

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY



Annual Report 2011

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE

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 interest.

The Kensington Society's Annual Report 2010 won a **Commended Award** and the 2008 Annual Report won a **Highly Commended Award** at the London Forum of Civic Amenities Societies, in the printed publications category. The awards are held every two years.



Front Cover: *1505*, by Nigel Hall, copyright The Artist
Find out more about one of Kensington's most prestigious artists on p.56

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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

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FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT



Nick Ross, President

David Cameron likes to rebrand it as the Big Society though good neighbourliness has always been there in different guises; claimed by the left as communalism, social values and social action, or by liberals who talk of community engagement and community involvement, and by the right who describe it as municipal duty and civic responsibility. Whatever your politics, or none, The Kensington Society is surely just the sort of thing that everyone would approve of.

Or is it? Some truly believe in working for friendly and coherent residential neighbourhoods, where people feel home is outside the front door as well as within. Then there are those who are concerned less about the community as such and more about their physical surroundings: the architecture, the trees and parks and street furniture. And no doubt there are other, less selfless, reasons for supporting the Society, not least the natural instinct to protect one's home from the threat of local planning applications.

- So where does that leave the Society? What should it focus on and why?
- Is it a force for improving the Borough generally, in which case should it concern itself with everything from schools to policing? Is its job more or less shadowing the Council?
- Should its priority be to vet planning applications and oppose those which don't meet residents' approval?
- Or does it have a broader planning remit: including housing and transport policy, leisure facilities and libraries?
- In any case where does its authority come from?



(l-r) Nick Ross, The Duke of Gloucester and Sir Ronald Arculus

These are certainly not new questions, but in taking up the presidency these were obviously challenges I needed to consider for myself; and in any case more than 60 years on from the Society's founding, they deserve to be considered afresh. But after trying to go back to first principles I have come to the view that the first principles were right all along and that the Society's original objects stand the test of time:

"...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."

That is a big portfolio, perhaps already too big given the Society's slender resources. It is a task that needs good judgement more than an electoral mandate. Yes, in theory I would like to see us play a wider role, but I cannot believe that we would be very effective if we tried to do more.

On the other hand it would be sad, and a wasted opportunity, if we settled for being professional objectors. For one thing the planning officers and Councillors will easily tire of predictably disapproving naysayers. Our role should not be to halt progress - even noisy and disruptive progress. We do not live in a great museum like Venice.

London is a true world city because of its effervescent mix of history and modernity. Development is its lifeblood. Kensington is a fulfilling and vibrant place to live because it is evolving and adapting, not pickled in vinegar. Many of our streets and parks are beautiful, and a few of our buildings are truly of lasting importance, but mostly even they are hugely enhanced by renovations. And much of our housing and retail sprawl was always second-rate, never worthy of being conserved for ever as great works of art. In any case even today's most familiar and cherished local scenes were created by ploughing up or pulling down something that went before.

Of course there is always an important job to do in protecting truly historic structures and exceptional environments, but new ideas ought to be encouraged too. We are, and were always intended to be, much more than a conservation society. Every instinct to block development and impose red tape should be questioned: is it motivated by the shock of the new or by disdain for truly bad design and unimaginative drabness? In line with our original remit, we should stimulate interest in the past but also contribute to the future, not least by safeguarding against timid architecture that pretends to be traditional, but will always represent mediocrity.

We should never forget that each generation needs to take risks with its aesthetic judgements. We should recall how Christopher Wren was attacked by contemporaries over his supposed lack of competence and taste; that the genius of Antoni Gaudí appalled many fellow citizens in his time; and that Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright were loathed by as many in their day as now dislike Norman Foster or Zaha Hadid. Some of these great designers wilfully disregarded not merely the dominant conventions, but even the immediate environs so that their buildings, now iconic, must have stood out like a sore thumb. Think of St Paul's Cathedral in London or Casa Milà in Barcelona.

So rather than being a protest group I think there is a case for The Kensington Society to be more proactive and encouraging bold new ideas. That way, when we object to dreary mediocrity, we might be listened to with more respect by those who might otherwise dismiss us as mere nimbies.

And I can't help thinking such a role in "promoting good architecture and planning" would have been warmly approved of by Mrs Gay Christiansen when she founded The Kensington Society in 1953.



NICK ROSS, President

FROM THE RETIRING PRESIDENT

LOOKING BACK – AND FORWARD

John Drummond, my predecessor, wrote in 1997: "It is now 12 years since I was invited to succeed my old friend Alec Clifton Taylor as President, the fact that in that time some of the worst proposals for change have been rejected has much to do with the constant vigilance of the Society. I hope that it will continue"

...I believe it has, but the price of 'constant vigilance' is an unremitting effort by your Executive and support needed from the membership. The larger our membership, the greater our clout!

John did not always agree with me, for example, over the Diana Memorial Garden or the Libeskind extension of the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), when we took a high profile and won. The new plan by Amanda Levete Architects for the V&A keeps the Aston Webb screen in place and leads into a spacious quadrangle for many public uses. Much better!

In the year 2000, John announced his forthcoming retirement and the annual report noted with regret that Mrs Gay Christiansen would be giving up due to ill health, having edited the report since the Society began in 1953. Her tireless work for the Society over many years was recalled with great gratitude and tributes were paid to her in the report for 2001 when she died.

In 2003, by way of a change, I devoted my piece to the Blue Plaques of Kensington, which commemorate a wide range of worthies, and also to the unique circle of artists and their patrons in Holland Park.

In 2005, I described the Year of Remembrance, which was mainly to recall the end of World War II. In 2006, I was evidently feeling a little battle-weary when I entitled my piece "The Struggle for Kensington". In 2007, amid deep gloom over the financial situation, I thought opportune to count our blessings, an agreeable



Sir Ronald Arculus



Nick Ross in discussion at the 2010 AGM

exercise in itself. We were also pleased and honoured to welcome our Patron HRH the Duke of Gloucester, an architect by training, a resident of Kensington Palace and an indefatigable world traveller on royal duties.

In 2008, I reviewed our aims for keeping Kensington liveable, and mentioned some good European examples: the protected “historic centre” all over Italy, the unifying effect of the great boulevards of Paris, the flourishing pedestrian areas in city centres like Verona or Montpellier. In 2009, I wrote about style, which we have in different types in Kensington which contrast with different styles in neighbouring areas such as Chelsea, Brompton and Knightsbridge. I concluded “long live style”.

In 2010, I listed some negative aspects e.g. the disruption of large scale redevelopment, obstruction of traffic lanes and of pavements, resultant traffic jams, noise, dust pollution; such sites should be self-contained and not intrude on public spaces, or make life a misery for many residents not only for months but years. Much could be done by tightening controls by the authorities. Similar considerations apply to the drastic redevelopment of houses and smaller buildings, causing vibration, noise, blocking of streets, damage to trees and gardens and to underground water-flows, unsympathetic styles etc. There were also threats to the Royal Parks.

In several pieces over the years, I have stressed the need for architects/developers/clients to come up with designs, which, however radical or modern, fit in with and even enhance their surroundings instead of sticking out like sore thumbs. There are several different styles in Kensington from smaller houses to large terraces, and plenty of scope for sympathetic refurbishment which would improve the whole, not damage it.

In late 2011, when there were plenty of problems to address and developments to watch: uncertainty of over planning policy; mergers of services between neighbouring Councils; commercialisation of the Royal Palaces and Parks; election of the Mayor of London; effects of the Olympic Games; changes to Parliamentary constituencies to name but a few. There is, however, progress in some cases e.g. the Commonwealth Institute which is being adapted with charity help for occupation by the Design Museum. But over-commercialisation of the site may have to be opposed. 2012 and will be a busy year for the planning experts. On the one hand the Government preaches “localism”, but Whitehall continues to favour “economic development” over environmental protection.

Now I shall change gear, leave my busy and distinguished successor in charge, and join David Ramsbotham as a Vice-President, ready to help if called upon. My successor is already firmly in the saddle and I wish him a happy and successful term in an office which I have greatly enjoyed.

Sir Ronald Arculus

SIR RONALD ARCULUS
Vice-President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

The 58th Annual General Meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 11 April 2010. Around 150 members attended the AGM. Apologies were received from General the Lord Ramsbotham, Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Sir Angus Stirling.

Image courtesy of the Royal College of Art



Dr. Paul Thompson

Dr Paul Thompson, Rector of the Royal College of Art, gave an inspiring address on the history and present role of the world's oldest design school with 1,000 students in two campuses in Queensgate and Battersea. Former students included Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Ossie Clark, David Hockney, Sandra Rhodes, Bridget Riley, Ridley Scott, James Dyson, Gavin Turk and Tracy Emin. He commented that the College was a blend of 70% design and 30% fine art.

The business of the AGM then took place, chaired by Sir Ronald Arculus:

The minutes of the 2010 AGM were confirmed. Caroline Macmillan proposed with George Law seconding.

The minutes of the EGM on 11 November were confirmed. John Hable proposed with Clive Watson seconding.

The 2010 Annual Report and Accounts were adopted, having been proposed and seconded.

The 12 members standing for election to the executive committee were proposed by Sir Ronald Arculus and seconded by George Law and approved unanimously. They are: Michael Bach, Richard Chaplin, Angela Darwin, Gill Foley, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Anthony Lee, Charles Lutyens, Philip Roberts, Clare Singleton, Holly Smith and Anthony Walker.

Clare Singleton and Richard Chaplin were proposed as Secretary and Treasurer respectively by Sir Ronald Arculus and seconded by Clare Watson. Both were elected unanimously.



Jennifer Ware

Image by Michael Bach

Image by Michael Bach



Charles Lutyens (L) and Anthony Lee (R)

Sir Ronald Arculus announced his retirement as President after 21 years. Nick Ross was proposed as the new President, proposed by Sir Ronald Arculus and seconded by Jonathan Hindle. Sir Ronald Arculus was proposed as Vice-President by Angela Darwin and seconded.

Michael Bach reported as Chair of the Planning Committee. He said that the attitude of the

Government towards planning was challenging as it sought to reconcile 'localism' and 'economic growth'. The proposed Earl's Court redevelopment is a huge very high density and massive scheme. The latest Tesco West Cromwell Road proposal would involve a doubling of the supermarket sales area and the loss of the lorry/coach park. The Natural History Museum hopes to concrete its East Lawn. Subterranean developments continue to be a challenge, as are proposals to redevelop pubs, like the Prince of Wales. More advertisements are a problem especially on the new BT broadband cabinets. On the positive side, there is a new Post Office on Kensington High Street.

Amanda Frame as Chairman of the Executive Committee said that it had been an active year for the Society, with the new constitution, increased membership and a continued close working relationship with the Council. Looking in 2011, we intend to upgrade the website and monitor the progress of localism. Thanks went to the advertisers of the popular 2010 Annual Report. We will be looking to promote local history, possibly with a lecture programme. We have developed new sub-committees and encourage members to participate. Finally and most importantly, Amanda thanked all the members for their support.

RICHARD CHAPLIN



Image by Michael Bach

The Mayor, Councillor James Husband with Amanda Frame

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

"The past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshiped. It is our future in which we will find our greatness."

Pierre Trudeau

Kensington is not unique in the context of London or even the United Kingdom as a whole. This nation has a wealth of beautiful cities but what makes Kensington unique?



Image courtesy of RBKC

Stop and look around. Kensington is wonderful. The buildings have character and diversity; we can walk to our shops or a neighbourhood restaurant ...we have neighbours... there are families and children in multiple-tiered pushchairs with dogs attached. We have green spaces, tree-lined streets which are well maintained, clean and free of rubbish. We don't have wheelie bins lining our kerbs. Our streets are alive and we have beautiful parks and garden squares. Thanks to both local pressure and the support of the Council, we do not have those huge, blinding LED structures flashing away at every intersection. Apart from the West End, we have more cinemas than any other area.

The Mayor has revised the London Plan ensuring that the local needs are addressed. The Government followed his lead with Localism. Neighbours are now given the opportunity to address their own specific problems and challenges... there is a revival of communities. The activist in and around Portobello Road are shining examples of what local pressure can accomplish.

The Design Museum will be coming to Kensington High Street. Kensington High Street seems to have recovered and weathered the challenges of Westfield. We lost a few Post Offices, but not the one on the High Street. Other smaller

Exhibition Road



Holland House

Image courtesy of RBKC

shopping areas, such as Holland Park and Gloucester Road, continue to improve. The changes and enhancements to Kensington Palace can be seen from the Broad Walk and the Palace will re-open for the Jubilee. The Duke of Cambridge will return to Kensington with his Duchess and brother.

This year has seen the major improvements on Exhibition Road. Many are concerned about the traffic and pedestrian shared space, but all agree it looks wonderful. The redesign and completion of the area around South Kensington Station has greatly improved what is one of the busiest areas of the capital and the entrance for many to our, and the nation's, greatest museums. However, the loss of some of our favourite shops has resulted in perhaps too many restaurants, but the improvements are long awaited and very welcome. The design of the South Kensington Station and the proposed development above the station continues to be reviewed and we, along with the other local societies, continue to insist that the station must be step-free.

