

63rd ANNUAL REPORT

December 2025



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THE EMORY

LONDON

Dining *Like No Other*

Framing Hyde Park views, abc kitchens at The Emory is a culinary masterpiece by celebrated chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten.

Set against the signature interiors of Rémi Tessier, seasonal menus here are a delicious work of festive art. Gather with loved ones to share beautifully bronzed turkey, delicate lobster and classic Christmas pudding – served in convivial family style.

TO LET



Thurloe Street, South Kensington SW7

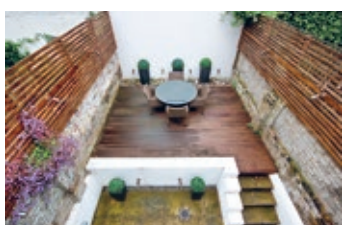
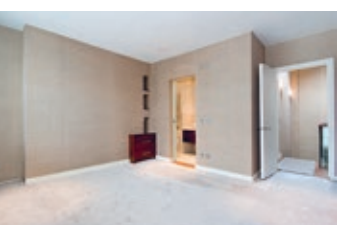
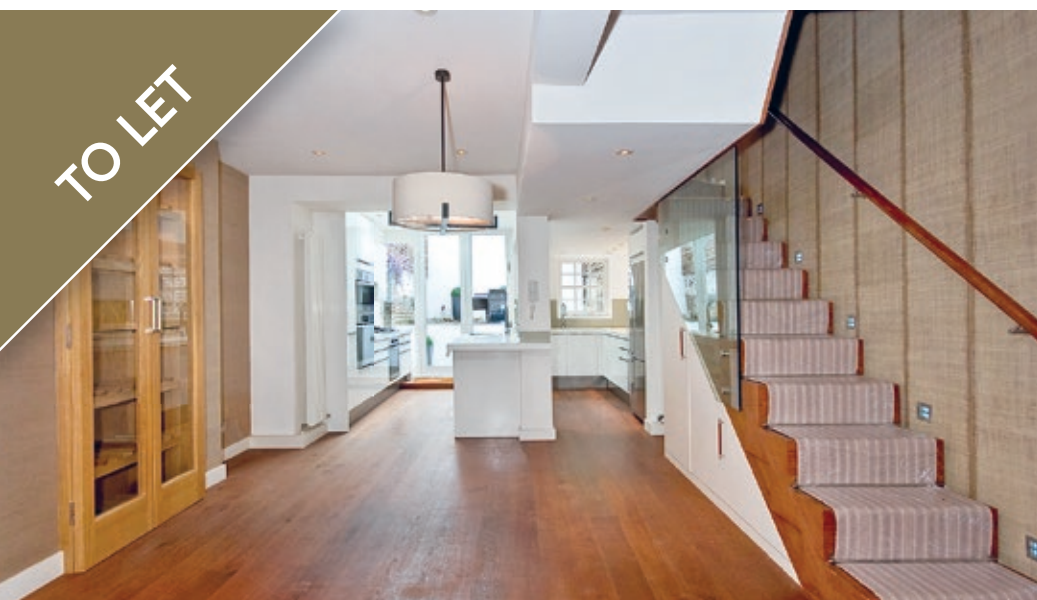
A remarkable opportunity to rent a magnificent four-bedroom house in the prestigious neighbourhood of South Kensington, situated on the highly sought-after Thurloe Street.

FEATURES

- Private Lawned Rear Garden & Patio Front Garden
- Unfurnished/Part-Furnished
- Four En-Suite Bedrooms

ASKING PRICE: £4,600 PER WEEK

TO LET



Bramerton Street, Chelsea SW3

A contemporary three-bedroom house with a west-facing garden which would make a perfect home for a couple or small family.

FEATURES

- Unfurnished
- Three Double Bedrooms
- Terrace & Paved Garden

ASKING PRICE: £1,900 PER WEEK



The boutique estate
agency in the heart of
Knightsbridge

Hans Place, Knightsbridge SW1X

Situated in one of Knightsbridge's most prestigious garden squares this glorious apartment lends itself perfectly for both entertaining and family living.

FEATURES

- Principal Bedroom with En-Suite Bathroom & Walk-In Wardrobe
- Three Further Bedrooms
- Reception/Dining Room
- Private Courtyard

ASKING PRICE: £5,900,000



FOR SALE

Ennismore Gardens, Knightsbridge SW7

A well-presented second and third floor maisonette with a lift and with west-facing views of the square gardens and a delightful terrace overlooking Ennismore Mews.

FEATURES

- Double Bedroom with En-Suite Bathroom
- Terrace
- Lift
- Access to Communal Gardens

ASKING PRICE: £1,925,000



FOR SALE

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Alternatively, our sales team can be reached on 020 7581 8277 and our lettings team on 020 7590 1200

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SOUTH KENSINGTON ESTATE

A neighbourhood shaped by design, enriched by culture, sustained by community.



COMMUNITY DRIVEN, CULTURE RICH, DESIGN CENTRED.

