

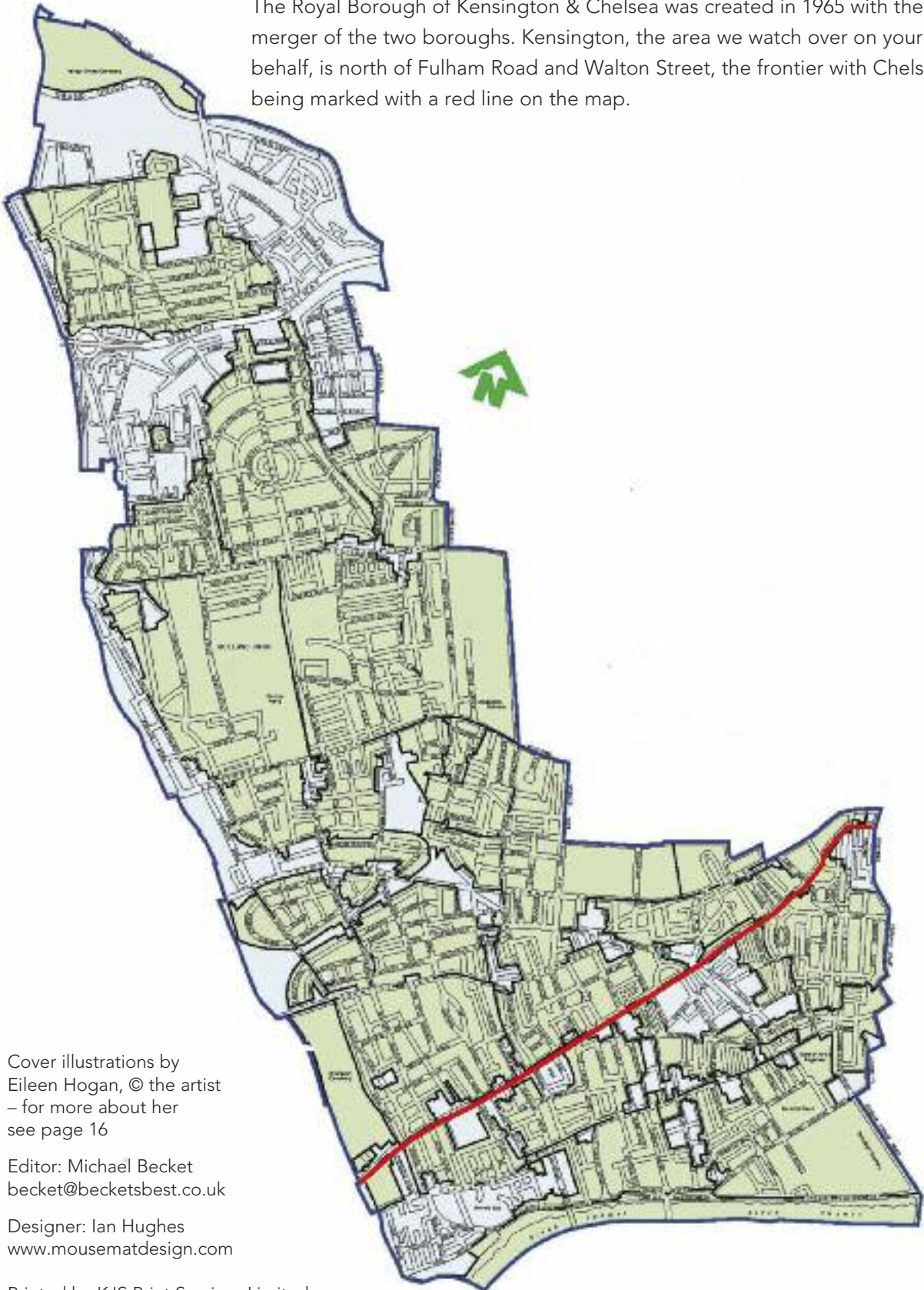
# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

2017–2018



## KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea was created in 1965 with the merger of the two boroughs. Kensington, the area we watch over on your behalf, is north of Fulham Road and Walton Street, the frontier with Chelsea being marked with a red line on the map.



Cover illustrations by  
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– for more about her  
see page 16

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# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE  
[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)  
2017–2018

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The objects of the society are to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington for the public benefit by stimulating interest in its history and records, promoting good architecture and planning in its development, and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic interest.

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His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO

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Nick Ross

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Mary Sheehan, *member (March 2018)*  
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# President's note

Nick Ross

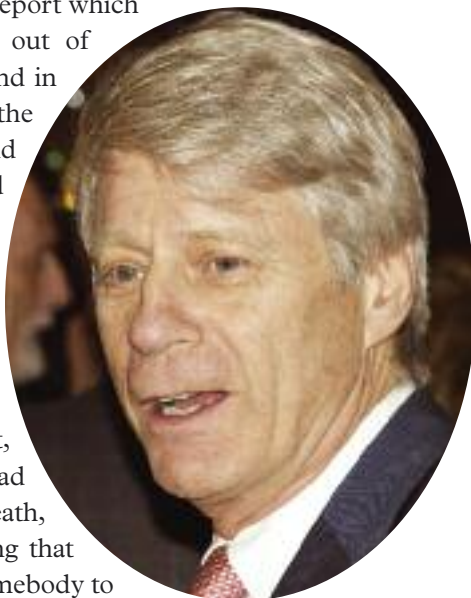
I have tried but I find it impossible to write a president's report which is not about Grenfell. The tragedy ripped the heart out of Kensington, bared social divisions which are more profound in London than in any other British city, overturned the leadership of the local council and brought activists and A-list celebrities to campaign on our streets. Nothing could be more important for Kensington than how to heal the wound and avoid another tragedy like it. Yet I fear we are at risk of confusing the desire to find someone to punish with the need to find real solutions.

In the 1974 disaster film, *Towering Inferno*, a high-rise firestorm is caused by a corrupt and cost-cutting contractor while Paul Newman, the building's clean-cut architect, heroically rescues people trapped inside. Good guys and bad guys are popular themes in movies. In real life, and real death, things are usually more complex. Even so, it's unsurprising that after the nightmare catastrophe at Grenfell, people want somebody to take the rap: "71 dead, and still no arrests...how come?", complain Justice4Grenfell campaigners. It's easy to point the finger, and the council is a convenient target, especially if you are politically opposed to its Conservative majority.

Neither I nor the Kensington Society have any reason to defend the local council. We spend much of our time opposing it. In fact, speaking for myself, I find it disturbing that any local authority should be in one-party control for the entirety of its existence, whichever party is in power. But it is as wrong to blame Grenfell on party politics as it is to seek scapegoats among contractors for criminal prosecution. The tragedy was certainly avoidable. But no one intended to do harm. No one was reckless. In fact, in a way we were all complicit.

The real causes of the loss of life at Grenfell are far removed from Hornton Street or even from the tower itself. They are also more widely embarrassing and should cause us all some uncomfortable self-reflection. Long before the hip hop artists Stormzy or the Oscar-winning actress Frances McDormand became late converts to the cause of fire safety, campaigners had been lobbying for new precautions, and successive fire ministers, Labour as much as Tory, turned them down. The measures being fought for would have prevented any loss of life at Grenfell – but they had no public or political support.

The reason was complacency. Fire deaths have been falling for decades in the UK. With fewer chip pans, fewer cigarettes, fewer oil stoves and open fireplaces, with better electrical safety and more fire resistant furnishing, fewer fires have broken out; and with smoke detectors more people have been alerted in time to escape. Fire deaths fell from 196 in London alone in 1980 to 199 across the whole of England in 2016. So when campaigners urged the two things that would have prevented deaths at Grenfell they were ignored. The first priority was to get



building regulations updated so that new materials, like external cladding, should be tested and approved. Ministers of both major parties rejected this on the grounds that the country needed ‘less red tape’. The second, the one I was most concerned about, was sprinklers, and especially in social housing. No one has ever died from fire in a home protected by sprinklers. They are the same price as fitted carpets, they are almost impossible to trigger by accident, they usually put the fire out before the fire brigade arrives and cause far less water damage than a firefighter’s hose. Again, ministers of both parties rejected the idea on the grounds it would impose an unnecessary burden on housebuilders and social landlords.

But the story of Grenfell gets darker still. These Labour and Conservative politicians were all acting on advice, and that advice came from, of all people...fire chiefs.

I have been working with fire chiefs on fire safety for two decades, and a handful of them persuaded me to take up the cause in the first place and have been vigorous campaigners ever since. Given the extraordinary endurance and bravery of firefighters of all ranks it does not come easily to criticise the service in any way. They are the real Paul Newmans and they do it for real, not with special effects. Yet where were the most senior of Britain’s fire officers when buildings regulations were allowed to slide? Where were the top-ranking chiefs when fire safety inspection went to the lowest bidder? Where was the National Fire Chiefs Council on sprinklers – apart from a weasel phrase that sprinklers, ‘may have some use in an overall fire safety strategy’? It is splendid that London’s fire chief Dany Cotton is now calling for sprinklers. “This can’t be optional,” she said, “It can’t be a nice thing to have. This is something that must happen.” If only this advice had been offered so trenchantly by all her predecessors and her colleagues.

As for Kensington & Chelsea, it is hard to see that any other council would have done much better. Not one had challenged successive governments’ cavalier attitudes to building regulations, many were using similar materials, and hardly any were retrofitting sprinklers. What’s more, precious few councils had robust contingency plans for a disaster on this scale; if Grenfell had happened on their patch, they too would have been caught like rabbits in the headlights.

So let us have less denunciation, less call for personal culpability. It is obviously important to find out what happened in great detail so we can learn what mistakes were made and make sure things are more robust in future. But finding someone to blame for what happened in the past is a distraction. It diverts resources from real crimes where even persistent violent offenders often go undetected – and which are suffered by poorer parts of our community much harder than by the rich. It will bring no one back to life, it won’t heal the wounds (even if some people think it will) and it won’t stop more fatal fires from happening. Only a change of public policy can do that, which is what we badly need.

Let’s make something positive out of tragedy. Let’s finally get politicians to face up to the need, the duty and the cost, to protect all social housing tenants in the future.

And let us not focus exclusively on high-rise buildings, for they are no more dangerous than any other home. In the year before Grenfell 196 of the 199 fire fatalities in England were in low-build or medium-rise housing. Let’s keep fire safety testing and building regulations up to date, and let’s get sprinklers into every unit of social housing, and ideally into all new housing too as is already the policy in Wales. Anyone who rents a home deserves protection. Not a clamour for scapegoats.

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

# Chairman's Report

**Amanda Frame**

Just as Nick Ross could not write his president's report without referring to Grenfell Tower fire, I cannot omit the most dramatic and important event of the past year. The fire at Grenfell Tower shocked and horrified the nation and it changed this borough. But has the change been enough? Those of us who live near the estate and can see the tower from our homes will never forget the shocking sights we witnessed for days after the start of the fire. We still live with its harrowing, blackened hulk which is now shrouded, lest we forget.

Nick is right about the state of building regulations. They are supposed to be safeguards, as recognised by architects and engineers, but contractors are often instructed to save money. But ignorance or lack of concern remain problems. Just a few weeks ago we questioned the distance to the only exit in a proposed deep basement; we were told it was not a planning issue but "a building regulations issue" and the application was approved.

The planning department takes the position that building regulations are not its concern. It was the Blair government which allowed building regulations to be privatised. The sad truth is that many projects are completed without proper building regulation scrutiny, if at all. Hopefully this relaxation will be addressed in the public inquiry.



**Amanda Frame**

## Change

On 19 July Councillor Elizabeth Campbell was elected leader of the council, stepping into the breach left by the resignation of the Leader Councillor Paget Brown on 30 June 2017. She restructured the cabinet, eliminating the term Cabinet and replacing it with Leadership Team and Lead Members, with two deputy leaders, Councillor Kim Taylor-Smith with responsibility for the Grenfell response and housing, and, initially, Councillor Will Pascal with responsibility for all other borough services, including planning. Councillor David Lindsay became the lead member for finance and corporate services. After a few months Councillor Hargreaves was appointed to be the lead member for planning and transport.

The Kensington Society expressed its concerns directly to the new leader before new lead members were appointed and about the disproportionate amount of cabinet members being from Chelsea in the past. However, the new leadership is again all Chelsea councillors except Councillor Lindsay. There are 18 wards in RBKC with 14 full wards and one half ward in Kensington. Chelsea has only three full wards with one half ward yet

the councillors from Chelsea run almost all of the borough. As many existing councillors are either not standing for re-election, the 3 May will bring an interesting change and perhaps more active Kensington participation within the new structure.

We recognise the gravity of the Grenfell crisis and the challenges which must be faced with diligence and with humanity.

### Changes to the structure and working of the council

On 22 June Barry Quirk accepted the then leader's invitation to be the interim head of paid services. On the 19 July he was appointed the head of paid service and acting town clerk. He was appointed chief executive on 11 September and amazingly he published one day later his Fit for New Purposes paper. It made for interesting reading.

He proposed changes within the structure of the council. He notes that "it is crucial that the organisation of RBKC is reshaped so that it is fit for these new purposes. This will require new management arrangements that reinforce corporate responses to challenges rather than fragments and silo responses".

This was music to our ears. However, there was a feeling that the report looks closely at the internal management and not enough the council's outward-facing role to look at the issues which the local residents find failing in the council. We agree with the silo assessment. We have for years expressed our disapproval at the way many departments have little or no relation to each other, leading to frustration and often to no action taken when a problem is across departments. The planning department seems to function solely for the benefit of the developers, with pre-application advice now a means to work with the developers and no means for the residents to express directly their local concerns before the recommendations are made.

All was silent for months, then on 24 January 2018 Councillor Campbell presented her "update speech" to the full council. She promised that as new housing is developed there will be an "encouragement for different tenures" and they "will expect developers to bring forward proposals to include intermediate housing and affordable housing for rent, as well as housing for private sale and rental". She noted that she "wants people who buy homes in the borough to live here" and she does not want "any of our homes to be left empty".

She mentioned the problem of knife crime, the high levels achieved by the state primary schools, support for employment with "exciting plans to make this an even cleaner and greener borough". She stated the "The Go Golborne initiative is encouraging children and their families to eat well, keep active and feel good – so the children get a better start in life by getting into good habits", but one wonders why it is limited to Golborne or why Golborne is singled out.

Perhaps most promising was the undertaking of "giving residents more say in the way their community is run; about providing them with more democracy, as they take advantage of new forums and communications methods to express to us what they want to see happening. It is about being more open and receptive to thinking from elsewhere and being more open to partnership-working with other organisations too".

All very promising, however, there are questions – what is different in the speech that could not have been said in June or July? Has it taken six months to formulate these aspirations? And how are these aspirations going to be achieved?

## Centre for Public Security and the Democracy Society

As part of its efforts to rethink its relationship with Borough residents, the council commissioned an independent review of its own governance arrangements. The Local Government Association agreed that it would provide Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Democracy Society with separate funding to cover this work, at no cost to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. This study was carried out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny with the involvement of the Democratic Society, and the resultant reports were published in early March. At the time of finalising content for this annual, discussions within the council on the findings of the review had yet to get underway.

The evidence for the study was based on interviews with councillors, officers, local organisations and individual residents. These questioned how the council makes its decisions (through formal processes) and how the council communicates and engages with the public. Two surveys were published online by CfPS, so it took some time for news of the review to filter out, but by the end of the consultation period the two surveys, one for residents and one for those connected with the council, had received 375 and 79 responses respectively. The researchers also attended council meetings and held a series of workshops, one of which was organised by the Kensington Society for local amenity groups. The report concentrates on the outward workings of the borough and in our opinion, the report does not look at the working of the council internally especially the powers both delegated and as support to the councillors.

We also submitted our own response, which set out our views on the current organisational culture of RBKC and how the council relates to the public. This includes how councillors make decisions, how these are overseen by opposition and backbench councillors, and how the local authority communicates what it is doing. Our main concern is that the council has become less willing in recent years to listen to residents, to look outwards at what other London boroughs are doing by way of best practice, and to take on board responses and views from all sections of community. The more specific failings that led to the Grenfell tragedy will continue to be examined by the public inquiry. Meanwhile a new council from 3 May, whatever its political composition, faces a major task in rebuilding public trust and confidence in how the council operates. The society is not alone in feeling that the council has rested too long on its laurels as a local authority once assessed as ‘excellent’ for its services and its management. The roles of councillors and officers, and the relationship between the two parts of the organisation, also needs some open and honest discussion.

The society’s dealings with the council revolve mainly around planning, environmental, property/regeneration and transport issues. We recognise that there are many other aspects of RBKC services and activities which are seen by service users and the wider public as being of very high quality.

## Campaigns

### *The Academy pub*

Following months of meetings with masses of consultants retained by the supposed buyer of the Academy pub, and three local amenity conservation societies, a planning application was submitted. Though throughout the months, we had emphasised at every meeting that the Asset of Community Value approved area of the pub must be retained. Ignoring our

opposition, the application was for a reduction in the size of the pub. If approved, the pub would have been too small to be viable. Opposition was mounted and the developer realised, perhaps with the advice of the planners, that the proposal would be refused; the first proposal was withdrawn. A new application was presented which did retain most of the pub space. However, to our surprise the planning department refused the application.

Today you can see the sad state of the Academy, which closed in August. The windows whited out, rubbish blowing around but oddly “security” tenants living in the former publicans’ rooms.

We have seen the odd grouping of the consultants and have heard rumours that pre-application is being sought. But as in many cases with pre-applications the locals remain isolated and ignored.

### *Notting Hill police station*

The Kensington Society along with local residents’ associations mounted the opposition to the closing of the Notting Hill police station. Since 2010, the government has demanded savings from the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) of £1 billion. The savings were to come from the closure and sale of many of the 149 stations. By 2016, 73 stations were closed and either sold or on the market to produce £600 million. But the government wanted its pound of flesh – or in this case £400 million more. In 2017 the mayor of London, heeding the government’s continued demands, announced the restructuring of the police and the closure of all but 32 remaining stations (only one per borough).

