

THE

# Kensington Society



## Annual Report 2006

**Front cover** Looking westwards along the Gand Union Canal, photographed by Tamara Cartwright-Loebl in 2006.  
On the north side is Kensal Green Cemetery.  
On the south side part of the Kensal Gas Works site is being redeveloped by the Peabody Trust.  
The appearance of the Canal Towpath has been improved under the 'Cleaner Greener' scheme.

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 2006

# The Kensington Society

PATRON  
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, KG, GCVO

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Michael Bach	Robin Price
Mrs Angela Darwin JP	Ms Celia Rees-Jenkins OBE
Mrs Amanda Frame	Mrs Ethne Rudd
Mrs Dianne Gabitass	Mrs Carolyn Starren
Ms. Valerie Heathorne	Robert Vigars
Charles Lutyens	Ms Loveday Waymouth
Anthony Lee	George Wightman

CHAIRMAN: Robin Price  
VICE-CHAIRMAN: Ms Celia Rees-Jenkins OBE  
HON. SECRETARY: Mrs Ethne Rudd JP  
HON. TREASURER: Anthony Lee  
PLANNING CHAIRMAN: Mrs Amanda Frame  
MINUTES SECRETARY: Ms Loveday Waymouth  
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Mrs Angela Darwin JP  
EDITOR, ANNUAL REPORT: Mrs Carolyn Starren  
LICENSING: Anthony Lee

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# The Struggle for Kensington

I have been working for much of the two decades or so since I retired from my main career, to help keep Kensington in the civilised state in which I found it when we moved here in 1983. This is a time of change and it may be opportune to review how your Society deals with the problems which, increasingly, arise and beset us.

The Government constantly comes up with new initiatives designed to give more 'freedom' to some, but at the expense of others – often residents like ourselves. The Council has had to make changes in its organisation and scope. The Mayor of London constantly seeks to push his powers further at the expense of councils. Government may seek to take more away from councils. A change of Government or of leadership could bring other moves. So we have to adjust to constant change or the threat of it.

In her time our founder, Gay Christiansen, aided by her Planning Committee, did much of the planning work herself. I asked for her recipe. "Simple," she replied, "I just ask the Town Clerk round for tea in Kensington Square". A delightful formula. Nowadays there are more of us involved, with a variety of expertise, but the problems come thick and fast, and the pressure on those in office is quite intense. So how do the various forces impact upon us?

First, **The Council**; we support them whenever we can e.g. in the (failed) resistance to the extension of the Congestion Charge Zone, or in seeking ways to enhance our High Street. It has had to change its organisation. Power is now concentrated in the Leader and his Deputy, and the few other colleagues who make up the Cabinet. There are scrutiny committees whose Chairmen, as in Parliament, keep a critical eye on Cabinet members. The Council makes use of consultation through focus groups and other means; your Chairman is in close touch

with the Leader, and between us we know many of the relevant Councillors. We join forces with the Chelsea Society, the Brompton & Knightsbridge Associations and others as appropriate. We are consulted on most major questions. Another requirement imposed by Central Government means the replacement of the Unitary Development Plan (to which we contributed much) by the Local Development Framework which is more circumscribed by Government impositions, and which will almost certainly be amended by an Inspector from whom there will be no appeal. We work closely with the Council on such developments as the new liquor licensing regulations, or the Gambling Act of 2005. We are also consulted on parking controls. The Council is increasing the number of PCSOs (auxiliary police), but it remains to be seen how effective they prove to be and to what extent they free the police for more serious work. The Police Sergeant in charge of policing aspects of licensing is also important to residents.

The future health of our **High Street**, in the face of expected competition from the new White City Shopping complex and of a feared loss of trade when we are in the Congestion Zone from next February, is important to us all. Some of us serve on the High Street Working Party which dealt with the changes, and we are now involved in discussing whether there are measures to be taken to strengthen the commercial and economic position, and also to look at the problems of small, local shopping streets which are important to residents. The Leader has set up a Commission on Retail Conservation, on which your Chairman serves, and which is due to report in July 2007.

**Residents' Associations**, for which your Society is a kind of umbrella, know that we will support any serious local campaigns, or matters of planning principle, which have wider implications to justify our intervention.

The **Mayor of London** also impacts heavily on us, not only because of the extension of the Congestion Charge Zone. Transport for London deals with our buses and underground rail

network, and main roads. The Mayor may also support and contribute to major schemes such as Exhibition Road. He wants to get his hands on other Council sectors such as planning in the guise of 'strategic planning' (whatever that may mean). He likes high rise apartment blocks – which we do not.

The **Government** forces the pace on 24-hour drinking, encouragement of casinos, large or small; mobile phone masts; imposition of the Cabinet system on the Council; abolition of the Unitary Development Plan (which was a planning bible) – and so on. The Deputy Prime Minister sought more affordable housing everywhere. The Royal Parks are starved of cash and obliged to use large, sometimes damaging commercial events to raise money. Planning cases we thought we had won are often lost on Appeal to the Secretary of State; the Council is inhibited by having to pay costs on Appeals lost.

So in this combative environment, do we ever win? Well, sometimes and enough at any rate to justify the effort to go on. Your Society has developed a fair amount of expertise and influence which we try to use sparingly. The Council (and indeed MP's and government departments) also counts the number as well as the quality of objections received. In this way we can score a number of successes, including the Princess Diana Garden and Fountain and the excessive proposals for South Kensington station. Personally, having campaigned against the expensive Libeskind extension to the V & A (wrong style in that location), I was very relieved when the plan was scrapped.

We ask for members' support when needed, for a large residents' response can help in some cases, as Residents' Associations also know well. We can punch above our weight and we need to keep up our strength, exercised through numbers and responsible activity. So do also bring your friends into the fold, thus adding to our power to influence authority.

Sir Ronald Arculus, President

## Annual General Meeting 2006

The 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting was held at the Small Hall, Town Hall, Hornton Street, on 27 March 2006. The Society's President, Sir Ronald Arculus, opened the proceedings with an explanation of the change of speaker and venue. He welcomed the distinguished guests including The Mayor, Cllr Warwick Lightfoot, Cllr Barry Phelps, Mr Michael French, Executive Director of Planning and Conservation, the Chairman of the Victoria Road Association, representatives of the Chelsea Society, the Brompton Association and the Knightsbridge Association.

The speaker, Mr Malcolm Shirley, Secretary to The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, was then introduced to talk on 'The Legacy of the Great Exhibition-Where Now?' Sir Ronald commented that this was very topical as interest in 'Albertopolis' was expanding and in view of the proposed redesign of Exhibition Road.

Before beginning with his talk Mr Shirley was invited to present the prizes to the Kensington Society school prize winners. Further details and the winning entry in the senior category can be found on page 65.



Mr Shirley presenting the prize to Nashilu Mouen

Mr Shirley then began his address on the work both past and

present of the Royal Commission. He began with a history of the Great Exhibition itself and went on to list some of the legacies including London tourism, 'The Knowledge' for taxi drivers, the America Cup and the expression 'to spend a penny'. The Commission's plans for the eighty seven acres of land in South Kensington were outlined which resulted in the formation of the great national museums and educational institutions. In 1891 a trust fund for educational awards was set up which continues today. Future developments on the estate were mentioned including the Exhibition Road project. The 1851 Medal was to be reintroduced and awarded to those who had made an exceptional contribution to the work of the Royal Commission and the inaugural medal has been presented to Prince Philip, their President for 45 years. It was an extremely interesting, well structured and illustrated lecture which was much appreciated by the audience.

Sir Ronald then chaired the business part of the AGM. He started by congratulating Carolyn Starren on the new look Annual Report which he described as "84 pages of compulsive reading" a view that was endorsed by the audience.

The minutes of the 2005 AGM as set out in the Annual Report were confirmed and the accounts adopted. The election of officers followed and all were elected unopposed.

The Chairman, Robin Price, then gave his update to the Annual Report.

"I wish I could say it's all in the Annual Report, and sit down. But it isn't and I can't because, unsurprisingly, things have moved on since the report was drafted. I will be as brief as the matter allows.

But first, we hope that you will like the subtly reformatted **Annual Report for 2005**. Reactions so far have been uniformly encouraging, even enthusiastic. We are grateful to Carolyn Starren, formerly Archivist and Local Studies Librarian to the Royal Borough, who took over as editor this year.

**Holland Park School** We expressed considerable concern to

the Council about many aspects of the project. These reservations, and those of others, have been taken on board in a major re-planning exercise, and I understand that revised plans will come before the Royal Borough's Planning Services Committee in the autumn. I must make it clear that this Society, like the Council, seeks the best for the children educated within the Royal Borough. This is a flagship Borough, and we all want it to remain so.



The Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) reported that it was generally satisfied, in practical and contextual terms, with the plans for the **main building**. However, it had reservations about the key-worker housing on the **northern site** and the market housing on the **southern site**. They felt that these need re-positioning and re-designing, a view we support. We hope that the plans in the formal application are substantially modified. Our difference with the Council is about means not ends: though the proposed sale of the southern site remains a highly controversial issue among residents.

**South Kensington Station** The Brompton Association, led by its Chairman Sophie Blain, presented a revised outline plan to senior Councillors and stakeholders for the station and its site, together with contextual suggestions and an outline revised traffic gyratory system. This relatively simple and very practical scheme provides funding for step-free access and for necessary upgrading of the station. Any scheme enhancing this iconic area should be locked into the developing strategies for

a revised local streetscape and the plans for Exhibition Road, and be conservation-led.

**Exhibition Road** We regard the present scheme as innovative and interesting – but in our view it requires some modification of the too strenuous cross-hatching of the roadway. We bear in mind the reservations of residents about the flat road scheme; reactions which have been partly met in the latest draft scheme. We keep a watching brief.

**Vicarage Gate Care Home** remains very much on the agenda, but there is nothing further we can do until the Section 288 Claim (made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) against aspects of the Planning Inspector's Report is heard and decided by the High Court.

**Princess Louise Hospital** Your Vice-Chairman, Celia Rees-Jenkins, has written to the Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trust to say that the Society wishes the site to be retained for the public benefit. At a meeting with the PCT it was made clear that since the site and its hospital had been gifted and maintained by Kensingtonians for the benefit of Kensingtonians, they should be retained for broad public benefit – not necessarily for health purposes. The PCT was entirely sympathetic to that view, and provided a viable local use is identified will recommend retention of the site to the NHS.

A meeting of local residents called by Karen Buck MP was firmly of the view that viable and well-costed public benefit must be identified. Unless that is found the site will inevitably be sold by a cash-strapped NHS. We are all pushing forward towards a community solution. One of our members, Mary Lambert, is much to be thanked and congratulated on taking a very effective local lead on this issue.

**Householder Development Consents Review** HMG is seeking to speed up the planning process by abolishing planning permissions for all householders' applications for additions and alterations to their property – except those relating

to listed buildings. The Council has responded with vigour and is working behind the scenes to modify this totally deleterious and ill-considered revision of planning principles. We too, as has the Chelsea Society, have requested that planning permission must also be required within Conservation Areas.

**ODPM Consultation on Increased Powers for the Mayor of London** We have strenuously opposed these proposals; there is no need for change and local democracy will be heavily eroded by creating a one-person planning committee for all strategic applications. There will be conflicts of interest by a Mayor who both advocates growth strategy, and who seeks to make quasi-judicial decisions in planning applications. Such decisions would certainly be challenged in the Courts, leading to delay and costs – exactly the reverse of what HMG says it seeks. The Council has submitted a detailed and well-argued paper on all the points raised by these extraordinary ODPM proposals.

Now to some totally different topics.

**Pavement cycling** Members may have noticed some diminution in this dangerous and forbidden activity. More than 1000 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued by the PCSOs since the £30 fine was introduced in April 2003. Of these, nearly half have been issued since April 2005.

As to **Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)**, the Borough is investing an additional £1/2 million for additional PCSOs. Eventually, by 2008, we should have ten per ward. This is an aspect of amenity that your Society has been carefully watching and responding to, when called upon.

**Kensington Society School Prize** As we hoped, the entries have increased, even dramatically this year, and they remain of high quality. We feel that the project is a worthy use of the generous sum left to the Society by Mrs Christiansen, and we believe that the schools regard it as a useful and lively stimulus for their pupils. We would like to thank our hardworking judges: Diana Hall, the RBKC School Improvement Advisor, Dave Walker, Local

Studies Manager and our member Shirley Nicholson.

**The Kensington Society Website** is recently updated. Please visit it at [www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org). We are always open to suggestions for improvements but please bear in mind that limited time makes it difficult to update it more than every six months or so. We are more than ever grateful to our enormously helpful webmaster, Cllr David Campion.

**More members** I end with my usual plea for more, active and younger members. We steadily grow in numbers, now at 630, owing to your enthusiasm. Please keep them coming in.

**Next year** we return to the Convent for our AGM. I thank you for your attention and for your continued support."

This was followed by a report by Amanda Frame, Chairman of Planning Committee. "The planning committee consists of Robin Price, Loveday Waymouth and myself. We meet every month to review the current planning applications. Over the last 12 meetings we have reviewed approximately 225 applications. I am sure you do not want to hear the ins and outs of these...and only want the highlights."

She then went on to mention several of the most important issues handled during the past year. **Casinos** remain a growing concern. Although the application to enlarge the Kensington Close Hotel to accommodate a casino was withdrawn, pending applications for Earl's Court Exhibition Centre and the old Derry & Tom's Rainbow Room in Kensington High Street are worrying. **Tesco** presents a multi-level problem; the ATM at the Holland Park Avenue branch will now be relocated but delivery issues are still outstanding. Michael Bach has organised a meeting with the Tesco senior design team within Tesco to discuss shop front design to ensure that it is more in keeping with the overall appearance of existing shop fronts in the Borough. As a result of concern over the negative impact of large corporate operations on small retailers the Council has established a **Commission**, chaired by Cllr Tim Ahern, to

review these concerns and to ensure the preservation of the character of our high streets. A **Portobello Working Group** has also been created and will be chaired by two councillors, Dez O'Neill and Nicholas Paget-Brown. Other matters raised were the multiple applications to install **ATMs** in existing telephone boxes or to allow new installations on the pavement, the proposed development at **100 Cromwell Road** and the increasing number of applications to **excavate rear gardens**.

She concluded by saying, "I would ask that the Planning Committee be consulted when there is a planning problem. We have been most successful in giving advice to our members and support to associated organisations".