Notting Hill Gate will be a concern over the next year, as the new owners push for a denser redevelopment with the possible loss



Image courtesy of The Friends of Holland Park

Kyoto Garden, Holland Park



Image courtesy of The Holland Park Opera

of more of those beloved shops. We now have new shop-front guidelines, which require the improvement to all new shops and the renovation of our many old and valued facades. The Council is supporting the policies to protect small offices and commercial units, to maintain the diversity of uses that make Kensington special.

We have had some set-backs this year. The Prince of Wales in Princedale Road, after trading uninterrupted for over 165 years, was closed by a restaurateur/property developer. Over 150 locals signed the petition and though the Council refused planning permission, the Inspector allowed the appeal. The result, however, is the Council is now reviewing the Core Strategy policy in relation to public houses and other community amenities. We hope the changes will also embrace the much-needed protection of the markets on Portobello Road. We do have too much traffic and the proposals for the massive developments along the west of the Borough from White City to the Thames concern us all.

I can not end without thanking our President and retiring Trustees of the Society. Sir Ronald Arculus passed the baton to Nick Ross at the AGM. Nick has been fully involved in many of our controversial issues. Celia Rees-Jenkins served as Vice-Chairman and our representative on both Kensington and Chelsea Partnership and the North Kensington Environment Programme. Dianne Gabitass joined the executive committee in 1996 and was responsible for organising many excellent tours for the members. Dianne and Celia left the committee prior to the AGM. Angela Darwin joined the executive committee in 1995 and has left the committee in May after years of devoted service as the Membership Secretary. We shall miss their wise and sage advice and opinions.

Since the beginning of the Kensington Society in 1953 we have worked to preserve and improve Kensington... and having stopped to look around I think we, along with our friends, members and local societies... have done a pretty good job. The future is bright.

AMANDA FRAME
Chairman

BARONESS GREY-THOMPSON



BRITAIN'S GREATEST PARALYMPIAN ATHLETE REVEALS THE SECRETS OF HER SUCCESS AT THIS YEAR'S AGM.

This year we are fortunate to have an extremely prestigious athlete and public figure speaking at the Kensington Society AGM. Not only is Baroness Grey-

Thompson one of Britain's most successful paralympic athletes – she has competed in five Paralympic Games, winning 11 Gold Medals and has won the London Wheelchair Marathon six times between 1992-2002 – she is now a peer in the House of Lords residing over legislation that could change the lives of disabled people in this country forever.

Baroness Grey-Thompson, who was christened Carys, but nicknamed Tanni after her two-years old sister declared that she was 'tiny' when she first saw her; has competed in paralympic sports from the age of 15 and is instrumental in the running of this year's Paralympics in London.

The Paralympics began in Stoke Mandeville in 1948, when Sir Ludwig Guttman, a neurologist, was working with spinal injury victims from WWII at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and he decided to set up a sports competition as part of the soldier's rehabilitation. Over the years this idea became adopted by other spinal injury units in Britain and by 1960, when the Olympics were held in Rome, Guttman brought 400 wheelchair athletes to compete as well - in the first Parallel Olympics.

As Tanni explains, 2012 is a big moment for the Paralympic games as, "this is the first Games to be held where both Olympics and Paralympics have been planned together – I think this will have a great effect on the Paralympics, it won't be seen as the event 'tagged onto the end' of the Olympics, but a great sporting event in its own right".



Tanni at the tunnel race launch

Born with spina bifida and confined to a wheelchair at the age of seven, Tanni's paralympic career started in 1984, when she competed in the 100m at the Junior National Games for Wales. She cites Chris Hallam, the Welsh paralympian and wheelchair athlete, as one of her major inspirations, "I watched Chris win the London Marathon on 1982 and thought it looked like fun. Chris was a bit of a rebel, he had long flowing blond hair and raced in a leopard-print suit, and I admired his attitude and skill". His inspiration obviously continued to inspire, as Tanni's international career took off at the Seoul Olympics in 1988 at which she won a bronze medal in the 400m.

Competing at such a high level has obviously not been easy, especially as Tanni overcame extensive surgery on her back in her early career, but she says that her grandfather's old adage of, "aim high, even if you hit a cabbage", which basically means keep trying, is always in the back of her mind. And it's that enduring spirit and fight that has helped her overcome career lows, such as, "straight after the Atlanta Paralympic Games – I had won four golds in Barcelona in 1992 and there was a high level of expectation for Atlanta in 1996. I won one gold and three silver medals in Atlanta (and set two world records), but there were people around the GB team...who were saying that I should retire. I knew that I had a lot more to offer. At the next Paralympic Games, in Sydney in 2000 I won four gold medals again".

Now retired from sport, Tanni was created a Dame in 2005 and a life peer in 2010. She explains her new role is as equally challenging as her sporting life, "there is a lot of legislation passing through parliament this year which will have considerable effect on the lives of disabled people. I've spent a lot of time listening to disabled people and considering their views and as a result I have tabled quite a number of amendments to various pieces of legislation". She clearly undertakes her new work in the same spirit as her athletic career, with vigour and determination, and when not at the Lords she is, "a member of the board of Transport for London and chair the Environment, Corporate and Planning Committee. I am also on the board of UK Athletics and the London Marathon, and I am a trustee of a few charity organisations. I am an ambassador for London 2012 and vice-chair of the Athlete Committee which has been involved in many aspects of planning for the Games".

There doesn't seem to be much that our speaker cannot do, so we look forward to seeing you at this year's AGM where Baroness Grey-Thompson will not only discuss sports and politics, but how we can all "plan for success in whatever we do". It will be a truly inspirational evening **KS**

EMMA JUHASZ

Tanni's various roles take her worldwide as both a trustee and ambassador



FROM RAGS TO RICHES:

THE CHANGING FACE OF NOTTING HILL W11

Notting Hill has been transformed from vicious notoriety to glittery fame at such a fast pace that it even caught estate agents unawares. From the race riots, street violence and slumlords such as Peter Rachman (1950s and 1960s), it became, by the 1990s, a rising property speculation haunted by journalists, politicians and rich entrepreneurs. And since then it has become the preferred destination of people richer than even British bankers.

In the late 1950s, hardy pioneers who moved to a reasonably respectable street such as Pembridge Villas were surveyed with horror by friends, who would explain that they certainly could not come and visit them there.

Then, starting from the south: Notting Hill Gate and Holland Park tube station, the area began to gentrify northwards. There had always been a small core of traditional middle class people living at that end, but they did not penetrate far. Victorian developers constructing the imposing mansions for the upper classes had gone bust and the area's period of prosperous, late Victorian comfort had long disappeared.



Pembridge Villas 1989

Most of the large houses had been transformed from single occupation into bed-sits for poor students and further north, for overworked and underpaid immigrants. Owners reduced to accepting such impecunious tenants lacked the spare cash for maintenance and decoration, so much of the housing fell into dereliction.



Portobello Market 1970



All images courtesy of RBKC Local Studies Library

Notting Hill Gate redevelopment 1959

The artist, stage designer and Daily Express cartoonist, Osbert Lancaster, had been brought up by prosperous upper middle class parents in 79 Elgin Crescent and returned to view his house in nostalgic mood in 1963. He was devastated by what he saw and his drawing of the decaying, neglected wreck of his house is used as the frontispiece for his memoirs, *All Done from My Memory* and is a good representation of what had happened to the area.

Meanwhile, the slumlords, like the notorious Rachman, spent any spare cash on enforcers with Alsations, to empty properties for renting and scare the existing tenants into paying every penny on time.

But its intrinsic advantages could not hold the area back for ever. It is reasonably central, with access to the City and West End by two tube lines and a large number of buses. It had housing stock which had once been attractive and substantial, and there was wide range of shopping available from the street market in Portobello Road, to the fashionable shops and department stores of Kensington High Street

By the 1970s things began to improve, but the upgrading was spreading slowly. At that period a woman living in Elgin Crescent would still ask for a man she knew to walk her home from Notting Hill tube station because she felt justifiably unsafe there after dark. The police still patrolled the All Saints Road, at least, two at a time, and no sane and honest citizen would be at the end of that road after 6pm on carnival nights. Come to that, few honest citizens ventured near All Saints Road at all, as it had a fearsome reputation as the centre of gang-ruled drug dealing.

From the early 1980s, the adventurous few began to move beyond the first three or four blocks and to convert bed-sits into flats. They began to penetrate the frontiers of poverty. The process steadily accelerated. Gentrification oozed visibly as crumbling

stucco was repaired, houses acquired new coats of paint and windows lost their frames of rotten timber.

Gradually this began to attract those pioneers of changing style – media people, including journalists – who arrived because they enjoyed living on the edge of what was mutating from criminal to louche. The Victorian developers had been quite careful that their expensive new estates would not be contaminated by the smell of poor people and so constructed a street pattern that made Clarendon Road a formidable barrier between the stylish development to the east and the piggeries and pottery to the west. But slowly even the area west of Clarendon Road began to attract its share of affluent settlers, especially where it turned posh again further west by the Norland estate.

The signs of change were everywhere. Portobello Road started losing its second-hand clothes barrows, used kitchenware sellers, stalls of ancient table lamps and rusty old tools. It acquired more fruit and vegetable sellers. And some of them ventured into the more exotic imports, but the market still managed to retain a community atmosphere with old-time residents exchanging insults with the market people.

Then the lighting bolt struck. A wildly popular film transformed the area into a place of myth: a haunt of film stars, a place of romance, the centre of fashion, the epitome of cool. Within a year Notting Hill became scarcely recognisable, and not just because the streets were clogged with Japanese looking for a blue door and Julia Roberts. (There is even a company organising walking tours round the purported sites shown in the film).

The film was, obviously, Notting Hill and the director and writer Richard Curtis said he chose the area Notting Hill, as it "...is a melting pot and the perfect place to set a film".



Portobello Market 1967



Image courtesy of RBKC Local Studies Library

Portobello Market 1970

While in his commentary to the published script, he explained that the film's inception had come from when he was having sleepless nights and instead of counting sheep, he devised the notion of inventing a tale to send himself to sleep. One story he told himself kept recurring. "I would imagine going to dinner with my friends Piers and Paula in Battersea, as I did most weeks. I'd casually say I was bringing a girl and then turn up unexpectedly with Madonna – usually Madonna, sometimes Isabella Rossellini – but usually Madonna. Piers would open the door and be very cool about it, though secretly thrilled. His wife Paula would have no idea who Madonna was and behave accordingly and my friend Helen would arrive late and explode with excitement. By which time I'd have dozed off again. Five years later, we were doing the first week's filming of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and I was sitting in a cold room in Luton Hoo, beside James Fleet [the actor who played Tom], asleep, trying to work out what I should write next. I remembered these dreams and thought it's not a bad idea for films to be about dreamy situations, and so decided I'd have a bash at writing a film about someone very ordinary going out with someone very famous. This script is the result of that".

Curtis's choice of film location was not ideal though, as it left the producers coping with filming in a heavily populated area, with fears that the stars would attract thousands of fans and paparazzi. Thousands of people were kept at bay, however, with the promise that the producers would donate to their favourite charity – 200 charities did get money. Filming was in Portobello Road, Westbourne Park Road, Golborne Road, Lansdowne Road (where a dinner party similar to Curtis' dream took

place), and the Coronet Cinema at Notting Hill Gate.

Setting this 1999 fairytale film in Notting Hill created such a blinding glitter of bogus Hollywood glamour that the area is still reeling from the effects. It may never recover. The critics were pretty sniffy about the film, calling it an artificial, contrived and hackneyed romantic comedy, but – in the words of Liberace's famous reaction to criticism – Richard Curtis was probably crying all the way to the bank, because the public lapped it up. Evidently not just in Britain, since tourists from all round the world are still devotedly pouring into the area looking for the sites in the film.



Fruit & veg stall, Portobello Road 2011

One measure of enthusiasm for the film was that a besotted fan, with more money than good sense, paid £40,000 at auction for the blue door off Portobello Road – it was the door to the house where Hugh Grant's character was meant to have lived. In fact, the house with that notorious door was quite a long way off. The Travel Bookshop in the film also bore little resemblance to the actual one of that name in Blenheim Crescent; in fact they transformed an antique shop next to the butcher for the purpose of the film. However, the poor owner of the real-life shop has subsequently had to chase away people from his shop, who merely wanted to be photographed in what they thought was the shop in the film – they never bought anything, but just got in the way of those who might have been customers. Unfortunately, the shop went out of business in September 2011, when nobody could be found to buy or support it, but it is now being reborn as the Notting Hill Bookshop.