From the beginning it was obvious we were not going to be successful in keeping the police station. However we were not going to give up lightly. We applied to the council for protection and the designation of the site as an Asset of Community Value. We had the support of the leader and the council and the site was designated as an ACV on 8 November 2017. This does not mean MOPAC cannot sell the site but it does mean that we have a period of time to stop any sale while future considerations can be evaluated. Any future use must be within the policy controls of an ACV and the planning policy CK1 adds further protection.

What happens to this site will be interesting and we ask you to watch the website for updates.

### *CTMP (Construction Traffic Management Plans)*

A success story on its way.

We held a local meeting at the end of last year to discuss the increasing problems with CTMPs. We invited members from planning and enforcement, but all declined. James McCool though, braved the fire and came along to discuss specifically the highways issues. His presence and calmness were valuable.

Most if not all basements approvals allow the CTMP to be approved via a condition which can be approved after the planning approval, without public notification and as a delegated decision. The CTMP is most often prepared by a specialist consultant and once approved, it is seldom referred to again. The responsibility for policing the CTMP becomes the neighbours’. Deliveries are made before agreed times; pavements become part of the construction site; parking suspensions become private parking for the builders while residents cannot find a parking space. Over 60% of enforcement actions now relate

to CTMPs. The neighbours photograph the HGVs, the skips and construction material delivery vehicles and often are verbally abused and/or threatened. It is out of hand and the enforcement team, though presenting a good face, is not forcible nor timely enough.

Another problem is that the requirement for a CTMP applies only to basements. So if you have massive demolition and then construction but without a basement, there are limited policies for control.

Our concerns and our objections to the abuse of the system were heard – not by the planning department but by Councillor Will Pascall. He too had experienced the growing frustration with the abuse of the system and the increase in problems some of which were obviously becoming dangerous. The Chelsea Enforcement Pilot started in January intending to outline the problems and formulate a system for better controls. The pilot covered 28 sites subject to a CTMP, so not the general construction sites. The pilot monitors sites, communicates with site managers and has drop-in sessions at Chelsea Town Hall for residents. According to Jago Williams, the team leader, the pilot sites which have received enforcement notices, have quickly fallen into line, showing the benefit of robust enforcement.

Councillor Pascall has made a commitment to expanding the pilot and we hope that a street in Kensington will be next.

### *Pre-application alarms*

There is growing concern over the way in which the council at the direction of the planning department administer the pre-application process. The pre-application advice fees generated in 2015/16 were £1,080,365. In 2016/17 £913,947. It has become a money-making service and which we feel has become too developer led.

The public realm scrutiny committee on 22 November 2017 not only considered the short-lets issue referred to next but the pre-application advice provided by the planning department. Michael Bach, representing the society, and Graham Stallwood, executive director, planning and borough development presented papers to the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. Mr Stallwood's paper is on the website within the minutes for the



Road closures and disruption

meeting. However though Michael has provided his notes, his recommendations are not noted in the minutes of the meeting.

The society maintains that pre-application advice does not involve any input from the public sufficiently and is not in the spirit of the manner in which the government intended. The conclusion of the scrutiny committee on pre-application advice notes that “The committee supported Mr Bach’s aim for earlier active community engagement and for big schemes asked that ward councillors were notified sufficiently early so that their local knowledge and observations could shape the application.” Councillor Hargreaves “recognised that more work was needed to assist residents in getting engaged earlier in the application planning process. He was seeking to ensure earlier ward councillor engagement over large planning applications”.

Pre-application process was based upon the principle of giving neighbourhoods a greater role in determining the shape of the places in which they live. The original document, Open Source Planning, sets out the best planning principles:

- Communities should be given the greatest possible opportunity to have their say and the greatest degree of control of planning issues.
- Local people in a neighbourhood should be able to specify the kind of development and use they want to see in their areas.
- Giving all local planning authorities and other public bodies a duty to co operate.
- Ensuring that significant local projects are designed through a collaborative process that has involved the neighbourhood.

We fully agree with Mr Stallwood’s statement that “For engagement to be successful all parties need to engage positively”. That includes the planning department; after all it is our environment, our homes and our community at stake. We need the department to work for us and not in the interest of fees from developers. The current approach “business as usual” is not an acceptable position for pre-application. Together with the councillors’ encouragement we will continue to push for change.

### *Short-lets*

These continue to be a concern. An issue which has not been fully addressed is the proper research and verification on the actual numbers of short-let units within the borough.

A cross-party working group produced a document for presentation to the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 22 November 2017. This society and many others participated and lobbied the councillors for changes, but we were not even presented with the final recommendations. The working group did recognise that “short-term lettings had contributed to the loss of permanent residential accommodation in the borough with consequences for both housing supply and rent levels. These lettings had affected the quality of life of borough residents and had an impact on local businesses” and made the following recommendations:

1. Lobby for self-financing compulsory registration and licensing scheme;
2. Try a licensing pilot scheme in three of the worst affected wards and compare their impact in other boroughs;

3. Produce information on a website information for private sector (e.g. breaches of leasehold conditions and insurance);
4. Produce a guide to anti-social behaviour;
5. Review delegated powers of officers with enforcement duties and to promote a joined-up departmental approach;
6. Work with garden committees over complaints about misuse of gardens;
7. Ensure new council leases contain terms that prohibit short-term holiday lettings;
8. Lobby short-term holiday lettings companies to implement enforcement including list properties on lettings and right so to do;
9. When national or London policy allows, adopt a self-financing compulsory registration and licensing scheme.

All very aspirational and if implemented; we are very encouraged. However, we do not hold our breath for items 1 and 2. Recommendations 3 and 4 are doable but when and by whom? Recommendation 5 is an excellent recommendation and very doable – but again, when? Recommendations 6 and 7 seem very helpful, but this paper was produced in November and we have not seen any reference to the private sector housing officer. Recommendation 8 depends on industry cooperation but with the amount of money at risk and the individual nature, we must all press the companies for compliance.

### Maintaining the dialogue

The planning committee of the Kensington Society meets the senior planning officers and the executive director every three months. Meetings review current planning issues and discuss issues which our members have expressed to us. We are often asked to assist our members in the complicated process of first a review of the application then to comment on issues which may be objectionable and contrary to the local plan policies. A few applications are actually presented in correct form and though the neighbour may object to the time a construction period will take or the obvious noise and disturbance, these are not concerns which will cause the application to be refused.

However there are other common complaints.

We are reviewing these both with the lead member and the executive director to address some of the most obvious concerns.

- Hoardings: all too often builders and/or developers use the site hoarding for advertisement of the works or the development. There is a strict size for a site sign with specific information to be evident. If you see a hoarding that is really an advertisement such as photographs of bedroom and pools, please send an email to the enforcement team and it will see that it is removed.
- We have asked that an informative be included in all planning permissions which set the parameters for site signage. Though it is doubtful it will stop all abuse, we hope the information will assist the enforcement team and in time the constant abusers will stop this practice.
- Pre-application advice: (see above) once an application has been lodged if pre-application advice has been provided, the planning department has agreed to include the advice on the website. A few times this has not happened but the excellent IT team

quickly responds if asked. However, the advice is not within the case file for the current application but obscurely located within the decided cases. We have asked, repeatedly, for this to be changed, as many never find the advice.

- Following the approval of the construction environmental management plans for the Dukes Lodge site, we have pressed for stronger application of the environmental controls.
- We received a week ago a paper presented on 3 December 2017 to the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. Unfortunately, as is the case with many such papers, there is no consultation with the public or the specific people who have asked for the changes to the conditions, or could possibly be revised to address concerns. We will comment on the “paper” and hope to make some meaningful improvements in the system perhaps after the election.
- Conservation area management plans: planning department has agreed that a draft template for conservation area management plans could be produced. It is our opinion that this will bring a control form into place, but the planning department warned that if the plans increase in length and are more complex, implementing will depend on funding. Our intent is to reduce the complexity, not the length. We will continue with our efforts.

I would make the point that all too often “papers” or plans for change are developed, written, presented and approved within the workings of the council without any reference to the public.

### Thank you

The trustees continue to work very hard in all our endeavours. Without their constant and professional work this society would not be where it is now. The council is presenting some challenges with change and change again. However, some areas have not changed enough.

The planning committee led by Michael Bach and including Anthony Walker, Sophia Lambert, Thomas Blomberg, Henry Peterson and Amanda Frame review the weekly list of planning applications, comment on applications which contrary to planning policy, assist members in their own review of an application and often write objections. Thomas Blomberg is many things: our Sherlock when challenged on information needed, our newsletter editor and the man who holds our website together. Martin Frame maintains the membership and donations databases and prepares the bi-monthly accounts and successfully claims the gift aid with HMRC changing the process annually. This is no small feat.

**We do need help though. It seems every day there is more which we can do and more that we cannot turn away from. If you are interested in Kensington, value our wonderful environment and its heritage and want to help...call us!**

**We would not be here if we were not needed by our members and we would not be here if you did not support us. Thank you all for your support.**

# The 64th annual general meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 25 April 2017

AMANDA FRAME, chairman of the trustees, welcomed distinguished guests and members: Victoria Lady Borwick MP for Kensington and Lord Borwick; the Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, Kenneth Olisa OBE and Mrs Olisa; the mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; councillor Elizabeth Rutherford; leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Nick Paget-Brown; and leader of the Labour group of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, councillor Robert Atkinson. Apologies were received from Nick Ross, president, of The Kensington Society, General the Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington Vice President of The Kensington Society, and Sir Angus Stirling, council of The Kensington Society.

In the absence of the president Nick Ross, the order of business was conducted by Martin Frame, treasurer and membership secretary. The minutes of the 2016 AGM and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2016, set out in the annual report, were confirmed and approved nem con.

Michael Bach, Michael Becket, Thomas Blomberg, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Sophia Lambert, Henry Peterson, Holly Smith and Anthony Walker put their names forward to serve as trustees in 2017/18 and were proposed and approved nem con. The trustees proposed the election of Martin Frame as treasurer and secretary which was seconded from the floor and approved nem con.

Councillor Robert Freeman introduced the guest speaker Ken Olisa OBE, Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, who told of a rise from the back streets of Nottingham, to

Cambridge, a series of leading technology organisations and banking businesses. He told also a number of amusing anecdotes and of his charitable work, helping the homeless and encouraging young entrepreneurs.

Amanda Frame thanked Mr Olisa and then gave her chairman's report. She reported particular concerns over the recent implementation of increased business rates and reported increasing levels of air pollution in the borough which has been designated an Air Quality Management Area. She also related the efforts of the society to save the Academy pub from development. Finally, she passed on apologies from the president, Nick Ross, and a message in which he emphasised the positive force exercised on local developments by the society. And lastly she thanked the trustees for their hard work in support of the society's objectives and members.

Michael Bach, chair of the planning committee, noted several important issues that had arisen over the year and the society's role in helping to shape the future of Kensington. He spoke first of the council's positive response in issuing Article 4 Directions to protect small business premises: pubs, offices, launderettes and light industrial such as garages. He explained that the society's new approach is to endeavour to be engaged as early as possible in local schemes – a particular success has been the joint work on the refurbishment of South Kensington Station – and to shape policy, for instance in the council's stance on basements, and Construction Traffic Management Plans. The aim now is to tackle air quality on construction sites. He went on to discuss driving up the

quality of the public realm, citing initiatives to prevent the spread of new telephone ‘boxes’ (really advertising panels with a phone attached), and the disastrous installation of new bus shelters. Noting that new challenges include applications for garden ‘summer houses’, and to turn housing into short-let accommodation, as well as the proliferation of cafes, restaurants and estate agents taking the place of more traditional retail outlets especially in such areas as South Kensington. He repeatedly emphasised the importance of implementing the council’s own policy of maintaining a diverse and healthy retail offer

and the need for an improved vision in the revised local plan. Finally he pointed up the need for greater and earlier public involvement in planning so that the needs and aspirations of residents are taken into account by the officers in considering applications and can be better balanced against perceived benefits. The aim is to shape the future of the borough, not just to object to everything.

Questions from the floor concluded the business of the AGM before the mayor, councillor Elizabeth Rutherford, invited members and guests to the mayor’s parlour for a reception.

1. Kenneth Olisa
2. Michael Bach
3. Amanda Frame
4. Martin Frame
5. Kensington Society trustee Thomas Blomberg with a society member
6. Kensington Society trustee Henry Peterson with a society member
7. Kensington Society trustee Sophia Lambert with member Geoffrey Roome
8. Anthony Walker



Front row: Kenneth Olisa, mayor of Kensington & Chelsea Elizabeth Rutherford, council leader Nick Paget

# Local artist: Eileen Hogan

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By Michael Becket

EILEEN HOGAN KNOWS HOW LUCKY she is to be working at Pembroke Studios in Pembroke Gardens, just behind Kensington High Street. She is in the studio that belonged to the painter, the late Leonard Rosoman, who taught Eileen at the Royal College of Art. When Leonard became too frail to use the space, his wife, Roxanne, very kindly offered it to Eileen, wanting to have it used as it was designed to be.

The whole splendidly dignified development (recently granted a Grade 2 listing) was originally built to be a place of work for artists, all the premises with good north light, but few of the 16 are still used as studios. Current inhabitants include David Hockney, who owns three of them, and Marie-Louise Laband, director at Artists Rooms Foundation. The buildings have a distinguished artistic history, having in the past housed the painters Michael Andrews and Peter Greenham, the architects Philip Dowson and Sherban Cantacuzino, the sculptor Franta Belsky and cartoonist his wife, Margaret Owen, among others. At one time owned by the Prudential, the tenants of the time were able to form themselves into a group and purchase their spaces in the late 1980s.





Eileen's space was Rosoman's creative workshop for many years. Much of his stuff is still there, including a long set of book-filled shelves, demonstrating a catholic taste, ranging from an ancient multi-volumed Chambers Encyclopaedia to a book on Mozart. "He never threw anything away" so the place was full and "I thought it might be spooky, moving into someone else's space", said Eileen "but because we were both painters, the materials and paraphernalia are much the same and I immediately felt at home and a sense of kinship."

The spacious, light studio has subtly influenced the scale of some of Eileen's paintings, in particular a series she made of London squares under snow and a set of works relating to the artist Ian Hamilton Finlay's garden in the Scottish hills. Her most recent concentration has been as a result of being made Artist in Residence at the Garden Museum at Lambeth Palace. Normally that would entail focusing on the museum collection and garden, but as the building was under renovation, Eileen re-christened herself Artist Not in Residence and invited ninety people to nominate London green spaces which mattered to them. She visited as many of the gardens as she could, first making drawn and painted sketches and written notes in situ in a notebook about four inches square. The range included Victoria Park and Chelsea Physic Garden, the Brompton Jewish Cemetery (which has been closed so there is no entrance and she had to paint it by standing on a ladder to peer over the wall), Chiswick House, Hyde Park and of course Kew Gardens. The photographer, Sandra Lousada, came on some of the visits, documenting Eileen at work in the chosen settings.

From the sketchbooks, Eileen often progresses to a series of sketches seldom bigger than an A3 sheet of paper. Then come larger pictures, still fairly sketchy, created on a big flat table. That is also the place for the initial work on the final picture. "Working on the table I can get the detail and fine painting", she explains. She will then transfer to one of her easels "to consider the painting as a whole, using broader brush marks, sometimes reverting to drawing in charcoal at the end," in this way gaining the greater freedom and looseness she likes.

Eileen's career began when aged 16 she went to Camberwell College of Arts and Crafts. She is aware that throughout her career figurative painting – and indeed painting itself – has often been out of fashion but “although I enjoy a lot of conceptual art, I’ve always been firmly figurative myself and always a painter and I’ve never regretted that.”

She is attracting a lot of interest. From a young age she was shown at the Fine Art Society in Bond Street for many years, and now at Browse & Darby in Cork Street. In 2019 she gets her own museum show at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, where she has previously been part of group shows and has given a lecture. The Yale curator had been planning a centenary show to commemorate the Versailles Treaty ending World War 1 but became so depressed at the resurgence of bellicose attitudes, threats of war and then the political climate that she completely changed direction and decided to show something “that will produce joy” at an unhappy time. And the artist she chose for that was Eileen Hogan.

Eileen has also been busy with commissions which almost seems to surprise her because she is extremely careful about the subjects she chooses. Sometimes the commissions come by chance, one such led to her painting gardens in France and England belonging to a couple who saw her work at a picture framers when they were getting something framed themselves. The Prince of Wales asked Eileen to paint some of the veterans of the Dunkirk evacuation. These pictures must have been appreciated because she was invited to the Balmoral estate for sittings with the Prince and the Duchess of Cornwall, creating individual portraits for their private collection. A second portrait of Charles by Eileen now hangs in the Garden Museum, of which he is patron. Painting portraits has come as something of a surprise to her as, traditionally,





people in her paintings have more often been represented by their implied absence, for example by a garden bench, but in the last decade her work has been a frequent presence in the annual BP Portrait Awards at the National Portrait Gallery and subsequent tours.

As well as her busy painting career Eileen is a professor with a role in the research department of the University of the Arts London, and is member of the Academic Board of the Royal Drawing School.



# The Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising

By Greg Hammond

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE NOSTALGIA – and who doesn't? – the Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising near Ladbroke Grove is for you. Housed in the famous 'Lighthouse' building in Lancaster Road, the Museum is the lifetime's work of its director, Robert Opie. "Brands and packaging are so much part of our lives", says Opie. "We may dismiss them as unimportant, but these are some of the strongest memories we have. I wanted to use them to tell our domestic history, the context in which we live our lives."

