the future and that cyclists can only really be safe in segregated lanes.

Sophia Lambert, Chairman

NEVERN SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2019 was a year of change. First of all the application for 100 West Cromwell Road opposite to the Conservation Area with a portal building of 22-storeys went up to 29-storeys and despite objections both to the council and the GLA Planning Committee, went through. This application will cause a loss of light and daylight to those who live near to the site but also impact on Longridge Road gardens.

Delancey have taken over the interests held by Capco in the Earl's Court Partnership on the 22-acres of the Earl's Court Exhibition sites and will be coming forward with a revised masterplan covering 44-acres. At present they have gone back to the drawing board and gone out to 45 architects with a view to refine down to five shortly. They plan a build-to-rent mixed



development model, which will change the demographics of the site and place increased pressures on the transport infrastructure in particular the tube station at Earl's Court. At present they are going through a "Listening Process" meeting and greeting the different RAs and stakeholder groups, so it will be interesting as to what they will come forward with. I hope that they take their lead from the Argent Development at Kings Cross and reuse existing buildings to promote better site integration and connectivity with the adjacent streets and area.

Linda Wade, Chairman

NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

At its AGM in June NCS celebrated its 50th anniversary and at the same time Clive Wilson – one of its founders – retired from the committee. Norland Conservation Area has much to thank Clive for who saw within its crumbling facades and dilapidated buildings an architectural integrity. This was in 1968 when he and his wife moved into Norland – and this part of town was considered quite beyond the pale. It certainly wasn't a Conservation Area. If it wasn't for Clive and other like minded pioneers many of the features that give NCA its particular character would not exist.

NCS has joined forces with the Kensington Society and other RAs to oppose TfL's proposed two-way dedicated cycle way – CS10. Removing one lane heading west from Notting Hill Gate down Holland Park Avenue to the roundabout (and onto Wood Lane) would bring congestion, increased pollution and rat runs through residential streets. TfL's own air, noise and traffic modelling state that this £42m proposal would not improve air quality, and in certain key sites in Norland CA pollution would increase by 3%. I cannot think of one NCS member that does not want healthier, safer streets but 99% of its members agree that this is not the way to achieve it.

The council has supported its residents in rejecting TfL's first plan resulting in another proposal with slight modifications. Do let our council know that we continue to object to TfL's proposed cycleway which brings only disbenefit to pedestrians, bus users and residents by emailing: TFLCycleRoute@rbkc.gov.uk

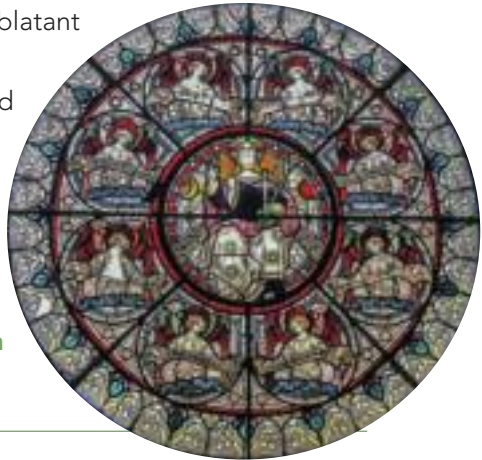
Mixed News on the Academy Pub. In December NCS and Kensington Society applied for the renewal of the Academy's ACV (Asset of Community Value). The application for renewal received over 120 submissions of support. Meanwhile the Academy has again changed hands and has been brought by the property company, Kingscastle Limited. Currently 57 Princedale Road – The Academy – is being occupied and we believe internal alterations have taken place to make this possible. An Enforcement Order has been taken out on the property and the occupant has appealed. It is hoped that the description and protection that the ACV provides 57 Princedale Road which was upheld by the tribunal in 2015, will



be sufficient to squash this appeal which is a blatant disregard of the building's ACV status.

NCS is raising funds to repair the round stained glass window in the gable of St James's Church. It has applied for City Living Local Life support and will donate all ticket sales from its lecture Stained Glass the Magical Art of Architectural Illumination given by local artist Mark Cazalet.

