

THE  
**Kensington  
Society**



**Annual Report  
2005**

THE

# Kensington Society

15 Kensington Square, W8 5HH  
[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)

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 future development, and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic or public interest.

Registered Charity No.267778

## Annual Report 2005

**Front cover** Barkers on Kensington High Street as seen from the east. The photograph was taken by John Rogers in December 2005 shortly before the store closed its doors after some 140 years of trading on the High Street.

# The Kensington Society

PATRON  
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
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VICE-PRESIDENTS  
THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF SNOWDON, G.C.V.O.  
GENERAL THE LORD RAMSBOTHAM OF KENSINGTON G.C.B., C.B.E.

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Susan Lockhart	Arthur Farrand Radley, M.B.E.
Robert Martin	Martin Starkie
Robert Meadows	Sir Angus Stirling
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Michael Bach	Ms Celia Rees-Jenkins O.B.E.
Mrs Angela Darwin	Mrs Ethne Rudd
Mrs Amanda Frame	Mrs Carolyn Starren
Mrs Dianne Gabitass	Robert Vigars
Anthony Lee	Ms Loveday Waymouth
Robin Price	George Wightman

CHAIRMAN: Robin Price  
VICE-CHAIRMAN: Ms Celia Rees-Jenkins O.B.E.  
HON. SECRETARY: Mrs Ethne Rudd  
HON. TREASURER: Anthony Lee  
VISITS SECRETARIES: Robin Price & Mrs D Gabitass  
MINUTES SECRETARY: Ms Loveday Waymouth  
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Mrs Angela Darwin  
EDITOR, ANNUAL REPORT: Mrs Carolyn Starren  
LICENSING: Anthony Lee

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## 2005 – A Year of Remembrance

2005 was a year mainly to recall the end of World War II. Various commemorative events took place in the Royal Borough and nationally. 60 years on, both VE and VJ Days were duly celebrated. Cllr. Warwick Lightfoot, the new Mayor, held a summer event in Chelsea Hospital grounds – where better? – to mark both anniversaries. He invited service and civilian veterans, and there were many decorations, medals and badges to be seen, worn by members of both sexes; and no doubt many wartime experiences were retold. The band and a number of Chelsea Pensioners added colour to the occasion.

Naval events naturally centred on Nelson and Trafalgar, 200 years on. There was the great gathering of warships of the world off Spithead, and the mock battle between the 'blue and red' fleets. Portsmouth also had a week of nautical festivities. In Kensington on 8 September there was an historic re-enactment in Holland Park of the passage through the Royal Borough of the Trafalgar Despatch. The despatch, which carried word of Nelson's death and of the victory at Trafalgar, was read out on the steps of Holland House. On 16 September, for the whole of London, there followed a celebration entitled "The Nelson Flotilla", a symbolic re-enactment of Nelson's grand final send off on 8 January 1806. The flotilla consisted mainly of some 40 traditional oared craft, including HMS Victory's cutter, headed by the motor vessel 'Havengore' which had carried Churchill's coffin up the Thames. The route led from Greenwich to St. Paul's Cathedral, where a memorial service was held on 23 October. In all, it is said that there were some thousand events nationwide to commemorate Trafalgar Year, 1805.

On the military side, the Mayor held a ceremony at Leighton House on 13 July to mark the conferment of Civic Honours on the 21 Special Air Service Regiment, better known as the Artists' Rifles. Leighton House was the natural venue, as Lord Leighton commanded the unit from 1869 to 1883. It had been

formed in 1860 and was first commanded by Henry Wyndham Phillips, the painter. It then consisted of painters, sculptors, engravers, musicians, actors and architects – a rich mixture. Nowadays it draws from many walks of life. Kensingtonians will be cheered and reassured to know that the regiment now enjoys "the privilege, honour and distinction of marching through the streets of the Royal Borough on all ceremonial occasions with colours flying, bands playing and bayonets fixed."

The achievements of the RAF were honoured, in attack in remembering the work of Bomber Command, and in defence in the Battle of Britain with its memories of the feats of Spitfire and Hurricane pilots. On 18 September the Prince of Wales as Patron of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association attended a special service in Westminster Abbey. He unveiled the Battle of Britain monument on Victoria Embankment, and attended a reception for veterans at the Ministry of Defence. The memorial by Paul Day was commissioned by the Battle of Britain Historical Society.

Where was further recognition of the part played by civilians who lived in the Royal Borough during the Blitz? Indeed, I recall how concerned the troops abroad were in the latter stages of the war at the unpredictable dangers to their families and friends from the long-range German missiles then deployed to devastating effect where they struck. Those days, and indeed the whole period of the London Blitz, are vividly recounted in a book called "Few Eggs and No Oranges" by Vere Hodgson, a social worker who lived in Ladbroke Grove. She described it as a "diary showing how Unimportant People in London and Birmingham lived through the war years 1940-1945". Published in 1976 it was again very topical in 2005. It contains many memories of Notting Hill and Holland Park, and mentions many names of local people, which may stir echoes today.

For their part the Council produced an evocative booklet entitled "Ordinary Heroes – the Home Front in Kensington and Chelsea in World War II". This is well illustrated, from the photograph of "Digging trenches in Kensington Gardens" to a

scene of a street party on VE Day. There is a list of wartime diaries of which Vere Hodgson's is but one example. The Council is also producing a book with the names of the 800 civilians who died here as a result of enemy action; copies will be offered to principal churches.

To honour our great wartime leader the Mayor held an historical seminar on 13 October to explore the role of Sir Winston Churchill and the contribution of the Commonwealth in World War II. Sir Winston was both a resident of the Royal Borough and a Freeman of it. This year was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death and the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the year in which he took over as Prime Minister in 1940. Eminent historians took part and Lady Soames made a special contribution.

There are now very few veterans left alive who served in World War I, but many of these still take part in parades and reunions for World War II veterans; nor is the contribution of many civilians forgotten, and the stolid reaction of Londoners to the bomb attacks in 2005 prompted many comments comparing it to the dogged spirit shown during the Blitz.

Now to Kensington Square. The role of Malta GC in World War II is well remembered too, and it is a pleasure to recall a ceremony on 29 September as close to the heart of the Kensington Society as Kensington Square itself. There the High Commissioner of Malta, Dr. Michael Refalo, planted an oak tree in the Square garden to commemorate the support Lord Nelson gave to Malta, in liberating it from Napoleon. Nelson termed it a valuable base for the Navy and said it should be kept always. The Mayor was present at this timely gesture by Malta.

Finally Trafalgar Day itself was the day for a final round of ceremonies and celebrations nationally, and the media coverage has been vast and sustained. Heroes still stir the nation. So 2005 has indeed been a year rich in memories, and we are grateful to the Council for their part in the commemorations.

Sir Ronald Arculus, President

## Annual General Meeting 2005

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting was held at the Maria Assumpta Centre, Kensington Square, on 27 April 2005. The Society's President, Sir Ronald Arculus, opened the proceedings by remarking on the turnout, which, he said, was at a record high this year. He welcomed the Mayor of Kensington, and representatives of the Brompton Association, the Knightsbridge Association, the Chelsea Society and the Friends of Holland Park, as well as members of other local societies. Sir Ronald relayed the good news that our Vice-President, General Sir David Ramsbotham, had been nominated to the House of Lords, and will sit on the cross benches. Sir David will be known as Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington.

The **Mayor of Kensington** made a short speech, praising the hard work of all our local societies and associations, and particularly the Kensington and Chelsea Societies, whose members are doing so much to care for our community and to



The audience at the AGM with Lady Rifkind and Cllr. Cockell, Leader of the Council, in the foreground



make Kensington such an exceptional place to live in. Such organisations engender a real sense of community spirit, he said, an essential element of the quality of life in this borough.



Sir Malcolm Rifkind with a winner of the Essay prize

There followed the prize-giving for the annual Essay Competition. The essays this year were of a very high standard, and it was extremely difficult for the judges to choose. The winners in the junior category were Michael Perkins and Sammy Shaheen, both of Holland Park School. In the senior category, 1<sup>st</sup> prize went to Alexandra Tompson and Sophie Goodfellow and Emerald Maxwell shared 2<sup>nd</sup> prize; all attend the French Lycee.



The President, Sir Ronald Arculus and the Chairman, Robin Price

Following the prize giving, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, who only a few days after the AGM was elected MP for Kensington and Chelsea, spoke on his chosen topic, **'Caring for Kensington'**.

Sir Malcolm began by remarking on the striking diversity of the Borough and the depth and strength of the community. He went on to address his key theme of conservation emphasising the need to distinguish between conservation and preservation.

"Conservation is a much more dynamic idea, which recognises that we have a heritage, and we must look after it and adapt it to meet the needs of modern communities. It doesn't mean that you never change anything. But it does mean that the onus is on those who wish to remove or destroy something from the past, to explain why they wish to do so." Sir Malcolm cited the Kensington Society's mandate, "to preserve and to improve", as an excellent definition of 'conservation'. He highlighted three

areas of importance - links between various areas of Kensington, the need for good design and the impact of the extended congestion charge zone. Finally, Sir Malcolm paid tribute to the Kensington Society itself – “a thriving, active organ of the community, whose activities cover a wide sweep of affairs, and which looks to me to be in very good health.” His witty and informative speech was much appreciated by the audience.

Robin Price then delivered his **Chairman's Report** beginning by outlining the key issues of concern namely: South Kensington Underground Station, Vicarage Gate Care Home, the extended Congestion Charge Zone, the West London Tram Route, Exhibition Road and the Local Development Framework. (All these issues are more fully discussed in the Chairman's Report on page 13.)

He went on to mention the **Kensington Society School Prizes for 2006**, noting that “More schools seem to be coming on board, as we had hoped, and it is becoming a predictable part of the secondary school scene in Kensington, exactly as we had wished.”

On **Licensing** he observed that “the new regime has been closely watched by your committee. So far, the Council has received very few untoward applications. We have opposed – and won – one test case, and we shall continue to oppose such test cases. Our major concern must be the issue of post-midnight licences in residential areas. You will appreciate that the new regime permits all licensed premises to open until midnight and I fear there is nothing we can do about that. The Council has done all it can to protect us, the householders, from undue nuisance as a result of this legislation.”

He then drew attention to the **Kensington and Chelsea Virtual Museum website** and the Society's participation in the Steering Committee set up as a Mayoral project this year by Cllr Barry Phelps. The project aims to spread knowledge on the Borough's rich history to all interested people no matter where

they live and will be further developed in the future. He urged people to look at the site.

Turning to larger issues mention was made of evidence submitted to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the role and effectiveness of **CABE – the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment** – HMG's successor to the Royal Fine Arts Commission. He noted a major shift towards real contextual comment and advice from CABE which should lead towards higher and more objective standards of CABE comments on development proposals, which in turn should materially assist representations on major projects like South Kensington Station.

On **The Annual Report** he praised the editor, Caroline Shaw for “a wonderfully varied and interesting Report for 2004” and for bringing to a successful conclusion the sponsorship offer of £2,500 from Savills to whom the Society is most grateful.

Tribute to the hard work of the **Committee and Royal Borough Councillors** was then made. “The increasing complexity of work could not be done without an immense spirit of co-operation, goodwill and concern for the integrity and excellence of the amenities of the Royal Borough. It is not complicit in any sense to pay very proper tribute to the Councillors, who work immensely hard on our behalf to create what is generally acknowledged to be one of the best Local Authorities in the UK. We are indeed grateful. We thank them, and you, our members, for all your support. It is greatly appreciated.”

In closing, he made a plea to each member to get at least **one new member to join the Society** in the coming year.

Anthony Land then updated his **summary of planning issues** and, specifically mentioned the following: - the two new Conservation Areas, Earl's Court and Colville; increased sensitivity by RBKC on applications for mobile telephone masts; the unsuccessful challenge to the listed building status recently accorded to 1 Campden Hill, W8; the decrease in

planning applications to turn hotels into hostels; the rethink by Tesco of its branding treatment of the range of stores of different sizes; concern at the rate of closure of Post Offices; the Society's official decision to oppose the delisting of the Commonwealth Institute and the likely demolition and rebuilding of Holland Park School.