Opie comes from a family of collectors. His father's collection of children's books was the best of its kind and ended up in the Bodleian Library. As a teenager in the 1960s, Opie made a deliberate decision to start collecting sweet wrappers and grocery packaging. Soon he had a network of local shops saving labelled display material for him and, as his collection grew, so did his understanding of the workings of consumer society. By regularly scouring sources like Portobello Road, Opie also took the collection into earlier decades, from rationed wartime products back to Victoriana. Later expanding into other genres, such as toys and games, royal souvenirs, magazines and album covers, the collection has grown year-by-year and decade-by-

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decade into a unique record of the products that have surrounded our domestic lives.

Working as a market researcher to gain further insight into the consumer world, Opie always knew that he wanted to turn his collection into a museum. With the confidence of youth, he went to the very top of the museum hierarchy and cold-called the Victoria & Albert Museum to propose an exhibition. Astonishingly in hindsight, his proposal was accepted and the renowned South Kensington institution was the scene of a popular exhibition of brands and packaging for a few weeks in 1975–6.

Finding a permanent site in Gloucester, the museum existed happily there for seventeen years until its building was sold for re-development. Opie explored dozens of alternatives for a replacement site before eventually accepting the offer from a design agency to share space in Colville Mews, W11. Quirky but cramped, the museum was an exciting addition to the Notting Hill scene in December 2005. For ten years the museum prospered, but the site was too small to do justice to the collection or accommodate increasing visitor numbers, so Opie jumped at the chance of taking over the ‘Lighthouse’ building and the museum re-opened here at Easter 2016. The new site not only offers more space for the expanded collection and larger groups of visitors, but also has better public transport links than its predecessor, being a two-minute walk from Ladbroke Grove Underground station.

The building was originally a school, in its last incarnation the Solomon Wolfson Jewish Primary School. This school moved in from Bayswater in 1930. A foundation stone is still visible on a former external wall showing its opening by Samuel Samuel MP, an intriguing character who was a Baghdad-born businessman and represented Putney for 21 years in parliament. The school moved out in 1981 and the building decayed. In the late 1980s it was acquired by a new charity set up to handle the emerging HIV/AIDS crisis and The Lighthouse was created as a hospice and treatment centre for victims of the then little-understood disease. Princess Diana

was a regular visitor, sometimes calling in to meet patients unannounced. As HIV/AIDS treatments changed, the need for the expensive residential centre diminished and the charity – by now merged with the Terrence Higgins Trust – sold the building in 2015 which created the museum's opportunity. The delightful Lighthouse Memorial Garden, a re-planting of a Tudor-style garden sponsored by Crabtree and Evelyn for the 1990 Chelsea Flower Show, remains accessible through the museum's cafe.

The heart of the museum is the Time Tunnel. Visitors walk along a cleverly designed snaking corridor between display cases crammed with thousands of period items from the collection. Each section of the corridor broadly covers a decade, starting with Victorian Britain: think of red-coated soldiers on jigsaw puzzles commemorating half-forgotten imperial wars, plus the recognisable beginnings of many modern brands. The tunnel takes the story right up to the present day and contains representative items from all genres in the collection from food packaging to magazine covers.

Pausing in the 1960s and 1970s sections, the displays immediately transported me back to my childhood: milk-churn shaped Ski yoghurt pots, Marathon bar wrappers and Monster Munch bags; souvenirs of The Queen's Silver Jubilee; jigsaws of Disney's *Jungle Book* film, Concorde and Blue Peter with 1970s presenter Lesley Judd and dogs Petra and Shep; a toy Evel Knievel stunt bike and an Emu puppet; and Green Shield Stamps. These are the sort of items that surround us daily, but they evolve over time as brands appear and disappear and advertising





designs change to fit current tastes. It is remarkable to be transported back to remind ourselves what we were surrounded by in earlier decades.

Current events also bring items from the past to life. A David Bowie album cover from 1973 reminds us of the star's recent death. Brexit is referenced in election leaflets from the 1975 Common Market referendum. One is from the Kensington Liberal Association with its slogan from before the 'sound-bite' era, "Don't Vote 'No' in the Referendum". And then there is the unintentional horror show: a Jim'll Fix It game marketed for "Ages 7 to Adult", whose cover is dominated by the grinning visage of the monstrous host. As Robert Opie says, "You can't air-brush history. Bad things like Hitler and cigarettes are part of it. If we sanitise history, we can't learn from it." Indeed cigarette packages are an important part of the collection. As recently as 1974 around 45% of the British population smoked – a proportion that has now dropped below 16%.

Opie gets "a real buzz" from mixed-generation visits, particularly when three generations walk round together. They connect with each other in new ways when some of them talk about an item that means something special to them. The balance changes from the older to the younger generations as they walk through the Time Tunnel and "children say things that often their parents haven't heard before." Opie says his lack of a background in museums is an advantage as his focus is "from the point of view of the visitor, not conservation." He still gets a "huge thrill" when someone feeds back that they have found in the displays the one thing they wanted to see from their past.

The collection is still growing to maintain its relevance for future generations. Opie is particularly proud of his large collection of merchandise from the boy-band One Direction. "There has never been a marketing phenomenon like it", he says, "and it is essential for me to record it for posterity." There are a "couple of thousand" items Opie would like to add to the collection. Pressed for the 'holy grail', he names three items: a 1940s wartime Spam can; a pre-1925 straight-sided Marmite jar; and an original 1961 Kellogg's Coco Pops box. If you happen to have any of these lying around, please do get in touch with the museum but Opie does not recommend trying the Spam. In the meantime, a visit to the museum is highly recommended as a great local day out for all the family.

# Local retailer: Sally Clarke

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By Michael Becket

It would be hard to find a chef with a more comprehensive and extensive schooling in the subject than Sally Clarke. Being focused from an early age on cooking she went on the hotel and catering management course of Croydon Technical College – she implausibly claims not being bright enough to have gone to university. That training had an impressively comprehensive coverage, including cooking for 500 people, staff law, how to fillet a fish, how to ice a cake and so on and on.

Good start, but not enough. So she went to the Cordon Bleu school in Paris for a three-month course. Having finished that, aged 20, and looking for further experience, she walked into the temple of gastronomy called the Grand Vefour and asked for a job as a commis chef (a trainee doing food preparation and basic cooking under supervision, progressing through the sections such as sauce, vegetables, fish and butchery).

The chef was sympathetic and recommended her to his son's restaurant across the river. There she was present at the birth of nouvelle cuisine. Still not enough. So she went to Le Recamier, a fish restaurant.

Seeking still further training, she left Paris for southern California for five years where she not only cooked at a range of fine restaurants, but took every cent and free moment to eat at the legendary Chez Panisse. As a result fell under what she still calls her most important influence, the even more legendary chef, Alice Waters.

Now she was ready. So she returned to England in 1983 to create her own restaurant. She eventually found a site on Kensington Church Street where the owners of an Italian restaurant were retiring, and took a 16-year lease, later extended. Five years later the launderette next door closed. Large numbers of people had been asking to





take away examples of her breads, so it was an obvious site for a bakery. But then she realised “We had to turn away so many people” from the restaurant that an extension of that next door was necessary and the capacity grew from 60 to 90 seats. The bakery shop then moved across the road into Campden Street. She now owns all the premises.

Still demand grew, so the bakery went from the restaurant basement to Ladbroke Grove and the area downstairs became a function room. Then the bakery outgrew Ladbroke Grove and is now just off Golborne Road from where her three vans supply 120 hotels, plus many restaurants and catering companies, with bread, croissants, cakes etc, as well the jams, pickles and so on which are sold in the shop. If you get an email from the business there are four companies listed below the signature.

She is deservedly praised in various restaurant guides such as the Good Food Guide, the AA and ever-reliable Harden. But not Michelin. She seems rather amused by that. The first time the Michelin inspectors came, she says, they looked at the polished wood floors and said no carpet, no stars. Oh, and she did not have more than five chefs in the kitchen. On returning a few years later they seemed equally perplexed by her fixed-price menu which, horrors, offered no choices.

Such neglect seems not to have dented the

business. It has grown so much and in so many directions that two years ago Sally Clarke “came out of the kitchen” where her place was taken by chefs she had trained. What that means is she no longer does most of the cooking, yet she is in and out of the kitchens and indeed her normal clothing is usually topped by an apron. Several of the staff have been with her for 25 years. She says she is lucky to have such loyalty. But that sort of loyalty is earned – they clearly like her.

Despite the popularity, growth and diversification she says the business is owned by her and the bank – financially she is just keeping her head above the water.



# Grenfell

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By The Rev'd Dr Alan Everett,  
Vicar, St Clement Notting Dale and St James Norlands

THE SIGHT OF THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE in the early hours of 14 June last year was something local residents will never forget. As the fire raged upward, vividly illuminated against the night sky, it almost felt as if we were watching a scene from a movie. And yet inside that terrible furnace people were struggling to escape, waving from windows, calling for help, dying in circumstances that are too painful to contemplate.

Shortly after 3.00 am, when I opened nearby St Clement's church, the first visitors arrived – not to seek help but to provide it. They brought in gallons of water, milk, biscuits, fruit, bread and other essential supplies. Soon after that, traumatised residents drifted into church, in a state of shock.

Over the next few hours, places of worship and community centres throughout North Kensington witnessed a truly remarkable volunteer effort, characterised by some as 'a Blitz spirit'. In St Clement's, we swiftly set up a breakfast bar. Young Muslim men from Tower Hamlets arrived with blankets and clothing. A church member put out blankets on the floor, and played with young children, using her own children's toys.

As it was Ramadan, many of those who sought shelter were fasting. They refused food and water graciously, without the slightest sign of ostentation. I remember being concerned about their capacity to cope through the gruelling hours ahead. They would not break their fast until after 9.30

The fire still smoking into the day



pm, when the Central London Mosque offered an Iftar ('break-fast') in our garden.

By 8.00 am, the newsmedia was out in force. Staff from our sister community organisation – The ClementJames Centre – monitored the church entrances, protecting those seeking refuge from unwanted intrusion into their grief. Volunteers poured onto the church site. Donations arrived in such quantities that by mid-afternoon we had to post signs on the railings to say that we could no longer accept them. But still they kept on coming. Our small church was overwhelmed, becoming what one person described as 'The world's biggest jumble sale'. Those inside the church were forced out into the peaceful back garden.

Local restaurants provided food. Enticing barbeque smells drifted across the garden. Residents sought shelter from the intense heat, in the shade, sitting numbly for hours on end.

Our church railings were soon covered with prayers, messages of goodwill, and appeals for the missing. Flowers piled up on the pavement.

Over the first three days, the equivalent of fifty transit vans worth of donations went into safe storage, mostly with the help of commercial organisations, as the council was slow to help. And we were only one of several relief centres.

The public expressions of grief began in earnest on the second day, as bad news filtered through. Private rooms were found for those in mourning. Parish clergy, staff from The ClementJames Centre and IntoUniversity, the Samaritans and volunteers worked flat out to provide whatever support we could.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May arrived on site – and of course there were other high profile visits to north Kensington, including from the royal family. The prime minister's visit to St Clement's led to a further meeting with residents at Downing Street on Saturday 17 June, which in turn helped to pave the way for her decision to send in a Government Task Force to take control of the disaster response.

Over the following weeks, the relief operation gradually became more coordinated, although



communication about money, housing and support services continued to be poor. Over the summer, the police organised a series of meetings, many of which descended into chaos. Feelings were running so high that it seemed impossible to have any kind of constructive public conversation. And yet throughout all this important meetings were taking place in private, many on the St Clement's site, as the government sought to engage with local people.

By the autumn, the trauma was deepening, as the adrenalin that had sustained many residents over the summer months began to run out. The Lancaster West Estate – in which Grenfell Tower is situated – was like a ghost town. Survivors were still in hotel rooms, the official death toll would not be released until November, and there was widespread frustration about the apparently slow progress of the police investigation. Above all, the blackened hulk of the Grenfell Tower dominated the landscape, causing considerable psychological damage.

Grenfell Tower is still the first thing people see when they open their curtains, and children pass by the tower each day on their way to school. Even now, dust from the largely uncovered tower blows onto neighbouring balconies. No one should have to live in these conditions.

And yet there are small signs of hope. The outline plan for determining the future of the Grenfell Tower site – published in February 2018 – is a major step forward. It commands the necessary widespread support. Signatories include Sajid Javid, Elizabeth Campbell (leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council), Shahin Sadafi (chair Grenfell United, the main survivor's organisation), and Jaqui Haynes (chair of the Lancaster West Residents Association).

The decision to place the local community – and especially the bereaved – in a lead position in shaping the future of the Grenfell site is the right one. We continue to see just how difficult it is to find the right forum for public meetings. Residents are still processing their grief and anger. But working on the Grenfell site together, knowing that they are fully in control, will be a constructive, if painful, process.

However complex the next stage will be, it is the only way of securing a fitting memorial. It is also right that discussions will extend to the possible re-naming of nearby Latimer Road Underground Station – although this is likely to be a controversial issue – and the regeneration of the Lancaster West Estate.

Despite all they have endured over the



The tower soon after the fire

gruelling past months, many residents of north Kensington have shown the most extraordinary resilience – very often providing one another with on-going mutual support. Community centres, schools and places of worship work together more closely than ever, greatly assisted by outside organizations. Groups helping survivors, the bereaved and other immediate residents have emerged or discovered new energy.

This spirit of partnership was very much in evidence at the Grenfell National Memorial Service at Paul's Cathedral, on 14 December – six months after the fire. The service was a powerful focus of solidarity. Survivors and the bereaved, as well as other local residents, felt that their pain was acknowledged by the nation. It was fitting that the tragedy was remembered in the cathedral which during the Second World War came to symbolize our national resilience.

No one imagines that the next few months – or indeed years – will be easy. Whoever and whatever are eventually found to be the cause of the disaster, the Grenfell Tower is at the moment a symbol of neglect, incompetence and injustice. Will it change our society for the better? It is far too soon to tell. But at some stage we will need to move on to constructive dialogue and engagement.

Looking ahead, it is clear that North Kensington needs to discover a fresh language of place, through the renewal of its buildings and public spaces, and especially the Grenfell site. But this will take many years, and will only emerge from a determined commitment to reconciliation and cooperation.



Sorting of donations at St Peters, Kensington Park Road

# Blue Plaques

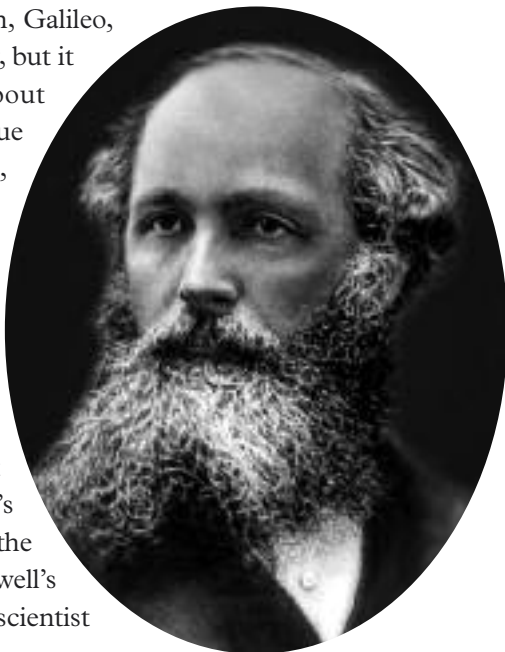
## James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879)

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By Michael Becket

HOW IS IT THAT MOST PEOPLE KNOW about Einstein, Galileo, Darwin and Newton, many have heard of Faraday, but it seems only graduate scientists actually know about Maxwell? He is well enough known to have earned a blue plaque at 16 Palace Gardens Terrace but few, seeing that, would realise he is one of the all-time greats.

The physicists' physicist, as Stephen Hawking pointed out. In the millennium poll of the 100 of the world's most prominent physicists Maxwell came third, just behind Newton and Einstein. Nobel-prize-winner Richard Feynman said "From a long view of the history of mankind – seen from, say, ten thousand years from now – there can be little doubt that the most significant event of the 19thC will be judged as Maxwell's discovery of the laws of electrodynamics." In fact, "the special theory of relativity owes its origins to Maxwell's equations of the electromagnetic field." So, the greatest scientist you have never heard of.



His original name was James Clerk. Maxwell was added after he inherited at the age of eight the Middlebie country estate in Kirkcudbrightshire, from connections to the Maxwell family. Joining Edinburgh Academy into a class a year older than he was and his Galloway accent got him the nickname Dafty, but at about the middle of his school career he suddenly gained the highest prizes for scholarship, mathematics, and English verse. At the age of fourteen, Maxwell wrote a paper describing mechanical means of drawing mathematical curves with a piece of twine. In his eighteenth year, while still a student, he contributed two papers to the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh – one of which, On the Equilibrium of Elastic Solids, laid the foundation of one of the most singular discoveries of his later life, the temporary double refraction produced in viscous liquids by shear stress. Even as a Cambridge undergraduate, in spite of his shyness and some eccentricities, he was recognised as an outstanding intellect although many found it difficult to follow him in his quick changes from one subject to another – his lively imagination started so many hares that before he had run one down he was off on another.

Probably his most important achievement was the extension of earlier work on electricity and magnetism by Michael Faraday, André-Marie Ampère, and others, to unite electricity, magnetism and light into a linked set of differential equations. These equations were first presented to the Royal Society in 1864, and published the following year as A Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field.

He produced relatively simple equations – at least to scientists – which described the behaviour of electric and magnetic fields, their interrelation and showed them to be complementary. He went on to show that the equations predict waves that travel through space at a speed which could be predicted from simple electrical experiments. “This velocity is so nearly that of light, that it seems we have strong reason to conclude that light itself (including radiant heat, and other radiations if any) is an electromagnetic disturbance in the form of waves propagated through the electromagnetic field according to electromagnetic laws.”