Libby Kinmonth, Chairman



OLD COURT HOUSE RESIDENTS' GROUP

Our mansion block faces Kensington High Street so we have a front row seat on what was once a prestigious London thoroughfare. I say 'once' because as we enter 2020, sadly, the poor old High Street, previously famed for its shopping, shows no sign of emerging from a decline.

At the height of the High Street's retail popularity in the 1970s, the likes of Biba and other famous stores generated the equivalent of £1 billion a year in today's money. Biba is long gone, so have other well-known names like Top Shop. These days we residents begin to worry when we walk into Marks and Spencer and see the upper floors devoid of customers.

Indeed there are currently 16 retail premises closed between the Post Office at the west end of the High Street and our homes in Old Court Place; victims of a switch by customers to internet shopping, high rents and the magnetic pull of glittering Westfield mall at White City.

We residents of the Old Court House, as many others in Kensington, await a radical initiative from the RBKC to revive the moribund High Street's fortunes. The appointment of a High Street Czar perhaps?

Late last year we notched up a small victory in our campaign to rid us of the nuisance of so-called buskers who are trafficked in from East Europe and dropped by their organised crime minders outside stores like Whole Foods. Such is the racket from accordion players, fiddlers and other 'musicians,' all on loudspeakers, it is impossible to have our windows open, especially in summer.

After years of so called consultations RBKC has finally moved against this form of begging and imposed a moratorium on busking outside the Tube station entrance. Thanks to evidence



submitted by our chairman, John Cookson, the council's legal department is now investigating extending the ban up to Young Street which means our days of having to endure



Besame Mucho, played very badly and repeated a hundred times, will be over. That is if there are resources to enforce the ban.

The north of our mansion building faces what's turned out to be a horror show: the massive Lancer Square development. Four blocks including 51 'affordable' residential apartments and office buildings have shot up, courtesy of Malaysian property developers Chesington Investments. These buildings absolutely dominate the neighbourhood restricting the light to Old Court Place and built so close to our homes

our residents can lean out of bedroom windows and shake hands with the neighbours, once they actually arrive. We attended the developers' slick public relations meetings. It wasn't until the edifices were built did we realise the impact. Now it's too late



Old Court by John Cookson

THE ONSLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION (ONA)

ONA has had an extremely busy year. We spearheaded the campaign to preserve the South Kensington Post Office, engaging the support of our local MP, Emma Dent Coad, and ward councillors as well as hundreds of our members, neighbourhood residents and business owners. It was a great effort including a public meeting, a public petition and "walk of shame" to Gloucester Road sub-post office. Unfortunately, our efforts were to no avail but we will continue to fight for a local post office.



To reduce the risk of burglary, ONA has also organised the local distribution of Smart Water. This liquid is a great new invention which invisibly marks one's valuables, pictures and objets d'art so they can be identified if stolen. We have participated in many meetings at the Town Hall to press our points on developments in the area. We have also joined with other residents' associations to oppose TfL's shocking proposals for the redevelopment of the South Kensington Station. These proposals were a significant set-



back as we had understood that TfL had listened to our concerns and, indeed, they had previously produced plans which did largely satisfy us.

We have continued to support the council in its fight against the proliferation of so-called telephone kiosks which are little more than digital advertising boards which clog up the pavements and destroy the appearance of our streetscape.

On a wider scale, we continue to fight the re-development of the Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road and will do whatever we can to support the council in obtaining a reduction in the new housing targets being imposed on the Royal Borough by central government. The result of failing to meet the wholly unrealistic target (over 400 new homes every year for 10 years, of which many are required to be "affordable") would be to rob the council of its planning powers to prevent unsuitable developments.

Once again, we welcome all neighbours to join us at our annual garden party, which will be held in Onslow Square on Thursday 25 June (details on ona.org.uk). We hope to see many of you there.

Laura Mosedale

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

We have a membership of 420 local residents and cover the western part of St Helens ward and the southern part of Dalgarno ward. This is the same area as the St Quintin and Woodlands neighbourhood area, for which we prepared a neighbourhood plan in 2015/16.

This neighbourhood plan is part of the borough's development plan, and is used when planning applications are decided. We monitor planning applications in the neighbourhood to ensure that applicants take account of our StQW policies, as these vary to extent those that apply in the rest of the borough (particularly on some conservation issues where our policies are tailored to the type of Victorian and Edwardian houses in the area).