He then highlighted a recent meeting he attended involving Councillors, Council officials and interested parties, including the Society and The Boltons Association, at which a range of planning issues with relevance across the Borough were discussed. These included the effect of excavations to create more living space (usually below front and rear gardens) on neighbouring houses, garden walls etc, and the extent to which building projects appeared to deviate from approved plans. The former needed to be controlled by specific policies in the UDP and its planned successor the LDF, but policing the latter depended to a large extent on concerned members of the public reporting apparent violations to the Council's enforcement team.

Caroline Shaw

### AGM 2006

The Society's Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 27 March, in The Small Hall, Town Hall, Hornton Street W8. Doors open at 6.00 and the meeting will begin at 6.30. The speaker will now be Malcolm Shirley, Secretary to the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, who will speak on 'The Legacy of the Great Exhibition of 1851- Where Now?'

## Chairman's Report 2005

An eventful and challenging year. Larger issues first. Late in 2004 the RBKC Council asked us, with the Chelsea Society, to act as consultation champions for the development of the **Local Development Framework**, the new planning régime with dependent documents, which will replace the Unitary Development Plan by the end of 2007. Fortunate to have an experienced and talented market-researcher on our committee, we circulated via the Council a questionnaire to all our members, which received a fabulously high response of 50%. Thank you to all our diligent and committed members who care so deeply about the quality of our Borough's built environment. The results were taken on board by the Council's LDF team, together with our further response made to the Council's **LDF Newsletter 2**. This will form part of a further RBKC consultation process with all residents. There is no doubt that while your Society by no means resists change, it wants to be assured of quality and excellence of design in accord with our unique built heritage.

**The Vicarage Gate Care Home** saga continued unabated until November. The appeal by the developers against the Council's refusal, in effect, to grant change of use of the site from C2 (nursing home) to C3 (residential) began its hearing before the Inspector in mid-July, was adjourned throughout August, and resumed in mid-September. Christopher Buckmaster, Ward Councillor, to whom we owe an immense debt of gratitude, represented the Vicarage Gate Action Group as its Chairman in a vigorous and magisterial address. Your Chairman represented the Society on a dependent point that required emphasis. The Inspector found in the most stringent and indicative terms that there was not only a sound UDP basis to SPG 7 (Elderly Persons' Accommodation in the Royal Borough) but also to uphold the Council's (and thereby the Society's) view that the site should remain designated for care home use. He accordingly dismissed the two appeals and refused to grant



planning permission for demolition of the existing building and the erection of a six-story block of luxury flats. In other words, we have won the appeals. A nursing home provider can now be sought for reconstitution of this all-important site. Congratulations and thanks to all concerned, but especially to the Vicarage Gate Action Group and its redoubtable and ever active Chairman. While it is gratifying to know that Justice does, sometimes, prevail, we now have to await the further decision of the High Court following a Section 288 Application against the Inspector's decision.

For some three years the re-build (or refurbishment) of **Holland Park School** has been on the Council's agenda. It does the Council considerable credit that it seeks the best for the children educated within the Royal Borough. This we entirely endorse, and we greatly want to be able to support the Council in any way to this end.

Unfortunately we concluded after much consideration that the proposals placed before us during the consultation period of 14-19 November were deeply flawed in many aspects – the design and bulk of the exterior, the sale of the southern site and the elevations and building density proposed for that site, traffic generation and parking provision. We also had reservations about the ever-rising costs, the viability of the interior for such a school and the consultation process.

In our view the project needed to be revisited by the Council and by independent advisors, including independent educational experts. Since this project is of manifest importance to the Borough and to the children it educates, we shall do all in our power to help a revised process forward.

**South Kensington Station** continues to focus the minds of your Committee and of the Brompton Association and the Knightsbridge Association. Working together, we have represented numerous points to the Council and to English Heritage. The site needs a modest solution in keeping with its

primarily residential context and listed status. There is a need for an upgraded station to include step-free access and an upgraded tunnel to the museums. These points are vitally necessary both for the 2012 Olympics and for the proposed redesign of Exhibition Road, to which South Kensington Station and its traffic gyratory system must relate.

**Exhibition Road** and its redesign came up for preliminary public consultation and exhibition in late October 2005. We found it both interesting and innovative. Our prime reservation lies in the proposed strident cross-hatching on the road. We have suggested therefore that another means be found of indicating the change in traffic régime that is more sensitive to its distinguished architectural surroundings. We have also asked to be included in any future consultations on these proposals.

While on traffic, we should record that the Mayor for London, in seeking against all the weight of local and trans-London consultation to impose an **Extended Congestion Charge Zone** across Kensington and Chelsea (and much of Westminster), will also by implication impose considerable financial burdens on the Royal Borough. We note, and totally support, an open letter by the Leader of the Council to the Mayor for London pointing out the fiscal burden on the Royal Borough and seeking recompense for it. Those who are opposed to the extension of the congestion charge zone will be duly grateful for the activity of the West London Residents Association.

**Portobello Road** was, it was rumoured in September 2005, due to be upgraded by *fiat* of the Royal Borough in association with the Mayor of London, to the status of an International Shopping Centre (like Knightsbridge). We find on enquiry that it is designated, as it always has been, as a Local Shopping Centre, and, unless the subsidiary documents of the LDF radically alter the tenor of the present UDP (which in this case is most unlikely), it will remain so. We agree entirely with those who raised the issue that it would be dire indeed if as a result of re-designation, the Portobello Road lost its unique local

character and its all-important street market. It is, after all, the resort of many enthusiastic local shoppers and of a multitude of foreign visitors, all of whom rejoice in its lively local flavour.

The **West London Tram Route** proposal is at last arousing the anxiety and ire of the residents of Ealing and of Hammersmith and Fulham. Surprisingly, Ealing Council is in favour of WLTR, while more naturally, Hammersmith and Fulham Council is not. The five pinch-points *en route*, around which normal traffic will have to flow through quiet residential areas, does little to please residents; nor will the project please Kensington residents, if the Mayor's wish to pass the route through to a revised Marble Arch gyratory system sees fruition. We have already commented formally on this scheme to Transport for London, and we keep it under closest scrutiny. A huge loss of street trees is one of many deep reservations which all of us will have about this scheme.

We have commented briefly in support of the Royal Borough's views on the proposals to breach present rules on **Heathrow night flights** which is covered in the Planning Report on page and more fully on **Licensing and Casino** issues which are outlined on page 46.

**The Kensington School Prizes for 2006** have again been offered as last year for essays in the two categories of pupils aged 12-13 and 14-15 during the school year 2005-6. The pupils are asked to imagine themselves in a place in Kensington on 8 May 1945, to explain why they are there, and to describe what they saw and experienced. It is good to know that the Kensington School Prizes are becoming an annual and appreciated feature of the school year in Kensington secondary schools. The results will be announced and the prizes awarded at our AGM in March 2006.

We are again indebted to **other societies** for our constant, useful and very cordial relations with them. The Brompton Association, The Chelsea Society and the Knightsbridge

Association figure largely among them; but we are also in touch with other such societies, and in particular from time to time as the need arises with our constituent societies on major matters or matters of planning principle. We hope that our constituent societies will be in touch with us whenever necessary. There is greater strength for all of us in greater numbers and in shared expertise.

There have been some changes on the **Executive Committee** this year. After many of years of service to the Society, especially as its Vice-Chairman and as long-standing member of its Planning Committee, Robert Meadows has decided to step down from the Executive Committee. His resignation was received with the greatest regret since the Committee is cognizant of his huge and valued input over the years. So that we shall not entirely forego his wise and experienced counsel the Committee unanimously elected him a Councillor of the Society. Anthony Land has resigned from the Committee following his decision to leave London. His wise, negotiatory and ever-active work in the midst of his many commitments has been one of the hidden and great benefits to the Society. We are deeply grateful to him. Amanda Frame, herself a practising architect who has served both on the Planning Committee and the Executive Committee for some years, takes his place. We are grateful to her for assuming this responsibility in a very demanding life. Owing to considerable pressure of professional commitments Nigel Wilkins has also resigned. We owe him much gratitude for his work for the Society on licensing, now a matter of considerable concern to residents and of course to the Society. I am glad to say that Anthony Lee will take over this important role as of January 2006, coupling it with his duties as Hon. Treasurer. His input as a lawyer will be of particular value during a period in which we may expect a number of licensing appeals.

I make my regular plea for **new, active and younger members**. Despite losses, our membership has again risen this year to some 630 members. People enjoy belonging to the

Society and taking part in its activities. Please make a further and sustained effort in the coming year to approach likely new members. Make our membership 700! Membership forms are available from the Membership Secretary, 2 Campden Hill Court, Observatory Gardens, London W8 7HX. Annual subscription rates after many years remain at £10, standing orders preferred. It is still a wonderful bargain.

Robin Price, Chairman



Brunswick Gardens in Springtime, May 1962

## Secretary's View 2005

This is the first edition of our Annual Report put together under our new editor, Carrie Starren. We are most grateful to her for taking on this most important position.

Looking back at the past year the Society continues to be absorbed by the problem of trees. Readers may be interested to know that a new reason to cut down a tree has been put forward – namely that it smells. Another reason put forward with a new slant was that an offending tree blocked out the light, which led to the increased use of artificial light thus adding to the greenhouse gases! Your Society however remains strenuous in its opposition to the cutting down of trees unless their condition is dangerous.

The Diana memorial continues to be dogged by disaster. The original plan to dig up 17 acres of Kensington Gardens to make into formal flowerbeds having been kicked into the long grass by public protest led by your Society, a new plan was hatched by a trendy architect to build a water feature, deliberately sited beyond the boundary of Kensington.

Marble may be OK for memorials but water is decidedly tricky. Unhappily the water has got out of hand and costs have escalated and turned out to be as uncontrollable as the water. The Parks Agency now has to pick up a large slice of the increasing bill and has to cut back on maintenance to meet this. They of course had no part in the choice of the feature.

Finally we have had the most interesting initiative by Counsellor Moylan where he brought out the difficulties of residents being priced out of the local housing market Kensington. A consultation paper has been issued by the Borough seeking the views of residents and proposals to deal with this difficult issue. We all know the problems of living in such an expensive borough.

Ethne Rudd

## Obituaries

It is with sadness that we report the death of the following members: Philippa, Viscountess Astor (member since 1968), Lady Beit (member since 1982), Mrs Jean Ellsmoor (member since 2002), Vincent J Farley (member since 1976), Miss E M Morgan (Life member since 1978).

### **Philippa, Viscountess Astor 1915-2005**

Philippa Victoria Hunloke was born at 2 Carlton Gardens on December 10 1930, the eldest child of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Philip Hunloke (a descendent of King William IV and Mrs Jordan) and Lady Anne Cavendish, daughter of 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire.

She attended Rene's in Kensington where she developed an interest in the theatre. During the war Philippa and her brother Timothy were sent to Canada and on her return she enrolled at RADA. Although a talented actress, she preferred to work behind the scenes and her first job was Assistant Stage Manager at Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket. On 26 April 1955 she married William Waldorf Astor, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Astor, in Chelsea at St Columba's Church, Pont Street. Their daughter Emily was born in 1956. Following the breakdown of her marriage Philippa and Emily moved into St Alban's Grove

A very active member of the community from the start, she joined the committee of a school for handicapped children in Wormwood Scrubs and then became a Justice of the Peace sitting on all three Magistrates' Benches, Adult, Youth and Family. Following her retirement she concentrated on her work for Campden Charities, the Children's Hospital Fund and as Chair of Governors at Middle Road School, Kensal. Much to Philippa's delight Emily returned with her family to live in the top part of the St Alban's Grove house, enabling her to spend many hours with her grandchildren.

Philippa died on 20 July 2005 and will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

### **Clementine, Lady Beit 1915-2005**

Clementine Mabell Kitty Mitford was a cousin of the famous Mitford girls. Her father was killed in action during WWI, five months before her birth. After her mother's second marriage and subsequent long periods spent overseas she spent much of her time with relatives.

In 1939 she married the late Sir Alfred Beit following his proposal to her under Goya's Portrait of Dona Antonia de Zarate at his house in Kensington Palace Gardens. In 1945 Sir Alfred lost his St Pancras seat and they moved to South Africa. In 1952 the Berts purchased Russborough in County Wicklow, Ireland which was to be their main residence for the rest of their lives. This peaceful life was interrupted when in 1974 an IRA gang, including Rose Dugdale, invaded their home. Several paintings were stolen with the gang demanding prisoner releases in exchange for their return. Soon after, the house was gifted to a charitable foundation and the house and its extensive art collection opened to the public. In 1987, 17, of their major paintings were given to the National Gallery in Dublin including works by Goya, Gainsborough and the last known Vermeer in private hands.