Portobello Road has suffered even more for its role in the film. It has always been on the tourist circuit, just as the Paris flea markets are part of the experience for the swiftly-transient visitors from Oklahoma, Yokohama, and Nizhny Novgorod. But all of a sudden it was no longer the place to pick up a genuine antique bargain. Although that has not altogether disappeared, it has diminished, as the flashier downmarket goods for transients have increasingly taken over.

These newcomers have also been gradually squeezing out the fruit and vegetable market, the cheese vendors and fish stalls, much to more traditional residents' disgust.

More fundamental still has been the transformation from a cheap and cheerful street market to the focus of the trendy lifestyle for the young and rich.

Notting Hill became cool and fashionable, and the jeunesse doree of Europe flocked in – after all Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts had been there – and soon the place was inhabited by models, pop stars, and even top Tory politicians. The clothing chain of shops, All Saints, decided this was the place to create a giant shop selling teen clothing and used an area which had once been home to dozens of specialised antiques booths – once again in face of disregarded protests and disdain by established locals.

As the area became trendier and more expensive, the hugely-moneyed foreign residents moved in. They filled the streets with four-wheel-drive Porsches and BMWs and dug several floors below their homes for swimming pools, gyms, cinemas, bars and the nanny flat. Considering the inherent advantages of the area, perhaps it was bound to happen anyway, but Mr Curtis certainly accelerated the trend. Little wonder long-time locals, unable to believe their luck, have sold their places for untold millions and moved to somewhere else that is, for the moment, blessedly unfashionable.

MICHAEL BECKET



Blue Door - any offers?

PLANNING IN 2011



Image by Michael Bach

Kensington Palace exposed in 2011

A YEAR OF MAJOR CHANGE?

2011 was a watershed year for planning in the Borough. Despite the current financial uncertainty, more development than in the last century is now coming forward in and round the edges of the Borough – mainly as a result of the Mayor of London's London Plan adopted in July and reflected in the Borough's new development plan – the Core Strategy - adopted in December 2010. The development pressures are becoming extreme, whether from major developments or individual residential developers digging 2 to 5 levels down.

Great uncertainty has been created by some of the Government's poorly-developed proposals, such as: allowing any building to turn into a school without requiring planning consent, or any commercial building to become housing, also without requiring consent. But most concerning of all has been the proposal to change national planning policy to a new shorter National Planning Policy Framework.

London Plan

The unprecedented scale of development has been based on Ken Livingstone's 2008 version of the London Plan, which identified Opportunity Areas - areas for major growth for jobs and housing - at White City and Vauxhall/Nine Elms/Battersea, which was produced in a climate of seeking to maximise the density of development.

The new 2011 London Plan produced by Boris Johnson has changed the emphasis from "maximising" the density of development to one of "optimising" the use of sites; by making sure that the density of a scheme does not exceed what is appropriate for the



De Vere Gardens Invention solution for a site office

site in terms of its location, access to public transport and its local context. This change was designed to curb the excessive densities produced under Ken Livingstone's 2008 Plan, although, apart from the developments in Warwick Road, the effects of the 2008 Plan were not so noticeable in Kensington, where densities are already very high. Similarly, with Ken Livingstone's penchant for tall buildings, the evidence at Lots Road have yet to be seen, Kensington came off lightly.

The new London Plan, however, is a different matter. It introduced two new Opportunity Areas that affect us very directly: Earls Court/West Kensington and Kensal Canalside. In addition, the two existing Opportunity Areas, in Battersea and White City, have now progressed to the stage of producing Planning Frameworks.

But it is hard to turn round a super-tanker. All of these Opportunity Area

plans seem to have been developed using the policies of the "old regime" – maximising densities and promoting large amounts of commercial development: Battersea Power Station will include a new sub-regional shopping centre and, closer to home; White City proposals include increasing the size of the retail areas of Westfield by 40%.

Earls Court/West Kensington

The Earls Court Opportunity Area, first mooted in the new Mayor's 2009 draft revised London Plan, have moved forward quickly, especially Earls Court/West Kensington. This enormous development involves demolishing everything - except the Empress State Building - between Talgarth Road in the north and Lillie Road in the south, Earls Court Exhibition Centre in the east and North End Road in the west, plus the Seagrave Road coach park. The developer, Capco, has employed Terry Farrell to produce a vision for this massive new development.



Earls Court site visit: Mark Balaam, Amanda Frame and Malcolm Spalding

It is not just the scale of development that is massive in local terms, but the density of development and the height of the buildings proposed. Even though the Earls Court area in Kensington has the highest density in the country, the new development would mean it would have even higher densities. The problem is that the developer is still working with the "maximise" philosophy of the 2008 London Plan, rather than Boris Johnson's "optimising" 2011 London Plan. It is up to the Mayor to curtail the developer's plans and to make sure that their proposed development is in line with his plan.

White City

The White City Opportunity Area may be entirely in Hammersmith and Fulham, but the development would have major impacts on this Borough. The developers proposed a series of tall buildings and an extension of the Westfield shopping centre. Residents in North Kensington are alarmed at the prospect of the tall buildings just the other side of the West London Line, whilst the major expansion of Westfield raises concerns about the traffic it could generate. Already this part of London jams up regularly. Transport for London, the Mayor and Hammersmith and Fulham must solve the transport problem before anything is allowed. There should be no increase in traffic, which means all of the increase needs to be handled by public transport. There is a need to recognise that too much is too much.

Kensal Canalside

This is a more speculative project, which depends on whether the Mayor agrees to a new station next to Sainsburys. Whilst the Council has lined up a list of supporters

and offered to put up some £33 million of the Council's resources to ensure a station is built, there are still doubts about building a station so close to Paddington with so few people likely to use it. The Council is relying on the field of dreams concept, "build it and they will come". However, they should remember that "the road in is also the road out". There is also competition from Hammersmith and Fulham who are backing a new interchange station with the High Speed rail link HS2 at Old Oak Common.

Basements

At the other end of the spectrum one of the growing pressures is the demand for basements. This phenomenon has led to growing concern among residents. The Society has pressed for tighter controls on basement developments for several years, including greater control of the construction process. The Council has come under increasing pressure to make sure that these developments are professionally managed, are as sustainable as possible in terms of energy conservation and avoid damage to neighbouring properties.

Nevertheless, residents' experience of such projects, poor management practices and concerns about the cumulative effects, have meant that there has been pressure for action both by the Council and the Government to tackle these issues. The Government is currently considering whether the nuisance from a long-drawn out construction process should be part of the considerations when dealing with planning applications and whether the Party Wall Act needs to be amended.

Prince of Wales - with permission for two flats



Image by Michael Bach

New Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Government's proposals for changing national planning policy are a matter of major concern, not just in the countryside but also for urban areas. The brevity and, in particular, the tone of the document means that it fails to realise the potential benefits of bringing existing guidance into one document. It lacks vision, it's not really about anywhere, does not recognise urban areas let alone London, gives no guidance as to how our towns and cities should grow and threatens those without up-to-date plans that all development should be allowed, unless contrary to the new guidance.

Fortunately, we have up-to-date plans, both the Borough's Core Strategy and the Mayor's London Plan. That should mean that we do not have to worry, but the tone of the draft documents is that the Council will need to prove that the harm of allowing something that is against the plan is "significantly and demonstrably" greater than the benefits. If that were so, what is the point of having a plan? If developers can get consent for schemes that are clearly contrary to what has been agreed locally and judged as "sound" by a planning inspector - so much for localism.

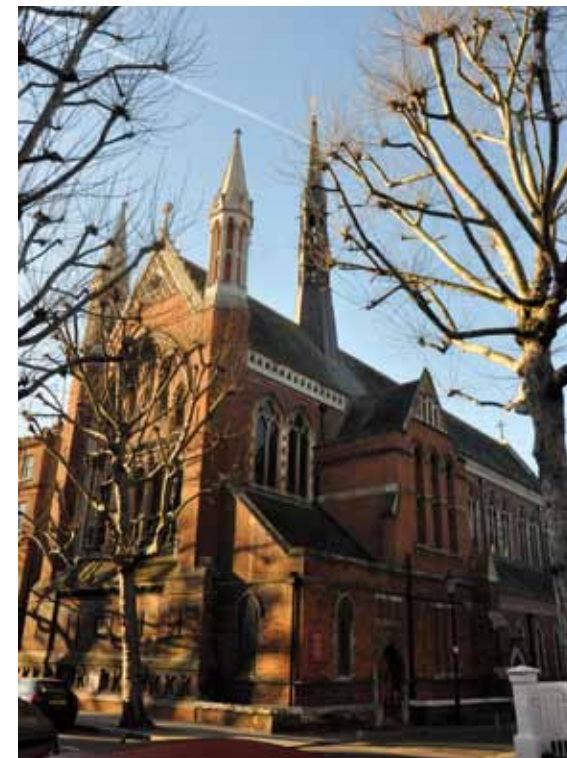


Image by Michael Bach

St Cuthberts Church, Philbeach Gardens

We supported the submission of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies and will continue to press for the recognition of our up-to-date plan; the London Plan and the Borough's Core Strategy as an expression of local choice.

Use it or lose it!

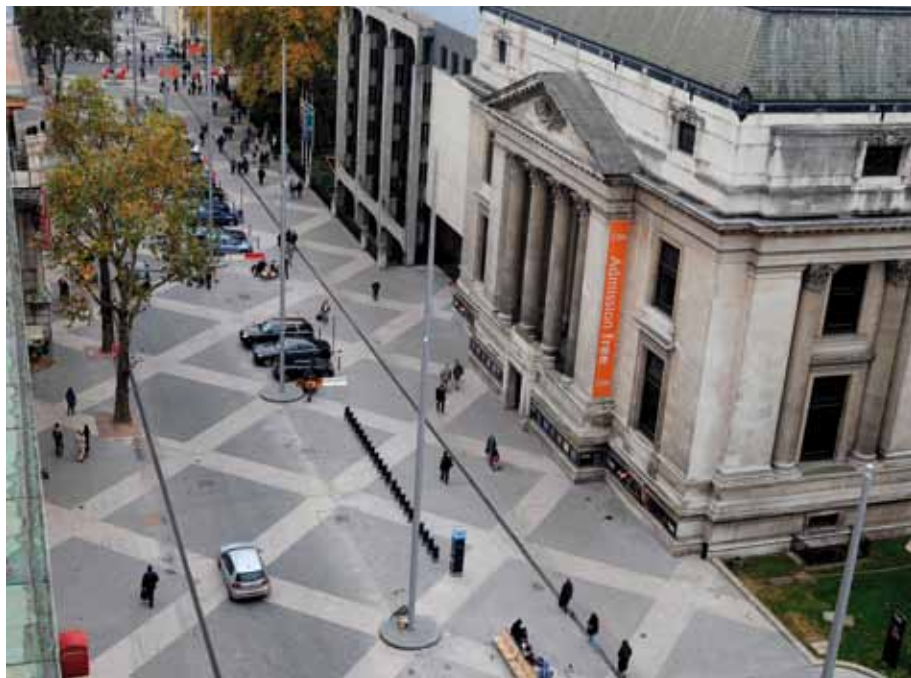
Left to the market, anything not explicitly protected by the planning system will disappear, especially where the value of housing is as high as it is in Kensington.

We have already lost a huge number of small offices to housing, but we now have a policy to retain them, which will enable small firms to find premises in the Borough. This is based on our local needs. The Borough will now need to defend this against Government pressure to allow changes of use in the interest of economic growth. How does reducing the number of premises for small firms help achieve that?

We have lost a number of post offices and no longer have a sorting office in the Borough, not so much because of lack of business, but because Royal Mail is selling off the family silver.

We have lost a lot of pubs in the last decade, not just to housing. This has left some areas without a “local”, especially in the Norland area, which has lost almost all its pubs over the last decade to housing. The last, the Prince of Wales in Princedale Road, was lost despite a hard-fought campaign by local residents – 75 turned up to the public inquiry in the middle of August, not just to listen but, as many did, to explain to the Inspector how much they valued the pub. We lost because the Council’s plan does not consider that there is enough evidence of a problem. They consider that people will walk up to half a mile to a pub – not exactly a “local”! We are pressing the Council to change their policy.

Image courtesy of RBKC



Aerial view of Exhibition Road

All our petrol stations will be gone before we wake up – many already have gone to housing, without retaining a petrol station, as they have in Westminster. They have a policy to protect petrol stations. RBKC does not.

The Government have made much of their support for “sustainable communities” and have said they want to secure the survival of post offices, pubs and other valued local facilities and services. It has not, however, supported legislation to control their loss, other than a community right to buy. As the House of Lords observed in debating the Localism Bill, it is not ownership which is the key issue, but retaining the use. We need more support from the Government, which we have raised with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, and some changes to the Borough’s Core Strategy.

Summary

2011 has involved a lot of large issues – changing Government planning policy, the Opportunity Areas (Earls Court/West Kensington and White City), major cases (Tesco, Vicarage Gate), controversial issues and cases – Natural History Museum, Exhibition Road, shop-fronts, basements, loss of pubs and Post Offices – and the casework and appeals. The fight continues.