One of the aims of our neighbourhood plan is to bring more vitality to Latimer Road W10. This is a street of which parts were designated by RBKC as an Employment Zone back in the 1990s. We have long felt that the resultant planning policies unhelpfully restrict use of sites and buildings for mixed use, with housing as well as office or commercial use. After initially opposing the idea, the council's planners now accept that this approach makes sense. We are working with planning officers on a Supplementary Planning Document aimed at bringing forward more new housing in Latimer Road.

As part of the council's 'New Homes' programme, the council is building small developments on two infill sites in our area. These will contribute towards the target of 600 new homes in the borough, half of which are to be within the



various 'affordable' categories used in London. We welcome the fact that the term 'Council housing' has re-entered the vocabulary used by RBKC, and that RBKC is developing sites directly as well as relying on housing associations.

Henry Peterson, Chairman

www.sthelensresidents.org.uk / www.stqw.org

VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2019 was dominated by two major planning applications – Kensington Forum Hotel on Cromwell Road and the proposals for Heythrop College.

Kensington Forum Hotel

This application, having been refused by the council, was called in by the Mayor of London for his decision. His main interest was to achieve an increase in the amount of genuinely affordable housing. Following negotiations between the applicant and the GLA, a new scheme was produced with more units of social housing. The effect on the scheme was to add two storeys to the building facing Courtfield Road.

The mayor consulted on the revised scheme in May in advance of the mayoral hearing on 21 June. The hearing allowed plenty of time for the council and residents, including VRARA, to argue for the scheme to be refused on the basis of the impact the two tower blocks on the surrounding residential conservation areas. VRARA's main objection was to the impact of these towers, which would dominate our area.

We were pleased that RBKC challenged mayor's decision which is due to be heard in April.

Heythrop College

The original application was withdrawn in May 2018 and a new application was submitted in September 2018. VRARA, with the support of the society, strongly objected to the loss of a major education site, and its development for super-luxury extra-care housing, but the council granted consent, subject to the mayor's agreement. The mayor, however, directed the council to refuse consent due to the insufficient affordable housing. This led to an appeal and resulted a 9-day public inquiry which is being held from 27 January – 6 February.

The council chose not to participate. VRARA worked with the Kensington Society and Kensington Court RA as a Rule 6 Party. We hope to hear the result by April.

20 mph zone

Although VRARA wanted an area-wide 20mph zone, In the event the council only agreed to St Alban's Grove being limited to 20mph. The current signage is confusing and we will be asking for this scheme to be extended to the whole of VRARA's area.

Mews arches

We have a project to restore listed mews arches in our area. Having surveyed these arches and hope to start work this year.

Michael Bach, Chairman



THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY – CHARITY NO. 267778
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2019

Income	2019	2018
Donations and legacies	£	£
Membership subscriptions	10,302.00	10,110.00
Donations and legacies	2,741.69	2,059.00
Gift Aid	2,405.26	3,344.01
Total donations and legacies	15,448.95	15,513.01
Charitable activities		
Events	2,993.31	4,140.00
Annual report advertising	8,650.00	8,000.00
Total charitable activities	11,643.31	12,140.00
Investment income		
Bank interest	337.20	337.20
Total income	27,542.26	27,990.21
Expenditure		
Charitable activities		
Newsletter	2,293.34	1,540.13
Events	8,043.29	8,567.11
Annual report	11,402.49	9,293.61
Planning	4,340.00	6,538.45
Membership	2,500.06	1,309.52
Charitable	150.00	1,394.30
Total charitable activities expense	28,729.18	28,643.13
Other		
Insurance	350.33	349.29
Examiner	660.00	660.00
Total other expense	1,010.33	1,009.29
Total expenditure	29,739.51	29,652.42
Net income/(expenditure)	(2,197.25)	(1,662.21)
Total unrestricted funds brought forward	85,124.36	86,786.57
Total unrestricted funds carried forward	82,927.11	85,124.36