Maxwell deduced that such waves with other wavelengths should also exist. When German physicist Heinrich Hertz produced radio waves in 1887 (eight years after Maxwell’s death), it confirmed his prediction, since radio waves are part of this scheme with wavelengths longer than light. The later discovery of X-rays was further confirmation of Maxwell’s predictions. Twentieth century communication technology stems largely from Maxwell’s work. Radio, television, radar and satellite communication all have their origins in his electromagnetic theory.

Maxwell also developed the theory that heat is a function of molecular movement – the faster atoms or molecules jiggle around the hotter the material. But of course not all molecules jiggle at the same speed, so the temperature is of the average. That prompted Maxwell to a mischievous thought. He invented a creature which other scientists have dubbed Maxwell’s demon. If a tiny demon batted all the fast-moving atoms to one side of a glass of water, and the slowest the other way, you would have the glass boiling on one side and ice on the other. Implausible, but theoretically just possible for that to happen, even without the demon, though it might fracture the third law of thermodynamics.

Maxwell’s introduction of the idea of probability into physics was probably his most important contribution to physics apart from his work on electromagnetism. This statistical approach, defying Newton’s picture of the universe, paved the way for the following century’s quantum physics, which gives only a probability of small-particle behaviour. A view that made Einstein so unhappy, he exclaimed “God does not play dice with the universe.”

One of the characteristics of geniuses like this, is that their brains are so fizzing with interest and ideas that they have a go at any branch of study available. Maxwell was also the first to show how to calculate stresses in framed arch and suspension bridges and how to calculate the rigidity of rod-and-joint frameworks (trusses).

In 1859 he won the Adams prize in Cambridge for finding that Saturn’s rings could not be completely solid or fluid, as they could be stable only if the rings consisted of numerous small solid particles, an explanation confirmed in the 1980s by the Voyager spacecraft. Airy who turned down Babbage’s computer wrote “It is one of the most remarkable applications of mathematics to physics that I have ever seen.” Maxwell went on to disprove mathematically the hypothesis that the solar system formed from condensed gaseous nebula, forcing the theory to account for additional portions of small solid particles.

But electromagnetism, probability, the theory of heat, and architectural systems, were not enough; Maxwell had a go also at optics. His study of colour perception found white light could be reproduced from red, green and blue. To demonstrate this he had Thomas Sutton, inventor of the single-lens reflex camera, photograph a tartan ribbon three times with black and white film, but with a red, a green and a blue filter. Then three projectors, each with the same colour filter used to take the images, projected a full colour image on screen. That was the first colour photograph – in this case of a tartan ribbon. Maxwell’s work on colour blindness won him the Rumford Medal by the Royal Society.

But there was yet more. Rheology – study of the flow of substances – can be traced back directly to Maxwell’s pioneering theoretical and experimental work on topics such as viscosity, which are strongly dependent on the molecular structure of free-flowing substances. He also led the work of the British Association committee which defined most of the electrical units in use today; in the associated experiments he pioneered the use of feedback control. He wrote clear textbooks on the Theory of Heat, and on Matter and Motion

As a great lover of Scottish poetry, Maxwell wrote his own. The best known is *Rigid Body Sings*, closely based on *Comin’ Through the Rye* by Robert Burns, which he apparently used to sing while accompanying himself on a guitar. It has the opening lines:

*Gin a body meet a body Flyin’  
through the air.  
Gin a body hit a body, Will it fly?  
And where?*

Maxwell died of abdominal cancer at Cambridge in 1879, aged only 48. Strangely, his mother had died at the same age, from the same disease.



# Being an MP

Cllr Emma Dent Coad MP  
MP for Kensington

I AM KNOWN AS ‘the surprise MP’ to many, but winning the General Election was no surprise to me. I always knew it was possible, in a very mixed constituency. I am very proud to represent the wonderful place where I was born and bred. I was born in Paulton’s Square off King’s Road, which was a proper family neighbourhood and very mixed. My father’s job as a doctor supported my mother, six children and my Spanish granny. An NHS doctor couldn’t possibly afford that today.

I well remember the Bluebird Garage, the old tramlines where a tiny foot could get caught, neighbours walking down the street in their dressing gowns to catch the early post. There was a lavender seller who sang one line of an ancient song every 50 yards, a French onion seller on a bicycle festooned with knotted onions, babies left in their prams on doorsteps for their afternoon snooze ‘to give them an airing’, front doors open much of the day, men with ladders lighting gaslights. There was Boris’ the grocers, where we children were given little paper bags so we could raid the broken biscuit jar. All gone.

I have visited King’s Road countless times over the years; some change is for the better, and some for the worse. I’m sure we all welcome newcomers moving into our areas who bring life, love, children, business and investment with them. But what we fear most is change that benefits people who don’t live here and have no interest whatever in our neighbourhoods, apart from how much

money they can make out of them. All too often we are subjected to the cuckoo effect, whereby people drop their money into our neighbourhoods, and we unwittingly nurture it, displacing our own chicks as house prices soar.

Many people think planning is a boring and trivial matter that we can dispense with unless directly involved. But, as the Kensington Society knows so well, planning is the foundation of the good functioning of our daily lives. Good planning should be invisible, but should simply make daily life convenient, comfortable and safe. A well-planned neighbourhood will have everything you need within a ten-minute walk. A post office, GP surgery, dentist, pharmacy, transport links, schools and nurseries, hairdresser and dry cleaners. You might want the kind of corner shop where they would give you a tab for a few days, or a friendly chat, knowing that for



Emma in Paulton's Square, 1957

some people that could be their only human interaction all day. Many good shop-keepers will keep an eye on older or frail customers, and offer to deliver some basics if the pavements are icy and treacherous, or you are ill, or you have a poorly child. All these things make neighbourhoods work, and serve the people who live there. That's why we fight to protect them.

This brings us onto bad planning. Earl's Court Exhibition Centre, while a bit tired and in need of an update, was a thriving centre providing a major London focus for the UK's exhibition space, a popular concert venue, provider of thousands of jobs, and year-round business to the innumerable hotels, cafes, restaurants and shops in the area. The buildings have now been flattened. Our pre-Brexit economic climate has affected the residential market, and rumours are that the now-cleared site is for sale in the Far East.

This is the worst possible outcome, with the exhibition business destroyed, local businesses struggling some already closed, and a huge urban site potentially blighted for years to come.

A similar fate has visited Kensington Odeon, one of many 'save' campaigns I have been involved in, and I find it quite distressing to see how that corner of our lovely borough has been affected, along with the mostly empty residential cubes in front of the Design Museum.

One key question we need to ask at these moments is, 'who will this serve?'. Major change in any neighbourhood should benefit existing residents first. Squeezing out a local shopping parade to be replaced with yet more identikit chain coffee shops, snack bars and luxury goods will not serve the local community, who suffer years of demolition noise and dust, destruction and construction traffic, pollution and inconvenience, and are often left with empty flats over shops that do not serve their needs.

Kensington of course is a magnet for those developers who disembowel our neighbourhoods to replace them with depositories for international money. Of course we welcome step-free access at Knightsbridge tube station, but let's see just how many of the offices, shops and homes are occupied after years of relentless nuisance. Where is the benefit to local people?

Another development I am hugely disappointed with is that at One Kensington Road, where the 700-bed De Vere Hotel was demolished and replaced with David Chipperfield's (to me) rather dreary building of 97 premium flats, only four of which are ever occupied. Kensington High Street must be feeling the loss, and it seems criminal for these flats to remain empty, when they overlook one of our beautiful parks and Christopher Wren's austere and beautifully composed Kensington Palace.

At the time of writing the next battle is that of Newcombe House, Notting Hill Gate. We were led to believe that this development, which would drastically change the entire DNA of Notting Hill Gate, would provide step-free access. Instead it was revealed that access would only be to the District and Circle Lines, going anti-clockwise. The developer's response did not go down well: 'as it is the Circle line, people could go the whole way around'. We will know soon enough whether the prospect of a new GP surgery will be enough to sway the committee.

As a new MP I must say it was heartening to receive messages of support from those who probably did not vote for me, wishing me luck in my new role, particularly after the sad events of 14 June. For my first six months I have spent a great deal of time looking after the interests of those who have been through the horrifying experience of the Grenfell fire, and this will remain a key focus, particularly until they are all rehoused. However I always

find time when possible to visit residents' associations, individuals and interest groups (so please invite me!), and I have been gathering your thoughts and concerns, relating to Kensington and of course the wider world.

Once we have housed and settled the homeless of Grenfell, we will need to review ways to house our children and future generations, as near as possible to us if that is what they want. There is a lot of work to be done on housing in Kensington, which has

been my key concern for many years. We need to achieve 'good Brexit' and I will be commenting on those shifting sands further in the New Year. We need to secure the future of Kensington so that it works better, not just for visitors or overseas investors, but for everyone who lives and works here.

I look forward to hearing your views on this and on the many issues that affect you, and to represent your views and create the change we need in parliament. I will never forget – I work for you.



# Portobello Road

By Michael Becket

**T**HE IMPLAUSIBLE SOUNDING WAR of Jenkins' Ear was triggered by the Spanish trying to prevent smuggling by British ships from the Caribbean. In 1731 a British merchant vessel was boarded by a Spanish guardship in Havana and in the altercation Captain Robert Jenkins' ear was cut off. His pleas for government redress failed for many years. It was not until his appearance in 1738 before a parliamentary committee trying to reduce tension between the two countries that his emotional pleas generated huge public feeling about Spanish brutality. Instead of the proposed agreement, public opposition was so inflamed that war eventually broke out. As part of that struggle Admiral Sir Edward Vernon, with six ships, captured the Panamanian city of Porto Belo, which aroused such nationalist fervour that more medals were struck for Vernon than any other 18thC commander. In addition a Dublin barracks, a suburb of Edinburgh and numerous pubs were named in honour of the battle of Portobello. Round about the western end of where Golborne Road is now, in north Kensington, was a 170 acre farm and also christened Portobello at the time – the admiral himself being still honoured in the Vernon Yard off Portobello Road.



Until then the road leading to the farm had been a meandering rural footpath from Kensington Gravel Pits (now Notting Hill Gate), to the village of Kensal Green, but it became a country lane through fields to the farm and a footpath further north. And it remained like that for a hundred years. Thomas Faulkner in his 1820 book *History and Antiquities of Kensington* calling Portobello Lane “one of the most rural and pleasant walks in the summer in the vicinity of London” where nothing is heard “but the notes of the lark, the linnet and the nightingale”. By 1846 Kensington Park Villas (now Road) was built up to Westbourne Gardens (now Grove) with their back gardens onto Portobello Road. And about that time buildings started appearing along Portobello Lane. Gradually housing development spread across the area.

In 1864 the opening of Notting Hill (now Ladbroke Grove) station on the new Metropolitan Railway spelled the end of farming in the area. The Talbot family, which owned the farm from 1755, had sold part of the land to the railways, and then sold the farm to the Little Sisters of the Poor to build St Joseph’s Home for the Aged, which became a council estate in the 20thC. A Franciscan convent on the other side of Portobello Road had been founded by Henry Manning and is now the Spanish college.

As the road became built up a street market developed, as in other parts of London at the time, and others in the area included Sirdar Road, Kenley Street and Golborne Road. Initially it sold mainly food but there were also gypsies selling herbs and horses, and rag-and-bone men joined with a slow accumulation of bric a brac stalls, selling second hand goods. Despite protests from the growing number of shops along the road, the stalls were not licensed until 1927.

Gradually they upgraded themselves to upmarket bric a brac which counts as antique,



and the temporary closure of the Caledonian Market in 1948 accelerated the trend. The sign of change and decay of the antique market was signalled by the 1985 creation of the Portobello Antique Dealers Association. It was about then the market was starting its shift to its current life of selling tourist tat, fast food and clothes.

A fascination with the street for fiction has included the 1950 *Blue Lamp* film with Dirk Bogarde and Jack Warner, later revived as a TV series called *Dixon of Dock Green*. It also appeared in a 1971 film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* and most notoriously in the 1999 film *Notting Hill* which still brings hordes of Japanese tourists photographing the wrong bookshop and searching for the blue door. More recently *Paddington bear* has been filmed in the road. Muriel Spark, Paul Coelho and Ruth Rendell have set stories in the area.





# Local retailer: Pom Harrington

By Michael Becket

IT IS NOT EVERY BOOKSHOP that sells a publication for £750,000, but then not all of them stock a Blaeu Atlas Major from 1663, meticulously hand coloured maps of the known world and beautifully bound. Pom Harrington points out “at the time it was published its price was the cost of a decent family house. It still is.”

Not all the stock of Peter Harrington in the Fulham Road requires a major mortgage. Although the shop specialises in first editions and books inscribed by the author, some of them are not much dearer than current new books. But beware, the subject is addictive. One man walking past was intrigued by some P G Wodehouse first editions in the window, and found they ranged from £75 to £300. He bought the cheapest. A few weeks later he was back for the others. By then he was hooked – the collecting bug had firmly seized him. Nine months later he was buying a first

edition of *The Great Gatsby* for £150,000.

In a way that sort of passion was the trigger that got the business started. Pom’s grandfather was a book collector and his son, the Peter of the shop name, used to go hunting round the country to help him. He soon discovered prices in the distant provinces were seriously lower than in London, “and realised it was a better living than anything else he had tried”. He started bringing back more books than his father needed and in the 1960s set up a stall in the Chelsea Market to sell the surplus.

His brother Adrian joined him and the business thrived. By the mid-1980s the business had expanded so rapidly that the Harrington portion accounted for over a third of the market that had had some 200 stalls. It therefore seemed reasonable to take over the head lease of the market and Peter diversified into prints with a shop in Old Church Street. As a logical progression, when the Church commissioners were selling the market freehold, Peter bought that too. But in 1997 he sold that to fund setting up his own shop. Adrian had by 1971 gone independent with his own bookshop in Kensington Church Street, which moved to Tunbridge Wells in 2014.

The Fulham Road shop occupying two adjacent houses, is now run by Peter’s son, also Peter, hence the Pom nickname to differentiate them. Like any other teenager, any job but the family firm, but he came in during the summer holidays to help, and “sort of semi-enjoyed the work” then as he got older the business got to him. He now employs twenty



people but his main worry has been a running battle with his landlord the Royal Brompton Hospital which tried to get sharp increases in rent and threatens to evict him to redevelop the site. So far the rebuilding plans have failed to get planning approval, and Pom keeps trying to convince the hospital that bedsits for nurses may be better sited off the main shopping street in some of the other 68 properties the hospital owns.

Having been so long established in the Fulham Road where buyers and sellers seek out the shop, Mr Harrington is reluctant to move but as a precaution leased premises in Dover Street in Mayfair. That turned out to be rather fortunate because the West End clientele is different, so he has acquired a new set of buyers, some of whom are “converting into dedicated collectors”.

On the other hand, the shops are not the only places to sell, and the alternative is not just the internet, though predictably the business has a substantial website accounting for about a fifth of business by volume, though rather less by value. Just about every month there is also a book fair somewhere in the world – Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Abu Dhabi, Melbourne etc – and Harrington is there.

His father’s adage was that Shakespeare

paid for the shop’s costs. Now it is Harry Potter. But the 15,000 or so books spread over the three floors range pretty widely. What collectors really “try to find is a book in the condition in which it was born”. But that has changed astonishingly in the past couple of centuries. Up to the early 19thC books came in plain, unadorned cardboard boards, Mr Harrington explains. That means original Jane Austen editions to an ignorant layman look remarkably scruffy and unprepossessing. The practice in those days was apparently for a gentleman to have the unappealing book dressed in his own library’s leather uniform.

This preference for the original means a first edition of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in plain boards would cost say £300,000, but one in the shop that has been rebound for the king of Hanover and its leather cover adorned with the royal coat of arms, goes for a mere £175,000. The growing and spreading readership changed the demands of the market and first more attractive covers arrived and then decorated ones, and finally with paper dust-covers to protect the binding. The trouble was people when they read the book threw the paper cover away so “for the 1930s paper jackets are quite rare and there is only one copy known of *Dracula* with the original paper still on it”.



# Historic England

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By Sarah Gibson, Historic England's  
Listing Team Leader for the South

From palaces to pigsties, barrows to bunkers, and medieval churches to modernist houses, England is full of irreplaceable historic sites. Historic England exists to champion and protect historic places, helping people understand, value and care for them.

There are almost 400,000 entries on the National Heritage List for England and over 1,300 in Kensington and Chelsea alone. The list is a free, searchable online database and is a remarkable collection of all England's designated assets – listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wrecks. We estimate that 99.3% of people in England live within a mile of a listed place, so encourage everyone to use the list to discover your local treasures.

While all listed buildings are of special interest, there is a system to grade relative significance. The great majority of buildings (91.7%) are Grade II, which means they are special. There are two higher levels of listing: Grade II\*, which means 'particularly important buildings of more than special interest' (5.8%), and Grade I, which covers buildings of 'exceptional interest'. For instance, the former Commonwealth Institute, now home to the

Michelin Building, Fulham Road, London



Design Museum, is Grade II\* listed and Kensington Palace, the Natural History Museum and the Church of St Cuthbert and St Mathias at Philbeach Gardens are all Grade I listed.

### How did listing start?

Listing emerged as a 1947 legal system of protecting England's most precious buildings after World War 2. The first lists were compiled as an emergency measure to identify what should be protected in post-war rebuilding. The next generation of more systematic lists on a geographical (parish) basis were heroic in their scale, but inevitably quite brief in their descriptions and often done from the road, sometimes from bicycles, without internal inspection.

The system today is dramatically different. We notify and consult owners as a matter of course. On a site visit, we find out as much as we can about a building's historical development, architectural quality, internal features, degree of survival, relationship with other buildings and historic interest.

### How are buildings chosen?

Anyone can apply to Historic England to have a building listed, although we will only take forward applications where the building is under threat or is clearly of listable quality. We also undertake strategic listing projects. Recently, this has included post-war public art, post-war commercial buildings and a review of Roman-Catholic churches.