Despite taking Irish citizenship in 1993, Lady Beit continued her membership of the Society and an interest in Kensington affairs. She died aged 89 on August 17 2005.

### **Vincent James Farley 1920-2005**

Many of our members will remember with great affection Vincent Farley who for some 70 years was associated with Farley & Co., estate agents based at 44-48 Old Brompton Road. He started working in the family firm, which was opened by Stephen Farley in 1900, shortly after the end of WWII and

continued to visit 'the Office' daily even in his 85<sup>th</sup> year. His final visit was made on Tuesday 21 June just before he went into hospital for tests. Sadly he died there on 25 June 2005.

A devoted family man; he was a very keen gardener and loved all sports. He was involved with and active in many professional, social and charitable organisations. A great supporter of the Kensington Society he was also a Rotarian, attending every meeting of the Kensington Rotary Club, and the local Chamber of Commerce. His membership of the Kensington Society has been taken on by his son Stephen.

He was passionate about South Kensington and had a great knowledge and experience of the area which he was always ready to share with others. He will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues.

Carolyn Starren



St Alban's Grove by James Bucknill

## 'Barkerization' of Kensington High Street

In 1851 the young John Barker, born in Maidstone in 1840, was brought by his parents to visit the Great Exhibition. Perhaps it was this visit that encouraged him to seek his fortune in Kensington. By the mid 1860s he was working for William Whiteley at his famous emporium in Westbourne Grove as departmental manager. But when Whiteley refused to make him a partner he found financial backing from James Whitehead, a Bradford merchant. They purchased two of the new shops just built on the south side of Kensington's High Street at number 91 and 93. Within a year they were already expanding not only along the High Street but also into the side streets. He and his family lived 'over the shop', with servants and eight female assistants, three milliners, two salesmen and a porter. As the premises proliferated so did the merchandise, until all household needs were catered for. By 1887 the magazine *The Queen* described Barkers as "the best establishment in London for moderate prices". By this date he had 28 shops, a staff of over 1,000 and a delivery service with 80 horses. In 1884 Tresham Gilbey, who had married Barker's daughter Ann, bought out Whitehead and the firm became a limited company with John



Barkers circa 1900

Barker as its first Chairman.

On the corner of Young Street an imposing building was erected housing the food hall and carpet department. A furniture depository was opened on the



old Erard piano factory site in Cromwell Crescent with Warwick Mansions built on one side. Houses were taken in Kensington Square to accommodate staff. To service and develop this enormous operation a building department was added.

With the whole section between Young Street and Derry Street



Bernard George's design for the new Barkers building

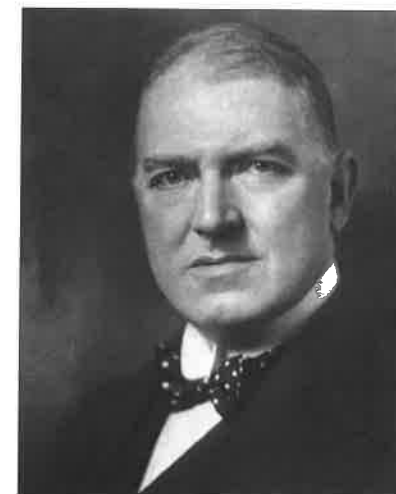
now filled, John Barker's tentacles spread across to the north side of the High Street where by 1905 a new building was erected to house the furniture and other new departments. Profits soared and in 1907

the firm bought Pontings, the first of many takeovers. Then on 3 November 1912 tragedy struck when the food hall block was the scene of a fatal fire. Some 20 waitresses were accommodated in a dormitory on the fifth floor and five of these fell to their death trying to escape the fire. The company was severely criticised for not paying attention to safety measures. Undeterred, and to meet the Christmas rush, the management took over a vacant plot on the north side and put up a temporary building, later rebuilt as the Portland stone-clad Ladymere Building. The fire-gutted block was rebuilt in 1913-4 with a bridge linking it to the Ball Street buildings and a subway under the main road to the new departments on the north side.

John Barker was elected MP for Penrhyn and Falmouth in 1906 and knighted in 1908. He retired in 1914 and died a few months later.

That same year another ambitious young man, Trevor Bowen, joined as Manager of the Food Section. Initially involved in the gigantic task of army catering, which prior to the establishment

of the Catering Corps was carried out by private contractors, his first major contract was to supply 'Kitchener's Army' prior to being sent overseas. The new chairman was Sydney Skinner and together in 1919 they negotiated the merger with Derry and Toms. However it was their ambitious expansionist plans, including expansion into Kensington Square that was to cause controversy and a seventy-year battle with the Council and local residents, in particular those living in Kensington Square who objected to the 'Barkerization' of their amenities.



Trevor Bowen

The first building to be reconstructed was Derry and Toms and work on the beaux-arts building began in 1929 under the direction of Bernard George, a newly qualified architect. C. A. Wheeler of Chicago made the floor layouts. These six floors, including the magnificent Rainbow Room, were completed by 1933 and the famous Roof Gardens opened in 1938 by the Earl of Athlone.

Finally in 1937 the rebuilding of Barker's began, commencing at the rear with George once again employed as architect. Only two thirds was complete at the outbreak of WWII. The work was beset by problems including disputes with the London County Council, the Borough and local residents, WWII and post war restrictions. Worn down by the battles Sydney Skinner became seriously ill and Trevor Bowen succeeded him. Frustrated by the slow progress Bowen began a campaign for the widening of the road with banners on the old part of the building saying "Safety First – until Barker's widening scheme is completed this crossing is dangerous". Finally on 15 April 1955 Bowen started

the demolition process, wielding a ceremonial hammer with such enthusiasm that he narrowly missed hitting the Mayor, Alderman Lady Petrie. The familiar more modernistic curved frontage complete with stonework, showing items that might be bought within, and metallic decorations, finally emerged in 1958. In July 1957 the House of Fraser made a successful take-over bid for the Barker Group and Trevor Bowen was made Honorary President, a position he held until his death in 1965.

From that time the slow disintegration of the mighty Barker's empire began. First to go were the Ladymere building and Barker's Store on the north side of Kensington High Street, followed in 1971 by Pontings; and in 1973 Derry and Toms finally closed after its sale to British Land and Dorothy Perkins, where for a brief and memorable period Biba flourished. Today Marks & Spencers, Hennes and Gap occupy the building. The rump of Barkers has continued on the corner of Young Street but with major fashion stores occupying the frontage and the offices of Associated Newspapers, publishers of the Daily Mail and The Evening Standard, occupying the upper floors. On January 2 2006 Barkers finally close its doors after trading for some 140 years. Associated Newspapers have taken the



Barkers in 1951  
showing the partially completed building

second floor and Whole Food Market, retailers of organic and natural foods, have taken the remaining floors for their new flagship store due to open in 2007.

Carolyn Starren

## Furled flags and long farewells for an old friend

In the mid-1950s political change and the steady growth of Imperial College of Science and Technology were to see the end of a prominent local monument, the Imperial Institute. Built 'in the renaissance manner' on 2 acres of land as a national memorial to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887 to the designs of Thomas Colcutt, the great stone edifice was finally closed in 1962 to much public outcry, including a major movement led by the Kensington Society. It would be hard to imagine how the old building could have remained, with its Imperial connections, in an era that was watching the birth of the new independent Commonwealth nations. Instead, in 1958 the Government of the day ruled for a new building to be constructed in Holland Park to commemorate this momentous new age and so, in 1960, work began on the new and striking Commonwealth Institute.

Funding for the project came from the compensation for the acquisition of the Exhibition Road building, as well as from essential donations from overseas governments and commercial organisations, without which it could not have been completed. Like its predecessor many of its materials were from all corners of the Commonwealth with donations including woods and stones from every member state as well as generous cash amounts. Not everything from the Imperial Institute building was lost though; the flooring from the old Entrance Hall and two of the four famous lions also made the move across Kensington.

Designed by RJM Sutherland and Roger (later Lord) Cunliffe, the building work took two years, with the doors finally opening in November 1962. Construction faced a number of challenges, not least being the ambitious roof with its five hyperbolic paraboloids made of slim concrete spars with light-weight

decking clad in copper, a gift from the Chamber of Mines of Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. However, the ingenuity and engineering skills of its designers and the builders, John Laing Construction, saw the project through.



Model of  
the Commonwealth Institute

The overall effect was not to everyone's taste and, as with all of London's major monuments, it faced a great deal of public criticism. But despite that everyone agreed that it certainly stood out, even on the busy streets of Kensington, and it rightfully received the recognition of being given a Grade II\* listing. Recently proposals for delisting were rejected by Tessa Jowell, the Culture Secretary. The overall impact of the building was added to by the famous flagged courtyard and the gardens designed by the landscaper Dame Sylvia Crowe.

The open plan of the interior was designed by James Gardner, with the idea of offering plenty of space to fulfil the Institute's stated aim to "promote and celebrate the Commonwealth by engaging the people of Britain and other countries in educational, business, cultural and public affairs programmes." With three floors and numerous galleries, it offered more than enough space to house impressive art collections, a library, resource centre, cinema and much more besides.

The early days of the Commonwealth Institute were a unique example of the good that was possible from real international cooperation, as illustrated on the opening day



Interior view of  
the newly completed building

in an event attended by senior dignitaries from each member state and hosted by Queen Elizabeth herself. The Institute's first ten years in its new building are remembered as a period in which there was massive progress in moving from Empire to Commonwealth and in which it actively brought knowledge of those changes into the lives of British school children.

Unlike the Imperial Institute it was not designed to be a civic building; rather it was to be a public space concentrating on its goal of educating people through art and music festivals, book fairs, plays and public readings. However, its design still made it the ideal site for a number of major events, including hosting the occasional Commonwealth Conference and as a popular venue for private conferences for many big name corporations, including Disney. The different galleries were filled with permanent displays and exhibits donated by all the member states alongside a changing central show which concentrated on one member.



The Commonwealth Institute in 2005 shortly before it closed

After Britain's inclusion in the EEC in the early 1970s it became harder to raise funds from the donor countries, as the Commonwealth trading and monetary system came to an end. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office took over funding from the Ministry of Education as the Empire turned into a Commonwealth, and the Institute became a non-departmental public body. The exhibitions became exclusively educational, but this purpose came to a natural end as methods of teaching changed and the enthusiasm for the galleries waned. The galleries, whose existence had been so controversial over so much of the Institute's life, were closed in 1995 with the agreement of all Commonwealth governments. Many of the works were returned to the donors while the remainder were gifted by deed of trust to The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol in 2002. The building then passed into the hands of a Trust, the members of which were all Commonwealth governments, for the benefit of education across the Commonwealth, and Ministerial Trustees were replaced by the Commonwealth Secretary General and five Commonwealth High Commissioners to London. Heads of Commonwealth Government at their meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, approved the proposal by the Trustees that the Institute would carry this task out in a joint venture with Cambridge University by funding a Centre for Commonwealth Education in 2003. Since then relations on all sides have become somewhat strained, with the Trustees pushing for the sale of the building while others, including the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea supported by the Kensington Society, demanding that the building be retained. So we come full circle, with the Kensington Society once again at the forefront of a very public battle to retain this major part of Kensington's global heritage.

Nick Starren,  
 Researcher who worked on both  
 the FACET web site and  
 the Virtual Museum website

## Environmental Awards 2005

The Mayor, Cllr. Warwick Lightfoot, presented the 2005 Awards at the Town Hall on 18 October 2005. The awards scheme, initiated in 1977, aims to recognise visual enhancements to everyday surroundings that can be seen and appreciated by the public. Indeed the public are actively encouraged to nominate buildings, which they feel enhance their area and deserve recognition.

To obtain nomination forms for next year's awards contact  
 the **Planning Information Office**

Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8 7NX

Planningline: 020 7361 3012

E-mail: [planning@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@rbkc.gov.uk)

Website: [www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning)

This year awards were given to the following:

### **15 Sloane Square, SW1**

#### **Award for Commercial Development**

#### **Architects: Paul Davies & Partners**

Assessors' comments: This construction of a substantial office building behind retained facades was considered more appropriately assessed in this category than as Restoration and Conversion, for which it was also nominated. The works have been extremely well done. The former boring street level corner is enhanced by windows whose scale was admired and where the polished granite and stainless steel radiate quality.