- Questions and comments were then invited from the floor. These included:-
- Concern over underground developments voiced by the Ladbroke Association. Michael French responded by saying that the Planning Department shared these concerns and that a condition method statement must be provided before work proceeded. A consultant had been employed to look into the issue.
- Plans for Kensington Odeon site
- South Kensington Station and the importance of a united front on the issue
- Underground parking in garden squares

Proceedings were adjourned at 8.05

Carolyn Starren

### AGM 2007

The Society's Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Maria Assumpta Centre, 23 Kensington Square W8. Doors open at 6.30 and the meeting will begin at 7.00. This year's principal will be Lord Baker of Dorking, who will speak on George IV.

## Chairman's Report

This has been an exceptionally active, varied, and complex year.

Amanda Frame, Chairman of our Planning Committee, reports elsewhere on our **planning concerns**, which range from the Commonwealth Institute, through the Odeon Cinema, excavations, and Holland Park School, to the Vicarage Gate Care Home. She has been particularly active this year, and we owe her a considerable debt of gratitude for the new professionalism she brings to the task and for the time and effort she expends on these often complex issues.

**Matters of Policy** have also claimed us, of which **Warwick Road** is perhaps the most concrete example. We have pressed the Council for some 12 months to consider the implications of its future development. The immediate threat of piecemeal development from no less than three planning proposals and the surprising total lack of a planning brief for the area seems at last to have goaded the Council into belated action. Any future consideration, as we have urged, must take account of the pressing need to consider hard and soft infrastructure for a potentially large-scale and damaging series of developments along the west side of Warwick Road. The site requires a distinguished design for the road as a whole, in relation to height, density, affordable housing on-site, and to green space accessible to residents of the large-scale developments proposed.

For many years we have been increasingly engaged in amenity concerns in the **north of the Borough**, but not entirely to the extent that we would wish, bearing in mind our remit to cover all of Kensington. Institutions to engage with have been lacking. It is good to emphasise that Celia Rees-Jenkins, your Vice-Chairman, has been highly active in representing our concerns in the north through the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership

(for she also represents Chelsea on that body). We continue to hold a watching brief on the **Princess Louise Hospital** site which we wish to remain for the public benefit, as also on the large and significant **Peabody Estate** site and the **Grand Union Centre**. We follow these with the greatest interest. Institutions and groups are now emerging, with which we shall engage in due course.

Further south, we will continue to watch developments for the re-routing of the gyratory system around **South Kensington station** in association with the flat-road redevelopment of **Exhibition Road**. We are well aware of residents' concerns and of those of the partially-sighted, and we keep in touch with both the Brompton and Knightsbridge Associations on these issues. We still await a proposal from London Underground for a modern and appropriate redevelopment of the increasingly shabby, one-storey 'prow' site above South Kensington Station.

In the same area, we share the Brompton Association's misgivings over the re-branding and re-development of the *soi-disant* **Brompton Quarter**, which seems increasingly to imply the elimination from the Brompton Road of small shops useful to residents in favour of large multiple enterprises of little neighbourhood value.

The attempt by the **Mayor of London** to snatch planning powers from local authorities has not found favour with London Councils, nor with the Royal Borough, nor indeed with your Society. We have entirely supported the Council's official response. We note that the distinguished and highly professional London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies has made a particularly powerful and well-articulated formal response which we hope may have some salutary effect on HMG's consideration of this proposal so minatory to local democracy.

As many residents will now know, the Council has set up an independent **Commission on Retail Conservation** to

examine the retail mix in the Royal Borough and to propose ways of protecting and enhancing our local retail areas. Its Commissioners are Cllr Tim Ahern (Chairman, and currently Mayor of the Royal Borough), Andrew Ashenden (until recently Chief Executive of the Howard de Walden Estates), Sir Terence Conran, Peter Simon (of Monsoon and Accessorize), Dennis McCoy of McCoy Associates, and your Chairman who represents the interests of residents. Its initial findings were due to be reported in February 2007, and the final report and recommendations in the summer. It is hoped that the final report will become a standard for this and other UK local authorities in dealing with an increasing menace inimical to the sense of locality, variety and quality of streetscape and retail offerings.

Other major policy concerns remain. It is all too evident that foreign investment has changed, is changing, and will radically further change the residential character of this Borough and very possibly the real engagement which present traditional residents, sometimes of several generations, naturally have with our community. We are seeking ways in which we can mitigate the potentially disastrous effect on community values and activity this will have, and of drawing new residents into this Society and thus into local participation.

Of related interest is our concern to ensure that affordable housing, demanded by the Mayor of London for any residential developments above a certain unit-size, is made available on-site. For a variety of reasons, affordable housing has often in the past been pushed to the disadvantaged north and south of the Borough. This we do not regard as acceptable except in very special circumstances since we all need for every reason to support social diversity rather than ghetto-like seclusion. For this reason we entirely endorse the Council's policy of resisting gated communities.

The **Kensington Society School Prizes** continue as reported elsewhere in this Annual Report. We aim for still greater

participation of schools, already large and growing, and we work towards that end. It has so far proved a successful venture, supportive to the community, and to the schools by whom it can be used as part of the national curriculum.

In noting with regret the imminent retirement of Mr Michael French as **Director of Planning and Conservation**, we thank him for all his support over the many years he has served the Council. It has been a difficult job in increasingly difficult times, and we thank him for his patience in the face of what must often have seemed distinctly intransigent local pressure groups. We wish him a long, fulfilled and happy retirement in his native Yorkshire. His successor, yet to be selected, will be entitled **Director of Planning and Development**, which residents will be reassured to know does not mean encouraging developers. But it does mean that the job will entail a continuing policy overview of Borough planning, a task of escalating importance for many reasons, not least because development is implicit in the HMG inspired LDF which is due to replace the familiar conservation-related UDP. The job will also necessarily entail due concern for the some 75% of the Royal Borough now in Conservation Areas and for our nearly 4,000 Listed Buildings. The Borough concern for conservation will continue to rank of major importance, and it will be our concern to keep it in the forefront of the developing LDF and of all relevant planning considerations.

Turning to your **Executive Committee**, we have co-opted two new members, **Valerie Heathorn**, whose Civil Service career included a number of key policy areas; and **Charles Lutyens**, who has 20 years of experience in international project finance and business development in the natural resources industry. Both are long-term residents of the Royal Borough. We are glad to have them with us.

**Robert Vigers**, Chairman 1994-98, has indicated his wish to resign from the Committee as of the AGM in 2007. We wish to record our gratitude for all his services to the Society, both as a

long-standing member of the Committee and as its Chairman, coming as he did from the demanding Chairmanship of the Planning Committee of the former GLC. We shall miss his wise and learned counsels.

As you will all know by now, we currently seek new, younger and active members of the Society. Please direct your friends, relations, acquaintances, and anyone interested in the work of our Society to our Membership Secretary. £10.00 a year, unchanged for aeons, remains London's best and most attractive bargain.

Robin Price, Chairman



Amanda Frame and Robin Price at the AGM

## The Secretary's View 2006

The work of the Society continues to increase as the number of people who wish to live in the Royal Borough becomes greater. This is an inevitable result of the increasing prosperity of the City. Reportedly bonuses will be at a record level this year – a circumstance that will inevitably reflect an increase in demand for the prime locations in Kensington. This also leads to more people wanting to increase the floor space of where they live, upwards or downwards, which means that our Planning Committee has to look very closely at planning proposals.

Developers are pressing to turn the Odeon Cinema into yet another block of luxury flats. It is a large site and has space both sides and in front. The trees are listed, but were the development to be agreed inevitably the trees would go and be replaced with smaller trees in containers.

The Commonwealth Institute was handed over by HMG to the Trustees in 2001 and until then had made a profit every year. The Foreign Office gave the Trustees £8.55 million. Approx £3m was spent on repairing the roof and the glass walls. The remaining money has been spent and expenditure has exceeded income.

The building is listed Grade II\* so that it cannot be demolished nor the interior altered. Tessa Jowell sent a letter to all involved asking them to help our friends in the Commonwealth and to agree a Hybrid Bill so that the building could be delisted (and thus pulled down). The feeling against this was so strong, that at a meeting at the House of Lords (at which we had a representative) it was agreed that a Hybrid Bill would create a dangerous precedent and should not be agreed.

We now wait for RBKC to publish its report on the possible future of the building and for Norman Foster, the architect, to suggest what he considers might be appropriate. I'm glad to say that there seems to be general consensus that the building should be retained.

Ethne Rudd

## Obituaries

On 6<sup>th</sup> September 2006 Sir John Drummond, President of the Kensington Society from 1986-2001, passed away.

### SIR JOHN DRUMMOND REMEMBERED

There was nothing ordinary about John Drummond, as the many of the obituaries reviewing his life and achievements, were at pains to point out. Drummond was clearly not a man designed for the quietude of anonymity, and many who knew him, mainly from his time as President of the Kensington Society an honorary position he occupied with distinction from 1986 to 2001, will not be too surprised to learn of his occasional tendency to be 'difficult' with colleagues. They will also be aware that, despite the shortcomings prominently raked over by the reviewers, Drummond's contribution to the cultural life of Britain was both significant and undeniable.

His schooling at Canford, where he left with a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, his National Service in the Royal Navy as a coder in the Royal Navy where he took a course in Russian and commissioned as midshipman, were all well-documented by the reviewers. He joined the BBC as a general trainee, and later became a current affairs documentary maker. It is the field of arts that he will be best remembered: his appointments included Director of the Edinburgh Festival (1978-83); Controller of Music, BBC (1985-92); Controller, *Radio 3* (1987-92) and Director of the Proms (1986-95). His predilections for the works of modern classical composers such as Berio, Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies and Messaien were not always appreciated, and he retired from the BBC in 1995.

Drummond's talent for generating conflict, and what David Attenborough, one of his bosses at the BBC, was alleged to have described as his "unlimited capacity for indignation", were character traits that seemed to have dogged his footsteps at almost every stage of his career. The "capacity for indignation"

was not entirely unknown to some of us who worked alongside him in the Kensington Society, and complaints about not being consulted enough by the Committee frequently soured the happy atmosphere in which the volunteer committee members normally went about their business.

My association with John Drummond was based on a shared commitment to the preservation of all that was good about the Royal Borough, of which we were both long-time residents, a shared interest in music, and the fact that we were both recruited to the Society by the late and formidable Mrs. Gay Christiansen. He chaired the Society's AGMs with consummate skill and his passion for architecture and heritage was clear to all. Whatever his faults and idiosyncrasies, his contribution to the cultural life of Britain was undeniably impressive; a fact underlined by his award of a CBE in 1990 and a knighthood in 1995. I suspect, from the little I knew of him, he will not have been too disappointed or put out by what the reviewers said about him. John Drummond died on the 6<sup>th</sup> September after a debilitating illness, tended in his final hours by his lifelong companion.

Harry Morgan

Member of the Council of the Kensington Society

It is with sadness that we report the death of the following members: Diana Goddeson (member since 1996), Mrs Clarice Gurney (member since 2003), C A Molloy Esq. (member since 2004), Miss Rosemary Rowles (member since 1993), Mary Saunders (member since 1998), Col. D Sutherland (member since 1983) and Prudence Taylor (member since 1998).

### Rosemary Rowles

Rosemary Rowles, whose funeral at St Mary Abbots on September 5th 2006 was well attended, will be much missed by her many friends. After graduating from St Anne's College, Oxford she became a chartered surveyor. Rosemary was the first woman to be made a member of the Board of Chartered Surveyors. For her many achievements Rosemary was

awarded an MBE and made a Freeman of the City of London. In 1992 she wrote a history of the St Mary Abbots Church, which was published by Pitkins.

### **George Sivewright 1921-2006**

George was born in Cambridge and educated at Christ's Hospital, Horsham and then served in the Royal Navy from 1939 until 1956. He was a gunnery officer on *HMS Norfolk* in its engagement with the *Battleship Scharnhorst*, and later a Lieutenant Commander stationed in Hong Kong. In civilian life he was chief training officer to the Ship Building Board until 1982, and then Secretary of the Kensington High Street Association until 2000. He was a long standing Church Watcher at St Mary Abbots, and worked for a number of local charities. His wife, Esther, who originally came from the Netherlands, only shortly pre-deceased him.

### **Colonel David Sutherland 1920-2006**

David Sutherland was educated at Eton and Sandhurst. Following his father's footsteps he joined the Black Watch and was sent to France in 1939. His distinguished war service was recognised by the award of the Military Cross and bar. At the age of 21 he joined the Special Boat Services (SBS) and took part in a daring raid on the occupied island of Rhodes in 1942; only 2 of the 12-man unit survived. From 1952-1955 he was an instructor at Sandhurst, and then he joined MI5 working in counter-sabotage. He was deputy commander of the SAS from 1967 to 1972 and, in 1980, acted as advisor during the siege of the Iranian Embassy in Princes Gate.

Family and friends persuaded him to write his autobiography recalling his years of service; *He Who Dares* was published in 1998. In 1946 he married Jean Henderson and they had three children; sadly, his only son, Michael, predeceased him in 2004. Jean died in 1964 and he subsequently married the Polish-born historian Christine Hotchkiss. David Sutherland, aged 85, died on March 14 2006.

## **PORTOBELLO CALLING...**

When Admiral Sir Edward Vernon captured a vital Panamanian port from the Spanish in 1736, London revelled in jubilation, so much so that the owner of Barley Farm near Notting Hill happily renamed his land after that captured harbour. Today nearly three hundred years on this same Portobello is witness to another struggle.

Yet if you glance along Portobello Road you'll see an undulating row of neat three-storey Victorian properties comprising residential flats over narrow shops or arcades that changed little since the *Builders News* in 1866 described these buildings as a speculators, "grave yard of buried hopes". But the eye can deceive, because what was until the mid-1990s a bohemian and migrant backwater with a unique street market is fast becoming the backdrop for a speculators' free for all, one which could soon end the neighbourhood's nature and character.

It's easy to forget that urban character starts somewhere, that there are reasons for its evolution. Back in 1870 soon after the opening of the 'Ragged Union School' the development of Portobello Road as a working street came into being. Some of today's market traders can still trace great-grand parents who were costermongers who marched in 1920 on Kensington Town Hall demanding to be allowed to trade in front of the shops on weekdays. But it wasn't until after the Second World War when antiques traders moved from the Caledonian Road that Portobello Road started to garner its wider reputation.