The key criteria for listing are special architectural and special historic interest, but these will differ according to the building or site in question. Historic England provides advice to the government using themed selection guides which explain what makes different places listable.

When it comes to listing a building, scheduling a monument or protecting a wreck site, the final decision is taken by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and in 99.8% of cases our recommendation is agreed with. When it comes to registering a park, garden or battlefield the decision is taken by Historic England.

Not surprisingly, the older a building is, the more likely it is to be listed. All buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed, as are most of those built between 1700 and 1840. From around 1840, the start of the Victorian period, when materials become more standardised and mass produced, and greater numbers survive, we are more selective. Buildings that date from after 1945 require particularly careful selection and only the best examples will be listed. There are about 770 post-war listed buildings and sculptures, which is just 0.2% of all buildings on the list. This is still more than in any other country in the world.

To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special





interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms. To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural, or military history and/ or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing.

One of the most recent additions to the list in Kensington is Pembroke Studios, listed at

Grade II in June 2017. The studios are compact, beautifully-tailored and unique artists' studios dating back to 1890–1891. The gabled decorative red-brick building nestles in the heart of Kensington in a calm grassy enclave. The double-height studios are north-lit, with large windows to capture the light. Many artists have worked from here, most notably David Hockney who has featured the studios in a number of his paintings. Artists flocked to Kensington and Chelsea in the late 19th century and there was a sharp rise in the number of artists' studios. The design of purpose-built studios incorporated separate entrances and gatehouses for models (at the time a profession of ill repute) and facilities for the storage of large canvasses.

Listing has a celebratory role in recognising our rich and diverse national history but also provides clarity for the planning system, indicating where special care is required to protect and manage important buildings and sites. Listed Building Consent, granted by local authorities, is needed for all work to a listed building that involves alterations, extensions or demolition and affecting its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings make great homes, places to work and visit, and Historic England has lots of advice available online for looking after our historic built environment.

### **Add your knowledge and photos to the list**

You can get involved in keeping the list rich, relevant and up-to-date through our crowd-sourcing initiative, Enriching the List. We are asking individuals and community groups across England to share their knowledge and pictures, so we can record important facts about places, and even unlock the secrets of some.

So far nearly 37,000 list entries have been enriched, helping to keep the list relevant and accessible for all to enjoy. While many places and buildings on the list are well-known and even world-famous, the older list entries are likely to be on the brief side, often providing little more than a short description of the property. By sharing photographs or information about the architecture, history or archaeology of any listed place you will be adding to the understanding of these wonderful places, which will help to make sure that they are valued and protected now and for the future.

**There are currently 44 selection guides on how Historic England decides whether a building or site should be protected, also readable onsite at**

**<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/listing-selection/>**

Twenty are on buildings: Agricultural buildings • Commemorative structures  
Commerce and exchange buildings • Culture and entertainment buildings •

Domestic 1: vernacular houses • Domestic 2: town houses • Domestic 3: suburban and country houses • Domestic 4: modern house and housing • Education buildings • Garden and park structures • Health and welfare buildings • Industrial buildings • Law and government buildings • Maritime and naval buildings • Military structures • Places of worship • Sports and recreation buildings • Street furniture •

Infrastructure: transport • Infrastructure: utilities and communication

Eighteen on archaeological sites

Four focus on designed landscapes

One deals with battlefields

One handles ships and boats

# The London Cage

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By Michael Becket

IN THE SUMMER OF 1940, just after the Dunkirk evacuation when a German invasion seemed imminent, the War Office intensified intelligence gathering. It opened Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centres, generally labelled cages, in each command area of the United Kingdom. The London Cage was in 6, 7, and 8 Kensington Palace Gardens, able to hold 60 prisoners at a time, and separated from the adjacent splendid homes by a single strand of barbed wire. The cages were operated by MI 19, originally an offshoot of MI 9, to interrogate enemy prisoners of war and suspected spies, and later Nazis either suspected of or charged with war crimes.

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Scotland, in charge of the London Cage, had at 22 fought in the Boer War and while there, a British liaison officer gave him a useful tip: “Learn all you can about the German army, and one day you will be valuable to your country”. Scotland enlisted in the German army in what is now Namibia in 1904, becoming fluent in German and Cape Dutch and sent information on German manpower, equipment, and tactics to British intelligence in Cape Town. The Germans imprisoned him for spying in 1914, but British soldiers freed him a year later, and he was formally commissioned in the British intelligence service.

During World War I, posing as a South-West African colonist, he made three trips to spy behind German lines in Belgium before falling under suspicion and subsequently became an interrogator of German prisoners. In the 1920s and early '30s he travelled in

Argentina, ostensibly as a businessman, and to Germany, even meeting Hitler on a visit to Munich. “You are an ingenious man, Schottland,” said the Führer. “Now I understand the reports we have on our files about you.” Through his German contacts, he enabled several hundred Jewish families to flee to South America.

Scotland was recalled to military duty in 1940 and sent to France with the Intelligence Corps, where he set up interrogation centres noting the British army had a “pathetically inadequate” number of trained interrogators. On his return to Britain in the Dunkirk retreat, he was promoted to head his own interrogation section.

“If any German had information we wanted, it was invariably extracted from him in the long run” he wrote in the first draft of his memoirs, now in the National Archives. He added the phrase from Dante that ran through his head every morning as he arrived at work was “Abandon all hope ye who enter here”. More than 1,000 of the 3,573 prisoners who went through his hands gave statements on war crimes to their British handlers.

MI 19 and MI 5 were setting up the Double Cross System of converting German spies into sending home bogus data. Scotland’s conduct in extracting such cooperation raised concern from the start. In 1940 Guy Liddell, director of MI 5’s counterintelligence B Division, investigated a report that Scotland at a different holding camp had hit in the jaw a German spy, Wulf Schmidt (codenamed Tate), during an interrogation. Liddell was told Scotland appeared next day “with a syringe containing



Alexander Scotland in 1945

some drug or other, which it was thought would induce Tate to speak". Schmidt subsequently became an agent for Britain but Scotland was banned from that camp. In 1943, allegations of mistreatment at the London Cage of Otto Witt, a German anti-Nazi who was interrogated to determine if he was acting on behalf of German intelligence, resulted in a formal protest to the Secretary of State for War by MI 5 director Maxwell Knight.

In 1946 MI 5 conducted two investigations of the London Cage but nothing came of them.

Fritz Knöchlein, a German lieutenant colonel in the Waffen-SS, filed complaints that he was stripped, deprived of sleep for four days and nights, and then starved. He said he was made to stand naked next to a red-hot gas stove for hours, then forced under an ice-cold shower and scrubbed with coal dust. Knöchlein added that after making an earlier complaint he was punched in the face, beaten with a cudgel and thrown down a flight of stairs.

Other prisoners, he said, were beaten until they begged to be killed, while some were told

that they could be made to disappear. The War Office considered convening an inquiry, but did not because it “would be futile”. Torture allegations resurfaced in 1947, and the following year. Suspects of murdering prisoners of war said they had been starved, deprived of sleep, and tortured by electric shock.

The International Red Cross monitored POW facilities and detention centres, but did not know of the London Cage until it was inadvertently added to a list of camps sent to the organisation in March 1946. A Red Cross inspector visited the site twice but was turned away. Scotland refused access on the grounds that prisoners were either civilians or “criminals within the armed services”. After the Red Cross applied more pressure, the War Office asked Scotland to open the facility to inspection. Scotland replied “The secret gear which we use to check the reliability of information obtained must be removed from the cage before permission is given to inspect the building”. When the Red Cross gained entry 18 months later, most of the worst injured and malnourished prisoners had been removed to a hospital and POW camps the night before. So the inspector found little evidence of ill-treatment but his reports noted the removals and evidence that any prisoner who lodged a complaint in his presence would suffer reprisals.

When Scotland submitted a draft of his memoir for clearance in 1950, there was pandemonium at the War Office. Officials told him to lock the manuscript away, then threatened him with prosecution under the Official Secrets Act. Special Branch detectives raided Scotland’s retirement home and seized copies of his manuscript, along with research material and old files from the cage he had secretly kept. An MI 5 document at Britain’s National Archives says the manuscript was removed because it might help persons “agitating on behalf of war criminals” and “it reveals some infringements of the Geneva Convention”. In 1957 the heavily censored

version, *The London Cage*, was finally published but in it Scotland denies violence was used to extract confessions and claims that little more than “our intimacy with German habits, personalities and language” was needed to inveigle information from Nazi prisoners.

War Office archives do not show whether Scotland was regarded as a maverick whose methods were to be quietly overlooked, or if he was acting with official approval. It is clear there was “disquiet about his methods” at the headquarters of the British army of the Rhine but it was felt that prisoner mistreatment being made public could compromise war crimes trials, damage Britain’s international standing, and antagonise the Soviet Union.

Scotland, who died in 1965 aged 82, wrote in his memoir that people were intrigued by his success at getting Nazi criminals to confess. He claims to have merely asked each German suspect to write a detailed version of his involvement in the crime, and then crosschecked, noted discrepancies, and lies detected. “We were not so foolish as to imagine,” he wrote, “that petty violence, nor even violence of a stronger character, was likely to produce the results we hoped for in dealing with some of the toughest creatures of the Hitler regime”.

The London Cage closed in 1948 and the interrogation of prisoners was switched to internment camps in Germany. There is evidence the treatment in these places was, if anything, far worse. Many papers relating to these interrogation centres remain sealed, it is clear that one camp in the British zone became particularly notorious. At least two German prisoners starved to death there, according to a court of inquiry, while others were shot for minor offences.

This is a little-known part of Kensington’s history in World War 2. With all that is going on around the world we may need reminding that complacency should not blind us to the fact such things happened.

# From Victorian Kensington to Bloomsbury: A Literary Legacy

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By David Waller

**O**LD KENSINGTON, A NOVEL by Anny Thackeray Ritchie, was first published in 1879. Not much read now, in its time the book was highly popular and went into five editions. It came out as Kensington was taking its modern shape, the elegant squares and terraces of stucco town houses that define the area today replacing the ramshackle houses and fields of the mid-century when the romance was set.

“In those days,” she wrote, “...the hawthorn spread across the fields and market-gardens that lay between Kensington and the River. Lanes ran to Chelsea, to Fulham, to North End...there were strawberry beds, green, white and crimson in turn...there was a Kensington world...somewhat apart from the big uneasy world surging beyond the turnpike—a world of neighbours bound together by the old winding streets and narrow community of venerable elms and traditions that are almost levelled away.”

There is no mention of the Great Exhibition, which brought the wonders of industrialisation to Hyde Park at the time the novel was set, but the Crimean War and a cholera epidemic affecting the London poor provide a tragic backdrop to this otherwise idyllic scene. Light on plot and characterisation, the book follows the emotional adventures of Dolly Vanborough, a heroine thought to be modelled on Anny’s sister Minny.

Spoiler alert: the book tells how Dolly and her brother George are sent from India by their neglectful parents to live with their aunt in the sprawling family mansion Church House. She grows up and falls in love with a man she loves but we know to be an abominable prig. Her best friend Rhoda proves treacherous, running off with Dolly’s fiancé and also with her fortune. But in a plot twist characteristic of Victorian melodrama, virtue is rewarded and she retrieves her money and her happiness, ending up with Frank Raban, the man she should have married all along.

The book is worth reading for its nostalgic evocation of a time when Kensington was a “happy jumble of old bricks and sunsets,” and children played with their governesses in Kensington Gardens, an arcadian park then still surrounded by a high brick wall. But Ritchie’s



Anne Isabella  
Thackeray Ritchie

novel is also a literary link between the Kensington of William Makepeace Thackeray, author of *Vanity Fair* and rival to Charles Dickens as the greatest Victorian novelist, and the Bloomsbury of Virginia Woolf and her sister Vanessa Bell.

Thackeray himself had died suddenly at home in Kensington, at 2 Palace Green, on Christmas Eve, 1863, leaving his two daughters as orphans. They stayed for a while in the family mansion, which overlooked the royal palace and Gardens, before selling the house to a banker at a knockdown price, not the first financier to appreciate the charms of the area. They moved to No 16 Onslow Gardens, a new development for London's burgeoning middle-classes. There, Anny began her literary career, writing stories for *The Cornhill* magazine and a succession of romantic novels.

Her writing was popular with readers, and appreciated by serious women writers such as George Eliot and Rhoda Broughton. But male critics were more dismissive, Anthony Trollope complaining that Anny was unduly moralistic, always "endeavouring to prove that good produces good, and evil evil." Her future brother-in-law Leslie Stephen bemoaned her lack of education, which was sadly typical for women of this time. Certainly, she became a matriarchal and moralistic figure, qualities later used by Virginia Woolf in her portrayal of Mrs Hilbery, modelled on Anny, in *Night and Day*. Yet she was a serious and successful author, making her own way in one of the few professions open to women at the time.

Soon after establishing herself at Onslow Gardens, her sister Minny met and married Leslie Stephen, a former Cambridge don who was embarking on a distinguished career as a man of letters. Born (in Kensington Gore) brought up (in Hyde Park Gate) to a distinguished family of public servants, he had at first pursued an academic career. He had then turned to what we would call freelance journalism after he lost his religious faith and had to abandon his fellowship at Cambridge as a result.

Striking to look at, tall, with a thin, pensive face, he was an embryonic late Victorian sage, in the tradition of Thomas Carlyle. Although not a great writer himself, he was an influential literary figure. As editor of the *Cornhill*, he published Thomas Hardy, and was later the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Known today chiefly as father of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell (two of four children from his second marriage), he was also a celebrated climber, one of the great figures in the golden age of mountaineering.

Robert Louis Stevenson described Stephen as like an illustration of Robinson Crusoe's goat. Thomas Hardy said his mentor was as craggy and brooding as the Finstaarhorn mountain (one of Stephen's Alpine first ascents) in the middle of a storm. He was certainly an impressive figure, an intellectual of boundless energy. Minnie, whom he adored, was of a quieter, gentler temperament. "Her nature was one of quiet love," Stephen wrote dotingly, "of a sort of complacent indulgence of tender, cherishing, caressing emotions".

After they married in 1867, Stephen moved into his



8 Southwell Gardens

wife's home in Onslow Gardens. Anny stayed on, and the three lived together happily. The house became a meeting point for many of London's literary lions, from Stevenson to Hardy and Henry James. The Stephens' marriage was also extremely happy, marred only by the fact that their beloved daughter Laura proved to be mentally disabled.

The ménage later moved to No 8 Southwell Gardens, now a prime SW7 address but then surrounded by a wasteland of rubble amid much speculative new building. Tragically, the domestic idyll came to an end in November 1875, when Minnie died. Stephen and his sister-in-law were plunged into profound grief. They found the empty house depressing and moved to 22 Hyde Park Gate – a residence now beyond the reach of all but an oligarch or hedge fund titan, but then a new residence appropriate for a freelance writer.

Stephen installed himself in a top floor study, complete with custom-built ventilator for his pipe smoke. Consolation came in the unexpected form of his neighbour Julia Duckworth, also grieving from the loss of a spouse. Stephen and Julia married in March 1878. By this time, Anny had moved out: Leslie walked in on her in the drawing room kissing her godson and cousin Richmond Ritchie, 17 years her junior. This odd couple were soon married.

Julia had two children of her own and went on to have four with Leslie, including the fabled Vanessa and Virginia, as well as their brothers Thoby and Adrian. With the two Duckworth children and Laura, this was a lively late Victorian home, but with modern overtones of mental illness and abuse. As Virginia later wrote:

*“When I look back upon that house it seems to me so crowded with scenes of family life, grotesque, comic and tragic: with the violent emotions of youth, revolt, despair, intoxicating happiness, immense boredom...with passionate affection for my father alternating with passionate hatred of him, all vibrating in an atmosphere of youthful bewilderment and curiosity.”*



22 Hyde Park Gate

Many years later, Virginia and her sister Vanessa complained bitterly about their father's miserliness and controlling behaviour. Being summoned to the study to discuss the household accounts became emblematic of oppressive Victorian patriarchy. Some of this is captured in Virginia's *To the Lighthouse*, where the rueful Mr Ramsay is clearly modelled on Leslie Stephen. Ramsay worries that he has reached no more than the letter Q in the alphabet of literary reputations, a clear reference to Stephen's efforts on the immense biographical A to Z that was the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

After Sir Leslie died in 1904, his daughters soon decamped to Bloomsbury, a couple of miles to the east. This was intended as a definitive break with the Victorian era, but that is not the whole story. Read Ritchie's *Old Kensington* and one is immediately struck by the author's emphasis on emotion and impressions, qualities central to Virginia Woolf's own work. In fact, Bloomsbury descended directly from Victorian Kensington.

# Barry Quirk

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By Michael Becket

**F**OLLOWING THE **GRENFELL DISASTER**, the London Gold network of metropolitan local authorities to cope with civil disasters, clicked in to help RBKC. But it needed a contact on site who would also be helping and advising the council. Barry Quirk, for over 23 years the chief executive of Lewisham and a veteran of committees and investigation groups, was the obvious candidate.

It was clear that K&C “needed support and someone to advise it at close quarters, and therefore to step in and stabilise management arrangements”, is the way he put it. Hardly had he arrived though when the town clerk – what they now tend to call chief executives to make them sound more distinguished – had left, and so had the leader of the council. There was for the moment nobody to advise, so he was doing the job himself.

As a result, at the end of June last year he was appointed in what was to have been an interim arrangement for a few months. But it rapidly became evident that “it needed many management changes and the job would take not months but a couple of years”, Mr Quirk explained. Quite apart from “a bridge to the future in management terms”, what was needed was somebody who could meet those directly affected by the Grenfell tragedy “who could say they would be back for the next meeting”.