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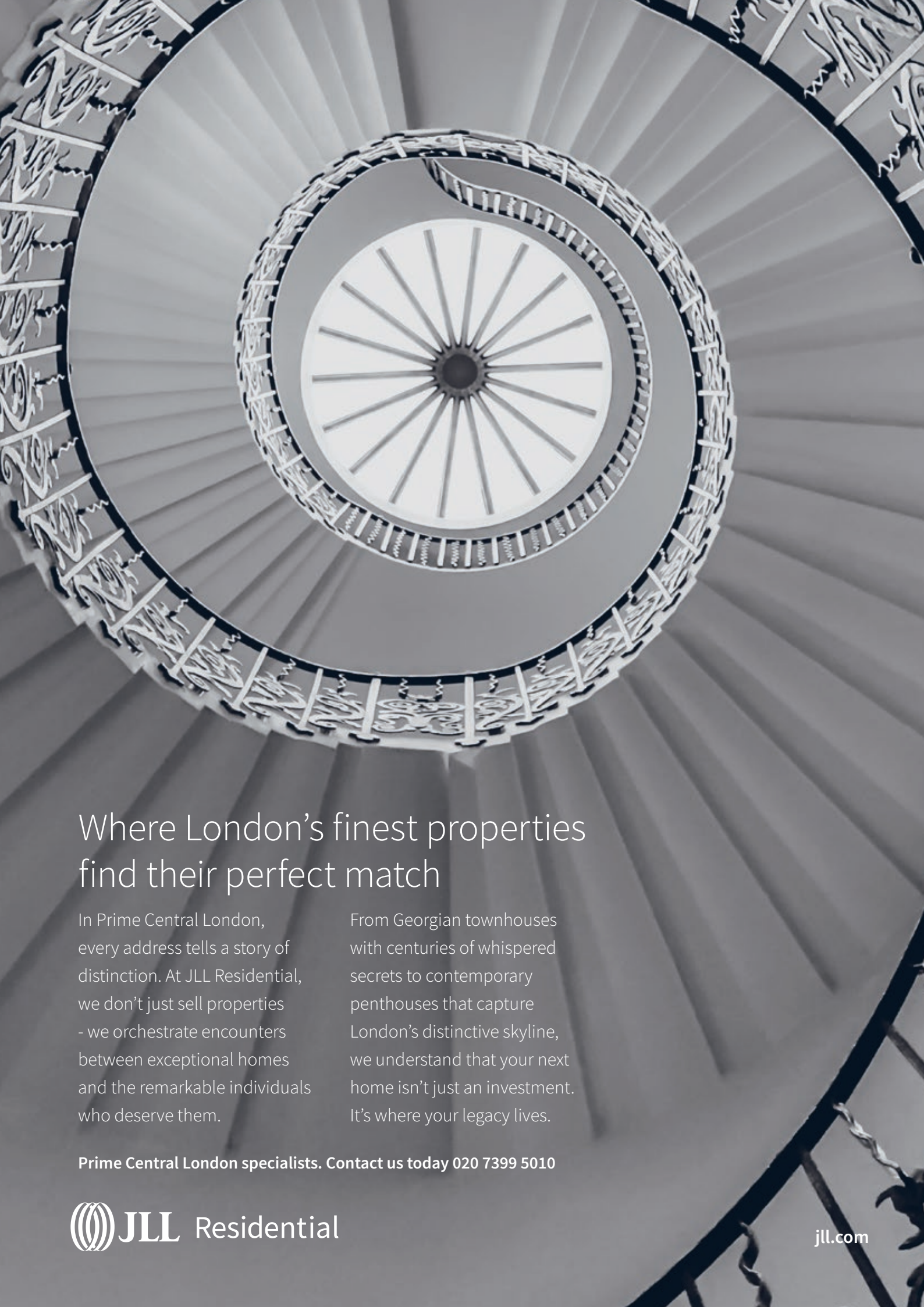
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THE CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW



The grandiose empty mansion: 2-8 Rutland Gate

This has proven to be the most difficult of years. On the one hand we have Knightsbridge Partnership's Place Management Strategy for Brompton Road that could deliver welcome improvements to a hitherto neglected stretch of public realm within five to ten years, while on the other we have Local Authority controlled licensing decisions that could transform the local street scene in a matter of months, undermine the Partnership's own objectives in Knightsbridge and deliver adverse outcomes for residents. We live in an era of hope tempered by threat.

Licensing decisions pose a threat because the economic growth the country needs is not coming from industry in the way it should. Casting around for other economic stimulants, the Government spotlight has fallen on hospitality and entertainment – and the late-night economy, in particular.

We were aware of this ever since Westminster City Council launched their Westminster After Dark consultation in early 2024. We have watched, with growing alarm, the struggles of Soho residents trying to claw back some semblance of residential amenity. It is now quite likely that late-night culture will flood into Knightsbridge on the back of two or three licensing decisions each one in perfect conformity with Licensing Objectives; each one an irrefutable precedent

for the next copy-cat application; each one incrementally ratcheting up pressure on Police and NHS from ensuing antisocial behaviour. And, if that's not enough, the addition of 'economic growth' as a licensing policy requirement in the new National Licensing Policy Framework will only ensure the process is not obstructed by objections from residents. In case you are not aware, the process has already started with an application for 3.00am opening by Sekerci Caf   Erol 1807 at 137 Brompton Road, whose application was approved by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, for details see page 15.

On a positive note, we were successful in securing the removal of scaffolding at 31–32 Rutland Gate after some six years, which came as a great relief to residents living on either side of the building. While thanks for this outcome are due to the persistence of Councillors and Officers and at Westminster City Council, the fact remains that consent for the renovation of these two buildings dates to 2013. The painted frontage now fits with the rest of this majestic Grade II listed terrace, in contrast to the building interior, whose broken windowpanes at basement and upper floor levels signal dereliction. Long delays in development are increasingly common in Knightsbridge where hoardings /

scaffolding in Brompton Square and Ennismore Gardens stand sentinel to the passage of time.