### **Cadogan Hall, Sloane Terrace, SW1**

#### **Special Award; Award for Access**

#### **Architects: Paul Davies and Partners**

Assessors' comments: ...first class auditorium and foyer...all areas creatively used, and a valuable additional amenity for the Chelsea community has replaced a tired and latterly little used building. Impressive improved access for people with

disabilities, especially in the face of narrow staircases, many different levels, and the constraints of a listed building overcoming these barriers has been so well done as to merit in addition an access award.

**The Phillimores, W8**  
**Award for Restoration and Conversion**  
**Architects: Nilsson Design Ltd**



The Phillimores

Assessors' comments: ...war damage has been seamlessly repaired, new work unobtrusively added, and grounds landscaped in an exemplary fashion. The locality is enhanced, not least by the generous pavement widening on the corner of Duchess of Bedford Walk.

**Princess Louise Care Home, W11**  
**Award for New Building**  
**Architect: PRP Architects Ltd**

Assessors' comments: Of the three new buildings nominated in 2005 this fits best into its context while fulfilling a community need effectively. Though achieved on a limited budget the result is neither mean nor ordinary...



Princess Louise Care Home

**Pavilion Road, SW3**  
**Award for General Environmental Improvements**  
**Architects: Paul Davis and Partners**

Assessors' comments: The pedestrianisation of the southern end of this road has been carried out unstintingly, eliminating squalor and creating a place which generates a sense of wellbeing. It is a pleasure to walk through, an example of how walking through the Borough can be made tempting and enjoyable, and clearly an award winner.

**Portobello Road Rail Bridge, W10**  
**Award for General Environmental Improvements**  
**Designed by Westway Projects**

Assessors' comments: A vast improvement to a place which before could leave one with a sense of danger but where now people are happy to pass through. The employment of art and imagination has solved a problem and importantly has evidently eliminated graffiti and abuse at pedestrian level, though not entirely on the face of the bridge itself. All agreed the work deserves an award.

**319 Portobello Road, W10**  
**Commended**  
**Architect: Meadowcroft Griffin Limited Architects**

Assessors' comments: A very interesting building, almost too interesting as a background to market activity. The metal clad gable caused some concern. Though daring the building does not "go the extra mile" but does merit a commendation.

**Kensal House Nursery, W10**  
**Commended**  
**Architects: Cottrell & Vermeulen Architecture**

Assessors' comments: A welcome rescue of a historic building for the use for which it was designed, but marred by the neglected flower bed, the extent of plain tarmac and sheds where once a sand pit and paddling pool were located.



Kensal House Nursery



## Planning in 2005

The 2005 report from the Planning Chairman is very much as the 2004 report with many of last year's concerns carrying into this year. The LDF, Holland Park School, Exhibition Road and the continuing licensing applications and actions are mentioned elsewhere within this Annual Report.

We have continued our watching brief with the **Commonwealth Institute**. The tent-like structure, with its famous green copper roof, which has been a distinctive part of the Kensington cityscape for more than 40 years, will retain its Grade II\* listed building status. In July Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell decided not to allow de-listing the building. However, she did amend the list entry to make it clear which parts of the building are most significant. The decision ensures that the main exhibition building is protected while the linear administration and conference building could possibly be considered for development. Ms Jowell notes that "discretion is limited by the terms of the current legislation - and the conditions which would allow me to de-list the building are not satisfied....We are carrying out a fundamental review of the listing regime, and we hope to take the first step towards reform with the White Paper next year". This is a worrying statement for all Grade listed buildings and the Kensington Society will watch for any changes proposed by the Government. In the meantime the future of the Commonwealth Institute building though now protected remains uncertain.

**Tesco** was mentioned in the 2004 report and will probably also be mentioned in the 2006 report. In 2004 Anthony Land reported on the borough-wide dominance of Tesco and the growing concerns by the local residents and the Council at Tesco's lack of regard for planning procedures. Tesco continue to expand into all areas of the borough. They currently have two applications in for the Holland Park Avenue store for changes to the conditions imposed by the Council in the planning

permission issued in May. There have already been three other applications for this site in the past year. Michael Bach represented the Kensington Society in the Planning Committee review in December. Throughout the nation local residents are voicing their fury at Tesco's intransigent and dilatory behaviour and the total disregard of Council and residents wishes and inconsiderate actions of what has become a monopolistic giant. Robin Price wrote to Merrick Cockell, Leader of the Council, in October expressing the Society's concerns about this threatening pattern noting that "since Tesco appears to care little for the sense of place, character, quality, or diversity, and to care much for the bottom line, and since its stores Hoover up local competition, this could plainly have a dire effect on, say, Kensington High Street". We will continue to monitor the developments throughout Kensington and we ask Society members to please inform us of any related issues of which we should be aware.

Applications to **excavate rear gardens** are increasing with the addition of several for the excavation of front gardens as well. The Society has expressed its concerns to the Council over extensive excavations, the possible de-stabilisation of adjoining properties and the need for underpinning. Full excavation and infill of a garden will result in no water percolation under the building, ground destabilising and extensive water run-off onto adjoining properties. At present there are no restrictions on such infills; however the Council has acknowledged that there is an issue involving such excavations and has even highlighted it within the LDF questionnaire.

Sadly a major Kensington High Street fixture will close its doors in January. **Barker's** Store on 63-97 Kensington High Street will become a Whole Foods Market. Whole Foods Market has over 170 stores in the USA and Canada. The servicing, both loading and unloading, and access to the loading bays has been a concern of the Kensington Square residents. The Planning Department has recommended several restrictions on

the servicing which hopefully will allow the peacefulness of Kensington Square to prevail.

An application for change of use and increase in volume has been placed by Metroplex for the parking garage on **100 Cromwell Road**. The proposal increases the number of residential units from 296 to 435, a difference of 139 units. The proposed height of 27 storeys (increased from the permitted 83m to 91m and roughly the height of the Hyde Park Hilton) and its excessive bulk are highly insensitive to this significant portal to the Royal Borough. It is the Society's opinion that this is a gross overdevelopment of the site. While there is driving need for residential development throughout London, such development should not be to the detriment of the quality of the townscape.

**Mobile base station** applications continue to be reviewed. Where the proposed location is close to either a school or homes, the Society has objected. We have supported several residential groups this year in their successful objections to base station located on rooftops and even footpaths. Several members of the Government seem to be at last aware of the possible adverse effects on health and the growing public anxiety. At present the Government's position is that health concerns cannot be the reason for planning refusal. Current guidance (PPG8) states that it is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and not local councils to act on potential health issues. Although the HSE takes exactly the same line as the National Radiological Protection Board in relation to exposure guidelines and possible health effects, local authorities need clear government guidance based on sound scientific evidence and should set down procedures that can be adopted uniformly throughout the UK. This Society has repeatedly stated that the Government urgently needs to provide local authorities with precise and unambiguous planning procedures for mobile base stations.

The Society has supported the RBKC in its response to the

**Night Flight Consultation Document.** We will continue to monitor the changes proposed; however there are fears that it is a far-gone conclusion that Heathrow will continue, and even expand, the night flight landings.

As noted by Antony Land in last year's report the Planning Committee (Robin Price, Loveday Waymouth and myself) continue to maintain our monthly vigil and monitor the planning applications. Antony Land retired from the committee this summer following a move to the country. We all miss him, though I the most. RBKC Planning Department receives approximately 2,500 applications a year. We review as many as 25 at each meeting and often comment to the Planning Department about our concerns. The quality of the applications has improved over the years with fewer PVC or Velux windows; however, large rear extensions of extremely modernist design are on the increase. In general we do not object to modernist design as long as it is an architectural improvement to the environment.

Amanda Frame, Chairman, Planning Committee

**Further information:**

Planning Information Office, Town Hall,  
Hornton Street, London W8 7NX  
Planningline: 020 7361 3012  
E-mail: [planning@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@rbkc.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning)

## Our Village

If London is a group of districts, most districts are a collection of villages. This certainly applies to much of Kensington, and one's local 'village' can be an effective antidote to the stresses of city life. Our particular one runs from Kensington Square eastwards to Kensington Court and Court Place. Its main artery is Thackeray Street – a significant name in Kensington. At one end is a blue plaque for Talleyrand and at the other one for T. S. Eliot. In between there is a surprising variety of goods and services, and some local colour.

We have a French mosaic specialist with artists visible through the windows; an Italian coffee shop, delicatessen and restaurant; a Parisian patisserie, café and restaurant; two well-known art galleries, and a quality print and framing shop; a black and white photography studio with intriguing window displays; a well stocked saddler for riding and polo gear; two hairdressing salons and a beautician; a dry-cleaner with a seamstress; several real estate agents, one of which promised to sell caviar but changed its mind; an Iranian bookshop/news agent, and another newsagent opposite; a typical corner grocery store; a parking garage; and one empty shop. If we go around the corner at either end we find bridal gowns, printing services and more dry-cleaning. Above, rise middle-sized red-brick mansion blocks so characteristic of this part of the Borough and all this in a one-way street just a few yards long.

The cafes now have tables and chairs outside, which adds to the slightly continental air. The background to the west is the plane trees of the Square, and to the east it is the 'Old Pump House', which became residential but was originally a pumping station for water from the Thames for, it is claimed, the first hydraulic lifts in London.

One can scarcely walk down our village street without passing the time of day with a friend or acquaintance; the shopkeepers know us,

and it is all very cosy and comfortable, and long may it stay that way. Do you have a much-valued little street like this? If so do tell the Editor and share it with us.

Sir Ronald Arculus



Electric Lighting Station, Kensington Court in 2005

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDWARDES SQUARE

In May 1811 Louis Leon Changeur, builder and developer, signed an agreement with the Rt. Hon William Lord Kensington, permitting Changeur to build on part of Lord Kensington's estate south of Kensington High Street. The Square was named after William Edwardes, Lord Kensington's father. Changeur started to lay out the Square in 1811 but fifteen months later in November 1812 he was declared bankrupt. However the development continued, probably under the direction of the Committee of Trustees of Kensington Turnpike Trust, and was completed in 1819.

The rumour that the Square was built by a Frenchman to provide 'cheap little houses' for the officers of Napoleon's army in anticipation of their successful invasion of England, perhaps arose from confusing the name of Changeur with Colonel Charmilly who was denounced by Earl Gray in the House of Lords as an agent of Napoleon for transmitting false information to the British Army in 1809.

The garden of Edwards Square was laid out in 1819 by Paul Alexander Sack who later became Director of the National Botanical Gardens in Buenos Aires, but others say by Augustino Aglio, an Italian artist and decorator who lived in the Square at number 15. In July 1819 an Act of Parliament was passed for 'paving, cleansing, lighting, watching, watering, planting and otherwise improving Edwardes Square'. Twenty two



The Temple in Edwardes Square circa 1930

trustees, chosen from residents, were appointed to administer the provisions of the Act. The gardener's lodge or 'The Temple', as it is known, dates from this time, and is still used for its original purpose.

In 1851 the management functions were transferred to a new body of elected Commissioners by the Kensington Improvements Act, and the maintenance of the garden was transferred to a garden committee of residents in whom the ownership of the railings, trees and shrubs was vested.

In 1908 the freehold of Edwardes Square and Earl's Terrace was bought by a speculator, The Amalgamated Estates Ltd., with the intention of demolishing Earl's Terrace and building over the whole of both sites when the 99 year lease fell due in March 1910. Consequently the Garden Committee ceased to maintain the garden after 1908, and instead, it accumulated funds for the payment of possible future claims for dilapidations. When the dilapidation orders were served, the Garden Committee representing the residents issued a writ against The Amalgamated Estates claiming the right to maintain the garden for the benefit of all the residents regardless of the fact that they did not own the freehold. The judge held that operation of the Acts of 1819 and 1851, which conferred upon the Trustees and the Garden Committee respectively all rights of management of the garden, was not limited to the duration of the lease but was perpetual. As a result of this, the Garden Committee went to court to uphold their rights successfully at appeals in 1910 and 1912, thus preserving the Square for us today.

The garden's appearance has altered very little over the years and is considered by English Heritage to be of exceptional importance, and was duly listed grade II\* in October 2003 affording it protection for future generations.