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 £	2018 £
Current assets		
Debtors		
Accrued income and prepayments		
Gift Aid	0.00	200.00
Insurance	227.72	227.72
Total accrued income and prepayments	227.72	427.72
Cash at bank and in hand		
Nationwide Building Society	75,000.00	75,000.00
Barclays Bank	9,384.23	11,931.06
PayPal	100.00	578.91
Total cash at bank and in hand	84,484.23	87,509.97
 Total current assets	 84,711.95	 87,937.69
 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Deferred income		
Subscriptions and donations	110.00	0.00
Creditors		
Accruals	1,014.84	2,813.33
Total deferred income and creditors	1,784.84	2,813.33
Total net assets	82,927.11	85,124.36
 Funds of the charity		
Unrestricted funds	82,927.11	85,124.36

Approved by the Trustees 16 January 2020

Signed: Martin Frame

Date: 16 January 2020

Martin Frame, Chartered Accountant

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

The Kensington Society

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The total income for the year was steady at £27,542.26, a decrease of £447.95 from last year.

The workload has increased significantly. We now pay for administrative help. The cost of this is allocated on a time basis to the various charitable activities.

Events expense (net of events income) was £5,049.98; planning expense was £4,340.00; annual report expense (net of advertising income) was £2,752.49.

The balance sheet remains strong with unrestricted funds of the Society of £82,927.11. £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 £10,302.00, donations and legacies of £2,741.69; Gift Aid of £2,405.26 and participated in the Society events during the year.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS For the year ended 31 December 2019

- **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.

Financial instruments

- **Debtors**

Debtors do not carry any interest and are stated at their nominal value. Appropriate allowances for estimated irrecoverable amounts are recognised in the SoFA when there is objective evidence that the asset is impaired.

- **Cash in bank and on hand**

These comprise cash at bank and other short-term highly liquid bank deposits with an original maturity of three months or less.

Membership

Charity No. 267778

The objects of The Kensington 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 future development and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic or public interest. The membership subscription is payable by bank standing order only and is renewable annually on 1 January. This entitles one person to be a member. Please complete further forms for additional memberships.

Individual subscription £ 15 Renewable annually on 1 January.
Donation £ _____
Total £ _____ Please pay by bank standing order only; no cheques.

Title: Full Name: Date of Birth:

Address:

City and Postcode:

Email:

Mobile: Home telephone:

How did you hear of us? Renewal ☐, Friend ☐, Planning issue ☐, Other ☐

giftaid 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 Gains 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 qualify. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give after 6 April 2008. You can cancel your Gift Aid declaration at any time. Please let us know if you change your name or address or no 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-Assessment tax return or ask HMRC to adjust your tax code.

X Signature:

Date:

Bank Standing Order

Bank Name and Branch:

Bank Address:

City and Postcode:

Sort Code: Account: A/c Name:

Please pay Barclays Bank Notting Hill Gate sort code 20-47-34 for the credit of The Kensington Society account 70519138, reference * a first payment of £ immediately and an annual payment of £ on 1 January until further notice.

This cancels any other previous standing order to The Kensington Society.

X Signature:

Date:

* The membership reference number will be allocated when we receive your membership form. Please check that your bank address and post code are given above as this form will be sent to your bank for processing. The bank will need your original signature. Please post to The Kensington Society, 23 St James's Gardens, LONDON W11 4RE. For further information email kensingtonsociety@outlook.com or call 020 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.