I am grateful for the support and the huge amount of work done by the team - Amanda Frame, Anthony Walker and Hilary Temple.

MICHAEL BACH



Image by Michael Bach

Kensington Palace and its golden gates

SAVING KENSINGTON'S HIDDEN EDEN



THE RESTORATION OF THE ROOF GARDENS AT THE FORMER DERRY & TOMS STORE

The growth of Kensington High Street as a shopping locale began with the Kensington Improvement Scheme of 1868-71, and the arrival of the railway in 1868. Three of the most successful retailers in the area, Barkers, Derry & Toms, and Pontings, rapidly expanded their premises into department stores.

In the 1860s, shopkeeper Joseph Toms had joined forces with his brother-in-law, Charles Derry and set up shop. In 1920, the John Barker Company, which had the large department store just a few yards up the road, bought Derry & Toms, but it also owned Pontings as well. The three stores, however, were organized to operate as independent entities.

The zenith of this popularity was during the 1920s, when scores of out-of-town shoppers descended on the High Street to visit the fashionable stores, and commercial confidence soared. The constant need for expansion, however, led to the re-development of the store sites between 1927 and 1958, and two distinctive department stores emerged, Barkers and Derry & Toms.



Derry & Toms 1919

Derry & Toms and Barkers Department Stores.

Derry & Toms was built c1929-31, and Barkers followed c1935-39, however, the delays caused by the depression put completion back until c1958. Bernard George was appointed as chief architect for the project in 1927, and designed both stores in collaboration with the Chicagoan architect, C.A.Wheeler.

Wheeler was engaged to do the job, because of his understanding and experience of American department stores. The new owners had decided they wanted an art deco palace with horizontal shopping – open floors to provide more selling space – to match the department stores which had become so popular in America.

Bernard George produced the external elevations, Barkers had the sleeker modernist profile, while Wheeler provided the plans and equipment layouts, most of which came from American suppliers. The building exterior of Derry & Toms was designed as English Art Deco, using polished Hoptonwood stone surrounds to the windows on a plinth of dark granite. Broad fluted Ionic and Egyptian pilasters were supplemented by carved panels depicting productive labour.

Lifts were used to travel between floors, there were no escalators, and the staircases were placed on the perimeter of the buildings for occasional use and as fire escapes.

A restaurant called the Rainbow Room was created on the fifth (top) floor and was lit by an elliptical skylight, with concealed neon lighting in several different colours. Planned additional floors were vetoed by the London County Council, as the fire brigade's ladders could not reach that high.

"The suave restraint of the interior, with its concealed lighting, furniture, blue and gold carpets, balustrades, lifts and other fittings, brought Derry and Toms renown as a classic of the short – lived phase of English Art Deco."

Survey of London, Vol.42



Image courtesy of RBKC Local Studies Library

Derry & Toms - Spanish Garden

Derry & Toms, The Roof Gardens

Between 1936 and 1938, the Roof Gardens were constructed. Gordon Selfridge's big department store in Oxford Street had already created a garden on its roof, and

Barkers too had a half-hearted attempt in 1921, but this grandiose proposal was on a scale which remains the largest in the western hemisphere. Ralph Hancock, the designer of the roof gardens at the Rockefeller Center, New York was commissioned for the project, which encompassed one and a quarter acres. The gardens were laid out in three areas, each with a distinctive character, the Spanish Garden, the Tudor Garden, and the English Water Garden.

The scheme was based on a series of landscape designs by Hancock, using architectural features to recreate the period and style of each garden. Pergolas, a campanile, fountains, Tudor arches, sun dials, brick and cobbled paths, cascades, and an arched bridge, were all constructed on the flat-roof directly above the floor containing the Rainbow Room.

At the centre was a tea pavilion for refreshments, designed by Bernard George in a modern movement style. A high wall, running around the perimeter, was pierced with circular apertures, enabling visitors to view the London skyline - A telescope was eventually added to allow visitors to survey the distant Surrey Hills or the rooftops of Kensington.

The Planting Schemes

The Spanish Garden, designed to suggest the warmth and colour of the sun, was planted with hydrangeas, scarlet cannas, and geraniums. The Tudor Garden featured traditional lavenders, heliotrope, hollyhocks, and pinks, with clematis, Virginia creeper, ivy-leafed geraniums, and lobelia. The English Water Garden, also known



Spanish Garden Today



Image courtesy of RBKC Local Studies Library

Barkers in the 1800s

as the Woodland Garden, was planted with woodland trees and shrubs, exotics, herbaceous plants, and bedding.

The Roof Gardens, a celebrity venue.

The Roof Gardens were officially opened on 9 May 1938, by the Earl of Athlone. A visitors' book was kept for the first four years, recording visits by Queen Mary and other members of the Royal Family. These distinguished early guests were followed by film stars, and famous actors, all attracted by the beauty and prestige of the venue. The parties and events held over the 1950s and 60s, were against the backdrop of the Mediterranean influenced Spanish Garden, the exotic flamingoes of the English Water Garden, and the elegance of the Tudor Garden.

The decline of the department stores

Both Barkers and Derry & Toms demised, as shopping patterns changed. The House of Fraser group bought Barkers and its offshoots, only to sell off the shops. Pontings shut in 1970 and Derry & Toms the next year. Two years after that, Barkers itself closed as a department store, the property sold for £4 million. The flamboyant Barbara Hulanicki who owned the Biba brand, spent over £14 million on doing up the Derry & Toms building in 1973. It was not a good time and her venture lasted only two years

In 1976, a worried Kensington and Chelsea Council placed a Tree Preservation Order on the trees in the gardens. Change of owners and usage continued. In 1978 the tea pavilion was replaced by Regine's restaurant and night club. The Roof Gardens were then bought by Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group in 1981. By then, the rear part of the garden had been destroyed, due to the installation of a lift shaft. The cascades of Pennsylvania rock, and a bridge across the river had been removed. The installation of an air conditioning plant had destroyed the line of the Spanish loggia walkway, and interrupted the long views of the Tudor Garden. Garden ornaments and statuary had been lost, and the original planting scheme was forgotten. The armies of workers tending the plants had also been replaced by a lone part-time gardener

Nevertheless, much of the original fabric and layout survived, in all of its variety. The gardens are now included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of special historical importance at Grade II*, as they are considered to be of high importance, survive largely intact, and are a fine example their type.

Under the management of Virgin Group, the gardens began to flourish, and the cycle of deterioration began to be halted. Regine's nightclub was re-designed in a modern movement style, and re-opened as the Babylon Restaurant. The restaurant is now open to the public at specific hours, as are the gardens which can be hired as a venue and visited by appointment, www.roofgardens.virgin.com

Repair and restoration works

After 80 years of service, the construction of the flat roof began to fail, with serious consequences for the fifth floor beneath and the foundation of the gardens.



Views through the Spanish Garden

In 2005, the water-proofing layer began to disintegrate. The only apparent solution was to take up the entire garden, including all of the garden structures and trees, and resurface the roof. The water-proofing had to be unbroken to maintain an effective seal. The situation was increasingly urgent because 95% of the roof was letting water into the floor below, including the Rainbow Room, which had become vacant and unusable.

As the building is Grade II listed, and the Roof Gardens are Grade II* on the Register of Historic Gardens, an assessment of the works required had to be carried out, to protect the special interests of both structures. A series of meetings were held between English Heritage, RBK&C, consultants, gardeners, garden historians plus of course the owners and occupiers of the building, to sort out a solution. "We did a lot of historical research and took it back as far as possible, using some of the old photographs", said David Lewis, the current head gardener. There were some photographs from the 1950s which were reckoned to represent the original quite well. But he felt it ought also to represent the people who were planting and working on it. For instance the porch in the Spanish Garden had always been called St Theresa's, so he planted it with really spiky plants in memory of his first wife called Theresa.

The strategy adopted was to effectively micro-manage the situation. This also gave an opportunity to develop a long term maintenance plan, to avoid similar problems for future generations. Colwyn Foulkes Architects, were commissioned as project architects, to repair the failing roof structure and restore the gardens.

The first stage of work was a survey of the top floor, to identify the pattern of water penetration. The perimeter area appeared to be the most affected, with more central areas less vulnerable. The zoning of the roof in this way enabled the repairs to be concentrated on the areas most at risk, and a gradual installation of the new water-proof membrane.

Tree roots were also growing radially through the concrete roof slab, weakening the construction. Several of the trees were too established for the structure supporting them, and self-seeding trees had also been allowed to establish themselves, which were often out of keeping with the 1930s design scheme. The trees causing the most harm to either the building or to the character of the gardens were removed. Further works were carried out to remove over-planted areas, opening up views which had been hidden for years.

The second stage was the restoration of each garden as fully as possible, with sensitive re-interpretation of areas which had been lost. Major alterations to the building, such as lift shafts and air conditioning systems, had required the loss of garden features



such as the cascade; key vistas were blocked, and the English Water Garden in particular had been badly affected.

The walls of the Spanish Garden were repainted 'flamingo pink' from the original samples, the original ceramic tiles were restored, four new palm trees were planted, a pomegranate, and a fig tree. A new lawn was laid in the English Water Garden, now known as the Woodland Garden, and its Cotswold stone bridge was cleaned and repaired. The lost cascade was replaced with a water feature.

The restorations of the gardens were carried out under the supervision of Head Gardener, David Lewis. Garden historians were able to find the original planting layouts, and while it was agreed that many specimens survived, there were had also been many unwelcome changes. Original varieties of flowers, climbers, and shrubs, had gradually been replaced, changing the appearance of the borders and beds and the colour palette of each garden. A re-planting scheme was designed to reflect the original design concepts in each of the three themed gardens.

The future

The strategic approach taken, by an expert team working effectively together, has not only saved the fifth floor and its Rainbow Room from destruction, but has radically changed the future care of the gardens.

The gardens are now accessible from Derry Street, a turning off Kensington High Street, through a doorway marked 99 Kensington High Street, and are open to the public. The original design has been pretty comprehensively recreated and the decades of alterations, new plantings, and different species removed to revert to Ralph Hancock's original horticultural vision. David Lewis is now helped by two gardeners who come four days a week, plus a volunteer. However, this is "not just a nice little island in Kensington" says David Lewis, as there are presently 15 projects running which teach good horticulture technique, especially to the schools in the Borough **KS**

HILARY BELL

REPORTS FROM LOCAL SOCIETIES 2011

From the Chairman

Many thanks to all of you have contributed this year. The Society has worked with many of the local societies on specific issues in their areas and we hope that they continue in these efforts. These reports are an invaluable insight into the hard work that is undertaken to help maintain Kensington's unique character.

BROMPTON ASSOCIATION

Roadworks both in Exhibition Road (for the Project) and along Brompton Road (gas mains replacement) have dominated the neighbourhood. Both, happily, are nearing completion. However, south of Cromwell Road a rash of applications for tables and chairs licenses - including in the middle of the road - have been made. RBK&C seems keen to approve these, yet has no proper policy in place (unlike Westminster City Council). There is real concern that this new urban space will be dominated by eateries generating all the usual problems. Infringement of T&C licenses is already a major issue in Brompton Road. The raised pavement on the north side is now swamped in the summer months with restaurants putting out many more tables and chairs than allowed. They also fail to close at the agreed time.

The situation with the Natural History Museum remains unsatisfactory with the museum still ambitious to concrete over its East Lawn and to maximise events potential. Worrying too is the way Exhibition Road will be used when its finished. Pressure for outdoor cafes and bars and road closures for events will impact negatively on those residents in the street and nearby.

Lastly, TfL has come forward with further large scale redevelopment proposals for South Kensington Station. These are based on an outline scheme drawn up in 2009. We objected in 2009 and have objected again. South Kensington is not Fulham Broadway and existing small shop units should be kept. When will TfL adopt a "conservation-led" approach to this listed station?

Sophie Andrea

EDWARDES SQUARE SCARSDALE & ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

While we continue to work actively to protect our immediate conservation area and to support the interests of our members, it becomes increasingly clear that many of these issues are shared with other associations in the area. We try to work with as wide a network as possible to give us a stronger voice.

There often appears to be a local unwillingness to apply the policies so recently adopted in the LDF at the end of 2010. Emerging Government policy in the draft National Planning Policy Framework combined with proposals to change permitted development criteria and licensing controls, actually undermine rather than support the concept of Localism. Support for local amenity associations has become all the more important.

The battle over sub-basement consents continues and as the recent surge of consents are implemented we are getting more and more reports of the serious damage they cause, including subsidence, sewage flooding due to lack of consideration of water levels, and significant noise and disturbance to adjoining owners. It can be difficult for those who are suffering these disruptions to come forward individually, but combined representations by a number of associations could have a real effect on our Council.