He became “genuinely horrified at the tragedy, its impact and scale” and realised very quickly “it was not just the horror of the moment but it has a much wider impact on the community and will have into the foreseeable future, for years”. In addition, “this organisation lost its credibility”. So he told the mayor of Lewisham the “moral urgency of doing something was critical” and asked to be able to move into the job. The mayor readily agreed, perhaps because he had been warned Mr Quirk was winding down in preparation for retirement, and was working only three days a week. So within a month he had been appointed K&C chief executive. “Now I am not retired but working and fully committed here.”

The range of the task was formidable. Housing policies had to be rethought and “there was the challenge of the public inquiry and the police investigation” of what had happened at Grenfell Tower. As he put it, what has to be formally examined was “the causes of the fire and its spread”. The causes of the causes and the wider consequences of the tragedy are not for him. The origins of the problem he leaves strictly to the official inquiry. His role is to focus on the immediate consequences of the tragedy, to sort things out to cope with the future. A priority is “to rehouse people and support them to cope with both their practical needs and their psychological welfare.”

For the longer term and in a wider context “my role is to ensure we have the right people in place”. He has already started reorganising the management structure and responsibilities. “There were 16 people reporting to me. I found that odd. In a way the council hasn’t looked at itself as one organisation but as a set of professional functions.” It was not that the quality

of the work was poor – “child protection is about the best in the country” – but they were not being fully coordinated, “not sufficiently connected together”.

In some other local authorities they have found it better “to organise around a problem rather than as a set of professional disciplines”. That means changing “the culture of the place and the extent to which the people feel a proper connection, a deep and sincere empathy, with the people they serve”. One aspect of that is more difficult in K&C than in Lewisham. There the staff live next door to the people they are working for, whereas here fewer of the council’s staff live in the borough.

He has also had to move some people on, not because they were incompetent but because “they lacked the full range of capabilities to do the work – the depth and breadth of it, and the need to step up to being a true management leader”. He concedes many of the jobs are “intellectually, managerially and emotionally challenging” to a degree not everyone can cope with. The management of the council flats, the Tenant Management Organisation, has now been brought in-house because the TMO handed back responsibility of housing service delivery to the council. “We need to have a wide dialogue with residents about the future management of their homes”, he said.

Perhaps he feels enough is already being said about Grenfell, since his talk at the annual general meeting will be on the far wider topic of how a place like London can be managed, both now and far more importantly in the future. He has already had a book published called Re-imagining Government which deals with the problems of policy and politics.

As one example of the aspects needing to be considered, London has an unequalled diversity and a super-concentration of intellectual work. Two-thirds of jobs in inner London are at graduate level, the highest concentration of graduate jobs in the world, and yet, despite education in London being relatively high (and K&C has some really good schools) nowhere near enough young Londoners will become graduates. “Young people in inner London are growing up in the most unusual labourmarket in Europe”, he said.

Mr Quirk is trying to urge people to think twenty years ahead to the challenges and the occupational requirements resulting from the changes we are already experiencing.



Barry Quirk

# Planning Reports

2017 has been a tumultuous year. Again the government is imposing changes to the way the planning system operates, the Mayor of London has new strategies for transport, housing, environment and a draft new London Plan and, belatedly, the council's Local Plan is getting closer to being adopted.

The Grenfell Tower fire brought a total rethink of the council's plans for estate regeneration in line with the council's commitment to put all these schemes on hold, as well to promise a culture change in the way the council will operate in future – to work together with the community, through genuine community engagement, to develop any future plans for these estates through engagement. The message from communities across the borough has been that this approach is needed in all areas of planning – business as usual can no longer be the preferred option. Communities expect to be heard, listened to and for the council to ensure that community engagement happens as early as possible and continues throughout, especially for major developments. At present developers have the inside track and the planners are negotiating for the council without knowing what the community thinks or wants. We are at a turning point – things have to change.

## Government changes

The government is quite rightly concerned about the housing crisis and is concerned about increasing the delivery of new housing. Having bent over backwards to help the housebuilders, it has now realised that it is not the planning system that is holding things up, but the failure of developers to develop the housing for which they have planning consents. In Kensington some of the major developments that received planning consent within the last ten years have not even begun: the Odeon, one of the major sites on Warwick Road, the Tesco site on Cromwell Road and the largest, Capco's Earl's Court.

Added to the government's previous permitted right to adapt commercial buildings to housing without planning consent, it is now proposing to extend permitted development to allow upward development, to build a couple of extra storeys on top of existing buildings, houses, blocks of flats, offices and other buildings, to increase the number of new homes built, "where existing buildings are lower than the prevailing roofline".

The society had previously commented the government needed a 'reality check' – few people would build an additional storey on top of their house to create a new, separate unit, not least because of the need to provide a separate access, let alone the logistics of building or financing. Some freeholders of blocks of flats might consider it, as will some developers. The simplistic thinking that there is unused airspace to be exploited demonstrates some very flawed thinking by government politicians.

This is just one of a number of changes in the government's revised National Planning Policy Framework which we will be commenting on by 10 May.

## Mayor of London's draft new London plan

The mayor of London's new draft London Plan recognises the housing crisis in London and has revised upwards the annual target for housing completions from 42,000 net additional homes a year to 67,000 a year. This will be a major challenge as current levels of completions have not exceeded 30,000 a year. Much of the additional growth will need to be in outer London. The good news for RBKC is that, following a review of our capacity, our annual target has been reduced from 733 units pa to 488. There will, however, be strong pressure to increase the density of development.

## Local plan partial review

Large parts of the borough's 2010 local plan desperately needed updating – especially housing and commercial development policies. The review process has been going on for over two years and the examination of the revised local plan was scheduled for last summer. Grenfell changed all – the council's proposals for housing estates were withdrawn and the examination was delayed until late February/early March.

The society's main concerns were to make sure that the 'visions' for the local areas within the borough reflected the local community's aspirations; that the disastrous planning policy for housing was changed from oversupplying large units for the overseas investment market to one that met the needs of people who want to live here; and to ensure the council does not relax policies to maintain the proportion of shops in our shopping streets, especially Kensington High Street, South Kensington and Notting Hill Gate.

We supported the council's new policy on amalgamations, which places planning controls on the deconversion of buildings divided into flats, the merger of flats in purpose-built blocks of flats and the merger of two or more houses. Amalgamations had resulted in a significant annual net loss of housing units which need to be offset against the additional new units. Since August 2014, when amalgamations were first resisted by the planners, more than 300 cases have been refused.

As we have said before, the council policies of encouraging large units with three or more bedrooms has resulted in over 60% sold to overseas buyers as second homes or as investments. Following the current Examination in Public process the council is offering an early review of the local plan on housing policies and any proposals for the future of the council's housing estates. We have suggested that other areas also need an early review, including flooding, air quality, waste disposal and open spaces.

## Major Developments

There have been a number of major, contentious planning developments in 2017, especially Newcombe House, Kensington Forum Hotel and Heythrop College.

The redevelopment of Newcombe House in Notting Hill Gate, having been refused by the council in 2016 on the basis of height, design, impact of the taller elements of the scheme and the lack of replacement affordable housing, went to appeal in early 2017. The inspector's decision in June did not accept all the council's grounds for refusal. He did accept the affordable housing issue, which was the basis of his dismissal of the appeal. The developer resubmitted the scheme which was basically the same design proposal, with minor improvements. The affordable housing was increased to nine flats but the bedsits, as before, were not included. The new application was recommended for approval by the planning department and was considered in January by the Planning Committee. The committee voted

to refuse the scheme again. The refusal could be appealed or could be challenged in court. The society sympathises with local residents who fear a taller building than present, but the mayor's new direction for increased site density, height may no longer be an accepted point of opposition. We regret the lost opportunity for the public square, major GP surgery and provision for limited step-free access.

The other eyesore – the 29-storey Penta/Forum/Holiday Inn in Cromwell Road – is also likely to be redeveloped as reported last year. The developer, following private pre-application advice from the council, presented in a public exhibition a scheme that would replace the tower with a new hotel of similar height, but squeeze an extra 50% more floor-space of over 150 new flats, whilst reconfiguring the previous, protected garden square. Local residents are adamant this development is excessive, with many preferring to keep the existing building rather than accept the new more intensive development. The society has been supporting the residents. We have challenged the argument that a bad precedent can set the acceptance of proposal which does not meet the local plan policies on scale, bulk, height, and historic context. With the demise of Bell Pottinger as the PR firm, the developer's public relations is now led by Cratos – headed by Sir Merrick Cockell.

The most alarming of the major developments, however, is the proposal to redevelop Heythrop College, just behind Kensington Square. The application is to replace a college with student housing, with a 150-unit luxury retirement housing complex. The local plan classifies student housing as “social and community use”. The proposal for retirement housing for the over 55s with a starting price for a one bedroom of over £3m and a 995 year lease includes a swimming pool, gym, and all the modern convenience that luxury housing requires. The proposal includes an enlarged site, by over a third, by building a raft over the Circle Line just south of High Street Kensington Station. The scheme is one of the largest housing schemes in the last decade. The site is land-locked with one narrow entrance in South End. All demolition and excavation for the two-level basements and the structural elements and materials will travel over 600m through quiet, narrow residential streets for more than five years. Some of our members on Kensington Square who will not be affected by the construction or the traffic, have



Winter view of Heythrop College Garden

supported the application, but reflecting the many members who will be so harmed by the development, we have opposed the application.

The development itself is a real challenge to the council's local plan policies. The developer claims the scheme should be classified as a care home and as such should therefore be regarded as a replacement "social and community use". Our legal advice is that the scheme has all the characteristics of a housing scheme, and that the "extra care" facilities offered, which include the use of the pool and gym, do not amount to care as it would normally be understood. The society is supporting residents of the Victoria Road Area Residents' Association in opposing this scheme, which is due to be determined shortly.

## Advertising and new telephones on the street

With the changes in communication technology, we do not need as many telephone booths as we now have. But the companies that own existing ones will not give up their "rights" to operate them, especially if they can translate them into money-spinners by redesigning them as vehicles for advertising panels. Following the BT/JCDecaux advertphones – a telephone attached to an advertising panel – there are proposals by New World Telephones/Clearchannel to put in new kiosks with digital panels. In addition, a new company, Maximum/Maximus Networks have a proposal for 40 thin "kiosks" – rectangular with one side as big as the JCDecaux advert panels, and other companies wanting new "kiosks" also with large advertisement panels. Waiting in the wings there are other proposals such as by BT/Link for advertising columns.

RBKC is not the only council facing this challenge, but, like Westminster, this council has refused all of the applications. We strongly support the council's stance and will be supporting them on the appeals.

## Conservation areas

The council has been undertaking conservation area appraisals over the last three years to replace the previous conservation area policy statements. Whilst we have welcomed this programme which is now close to covering all the borough's conservation areas, we are concerned that the documents have been downgraded from being supplementary planning documents which elaborate local plan policies and proposals for the enhancement of the conservation area, to a description and an appraisal of the character of the area. The last area to be considered is that for Edwardes Square which should be completed in the summer.

As such, these documents do not fulfil the legal requirement to publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. This will require conservation area management strategies,



Telephone advert

which will be the next step to build on the conservation area appraisals and provide planning officers with awareness of opportunities and proposals for enhancing these areas.

## Listing

The last time the List of Listed Buildings was published was in 1984. Since then there has been no review, only sporadic proposals to list additional buildings. We have drawn up proposals for designating further buildings, but this has become more difficult requiring the support of the Council. We are currently in the process of seeking the listing of several significant buildings.

## Thank you

The planning agenda for the Kensington Society is very diverse, which is why we have a planning committee to deal with the wide range of our activities. I would to thank Amanda Frame, Anthony Walker, Henry Peterson, Sophia Lambert and Thomas Blomberg for their hard work that enables us to deal with the heavy workload. In addition to providing input that relates directly to the areas where they live, especially the local case work, they each bring expertise to our group.

## Looking ahead

The society is looking forward to a change in approach in the way the council plans – with greater direct engagement in the future of our communities– and how it manages planning applications, as a service for residents rather than what appears to be a service for developers.

## Neighbourhood planning in Kensington and Chelsea

When first introduced in the 2011 Localism Act, many people thought that this new ultra-local part of the planning system would prove a passing fad and soon disappear. This has been the fate of many other initiatives from different governments over the years ‘to give power to the people’.

But neighbourhood planning has in fact thrived across England (less so in London). There are now over 2,200 neighbourhoods preparing plans, and over 450 plans have been examined and found fit to be put to a local referendum. Once supported by a majority of the local electorate (as has happened in nearly all cases) these neighbourhood plans become part of the statutory development plan for the area. Their policies and site allocations are used by local authorities when deciding planning applications.

Kensington and Chelsea was the first council in England to see a neighbourhood plan adopted, for the Norland area. This plan focuses very largely on conservation issues, and did not seek to introduce new policies on issues such as retail, housing or employment.

The St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood plan followed in 2015, covering the streets of the St Quintin Estate between St Marks Road and the borough boundary with Hammersmith. This plan was supported at its referendum by a 92% majority of voters on a 23% turnout, in February 2016.

Before the ink on the plan was dry, a landowner and developer applied for judicial review to quash the council’s decision to progress the neighbourhood plan to its referendum. The legal challenge was dismissed on all grounds by the High Court in January 2018. More details are given in the update from the St Helens Residents Association/St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum, elsewhere in this annual.

Neighbourhood plans, once past the examination stage, have the full statutory weight of a local plan. There has been a series of legal challenges across the country, mainly by housing developers. In nearly all cases the neighbourhood forum (or parish council in rural areas) has seen their plan prevail in High Court judgments.

The council's updated local plan for Kensington and Chelsea has recently been through its Examination in Public. The local plan includes ten Place chapters, setting out a vision and planning priorities. The ten Places do not cover all the borough, but include those seen as areas of change.

At the recent EiP of the local plan, council officers accepted that the priorities set out in Place chapter are non-strategic policies. This is an important distinction, as policies and site allocations in a neighbourhood plan are required by law to generally conform with strategic policies in a local plan – while having scope to vary or differ from 'non-strategic' policies. There is not much point spending time preparing a neighbourhood plan if it cannot vary the policy framework set by the local plan.

Such variation took place in the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Plan. There are now specific neighbourhood-level policies for part of North Kensington on permitted uses in shopping parades, mixed use in the neighbourhoods' Employment Zone, and some conservation policies. These allow bespoke flexibilities that reflect the types of buildings in the area. All these variations were identified through local public meetings and consultation, when the neighbourhood plan was being drawn up. Some new housing sites were also identified, and three backland open spaces designated as Local Green Space. The council's updated local plan now takes note of these variations.

Interest has grown, and there are now over 100 neighbourhood forums across the capital. Neighbourhood plans are nearing completion in Knightsbridge and Victoria, and seven such plans are adopted and in use in areas including Highgate, Kentish Town, and West Hampstead.

The revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (currently out for consultation) makes very clear that this community-led layer of the English planning system is here to stay. Planning authorities are encouraged to focus their spatial plans on strategic issues. What the NPPF terms as Local Policies are then expected to emerge as much through neighbourhood plans as through place-based sections in local plans.

Where local plan consultation has been deep and effective, most residents may be content to leave it to their local council to define the vision and priorities. But where locals have alternative views on what sort of development should happen in their immediate area, neighbourhood plans now provide a vehicle for the community to come forward with their own proposals.

The council's political leadership, since the Grenfell tragedy, has made clear commitments to listen more to residents, and not impose solutions from above. There is much talk of a 'co-design' approach to estate renewal, and other regeneration projects in the Borough. Current work with residents of the Lancaster West Estate will be the first test of this new thinking at the town hall.

A third neighbourhood area in the borough was designated in September 2017, following an application from Ashburn Gardens Square Garden Association and Stanhope Mews East Residents Association. This Courtfield Neighbourhood area covers Courtfield ward and a small part of Redcliffe ward. As with the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Area, this is not one of the ten Places defined in the borough's local plan.

Other residents' associations and forums in the borough have decided neighbourhood plan it is not for them. Kensington Society trustee Henry Peterson is always willing to discuss what is involved, with any local organisation that is interested. There is a network of neighbourhood planners in London at [www.neighbourhoodplanners.london](http://www.neighbourhoodplanners.london) which Henry co-convenes and which is a useful source of information.

Michael Bach  
Chairman: Planning Committee



Queensgate Hotel (Holly Smith/Garden Square News)

# Reports from AFFILIATED SOCIETIES, 2017

## ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ACRA)

The game is afoot ...

Once again the main activity of our residents' association concerns what is happening under, in and at the Holiday Inn hotel.

The Kensington Forum Holiday Inn site was bought by Queensgate Investments in December 2016. The new owners are proposing to demolish the existing hotel, and were intending to re-build it with increased floor space of some 50%, together with 174 residential apartments, comprised in three tower blocks. These proposals were shown at public events in November 2017. Following objections expressed by residents, the plans are being redrawn to take into account some of those concerns.

We have recently been told that the latest proposals provide for two towers (one on Courtfield Road and the other on Ashburn Place), plus a third building close to Courtfield Road; the residential apartments are to be reduced to 50, with the hotel being even larger than previously proposed.

This massive re-development is still at the pre-planning application stage. It is expected that the planning application will be lodged with RBKC in April or May 2018.

We had been led to believe by the developers that the buildings would be front-loaded onto Cromwell Road. Unfortunately, the current proposals encroach unacceptably into the residential area of Courtfield Road. The structures are also overbearing, and constitute overdevelopment of this already over-developed site, considerably out of proportion for its surrounding area.

Planning is supposed to enhance. This is an opportunity to recognise the mistakes of the past by which this unsightly building was permitted. Instead, it seems that one eyesore is to be replaced by yet another eyesore. The present proposals will clearly have an adverse impact on the character of this neighbourhood, a conservation area.

We can but await the actual plans when the planning application is lodged to take a final view, but we are pessimistic from what we have seen so far.