*Editor's Note: All efforts have been made to trace the author of this piece and we hope publication does not cause any offence.*



## Open Squares Weekend June 10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> 2006

For the last seven years, the London Parks and Gardens Trust, with the support of English Heritage, has organised a weekend during which, by agreement with the residents, many of the privately owned squares in London are opened to the public. In 2005 104 squares took part in the scheme

Tickets cost £5 and are available at a number of sources throughout the capital that are advertised nearer the time. The ticket comes with an explanatory brochure and map, and gives the right of entry to each and every square in the scheme. Some squares offer facilities, including music, refreshments and guided tours. Kensington has 25 such sites, and we last year produced a local map with explanatory text, covering the Royal Borough, which has been handed out to our visitors.

In 2005 we received over 5000 visitors and raised £22,425. As agreed in the past, half of this was retained by the Trust for charitable purposes; the remainder was distributed to the participating squares, at the rate of £50 per half day opened. Feedback from both visitors and hosts has been very positive, and the project continues to grow.

The Trust is always pleased to hear from residents' committees of squares that are interested in taking part in the scheme. Information and application forms are available from:

London Parks and Gardens Trust  
Duck Island Cottage, St James's Park, London SW1A 2BJ  
Tel & fax: 020 7839 3969  
E-mail: [office@londongardenstrust.org](mailto:office@londongardenstrust.org)

Adrian Marston,  
LPGT Co-ordinator for Kensington & Chelsea

## News from the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership

2005/6 sees the end of the government's provision of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds to the Borough. As the programme of NRF-supported projects nears completion, improvements which have recently been made in North Kensington include a new archway entrance to Sunbeam Gardens in the Dalgarno Estate; new signage in Meanwhile Gardens; the creation of a 'pocket park' on a plot of land between Elkstone Road and Golborne Bridge; artwork under Carlton Bridge over the Grand Union Canal; and the completion of work on Portobello Bridge, which has received an award from the Council's 2005 Environment Award Scheme. A similar refurbishment of the bridge by Ladbroke Grove station should soon be underway, and the first stage of the consultation about improvements needed to Golborne Bridge has been completed.

Local young people have been helping with the design of a safe running/walking route, and they are being involved with a local



Underneath Carlton Bridge

creative writer in a poetry scheme intended to improve the route between Portobello and Golborne Roads. With the aid of a local environmental group, a booklet 'Front Gardens Matter' has



been produced to encourage the creation of wildlife friendly spaces in an urban environment.

In addition to making an input into these and other projects, the North Kensington Environmental Manager is taking a lead part in the promotion of the 'Cleaner Greener' initiative which brings together landowners, businesses, residents, the Council and the police to define responsibilities for apparently neglected land and establish methods of working together to tackle problems of litter, dumping and graffiti, issues which affect the quality of life of those living in the area. It is to be hoped that the 'Cleaner Greener' scheme will receive support, as part of a programme to improve the streetscape, within the Local Area Agreement (LAA) the Council is negotiating with the government. One of the aims of the LAA is the achievement of better outcomes than would otherwise have happened, and there will be some funding to help targets to be met, with an overall emphasis on reducing fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and on empowering local people to have a greater influence over decision making and the delivery of services.

This is familiar territory in the case of those concerned in the preparation of the Borough's recently published Community Strategy, which contains aims resulting from wide ranging consultations. A main environment and transport aim is to deliver services and work with local people day by day to make



The organic garden in Kenley Walk

the Borough a pleasant place to be in. The means identified to help meet this aim include creating and maintaining well designed, well managed, clean and safe streets and public areas; and

encouraging people to be considerate towards their neighbours, to take pride in their area and to join in efforts to improve it.

The Partnership's Steering Group will need to work out in the delivery plan for the Strategy how these tasks can be carried out, and any support arising from the LAA should certainly help to reinforce their efforts.

Celia Rees-Jenkins

Kensington Society representative on  
the Partnership Steering Group

**Further information:**

Telephone: 020 7361 3671

E-mail: [info@kcpartnership.org.uk](mailto:info@kcpartnership.org.uk)

Website: [www.rbkc.gov.uk/kcpartnership](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/kcpartnership)



Meanwhile Gardens in 2005

## Licensing and Casinos in 2005

During the extraordinarily compacted six months from 7 February to 6 August within which licensees had to re-apply, we supported local residents in their objections to certain pub applications which we regarded as test cases. Owing to massive local objections and on occasion this Society's vigorous support for residents, some licensees withdrew their applications for late night and special period late licences. This is obviously much to the good of those living near pubs in primarily residential areas. Where residents failed to make their voices known, the RBKC Licensing Committee had no recourse but to grant the application. Late night licensed premises are therefore patchily spread over Kensington, and we can only hope that this will not lead to late night carousers proceeding merrily but noisily from closed premises to those still open. If such nuisance does occur, diaries should be kept, and complaint made to the Council's Licensing Team, with your evidence and that of your neighbours.

In a not too dissimilar vein, we noted in September that HMG had signalled that it was prepared to allow **Las Vegas-styled super casinos** in Britain, provided that the demand comes from MP's and local authorities. Accordingly, we wrote at once to the Leader of the Council, copying our letter to Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP, to place on record that the Kensington Society on behalf of residents would deeply deplore any move by the Council in this direction. The reasons are obvious and numerous, and they do not require rehearsing.

Robin Price

### Further Information:

Licensing Team at 37 Pembroke Road London W8 6PW  
Telephone 020 7341 5152  
E-mail: [licensing@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@rbkc.gov.uk).

The licensing pages on the Council's website are extremely informative including information on all current applications and how to make an appeal  
The address is [www.rbkc.gov.uk/licensing](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/licensing)



Morris dancers outside the Elephant & Castle, May 1965

**Editor's note:** *As many of you know most Kensington pubs have long and interesting histories and we would like to feature some of them in next year's report. Kensington Local Studies have an excellent collection of prints and photographs which could be used to illustrate short pieces from members on their favourite local watering hole. All contributions will be gratefully received and can be e-mailed to me directly at*

[c.starren@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:c.starren@ukonline.co.uk)  
or by post to 15 Kensington Square,  
London W8 5HH

## SOUTHERN KENSINGTON: FROM LANDED ESTATES TO VICTORIAN TERRACES

Between 1848 and 1888 Kensington underwent a spectacular transformation, leading Kensington historian Loftie to comment in 1888 that, "During the past few years the changes in Kensington have been so great that I doubt if anyone who knew his way in it 40 years ago would know his way now". This article is the first part of the story of how and why the owners of the Great Estates of Southern Kensington transformed their land from fields, nurseries and market gardens to the roads, terraces and squares that now dominate the area.

### Southern Kensington before 1851

To fully appreciate the scale of the developments a picture of the area prior to the 1851 Great Exhibition will help to set the scene. Early land use maps show the area almost entirely occupied by market gardens and nurseries from Brompton to Earls Court. Market gardens supplied London with fresh produce along lanes that were frequently congested with 'the carriage of produce from market gardens and heavy return loads of manure'. Twenty years later the 1843 Tithe maps show that 57% of southern Kensington was still under cultivation

Even more important were the nurseries many of which had national and international reputations. The most famous was Brompton Park, originally set up by London and Wise, covering some 100 acres. Other famous nurseries include Furber's 40 acre site between Victoria Road and Gloucester Road, famed for its fruit trees, roses and annuals for seed; Harrison's nursery in South Kensington; Selwoods, opposite the Queen's Elm, where Rugergall grew the first lettuces in England and Cromwell's Garden Nursery around Gloucester Road specialising in fruit, especially apples and grapes. The last

nursery to succumb to bricks and mortar was Wills and Segar in Old Brompton, which until recently maintained a florist shop on Old Brompton Road.



Parish map of Kensington 1848



Parish map of Kensington 1879

### Residents and their homes

Large villas with extensive lands and smaller cottages were to be found along the lanes as the charming paintings of William Cowen, who lived in Gibraltar Cottage in Old Brompton from 1846-c.1861 show. Brompton with its seclusion, large villas and gardens was particularly popular with those of gentle refinement wishing to escape the London smog. Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, who moved into Clareville Cottage in 1847 wrote to her mother that, "we live most delightfully, rather far from the city, where all is still and restful; the air is splendid and there is a garden in which birds are singing the whole day long and the trees are so fresh and green". I doubt that any resident of the Old Brompton Road today would recognise this description. Earl's Court was even more rural with a single farm stretching westwards to Counter's Creek and the old manor house still standing on the west side of Earl's Court Road, today



the site of Earl's Court station. A few large houses namely Earl's Court House, home to the celebrated surgeon John Hunter; and Earl's Court Lodge, the Gunters' family home, locally referred to as Currant Jelly Hall, dominated the eastern side. Other attractions were the inns, such as the Bell and Horns and the Hoop and Toy on the Alexander Estate, and pleasure gardens such as Florida Gardens where townies would come to relax and enjoy the clean air.

### Early developments



Brompton in 1837, a watercolour by an unknown artist

There were some building developments prior to 1851 particularly in the south east including Brompton Square in 1821 and Alexander Square in 1826. The exception in the west was Edwardes Square, built in 1811 by Louis Changeur, falsely rumoured to be for the exiled supporters of Napoleon. Small compact sites with frontages on main highways were seen as ideal development prospects as shown by Ware's purchase in the 1820s of the old Selwood Nursery, an excellent example of a late Georgian enclave, and the Lee Estate where 75 modest sized villas with large gardens were built in Clareville Grove and Street.

In the 1840s extensive work was undertaken on the Alexander and Henry Smith Charity Estates and land values of £50 per acre per annum were the norm. On the Day Estate buildings

were erected in Drayton Gardens and Hereford Square. Kensington New Town was also appearing on the Inderwick and Vallotton Estates. By 1851 the transfer from rural parish to city suburb was well underway as Leigh Hunt states in 1855 that, 'Kensington is only now giving up its green ghost before the rise of new building'.

### Legacy of the Great Exhibition



The Opening Ceremony of the Great Exhibition on May 1 1851

The Great Exhibition of 1851 is often quoted as the determining event that changed forever the landscape of southern Kensington. The exhibition was an outstanding success, attracting thousands of visitors every day between 1 May and 11 of October and making a profit of £186,430. These funds enabled the Commissioners to purchase 87 acres of land. Skilful negotiations with the surrounding estate owners gave them a consolidated block of land to develop. Their first act was to lay out roads, as access had been seen as the key difficulty for those attending the Exhibition. By 1856 Cromwell Road, Exhibition Road and Queen's Gate had been laid out by Thomas Cubitt and the name South Kensington formally adopted. However, their primary objective was to fulfil Prince Albert's wish to 'create a cultural and educational quarter where arts and sciences could be promoted and taught to be of

practical use to industry'. Once again it fell to Sir Henry Cole to make the Prince's aspirations become a reality. Residential building was seen as a way of increasing profits to support their primary aims but these activities were to have a galvanising effect on the development of the surrounding estates. Further impetus was given as building development became more profitable than horticulture for landowners and land disputes were finally resolved.

### The Coming of the Railway



Gloucester Road Station under construction in the mid 1860s

Access to and within the area was very poor and road tolls, which were not removed until 1864, were a further deterrent. The 1851 Commissioners were the first to tackle the problem followed by landowners who began working together to construct better roadways. However, it was the coming of the railways between 1864-1867 that opened the area up. Desirable residential areas such as South Kensington were very attractive to railway companies and the cheaper construction costs further west acted as an incentive. It can therefore be said that in the south-east the railway companies were responding to developments but dictating them in the west. Some landowners, particularly the Alexanders, opposed the plans as

they had to sacrifice land and houses but they soon saw the advantages. Further west in Earl's Court tracks passed through rural lands and the 'District' was for some time virtually without traffic. Here they acted as a stimulus to building and were more warmly welcomed, especially by the ever debt-ridden Lord Kensington. In 1869 the 3rd Lord Kensington was able to release land in the Cromwell Road area; by 1871 in Earl's Court along with the Gunters; and in 1870 the Alexanders released land in the Gloucester Road area. Between 1865 and 1871 five stations were opened in southern Kensington. The railway was to continue to have a strong impact on future developments.