By the time the 1960s Pop artist Peter Blake found all the props in the market for his seminal *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Clubs Band* cover, the locality was already seen as home to an emerging counter-culture. In 1965 a youth worker, Rhanune Laslett, organised a street parade near Tavistock Road, which became the Notting Hill Carnival. And after Rachman, the slum landlord, was

vanquished the neighbourhood's growing political dynamic contributed to both the 'Fair Rent Act' and the '1967 Conservation Act'. But any such emerging urban harmony was soon broken when in 1970 the Greater London Council sought to clear swathes of North Kensington to build the Westway motorway.

Yet Portobello's patchwork street-market survived. In fact ten years after the Westway calamity came a renaissance. The 1980s saw the opening of many small independent local shops - such as the Books for Cooks, Rough Trade Records, and The Travel Bookshop - which unknowingly knitted together the Fruit and Vegetable, the Antiques, and the growing Vintage fashion markets, into one unique urban footfall like no other. Every Saturday Portobello Road attracts over 40,000 visitors who stroll the market, generating extra revenue for the 200 local



shops and 2000 stallholders alike. Yet this complicated retail ecology is once again under threat, perhaps facing a bigger challenge than even slum housing, compulsory purchase, or celluloid gentrification.

Currently the Portobello Market area is beset by retail hyperinflation and speculation, which is pushing many much-loved sole-traders out. To some this potential change in character is a natural consequence of contemporary London market forces. For many this will seem an urban destruction akin to the demolition of Georgian and Victorian streets and squares in the 1960s. However it needn't be either. With the

emerging Westfield retail behemoth in nearby Shepherd's Bush comes a small window of opportunity to think about what kind of city is right for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More of the 'clone retail' that already governs the King's Road and Kensington High Street, where the ubiquitous fascias of each and every Starbucks and Tesco Express mirror the other, or the converse reality of individual, specialist, and young independent retail?

In Paris, the City Council recognised this dilemma and chose to zone 50% of retail space for small local trades such as cafés and charcuteries. In Italy many towns have adopted the principles of the slow-movement where all shops should support the 'slow culture' of locally produced wares. Yet in London there is no such policy endeavour.

In the 1920s the Ancient Monuments Society sought to preserve the likes of Stonehenge and castles for the nation. By the 1960s this crucial movement embraced landscape and architecture, no matter the cost to the developer. The benefits of such prevention can be seen every day in Kensington's many conservation areas. But as the new century gathers pace something less tangible than outstanding natural beauty or classical facade may now deserve protection.

In Portobello there is a wish that cuts across age and class not to lose a unique retail culture that has lasted and evolved over the best part of a hundred years. One idea could be to create Britain's first '*Business Conservation Area*'. A re-designation that would halt any two shops being knocked into one lateral unit, the prime cause of local retail degradation. Also such a crafted plan would aim to protect and regenerate the principle Victorian shop fronts and awnings whilst recognising the primacy of the street market over any incoming development. Small details perhaps, but enough to preserve this unique London quarter for future generations to live in, come to, and revel in.

Tim Burke, Friends of Portobello

## Echoes of Spain 1936 - 1939

The Echoes of Spain project brought together 15 to 20 local people, who have created a mosaic to celebrate events at a pivotal time in our history: the struggle to defend the Spanish Republic. This was the opening chapter in the fight for democracy and the struggle to defeat fascism. At 5.30pm on Wednesday October 18 2006 over 200 people gathered on the Portobello Road to hear Jack Jones, veteran of the International Brigade who fought to save democracy in the Spanish Civil War, inaugurate the echoes of Spain mosaic memorial. His Excellency Carlos Miranda, the Spanish Ambassador, was one of the guest speakers. He emphasised that their sacrifices were not in vain and that Spain was now a democracy. The Richardson family opened the event with a song about the fight for democracy and against fascism which their mother Hilda had learned in the thirties.



The mosaic which is 5m long and 2m deep, tells the story of the sixteen volunteers who went from Kensington to join the International Brigade and of the Spanish refugees who came to Britain. The

volunteers were Bernard Collins, John Ricordon, Bill Rowe, Frederick Wimbush, Richard Arthur Moss, Lewis Clive, Tony Mclean, Charles T Matthew, Arthur Richard Lydiard, George Creswell Lamb, John Kirkpatrick, John C Horner, W Hooton, Edward Henry Burke, W J Burton and Walter Clasper. Sadly, all the volunteers who went from Kensington have passed on. Two wives of volunteers, Margaret McLean and Mrs Rose, were

present, plus other relations of the volunteers.

Central to the mosaic is the Basque Oak, the symbol of the Basque people. Emerging to the left of the oak is a Russian T40 tank; similar to the one driven by the 17 year old Juan Moreno for the Republic. The group of men is symbolic of the multi-racial International Brigade. Above them, the rowers represent one volunteer Lewis Clive, an Olympic gold medallist in the 1932 games and later a Labour Councillor for St Charles Ward.

To the right is the story the Spanish refugees including ship *The Habana* which brought 4,000 children to Britain. The children lived in 98 colonies around Britain and who were helped by the British people, but not by the Government. Many of them stayed in Britain and some settled in North Kensington.

Also included are cameos of individual experiences, and many of those involved were on hand to relate their stories. Alfonso Santana who also worked on installing the mosaic, spoke of his family's experience when the Fascists attacked during "La Linia", a local fair, and how they escaped into Gibraltar, never to return to their home. Maria Pepa Colomer was a pilot, her mother thought she was having riding lessons, but she was learning to fly and went on to train many Republican pilots. Elvira Medrano told how, as a child, she had hidden in a lorry full of oranges going to the front so that she could see her father. Robina Rose spoke about how her father, Reginald, joined the Spanish army and his adventures in a local amateur bull fight where unfortunately he lost his trousers, much to the embarrassment of his girlfriend who had disappeared when he returned to the stands!

Running through the mosaic is a road. This represents the journey from the Portobello Road, where political activity in support of democracy in Spain was carried out and ends at the Pyrenees, which the volunteers had to cross to get into Spain, dodging the border patrols. The letters represent a campaign to raise the profile of the struggle in Spain by the Brigadiers writing

to their MP's. On the wall is a poster designed by Felicity Ashbee in the 1930s to raise aid for the Spanish people. Now aged 94, she also attended the launch.



The project was run as a class by the Kensington & Chelsea College and designed by Maureen Pepper. Amanda Hayes, the Vice Principal of Kensington & Chelsea College, outlined the college's role in promoting community projects and how they had supported this particular project over a long period of time; 15 to 20 volunteers had worked on it over a three year period. The mosaic was accompanied by an exhibition on the Civil War, and it is hoped to produce a book telling all the stories in the near future. Sponsors of the project included; Kensington & Chelsea College, Westway Development Trust, History Talk, Notting Hill Housing Trust, Golborne United, TGWU ACTS 1/684, International Brigade Memorial Trust and Juan, Manuel and Paco Moreno in memory of their parents.

Eddie Adams  
Convenor of the project

## Environmental Awards 2006

The Royal Borough possesses some of the finest buildings, groups of buildings and townscape in the country. The Council is proud of this heritage and is concerned to ensure that new development is of appropriate quality.

To this end, the Council makes annual awards to schemes which it considers set an example in their inherent quality and respect for, or contribution to, their setting. The awards, initiated in 1977, are grouped into categories and include concern for the encouragement of design excellence at a small scale.

A separate award is offered for provision designed to increase access for disabled people. It has been found that attention to smaller, less obvious details in particular can greatly enhance access, and it is disappointing that the only entry this year fell short of award-winning excellence.

This year's awards to buildings in Kensington went to the following:

**Mosaic at Frinstead House,  
Silchester Estate, W10  
General Environmental  
Improvements: Award  
Commissioned and  
designed by the Westway  
Project Created by the  
young people from Oxford  
Gardens School**

Assessors' comments:

"....cheers up the adjoining space and displays much humour and imagination in the figures depicted in a surreal aquatic landscape."



**Garden at Iverna Court, Kensington W8**  
**General Environmental Improvements: Commended**  
**Commissioned and designed by the Iverna Court Garden Committee**

**Landscaping: Scenic Blue, Windsor**

**Planting: John Gilbert, London**

**Railings: Stockwell Forge, Wisbech**

Assessors' comments: "....this space has been transformed..., a variety of features integrated within a quite small space...being well used"



**Houses at 61-63 Portobello Road**  
**New Buildings: Commended**  
**Architect: Alan Power AADipl RIBA**  
**Commissioned by Mandeville Estates Ltd**

Assessors' comments: "Modern architecture is welcome, and some thought this scheme mediated very effectively between contrasting neighbours."



## Princess Louise Hospital, Kensington

Princess Louise Hospital, Kensington, came into existence as a direct result of the people recognising the need for medical care among the poor in the Parish and taking matters into their own hands. By hard work and commitment to their cause, they managed to achieve their goal and local health and welfare was improved beyond recognition.

In other words, the hospital was built by the people for the people.



Some medical care had been available for the sick and poor in Kensington from the early 1800s, most likely provided by a group of medical and philanthropic people getting together and starting what was called in those days a 'dispensary'. This would have been a consulting room or converted building where medical men could attend to their patients, give treatments, dispense medicines, and so on. From such small beginnings the Kensington Dispensary opened in 1815 at 13 Holland Street, with an initial expense of £20 for furniture and equipment.

Its affairs were governed by a Committee of lay people, advised by a medical board of eight doctors. A consultant physician and

surgeon were appointed plus a resident Apothecary, required to be a licentiate of the Apothecaries' Hall.

Although there was general poverty and extremely poor living conditions throughout Kensington, improvements were taking place in the districts nearest the Dispensary. The working classes were moving to the new district of North Kensington. Soon some of the worst slums in London could be found in the area, particularly in The Potteries of Notting Dale, Golborne and Kensal Rise.

Dr Goodrich, the first Medical Officer of Health for Kensington, described the Potteries as follows: - "One of the most deplorable spots, not only in Kensington but in the whole of the metropolis, is the Potteries at Notting Dale. It occupies 8 or 9 acres of ground and contains about a 1000 inhabitants, the majority of whom obtain a living by rearing and fattening pigs upon the house refuse obtained from club houses and hotels, and upon the offal from slaughter houses.

The general death rate varies from 49 to 60 per annum. Of these deaths the very large proportion of 87.5% are under five years of age and the most appalling fact, however, is that for a period of three years the average age or time of death is under twelve."

The first President of the Dispensary was the Venerable Archdeacon Potts. The first patrons included HRH the Duke of Sussex, HRH the Duchess of Kent, HRH Princess Sophia, Her Grace the Dowager Duchess of Bedford and the most Noble Marquis of Bute. In 1843 HRH Prince Albert also consented to become a Patron.

The object of the Dispensary was "to render medical and surgical aid gratuitously to the sick poor not receiving parochial relief upon the recommendation of the Governors."

Two members of the Board attended the Dispensary taking alternative days for three months in succession, so that "a patient may.... have the benefit of being seen by the same medical man even for 3 months together..." Apart from

attendance at the Dispensary the Medical Board organised a scheme of home visiting, dividing the district into 8 areas and appointing medics to cover each area.

By the year 1845 the premises at 13 Holland Street had become too small for the increasing numbers of patients. A building fund was set up and in 1849 the Dispensary moved to 49 Church Street, Kensington, remaining there for 75 years.

A turning point in the Dispensary's history took place at a meeting of the Medical Board on November 10 1879. The Board noticed that the proportion of child patients was steadily increasing. A Report was produced recommending the setting up of a Children's Hospital and stipulating what would be needed for such an establishment such as bed space, the size and position of the windows, separating the toilet from the ward and bathroom provision. The Board also recognised the need for the children's parents to have them near by, as every visit involved expense and, possibly, the loss of a day's work.

By the 1920s plans were afoot to take the Dispensary north. Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria, called a conference at her home in Kensington Palace in 1924 where it was decided to re-establish the Dispensary in North Kensington where there was the greatest need.

Lord Balfour of Burleigh, a Kensington Councillor, was appointed Treasurer. His fund-raising campaign began with an



advertisement in The Times, March 1925, quoting the Medical Officer for Health, Kensington, "out of every 1000 children born in Kensington not many more than half are alive and perfectly fit at the age of five."

An all-out effort was made to raise the necessary money to build and maintain the planned hospital, and four years of continuous collecting took place. Their goal was reached and the £80,000 needed was achieved. Thus the Princess Louise Hospital for Children was indeed "built by Kensington people with Kensington money for Kensington children."

A site on the War Memorial Playing Fields was bought in 1925 for £4237 6s 6p. The foundation stone was laid a year later by Princess Louise and the new road of Pangbourne Avenue was created. The Hospital, built on an open, airy site between some of the worst slum areas was finally opened in 1928 by King George V and Queen Mary. There were 42 beds, an Out Patients Department, a Dispensary for Sick Women and Medical and Surgical wards.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s the Hospital played an important role in the local community, its work supported by the Borough Council and the London County Council. The Hospital's pamphlet of 1937 said that "Today the keyword is not 'Charity to the poor' but 'service'. And in our special case



'service to the children' is the keystone on which Princess Louise Kensington Hospital for Children bases its claim."

Even so it still needed to rely on charitable donations and voluntary groups to survive. The House Committee Minutes Book of 1929 gives the following examples of donations to the Hospital funds:-

The money raised at the opening of the Royalty Cinema in Lancaster Road was shared between the Princess Louise and the Middlesex Hospitals

A charity meeting of the Greyhound Association on November 29 donated £300 and a Boxing Tournament raised £130

For one week a year the income from Derry and Toms' roof garden was donated

Other schemes included a proposal whereby local people paid a penny a week to support the Hospital. The Maintenance Fund Committee proposed that residents paid 3d a week or 12s a year, for which they would receive certain benefits including free general Out Patients treatment for girls, boys under 12 and women. This was not a popular proposal, especially amongst the doctors who thought that they would be known as the 'Threepenny Doctors' and was abandoned in 1929.

Few patients could afford to pay for their treatment so an almoner, positioned near the Out Patients Department, was on hand to assess how much the Hospital could afford to subsidise each patient. At the time, National Insurance only covered those in employment and there was increasing unemployment in the 1930s. Healthcare depended on a range of private, voluntary and municipal provisions.

The Out Patients Department stayed open throughout the Second World War even though the hospital was damaged three times by bombs. It also served as an air raid First Aid Post. Most of Kensington's children were evacuated during the War and as many of the wealthier residents' left London, fund-

raising decreased. It was becoming clear that a state provided health service needed.