The new plans for the Holiday Inn site are not the only problem in this neighbourhood. Despite many efforts by residents, and the apparent bell-weather change in favour of cleaner air in London, we are still being plagued by the volume of idling coaches as well as delivery vehicles, black cabs and mini cabs servicing not just the hotels but also the surrounding area, all emitting their toxic fumes. This must change. Residents must take the first step by raising their own awareness and fighting for cleaner air in London.

**Friederike Maeda, Chairman**



## ALEXANDER SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

We are a small association and have only recently joined The Kensington Society. As noted by other associations, we are seeing our area under considerable pressure, as both Knightsbridge and South Kensington areas attract increasing numbers of tourists and other visitors. The area is blighted by growing domination of A3 food outlets, increasing street crime, pavement congestion, supercars, illegal parking, etc. The development of South Ken Tube station and Exhibition Road are two current issues that we are keeping a close eye on. While RBKC has responded well on certain issues, such as busking, they have let the area down with poor enforcement of the PSPO and parking, as well as a failure to listen to resident concerns, when it comes to considering planning applications for greater commercialisation. These issues are not simple to solve and will require community groups working together.

**William Fall, Chairman**

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## THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

The proposed redevelopment of Cavaye House, a 1970s residential, office and retail building on 'The Beach' stretch of the Fulham Road, has been the focus of much attention during the past year. The owner of the building, which is immediately contiguous to the Boltons conservation area, is the Imperial Tobacco Pension Fund.

Its proposals include bringing the frontage of the building right up to the Fulham Road - whereas it is currently set back in a 'pedestrian piazza' of sorts - together with plans for a strikingly-modern facade featuring massive windows at lower levels. The association's view, in common with other objectors, such as those of the proprietor of the wine merchant Lea & Sandeman next door to Cavaye House, is that redevelopment of the site is greatly to be welcomed in principle – the current Cavaye House, while not being a thing of beauty by any means, has at least the merit of being bland and set back from the Fulham Road – but such redevelopment should not come at the price of the highly undesirable new features mentioned above, plus the loss of much needed retail space (namely, Daunt Bookshop) and its proposed replacement with a large 'chain restaurant' (namely, Cote). The owners' proposals would make Cavaye House far more dominating both from pavement level/street scene and also in respect of the overall mass of the building as viewed from Callow Street opposite.

The Planning Committee turned down the owners' planning application, but an appeal was lodged with the Planning Inspectorate for 23 January this year. The association has written in support of the Planning Committee's refusal to grant planning permission, repeating the association's oral assertion before the committee at the original hearing that despite our wish to see the site redeveloped we would prefer to see such redevelopment not take place if what

is put in its place is a facade that might be fine, with all due apologies, on Croydon High Street but would look completely out of place on The Beach stretch of the Fulham Road.





Cavaye House

However, the inspector's decision was to allow the appeal in full. So presumably, building work to implement the original re-development proposals will start in the near future.

Calvin Jackson, Chairman

## BROMPTON ASSOCIATION

Last year Transport for London (TfL) submitted its Listed Building Consent application for the station upgrade at South Kensington tube. These will involve significant enlargement of the booking hall to allow access to the currently disused northern platform which is being brought back into use for eastbound trains. After much discussion we are pleased that TfL is going to restore George Sherrin's attractive Edwardian booking hall which was designed as a piece with the arcade. We have encouraged TfL to re-install clear glass in the roof (in place of the unsightly wired glass) as it did in the arcade roof in 2016, and to adopt a similar period colour scheme. The design of the extension and of the new platform canopy will be contemporary. This allows for the listed arched revetment walls to be seen in their entirety without having structures attached to them.

As this goes to press, TfL announced its partner for the station development is to be Native Land with Rogers Stirk Harbour as architects. We will continue to press for a conservation-led approach to the site and in particular the refurbishment rather than redevelopment of the block of shops and apartments on the southern side of Thurloe Street, a single storey extension to the bullnose and a modest level of residential development along Pelham Street.

We have continued to argue that Pelham Street should not become a retail street linking South Kensington to Brompton Cross. A significant part of the street is already residential and the Grade



11\* terraces of Pelham Place and Pelham Crescent open directly onto it. We have continued to support local residents in objecting to plans by the Wellcome Trust for a significant retail development to the east of Pelham Place. The pavement is very narrow (as is the street) and retail is simply inappropriate.

Last summer Amanda Leveté's Boiler House Square Scheme at the V&A opened to much acclaim. However, the new openings through the Aston Webb screen onto Exhibition Road have encouraged the V&A now to push for pedestrianisation of the road. At the time that the Exhibition Road Project was developed, residents were assured by RBKC that the road would remain open to traffic as a major north-south route. We have consistently argued that Exhibition Road is a road and not a public open space. In addition to access north/south there are large numbers of residents living on Exhibition Road and in neighbouring streets like Princes Gate Mews whose amenity needs to be recognised and respected.

In connection with this we have had to object to the current draft text of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan which is currently being considered by Westminster City Council. There are policies in the plan which are intended to cover parts of RBKC, including Exhibition Road. As residents of RBKC will not be able to vote on this Neighbourhood Plan and we consider this to be undemocratic. We are very pleased that RBKC supports us in this view.

**Sophie Andreae DSG, FSA, IHBC, Chairman**

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## CLARENDON CROSS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Clarendon Cross strives to be an RA which looks outward to our wider community as well doing what we can to promote a cohesive neighbourhood with a strong core bringing everyone together. When in June the Grenfell fire woke us all suddenly in the middle of the night, many watched in disbelief at the shocking sight and sounds of one of our neighbouring communities going through some sort of hell. Our instinct was naturally to do what we could to help.

With the tower still burning throughout the following day, the situation was chaotic and with little co-ordinated response from the local authority, community groups including Rugby Portobello Trust and Clement James Centre were doing a sterling job at offering refuge & support to survivors & those displaced by the fire providing essential food, supplies and funds. With established relationships with both centres and two committee members on the ground in the early morning, we were able to assess quickly what was needed. CCRA were able to keep our members informed and co-ordinate collections of supplies and funds which were then donated without delay to the centres to distribute.

We then became aware of an 'Art Therapy' drop-in facility voluntarily set up on the Henry Dickens Estate by Susan Rudnik, a practising NHS Art Therapist and



lecturer at Goldsmiths College, to help children traumatised by the fire. CCRA swiftly collected both art supplies and donations to enable the scheme to operate and spread to other centres. The Latimer Community Art Therapy group, as it is now called has now received support from both the NHS and RBKC to enable it to continue its work in nine schools and a number of community centres. It continues to receive donations including from Rymans thanks to one of our member's connection with the company.

Seeing residents from all walks of life pulling together in an effort to help those most affected went a long way to dispel the popular media view of community divides in Kensington. Of course, there remain huge disparities and a lot needs to be done but the compassion and solidarity that we witnessed following the fire was inspiring.

In other news, CCRA worked hard alongside the Kensington Society and Norland Conservation Society to try to persuade the potential new owner of the Academy pub to retain the ACV elements of the pub intact as part of redevelopment plans – we eagerly await a third planning application to be submitted.

We continue to suffer the blight of excessive building works, especially on Portland and Princedale Roads with routine contraventions of CTMPs and ineffective enforcement from the council. Our streets are lined with vans and construction vehicles parked on suspended resident parking bays from early in the morning until mid-afternoon and the pavements and gullies are filthy. With the support of our residents and councillors we hope to see steps to improve this unacceptable situation in the coming year.

Carolyn Arnold

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## THE EARL'S COURT SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2017 was a busy year for ECSRA. We lobbied the police and local ward councillors about the increase in anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and rough sleepers in the square. This resulted in a two month drug operation in Earl's Court to combat drug-related crimes and ASB and a number of arrests with a 80%-90% drop in email/airspace about drug issues from residents.

Despite the efforts of our three ward councillors, there has been a lack of enforcement by RBKC in relation to refuse collection, planning and pest control. There seems to be no appetite to prosecute repeat offenders or to issue Community Protection Notices, which continues to frustrate our residents.

ECSRA has identified the worst "hotspots" for rubbish dumping, which is exacerbated by the increase in short-term lettings. After much lobbying, RBKC installed a CCTV camera to identify/prosecute offenders. Sadly, this has not happened as we believe current borough policy states that CCTV cannot be used for this purpose.

There have also been on-going problems with the development of 1A, where RBKC's Planning and Building Control Departments did not identify that the sewer connection necessitated a 20 day closure of the exit onto Earl's Court Road. There was little





consultation with residents, who were unprepared for an extremely inconvenient road closure.

The RA shares these frustrations with our residents and wrote to the leader of RBKC in September detailing the apparent lack of enforcement. Sadly, we have not received a satisfactory reply addressing our residents' concerns, and we wrote again in November and December asking for these to be addressed. We await a response. In the meantime, the ECSRA Executive Committee met Mel Stevens from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (which is reviewing the decision-making processes at RBKC and making sure the views of residents are heard and included as part of the review findings) on 23 January to express residents' concerns.

ECSRA has been active during the past year organising four well-attended events to encourage residents to meet and to welcome new residents to the square. Our sincere thanks to the Garden Sub-Committee for their continued support and the use of Earl's Court Square's beautiful gardens for most of our annual events.

**Chrissie Courtney, Chairman**  
**A Gold Standard RA awarded by RBKC**  
[www.ecsra.co.uk](http://www.ecsra.co.uk)

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## EARLS COURT VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

This year we have seen one basement completed, with two more pending, in Redfield Lane. One of them is to be developed into two vertical flats, which, between them will have eight en-suite bedrooms, with provision for bicycles down below. The proposed number of possible residents, we feel, might be too heavy for our village of narrow streets and narrow houses containing families.



The application for a new basement in Child Street was turned down as Child Street is too restricted to grant a CTMP.

Otherwise, we were plagued with drug dealers and their customers, lurking around in our quiet streets, using residents' patios and steps to do their business from, until the police achieved some success in catching them.

The hollyhocks in Wallgrave Road continued to provide a lovely summer show.

**Philippa Seebohm, Chairman**

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## EDWARDES SQUARE SCARSDALE AND ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

There are many small studio enclaves within the ESSA area but few of them are still in active use which gives all the more reason to try and protect them. One example is Pembroke Studios where a dozen small studio houses were built in 1890–91, in the form of two rows of buildings running from south to north with a 'saw-tooth' profile, which was designed to ensure that all the studio spaces had light from the north. Unauthorised alterations carried out by one of the leaseholders sparked off a battle to protect this unusual building form by seeking listing and eventually this was successful with both groups of studios being listed Grade II. ESSA has worked closely with the landlord in achieving this listing.

Another building type which has strongly influenced the character of the ESSA conservation area is that of mansion blocks. The particular requirements in this field led ESSA to establish a Mansion Block Group several years ago, which meets twice a year. This autumn we held a



meeting to explore the historic development of mansion blocks which were originally to produce low cost housing but, in the latter part of the 19th century, were designed to provide increasingly opulent forms of accommodation. Representatives of five blocks from our membership of twenty plus provided presentations about the distinctive historic features of their blocks, including the menus once served in the communal dining room or in your own flat.

Wrights Lane lies on the eastern boundary of our conservation area and is the site of an ingenious redevelopment of what is often referred to as the 'Boots building' in the High Street. The proposal retains the existing structural frame while reducing the height on the Wrights Lane frontage but increasing it as it steps back from the road frontage and on the corner with the High Street. We believe that this will enhance the aspect along the frontage to the High Street, while reflecting to some extent the Barkers façade at the eastern end.

**Anthony Walker**

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## GOLBORNE FORUM

The Golborne Forum brings together people who live and work in the Golborne Ward of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea to speak up for the area. The forum offers a community response to issues around planning and other developments which affect the built environment and quality of life in Golborne. We have contributed to the development of the Local Area Review, a number of planning proposals and appeals and members are active in a variety of community issues such as health, social concerns, safety and security.

The Golborne Forum organises The Golborne Festival which takes place in the summer each year on Golborne Road. In July 2017 in particular, the festival was a celebration of our local community and the way our emergency services and volunteer sector came together in response to the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire. Each year the event relies on the support of members in the community and is enjoyed by over 3,000 visitors on the day.

As well as producing Golborne Life a biannual newsletter about the area, we also maintain the Golborne Life web site which shows events and issues in the ward.

**Roger Roberts, Chairman**  
[www.golbornelife.co.uk](http://www.golbornelife.co.uk)

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## THE FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK

2017 was a year of conservation and landscaping works which had been a long time in the planning.

The south terrace of Holland House is being laid with attractive stone sets in colours that mirror the hues of the house itself – a fitting environment for a Grade 1 listed house. The access road





CAD image of future Holland House terrace



Sibirica fountain and Ice house

has been re-routed round the outside of the café terrace, making the café yard a much more attractive space. The Belvedere building and the Stable Yard buildings have both undergone much-needed conservation work to the exteriors. Drainage work was carried out in the north west of the park to ensure rainwater is channelled to where the park's plants can benefit from it and not into the sewerage system.

So far, so good, but there is a lot still to do.

Holland House itself badly needs conservation work, now overdue according to the approved Conservation Management Plan. We must not allow a significant example of Jacobean architecture to deteriorate to a point where it is difficult to retain the fine





Orangery, Holland Park

stonework. The state of this house is on Historic England's radar.

The borough's 10-year Parks Strategy and the Holland Park Plan have committed to a long-term tree plan, woodland management plan and sustainable planting in the formal areas. A start has been made on these initiatives but it is slow going with such slender resources. Much of the heavily-used grass areas have been re-seeded successfully, though the area immediately south of Holland House is still more mud than green shoots. There is, as yet, no solution to path surfacing that avoids inappropriate black tarmac.

We commend the work that has been done and we must continue to act as stewards to ensure our valuable green and historic assets are preserved for the physical and mental health of future generations.

The next years will be challenging, with continued cuts in the council parks budget, temptation for the council to generate income from harmful commercialisation, climate change and damage from over-use by an ever increasing number of visitors.

**Jennie Kettlewell, Chairman**



## KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Looming over us, in every sense, is the proposed redevelopment of Heythrop College. This is a secluded, green oasis in our corner of Kensington. For the most part till now it has housed theological students. But God is giving way to Mammon. The Jesuits have trousered £110 million and are off this August. In their place will come, if the developers get their application approved, 'extra care accommodation.' Basically these are flats for older people with a care package attached – 150 one and two bedroom apartments to be sold on 999 leases. Whatever it's called, it will be a vast residential complex. Indeed they can only shoehorn in so many flats, by putting a deck over the adjacent tube track and increasing the size of the site. They intend to install an enormous basement, covering most of the site to service the flats. Demolition, excavation and construction will take at least 5 years.

Inevitably the proposal has caused controversy. Our association opposes it for two basic reasons. Though it will open the landscaped gardens around its five buildings to the public, it will bring precious little community benefit to the local residents – a community hall and a GPs surgery is all that is offered. But what it WILL bring in quantities that defy belief is construction traffic. Around 35,000 cubic metres of soil will need to be removed just to make room for the basement. That's at least 8,000 lorry journeys. At the peak of construction there will be a truck every three minutes coming through our quiet streets. It would certainly be the biggest building project in central Kensington for many years.



Heythrop project view



Residents of the Royal Borough are used to putting up with the inconveniences of construction. It is the price we occasionally have to pay for the advantages of living in Kensington. But there are situations where the disturbance, the pollution, the noise, the potential damage, the risk to safety and the disruption to the peaceful enjoyment of one's everyday life are so onerous that we think they are reason enough for refusing a proposed development. Surely, sometimes the interests of residents should prevail over the demands of developers. We think this is such an occasion and we hope the borough listens.

**John Gau CBE, Chairman**

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## THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Much time has been spent this year in consultation with the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum on the various stages of their Neighbourhood Plan. It was established to give people who live, work or study in Knightsbridge the opportunity under the Localism Act 2011 to develop planning and influence neighbourhood management locally. The area covered by the forum falls entirely within the borders of the City of Westminster.

Westminster City Council is now consulting on the final draft, following which there will be an examination by a planning inspector, and, if all goes well the council will then conduct a referendum on the Plan, hopefully around June. Only those on the electoral register living in the designated Knightsbridge area will be entitled to vote. The association is fully supportive of the plan and its policies.

Construction continues on phase 1 of the Knightsbridge Estate, the triangle bordered by Sloane Street, Brompton Road, Hooper's Court and Basil Street, with deep piling about to begin. Most of the facades are being retained and the finished block will contain retail, office and residential – much as before but the higgledy piggledy conformation behind the facades will be resolved.

Other major sites still under construction are at the Berkeley Hotel and 55-91 Knightsbridge. An application has been submitted by TfL for improvements to South Kensington Station and work has already begun on the northern platform, which will eventually be re-opened for trains.

The scandal of 31 Brompton Square, where the developer excavated the permitted four levels of basement under the extensive garden in 2008 – went bankrupt and was sent to gaol for fraud; the property then changing hands, more planning applications – silence – the forty foot hole gaping open to the sky – may finally be over. The property has again changed hands and work appears to have commenced.

The association continues to play its part with other societies in the many local liaison committees – South Kensington Station, the Natural History Museum, South Kensington Estates. The Science Museum is just forming one and RBKC has invited associations to take part in talks to review whether the Exhibition Road scheme can be made to work better and improvements can be made. Our fear is that they will be hijacked by the Exhibition



Road Cultural Group, many of whom would favour pedestrianisation of this half of this main north/south artery across the parks to South Kensington.

Areas of major concern are air pollution and the neglected state of Brompton Road which continues to deteriorate.

**Carol Seymour-Newton**  
[carol.seymour-newton@knightsbridgeassociation.com](mailto:carol.seymour-newton@knightsbridgeassociation.com)

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## NORLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

Norland Conservation Society is flagging up two major points of concern.

Interpretation of the planning policies of its Neighbourhood Plan which leaves much to be desired, particularly when the spirit of its intention is ignored.