At the other end of the spectrum, major developments in Warwick Road and the detailed development for the Commonwealth Institute require constant vigilance and input from ESSA.

Anthony Walker

THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

The Boltons conservation area has seen some long-standing planning issues/applications determined this year, but some others still await resolution.

Those determined include the applications in respect of 30 The Boltons/28 Gilston Road. The Planning Inspector supported the Council's refusal to grant permission for the demolition of both properties and their replacement with a single, much larger house. One of the reasons given was that the proposed new house would loom too close to the neighbouring back gardens in Priory Walk.

An application that remains outstanding is 1 Cathcart Road. This property is part of a 1950s development at the north-end of Redcliffe Road, where it joins Cathcart Road.

The application has been running for some years, with various 'iterations' of design and size - it proposes the demolition of the property and its replacement by a far larger 'replica' single dwelling which incorporates in its front elevation many of the features of the three Victorian villas running east; namely, Nos. 3,5, and 7 Cathcart Road. The size of the proposed new 1 Cathcart Road and the 'gap' treatment between Nos 1 and 3 continues to worry both the Association and the owners of neighbouring properties.

Lastly, the plot of 18 Tregunter Road remains empty (corner of the Little Boltons and Tregunter Road). The former large Victorian villa there was demolished in controversial circumstances a few years ago. There is planning permission for a 'replica' property (with a swimming pool under the back garden). We understand that the plot has recently been sold. So let's hope that building will start before too long.

Calvin Jackson

THE FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK

Holland House terrace is now open to the general public during the winter months when Opera Holland Park is not in residence. This is a triumph of patience and perseverance over many years. Having persuaded the Royal Borough to conserve what remains of the great house's facade, and it was done beautifully, the terrace is now being temporarily landscaped with planters and astro turf, and benches donated by The Friends. At long last the focal point of the park can be approached and enjoyed by all of us. A permanent landscaping scheme requires substantial investment; unsurprisingly it is not available at present.

We have kept abreast of the plans for the Commonwealth Institute site and the Design Museum's proposals for their occupation of the 'tent', which, as we write, have yet to obtain planning permission. We remain adamant that the site's northern boundary wall must be retained to maintain the park's integrity and tranquillity.

A magnificent poetry seat, carved from a single trunk of English oak, has been donated to the park and located close to Lord Holland's statue. Urgent conservation of the lovely old water trough in the north east corner of the Dutch Garden is being funded by The Friends and two new books, on the families of Holland House and the development of the gardens, are now in production.

The Friends' activities and events, which are open to non-members, can be found on our website at www.thefriendsofhollandpark.org

Nicholas Hopkins

LEXHAM GARDENS

Another Great Year for Lexham Gardens

We came third in the Kensington & Chelsea Garden Square competition this year and received a Highly Commended Certificate from the London Garden Society. We would like to thank Oliver Dickinson, our gardener, for all his hard work.

We continue to work with the Council, through our supportive local Councillors to maintain good services. Our garden continues to be a wonderful amenity for residents including many children.

Our Residents' Association flourishes with 236 member households. We have become a close-knit supportive community since our garden was refurbished in 1990.

Sir Cyril Taylor

PEMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

The 2011 AGM opened with a skilful, varied power-point presentation by Mr Jonathan Bore the Borough's Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development. The subject, The Future of Planning in the Royal Borough was formidable. It was a great success. Mr Bore's readiness to respond to spontaneous reactions from his audience was remarkable, keeping him on his feet for an hour and a half.

An application by the Imperial College Endowment Fund to build a terrace style block of 13 flats and a house, for letting, along the south-side of Pembridge Road was refused by the Planning Applications Committee on 22 March – because its materials and roof form would not preserve or enhance the character conservation area. Revised designs have been discussed with Planning Officers and P.A. Committee members. It is not yet known whether there will be a new application.

An application to use a large hoarding, screening the shop-fronts of 227-229 Westbourne Grove was refused by the Council. Despite the refusal, the advertisement was put up and is now the subject of an enforcement order.

Eight applications were made during the year for subterranean developments. Two were refused because they did not comply with Council policy. Causing potential damage to adjoining properties or nuisance to their residents continue not to be reasons for refusal.

Despite the efforts made by the Council and the Pembridge Association to encourage the restoration of the imposing but very dilapidated 25 and 26 Pembridge Square, the buildings remain unaltered and are now on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register. It is understood that the properties are up for sale.

The Association continues to contribute to the cost of the hanging flower baskets along the narrow stretch of Pembridge Road leading to the Portobello Road.

Roy Griffiths

ROYAL CRESCENT GARDEN COMMITTEE

Royal Crescent, at the bottom of Holland Park Avenue, has been working very actively on the improvement of its garden since the mid 1990s. With the support of the Royal Crescent Association and residents, the Garden Committee has been working to a restoration plan that is now almost complete. Putting back the railings, which were removed during the 1939 - 45 war, in 1997 was the first major element of the project and this £200,000 plus project was completed with significant support from RBK&C and English Heritage. The Committee worked on this with architect Susan Walker and Metalcraft of Tottenham and is very proud of the first award it achieved - marked by a blue plaque from RBK&C at the east corner of the garden. By 2003 the Garden Committee was ready to embark on the restoration of the garden itself. Almost nothing had been done since the 1940s, when the lorry park, barrage balloon site and standing water tank put in during the war were replaced by a lawn and a few roses planted in a central bed around an unremarkable urn on a plinth. Other planting was haphazard and the paths were in a poor state.

Working with garden designer Diana Ward over the last eight years, the committee first agreed the overall design proposals with residents and has since made significant changes to both layout and planting. Both flowerbeds facing the houses have now been contained by low walls and the planting within them has been largely replaced by trees, shrubs and plants better suited to the conditions and with more seasonal variety. Several large, elderly, diseased trees have gone and been replaced by more interesting specimen trees. A magnificent new central feature, in the form of a seasoned oak gazebo sitting on an old York stone footing with newly-planted surrounding rose and lavender beds, adorns the middle of the garden - a number of residents generously gave financial support to help us achieve this key phase of the work within the planned timescales. The paths have been straightened and aligned

with the central feature, as well as laid with new hoggin (dug gravel) and the new central planting has added much needed colour, as well as height.

The committee is very proud that it was awarded The Kensington Society's cup for Garden Design in 2007. Since then, it has come first in the Brighter Kensington and Chelsea Scheme's awards for community gardens in 2008 and has come second in 2009, 2010 and 2011. As a consequence of this work, the garden is now used more by residents to exercise, sit and play in and for family events. It is also a much more striking visual amenity for residents and visitors to this part of London. We hope to complete the final elements of the project (lighting, garden furniture and other small improvements) over the next couple of years.

Helen Murlis

ST HELEN'S RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The focus of the Association this year has been on the plans of Imperial College to build a campus and commercial development on the former BBC Woodlands site, with what we consider to be inappropriate density and height. We mobilised our members in 2010 to oppose Phase 1, which Imperial claimed, but which we disputed, would have minimal impact on the St Quintin's Conservation area. In 2011, with Phase 1 clearly visible from many of our streets, we have been fighting hard to get Imperial to reconsider the much greater heights and density of Phase II.

Our 'Fight the Towers' campaign and www.imperialfolly.org.uk website have helped to mobilise the community and membership has almost doubled. We helped ensure that around 150 people attended the local consultation on Phase II and Imperial was left in no doubt about the strength of local feeling.

On a more positive note, we were delighted to receive a Gold Award for Excellence in Representing Residents from Kensington & Chelsea this year.

Clare Singleton

VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Our big issue is the De Vere Gardens development between Victoria Road and De Vere Gardens, stretching some 250 metres south from Kensington Road. It is now a major Kensington landmark in a way that it never was before, with a massive eight-storey high portacabin structure towering above Kensington Road.

A year's worth of demolition ended in September and now we are going through the piling stage, which will be followed by a three-storey basement dig to produce one of the biggest holes in London. The noise has been extremely disturbing for those closest to the site – the system is firmly stacked in favour of the contractors as the noise limits are too generous. The project will not be finished before spring 2014.

Following a number of inconsiderate basement digs where contractors, collecting surplus soil or delivering cement, block the main road into our area, we are more determined than ever to remove all construction materials and skips from the highway. We have insisted on scrutinising the Construction Traffic Management Plans before they are agreed by the Council. There are four more basements in the pipeline. We welcome the Council's sharp increase in prices.

Michael Bach

Other Affiliated Local Societies:

Bramham Gardens Residents' Association
Campden Hill Residents' Association
Cherry Tree Residents' Association
Eardley Crescent Residents' Association
Earls Court Gardens & Morton Mews Residents' Association
Earls Court Society
Earl's Court Square Resident's Association
Earls Court Village Residents' Association
Hornton Court Services
Kensington Court Residents' Association
Kensington Mansions Residents' Association
Knightsbridge Association
Ladbroke Association
Nevern Square Conservation Area Resident's Association
Norland Conservation Society
Onslow Neighbourhood Association
Wetherby Gardens Garden Committee

RESTING IN PEACE: KENSAL GREEN'S ILLUSTRIOUS RESIDENTS



'Sleeping Child'
Kensal Green Cemetery

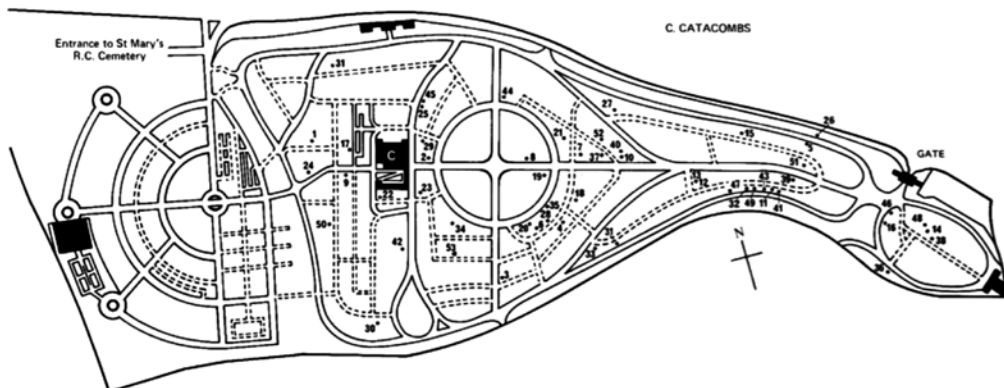
Kensal Green was the first London commercial cemetery in 1833 – and so the first of the Magnificent Seven – and rapidly became a fashionable venue for nobility and celebrities...

The rush of huge commercial burial grounds was prompted in the first half of the 19th Century by London's population more than doubling from around 1 million to 2.3 million. The actual numbers are uncertain, but the trend is unmistakeable. It made the space available in parish churchyards absurdly inadequate and remains were starting to leach into the water supply, which was already fairly polluted, causing epidemics.

In the decade after the 1832 Act, which permitted private cemeteries to be built, seven were established: Kensal Green 1832, West Norwood 1837, Highgate 1839, Abney Park 1840, Nunhead 1840, Brompton 1840 and Tower Hamlets 1841.

Inspired by the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, Kensal Green inaugurated a garden approach to burial grounds. It now contains about 250,000 individuals in 65,000 graves, including upwards of 500 members of the British nobility and 550 people listed in the Dictionary of National Biography. Here, we examine but just a few of its notable inhabitants.

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. AINSWORTH William Harrison | 12. BRUNEL Isambard Kingdom | 23. FORSTER John | 34. LISTON John | 45. SMIRKE Robert |
| 2. AUGUSTUS FREDERICK, Duke of Sussex | 13. BRUNEL Sir Marc Isambard | 24. GEORGE, Duke of Cambridge | 25. LOUDON John Claudius | 46. STRANG William |
| 3. BABBAGE Charles | 14. BURTON Decimus | 25. HANCOCK Thomas | 36. LOVER Samuel | 47. THACKERAY William Makepeace |
| 4. BALFE Michael William | 15. CALLCOTT Sir Augustus Wall | 26. HOGARTH Mary Scott | 37. MULREADY William | 48. TIETJENS Teresa Caroline Johanna |
| 5. BARNES Thomas | 16. CASSELL John | 27. HOLWORTHY James | 38. MURRAY John | 49. TINDAL Sir Nicholas Conyngham |
| 6. BENNETT William | 17. COLLINS William Wilkie | 28. HOOD Thomas | 39. O'CONNOR Feargus | 50. TROLLOPE Anthony |
| 7. BENEDICT Sir Julius | 18. DANIEL Thomas | 29. HUME Joseph | 40. PHILLIP John | 51. VESTRIS Lucia Elizabeth |
| 8. BIRKBECK Dr George | 19. DUCROW Andrew | 30. HUNT James Henry Leigh | 41. PICKERING William | 52. WARD James |
| 9. BLONDIN Charles | 20. DURHAM Joseph | 31. JAMESON Anna Brownell | 42. ROSS Sir John | 53. WINGFIELD, Major Walter Clopton |
| 10. BRAHAM John | 21. DYER George | 32. LEECH John | 43. SCRIVEN Edward | |
| 11. BROOKS Charles William Shirley | 22. EASTLAKE Sir Charles Lock | 33. LESLIE Charles Robert | 44. SIEVIER Robert William | |



A plan of the cemetery showing some of its notable figures

LITERATURE AND JOURNALISM

The cemetery is particularly rich in writing talent, including William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Terence Rattigan, Harold Pinter, James Pope Hennessy, Thomas Hood, Harrison Ainsworth, Wilkie Collins and George Grossmith.