### Population growth

The effect of rising population and the subsequent demand and supply of housing is a trickier problem as frequently it turns into a chicken and egg debate. Perhaps a few statistics taken from the census figures for Kensington best illustrate the point. In 1841 there were 26,834 residents; by 1861 this had risen to 70,108, and by 1881 to 163,151 – a six-fold increase. By 1901 the population was 176,628. One fact that is beyond dispute was the desire of the wealthy to move out of the noisy, polluted and crowded city centre with their large families and armies of servants and others to cater for their needs.

But who were the great landowners and how did they come to own their lands. The story continues in next year's report....

Carolyn Starren



## The Kensington Society School Prize

The Kensington Society offers two Competition Prizes in memory of Mrs. Gay Christiansen, to year 10 and year 11 pupils attending any secondary school, state or independent, situated within the former Royal Borough of Kensington who, in the view of the judges, produce the most interesting and best-presented entry.

The title this year was: 'Imagine yourself walking down Kensington High Street, London W8 on Monday 28 June 1897. Describe what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch in 1000-1500 words.' The winner in the senior category was Alexandra Tompson, a pupil at Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle, and her entry follows.

### Quelle Journée! (What a Day)

'Oh! La La!' I have arrived in London, it is Monday 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1897 and the capital of the great British Empire is still celebrating, with a huge public outpouring of affection, the Diamond Jubilee of the longest reigning British Monarch. This is also by request of Joseph Chamberlain, a festival of the British Empire; the Queen is also of course the Empress of India, and the Prime Ministers of all the self governing colonies were invited along with their families to the celebrations which began last Tuesday on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at St. Paul's. The procession in which the Queen participated included troops from each British colony. I have just read this in the Illustrated London News, which was given to me by my British host and friend George.

I am now strolling down Kensington High Street fascinated by

the earnest love expressed by the people for their Queen. The roofs and windows are rippling with red white and blue, street organs are playing to Leslie Stuart's 'Soldiers of the Queen'. People are relaxed, enjoying a rare Monday off work, and everyone seems to be wearing in the lapels of their coats enamel portrait-buttons of the Queen and the Royal Family. London is celebrating the Royal Reign! Personally I don't believe in figureheads, monarchy has been and gone.



Shops on Kensington High Street decorated for the Jubilee

The horse trams and the hansom cabs with their crystalline bells and spattering hoofs pass me by and the smell of horses is invading my nostrils, strongly reminding me of stables back in Louveciennes. Why horse-drawn carriages still throng the streets, despite the recent invention of the horseless carriage, I will never understand. Queen Victoria has declared: "I am told that they smell extremely nasty and are very shaky and disagreeable conveyances altogether" 'Pauvre femme'. Though apparently she is very interested in new inventions according to my English friend George. He told me that Her Majesty enjoyed the railways, but how can she be so negative about horseless carriages is beyond my understanding. Fussy woman.

What the British see in her I have no idea, is it her dignity, her musical and drawing talents or her clever understanding of the British political system? I imagine her as a small figure, dressed in black, mourning for Albert. Although apparently a few years back, Benjamin Disraeli managed to coax her into public life again by using his flattering tactful ways Victoria loved. She must miss him.

What's all the fuss about? "Buck up will ya" Yuss, yuss" "Do ya see what I mean? Buck up" A woman riding a bicycle! I noticed the tyres are made of rubber. Oh but of course! Queen Victoria is not a fan of women's rights; it makes her furious to even think of women having such ideas, and so passers by obviously feel free to jeer at unconventional women. Yet I'm walking down High Street Kensington in London, the centre of an Empire, 'au nom d'une pipe!'

That reminds me of the pipe for George, I've just got to find the shop but what a difficult task! I'm swimming through never ending silk hats, frock-coats, beards, curled moustaches, 'choker' collars, leg-of-mutton sleeves, veils, bonnets, trailing skirts... It's striking to see the contrast between the very wealthy and the others leading a hard life dressed in rags. How unfair and shocking it is that some are fussing over the colour of their hats while others are busy earning their bread as boot-blacks, match girls and newspaper sellers.

Although today the contrast is not as striking as it was yesterday, the city of extreme wealth and extreme poverty has merged into a city of joy, pride and celebration. A delicious smell of food, roast beef more precisely makes me realise how hungry I am. I look longingly through the window, from where the appetising smell emanates, and I see a happy sight of a large family gathered round a table.

What time is it? I dig in the front pocket of my coat, in search of my gold pocket watch. It's not there. I look round in irritation. The miserable sight of a boy, of around ten, carrying an

overloaded bucket of coal, dressed in filthy clothes, brings tears to my eyes, 'quelle misere'. I realise how much I love 'my douce France'. His misery confirms the tales of a dingy, over-crowded London of turmoil and clatter, of thieves and factory children dressed appallingly, of fog and dust, of tired horses going back and forth never ending dirty streets longing for a break at the trough. This is all too overwhelming; an urge to help the poor boy engulfs me. I search in my pockets for a few coins, the thief hasn't grabbed those. I still have a few pennies and a gold Sovereign. The Sovereign looks like riches, its very gleam gives promise of good things, its weight is reassuring.

I run towards the child, bumping into a few gentlemen on the way. Oh! Let them scowl over their now crumpled coats. "Boy, boy wait!" he looks at me. His young brown eyes evoke despair, as well as his determination to survive. I smile at him. His face softens. He looks straight into my eyes and says in a trembling voice "Sir, I'm sorry." Gripping his hand firmly, the touch of it saddening me even further, for it was skinny and weak, I hand him the few coins I have, including the gleaming Sovereign. His face illuminates with relief and joy, as he returns my pocket watch.

"Jean-Louis!" George, oh no! I forgot to buy him the pipe and I have no more money. "Jean-Louis, where have you been for so long? I have been waiting for you, you weren't lost were you, not between here and Edwardes Square? It's so close. Anyway I brought you some Ladies Delights, a very English biscuit, in case you're feeling hungry. It's too late to go back home, for we would miss Her Majesty."

These aren't half as good as our French patisseries. They are much too sweet and don't look as nice. I kept my thoughts to myself or else I would offend my British friend George. Keeping silent I rush after him through the crowds towards St. Mary's Church. Fortunately he is too preoccupied to mention the pipe. My friend informs that the Queen is on her way from Windsor to Buckingham Palace, to attend the Garden Party and that she is

shopping at Kensington, to visit her place of birth. I find the scene outside St Mary's Church deeply moving, crowds are cheering their septuagenarian Queen, who is, I am told, confined to a wheelchair. Her subjects are proud of her, and they are proud to be British.

In the carriage I can only just distinguish four figures I am so far back in the crowd, George tells me I am lucky to see anything at all, the British ceremonial is adorned by the music of Edward Elgar, beautiful! Her Majesty receives a splendid bouquet of roses at the hands of the Princess Louise, everyone falls silent as The Queen replies to the Marquis of Lorne holding on to every single word pronounced "I thank you for your loyal and kind address it gives me great pleasure to receive the



Queen Victoria at St Mary Abbots Church in 1897

assurance of devotion and goodwill from the inhabitants of Kensington and I gladly renew my associations with a place which as the scene of my birth and of my summons to the throne, has ever had, and will ever have with me solemn and tender recollections". Her Majesty is now driving on to the Palace; there are thousands and thousands of children singing God Save the Queen. The crowd joins in.

"My friend, you have just seen the Queen of the greatest Empire on earth", I can't help replying. "I am proud of being French" 'Quelle Journée!!!'

## What's new on and about Kensington?

### Internet sites

[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)

We certainly hope that members have found the Society's excellent website. At the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies' media awards on 15 November 2005 the Society was awarded second prize for its website. It was particularly commended for being "a clean looking website with straightforward navigation, good use of colour and a list of events that were up to date." Here you can find details of the Society's activities, past and present, and also details of current planning concerns amongst other things. Well worth a visit.

[www.rbkc.gov.uk/virtualmuseum](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/virtualmuseum)

This is the brainchild of Cllr Barry Phelps and brought to fruition during his Mayoral year. It contains sections on Blue Plaques, all 150 of them, a short history of the Royal Borough and a history of its local government. There are copious illustrations, mainly sourced from Local Studies, all of which can be enlarged to show more detail. The content was provided by Carrie and Nick Starren. Phase 2, which is currently under construction, will contain a trail and a then & now section.

[www.londonfacet.net](http://www.londonfacet.net)

Funded with Lottery money via the New Opportunities Fund FACET aims to give a picture of many aspects of life in Kensington & Chelsea. Working in partnership with several local organisations, including Westway Development Trust, Institut français and Harrods, the site provides access to hundreds of images and stories arranged in six key areas: Art

& Culture, Entertainment, Neighbours, Shops & Shopping, Spaces and Places, Travel & Transport.

### **RBKC Planning Department Publications**

Best known for Conservation and Strategy statements, recently the Department has produced some interesting publications on special topics. These include:

Kensington & Chelsea Town Hall by Michael J French, FRICS, DipTP, MRTPI

Artists' Studios by Kate Orme, Senior Conservation and Design Officer

Notting Hill Hippodrome: London's First Racecourse 1837-1841 by Cllr Jeremy Edge.

They are all extremely informative and well illustrated and available at the Planning Information Office on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Town Hall, price £6.00 for residents.

### **Local Studies at Kensington Central Library**

Early this year the transfer of Chelsea Local Studies materials and archives to the Central Library was completed. The integrated collection has led to an improved service for all those interested in family and local history. The Local Studies and Archives department is situated on the first floor at the end of the Reference Library.

The opening hours with effect from April 1 2006 will be: -

Monday	1.00 - 6.30	Thursday	1.00 - 6.30
Tuesday	1.00 - 6.30	Friday	1.00 - 5.00
Wednesday	1.00 - 5.00	Saturday	1.00 - 5.00

Before visiting you are advised to contact the department on 020 7361 3038 to book an appointment and check on the availability of materials.

## **The Redoubtable William Chambers Leete: an exceptional Vestry Official**

While cataloguing the Vestry records held in the Local Studies Department a small sketch book of cartoons by an anonymous clerk was discovered. These depicted the Vestry officials carrying out their administrative and social activities. A close examination of the Vestry Minutes enabled identification of many of the characters portrayed; but one person, William Chambers Leete, stands out. The following is a summary of his 34 years of service as illustrated by some of the cartoons.

In late 1889 the Finance Committee learnt that the incumbent Vestry Clerk, Mr. Harding, is unable through ill health to continue. Mr. Burton, an internal appointment, takes his place temporarily but he too falls ill. The Vestry minutes relate that soon after the Vestry Clerk's position has been advertised, 89 applications have been received. A committee agreed to reduce this to a shortlist of four, 'believing that in the latter number are included a sufficient number of gentlemen of high moral tone, of good ability and of large experience under somewhat similar conditions.' William Chambers Leete, 32, the Chief Clerk to the Vestry of Islington, is elected as Vestry Clerk, after the four candidates have been questioned, upon the third round of voting.



Portrait of William Chambers Leete  
in ceremonial dress

The laboured appointment of William Chambers Leete was to prove a wise one: he oversaw the Vestry's transformation into a Metropolitan Borough, and he remained in post until 1923. In 1901 the census enumerator finds a 44-year-old London-born William Leete at 48 Holland Park Road, Kensington, along with his 35 year old wife Ava, and their children Jessie and Beatrice, 17 and 15. Also recorded as living in the house are Elizabeth Lawrence, 28, a servant cook, and Minnie Young, 27, a house and parlour servant. Chambers Leete appears in the *Royal Blue Book* of 1901 as a resident at the same exclusive address, and he remains listed there in the London and Kensington directories until 1921/22. The Council minutes confirm that he retired in March 1923.

The minutes of the Vestry and its departments were taken by its clerks. These men (always men) initially started out in 1855 as a group of 5: one clerk of works, three assistant clerks, plus the long-serving Clerk of the Vestry, Reuben Green; by 1900 this had grown to a corps of 30 men graded from first to fifth class and spread across the clerk's, accounts, surveyor's, public health and lighting departments. The higher-ranking clerks were legally trained and commanded a salary of the same magnitude as that of the other head Vestry officials. The clerks' responsibilities included minute-taking, administrative duties and the compilation of minutes and reports. This last duty changed significantly in 1888 when the Vestry's minutes were printed for the first time; an acknowledgement of the new skills required to do this job can be traced through the changing skills required from applicants to clerkships. After the advent of printing, the assistant's duties are to read and revise printer's proof and to index minutes: the indexes, with the first printing of the Vestry minutes, become much fuller and hence more useful for the researcher. The clerks' duties went far beyond the merely administrative: Chambers Leete regularly represents the Vestry at the Middlesex Petty Sessions, bringing summonses against the residents of Kensington, for example against landlords under the Common Lodging House Act 1852-53 for the non-supply of water.