Perhaps the most egregious example of stalled development stands at 2–8 Rutland Gate (pictured above) whose planning application for refurbishment and partial demolition was granted in July 2021. Four separate houses were merged into a single residence circa 1987 and reportedly sold for around £210 million in 2020. An article by Jonathan Ford in the Daily Telegraph of 26 October 2025 describes the chequered history of this 45-room mansion that now stands as a '*Shrine to Homelessness*', yet another monument to dereliction. How are the mighty fallen: the unregulated, foreign inward investment economic model is truly broken.

Readers of our 2024 Annual Report and newsletters will recall that we have been advocating for Councils to seek powers to impose 'forced sale processes' on developers who fail to implement planning consents in good time. Crystallising the impaired value of assets is a first step to securing finance from alternative sources to enable planning consents to be fulfilled. It cannot be in the national interest for domestic or foreign investors to be able to convert valuable planning consents into planning options, exercisable at a developer's discretion.

This, coupled with unrealistically inflated property values, deprives working people of the opportunity of even living in Central London.

It came as a surprise, therefore, to hear that Westminster Council, the largest Planning Authority in the UK, did not submit a representation to the consultation on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill whose Report Stage commenced in the House of Lords on 20 October. The opportunity even to consider enhanced powers for local authorities to enable them to accelerate stalled developments appears to have been missed and may now have to wait for the next legislative cycle.

If officials are empowered to take planning decisions that previously would have gone through a Planning committee and if this is coupled this with an 'economic growth' criterion for the grant of alcohol licenses, then the last vestiges of local democracy will have been removed. At this point one must ask: what is the purpose of an Amenity Society?

Transport for London launched its consultation on Pedicab Regulations, after much cajoling from members of the Westminster Amenities Societies Forum, the KA and support from our two MPs, Rachel Blake and Joe Powell. Our Transport and Environment and Law and Order committees are now looking in detail at the proposed regulations and the outcome remains to be determined at time of writing.

We objected to Transport for London's consultation, conducted through Westminster Council, regarding the proposed imposition and / or extension of bus lanes and double yellow lines in Kensington Road. The proposal would create public safety issues for children and organisations seeking access to the Hyde Park football pitches. Reducing private vehicle traffic to one lane would create more traffic tailbacks in this already congested road. In our view, collectivisation of transport inevitably leads to longer journey times. For further details see page 17.

Discussions are on-going with The Royal Parks concerning proposals to reopen South Carriage Drive ('SCD') for east-bound only traffic. Relieving congestion in Kensington Road remains an issue of paramount importance for residents. The scheme was promoted jointly by the Knightsbridge Partnership, the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum,

and the Knightsbridge Association in 2024 and we remain hopeful that an accompanying cycle lane will be trialled in the Spring of 2026, see page 18 for details. The current layout at Hyde Park Corner is highly dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians and has involved head-on collisions. We are also urging The Royal Parks to renew park infrastructure, in particular the Joy of Life Fountain and damage to the Serpentine Bridge, further details on page 27].

The Association responded to the Fairer Funding Review, a consultation regarding proposals on ways to revise Local Authority funding. The formula proposed looking at two things: how much need there is in an area, and how much money a council could raise if it charged the national average council tax rate. You will be aware that many central London boroughs have some of the lowest council tax rates in the country, which means they collect far less than the average. The Association wrote to the Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government to express concern that the proposals would result in substantial Council tax increases and a reduction in services for elderly residents.

We argued that to produce a fair and sustainable funding settlement the Government needed to (i) adapt the funding formula to reflect the true costs borne by a capital city where employment costs can be up to 20% higher than in other cities; (ii) recognise the true cost of housing in Inner London which the proposed formula failed to do; and (iii) extend the transition period from three years to ten years to provide a longer period. We urged Government to reconsider both the pace and structure of proposed funding changes that would affect residential communities, profoundly. The results of the consultation are due to be published later in the year.

In last year's Annual report, I referred to a long list of 'anticipations' with the hope that some of them might come to fruition in 2024. I can report that both 1 Knightsbridge Green and the Park Tower Hotel secured their Planning consents. The Knightsbridge Partnership launched its Place management Strategy for Brompton Road 'Reimagining the Future of

Knightsbridge' at the Pavillion Club on 14 October, see page 31 for further details. Step-free access to the Piccadilly Line at Knightsbridge Station also opened but is dependent upon availability of TfL staff to operate it. Like Vesuvius, Nammos is dormant but could become active once an operator is secured.

In the year that Thames Water is likely to be taken back into public ownership, we thought it appropriate to highlight the work of architect Sir Joshua Bazalgette, responsible for the design and construction of London's sewerage system, see pages 41–46. We are grateful to Winnie Axworthy for researching the life of this overlooked engineering Titan whose work enabled London to remain a viable city after cholera and typhoid epidemics of the 19th century that culminated in the death of Prince Albert in December 1861. The Thames Tideway Tunnel, often referred to as the 'Super Sewer' is the first major improvement to Bazalgette's sewerage system for 150 years. How deftly this illustrates our nations' journey from an engineering-driven culture to a financially-driven one and begs the question: how could we have convinced ourselves to entrust strategic national infrastructure to private equity?