Thackeray's simple stone slab

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) is under a simple stone slab, surrounded by railings beside the Grand Union Canal. He came from prosperous upper middle class parents – his father working for the East India Company in Calcutta – but spent much of his inheritance on luxurious travel and lost the rest in the Indian bank failures of 1833. Desultory artistic work, including a book of ballet lithographs and occasional journalism, had to be abandoned when he started having children and his wife

became mentally ill. Instead, he wrote for any periodical which would pay him, including *The Times*, *Fraser's* and *Punch*, plus travel books. Many of his articles and early novels were written under pseudonyms, such as Charles James Yellowplush, Michael Angelo Titmarsh and George Savage Fitz-Boodle. His reputation grew, however, with the creation of his roguish upstarts, such as Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* and Barry Lyndon in *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, and the satirical collection *The Book of Snobs*. Those were followed by a variety of historical, semi-autobiographical, social and Christmas novels, including *Pendennis*, *Henry Esmond*, and *The Newcomes*. While some of his work became garrulous and hackneyed, the keen satirical undertow, robust energy and comic irreverence of his best works have kept them in print.

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) was not a man waiting for the divine hand of inspiration. "To me it would not be more absurd if the shoemaker were to wait for inspiration or the tallow-chandler for the divine moment of melting." He thought of himself as a craftsman, got up at 5.30am, often still in the dark, and with a quill wrote by candle or lamplight for three hours before breakfast. Then he went off for the day job in the Post Office, where he worked for 26 years. First as a junior clerk, but he transferred to Banagher, Ireland as a postal



surveyor and spent ten years reorganising and making the postal service effective. In 1843, he started his work on his first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*. He then came back to England and invented the pillar-box. After he left the Post Office in 1867 he tried to get into parliament as a Liberal, and that failure was the inspiration for a series of political novels, called the Palliser sequence. These had been preceded, however, by the first successful series of Barchester novels with their quiet comedy, sharp eye for character, measured pace, and telling detail. In Trollope's books there is an unobtrusive irony and an appreciation of the importance of money, which are coupled with a sympathetic understanding of human fallibility that provide a solid backbone to, what seems, a smooth professional style encompassing a pleasant conventional tale. Tolstoy was an admirer: "Trollope kills me with his virtuosity". Altogether, his disciplined application produced travel books, biographies (Thackeray, Cicero, Lord Palmerston), plays, short stories, literary essays, and 47 novels. His poignant autobiography describes his feckless father who was a failed barrister, and his humiliation at school, Harrow and Winchester, which was the result of his genteel poverty.



Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) qualified as a barrister shortly after his first novel, *Antonina* was published in 1850. In 1851, he met and became friends with Charles Dickens, which proved instrumental for his career as the pair went on to collaborate on several pieces, including a pair of melodramas, and Dickens published Collins work in his weekly publication *All the Year Round*. Although Collins wrote many novels, the best known remain *The Moonstone* and *the Woman in White*. His advice to novelists was, "...make'em laugh, make'em cry, make'em wait...", which worked well for

some, but in his private life proved to undermine his ability. He became addicted to laudanum (tincture of opium), had two mistresses sharing his house and became determined to tackle social issues. He turned his attention to topics such as fallen women, Jesuits, vivisection, adultery, divorce and heredity; as Swinburne mocked: "What brought good Wilkie's genius nigh perdition? Some devil whispered – 'Wilkie, have a mission'".

Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) is best known, insofar as he is known at all, as the author of *London Labour and the London Poor*, a detailed and compassionate encyclopaedia of the trades, the oppressed and the criminals of London's underclass. It originally appeared in weekly instalments in the *Morning Chronicle* before being collected into widely-selling books, and was later supplemented by social criticism in his survey of prisons. But he did a lot more than that, he wrote a farce and was one of the founders of *Punch* magazine, as well as producing a large volume of general journalism, and more than 20 books.

The Diary of a Nobody, a book of gentle English mockery and humour, was originally a series of articles in *Punch* by George Grossmith and his brother Weedon. George was principally a comedian and entertainer, who also took leading parts in several of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas and looked on the writing as an extra source of income.

There is a **John Murray** (1745-1793), head of the eponymous publishing company, buried here. But his name says nothing. Since the original founder, who started the company in 1768, there have been a further six men of that name running the business. It is the second, son of the founder, who is buried at Kensal Green and who was the one that made the publishing house one of the most important and influential in Britain. He was a friend of many leading writers and launched the *Quarterly Review* in 1809. He published Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott, Washington Irving, George Crabbe and Robert Southey. His home and office at 50 Albemarle Street in Mayfair was the centre of a literary circle, fostered by Murray's tradition of "Four o'clock friends", afternoon tea with his writers. Murray's most notable author was Lord Byron, who became a friend and correspondent. In 1812, he published Byron's second book, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which sold out in five days, leading to Byron's observation "I awoke one morning and found myself famous". This Murray seems also to have been a censorious prig, since in 1824 he burnt the manuscript of Byron's memoirs, which the poet had given him to publish, claiming he thought the scandalous details would damage Byron's reputation.

Later John Murrays published translations of Goethe, David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels*, Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, Herman Melville, Conan Doyle et al, but in 2004, rather sadly, decided to grab the money and run by selling out to the French

conglomerate, Lagardère. The archive from 1768 to 1920 was sold by John Murray VII for £31million to the National Library of Scotland.

There is a tale that around the middle of the 20th century someone rang the company to ask a ransom of £50,000 for returning its Byron manuscripts. Knowing the papers were locked in a safe in the chairman's room, the recipient of the call hung up on the hoax. A week later a similar call came, but the ransom price had been reduced to £30,000 - the reception, however, was the same. After the third phone-call, with the caller now getting a bit desperate and asking for £20,000, somebody suggested that a check on the safe might be an idea. Sure enough, the papers were not there. The fourth call was almost a tearful entreaty, asking for £10,000. The police advised acceptance and a melodramatic handover was agreed in a cemetery near Heathrow, at sundown the following Friday. As the sun slowly sank and the evening mist gathered around the ancient tombstones, the scene was something between a horror film and a tense thriller. But it soon became closer to an Ealing comedy. As the handover time neared, policemen positioned themselves behind headstones making full use of the gathering mist to conceal their positions, but their trap was almost confounded. The cemetery keeper, preparing to lock up, saw the hiding policemen and shouted at them, "Here, you can't go to sleep on them graves. Get out of here". Fortunately, the rather amateur and inept crook did not see any of this and walked in to the trap carrying a shabby holdall full of the missing documents.

It is not just literary talent but the distinguished from a wide variety of professions who rest here. They included engineers, entertainers and even royalty.

ROYALTY

George III's porphyria created eccentric and delusional behaviour, which made the life of his family including his fifth daughter, **Princess Sophia** (1777-1848), a misery. She was forbidden to marry and was kept in guarded seclusion. Rather ingeniously, however, she managed to bear an illegitimate child, which she was forbidden to keep. The disgrace precluded her being buried in the royal family vaults in Windsor and she was consigned to the public cemetery at Kensal Green. George III's third son, **Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex** (1773-1843) had actually chosen to be buried at Kensal Green five years earlier, and the two of them gave the cemetery such a cachet that the aristocracy took to being buried there.

German-born **Prince George William Frederick Charles, Duke of Cambridge** (1819-1904), was the son of Prince Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge, and the seventh son of King George III - he succeeded his father's titles of Duke of Cambridge, Earl of Tipperary, and Baron Culloden in 1850. He became commander-in-chief of the British army from 1856 to 1895, during which time he earned a reputation for promoting



The Duke of Cambridge's Mausoleum

men on the basis of class rather than merit. During his conservative tenure the army became a useless fossil, lagging far behind its continental counterparts. He is said to have exclaimed, "Brains? I don't believe in brains!". But during his time, the army did try various breech-loading carbines (short rifles, new to warfare at the time), he instituted annual military manoeuvres and restricted flogging for aggravated mutinous conduct in time of war, unless the offence was serious enough to degrade them to the second class and

so make them subject to corporal punishment. He was also involved in the creation of the Staff College, the Royal Military School of Music.

He married Sarah Fairbrother, the actress daughter of a servant in Westminster, by whom he had two illegitimate children and who previously had had two children by other men. As the marriage was contrary to the Royal Marriages Act, the duke's wife was not titled Duchess of Cambridge or accorded the style Her Royal Highness. Indeed, her very existence was ignored by Queen Victoria. Instead, Sarah called herself Mrs Fairbrother and later Mrs FitzGeorge. She (then pregnant for the fifth time) may have coerced him into marriage, she herself obtaining the licence, but the duke continued having affairs. Louisa Beauclerk, whom he described as "...the idol of my life and my existence...", was his mistress from at least 1849 until her death in 1882, and from the start of the affair he had decided to be buried next to her. It was on her account that he and Sarah were buried in Kensal Green, as it happens, about 60 feet away from Mrs Beauclerk's grave - other tombs had intervened since her death.

MICHAEL BECKET

Want to know more? In our next report, we will focus on more famous figures in one of Kensington's finest and for a time, one of England's most fashionable cemeteries.

For Information about tours of the cemetery contact:

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery
c/o The General Cemetery Company
London W10 4RA
T: 07904 495012 E: fokgc@hotmail.com

FIT FOR A KING

KENSINGTON PALACE'S NEW LOOK



Kensington Palace is the jewel of the Borough. Before it, Kensington was a village, with only fresh air in abundance. After 1689, when William and Mary moved in, everything followed. Today it has become a prominent and much-loved landmark for lovers of history and architecture, but like many historic buildings, the palace has for many years needed a lift. It seems that every fifty years or so it gets the care it deserves, as it did in 1898 and again in the mid-1950s when the London Museum reopened after World War II. So it is timely that for the past two years Historic Royal Palaces has been giving the palace its full attention in one of our biggest projects to date.

On 26 March this year, the palace will reopen, transformed once again. Passers-by will have noticed the hoardings coming down in recent weeks, revealing a new and more open garden, with lawns sloping gently to the new entrance from the Broad Walk. The statue of Queen Victoria looks better than ever, after having the effects of years of vandalism and neglect reversed. Within the palace, a whole new floor has been



Work continues at Kensington Palace

opened up for the first time, taking visitors into a spacious central hub and introducing a series of new exhibitions, a dedicated suite of education rooms, a new shop and café. A great deal of care and thought has gone into these changes, backed up with extensive historical research, and £12million has been spent; a modest sum for such a great building, but in these straitened times

reached through grants and donations from our generous benefactors.

Queen Victoria was born in the palace in 1819, and it is fitting that our premier exhibition, 'Victoria Revealed' commemorates her life in the very rooms she knew as a child. Her wedding dress, one of the most precious objects in the Royal Ceremonial and Court Dress Collection and it will be on display, along with other fascinating objects. After this, the visitor can ascend the King's Stair, with its ghostly painted figures, and learn about the 18th century court, its characters and intrigues in the State Apartments. And of course these wonderful rooms offer the best views across the park.

Historic Royal Palaces is justly proud of its innovative and engaging style of presentation, which is now being copied elsewhere. Its work in the field of education is also much lauded; children will have free entry and the palace now boasts superb facilities. For the first time, the building is fully accessible and has never been in better shape. In this jubilee year, what better way to celebrate than by commemorating another great event? Our exhibition entitled 'Jubilee; a view from the crowd' looks back to the Diamond Jubilee of 1897, a national celebration which led to the doors of the palace being thrown open to the public for the first time. In 2012, the wheel has come full circle, as we say to all our regular and new visitors, 'welcome back'.



The Kensington Palace Team

JO THWAITES

Historic Royal Palaces

PORTRAIT OF A LOCAL ARTIST

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This year we continue to emphasis and recognise Kensington's rich artistic talent with our portrait of a local artist on Nigel Hall. He had a solo exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts last year and is also an elected member of the RA.



Nigel Hall was elected to the Royal Academy in 2003 – the third time he was invited to join. In previous years he had not felt it was the sort of organisation he then wanted to be part of, but in the intervening years it had changed. It says something about his personal vision and dedication to turn down – twice – such distinction. It is after all a substantial honour. There are never more than 80 members at any time, drawn from painting, sculpture, print-making and architecture, so it really does suggest you are one of the elect – while also treading in the footsteps of Reynolds, Constable, Gainsborough, and Millais, not to mention Chagall, Kokoschka, and Miro.