The South African war was at its height in 1900: the newspapers concentrated intensely on reports from the front line and stories of local casualties. Also appearing regularly were the calls for volunteer training; less well covered, then as later, was the actual experience of these volunteers. The cartoons depict the Vestry's volunteers as an incompetent and reluctant lot, forced into action by the redoubtable Chambers Leete.



Cartoon 'Putting a Foot Down' 1897

In April 1900, the Vestry granted leave of absence of a fortnight for six of its staff to go on volunteer training. As is often the case, it is necessary to go to the papers from the following week in order to get a sense of the actual debate within the Vestry chamber. In the *West London Observer*, the Kensington Vestry report includes details of the Vestrymen Lockwood's ('whether the ratepayers or the colleagues of the young men would suffer?') and Thompson's (the proposal meant the subsidizing of the rates for the volunteering, whereas it had always been understood that the Volunteer force should be supported by the Imperial power) gripes. Chambers Leete defuses the issue by claiming that 'he was sure that the clerks would loyally combine in making up any deficiency in the number of staff, but if outside help is needed, it should be limited as much as possible.'



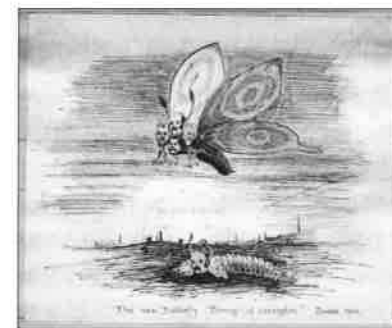


Cartoon 'The First Blast of Incorporation'

The cartoon above shows a clerk on the roof of the Town Hall showering the parish with petitions. As a result of the way in which the first- and second-tier government was arranged, the equalisation of rates meant that the richer parishes were subsidising the poorer. In 1897, the Kensington Vestry Chairman T. W. Wheeler, Q.C., claimed that '£450,000 of the £590,000 raised in taxes in this parish went to other bodies.' The answer for the incorporation movement seemed clear: 'complete secession from the metropolitan system.' The story of the cartoon is told in the Vestry's Report of 1898. Kensington's petition to Parliament, which was presented on 31 May 1897 to the Privy Council, included 9121 inhabitant householders: this represented 44.24% of the total. On 15 October 1897 the Vestry hears, along with Westminster, that their Lordships are not able to recommend granting a charter. On 9 November 1897 the Vestry made the same communication to the Prime Minister. Lord Salisbury affirmed that the document would receive 'careful consideration'. Days later, Kensington sealed a Joint Memorial to the Government, for immediate legislation, which included the seals of 20 vestries. On 21 February 1898, Wheeler introduced a deputation to the President of the Privy Council. The Prime Minister promised action 'as soon as possible.' The matter was even mentioned in the Queen's speech. But, as the report

notes disappointedly, 'up to Lady Day the Bill had not been introduced.' Nevertheless, John Davis points out that, in fact, 'The public burial of the two charter petitions virtually obliged the government to consider legislation, and the London Government Act of 1899 was really conceived at this point.'

Chambers Leete, who by this time had been made an O.B.E., died on 29 December 1929 at the age of 73. The Mayor observed that it was 'especially fortunate that when the present system of Local Government came into being in 1900, Kensington possessed an official so exceptionally qualified by experience and by natural gifts to combine the best of the old system with the many advantages of the new one.' The question of how different the new Council really is from the old Vestry is made by the cartoon below, which sees the Council as a grub with Chambers Leete's face metamorphosed into a butterfly with exactly the same visage.



Cartoon The New Butterfly 'The Borough of Kensington'

At the Council's next meeting after Chambers Leete's death, it was unanimously resolved that 'a letter be addressed to Mrs. Leete expressing the Council's sincere sympathy with her and the other members of the family'. Thus the last piece of the Vestry's business involving Chambers Leete is transacted, appropriately, with the resolution to draft a letter.

David Govier,  
Curator of Maritime Archives (Temporary) National Museums Liverpool,  
previously Archive Assistant at Kensington Central Library.

## Reports from Local Societies 2005

### **Editor's note**

*Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this year's survey of the events. Next year I hope to receive even more reports as it is very important for Kensington Society members to be kept informed of the activities of the local Resident's and Amenity Associations.*

### **Brompton Association**

Yet again South Kensington has loomed large in the work of the Association this year. As this goes to press the future of South Kensington Station is still unresolved but after a two year campaign it is looking more hopeful. Farrells, the architects who have been involved in the site for over ten years, resigned at the end of November. English Heritage and the Borough have gone on record to demand a "**conservation-led**" scheme.

Now that the station is listed the best way to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area is clearly to retain the historic buildings that contribute so positively to it. To demonstrate this the Association published a new illustrated booklet ***South Kensington: the Way Forward*** in December\*. This booklet shows how the station can be conserved, enhanced and modernised in a practicable and viable way. It also illustrates how the area around the tube station can be improved for pedestrians, how traffic flows and bus routes can be rationalised and how the village heart of South Kensington can be rescued from 30 years of planning blight.

The Association has sought to champion the survival of local amenity shops. Small, independent shops add greatly to the unique character of South Kensington. Not only have these been under threat at South Ken but in the Brompton Road. Proposals outlined in a "draft Masterplan" for what its promoters (Brompton Estates and St. Martin's Properties) want to call

"The Brompton Quarter" envisage the Brompton Road frontage opposite Brompton Square along to the V&A becoming a new shopping destination for London with "lifestyle" shops selling kitchenware and fashionable household goods. The Masterplan envisages larger shop units, larger restaurants and very controversially the creation of shops in Egerton Gardens Mews, currently a residential street. The Borough shares the Association's concern at inappropriate rebranding of historic parts of London to promote shopping and is resisting the commercialisation of Egerton Gardens Mews. Local amenity shops are needed on the main Brompton Road frontage if the area is to remain an attractive place to live. More "Clone Town Britain" is not what is needed either in the Brompton Road or in South Kensington.

Licensing applications have loomed large this year as pubs, bars and night clubs seek to gain longer hours and enhanced usage under the new rules. The Borough has generally been sympathetic to residents' concerns about noise and nuisance and the extensions granted have, on the whole, been within limits that hopefully will not cause too much further aggravation.

The major plan for Exhibition Road is marching forward. We await detailed designs with interest. However beguiling the artist's impressions being circulated to residents, the impact on the area should not be underestimated.

Sophie Blain, Chairman

\* Copies of ***South Kensington: The Way Forward*** are available from the Brompton Association  
c/o 23 Brompton Square, London SW3 2AD.

### **Campden Street Preservation Society**

This beautiful street in a Conservation Area is constantly under threat from property developers. 70A Camden Street called 'Bluebird Cottage' was a charming, small family house on two floors. It had been re-built recently, but the property developers wanted another storey. The Campden Street Preservation

Society put up a spirited fight, but we lost at the planning meeting just before Christmas 2004. The developers then virtually demolished the house before they had applied to neighbours about party walls, so they have been unable to build.

And now more property developers are trying to buy 54 Campden Street, at the top of the street. They have applied to demolish a perfectly habitable family house, with a lovely walled garden and replace it with a large and ugly three-storey house. The glory of 54 Campden Street is the long artists' studio, which was used by Dame Marie Rambert as her ballet school from 1920 to 1927. After that she moved to the Mercury Theatre in Lansdowne Road. The house itself was built by the Canadians to a very high standard and we are trying to get it Listed.

We attended the judicial enquiries into the 24-hour opening of local pubs. The Churchill Arms is very well run by Gerry, who master minds the award winning displays of lovely flowers all around the outside of his pub. At the Enquiry it was agreed that the Churchill Arms should close at 11pm except on Thursday, Friday and Saturday when it will close at midnight. Opposite this pub are charming little shops selling antique china, silver and interior decorations. The last shop displays the Royal Warrant of HRH The Prince of Wales.

Evelyn Ellison, Chair

### **Cornwall Gardens Residents Association**

The Cornwall Gardens Residents Association had another successful year in 2005. We draw our membership from Cornwall Gardens, Cornwall Gardens Walk, Cornwall Mews South and Cornwall Mews West. Membership costs just £10 a year.

We are perhaps best-known for organising the annual Summer Party in the central garden. After a disappointment in 2004, when the lawn was re-seeded and the party could not be held, the 2005 party was one of the best ever, with over 250 attending, dancing to the exciting rhythms of Brasiu, a Brazilian band, and

delicious food provided by Jakobs of Gloucester Road.

The Association's Committee continued its main activities, less high-profile but important to our members: commenting on local planning applications and, more recently, drinks licensing applications; working with the Council on local environmental issues such as rubbish collection; and operating our Residents Discount Scheme, under which some 20 local shops, restaurants and other businesses offer their goods and services to our members at a discount. Members are issued with a membership card which provides entitlement to these discounts. Discounted membership of "Friends of Imperial College" is also available, offering bargain-price access to many of the facilities at Imperial College.

All members receive a newsletter, usually three times a year. Most members can be sent the newsletter by e-mail but those without this facility get theirs the old-fashioned way, thanks to the efforts of Committee members who put the printed version into envelopes and deliver them by hand. We also forward Neighbourhood Watch bulletins to members with e-mail and are looking for ways of providing this information in a timely way to our other members.

Many of the apartments in the Cornwall Gardens area are sublet on short rentals. There is quite a high turnover of residents, many of whom are from overseas, and this naturally limits their interest in local affairs. It is therefore gratifying how many temporary residents are so impressed with the attractiveness of the locality that they choose to ally themselves with the Association's work. We shall continue our efforts to preserve Cornwall Gardens and its nearby streets as the delightful place to live that it is today.

Shelley Ian Charik, Chairman

### **Kensington Court Residents' Association**

The most active cause in our area in 2005 was the new liquor

licensing procedure and its effect on our main trouble spot, the Builder's Arms public house.

This was a quiet, friendly 'local' years ago, but now it is out of place in a wholly residential area, and much too small for the crowds of young people who cram into it, spilling out onto the pavements and the road-way, especially in fine weather. It is a good candidate to be closed down, as pubs diminish in numbers generally, in face of competition and other factors.

In the first round under the new licensing procedure, weighted against the residents and in favour of brewers, the Council agreed roughly to keep to the existing hours, and this was welcome to residents. But no restrictions to combat street drinking and its resultant nuisances were imposed. Residents now have to wait until after 24 November to have another crack at the problem. Meanwhile it is vital to collect evidence – times and dates of nuisances, and photographs when possible. The Government is constantly railing against 'binge drinking', street drinking, rowdiness and hooliganism, but resists pressure to change the procedures. PCSO's are one of the remedies claimed, but they do not so far help in our area, nor is any other effective action taken to curb these social evils. We supported efforts by our neighbours (Victoria Road Association and Kensington Square Residents Association) to prevent concessions to offending pubs in their area, close to our own.

The struggle continues, as it does against the extension of the Congestion Charge Zone to include us; the Council is now making counter demands on Mayor Livingstone for additional investment to offset some of the disadvantages the extension would bring.

Sir Ronald Arculus, Chairman

### **Norland Conservation Society**

2004/5 has been a year of real progress - but not without some difficult issues, and heated debate. Following intensive efforts to raise our profile and our membership, we now have 422 paid-

up members for 2005 - more than ever, endorsing the value and importance of our activities on behalf of the Conservation area.

This time last year, we were doing some soul-searching regarding the Way Forward for the Society. At the AGM, our role in safeguarding and enhancing the Conservation Area was whole-heartedly confirmed: in other words, more of the same. The view was clearly that we would be likely to see some very undesirable changes if we relaxed our vigilance.

That this is true is evidenced by at least two cases where we have fought and lost: the complete rebuilding of 13 Norland Place, and the redevelopment of 18 Addison Avenue. Neither property was protected by either listing or Article 4 Direction. We have now obtained an Article 4 Direction on Norland Place, and have asked the Council to seek an Article 4 Direction for the south end of Addison Avenue.

Planning control and protection of the street scene remain, as always, the core of our activities. We are extremely grateful to Robin Price, Chairman of the Kensington Society, and also our Planning Member, for inspecting, reporting on, and giving our comment to the Council on over 70 cases in the past year. This is very demanding on time, requires knowledge of Planning and Conservation powers and practice as well as discretion and cogent powers of expression.