Rachel Blake MP, Cities of London and Westminster and Joe Powell MP, Kensington and Bayswater are now eighteen months into their terms of office and have sent reports on their activities over the year. These can be found on pages 34 and 35. Once again, they are invited to our AGM on Monday 19 January and we very much hope they will be able to attend.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Carol for the very considerable work she puts in as Editor of the Annual Report and Newsletters; and to thank members of our committees for the hard work and dedication they have shown throughout the year. For sure, there can be no let-up given the impending Licensing and Planning policy reviews the Government has in mind for 2026!

It remains for me to send Seasons Greetings to all our members and very best wishes for the New Year; and the hope that we can achieve acceptable outcomes for residents in 2026.

Melville Haggard
Chairman

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Carol Seymour-Newton

During the course of a year the Committee deals with a considerable number of minor applications such as small extensions, changes to façades, new shop fronts and signage all of which take up a considerable amount of time for our voluntary committee members, but our main concern this year has been dealing with the ongoing applications on 1 Knightsbridge Green and the Park Tower Hotel.

1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE GREEN

44–56 BROMPTON ROAD

As reported in our two earlier Newsletters, permission was



granted by Westminster Council (WCC) for partial redevelopment of and extensions to the existing building – one time home to Tattersalls the famous equine auctioneers. Since then we have participated in regular detailed discussions with members from 199 Knightsbridge, 10 Lancelot Place, others and their advisors on responding to the various stages of the development.

Berkeley Estate Asset Management, (BEAM) the developers, has set up a Community Liaison Group - the first

meeting took place at the end of September. The group will meet regularly to anticipate and/or deal with problems which arise during the whole course of the partial demolition and construction.

The group will be hosted by BEAM and in addition to the KA will include representatives from the Knightsbridge Partnership, the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum, 199 Knightsbridge, 10 Lancelot Place, the Bulgari, TfL and the local Councils.

BEAM are currently progressing detailed project design and have yet to go out to tender.

A lot of detailed work remains to be carried out, not least on the Construction Management scheme (including traffic management which needs to mitigate as far as possible the effect on Brompton Road and the surrounding residential streets). See also page 17.

Members will be glad to hear that the intention is to reintroduce a Post Office space within the redeveloped site, potentially as part of a complementary use. Meanwhile the PO is currently looking at potential, short term locations in the area to maintain the service whilst the redevelopment takes place.

As we go to press the draft Section 106* agreement, another cog in the wheel, has been published.

It still looks as if work will not begin on site until late 2026 or more probably early 2027.

**a legally binding agreement between the local authority and the developer to require developers to mitigate the specific impacts of their development through funding or providing infrastructure, affordable housing or environmental measures*

THE PARK TOWER HOTEL

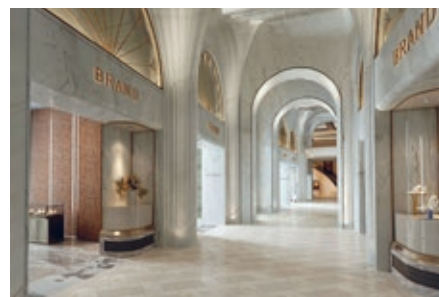


To bring this hotel up to the high standards required by international travellers, the proposal will bring significant enhancement at street level with a greatly improved presence on Knightsbridge, including a more important entrance, the introduction of shops and cafés in William Street, a more attractive side to Seville Street and several extra storeys (which the Association did not welcome).

We are told financing arrangements are nearing completion, and once in place the developers will be in a position to mobilise their team. It remains unlikely that they will be able to start work before 2027 with a further three and a half years to completion.

HARRODS

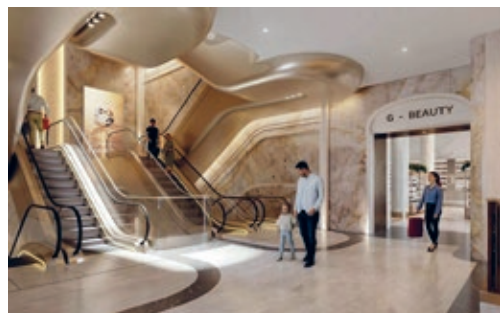
The Redevelopment of Fine Jewellery Department and Watches Department



The plans for this multi-million pound investment for a 'vertical' two storey boutique concept were

outlined in the Autumn newsletter. Work is anticipated to begin next year and take a number of years to complete.

The Central Escalator



The new central escalator

A planning application has been submitted to RBKC for works to replace the existing Egyptian escalator and other decorative features with new escalators and a glazed roof lantern above. We are assured that the proposed works reflect historic features and preserve architectural integrity.

Hans Road Façade

Works to the Hans Road façade in connection with the Fine Jewellery Department project, as covered in the Autumn Newsletter, are scheduled to commence in January, with plans to remove scaffolding by October 2026 coinciding with the closure of the Prada Caffè outdoor area. A PR company will be appointed to address any concerns that residents may wish to raise during the course of the works.

SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION

Following the completion of the concept design for the South Kensington Station upgrade project TfL (Transport for London) are still focussing their efforts on securing the necessary funding which, under current economic circumstances, is



The concourse

proving challenging. The total cost of the scheme is said to be in excess of £110 million. Of which Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) are understood to have confirmed up to £12 million of the delivery costs. Although TfL were awarded funds through the government's Comprehensive Spending Review earlier in the year, it is not known how much, if any of this will go towards this project.