Ever since childhood he knew he “wanted to make art”, and spent his time drawing things, though he always knew he would be a sculptor. Nigel Hall was a slightly shy boy, perhaps because “it had been a solitary childhood”, and felt he could communicate best through his observation of the world about him.

Nigel suspects the aspiration to be an artist and sculptor may have been in his blood, as his mother was an artist, in her case embroidery, and his grandfather was a stonemason who renovated cathedrals.



Nigel at home next to a small version of the sculpture exhibited at the Royal Academy one-man show

Having escaped from his grammar school – which “despised the visual arts” – he was accepted at the West of England College of Art (now a university). There they still taught the basics: drawing classical plaster casts, life drawing and modelling, anatomy and perspective. From there, he was not only chosen from the large number of applicants to study at the Royal College of Art in the 1960s, but even while a student, buyers were starting to acquire his work.

At college, Hall explains, “Professor Meadows [his lecturer] brought round a distinguished gentleman in a suit”. It turned out to be Bryan Robertson, one of the school's trustees and head of the Whitechapel Art Gallery. A pioneering connoisseur, Robertson had used the Gallery to display works by artists such as Pollock, Hockney and Rothko, now all considered classic artists of the

20th Century. He was so taken by the young Hall's work he bought one for £65 - it remained in a corner of his room until his recent death, when it was willed to Kettle's Yard at Cambridge University. Later on, at the Arts Council, Robertson bought some more works by Hall for the nation – so, we now own several examples of Nigel's art. The Tate Modern also has some but, like so much of that collection, they are hidden in the basement.

Further recognition came when a French gallery owner, wanting to get a share of swinging 1960s Britain, went to London to look for an artist to represent this and picked Hall. He then organised the first of Hall's 105 one-man shows.

Nigel loved his three years getting an MA at the Royal College and produced work that showed such early talent that he has recently borrowed back some of it to include in his two more recent retrospective exhibitions – one in Yorkshire and one in Germany.



Around Tiger Island 1

After graduating he managed to get a much-sought-after Harkness Fellowship, which funds an artist for two years anywhere in the United States with no strings attached. Unlike most student requests for New York, he chose Los Angeles because "I had a desire to get into a desert" and that was the only major city with one close by – the Mojave about 60 miles away. Even at this early stage he managed to get a one-man exhibition in Los Angeles, thanks to a gallery owner in LA who subsequently became so enthusiastic about Hall's work that he not only organised a show, but introduced Hall to galleries in New York and Germany.

But, as he emphasises, the life of an artist is never that easy, especially when young. On return from America the way to pay the rent was getting a day's teaching here and there. "There were periods when the telephone would hardly ring." Undeterred, however, he stayed with his vision. "I have always kept close to what I wanted to do and not bothered with fashion, which means you are sometimes left out in the cold." From time to time, though, the prevailing fashion would coincide with his view and he "managed to keep showing [his] work".

His art has changed over the years, as with any artist worth considering, but "it was the work which led me to explore other possibilities – it is internal and not driven from outside". Although now-a-days he is better known as a sculptor, he reckons

he does almost as much drawing, mostly in charcoal, sometimes with the addition of gouache. "I always enjoyed drawing – it is separated from the three-dimensional world of sculpture." Perhaps he likes it so much because it is also tactile in a way – "charcoal has a physicality; it has dust and a light-absorbency", he explains. He also draws extensively when abroad, for instance on his regular holidays in the Engadine in Switzerland, and in Japan. So far he has resisted selling those drawings.

Nigel continues to work hard and long at his Balham studio and now has galleries showing and representing his work in London, Zurich, Bad Homburg (on the edge of Germany's financial centre, Frankfurt), Palma, and Seoul. About a third of the works go to corporations, a third to public authorities or Governments, and a third to private buyers.

MICHAEL BECKET

Chinese Whispers XII



PUBS, PINTS AND PUNTERS

THE HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC HOUSE

"And if anyone knows of a pub that has draught stout, open fires, cheap meals, a garden, motherly barmaids and no radio, I should be glad to hear of it"

George Orwell, *The Moon Under Water*

The Scarsdale Tavern



Something I love about living in Kensington is the abundance of beautiful pubs; in my patch alone The Abingdon, The Scarsdale Tavern, The Hansom Cab, The Britannia and The Devonshire Arms are all just a stone's throw away. The quite extraordinary thing is that many pubs are the keepers of rich and wonderful histories, reaching far back over centuries. Did you know, for example, that Samuel Pepys himself kept a record in his diaries during the 1660s of several "supped and mighty merry" evenings in Kensington's various taverns (diaries 21 April 1668)?

Over the years, pubs have faced various threats: from fire and market 'bubbles', to prudish nineteenth century alcohol-haters and shiny 1980s wine bars. But, most recently, RBKC residents have been disappointed by a lack of Council protection of these historic venues from profit hungry developers seeking to destroy and reconstitute these pubs, so loved by communities for centuries, into private, residential properties.

Alcohol has been drunk and served in one form or another by human civilisations since the Bronze Age; thirsty inhabitants of Ancient Iraq brewed beer back in 6th millennium BC, while Ancient Babylonian clay tablets, from 4,300BC, detail some of the 20 different varieties of beer they drank. A much celebrated and well documented drinking culture has been central to British communities for thousands of years. As for organised venues, historians believe that it was the bibulous Romans who gave Britannia its first 'pub' two thousand years ago, with their tabernae serving food, wine and probably also local ale.

After the fall of the Romans, Anglo-Saxons alehouses grew out of domestic dwellings. We know that as early as the seventh century the number of ale-sellers was restricted by Ethelbert, the King of Kent, in order to curtail his boozing subjects. Alehouses were so commonplace that, in 965 AD, King Edgar decreed that there should be not more than one per village. In an attempt to regulate the trade in 1393, King Richard II decreed, "Whosoever shall brew ale in the town with intention of selling it must hang out a sign, otherwise he shall forfeit his ale".

Up until the middle of the sixteenth century, beer-making was generally a family, predominately female, operation and had little commercial application. Beer was an integral part of the everyday diet and small, weak ales provided purified (albeit alcoholic) water to everyone, including small children. Sadly, nearly all of the drinking establishments dating from this time were destroyed in the Great Fire of London in

1666 - Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street, although subsequently rebuilt, is a good example of their sparse, dark style.

Before the nineteenth century, three separate types of pub establishment were prevalent: the tavern, inn and alehouse. Inns, often grandiose venues, were defined by the provision of accommodation, but they disappeared due to the growth of the railways - The George in Borough High Street is a very rare surviving example, dating from 1676.

Kensington was a village along the main roads out of London and, therefore, often full of travellers. It has been home to various hostelries, taverns and drinking houses for hundreds of years. By around 1542 a very large inn, first known as The Lion and then the Red Lion, was situated on the south side of Kensington High Street by Young Street. In 1628, it included a barn and stables; it also was adjoined on its west side by another tavern, The Bell. Around 1663, it was listed as having more hearths than any other of the 23 properties on the south side of the High Street. Eventually, the Red Lion fell out of use and its forecourt was built over in the mid-eighteenth century, however, it was still fondly remembered as "the principal inn in the town ... much used by travellers".

Alehouses were the second type of drinking establishment, so popular that by the mid-eighteenth century larger venues had become common place. Finally, taverns, which were usually frequented by merchants, first predominantly sold wine (often port) and then, after the late seventeenth century, foul and sinful gin.

Up until the mid-eighteenth century drink, drinking and drunkenness united all British classes. It was socially acceptable and fantastically frequent. The production of ale was a point of national pride and beer was thought to be nourishing, medicinal and physically beneficial. However, the introduction of gin to the populace forever changed attitudes to drinking alcohol and its venues. Especially popular amongst the poorer classes, the production of gin rapidly increased to six times that of beer. The destructive Gin Fever years of the 1740s eventuated with the London populace falling by 9,300, the



consistent outbreaks of disease and the building of hundreds of ostentatious Gin Palaces around the capital (unfortunately, none of which have survived).

Although by the 1750s gin drinking was being curtailed by various Government legislations, it left a lasting legacy. Previously, alcohol-hating was rare and only by the minority, such as the much derided, radically religious puritans. However, popular reaction to the sinful Gin Fever resulted in the founding and rapid growth of the Temperance Movement. As the pub historian Peter Haydon wrote, "The effect of the first Gin Fever was to detach the middle and upper classes from the universal enjoyment of drink and to create an increasing intolerance of over-indulgence [by the lower classes]". (p12, The London Pub, New Holland Publishers Ltd, 2003).

A distinct population growth and the abolition of beer tax in 1830, which meant that any ratepayer could now sell beer without a licence, resulted in an explosion of beer-houses and make-shift kitchen venues. However, by the late nineteenth century, as a result of the popular Temperance Movement, public house licenses were infrequently granted by the authorities. Those with existing licences undertook extensive refurbishment to respectably doll-up their crusty public house interiors for the benefit of meddling officials. Meanwhile, a flurry of brewery buyouts, mergers and oversubscribed flotations saw the industry rapidly seeped in cash and wealthy ex-brewery owners buying up pubs and entering into outrageous bidding wars. For example, The Earl's Court Arms, 123 Earl's Court Road, advanced in value from £3,800 in 1868 to £9,000 in 1885 (for a much shorter lease).

These over-inflated pub prices meant that many owners rushed to redecorate throughout the 1880s and 1890s in order to attract more custom and recoup the vast purchase prices paid. The late Victorian era saw the creation of flamboyant pub interiors, notable for their sumptuously decorated mirrors, tiled walls and etched glass. Modern day historians no doubt weep into their pints, when musing upon the thousands of pub interiors that were modernised during this period. From the mid-nineteenth century, industrial developments saw pubs covered in ornate decorative glass, while pewter and pottery drinking vessels were abandoned





The modern pub - still a unique British phenomenon

in favour of glasses and bottles. Although eventually phased out, the design of Gin Palaces particularly influenced this new design; the modern public house bar is based on their shop counters, designed for swift service and ideal for attaching beer pumps. For a local example, in 1880 Alfred Savigear, the owner of Earls Court's The Prince of Teck pub, employed his favourite architect George Edwards to redecorate at a tendered price of £875.

This absurd situation led to an inevitable property crash by the beginning of the twentieth century, after which there was very little

subsequent pub building in London. As a result of these bankruptcies, pub ownership became concentrated in the hands of few. This situation was heavily criticised in The Supply of Beer, a damning report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1989, regarding the tight links between brewing and pub retailing. It made recommendations that these ties be loosened and encouraged increased competition between brewers, wholesalers and pub retailers. Meanwhile, various legislations restricted the number of pubs that could be owned by large brewery groups to 2000 and required large brewer landlords to introduce guest ales.

Pubs have always been the friend of the working classes and for centuries provided secret meeting places for societies, political groups and trades unions. As a result, the freedoms and liberties which we enjoy today in Britain owe a great debt to the pub.

Games, sports and music have also always been central to British drinking establishments: from the draughts played in Roman tabernae, to the development of many modern sports in Victorian pub gardens, including boxing and darts. Some have been lost in time, like Aunt Sally and Shove ha'penny and more fortunately, cruel animal fighting. Pubs also offered a place for local team players and management to meet, and for supporters to convene. During the nineteenth century, local matches were often organised following the receipt of a challenge sent by letter to the club's headquarters (the pub). Apart from football, pubs across the country played an integral role in other modern sport: for example, the Star & Garter in Pall Mall was where the very first Official Laws of Cricket were drawn up and adopted throughout England.

Meanwhile, Victorian concert halls developed out of the bigger beer houses, continuing the musical, performance and entertainment based tradition seen in taverns since the Middle Ages.

Many of the pubs in Kensington, still popular today, were erected in their present forms during the public house boom throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Britannia on Allen Street dates back to 1834 and it was named after the Britannia Brewery (which went bust in 1902). Did you know that

the word 'Arms' often denotes the historic aristocratic ownership of the land? For example, the Devonshire Arms on Marloes Road was originally built on an estate owned by the hugely wealthy Duke. The Angelsea Arms on Selwood Terrace, built in 1830, is named after Henry William Paget, Marquis of Angelsea.

Unlike these other pubs, and probably only due to centuries of landlord neglect, The Windsor Castle on Campden Hill Road retains one of the least altered Victorian interiors in London. The bar is still partitioned by heavy oak walls, casting back to a time when separate social groups would drink apart. The small doors inside the pub, however, were only intended for the uses of staff, patrons were expected to exit the pub and re-enter by another main door should they wish to swap areas.

Up until the mid-nineteenth century, a great number of drinking establishments were concentrated around Kensington High Street itself. Licensed houses particularly flourished along the south side of the High Street - by Young Street, a map from 1848 marks six in this short stretch and another three pubs further west. However, the growth of fashionable shopping and pub bankruptcies saw many close down and, by 1900, many of the pubs in the Kensington area had given way to retail use. Furthermore, the Temperance Campaigns meant that the enjoyment of pubs increasingly became separated between classes. Typically, pubs in rich areas, such as Kensington, are found on backstreets because they became intended for exclusive use of tradesmen and servants.