The post-war government was mandated to provide welfare for the whole nation – an idea that had been gaining popularity since the beginning of the century. Thus in 1948 the National Health Service came into being and all hospitals were absorbed. In 1846 Princess Louise Hospital volunteered to come under the protection of St Mary's Paddington, in the hope that this voluntary association would preserve its identity more effectively. Even then the Princess Louise continued to receive donations, for instance, the local Girl Guides raised money for the entrance gates and painted the railings.

There were other benefits to be gained from this association with St Mary's. Two houses were bought in St Quintin Avenue for nurses' accommodation – they had been sleeping in the wards until then – and the hospital became an official teaching hospital in 1952. Nursing was becoming a profession, not a vocation. Local support also continued and in 1948 the Friends' Association was formed, which over the next twenty years raised thousands of pounds for the Hospital. In Littlehampton, a home was given anonymously so that children could convalesce at the seaside. For many, it was their first view of the sea.

People's health began to improve steadily, thanks to a better diet, slum clearance and inoculation programmes. The *Daily Herald*, in 1955, was pleased to print, "the happiest news of all, they can't fill the kids' beds in hospital." This was certainly true of the Princess Louise where some of the beds were routinely empty. In 1954 it was planned to close two wards and use them for maternity; the long-term intention being to use the Hospital for adults only. This was not popular locally and, in fact, this became a national issue, going twice to the House of Lords.

Lord Balfour, now heading the Friends' Association, along with the Borough Council, local MPs and a petition of 15,000 local people fought this proposal. It was felt that despite the general

decline in demand for children's beds the Princess Louise was in an area whose needs had changed little over the years.

The Minister of Health discovered that the Hospital's land carried a Royal Charter stipulating that it could only be used by mothers and children, so in 1960 the Hospital became a maternity and paediatric unit

Improving conditions – diet, housing and medical care – resulted in people living longer and the idea developed that the Hospital would be of greater benefit if used for geriatric care. Despite local protests this came about; the final children's party was held in 1970 and the elderly took up residence in 1971. The Hospital was converted to accommodate 61 beds, and day rooms were added, along with rehabilitation, long-stay wards and a day hospital. All necessary facilities both medical and vocational were provided, even its own ambulance service.

The Senior Nursing Officer, Eulena Craig, wrote in 1989 about the Princess Louise being "built to be an intimate, warm environment for the neediest of its age: it still is, embracing the elderly need that is carrying us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

Despite this, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century opinions were changing again. Surveys of elderly patients showed that they would much prefer to receive care in their own homes. So, the future of this local resource once more became a local cause for concern. However, the decision was made on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2006 that this hospital would close as a centre for geriatric care. Other possibilities would have to be considered for its future.

It would be a great shame if its future had no involvement with its past and all the hard work, endeavour and enthusiasm of local people for Princess Louise Hospital was lost completely.

**Abridged from an article on  
The Princess Louise Hospital by  
Jane Godin, 2006**

## MICHAEL FRENCH

Michael French, the Royal Borough's Executive Director of Planning and Conservation will be retiring at the end of April. The 'end of an era' is a well-worn phrase, but when we talk about a career at Kensington and which has spanned over 30 years, the cliché turns out to be true.



Michael started at the Royal Borough in 1973, as Head of Development Control. He was then the youngest town planner in London to hold that position. He came to Kensington and Chelsea from the London Borough of Camden. Town planning was quite different in the early 1970s. Conservation Areas were in their infancy, having only been in existence since the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. There were relatively few listed buildings, and surprisingly no development plan. Virtually the only factor in common with today was the pressure for development. In those days it was hotels and offices but the threats to the Borough's character were as unrelenting as they are today.

Michael French was promoted from Head of Development

Control to Deputy Borough Planning Officer and in 1993 became Executive Director of Planning and Conservation. During his long career he has seen the approval of the District Plan followed by the Unitary Development Plan and its subsequent revisions. Conservation Areas now cover over 70% of the Borough and listed buildings have passed the 4,000 mark. When English Heritage started to withdraw from the control of grade II listed buildings in the mid-nineties he was the first Borough Planning Officer in London to secure a conservation agreement with Sir Jocelyn Stevens and funding for two conservation officers to deal with the additional workload.

He is proud of his many other achievements, from setting up the Borough's Environment Awards with Councillor Campion in 1977, to enabling the Royal Borough to be the first urban authority to sign up to the Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme. The number of Civic Trust Awards and Commendations is testament to the high quality of new development during his tenure. He is also pleased to have been able to assist the residents of garden squares to reinstate the railings removed during the Second World War. In some ways, that might be seen as a sign of one of his major successes; being responsive to Councillors and the many Residents' Associations, and working with them to maintain the Borough's special character.

Have there been disappointments? Not very many; the main one being the Iranian Embassy site on Queens Gate and the frustration of it being left vacant and undeveloped for so many years. And what will the future hold? He intends to continue to be involved in planning and will be turning his hand to practical building conservation by restoring a house in his home county of Yorkshire. We wish him well.

David McDonald  
RBKC Conservation and Design Team Leader

## Planning 2006

I have looked back at last year's report and though I am not surprised, it is interesting to see how intense planning seems to have become. Many of the same issues are repeated. However, the Royal Borough now faces truly challenging times. According to the Financial Times, property prices in Kensington have increased 20% in 2006. The increase is being driven by the shortage of good houses. It is estimated that 60% of the houses over £2m are purchased by wealthy buyers from Europe, Russia and elsewhere outside the UK.

Directly related to these changes are four applications currently before the Council: the Odeon site on Kensington High Street, the Kensington Park Hotel and Thistle Hotel site on De Vere Gardens, 100 West Cromwell Road, and the Telephone Exchange site on Warwick Road.

Northacre and Minerva have teamed up to develop the **Odeon site** on Kensington High Street. The proposal is for 35 luxury residential units, a subterranean cinema complex, underground parking for 50 cars, and 17 affordable houses at the rear of the site accessible via Pembroke Square. The developers have held two public consultations and have varied the design to address some of the concerns expressed. The original façade will be maintained. However, the trees will be replaced with smaller fastigate oaks, and the existing building will be approximately 3m taller than the cinema roof line. We have met with Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Association (ESSA) several times to review their concerns. The Society is currently reviewing the application and will be writing to the Council stating our specific objections.

The **De Vere Gardens** application will be reviewed by the Planning Committee later this month. The Chairman of the Committee has given permission for the Victoria Road Area Residents' Association (VRARA) and the Society to voice our

opposition at the meeting. The proposal is for a new luxury residential building of only 97 units. The developer proposes to retain only bits and pieces of the existing buildings. The Kensington Road new façade facing Kensington Gardens dominates the streetscape and is more akin to an American commercial office building than the villas it replaces. The 97 flats will each be over 3,000 sq ft. We are opposed to development which has no affordable housing and which is exclusive to the highest end of the market. We feel that there should be a mix of unit sizes. Though many may not miss the loss of these particular hotels, we are concerned over the slow erosion of our commercial mix. We fear that the Borough is slipping into a "bedroom" community of luxury flats owned by foreign investors who do not live in the Borough, visit rarely and where, therefore, the local shops and retailers will ultimately die a slow death.

The applications for **100 West Cromwell Road** and the **Telephone Exchange** aim at a different market. For 100 West Cromwell Road, Multiplex, the same developers for White City and the contractor of Wembley Stadium, propose building above the Tesco parking structure at the rear of the store (thus its nickname: Tesco Tower). The application is for a 27 storey building with a 10 storey side wing comprising 445 units, totalling 834 bedrooms. 40% of the units will be affordable. We have strongly objected to the application on the grounds of height, over-development, lack of proper and adequate play areas and green spaces, inappropriate design, excessive parking, and environmental impact.

The Telephone Exchange development proposes 222 residential units, with a total of 437 bedrooms. Again, we have objected on the following grounds: lack of outdoor space, boring design, over-development, and environmental impact.

The car parking facility for the Tesco Tower is for 371 cars and the Telephone Exchange for 186 cars. RBKC already issues more resident car parking permits than there are spaces on the

Borough streets. We have objected to this massive increase in potential RBKC parking permits.

The Royal Borough does not have the facilities to accommodate such intensive development. Following strong objections to the over-development, Multiplex has obviously recognised this and has offered a one off payment to the Council of £510,880 to compensate for the lack of schools in the area. We have objected in the strongest terms to any such payment especially if such an offer involves a quid pro quo from the Council for the granting of the present application.

The Society has met often with the Earl's Court Neighbourhood Associations (ECNA), Cromwell Road Association, the ward councillors and the residents of the area. We will again ask to voice our objections when the application comes before the Planning Committee.

The **Commonwealth Institute** was mentioned in last year's report and will probably be mentioned for years to come. The application for the totally inappropriate hoarding was rejected by the Planning Department. In June it was discovered via a leaked letter that Government ministers were plotting to push through Parliament a short Bill which would de-list the building, thus enabling its demolition. This Society, along with the Twentieth Century Society, has objected to the precedent such an action would establish for not only this building, but for all listed buildings.

The Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham wrote to us in October informing us of an application from the **White City** developer (Multiplex again) to increase the permitted space within the project. If granted, the internal retail space would increase by an additional 20% to 108,000 sq m. We, along with the Council, the Norland Conservation Society (NCS), and others, have objected to any increase in this already massive development.

A Singapore gaming consortium has submitted two applications

for **99-121 Kensington High Street** (aka Derry & Toms). One application for the refurbishment and installation of additional plant and lifts was unfortunately approved. The other application which remains undecided is for the change of use of the fifth floor from offices to a gaming facility and restaurant/bar facilities. The gaming facility would provide for 950 gamblers within the main casino, the restaurant would seat 450, and there would be a private gaming area with an undisclosed number of gamblers. All of this is in addition to the massive quantity of staff to service such a large facility. The operators stated in their presentation to the Society that the facility will have low numbers during the day with the restaurant "peaking" at 8.00pm and the gaming facility in full swing from 11.00pm to 4.00am. The facility's hours of operation will be from 12.00 noon to 6.00am with early closing on Sunday at 4.00am. We have objected to the application. A casino here will have a major adverse affect upon the area. The Government's position on the acceptable location of a casino is that it must be in a location which will improve the area, not adversely affect it. It is out of character with the existing area, constitutes over-development of the building, and it will create noise and late-night parking problems.

**Tesco** was in the 2004 and 2005 report, as it is here again; however, this time we have positive results to report. As stated in the Christmas newsletter for last year, this Society along with the Chelsea Society has met with Tesco Express management. As the result of our pressures Tesco has proposed and will now implement their new Express shop fronts for Holland Park Avenue, Gloucester Road and Royal Hospital Road. They have promised to carry the programme through to the Metro stores. It should be emphasised that here is an excellent example of the powers and influence of our societies. We will continue to press for other retailers to follow suit, with Tesco as the example.

The application to demolish **Holland Park School** and

construct a new 6 storey school, the erection of 24 key worker residential units north of Campden Hill, and erection south of Campden Hill of a residential development of 95 units was received in November. This has been a difficult application to review. We have repeatedly stated, and firmly believe, that we all must seek the best for the children educated within the Royal Borough; however, we do not agree with this proposal. We have written to all the Ward Councillors and to Mr French stating our objections which are in brief:

- the height and bulk of the school
- the consequent loss of almost one third of the existing site – useful and necessary playground space
- the boring and uninspirational nature of the building, complete with unnecessary (if fashionable) fins which add significantly to its height and bulk, and maintenance costs
- the huge and ever-escalating expense - now some £59 to £63 million (and what estimate does not rise yet further in the course of building?)
- the likelihood that this high-rise corporate style building will date all too quickly.

We have reviewed over 40 applications which involve **deep subterranean excavations** and we continue, as noted last year, to object. The Odeon application proposes a depth of 18m and the De Vere Gardens proposal 11m. We have seen applications where the depth of the excavation was more than the height of the house and where the entire garden is infilled. The Society recently organised a meeting, chaired by Charles Lutyens, with the interested parties including members from the Planning Department, associated societies and Councillors, in order to review the situation and to discuss future policies. The legal framework in which the Planning Department must work does not allow for much room for flexibility and, as always, emotions, the possibility of future harm and general inconveniences are not issues which are material. The

Planning Department is currently commissioning a study on the issue and we, of course, will continue to object to the excavations.

Robin Price, Loveday Waymouth, and I of the planning committee have been joined by Michael Bach and Charles Lutyens. We meet monthly to review and monitor the planning applications. RBKC Planning Department received approximately 3,100 applications this year, an increase of 600 from last year. At each meeting we review as many as 25 applications and often comment to the Planning Department about our concerns. Many of the Society's members have contacted us over the year and asked for assistance. When possible we have offered advice, reviewed proposals and represented the members and the Society at Planning Committee meetings.

Amanda Frame  
Chairman of Planning

#### **Further Information:**

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## Casinos & the Gambling Act 2005

The new Gambling Act 2005 which will become effective in September 2007 replaces current laws (including the 1968 Gaming Act) on the licensing and regulation of casinos, bingo halls, betting shops, lotteries, gaming machines, race tracks etc. Under the new Act, every licensing authority is required to publish a 'Statement of Gambling Policy' by January 2007. The RBKC published a draft statement which the Kensington Society reviewed and commented on as part of a public consultation exercise. The authority's responsible officer is Patrick Crowley, Licensing Team Manager.

The new Act provides for two types of licenses: licenses for premises, issued by the local authority, and licenses for operators, issued by the Gambling Commission. Only licensed operators can make applications for licensed premises.

There are three licensing objectives defined under the Act:

- To prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder, or being used to support criminal activities
- To ensure gambling is conducted in a 'fair and open' manner
- To protect children and vulnerable people against exploitation

Of these, the first two are the prime responsibility of the Gambling Commission although the local authority may consider the crime and disorder aspect when determining whether a location for premises is suitable. The local authority has prime responsibility for the third objective which it can exercise through suitable measures such as restricting access by children or vulnerable people.

Provided gambling activities do not contravene the three licensing objectives, they will generally be permitted. Representations to RBKC regarding a premises license should

therefore be restricted to (a) crime and disorder risk and (b) protection of children and vulnerable people. Representations on moral grounds or demand grounds are excluded. Nor are objections on public nuisance grounds permitted, unless public nuisance can be linked to 'disorder'.