The station serves over 30 million passengers annually and is a gateway to the world class cultural institutions - the V&A, the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and many more. Many of these passengers have small children, buggies or heavy luggage – so stepfree access is vital.

Congestion at times, especially during school holidays and at weekends, quite often necessitates temporary closure of the station for safety reasons. Stepfree access should help to avoid these closures by speeding up dispersal.

SIR HENRY COLE'S HOUSE

33 Thurloe Square



Facing the V&A, this house was home to Sir Henry Cole, who proposed the idea of the Great Exhibition (1851) and was the founder and first Director of the V&A. More recently the house was the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman. Since then it has been subject to a proposal to convert it to a hotel, and now a further proposal to completely gut the Grade II Listed building to create 6 holiday lets/apartments. The KA and the Brompton Association have written to RBKC to oppose this wholly inappropriate proposal for such a historically important building.

PUBLIC REALM SCHEMES

HANS CRESCENT



Plans for the public realm improvements in Hans Crescent are well under way and work is expected to start in January. Andie Sturgeon, the designer, was also responsible for the Sloane Street project.

A reminder of what is to come: new landscaping will include raised landscaped planters with integrated seating, retention of four existing trees with 3 new trees at the Basil Street end; new paving, and new heritage lighting and a zone for public art on a plinth at the Basil Street end. The café tables and chairs down the centre, allowed during Covid restrictions, will not return. Work is expected to commence in June and extend through 2026.

SOUTH KENSINGTON ESTATES



This begins on the south side of Brompton Road and covers a considerable area down to and around South Kensington Station and down to Brompton Cross. They are currently exploring the possibilities for a scheme to enhance the pedestrianised area of Exhibition Road (above) with consultants Space Syntax. Meanwhile they have renewed the tables and chairs

licences. In similar fashion to other major freeholders in difficult economic times, they are actively seeking new tenants for empty shop premises.

BEAUCHAMP PLACE

RBKC tells us that following detailed basement surveys and a stakeholder meeting in September, they are working with engineers and local businesses to refine the design for the street's improvement. Unfortunately owing to the location and extent of basements and location of utilities within the road the scheme can no longer facilitate tree pits. However, the proposed wider public realm does allow for the potential for future surface mounted planters if the community wants to proceed with that element.

The aim is still to create wider, more welcoming pavements and safer spaces for everyone, while ensuring the plans are practical and deliverable. RBKC will get back to stakeholders in the new year to update them further.

ENFORCEMENT

2-8 RUTLAND GATE

The gentleman who has taken up residence on the porch in recent



years with his ever-increasing number of chattels seems immovable. The Council only has responsibility for keeping the public streets and pavements clear. WCC has several times removed his overflowing possessions from the pavement, but is not empowered to remove them from private premises. For those who are interested in the status of the property, there was a long article in the Telegraph on Sunday 26 October. For those who are interested in the status of the property, see also the Chairman's Review.

31-32 RUTLAND GATE

At last the scaffolding has gone. See under Chairman's Review – the property remains empty, although the planning permission is still live.

64 ENNISMORE GARDENS and 2 BROMPTON SQUARE

Two more properties which have been empty and scaffolded for



64 Ennismore Gardens (top) and 2 Brompton Square

several years without any work seemingly taking place to bring them back into occupation.

10 RUTLAND MEWS SOUTH

This saga continues and there seems to have been confusion at the Council about exactly what the rules were concerning the height and extent of solar panels. Communication with RBKC continues.

LICENSING REPORT

Paul Meitner

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

A challenging year, with many applications to review and potential changes to licensing policies that represent a very real threat to our residents' quality of life.

SEKERCI CAFER EROL 137-141 Brompton Road

This application involved the provision of food and refreshments (including the sale of alcohol), until 3 a.m. Thursday to Saturday nights,

way beyond the standard terminal hour of Midnight, as set out in The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC's) Statement of Licensing Policy. The hearing took



place on 18th September 2025. At the outset the applicant stated that he had amended the application to bring the terminal hour back to 2 a.m. for all activities on Thursday to Saturday nights, with a closing time of 2.30 a.m.

On 2nd October, almost two weeks after the hearing had been held, we and other objectors were informed by RBKC that the application had been granted, albeit with the terminal hour for the sale of alcohol on the premises and

indoor provision of refreshments curtailed to 1.30 a.m. and the terminal hour to 2.00 a.m., subject to various conditions, most of which had been suggested by the applicant at the time of original application. One of these is the holding of regular meetings with local ward councillors and local residents' associations, including the KA and the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF), at which the operation of the premises will be discussed.

The Executive Committee of the KA was extremely concerned to hear that RBKC had granted this application and is consulting its lawyers to determine the next steps, which may include an appeal against the decision.

PROPOSED CHANGES to LICENSING POLICY in RBKC and WCC

RBKC has published the changes that it proposes to make when the new policy is issued next year. Taken at face value these are minor and uncontroversial and some are even welcome, such as requiring operators to implement delivery policies that deal with waste collection and reduce noise. However, we have expressed our concern about weaknesses in the legal framework and procedures applicable to licensing, as follows:

- Applications for Pavement Licences are not advertised in RBKC's weekly eLicensing newsletter, instead they must be displayed in a notice at the premises - but only require a week's consultation period. This requires continuous monitoring by concerned parties and so applications can be easily missed, especially at holiday times.
- Enforcement of conditions is patchy at best and local authorities, including RBKC, only seem to act in response to numerous vociferous complaints from residents.