Norland Square Garden Committee has now received their residents' backing to replace their chain-link fencing with some fine iron railings - with financial and Gift Aid support from the Norland Conservation Society. This will enormously enhance the Square, and, in fact, the whole Norland area. They are to be congratulated on taking such a major enhancement decision.

Extension of the Congestion Charge zone is an on-going issue, and seems likely to go the wrong way for Norland. The Mayor of London has ignored some 70% of Londoners who voted against the extension, and is intent on ploughing ahead, against strong and repeated protests from the Council and residents of

Kensington, whose area is effectively the only one affected. So much for democracy and "consultation"... Since it is likely to cost at least £208 per car, (even if it is not used), it seems another tax on Londoners, - many of whom, in the north of the Borough need a car, and can't afford it. From a purely parochial point of view, we can see no apparent benefit for the Norland area, and it could be detrimental: it seems unlikely that the CC Extension will help solve the problem of rat-run traffic, as most of this traffic is likely to be heading for areas in North Kensington which are within the Extension zone. Similarly, we maintain our opposition to plans for the West London Tram, and continue to support RBK&C and the Kensington Society in so doing.

Licensing: A very recent frustration has been the great difficulty of getting close neighbours (within 100 yards) of retail (mostly pubs and restaurants) outlets, which are applying for extended hours, to get together and object. The Society made objections in several cases, and where strongly supported by immediate residents, licensees withdrew their applications. In one case, though the Society objected, residents failed to support, and the Council had no alternative but to grant the licence as requested.

Clive Wilson, Chairman

### **Onslow Neighbourhood Association**

Another busy year. The South Kensington Station saga continues. The developers, Stanhope, having withdrawn their original scheme are now in discussions with London Underground and the RBK&C planners with proposals for a much reduced project. In the meantime the station and arcade have been given a clean up and lick of paint but with no improvement regarding congestion.

An increasing problem for local residents has been the influx of wealthy 'incomers' with grandiose schemes for enlargement of their new properties. In the Wellcome Trust Estate, these have largely

been confined to internal works often the including the joining of together of adjacent flats. The result has been considerable distress to the owners of neighbouring flats caused by noise and dust and on several occasions even damage to their property.

This problem has now spread to the small terrace houses on the former Ware Estate, the Selwoods and Elm Place. These are the oldest occupied properties in the South Kensington area, dating from the early 1820s and are Grade II listed. Two planning applications have been submitted for underground developments, one for a two storey house, half underground, at the rear of 12A Selwood Place and the second, a large excavation at the rear of 20 and 21 Selwood Terrace for a swimming pool with ancillary accommodation. The construction of these, if granted planning approval, would destroy mature trees and planting, and devastate a large part of this group of gardens unique in the area and supposedly protected in the Council's Unitary Development Plan which specifically mentions the value of grouped gardens and their protection. Added to this possible desecration is the nuisance caused to surrounding householders from months of noise from mechanical plant, dust and dirt, and congestion. Also in the long term, because the terraced houses are of frail construction, without proper foundations, they could suffer structural damage due to vibration caused by piling machinery.

On a happier note, our two annual social events, the A.G.M. and summer garden party were both enjoyed by good attendances. At the former, the Rt. Hon. Lord Baker of Dorking, a very welcome newly arrived resident, regaled us with amusing anecdotes from his many years as a Member of Parliament. The garden party was blessed with a warm summer evening attracting a record turnout and we did not have to seek shelter in near by St Paul's Church as in the year before.

The new licensing laws, which will have been implemented by the time this is read, could affect many of our members. The



later opening hours applied for by the majority of licensees in the area will probably increase nuisance from rowdiness at the later (early morning) turning out times. The Council is now the controller of licenses, so any complaints should be made to them. Also keep the Association informed of your problems.

Hugh Brady, Chairman

### **Victoria Road Area Residents' Association**

Last year, it was the arbitrary closure of our local (and profitable) sub-Post Office that exercised us so much. This year, it has been the Government's Licensing Act, which many of us think is lunatic.

However, our record in dealing with applications for hugely extended hours has been remarkable. First of all, we joined forces with the Kensington Court Residents' Association in opposing proposals put forward by the owner of the Builder's Arms and they were rejected. Subsequently, we opposed proposals put forward by the Spirit Group first for the Gloucester Arms and then the Prince Regent (formerly the Black Widow) both within a few yards of each other in Gloucester Road. The first was approved but on a heavily reduced bid so that alcohol will never be sold after midnight. The second set of proposals was withdrawn on the day of the hearing.

What seems so appalling is the fact that companies that own hundreds of pubs throughout the country can put in a blanket application to stay open until 3am for all of them but then where there has been substantial local opposition withdraw all or most of its bid on the date of the hearing. The Council has to spent huge sums of money giving publicity to each application only to find on the day that the application is withdrawn or drastically modified.

Other matters that have concerned us over the year have been:- The efforts of the Kensington Palace Hotel to open a

huge Casino there, suggesting that they do not need planning permission so to do and the decline of the shopping complex in Gloucester Road (North). Were it not for Partridges, we would be seriously worried. Our local chemist, Boots, disappeared - its place being taken by Rymans, the stationers. Apart from that, there seem to be more and more restaurants and charity shops and less and less of other facilities we really want. The recent decline can, we think, be largely attributed to the closure last year of our sub-Post Office.

We have set up a small Committee to look into ways and means of enhancing the area and we hope to work together with other local Residents' Associations. We feel it would be helpful if the Council showed more vision in producing their plans for the future of Gloucester Road (North). We would welcome ideas from your readers.

Peter Dixon, Chairman



Gloucester Road North in 1905

## EVENTS 2006

Members will note that costs have risen but we hope that members will understand that we are obliged to pass on these costs. Guests are welcome at any of these events.

**Tuesday, 4 April 2006**

## The Garrick Club

We tour this quintessential home of the chattering classes, with its unique world-class collection of theatrical paintings from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which includes a splendid wall of Zoffanys. Recently refurbished to a lavish standard, the club is immensely worth a visit. Coffee and biscuits are included. The visit concludes at mid-day.

**Meet at 10.15am inside the entrance  
at 15 Garrick Street, WC2**

**£15.00 per person**

**Tuesday, 16 May 2006**

**Christ Church  
Spitalfields**

This beautiful church has been carefully restored to its pre-1850 condition uncovering the clarity of Hawksmoor's original design. We will have a tour lasting about an hour which will give us the story of the restoration and the history of one of London's very special churches.

**Meet at 11:15am  
at the Church Entrance**

**£17.50 per person**

**Tuesday, 13 June 2006**

**The Vyne, Sherborne St John  
Basingstoke, Hampshire**

Join us for a visit to The Vyne, a National Trust property with beautiful gardens and woodland walks. The house was built 500 years ago for Lord Sandys, Henry VIII's Lord Chamberlain, and reflects the changing tastes and styles in architecture since then. National Trust Members, please remember to bring your cards.

**Meet at Kensington Square**  
**For departure at 9.00am sharp**

**£30.00 per person  
covers transport only**

## KENSINGTON SOCIETY BOOKING FORM

Date	No.	Name of Event	Fee payable
Total			£

1. Please enter your bookings in date order.
2. When you have completed the booking form make out a cheque payable to "The Kensington Society" (crossed "Account Payee only" if not already printed on cheque), and sign it - but do not fill in an amount. However, to protect yourself, write at the bottom of the cheque 'Amount not to exceed £ ' (amount shown in total).
3. Forward booking form, cheque and a stamped addressed envelope to **Mrs Dianne Gabitass, 37 Kensington Place, W8 7PR**. The booking form will be processed and any events not available marked on it. Your cheque will then be completed and banked, and your booking form returned to you in your S.A.E.

**YOUR NAME** .....

**(block letters please)**

ADDRESS .....

Telephone number .....

Please add any suggestions for future visits .....

## Constitution of The Kensington Society

The Constitution appears on the Society's website at  
[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)  
alternatively copies can be obtained from  
The Secretary, 15 Kensington Square, London W8 5HH

## Membership Forms

These are also available on the website  
or alternatively from  
The Membership Secretary c/o Campden Hill Court,  
Observatory Gardens, London W8 7HX

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank  
the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
for granting permission to use their illustration  
throughout the report;  
J W Rogers for the photograph  
on the front cover, Kensington Court and  
The Commonwealth Institute; and McCoy Associates  
for the images accompanying  
the Environmental Awards article.  
We would also like to thank Cllr. Campion for  
taking and providing the photographs of the AGM

## The Kensington Society

### Receipts and payment account for the year ended 31 December 2005

#### 1 GENERAL CORE FUND

	2005 £	2004 £
<b>Receipts</b>		
<b>Voluntary sources</b>		
Subscriptions	6,046.49	5,253.15
Donations	3,570.00	535.00
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Receipts from current year visits	2,263.75	2,324.50
Receipts for future visits	552.50	713.00
Advertising in annual report	500.00	200.00
Interest	<u>2,297.49</u>	<u>1,164.70</u>
<b>total receipts</b>	<b><u>15,230.23</u></b>	<b><u>10,190.35</u></b>
<b>Payments</b>		
<b>Direct charitable expenditure</b>		
Charitable activities	1,100.00	2,421.25
Visits	<u>3,212.77</u>	<u>1,049.65</u>
	<b><u>4,312.77</u></b>	<b><u>3,470.90</u></b>
<b>Other expenditure</b>		
Annual report	3,991.65	2,428.27
Stationery / printing	1,417.63	1,063.53
Postage / telephone	711.43	672.68
Typing	350.96	221.38
Meeting room hire	40.00	149.38
Subscriptions	197.50	105.00
Catering	690.55	237.36
Accounts	475.00	350.00
Insurance	577.50	0.00
Advertising	95.00	85.00
	<u>8,547.22</u>	<u>5,312.60</u>
<b>total payments</b>	<b><u>12,859.99</u></b>	<b><u>8,783.50</u></b>
<b>Net receipts /(payments) for the year</b>	<b>2,370.24</b>	<b>1,406.85</b>
<b>Bank balances B/F</b>	<b>46,250.24</b>	<b>44,843.39</b>
<b>Bank balances C/F</b>	<b><u>48,620.48</u></b>	<b><u>46,250.24</u></b>

The Kensington Society  
Statement of assets and liabilities  
at 31 December 2005

	Princess Alice Memorial Fund £	General Core Fund £	2005 Total £	2004 Total £
<b>Monetary assets</b>				
High interest deposit account	0.00	2.31	2.31	2.31
National Savings Account	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Current account General Core Fund	0.00	4189.59	4189.59	4116.84
CAF Cash account	<u>2370.41</u>	<u>44428.58</u>	<u>46798.99</u>	<u>44501.50</u>
	<u>2370.41</u>	<u>48620.48</u>	<u>50990.89</u>	<u>48620.65</u>

### Treasurer's Report 2005

The Society had another healthy financial year in 2005. The subscription income was £6,046.49 and the Society benefited from generous donations in the amount of £3,570. Income exceeded expenditure by £2,370.85, which was up on the previous year. Cash and Reserves are at £50,990.89 which puts the Society in a strong financial position. The Society will be looking at ways to employ these funds to good effect.

Anthony Lee

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The Blue Cross rehomes thousands of animals each year and provides veterinary care for the pets of people who cannot afford private vets fees.

We rely entirely on donations to continue our vital work. We are grateful to the Kensington Society and especially the support and generosity of the late Mrs Gay Christiansen.



**For more information on our work please contact:**

**The Blue Cross Head Office, Shilton Road,  
Burford, Oxon. OX18 4PF**

**Tel: 01993 822651 Fax: 01993 823083**

**Website: [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)**

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Le Pain Quotidien, the successful Marylebone High Street bakery & restaurant, is now opening in Kensington at 9 Young Street (opposite the East side of Barkers and near The Parking Shop).

To celebrate this event we are offering a free dinner for two consisting of a main course and a glass of wine to 250 members of the Kensington Society. The offer will run for the month of April from 7pm onwards. It is on a 'first come first served' basis and reservations are essential.

Please ring on 0207 376 0967 to leave your name and day time number and we will call you back to make your reservation. Or email us on [dinneroffer@lpquk.com](mailto:dinneroffer@lpquk.com)