The Act limits the number of new casinos in the country to just 17, being 1 regional (super-casino), 8 large and 8 small casinos. These will be in addition to the 400 odd casinos already existing in the UK. A Casino Advisory Panel has been established to recommend locations for the 17 new casinos pursuant to representations made by local authorities. One of the selection criteria is that the locality should benefit from the regeneration potential of having a casino. Some 40 local authorities have applied; RBKC has ruled itself out as a candidate location for these 17 new casinos. Final decisions will be made by the Secretary of State, Department of Culture Media and Sports. The number of permitted casinos may be reviewed by government in the future.

In the meantime, applications for casinos already in the pipeline remain under consideration in the Borough. Applications for Earl's Court, de Vere Gardens and the old Derry and Toms building are being dealt with under the existing regime in which 'environmental issues' including 'public nuisance' may be considered grounds for objection. These are more fully discussed in the Planning Report on page 38.

Charles Lutyens

### Further information

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## Licensing in 2006

In July 2003 the Licensing Act received Royal Assent and came into force in November 2005. After almost a century of restricted opening hours for pubs, bars and restaurants and, in the face of an increasing yob culture of lager louts and binge drinking, the spectre of round the clock opening became a reality. In the initial weeks of the new regime, it was felt that some licensing authorities were taking a restrictive view of evidence presented to them by local residents understandably concerned by the impact that extended laws could have on their lives and that this was to their detriment.

There is much that local residents can do by making their voices known, to limit the impact of the new rules on their local amenity. In practice, it is clear that licensing authorities are prepared to take their concerns into account.

Applications for new premises or variations to existing licenses have to be advertised, within 10 days, by a notice in the local newspaper. The applicant must also place a notice on or at the premises for a period of 28 days after the application was made, outlining the details of the application. Applications can also be monitored via RBKC's website [www.rbkc.gov.uk/environmentalservices/licensing](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/environmentalservices/licensing) and residents can subscribe, free of charge, to receive e-mail notifications of applications.

Interested parties, namely residents or businesses (or representative bodies) in the "vicinity" of the premises, can make representations within 28 days of the application being made. RBKC considers "vicinity" to mean within 100 meters of the premises or further away if within the premises "sphere of influence" (e.g. on a route used by patrons on their way home). There is no hard or fast rule here as the licensing authority will make its decision on a case by case basis.

Any representations must relate to one or more of the four licensing objectives which are: the prevention of crime and disorder; the prevention of public nuisance; public safety; and the protection of children from harm (i.e. stating why the particular premises which are the subject of the application will fail to promote them).

Residents who make representations are given an opportunity to attend the hearing at which submissions can be made. Affected residents should make every effort to attend to make their views felt – the Licensing Committee will not place as much weight on representations which are only made in writing. It is not unusual for residents to involve their ward councillor: Details are posted on RBKC's website at [www.rbkc.gov.uk/YourCouncil/YourCouncillor](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/YourCouncil/YourCouncillor).

Responsible authorities, such as the police and the noise nuisance team, can also make representations. Accordingly, diaries should be kept and complaints made (e.g. to the noise nuisance team) when problems do occur so that this evidence can be referred to in the representations.

Even if a contested application is granted, the Licensing Committee may condition the license in the interest of promoting the licensing objectives e.g. to insist on doormen being present to manage the flow of patrons to and from the premises.

However, responsible authorities and interested parties (i.e. residents or businesses in the vicinity) can apply for licenses to be reviewed by the licensing authority. Again, any application to have a premises license reviewed must show how the operation of the individual premises has not promoted or has worked against one or more licensing objectives (e.g. noise from live music constantly escaping the premises late at night and disturbing local residents and not promoting the "prevention of public nuisance" objective).

Any application for review must be advertised by the licensing

authority by placing a notice near the premises in question. RBKC will also place a notice at the Town Hall and publicise the details on its website. Again, e-mail notification can alert people who subscribe to the service. Residents and respective authorities may also make representations related to the premises under review within the 28 day period and a hearing will go ahead unless the parties reach prior agreement.

Every decision of the licensing committee can be challenged by an appeal to the magistrates' court. Significantly, not only does an applicant have a right to appeal, but so do interested parties such as residents, the police and other responsible authorities who originally submitted representations about the applications. If any party to such an application wishes to appeal against the decision, they must lodge their appeal with the court (i.e. West London Magistrates' Court at 181 Talgarth Road, W6 8DN) within 21 days of the notice of the decision being received. Where the appeal is lodged by the applicant, any interested party who made relevant representations has, as of right, an entitlement to be a respondent to any appeal and not just participate as a witness.

Judicial review can also be used to appeal against decisions of the licensing authority although this avenue is typically used to challenge policies which local authorities have adopted pursuant to the Act rather than as a way of challenging individual decisions. Whilst each party bears its own costs in relation to contested applications, the same principle does not apply to Appeals where costs awards can be made.

In conclusion, the Act is here to stay but there is a good deal that residents can do to reduce its impact on their lives.

Anthony Lee

## HISTORY OF EARL'S COURT SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA

*Editor's note: The full article by Jennifer Ware appeared in the Earl's Court Residents' Association newsletter; it has been edited by Valerie Heathorn for inclusion here.*

Earl's Court Square is built on land originally occupied by Rich Lodge (Rich is a family name of the Earls of Warwick and Holland). William Edwardes, 2nd Baron Kensington, inherited the estate in 1801. At this time it was entirely rural and market gardens covered the extensive grounds of Rich Lodge. Earl's Court Manor House, located north of the station, is where the Manorial Courts of the Earls and Lords were held and after which the district was named - hence the apostrophe, i.e. the Court of the incumbent Earl.

### Early Development

The first recorded development was Rich Terrace, a row of houses constructed in 1830 on the north side of Old Brompton Road, where The Mansions and Richmond Mansions now stand. Further houses were added between 1850 and 1853 where Redcliffe Close is now situated; a parallel terrace, built in 1866-68, still stands on Old Brompton Road. Behind Rich Terrace and fronting onto Rich Lane were three small houses, now demolished.

The earliest development to survive into the 20th century was St. Matthias in Warwick Road, built between 1869 and 1872. In 1873, infant and primary schools were erected to the south, but proved too small and were replaced by one larger school in 1898-99. St Matthias, damaged by incendiary bombs in WWII, was demolished in 1958.

### The North, East and West Terraces

The Square's first building was No. 1, known as Earl's Court Lodge, built between 1873 and 1875 by the builder and property developer, Edward Francis. He also built two rows of

houses, now Nos. 3-11 and 2-10, on the north-east arm of the Square, along a road on the north of Rich Lodge's grounds; these were originally intended as an extension to Kempsford Gardens. A much larger Earl's Court Lodge had previously stood on the east side of Earl's Court Road.

Drainage was also laid for Farnell Road, intended to run off Kempsford Gardens to join Rich Lane to the south. This is why the house drains on the east side of the Square run into a sewer at the back, rather than the front. Farnell Mews was created, but the houses intended for Farnell Road never materialised. Instead, Edward Francis and Sir William Palliser, the first occupant of Earl's Court Lodge, envisaged a far grander design - Earl's Court Square - for which Sir William provided considerable finance.

Construction of the east side commenced in 1875, followed by the west side in 1876. Numbers 25-37 on the north side followed and the whole of the northern terrace was under way by 1878. No. 12, which was of a particularly grand design, was earmarked for one of Lord Kensington's female relatives, and still boasts a conservatory on its porch. The south side of the Square was left open giving a view down to the Thames.

### **Style**

The Square is late Italianate, with Doric porticos and Bath stone features, initially left unpainted, but the stone became blackened in the London air and Nos. 15, 17 and 19 were painted white after WWI, with all houses painted after WWII. No cost was spared in the quality of the work or materials employed in these developments. The architect incorporated metal girders, an innovation for domestic architecture. However, the master joiner did not trust the durability of iron against the proven qualities of wood, so the main girders supporting the floors above the front bays have companion wood beams beside the metal ones.

### **Usage**

The development was intended as family houses for the

expanding wealthy classes and their retinue of servants. The 1891 census shows that the single family ownership households were large, with servants considerably outnumbering the family.

Some houses were bought 'off plan' with features and alterations added by their prospective owners. Several had the newfangled electric light installed, whilst others relied on gas. Sophisticated kitchen ranges were installed, handsome pieces with back boilers to supply constant hot water. At No. 15, a rich young banker and his bride built an extension to the rear ground floor to accommodate a billiard table and the salon (ballroom) was finished with Italian gold leaf.

To make the servants' lives as tolerable as possible, some houses had fireplaces in their rooms and in the sculleries, and had bathrooms and flush lavatories at both top and bottom. Other prospective owners skimmed on such amenities, or perhaps the houses were completed with the minimum fittings before buyers were identified.

However, Francis and Palliser misjudged an oversupplied market and many houses remained unsold. In 1879, Edward Francis went into liquidation and 28 houses remained empty, with only six of these sold by 1885 and some still on the market in 1890. In the end few became family houses, most being turned into boarding houses, hotels, schools and academies or split into rudimentary flats.

### **The South Terrace**

In contrast, Sir William, who had moved to No. 19 in 1877 and then to No. 21, did fairly well. In 1877, he was already laying plans to develop the Square's south side in the now fashionable Flemish style. Building was eventually started on Nos. 30-34 in 1888, but the development faltered. The later, smaller, houses are of a noticeably altered design and sold well. First to move into the 'Dutch houses', as they became known, was Mr. Frank Gielgud at No. 36, where his son, John, was possibly conceived before the family moved to Gledhow Gardens in 1904. The

Dutch houses' were Listed Grade II\* in 1965.

Building in the Square ended in 1965 with the erection of Northgate House on the site of a garage belonging to No. 3. Totally out of place, it is fortunately set well back.

### **Famous Occupants**

Lord North bought No. 23 for his mistress and commissioned the very elaborate and romantic plaster work which still adorns the ground and first floors. It is not known whether all the paintings, filling the panels in the plaster work and adorning the pillars, are the work of the next owner, Mrs. Elizabeth Stannus. She was an artist and glassware designer and had a workshop at the bottom of her garden. Her daughter, Barbara, later known as Ninette de Valois, spent her early years in the house and ran dancing classes in the large salon

No. 21 eventually became a discreet, high class, brothel with gambling and supper rooms, before being bought by a respectable family who sold it to the Polish Air Force Club at the beginning of WWII. Polish songs and anthems filled the Square on summer evenings. The Club also bought No. 10 for use as a hostel and built a chapel in the back garden, which remains as a ground floor extension. In 1963, No. 21 became the home of the National Poetry Society. Many famous poets of the day gave readings, whilst next door at the White House Hotel, actors like Charlton Heston, John Gielgud, Margaret Rutherford and Alec Guinness, through to Cliff Richard and many others, rehearsed in the ballroom.

### **The Mansion Blocks**

Herbert Court Mansions were built in 1891-2, followed by Langham Mansions in 1894-6, originally with billiard and reading (smoking) rooms in the basement. In 1890-2, what remained of Rich Lodge was demolished, together with Bolton Beer House on the corner of Earl's Court Road. A new public house was built, known for the next 100 years as The Boltons, now O'Neill's, along with 304-322 Earl's Court Road and The Mansions in Old Brompton Road.

Four blocks of Wetherby Mansions were built between 1892

and 1894 on both sides of the then Wetherby Road West. The fifth was built in 1895-7, together with Richmond Mansions which replaced the eastern end of Rich Terrace. Part of Richmond Mansions was severely damaged during WWII. The rest of Rich Terrace remained until it was demolished to make way for Redcliffe Close in 1936.

### **The Square's Garden**

Although somewhat dreary, the garden, controlled by the Edwardes Estate, was well managed until 1939. The handsome cast iron railings were removed for use as scrap metal during WWII and five huge emergency water tanks filled the garden's southern half.

A property speculator bought the freehold after WWII. Wire netting was erected and the garden was rarely, if ever, tended. It became overgrown and a dump for broken bottles and rubbish, making it too dangerous for small children, although it was sometimes used by older boys as a football pitch.

In 1971-2 a group of residents formed a voluntary working party and began to restore the garden. In 1975 the newly formed Residents' Association brought the garden under the 1851 Kensington Improvement Act and Christopher Fair, a landscape gardener and resident, designed the present layout. The established London plane trees were left and now dominate the Square. The Act gave the residents jurisdiction over any above-ground construction in the garden area which effectively ended oft-mooted plans to build an underground car park as this required garden access. The Garden Committee bought a controlling interest in the freehold and new iron railings were erected in 1977. Today the Garden regularly wins top awards.

### **Bombing**

The only bomb in the Square proper was in 1942; demolishing much of Nos. 25-27, Queen's Court - then serviced rooms. The lower parts of the two staircases, some of the main walls and the front basement rooms, where the 20-30 occupants had taken shelter, remained intact. The front portico's round pillars

were seriously weakened and were replaced by 'temporary' square ones. Queen's Court was rebuilt as flats in the late 1940s. The bomb blew out the majority of windows in the Square and brought down much plaster work in the adjacent houses, but the solid structure of the buildings was such that the damage was minimal.

### **Recent Times**

A Beadle, employed by the Edwardes Estate (not unlike our Police Community Support Officers), patrolled the area until the 1920s. He maintained propriety and standards and enforced conditions in the leases such as prohibiting the hanging out of washing.

In the early 1970s the Edwardes Estate sold its freeholds, still the majority, to property speculating companies owned by the Kirsch Brothers. The houses were then nearly all hotels, hostels or rooming houses or were poorly converted into flats, and painted in a variety of bizarre colours. The Square was now extremely run down, with dilapidated buildings and a steeply rising crime rate.

There were two squalid brothels, one at No. 9 and one in Wetherby Mansions, which were eventually closed. A sordid murder occurred at No. 4. Vietnamese boat people were housed in Nos. 2 and 4 until they were ousted for hard drug dealing. Cumberland House at Nos. 51-55 (formerly a nurses' hostel), was occupied by squatters. It suffered from planning blight making it virtually un-saleable, as the London County Council had designated that side of the Square for demolition to make way for an expansion of St. Cuthbert's with St. Matthias School. In 1981, Cumberland house was eventually developed into flats.

In the late 1970s property was cheap to buy and expensive to maintain and many freeholds were sold to Housing Associations which received government funds for converting flats into affordable housing, with subsidised maintenance. This improved the appearance of the Square considerably. Fifteen houses are now owned by Registered Social Landlords, whilst most of the

rest were sold on by the Kirsch Brothers and have been converted into high quality flats for owner occupation, with the last vestige of 'seediness' gone. Two of the large houses and three of the 'Dutch' houses remain single family residences.