There is a lack of metrics (i.e. the recording and publication of statistics) to show developing

trends and 'hot spots' for issues such as late-night opening, crime and complaints. These would be useful when it comes to focussing the deployment of resources by Licensing Enforcement and the Police.

Secondly, a proposal has been made that all licensing applications should be handled by the Greater London Authority (GLA), rather than individual local authorities that are accountable to residents and local councillors. We are strongly opposed to this as we believe that it is undemocratic. The GLA does not understand local needs and concerns and will be more swayed by what it sees as London-wide and national priorities.

In October we were made aware by the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum (WASF), which represents Residents Associations and other groups in the borough, of proposed changes to the City of Westminster's Licensing Policy. Some of these were 'new', i.e. not highlighted when RBKC invited comments on the changes to its policy and gave rise to additional concerns, as follows:

1. The inclusion in the National Licensing Policy Framework (NLPF) of economic growth as a Licensing Policy requirement. In our view this conflicts with two of the existing objectives of the Licensing Act 2003, being the prevention of crime and the prevention of public nuisance.
2. The proposed relaxation of the rules concerning Outdoor Trading & Pavement Licences, which in our view are already too relaxed and result in insufficient public scrutiny.
3. The possible abandonment of 'blanket' policies, including those relating to Core Hours.

There is also a possible increase in the number of TEN's (Temporary Event Notices), although at the time of writing it is not clear how big this might be.

Taking into account the above it is difficult to avoid the conclusion

that the current priority is the boosting of the nighttime economy (NTE) and thus business rates and tax receipts, to compensate for the nation's failing industrial strategy.

WESTMINSTER AFTER DARK

In May Westminster City Council (WCC) launched *Westminster After Dark*, which laid out its proposals to bolster Westminster's nightlife, and the public was asked to have its say. Recommendations relating to licensing matters included:

- The requirement for all new licensed venues to show that they were prioritising women's safety, with a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and predatory behaviour
- Encouraging non-alcohol-led activities at night, such as extended retail hours and later museum openings
- Setting up Westminster's first Late-Night Entertainment Zones on Oxford Street, The Strand, and Victoria Street to encourage music, theatre, and creative venues to set up on wide streets with good transport links and few residents
- Prioritising support and protection for culturally significant LGBTQ+ spaces, ensuring that they continue to thrive as safe and inclusive venues
- Creating opportunities for our residents to work in Westminster's thriving hospitality, creative and cultural industries.

The above proposals were proposed by the Labour group and passed without opposition.

DOLMIO 70 Brompton Road

This was a 'shadow' application, which should mean that the terms and conditions of the existing licence were carried over unchanged from one operator to another. We were initially concerned that the wording of the shadow licence would permit 'vertical drinking' – i.e. the consumption of alcohol without

a meal – and accordingly lodged an objection. On receiving confirmation from WCC’s Licensing Committee that this was not the case we withdrew our objection and the shadow licence was approved.

RIFAI
217 Brompton Road

This application involved the placing of tables and chairs opposite a pedestrian crossing and a set of traffic lights, thus impeding the flow of people across the road,

as well as people walking down the pavement. Accordingly, we lodged an objection. It appears that this application was withdrawn as no licence has been granted.

CHAIWALA
241 Brompton Road

Several residents expressed their concern about the noise created by bikers and food delivery agents assembling outside these premises late at night. We supported these concerns and lodged our own objections to RBKC, who in



turn referred the matter to their Community Safety and Street Enforcement team.

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Chris Barrass and Simon Birkett

BUS ROUTES AND LANES

We lost the 414 bus route in February 2025 in return for a more frequent ‘eight-minute’ 14 service. Looking ahead, we are concerned about proposals for two-way 24/7 bus lanes along the A315 i.e. Kensington Road and Knightsbridge between Palace Gate and Scotch House Corner. While the proposals have some merit west of Rutland Gate, they are likely to cause longer traffic queues and access problems near Scotch House Corner and lead to increased rat-running through the Ennismores, Montpeliers and Trevors. The KA objected to the consultation proposals. The Council’s next step would be a further consultation or Traffic Management Order in coming months.

CLEANER AIR

Knightsbridge’s air quality in 2024 was the best since records began in 2000 – including during COVID when there was no traffic. Annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), a toxic gas, in Brompton Road rose from 75 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m³) in 2000 to 95 ug/m³ in 2006 before falling to 32 ug/m³ in 2020 and to 29 ug/m³ in 2024. This has largely

been a story about diesel fumes. It’s not all good news though because levels have risen slightly to 30 ug/m³ in 2025 (as at 3 November 2025) and the World Health Organisation (‘WHO’) slashed its air quality guideline from 40 ug/m³ in 2005 to 10 ug/m³ in September 2021. The latest increase is probably caused by the increase in diesel vans. We’re focused on achieving the WHO’s interim guideline of 20 ug/m³ by 1 January 2030 which would match legal limits applying across the European Union since December 2024. This will require the phasing out of diesel and a shift towards all-electric buildings (as major developments are already doing to reduce emissions that harm the climate and environment). Meanwhile, enjoy the cleaner air!

DOCKLESS BAYS AND E-BIKES

In March 2025, Westminster City Council made permanent a number of changes to dockless bays that have settled in well. We continue to seek the extension of the Montpelier Street bay in front of 13 Montpelier Street to match demand.