The balance between development and conservation appears weighted in favour of the former. NCS is worried that an incremental nibbling away at policies that are specifically designed to protect a Conservation Area are gradually being undermined.

NCS's second concern is back gardens which are now a prime site for development. The humble garden shed is now replaced by the garden-house and permitted development allows for 20% of a garden to be built over. In years to come residents will feel the loss of these irreplaceable green spaces that give us pockets of clean air, biodiversity, natural drainage and wonderful leafy views that punctuate our built up urban environment. Front gardens are protected from becoming parking spaces, it is time to lobby our council to protect back gardens that contribute so much to the well-being of life in London.

News: During 2017 NCS, The Kensington Society and Clarendon Cross Residents Association met numerous times with the new owner/partnership of the Academy Pub to negotiate and argue for a viable community pub. A planning application submitted before Christmas has been turned down and it is hoped that the reasons for this will be addressed.

NCS welcomes Second Home to the Conservation Area. Tucked away in Princes Place is a large warehouse studio. The owner was persuaded by NCS not to demolish it for private housing. Second Homes opened in November and welcomes residents to visit its office studio space.



**Libby Kinmonth**



## ONSLow NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

Nowadays the Onslow Neighbourhood Association finds that those issues that require most vigilance, are also being watched by the other associations and societies. This is a great relief to us as the more support we get, helps persuade planning committees that we are no lone voice crying in the wilderness, but part of a robust protest from representatives of a considerable section of local residents.

Together, therefore, we have supported the Natural History Museum with its plans for improving the grounds, we have repulsed the Arup Bridge which would have disfigured the southern facade of the V & A for eight months. Together we have attended numerous meetings with TfL concerning the development of the South Kensington station making sure that we are not going to end up with huge development over the station. On our own we continue to attend the licensing and planning committees, trying to restrict the opening hours or noisy developments for the benefit of local residents, and doing whatever we can to prevent the continual drift of local retail shops into eating and drinking establishments. Unfortunately, RBKC having decided in the Local Plan that South Kensington should become a 'cultural centre' we are now facing the consequences of this plan which has many negative aspects for the residents.

Eva Skinner

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## THE PEMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Since the last AGM in November 2016, the Pembridge Association has been completely reborn as a Phoenix from the ashes.

In summary,

- There is a new Executive Committee and Officers and new email addresses to allow the members direct communication with the committee members.
- The membership list has been cleaned and email addresses confirmed.
- The finances are sound, with a solid balance at the bank and almost all members paying by standing order.
- The website has been completely and professionally redesigned and is being regularly updated with information about the Pembridge Conservation Area.
- We are in regular communication with RBKC planners and receive automatic notification of planning applications and decisions. This information is available on the PA website.

We now have in place, the infrastructure, necessary for an organisation such as the Pembridge Association to function effectively and we are now well able to pursue the aims outlined in our constitution.

What of the future?

- We would like to attract more residents to join the Association and from these we would like more members' to join the Executive Committee.



- We will increase our involvement with the RBKC planners and make sure we monitor the outcome of all applications in the area. It is also very helpful to have members input when they see building activities taking place in their locality.
- We would like to increase contact with you our members through social and educational activities and we are open to all ideas.
- We would like to maintain an open and frequent dialogue with the other local conservation societies.
- Finally, beside our primary goal of conservation, we would like to pursue other projects aimed at protecting, preserving and enhancing the quality of the Pembridge neighbourhood. In essence, adopting a proactive and not merely a reactive approach to conservation.

**Richard Payne, Chairman**

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## **ST HELENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION/ST QUINTIN AND WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

Our association covers the western part of the St Quintin Estate, north of the Westway and south of Little Wormwood Scrubs. We have 420 members. In 2012 the association set up a sister body (same membership) and this was designated by the council in 2013.

The St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Plan was successful at its local referendum in February 2016. The policies and site allocations in the plan are now used by RBKC Planning Department when deciding planning applications.

This has given local people some control over planning in the area. The StQW policies are more flexible on permitted uses in the shopping parades at St Helens Gardens and North Pole Road, where we have several vacant shops. This has meant that Bassett House School has been able to take on and refurbish a shop as extra classrooms. Educational use would not be allowed in place of retail use under borough-wide policies. But local residents would rather see a non-retail use than a shuttered shop.

One of our main aims has been to bring more life to Latimer Road, which was cut in half by the Westway and is part of the Freston/Latimer Employment Zone. We fought hard to ensure the neighbourhood plan includes policies for a wider range of uses. This includes much-needed housing above the 14 light industrial units, dating from the 1980s. One of these buildings has become lively 'co-working' office space, while others are used only for storage. In the past year the Playground Theatre has opened, with a café and bar, in one of these units. We would like to see more co-working space, artists' studios, galleries.

A legal challenge hung over our neighbourhood plan from 2015, when the landowner and developers of the former Clifton Gardens nursery applied for judicial review of the council's decision. The High Court dismissed the claimant's application on all grounds in January 2018.

The claimants planned to build 20 town-houses on this open backland, behind Highlever Road. Our neighbourhood plan



allocated alternative sites for housing, and designated this land as Local Green Space. The Kensington Society contributed £3,500 funding for our legal fees, with the balance raised from residents. The outcome of the case taught us that:

- Landowners and developers can afford to commission expensive evidence from consultants, and to use even more expensive lawyers, but this does not always win the day
- A residents' association or neighbourhood forum can work with a barrister on a 'direct access' basis (i.e. without use of solicitors) and this saves a great deal of cost
- The English judicial system may grind slowly, but will judge a case on the facts

The statutory framework for neighbourhood planning is pretty robust. Most legal challenges to neighbourhood plans have come from housing developers, and in most cases the parish council or neighbourhood forum has seen its hard work prevail.

In those parts of the borough where residents want to influence what sort of development takes place (and where) within their neighbourhood, neighbourhood planning is an option well worth looking at.

**Henry Peterson, Chairman**

## VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

This year we celebrate 35 years of achievements, although we don't win them all. We are a natural environmental area which people don't normally enter unless they have a reason to visit. One of our enduring aspirations is to make the area a 20mph zone. The borough is nearly surrounded by 20mph zones, but the council has so far resisted them. Now, the council is prepared to experiment with individual streets, but declaring a zone is a bridge too far.

Just when we thought that 15 years of basement building was coming to an end, it would seem that we face another round. This time we will be even more demanding about the Construction Traffic Management Plans.

One Kensington Road (aka De Vere Gardens) is still only half sold and less than 10% occupied. The location of the proposed public art project has switched to the northern end of Canning Passage – we are still awaiting a new proposal.

The current challenge is the redevelopment of Heythrop College – which has been in educational use for the last 150 years. The applicant proposes a 150-unit luxury retirement housing scheme – not a care home as they claim – building a raft over the Circle Line tracks and building three and half times the floorspace. The demolition, excavation, building the large raft and the buildings would take 5 years and involve a huge number of lorries. Unfortunately the only access to the site is along over 600m of quiet residential roads and in through a narrow access point in South End. Needless to say we have objected strongly.

Victoria Grove, a street of almost entirely listed buildings, is being threatened yet again by owners seeking to cannibalise the remaining shop and build extensions that adversely affect the setting of the listed buildings and the De Vere Conservation Area.

Finally, the council has given us money under the City Living Local Life scheme to repair our listed mews arches. We hope to repair one of the Kynance Mews arches in 2018.

**Michael Bach, Chairman**



## WARWICK RD ESTATE LEASEHOLDERS' ASSOCIATION (WRELA)

The Warwick Road Estate, comprising Broadwood Terrace and Chesterton Square, has approximately an equal distribution of council tenants and private leaseholders. WRELA represents just over 40 leaseholders on the estate. Many of our members are elderly, some having been among the very first residents on the estate when it was built in 1976, who subsequently went on to purchase their properties under the "right to buy" scheme.

Prior to the Grenfell Tower disaster, the focus of our association, was to scrutinise and critique the council's plans for the "regeneration" of our estate, a process that had begun in March 2013, to try and ensure the best possible outcome for our members in danger of losing their homes and their rights. Living under the shadow of regeneration is very disrupting, both mentally, and emotionally. It came to dominate the lives of all residents on our estate and created a cloud of uncertainty and anxiety.

In October the new deputy-leader and head for housing announced that all regeneration projects, including other estates like the Silchester, were "terminated". So, for the time being at least, we have a stay of execution.

What lies ahead for our estate, and other estates like it across the borough, is less certain. There's a new man at the helm of housing, Doug Goldring, and he appears to be intent on changing the prevailing culture within the former TMO and the new Housing Department, so that this is more customer focused and more responsive and empathic.

The council has announced that post-Grenfell, leaseholder insurance premiums are likely to rise by 86%. We await confirmation of this from the First Tier Tribunal. This would mean that the borough's estate leaseholders would be paying a hefty financial penalty as a consequence of the Grenfell disaster. A disaster for which council residents were not responsible.

We believe our estate has been neglected over a number of years by the council, and so we have members whose windows are literally rotten and let water in when it rains. Consequently, the fear of demolition and displacement has now been replaced by a fear of the size of the next major works bill, which is likely to be significant.

The council recently committed to a £115 million programme to improve estates over the next five years – an increase from £50 million. We await clarification of whether this increase will be financed by leaseholders, who represent approximately 25% of their housing stock.

**Hervé Nourisson, Chairman**



**THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY – CHARITY NO. 267778**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED**  
**31 DECEMBER 2017**

<b>Income</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>Donations and legacies</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Membership subscriptions	10,234.73	10,183.00
Donation and legacies	1,877.00	1,520.00
Gift Aid	2,100.28	2,343.70
<b>Total donations and legacies</b>	<b>14,212.01</b>	<b>14,046.70</b>
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Events	2,355.00	7,545.00
Annual report advertising	8,025.00	7,365.00
<b>Total charitable activities</b>	<b>10,380.00</b>	<b>14,910.00</b>
<b>Investment income</b>		
Bank interest	204.14	396.34
<b>Total income</b>	<b>24,796.15</b>	<b>29,353.04</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Newsletter	1,429.79	1,086.85
Events	767.43	3,974.33
Annual report	7,220.39	7,755.23
Legal fees	11,347.20	1,800.00
Administration fees	5,647.00	0.00
Membership expenses	722.29	1,089.52
Charitable subscriptions	196.00	115.00
<b>Total charitable activities expense</b>	<b>27,330.10</b>	<b>18,820.93</b>
<b>Other</b>		
Insurance	348.36	345.42
Examiner fees	0.00	500.00
<b>Total other expense</b>	<b>348.36</b>	<b>845.42</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>27,678.46</b>	<b>16,666.35</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	<b>(2,882.31)</b>	<b>12,686.69</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds brought forward</b>	<b>89,668.88</b>	<b>76,982.19</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds carried forward</b>	<b>86,786.57</b>	<b>89,668.88</b>

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2017

	2017	2016
	£	£
<b>Current assets</b>		
<b>Debtors</b>		
<b>Accrued income and prepayments</b>		
Debtors	28.66	29.07
Gift aid	0.00	0.00
Insurance	226.68	226.43
<b>Total accrued income and prepayments</b>	<b>255.34</b>	<b>255.50</b>
<b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>		
Nationwide Building Society	75,000.00	75,000.00
Barclays Bank	11,781.23	13,788.47
PayPal	500.00	1,124.91
<b>Total cash at bank and in hand</b>	<b>87,281.23</b>	<b>89,913.38</b>
 <b>Total current assets</b>	 <b>87,536.57</b>	 <b>90,168.88</b>
 <b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>		
<b>Deferred income</b>		
Subscriptions and donations	30.00	0.00
Events income	220.00	0.00
Creditors	0.00	0.00
<b>Accruals</b>		
Administration fees	500.00	500.00
Event expenses	0.00	0.00
<b>Total deferred income and accruals</b>	<b>750.00</b>	<b>500.00</b>
 <b>Total net assets</b>	 <b>86,786.57</b>	 <b>89,668.88</b>
 <b>Funds of the charity</b>		
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>86,786.57</b>	<b>89,668.88</b>

Approved by the Trustees on 18 January 2018.

Martin Frame Chartered Accountant

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

The Kensington Society, 23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

The total income for the year was £24,796.15 which was a decrease of £4,556.89 from last year. Income in 2016 had been boosted by the Design Museum opening event.

The total expense for year was £27,330.10 which was an increase of £11,509.17. Professional fees were £11,347.20, an increase of £9,547.20. This expenditure, mainly on Queen's Counsel opinions, has been a powerful aid to progressing major initiatives. The advertising income exceeded the cost of the annual report by £804.61.

The balance sheet remains strong, with unrestricted funds of the society of £86,786.57. £75,000.00 is on deposit with the Nationwide Building Society. These funds provide a strong financial base and are necessary for the secure future of the society.

The society wishes to thank all the members who have generously subscribed £10,234.73, donated £1,877.00 and thus the charity received Gift Aid of £2,100.28 during the year.

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS For the year ended 31 December 2017

- **Accounting policies**

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

### Income

- **Recognition of incoming income**

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

- The charity becomes entitled to the income;
- The trustees are virtually certain they will receive the income; and
- The monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

- **Donations**

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

- **Tax reclaims on gifts and donations**

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

- **Volunteer help**

The value of any voluntary help received is not included in the financial activities.

- **Investment income**

This is included in the financial activities when receivable.

### Expenditure and liabilities

- **Liability recognition**

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

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CHAPMAN, ALAN DAVIE, RICHARD DEACON,  
PETER DOIG, IBRAHIM EL-SALAH, TERRY  
FROST, EBERHARD HAVEKOST, DAMIEN HIRST,  
GARY HUME, ANISH KAPOOR, MICHAEL  
LANDY, CHRISTOPHER LEBRUN, ELIZABETH  
MAGILL, SARAH MORRIS, PAUL MORRISON,  
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A young boy and girl are looking up at a wall covered in many small, colorful butterflies. The boy is on the left, wearing a grey zip-up jacket, and the girl is on the right, wearing a blue patterned jacket. The background is a light-colored stone wall.

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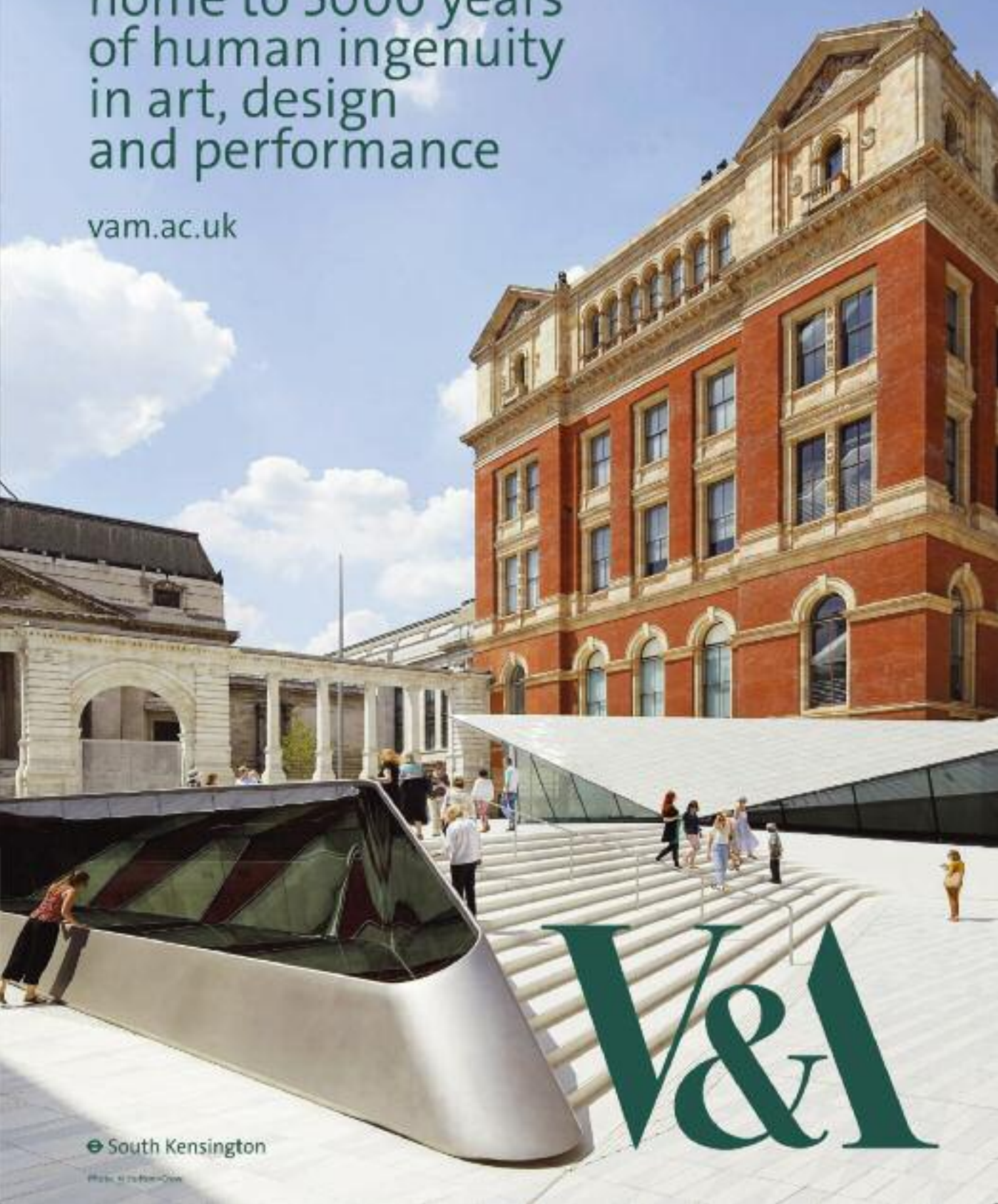
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Charity No. 267778

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## ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT KENSINGTON?

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

**Then join us.**

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

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

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

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

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