In 1974 a property development company acquired Nos. 33, 45 and 47 with the intention of demolishing the houses above the ground floor to make high-density flats. This demolition was halted at second floor level by the Greater London Council which imposed an emergency Provisional Conservation Order, at the request of the newly formed Earl's Court Square Residents' Association. Unfortunately the GLC had no powers to force the reinstatement of the upper floors, resulting in an anomaly of fenestration (window design). Numbers 45 and 47 were then sold and developed as affordable housing. The upper stories and windows of No. 33 were restored to their original design when Nicholson Estates redeveloped Nos. 33-43 as flats, completed in 2002.

### **Conservation Area Status**

In 1975, after considerable efforts by the Residents' Association, the Square was granted full Conservation Area status. One condition was that the buildings on the west, north and east sides be painted magnolia.

At first the Conservation Area covered only the original houses built or planned by Edward Francis and Sir William Palliser, plus Herbert Court and Langham Mansions. In 1997, this was extended to 304-326 Earl's Court Road, Wetherby Mansions and 248-252 Old Brompton Road. In 1998, 266-302 Earl's Court Road, 1 Earl's Court Square, Northgate House, and 16-38 Warwick Road, were added and all these properties were brought within the control of the Residents' Association. In 2002 Penywern Road was included in the Conservation Area but retains its own Residents' Association.

Jennifer Ware  
Earl's Court Square Residents Association

# KENSINGTON HIGH STREET – AT A TURNING POINT?

## The Rise of the High Street

In historical terms, high streets are a recent phenomenon, a product of the shopping needs of the middle classes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even a hundred years ago Kensington High Street was a narrow, winding and congested street – especially round the junction of Kensington Church Street. It had only recently graduated from being the centre of the rapidly expanding parish to the centre of the newly-created Metropolitan Borough of Kensington.

By 1900 there were already a lot of shops, the Vestry Hall (now the vacant Bank Melli) and a new Town Hall was being built (demolished 1982) in anticipation of its new status. The major department stores – Pontings, Derry and Toms and Barkers – were already emerging from a collection of shops to be a major force in the High Street. The High Street was the main shopping centre of this prosperous late Victorian Inner London suburb – primarily meeting the needs of those within walking distance, although buses and the underground made it accessible to a wider catchment.

The 1920s saw the addition of the “Kensington” cinema in 1926 (now the Odeon) – the largest cinema in the country (2,020 seats) – considered by the Architectural Review to be “one of the most imposing”, designed in the Egyptian classical style.

Major redevelopments and road widening took place in the 1930s – the Victorian terraced housing on the north side from Hornton Street to the entrance to Holland House (Holland Park) was redeveloped to become blocks of flats with shops below. The biggest changes in shopping terms, however, were the development of the three department stores and road widening between Young Street and Wright’s Lane, which has given us a

legacy of some of the finest art deco department store buildings in the country and some of the most iconic buildings in Kensington: Derry and Toms with its ‘garden in the sky’ and Barkers with its tower.



Kensington High Street looking east, c. 1930

## The Heyday of the High Street – 1930s to 1970s

Whilst the 1930s was the period of most rapid physical change and expansion of the High Street’s shopping offer, it was not until the 1950s that it really took off as a destination for shopping. Special excursion train tickets from the Home Counties to the High Street were devised to tap the market of “ladies who shop” during the week – the High Street continued to close at 1pm on Saturdays until the 1970s. With the biggest concentration of department stores outside Oxford Street, but a much more comfortable atmosphere, Kensington High Street appealed to middle-class ladies from the Home Counties.

By the mid 1960s, however, the High Street started its new role as a seedbed for retail innovation. One of the first supermarkets in the country was the Safeway in Kensington High Street when they first came from America. Some of the first seeds of “Swinging London” were sown in the side streets, such as Biba, which started in Abingdon Road, moved to 19/21 Kensington Church Street before taking over Derry and Toms in 1973.

Briefly Biba became the second most popular attraction after the Tower of London and put the High Street on the map – part of the Saturday tour of Portobello Road, Kensington High Street and King's Road. But Biba was short lived, closing in 1975 – it had overextended itself and the owners – British Land -then broke up the building, leaving shopping only on the lower floors occupied by Marks & Spencer (a first for the High Street) and British Home Stores, whilst the Rainbow Room became a conference centre and the roof gardens a nightclub.

### **Reinventing the High Street – 1980s to 2000s**

The closure of Pontings and Derry and Toms, and the contraction of Barkers, with the upper floors of each of the buildings going over to offices, meant that the quantity of shopping floorspace in the High Street plummeted – over 500,000 square feet was lost by 1980, more floorspace than most high streets have ever had. The demolition of the Old Town Hall – particularly the long period when it stood with a looming hole in the front – also had a depressing effect. People were beginning to worry about its future?

Nevertheless, the High Street continued to reinvent itself and attract a new generation of shoppers to Kensington Market and Amazon in Kensington Church Street. Barker's Arcade – part of the shrinking of the department store – attracted new clothing brands. But most of the changes moved the High Street's offer toward a mix of national and international brands – part experimentation, part cloning. The High Street has continued to be a place where new retailers – often new to the UK – have set up their first stores – Next, Muji, Urban Outfitters, Zara, Massimo Dutti, Hotel Chocolat, PC World and most recently Sony Ericson's concept store. It has become the centre for adventure holidays – Trailfinders and a concentration of shops catering for skiers, surfers, climbers and walkers.

But there have also been major closures – Kensington Market, Barkers, Safeway and a number of others, as well as new openings, such as Waitrose.

### **Changing the public realm**

The first attempt to revitalise the High Street in the mid 1980s only succeeded in getting rid of the two-stage pedestrian crossing at the station and creating a raised pedestrian crossing at Wright's Lane and Campden Hill Road, which changed the relationship between cars and pedestrians for that part of the High Street. Elsewhere the amount of guardrailing grew – shoppers felt increasingly like sheep penned behind railings.

The second attempt, however, has transformed the High Street into a national demonstration project – stripping it down to its essentials, clearing the clutter, new York stone paving, new lighting, new simpler pedestrian crossings. This has radically improved the pedestrian environment. But will this be enough to retain its position for the future.

### **A new future for the High Street?**

Despite its new image and new stores opening in 2007 – such as Wholefoods Markets on 3/4 floors of Barkers – there is a lot of uncertainty ahead. The main threats to the High Street are: the new shopping centre – Westfield London – at White City which opens next year; the congestion charge from February 2007; the redevelopment of the Odeon and, perhaps, the Commonwealth Institute; and vacancies are running at a high level.

To face the challenges – especially from White City - most of the centres around us – Hammersmith, Shepherd's Bush, Wandsworth, Putney, Ealing and, even, Oxford Street – have developed partnerships to manage their future. So far there is no such initiative for the High Street – the Council, retailers, landlords and the community need to get together to steer the High Street through the challenges ahead. We will need to generate a shared vision and a strategy to steer the High Street through the next decade. There may be a rough ride ahead.

Michael Bach

## News from the Kensington & Chelsea Partnership

Following a review of the structure of the Partnership against the background of the ending of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, some minor changes to membership and terms of reference have been agreed. The 'theme group' structure will continue, linked to the 8 sections in the Community Strategy, and thus including, inter alia, Environment & Transport, Culture, Arts & Leisure, Safer Communities, Homes & Housing, and Community, Equality & Inclusivity. The Partnership Regeneration Exchange events, which have previously covered such matters as community safety, transport and young people, are also to be maintained.

The Partnership Steering Group has responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the Community Strategy and the 16 Outcomes contained in the Local Area Agreement (LAA), which provides pump-priming grants for some and performance reward grant for all, depending on the progress made. Outcome 3 is to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services. Methods of measuring progress are expected to include postal surveys, and support is being planned to enable local organisations to strengthen channels of communication with their members.

Outcomes 11 & 12 in the LAA concern improving street cleanliness in wards north of Notting Hill Gate and also the safety & attractiveness of social housing estates in these areas. At a recent Regeneration Exchange on housing, the Landscape Regeneration Manager of the Peabody Housing Trust drew attention to the increasing recognition that well designed, well managed green spaces beside and in between housing are crucial to making neighbourhoods liveable. These spaces need to be viewed as assets and they provide potential for involving

residents in their immediate surroundings and for the opening up of training and employment possibilities. But there are difficulties to be overcome, particularly in the competition for resources and the use of space e.g. for car parking.

Outcomes 11 & 13 are supported by the Council's North Kensington Environment Project aimed at working with the local community, especially landowners and businesses as well as residents, to improve the environment through a programme of initiatives including the 'Cleaner Greener' scheme which, among other successes, has already resulted in the much improved appearance of the canal towpath.



Nevertheless, over 30 orphan sites or 'grot spots' (several already identified in the LAA) have been earmarked for action. In some cases where redevelopment is on the horizon solutions may be relatively short term – for example, a wildflower meadow is

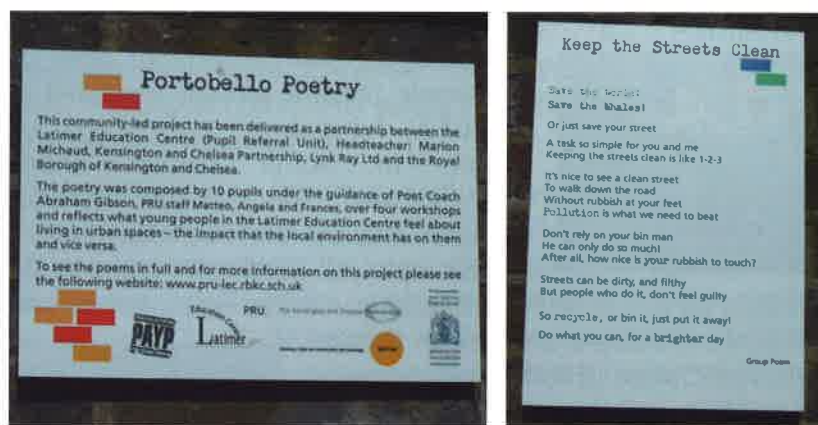
planned for currently vacant land in Acklam Road, taking into account the views of the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre. Efforts are continuing to create a permanent 'pocket park' by the junction of Elkstone Road and Golborne Bridge, in consultation with Sixty Plus and local groups, and bulbs have already been planted there. It may



be possible to replace concrete walls with railings, which would also allow surveillance from neighbouring properties, a point made by the consultants in the Golborne Road Study, the first step in a major regeneration scheme now under consideration. The study also drew attention to the poor visual condition of the railway bridge, for which the Westway Project, after consultation with local people, have already prepared design proposals. The refurbishment of the Acklam Road footbridge, with the striking use of anti-graffiti paint, is a recent example of the project's work, and their scheme for Ladbroke Grove

Railway Bridge is soon to be implemented, following the completion of preparatory maintenance work.

The Golborne Road Study commented on the need to improve the link between that road and Portobello Road North, particularly to enliven enclosing walls. An attempt to do this was made by affixing a selection of poems written by pupils of the Latimer Education Centre (Pupil Referral Unit) as part of a community led project supplied by NRF. Sadly the panels were all wrenched off, but more robust replacements are going up in their stead.



The North Kensington school's Environment Manager is now planning another project to encourage PRU pupils to learn how to garden, an activity which reaches across the curriculum. This would start within the school's surroundings, but could include expeditions, e.g. to Kew. It could lead to pupils undertaking gardening in the neighbourhood, creating links with the community and perhaps involving older people. But this may be looking too far ahead now, and the first year will need to show what directions this project could take in the future.

Celia Rees-Jenkins

## The Kensington Society School Prize

At the Annual General Meeting the Chairman, Robin Price, said that the school prize competition "had gathered momentum this year and thirty eight entries had been received. The standard was very high which made it difficult to choose the winners. All entrants were to be congratulated". The topic was 'Imagine the scene on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 – describe what you saw and heard'. The winners in the junior category were Guillaume Boehm (Lycée) and Soukina Grain (Holland Park) and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize to Alexis Alafouzo (Lycée) and Ashni James (Holland Park). In the senior category 1<sup>st</sup> prize went to Nashilu Mouen (Lycée) and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize to James Parry-Crooke (Lycée). Nashilu's prize winning entry follows.

8<sup>th</sup> May 1945

"Wake up, wake up."

Two hands were gripping my shoulders, shaking me. I opened one eye, and then the other and caught sight of my mothers lit up face smiling down at me. Her hair was haywire, as though she had caught hold of a live wire. Her eyes seemed to have swollen to five times they're normal size and were shining so bright, ever so bright. But I knew that look and I knew what was to come next. "*Malika*, it's over. It's all over!" She laughed.

I turned over in my sorry excuse for a bed and faced the wall.

"Go back to bed Mama", I murmured. "Sleep some more, we talk later".

"No, no *Malika*, it's true. The Englishes, they are shouting outside. Come- Come see *Malika*. Come. It's true. It's over. It's finished. \**Kofczyć*!"

My mother was hallucinating again. This had happened many times these last few months. Stress and fear had eaten at her until it had gained her entire being: mind, body and soul. She would often wake in the dead of night, swearing to me the war

was over and *he* would come, or that *he* was at the door but *he* never was. Sometimes she would be sitting on the floor in our grimy one-bedroom apartment, staring out and suddenly jump up and announce that it was the end, that there would be no more fighting, no more death, no more suffering, but there always was. It was never over. "Go back to bed Mama", I insisted.

She stood up and I allowed myself a second to relax. Suddenly my eyes flew open as I heard ripping. Before I could stop her, Mama had gotten up and started tearing the grubby cardboard off the windows. Light flooded into the room, blinding me momentarily. "STOP! Stop it Mama!" I yelled and I was up in flash. I dashed to the window and what I saw froze me to the spot.

Outside, what seemed like all of London was milling around the streets. Men, women, children, soldiers, maids, policemen; they were all there smiling, shouting, running. Some were crying up towards the sky, hands were raised it signs of prayers of thanks, others were just laughing. Children talked to strangers, beggars laughed with policemen, women chatted to men other than their husbands, but it was all right. Nothing mattered anymore. They were all one; they had all been through this together and had come out alive and victorious. As my eyes clouded with tears, the mass became a big splash of red, white and blue as union jacks flew above the crowd, fluttering in the wind.