Our other local priorities include solutions to the massive e-bike activity in Exhibition Road, stricter



Chaos in Hans Road

enforcement against inconsiderate cycling and more dockless bays on Brompton Road.

A city wide solution to the problems with e-bikes may require: more powers from government for councils and the Mayor; strict enforcement of road traffic rules; a cap on the total numbers of e-bikes (and e-scooters); require e-bike users to hold a provisional or full driving licence (as moped riders do) or similar because of the power and weight of the e-bikes; provide secure cycle parking for private bikes; more trial and virtual bays with faster churn; and a vision that balances the use of the public realm between e-bikes, pedestrians, vehicles and everything else.

1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE GREEN DEVELOPMENT

We have invested considerable time in responding to consultations

about the development, which would include about half the city block between Lancelot Place and Knightsbridge Green including the tall office building. With planning permission granted in March 2025 we are still waiting for the formal 'decision notice' at the time of writing. A top priority of the Transport and Environment Committee in 2026 will be to press for a construction management plan that will keep activity within the site failing which on Knightsbridge Green i.e. away from Lancelot Place and Raphael Street. A pit lane may be necessary on Brompton Road but should be time limited.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE PLACE AND PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

The successful completion of the reimagined Sloane Street scheme has set a high 'bar' for the ambitious Knightsbridge Place and Public Realm Strategy ('KPPRS'). Detailed traffic modelling is underway with a view to TfL approving in principle the preferred design by February 2026. There are a number of challenging traffic issues to address, not least if the two 24/7 bus lanes on the A315 Knightsbridge are implemented and cause increased traffic queuing eastbound into Scotch House Corner.

Our key concerns include: diversion of the traffic from Brompton Road to Knightsbridge and Kensington Road and further west, with consequences for queue lengths and rat-running (as above); the feasibility of the left hook turn for buses and taxis north-bound from Sloane Street when combined with the pedestrian crossing there; protecting the important left turn at Scotch House Corner from Brompton Road eastbound (which reduces rat-running through local streets); and inevitable details e.g. taxi ranks and stands.

PICCADILLY LINE UPGRADES

Step-free access to the Piccadilly Line became possible during 2025 after the lifts at Hoopers Court

were finally opened at Knightsbridge underground station. This valuable benefit came from The Knightsbridge Estate redevelopment. The next and bigger improvement is the prospect of new Piccadilly Line trains by the end of the 2026. They would be air conditioned, walk-through and more frequent at peak times.



Meanwhile, we have had to experience weekend station closures for testing including over the weekend of the Royal Parks Half Marathon. The Knightsbridge Partnership has been in active dialogue with Transport for London to protect their Christmas Trading period. We expect more testing and closures in 2026 until the new trains settle in. Please check before you travel.

PICCADILLY UNDERPASS

Piccadilly Underpass was closed for a number of weeks in 2025 for further works on ventilation and safety. These closures caused long traffic delays despite the signs warning people to avoid the area. At the time of writing, Westminster was developing its plans for further closures to complete this phase of the works. These are likely to happen in January and February 2026. Again, please check before you travel.

SOUTH CARRIAGE DRIVE

We continue to encourage the Royal Parks to address the chaotic merging of cyclists from South Carriage Drive, Hyde Park Corner, the Broad Walk and Park Lane by Apsley House and the Queen Elizabeth Gate. It was a scary place during the week-long strike on the London Underground. The latest news is that trial cycling lanes are expected to be introduced in early 2026 i.e. about a year later than expected. The implementation, monitoring and analysis of such a scheme is essential if we are to break the deadlock on the re-opening of



South Carriage Drive for drivers, at least eastbound, because a cycling solution is needed whether drivers are allowed or not. We welcome the trial and will press for evidence and progress on the re-opening of South Carriage Drive at least five days a week.

DRAINS, PAVING and RESURFACING

We have been pleased to see



ongoing improvements to the public realm. For example, most of the stormwater drains in Montpelier Walk have been replaced and upgraded in 2025. This will improve resilience across a wider area. Other planned works include the resurfacing of Lancelot Place, after the completion of the 3-11 Lancelot Place project, and the replacement of paving between 31 and 33 Rutland Gate now that scaffolding has come down.

DOG POO, FOOD WASTE RECYCLING and MORE

This is our annual reminder to use FixMyStreet.com to report dog poo, rubbish dumped out of hours, flooding and problems with streets

lights, paving or traffic signs. Please report any street flooding (which we find easiest to spot across an area after heavy rain) because it may save you or your neighbours from getting flooded

in future. The Council sees all reports immediately. With dog poo problems, Westminster says that it helps to give them a description of the owner, dog and time and place. Multiple reports get more action.

Last but not least, please do use the excellent food waste recycling service and email foodwaste@westminster.gov.uk or order online if you need more food waste bags.

LAW AND ORDER REPORT

Anne Wright and Frances Blois

WORKING WITH OUR METROPOLITAN POLICE WARD TEAMS

The Knightsbridge Association work closely with two Safer Neighbourhood Ward Teams - the Hans Town and Brompton Team and the Knightsbridge and Belgravia Team – who similarly work with the Royal Borough and Westminster, local businesses and residents to decide policing priorities in our area.

We are extremely grateful to both Teams for the quality of their work, which is of increasing volume, and their loyal attention to us all in Knightsbridge in carrying out their duties and keeping us safe.

PRIORITIES

Over the current year the priorities have been motor vehicle offences, robbery and thefts from person, and residential burglary. Not all of these priorities have resulted in a reduction of crime but there has not been any increase other than in motor vehicles and there has certainly been some successes.