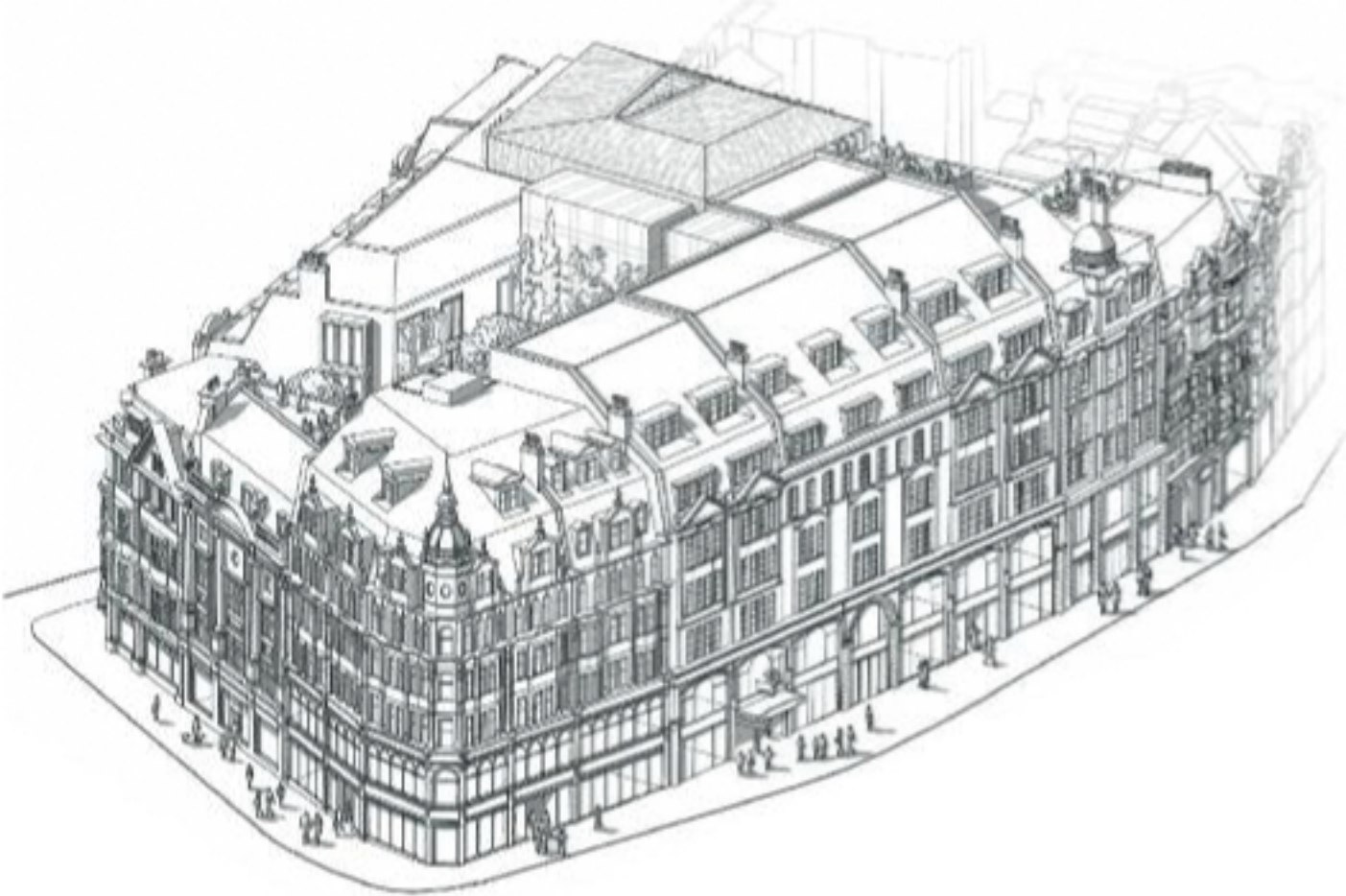
If you have the time and the interest, why not join us on one of the committees or on a specific project:

- 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



CHELSTFIELD: REAL ESTATE INVESTOR, PROPERTY DEVELOPER, ASSET MANAGER AND... COMMUNITY ENHANCER

At Chelsfield, we want to create better buildings that positively impact the local communities in which they sit. The 15-acre development at the northern end of The Knightsbridge Estate, which is owned by The Olayan Group, and for which we are the asset and development manager of, will make such an impact.

As part of the redevelopment, huge improvements to the public realm are being made. A new entrance to the Underground is being created further along Brompton Road as well as step-free access on Hooper's Court. A dedicated cooling system is being introduced on the Piccadilly line that will allow TfL to increase the frequency of trains at Knightsbridge Station. And the pavement along Brompton Road is being widened to ease pedestrian flow.

To create a more welcoming environment, we've adorned the site with

a giant hoarding that celebrates Knightsbridge's connection to art, fashion and culture. We've also built a luminous, multi-coloured tunnel to improve the journey of pedestrians that pass through. Once the development is completed, the introduction of new, lush pockets of green and the return of original architectural details will make this already storied corner of SW1 even more eye-catching.

This is all part of a wider commitment to local communities that has inspired each of the regeneration projects we've undertaken over the past 30 years. We believe in creating high quality places which make lasting differences to local communities.

£5 for non-members