One flag caught my eye in particular, not because it flickered higher than the others or faster, but because of its colours. White and Red. Peace and War. Hope and Death. And as stared at it, I saw my country, my Poland, ravaged by war, I was sure I would hardly recognise it if I were to return. *If I could return...*

I opened the window. The locks were almost stuck from lack of movement over the last few months. Fresh air streamed into

the stuffy room and the sounds of joy and relief flowed into my heart.

I turned to my mother; she too seemed too moved to speak. Gently I slipped my hand into hers. Once upon a time, those fingers holding mine had been as delicate as rose petals and as white as freshly fallen snow, but looking down at them now they were rough, hardened by the suffering they had seen. Dirt scarred them, threatening never to shift. "We are going to be just fine, *Anielica*", Mama promised. And for the first time, I felt the truth in those words. I just wish I could be sure so would *he*.

We had left Papa, back in Poland, he had told us to go ahead and he would join us later. For a few months we had gotten letters from him. Telling us how life was going; how close he was to coming; how much he missed us and loved us. But then the letters had stopped arriving.

As slowly as I had placed it in hers, I stole my hand away from Mama's. She remained still, but her eyes were now facing the sky. As soon I had stepped away from her, her hand flew up to the Star of David around her neck. Her fingers rubbed vigorously at it as she muttered under her breath.

I slipped on my used shoes and grabbed Mama's hand again, dragging her towards the door. "Come we go", I urged. "Maybe we see him," I added to myself.

Outside, the humid but cold air whipped my face. I jumped off the pavement into the water running into the drain. It had rained torrents in the early hours of the morning; maybe God was washing away our sins. I rejoiced out loud as water seeped through my shoes to my feet, washing away my troubles. People smiled at me before continuing on their way.

My hand fixed tightly to my mothers, we walked on in silence. Past the Victoria and Albert museum we trudged. Its once beautiful clean walls were stained black from nearby bombs. Houses in front and around seemed deserted and desolate. Most were now empty; abandoned when the war had gotten tough. You know what they say, "When the going gets tough, the *rich* get going". But what pleased me the most was to see

heads popping out through windows that had for so long been blacked out, shutting the whole world out and where you had known inside, people were shutting themselves out. It was as if someone had blown life back into the once empty and dreary looking city. "I don't know 'bout you Arthur, but I'm off to Piccadilly Circus." A middle-aged woman beside me shouted to the man beside her. "It's gonna be mad!" I looked up Mama, still clutching her chain and explained to her where we were heading. She nodded in approval and held on tighter to my hand.

Along the way, the surroundings remained the same, broken, bleak and cold. But the life coming from the mob of people littering the streets was enough to warm the stoniest of hearts. On Cromwell road, some young children played and thrashed the remains of a fallen Doodlebug. A dog tore at the pilots lost parachute.

We arrived at Piccadilly Circus by nightfall and it was the most magical sight I had ever seen. The whole of the area was light up; floodlights illuminated the clear, threat free sky, and for the first time, nor a zeppelin, nor a Doodlebug could be seen for miles to come. A firework bathed the crowd's faces red, then white, then blue. Alternating the British colours. "We've done it", a faraway voice cried. And the whole mob went up into cheers. And songs were started. Not far off, a bonfire was going on. "I'm cold", I whispered to my mother. Who instantly held me in her arms and walked me over to the front of the crowd.

Beside me, two teenage boys, scarcely older than me were beating out rhythms on a few bin lids. The crowd sang and slurred to the beat, and occasionally one of the boys would sing solo.

I glanced up at my mother's still and melancholy face. The dancing flames cast shadows of all sorts across it. Her distant and vacant look told me she was not really here, but somewhere else- with someone else. Her eyes betrayed sadness and longing which no amount of joy or love could fill. I closed my eyes and visualised his face, his voice and his smell. "I am here Kieniczka" he said.

Tears glided down my cheeks as I stared straight into the fire until my eyes hurt and could no more. I hummed a tune to myself that he- My Father- had once sung to me. "*Hej, górale, nie bijcie si*".

*Ma góralka dwa warkocze podzielicie si*!"

The words and notes had escaped my mouth before I could stop them. "Oi, you can sing for us", one of the drummers ventured to me. I smiled and shifted shyly. "I don't think so", I replied. "But you must", he insisted, "we brought all our bands equipment and all, all we need is a lead singer". At that he whispered to his friend who immediately stopped his drumming. He shouted above the rowdy crowd. "OI! THIS YOUNG LADY IS GONNA SING US ALL A SONG. Ain't she Ollie? So some respect if you please." Everyone's eyes were on me and I felt myself blush. "Sing it for Papa", Mama whispered and wrapped her fingers around mine.

And so I shut my eyes and sang. I sang like I had never sung before and the notes resonated around the crowd. I sang from my heart and soul. Ollie began a beat and we were off.

*I remember when I was a child*

*My father used to sing to me*

*"You're an angel, beautiful as all the worlds*

*I will bring a little star to you"*

*It still sounds in my ears*

*The beautiful melody*

*My youth is lost*

*Still I sing to myself his little song*

*Sing little birdie, sing*

*You make my lot easier*

*Remind me*

*Of the childhood years*

*Sing little birdie, sing.*

# What's New on and about Kensington?

## INTERNET SITES

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

Following the success of Stage 1 of the Royal Borough's Virtual Museum further pages were commissioned: a Chelsea Walk and the Then and Now Gallery. A video of Sir Winston Churchill receiving the Freedom of the Borough has also been added. The opportunity was taken to upload some of the historical data on the Borough's Local Life pages on to the site including Infamous People. Another new feature is a search facility just for the museum site, which greatly helps to find items of historical interest across the Virtual Museums packed pages.

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

Frederic, Lord Leighton is acknowledged as one of the great Victorian draughtsmen. The Leighton Drawings Project aimed to catalogue, conserve and photograph the collection of almost 700 drawings by Leighton. It was carried out between 2005 and 2007. The fully illustrated catalogue can be accessed on the web, with a database of all Leighton drawings in other public collections worldwide, created with the support of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Heritage Lottery Fund. A printed version can be purchased at Leighton House.

## BOOKS

**The Book of Notting Hill: A Very Special Part of London by Melvin Wilkinson**

This book not only traces the history of the area but is also a celebration of the sense of belonging that exists in the community. It is extremely well illustrated, including many images that have not been published before. Residents, past and present, were invited to contribute their recollections of

living in the area including their precious photographs and items of ephemera. Published by Halsgrove House, 2006 ISBN 1 84114 508 4 Price 19.99

## Companion Guide to Leighton House Museum

A comprehensive new guide book is now available. It is 96 pages long with more than 100 illustrations including many never previously published. The guide costs £7. Copies can be purchased from the Museum and the Borough's Libraries.

## News from the Library

**The North Kensington Archive**, formerly kept at offices in the Methodist Church in Lancaster Road, has been transferred to Local Studies in the Central Library, Hornton Street. Contact Local Studies on 020 7361 3038 for further details

## Ancestry.co.uk

Many members who are interested in family history will know about Ancestry. This is the largest family history site online with over 500 million UK and Irish genealogical records, including census and civil registration indexes. It is a subscription service but will soon be available free of charge via the People's Network computers at the Royal Borough's libraries.

Did you know that members of the Library can access the **Dictionary of National Biography** from the comfort of their own homes via the Internet? First log on to the library catalogue at [www.rbkc.gov.uk/librarycatalogue](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/librarycatalogue); then type in your library membership and pin code (1953 is the default pin number); select the online resource you wish to consult; then select the library subscription option; retype your library number then the site is open for free searching. As well as DNB you can search the following: - Encyclopaedia Britannica, Grove Art, Grove Music, Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford Reference and The Times Digital Archive. A world of information at your fingertips!

Carolyn Starren

## BOOK REVIEW:

### Kensington Book by Carolyn Starren

Historical Publications 2006 £14.50 ISBN 1-905286-16-3

What is the connection between Cornwall Gardens and the Broadwood pianos? Who built a mansion in Kensington for today's equivalent of £10m, in which no-one ever lived? What pop super-star rented a flat in Emperor's gate under an assumed name... until fans discovered him and he fled to the Weybridge. Which Swedish nightingale nested in the Old Brompton Road?

Answers to these and a multitude of other questions concerning the Royal Borough are to be found in *The Kensington Book*, a fact-packed, picture-gorged volume the result, one imagines, of a great number of hours of diligent research by its author, Carolyn Starren. Ms Starren could hardly be more qualified to tackle this project since apart from being born and educated in Kensington she was the Borough's Local Studies Librarian from 1991 to 2000.

*The Kensington Book* is a slim product of some 120 pages, but within those pages are contained more than 200 entries together with 168 photographs and other illustrations. The number of items dealt with demands that many are brief, averaging perhaps between 300 and 500 words, but this results in a highly convenient pick-up and put-down book, particularly useful for bedtime reading.

Robert Milne-Tyte

## Reports from Local Societies 2006

### Editor's note

***Many thanks to all those who have contributed this year - a bumper 'crop' both in terms of quality and quantity. Out of the 18 affiliated associations, 10, over 50%, have sent in reports on their activities. Next year we aim for 75%. It is very important for members to be kept informed of what is happening in all areas of Kensington.***

### The Boltons Association

**Building activity** continues apace in The Boltons Association's area. Many single family homes are in a state of major redevelopment, especially in Tregunter, Redcliffe, Gilston and Hollywood Roads, Milborne Grove, Harley Gardens, Priory Walk, Cresswell Mews, The Little Boltons and not to mention The Boltons. Such redevelopment can take anything from a year to over four years.

The Boltons Association has played its part in resisting the raising and altering of roof lines and aspects and infill between detached buildings. Extensions to the rear have also been restricted to the guidelines.

The Council believes it has no powers to restrict **building down below ground**, even to an additional three floors and under the whole garden. This must affect the water table and increase the risk of subsidence in adjacent properties. Often trees are removed and damage caused to other trees. Replacement trees are not an effective answer.

We have had meetings with the Council and the Planning Department sometimes in conjunction with neighbouring Associations. We have all urged the Council to seek additional powers to restrict total extra development, including below ground, to up to 10%, including any development since the 1950s.

**Calvin Jackson, Planning Controller,  
The Boltons Association**

### **The Brompton Association**

The prospect of large scale development at **South Kensington Tube Station** seems to have receded now that developers Stanhope and Hutchison Whampoa are no longer involved. The Association's considerable efforts two years ago to get the tube station listed are now paying off.

The Borough is firmly on record now as wanting to see a "conservation-led" approach. The Association illustrated how such a scheme might work in its publication *South Kensington: the Way Forward*. This booklet was well received by both the Borough, English Heritage and others. The Victoria and Albert Museum very much shares the Association's view that small and interesting shops bring life and character to the area. Substantial new development is likely to encourage chain stores to move in. It would be very sad if the village heart of South Kensington were to become yet another element of "Clone Town Britain".

However, the tube station does need to be refurbished. During the year, London Underground has been assessing the condition of the ironwork and considering how to improve access. We await the outcome of this work with interest. Meanwhile, the historic Museum Tunnel has been spot listed. This, too, is a major breakthrough. Although currently shabby and dirty, the tunnel could be made attractive if properly and sensitively restored.

Concern about the future of **local shops** both along the Brompton Road and north of the tube station continues. As leases fall in, existing traders cannot afford the enormous new rents resulting in a considerable number of empty premises. Attempts by Brompton Estates to expand A3 restaurant uses in and around the Brompton Road have, for the most part, been resisted by the Borough. The Association continues to be very concerned at the way Brompton Estates so-called 'Masterplan' for the area appears to be being advanced.

The Association was rather relieved that the **Exhibition Road Project** was not considered a priority for Lottery Funding in the summer and thus may not proceed as originally envisaged. Not

only is £35m is a lot to spend on one street, there are aspects of the proposals which the Association did not think have been fully thought through both in practical and aesthetic terms.

The major redevelopment proposals for **St. Paul's, Onslow Square**, have also been of great concern to the Association. St. Paul's is part of the parish of Holy Trinity Brompton and earlier this year HTB came forward with ambitious plans to turn St. Paul's into the headquarters for Alpha International Ltd. Plans by architects Foster and Partners envisage the demolition not just of the 1960s vicarage but the demolition also of the attractive church hall at the back of the site and its replacement with a large modern block. The plan is to gut the church itself and create a new interior which would be used both for worship and conference style activities. The scheme raises all kinds of issues in terms of its impact on listed buildings, on the Conservation Area and the impact a hugely increased intensification of use would have in a residential area. Whilst the initial planning application for St. Paul's was withdrawn at the Borough's request, another is expected shortly.

**Sophie Blain, Chair**

### **Campden Hill Residents' Association**

Campden Hill Residents' Association has had a particularly active year. Apart from the day to day planning issues as they relate to residential properties and trees, our major planning concern has been the Council's proposals to sell off the school playground and demolish and rebuild **Holland Park School**.

Those who have studied the Council's proposals are astonished that they would wish to allow precious open space to be used for yet more luxury housing. The Borough already has the highest density of population in Western Europe.

The current estimated cost of the rebuilding of the school is in the region of £60 million and local residents are amazed at how expensive this will be compared to other new-build schools – particularly as there will be no increase in non-denominational secondary educational capacity which, by the Council's own

statistics, is woefully inadequate. CHRA is actively working on an 'Alternative Vision' that would retain the campus-like setting, sensitive to its proximity to Holland Park and rebuilding/refurbishing in phases. Early estimates of £25 million suggest that this will be a much cheaper and less disruptive option.

The change in the **Licensing Law** generated considerable concerns amongst residents since the Campden Hill Area contains a number of public houses in residential streets. With the concern that there could be the possibility of 24-hour opening, a vigilant watch was kept on the proposals made by each publican. The general consensus was that the process was extremely well handled by the Council and the Police and a largely satisfactory outcome was achieved with limited extensions to opening hours.

The Association's major **social event** is our Summer Party which was again held in the grounds of Campden Hill Square – a stunning location. We were pleased to welcome once again, as our Guest of Honour, Sir Malcolm Rifkind who, despite being invited to four parties that day was able to join us and enjoy a wonderful evening with music from the Portobello Stompers and good food & wine. We were also pleased to have the assistance of students from Holland Park School to help with the catering arrangements.

**David White, Chair**

### **Cromwell Road Association**

As with most Resident's Groups our principal concerns are with Licensing and Planning matters.