Darts - thanks to the Victorians

The 1950s and 1960s saw greater retail development of the Borough: The Civet Cat on the corner of the High Street and Church Street turned into a Barclays Bank and then Pizza Hut. There was also the road widening of Notting Hill Gate (seeing pubs such as the Coach & Horses and The Plough pulled down) and the development of Westway and the Shepherds Bush roundabout.

Pubs have been an integral part of Earls Court from its very beginnings: The King's Headon in Hogarth Place was first built by Thomas Smith, the original developer of the area, in around 1805. Later, throughout the twentieth century, many pubs in Kensington – mainly Earls Court – played a significant role in the history of gay liberation. The Pembroke, formerly called The Coleherne dates from the 1880s. It had a long history of attracting a bohemian clientele and by the 1970s it had become infamous with blacked-out windows and an international crowd, including Freddie Mercury and Rudolf Nureyev. Another important Earls Court venue The Lord Ranelagh, since closed, spearheaded the local demand for live, wild entertainment in the mid-1960s. On Sunday nights the pub was so packed that every table and chair had to be removed and crowds spilled out on to the Old Brompton Road; the police eventually had to shut the show down.

Whether enjoying a cosy fire on winter's day or a barbecue in a sunny beer garden, the great British pub is something unique to our country, cherished and loved by visitors and much missed by Brits abroad. Pubs have acted as important meeting places throughout the ages: among very many other things these venues provided opportunities for trade and commerce, enabled the spread of religious ideology, facilitated the trade unionist movement, were (along with public schools) the Victorian birthplace of professional, commercialised sport and, finally, precipitated the popular celebration of music. Quite simply, Britain – and Kensington itself - would be a very different, less impressive place without the existence of the humble local public house. As Robert Cook wrote in his article Vanishing Pubs for the society 10 years ago, only 60 of the 150 pubs open in 1900 -such as The Prince of Teck, the Princess Victoria and the Duke of Clarence- remain standing in Kensington today. Shouldn't these vanishing, historic premises, therefore, be more protected by the Council?

CAMILLA CHAMPION-AWWAD

LOST PUBS OF NORLAND

In the last 15 years Norland Ward has lost most of its pubs, mainly to housing. The latest, The Prince of Wales, which was a real hub for the community, closed on 1 July 2011. In a tribute to our much loved public houses, here are but a few of that we have recently lost...

Prince of Wales Princedale and Portland Roads, opened in 1845, closed 2011, permission for residences



The Star, 46 Queensdale Road – a house

The Portland Arms, 119 Portland Road – now café and nailbar



All Images by Michael Bach

further pub losses in Norland Ward...

The Sheepshank, 7 Swanscombe Road - now housing



The Duke of Clarence, Holland Park Avenue - now housing



All Images by Michael Bach

The Earl of Zetland, 116 Princedale Road - now offices



The Norland Arms, 12 Addison Avenue - housing



The Crown, now The Academy - successful local winebar and restaurant



OBITUARIES

Marion Ward (1916-2011), Member since 1953

Marion Ward, who died in May, at the age of 95, spent the greater part of her life in Kensington where she was an active member of The Kensington Society. As a historian she was naturally concerned with the conservation of the Kensington she had known and loved for so long. Having graduated in Medieval History in 1940, her career including work with MI5 and The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts where some intriguing documents led to her investigation of the theft of Madame du Barry's jewels. Two books followed; *The Du Barry Inheritance*, Chatto & Windus, 1967 and *Forth: Life of Nathaniel Parker Forth, 1744-1809*, Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1982. She died peacefully at home.

The Kensington Society regrets to announce the deaths of the following members during the last year:

Mrs S B Crosland	Member since 1998
Mrs O P E King	Member since 1968
Mrs Diana Lindsey Midgley (née Cowley)	Member since 1979
Mr Harold Sebag-Montefiore	Member since 2004
Dr R Philpot	Member since 1996
Mr Martin Starkie	Council member since 1964
Mrs Doris Steel	Member since 2001
Miss P Marion Ward	Member since 1998

Diana Lindsey Midgley (née Cowley), the benefactor and settler of the Cowley Charitable Trust, was tragically killed in a road accident on 14 March 2011, aged 91. She joined The Kensington Society in 1979. The Cowley Charitable Trust has gifted to The Kensington Society £900 in her memory.

Lucian Freud, one of the nation's greatest artist and our Portrait of a Local Artist for the 2009 Annual Report, died on 20 July 2011, age 88. He lived and painted in his studio in Kensington for many years and was often seen with his beloved whippet walking along Kensington Church Street.

Statement of Financial Activities

for the year ended 31 December 2011

	2011	2010
	£	£
Incoming resources		
Voluntary income		
Subscriptions	8,015.00	8,642.00
Donations	2,395.00	1,325.00
Gift Aid	0.00	3,167.44
Total voluntary income	<u>10,410.00</u>	<u>13,134.44</u>
Activities for generating funds		
Events	982.00	1,495.00
Annual report advertising	3,700.00	2,250.00
Total activities for generating funds	<u>4,682.00</u>	<u>3,745.00</u>
Investment income		
Gift Aid interest	33.91	200.59
Bank interest	224.66	86.20
Total incoming resources	<u>15,350.57</u>	<u>17,166.23</u>
Resources expended		
Charitable activities		
Newsletter	881.25	1,202.55
Events	799.28	1,078.75
Annual report	6,489.15	6,962.20
Lecture and AGM	720.83	644.64
Subscriptions to related charities	412.00	0.00
Total charitable activities costs	<u>9,302.51</u>	<u>9,888.14</u>
Governance costs		
Insurance	410.56	706.69
Legal and accounting fees	(582.00)	3,526.20
Office expenses	305.90	241.88
Total governance costs	<u>134.46</u>	<u>4,474.77</u>
Total resources expended	<u>9,436.97</u>	<u>14,362.91</u>
<i>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources</i>	<i>5,913.60</i>	<i>2,803.32</i>
Total unrestricted funds brought forward	53,222.66	50,419.34
Total unrestricted funds carried forward	<u>59,136.26</u>	<u>53,222.66</u>

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2011

	2011	2010
	£	£
Current assets		
Debtors		
Prepayments and accrued income		
Subscriptions and Donations	0.00	260.00
Interest	159.11	0.00
Gift Aid	606.41	2,149.23
Insurance	204.28	282.00
Total prepayments and accrued income	<u>969.80</u>	<u>2,691.23</u>
Cash at bank and in hand		
Barclays Bank	6,166.46	9,228.54
Scottish Widows Bank	52,000.00	0.00
Charities Aid Foundation Bank	0.00	43,149.93
Total cash at bank and in hand	<u>58,166.46</u>	<u>52,378.47</u>
Total current assets	<u>59,136.26</u>	<u>55,069.70</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Accruals and deferred income		
Events	0.00	241.50
Annual report advertising	0.00	725.00
Office expenses	0.00	130.54
Legal and accounting fees	0.00	750.00
Total accruals and deferred income	<u>0.00</u>	<u>1,847.04</u>
Net assets	<u>59,136.26</u>	<u>53,222.66</u>
Funds of The Kensington Society		
Unrestricted funds	<u>59,136.26</u>	<u>53,222.66</u>

Financial Review

The net incoming resources for the year were £5,900 which is an increase of £3,100 from last year. This was mainly due to an increase in advertising income and no legal or accounting fees.

Claims are in progress for Gift Aid for 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 tax years. HMRC changed the Gift Aid claim form in April 2011 to Form R68 (i). To meet this new challenge, the membership records, donation records and financial records are now maintained by computer.

Charitable subscriptions have been made to The Civic Voice and The London Forum.

The balance sheet remains strong with funds of the Society improving to £59,100. Funds have been moved from the Charities Aid Foundation Bank to the Scottish Widows Bank. By changing banks, the interest rate has increased from 0.2% to 1.85%. The amount on deposit of £52,000 will yield £962 compared to £104 in 2012.

The Society wishes to thank all the members who have generously donated to the Society during the year. Donations increased by £1,570 to £2,400.

Accounting policies

– Accruals basis

The financial statements are prepared on accruals basis to match incoming resources and expended resources within the same activity within the same year.

Incoming resources

– Recognition of incoming resources

These are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when: the charity becomes entitled to the resources; the trustees are virtually certain they will receive the resources; and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

– Donations

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

– Tax reclaims on gifts and donations

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

– Volunteer help

The value of any voluntary help received is not included in the accounts but is described in the trustees' annual report.

– Investment income

This is included in the accounts when receivable.

Expenditure and liabilities

– Liability recognition

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

– Governance costs

Include costs of the preparation and examination of statutory accounts, the costs of trustee meetings and cost of any legal advice to trustees on governance or constitutional matters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editor would like to thank the following people for all their help with producing this year's Annual Report:

Michael Becket,

Hilary Bell,

Camilla Campion-Awaad,

Peter Davies,

Dave Walker,

Henry Vivian-Neal.

SAVE THE DATE

The Annual General Meeting of The Kensington Society will be held on **Monday 30 April 2012** in the Great Hall, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8 7NX, 6.30pm for 7.00pm, wine afterwards.

The speaker will be Baroness **Tanni Grey-Thompson**, Britain's most successful Paralympic athlete, winner of 16 Paralympic medals, six gold medals in the London Marathon and a comprehensive set of British and World Records.

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

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SPECTATOR MAGAZINE, 2011

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Lidgate's Dry Aged
Duchy Home Farm Fillet Steak

Judges Comments:
"Full flavour, melts in the mouth.
Superb!"



C. LIDGATE
Beef Bourguignon Pie

Judges Comments:
"Delicious 'Tastes Homemade!'"



C. LIDGATE
Lidgate's Dry Aged
Duchy Home Farm Ribeye Steak

Judges Comments:
"Very succulent and
a very good aroma!"



C. LIDGATE
Chinese Five Spice Pork Ribs

Judges Comments:
"Very good, tender!"



C. LIDGATE
Lidgate's Dry Aged
Duchy Home Farm Rump Steak

Judges Comments:
"A really lovely piece of meat –
melted in the mouth!"





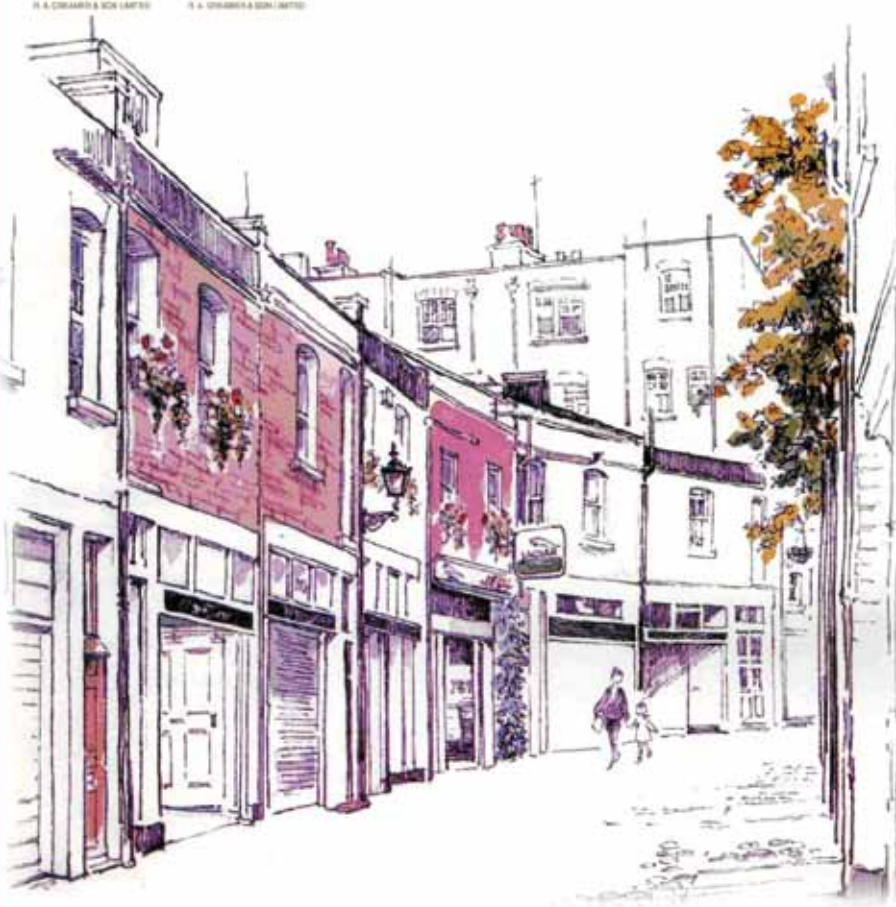
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