There have been fewer applications for **Licences** this year than last. Where indicated, the Cromwell Road Association has objected and liaised with other neighbouring Associations. In some cases it has been possible to negotiate modifications to the original application, e.g. when the Natural History Museum wanted to use their garden for late night functions, and the application was withdrawn when it was pointed out that it would disturb residents opposite. In others conditions have been

imposed by the Licensing panel. It does not seem to be always realised that, once granted, a licence remains with the premises, regardless of a change of management. However, on balance, the system seems to be working quite well.

There have been several small planning applications, but the big ones were for the **Casino at Earls Court**, when members of the CRA were among the crowd at the planning meeting when it was turned down, and the **Tesco Tower**. The latter has been the subject of a great deal of correspondence, including with the Kensington Society, and the Planning Committee decision will be known by the time this is read.

The CRA has opposed the 27 storey block both on aesthetic grounds and because of the lack of suitable infrastructure to support such a concentration of dwellings. We are greatly concerned about the lack of any coherent strategy for all the new buildings, mostly blocks of flats, being planned for North West Warwick Road, in particular for the provision of schooling, medical facilities and green space. The lack of these will impinge on the lives of everyone who lives in the neighbourhood as well as those on Warwick Road itself.

In October 2006 the Cromwell Road Branch of **St. Mungo's** reopened after having been closed for about two years for refurbishment. The work had been done with the minimum of disruption to the area and when the hoarding came down it revealed a model of redecoration. It is now a real asset to the street scene.

While St. Mungos has always endeavoured to help the homeless back into main society, at Cromwell Road the approach will be to get the clients to work out for themselves what they want and then help them do it, within a reasonable time span. An average stay of 14 months is expected. The rules are strict but fair, with each client having a personal contract of behaviour.

This combined with patrols and vigilance by the staff has ensured that we no longer see the residents hanging around with beer cans, as was the trouble at one time. The staff are

very approachable and we wish them well in their endeavours.

The biggest threat that now hangs over the whole of this section of the Royal Borough is the possible **third runway at Heathrow**. The main flight path would be parallel to and just north of Cromwell Road and we would welcome any suggestions of what could be done to influence a decision not to allow it to proceed.

On a lighter note we had a very enjoyable AGM in July at which Sir Malcolm Rifkind gave us an excellent talk. We had updates from the Natural History Museum on the progress of the Darwin 2 centre as well as contributions from Local Councillors and some of the Council officials who help to run the services on which we all depend.

**Hilary Temple, Chair**

#### **Earl's Court Square Residents' Association**

Over the years many coal holes covers have been removed to be replaced with paving slabs by contractors when re-laying the pavements. This practice was stopped two years ago when the Earl's Court Square Residents' Association protested vigorously when pavements were being renewed and the beautiful old plates had started to disappear. They were replaced with new plates, all very plain and with the name Dury in the centre, whilst the old ones mysteriously vanished - could this have had anything to do with a resale value of £50-£60 in antique markets? Once alerted, however, our Council officers were on the ball. The contractors were instructed to save all old plates and where possible to re-instate them. When this was not possible new ones were cast in old designs almost indistinguishable from the Victorian ones.

The exteriors of several properties have been renovated and redecorated; these include numbers 9, 11, 45, 26, 36, 13-38 Wetherby Mansions and the rear of Langham Mansions. Others have had their front porches redecorated, some with new limestone steps. The properties occupying Nos. 6 to 10, which were being used as hostels, have been sold and changed into

residential use; two into flats and one to a single dwelling.

This year's social events included participation in the London Garden Square Open Weekend, the annual summer barbeque, and a Children's Garden Party. Several 'Music in the Garden' events including a local string quartet and the Go Band were organised by the Garden Sub-Committee. In December, The Lighting of the Christmas Tree took place, the event supported by a quartet from the Royal Academy of Music.

**Douglas Eaton, Joint Editor of the ECSR Newsletter**

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

We continue in 2006 to have both macro - and local - preoccupations.

On the larger issues there were threats to residents posed by the **licensing provisions**, the **Gambling Act 2005** and the competition of the **White City** shopping development. The dice in planning, licensing and gambling cases are heavily loaded against residents. The government's actions seem to favour all kinds of social evils (except smoking).

We do not want half a dozen casinos close to our quiet residential streets, particularly a casino a few yards from Kensington Square. More gambling is not the way to arrest the drift away from the High Street to White City.

In detail, we continue to have problems at both ends of our little area. To the north is the passage to the High Street by the old electricity sub-station, with no less than three restaurants cheek by jowl. To the south we have our problem pub, the **Builder's Arms**, where happily the new manager has shown some determination in limiting street drinking, though it is still very noisy in summer. One intractable drink problem remains - that of rowdy groups who stagger through our streets at 2 - 4am on their way down from the High Street night spots, shouting and singing as they go. We still have a long way to go before the rowdy drinking culture gives way to more civilised continental modes of conduct.

It proved right to extend **parking controls** to Sundays, when High Street shoppers park all over the area as well as causing traffic jams on the High Street.

#### **Sir Ronald Arculus, Chair**

##### **Ladbroke Association**

It is with much sadness that we have to report that our Chairman, Charles Levison died on July 7 2006. He was an outstanding chairman. His tact, wit, charm and intellect as well as his professional expertise will be sorely missed. The new Chairman is David Corsellis.

The **Conservation Area** has been enlarged and now extends as far as Westway to the north and Portobello Road and Pembridge Road to the east.

**Issues of concern** during 2006 have been:

- excessive tree reduction work
- mobile phone masts and TV aerials
- Portobello Road and the proposal for it to be re-designated as a local shopping area
- Deep excavation applications
- the long running saga of 18 Horbury Crescent and the plans to change it from 'house in multiple occupation' to a single family house
- Shop fronts – preservation and restoration of original
- The quality of planning applications
- The proposals to develop the EDF site off Victoria Gardens
- Proposals made under permitted development

Henrietta Phipps led members on a fascinating **walk** around Ladbroke Square and Notting Hill Garden and gave a knowledgeable insight into the history, design and development of the gardens.

**Photographic Project** - Commissioned by the Association and funded by a bequest, Thomas Erskine has made a photographic record of the front of every building within the boundaries of the

Ladbroke Conservation Area, to show the façade and usage of each property as they were in 2005. This will not only provide an architectural benchmark of outside colours, materials and features, but also an invaluable source for planners when deciding on planning, conservation and restoration issues. A gallery of some of Thomas Erskine's photographs can be seen on the Association's website at [www.ladbrokeassociation.org.uk](http://www.ladbrokeassociation.org.uk). The Association is investigating holding an exhibition of the photography later in 2007.

#### **David Corsellis, Chair**

##### **Norland Conservation Association**

Not a month goes by when we are not made abruptly aware of the importance of a Conservation Society like ours to protect and enhance the Area. The threats are multiple and sometimes seem to come from all directions at once!

For example:

- An application to completely alter the fenestration of a house at the south end of Addison Avenue (not listed), replacing traditional glazing bars with picture windows; fortunately an Article 4 Direction had just been applied to control such developments
- The proposal to further increase retail space in the White City development, more or less doubling the original permission, without adding any new car-parking space; Norland will be joined to White City by a pedestrian bridge, making our area a very attractive place for "overflow" car parking. Can Residents Parking controls help? If so how? - given that a substantial amount of trade in White City is expected to come from North Kensington which is within the RBKC Residents Parking Scheme
- Parking problems resulting from mosque activities – particularly during Ramadan
- Thames Water wishing to site a permanent "kiosk" on the pavement just outside the church in St James's Gardens, to control the Holland Park Flood Alleviation Scheme

- “permitted development” claimed to apply to roofline and rear garden extensions
- Excavations to create subterranean basements for swimming pools, cinemas, squash courts etc
- A concern that in dealing with all these new developments, policy guidelines are lacking, and increasingly, Council Officers and members of the Planning Committee are at a loss to find valid reasons to object

Nonetheless, we try to be positive and pro-active as well:

- we hope to persuade the Council to make **Clarendon Cross** a priority for replacement of worn-out concrete paving stones with the new York stones as already installed in St James's Gardens, and planned to be installed round Norland Square, once the fine new railings are in place
- our Annual Lecture will have as its subject a history of wrought and cast iron, with particular reference to their use in London in 18th and 19th centuries
- getting advance notice of filming applications, so that we can ask the companies concerned for a donation to support our conservation activities.

**Clive Wilson, Chair**

### **Onslow Neighbourhood Association**

There is growing concern amongst members about the increase in residential **subterranean development**. Owners of mews and similar houses are finding that development under the houses is much less regulated than upwards or outwards and consequently basements and gardens are dug out to a great depth to provide increased accommodation, parking or sports facilities. Apart from altering the character and size of these houses, this can cause dangerous subsidence to neighbouring properties, and massive upheaval during construction. A lead from the Council is needed here to prevent the Borough becoming even more densely populated.

This organisation's experience of a current planning battle may be informative for other associations in the Borough.

There is widespread resistance amongst residents of Onslow Square and amenity groups operating in the area to proposals to redevelop the church and crypt of **St Paul's Onslow Square**, but especially the adjacent church hall and flats for the clergy on a 30ft wide plot next to the church. The initial plan by Lord Foster was heavily criticised by the Council on a number of different grounds – Increased Intensity of Use; Historic Building Issues; Conservation Area; Trees; Access. The fact that local opposition has resulted in the building being scaled down to line up with the façade of the existing church and also reduced in height is good news until one learns of the intended use for the new building. This has been described by the Church concerned as a ‘campus’ and includes multiple facilities including a conference centre and TV studio and a triple screen cinema in the church for international broadcasts. This will form the HQ for a large and international Christian evangelical movement – the Alpha Group – and to quote the Council's letter of rejection, ‘(The planning officer has) considerable doubts, given the broad estimation of numbers of people attending the site, that the development of the site will serve a genuinely local need, which forms the pretext of the UDP policy for such issues.’ In other words, in a designated residential area there is no place for a highly active religious business, which reaches far beyond a local parochial remit. Locals would be glad to see the removal of the 1960's additions to the church but not at the price of accepting such a cuckoo into the nest.

There is also concern in this area that **restoration and renovation of properties** – sometimes by absentee owners – can be a semi-permanent feature of life in buildings that are over 150 years old. There is currently no mechanism for preventing your neighbour rebuilding his flat comprehensively whenever he chooses – or whenever it changes hands – other than by nuisance or by appealing to a superior freeholder, if there is one. Sometimes, the most one can do is to remind neighbours – and

their builders – that permitted building hours are 0800-1800 Mon-Friday and 0830-1330 hours on Saturdays. Outside those hours you have recourse to the Council's noise officer.

**Roger Baresel, Chair**

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

Having been pre-occupied in 2004 by the closure of our sub-Post Office and in 2005 by the Licensing Act, the main causes for concern in 2006 have been two proposed developments – both of which have caused some disagreements in our community.

The proposal for the redevelopment of the Kensington Palace and Park Hotels into 97 luxury flats with ancillary facilities is the biggest development in our area in living memory and no one expects one of an equal or larger size in the foreseeable future. Those of our members living close to the two existing hotels seem to welcome the prospect of their closure and are not averse to their replacement by up-market flats, but others are not so enthusiastic. I think we all agreed that the developers can do better than the proposals they have so far put forward, and indeed, the Planning Committee has adjourned the application so that the architect and developers can think again and submit further plans.

A much smaller but perhaps even more divisive matter has been the application of Thomas's School to expand their premises in Victoria Road. Hopefully, this matter will be settled to the satisfaction of most of us through the expansion being permitted but with a limit on the number of pupils and the adoption of a plan for limiting the traffic at the beginning and end of the school day.

We have a sub-committee working with the Council on the enhancement of the shopping complex in Gloucester Road (North). Little progress has been made so far but we will persevere and would welcome ideas from those who live nearby or use the complex.

**Peter Dixon, Chair**

## **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

## **EVENTS 2007**

Robin and Dianne have thoroughly enjoyed organising the annual events; it has been a rewarding activity and members have been most kind and appreciative. After nearly a decade we feel it is time to hand over to a new team with fresh ideas to excite the members' interest. We are looking for one person or two working together to take over. We have found it very rewarding and great fun!

## **Acknowledgements**

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the Kensington & Chelsea Partnership article.

**The Kensington Society**  
**Receipts and payments account**  
**for the year ended 31 December 2006**

**1 GENERAL CORE FUND**

	2006	2005
	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>		
<b>Voluntary sources</b>		
Subscriptions	4,827.19	6,046.49
Donations	1,425.00	3,570.00
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Receipts from current year visits	1,300.00	2,263.75
Receipts for future visits	0.00	552.50
Advertising in annual report	1,090.00	500.00
Interest	1,917.12	2,297.49
<b>total receipts</b>	<b>10,659.31</b>	<b>16,230.23</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
<b>Direct charitable expenditure</b>		
Charitable activities	797.50	1,100.00
Visits	1,856.10	3,212.77
	2,653.60	4,312.77
<b>Other expenditure</b>		
Annual report	4,603.90	3,991.65
Stationery / printing	1,534.49	1,417.63
Postage / telephone	460.83	711.43
Typing	193.00	350.96
Meeting room hire	40.00	40.00
Subscriptions	92.57	197.50
Catering	703.80	690.55
Accounts	475.00	475.00
Insurance	0.00	577.50
Advertising	150.00	95.00
	8,253.59	8,547.22
<b>total payments</b>	<b>10,907.19</b>	<b>12,859.99</b>
<b>Net receipts /(payments) for the year</b>	<b>(347.88)</b>	<b>2,370.24</b>
<b>Bank balances B/F</b>	<b>50,990.89</b>	<b>48,620.65</b>
<b>Bank balances C/F</b>	<b>50,643.01</b>	<b>50,990.89</b>

**The Kensington Society**  
**Statement of assets and liabilities**  
**at 31 December 2006**

	Princess Alice Memorial Fund	General Core Fund	2006 Total	2005 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	1,924.59	1,924.59	4,189.59
CAF Cash account	2,370.41	46,345.70	48,716.11	46,798.99
	2,370.41	48,272.60	50,643.01	50,990.89

## Treasurer's Report 2006

The Society came through 2006 in robust financial shape with some generous donations supplementing its subscription income and with cash and reserves at £50,643.

Anthony Lee

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## THE BLUE CROSS *Britain's pet charity*

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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Free admission for Kensington Society members with this advert.

**Preview Reception** Wednesday 18th April, 6.30-9pm - **Strictly Ticket Only**  
Kensington Society members may purchase tickets for the Preview at £10 each.  
Cheque / card details to Penman Fairs, Widdicombe, Bedford Place, Uckfield, TN22 1LW

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