MOTOR VEHICLES OFFENCES

These include both thefts from vehicles as well as the vehicles themselves and the Teams have been running plain clothes and high visibility uniformed patrols that has focused on motor vehicle crime in the hot spot areas in the Wards – Princes Gardens, Prince Consort Road and Lancelot Place.

There has been an increase in thefts of in particular high end motor vehicles - often 'to order' and almost immediate export to the Middle East from the Kent ports. The Crime and Policing Bill (see below) will make it illegal to possess, manufacture or distribute certain car theft devices with a maximum five-year imprisonment which may be the deterrent our Police are looking for.

ROBBERY and THEFTS from PERSON

The Teams continue to host community events and patrols as a visible deterrent to in particular thefts from the person – watches, mobiles phones – which occur more in the summer months when watches are more visible and more people are about looking at their phones for directions coming up from the tube. The Met's Op Sorran



An open invitation

– a specialist unit of six officers operating on e-bikes earlier this year – was a successful deterrent, and we hope will be continued. The hot spot areas are South Carriage Drive, Hyde Park Corner and Brompton Road near to both Harrods and Harvey Nichols.

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

Reported burglaries have decreased over the last year and where they have taken place the Teams liaise with victim and provide to them – and the five houses either side - advice on crime prevention in their reporting.

CAR MEETS



Policing the Exhibition Road roundabout

These were not a specific Team priority but a certain success story. Illegal and disruptive car meets have frequently occurred in Exhibition Road and Prince Consort

Road leading authorities to take action such as implementing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) increasing police patrols and using noise cameras to deter dangerous driving and stunts.

Recent efforts have been successfully made to prevent them gathering as the problem has been on going for a number of years due to their widespread communication via social media. Our local Councillors have also allocated additional funds from the Ward budget to increase police patrols when it is known that car meets are going to take place and this has worked to limit the high speed stunts and noise often late at night.

ROYAL PARK POLICING:

Following the disbanding of the Royal Park Police on the 1 November 2025 the work of policing south of the Serpentine, is to be transferred to our Knightsbridge and Belgravia Ward Team who are being given an extra Team officer to assist them. Although the Team are to patrol the park, they are not to be involved in investigating any crime and neither are they to be involved in policing Winter Wonderland or any other Live Concert or gathering. These are additional duties however and we will continue to keep abreast of the success of this additional assignment for the Team.



Working with Knightsbridge Partnership's security



MET ENGAGE

Through a new platform Met Engage it is now possible to get to know our local officers, help shape how specifically our area of Knightsbridge is policed and have direct access to information and advice. We would encourage signing up to this facility – here is the link www.metengage.co.uk

LEGISLATION AND PENDING LEGISLATION

PEDICABS (LONDON) ACT 2024

The Act's aim was to address long standing concerns about pedicab operations which currently remain the only unregulated transport on London's roads.

Powers were conferred on Transport for London (TfL) to bring forward a licencing regime for pedicabs similar to powers of local authorities elsewhere in England and Wales. Provision was made giving TfL the ability to introduce fare control to combat overcharging and protect consumers from being financially exploited. A requirement was made so as to ensure that pedicab drivers undergo criminal record and right to work checks before being allowed to carry passengers in the same way as drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles as well as introducing insurance requirements and ensuring the vehicles are roadworthy. Power was also given to TfL to restrict the presence of pedicabs in certain areas at certain times to help improve road safety and traffic related issues in central London.

None of these provisions have been implemented by TfL who, following an initial consultation report in June 2025 which received overwhelming support for regulation of the industry from Londoners, deemed it necessary to hold a further consultation on detailed proposals for licensing, safety standards, fair fare structures and insurance requirements. The second consultation ran until the 20 October 2025 and at the time of writing we await what we hope is TfL's final report.

THE RENTERS' RIGHTS BILL

This is in its final stages and expected to receive Royal Assent by the end of the year at which point it will become the Renters Rights Act 2025 and will bring significant changes to the private rental sector imposing new responsibilities for Landlords.

The purpose of the Bill is to reform the residential rental market notably by abolishing assured shorthold tenancies and the so called 'no fault' eviction procedure for terminating tenancies under the Housing Act 1988.

It also introduces the right for tenants to ask to keep a pet at their rental property, a redress scheme which residential landlords will need to join and a database of private landlord and rental properties.

CRIME AND POLICING BILL

This Bill is intended to increase public confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system including by reforming the existing anti-social behaviour regime.

Respect Orders are introduced which are to partially replace existing civil injunctions and enable courts to deal with the underlying causes of ASB for example undertaking drug or alcohol treatment. The Bill also proposed introducing a new criminal offence of 'cuckooing' which involves criminals targeting and taking over the homes of vulnerable people for the purpose of illegal activity.

Both offences are liable to imprisonment and or a fine.

MEMBERS' SECTION

EVENTS

64th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION

Monday 19 January 2026 Please note the change of date

Our thanks go to the management of the Mandarin Oriental for once again making their fabulous Ballroom available for this event.

Invitations and the AGM Papers are in the process of being sent out by email or by post. This year's raffle will be in aid of THE PASSAGE a charity which aims to get the ever increasing number of homeless people off the streets of London.

We very much look forward to seeing you on the day.

63rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

Monday 20 January 2025

Members and guests once again came to the magnificent Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental to enjoy champagne and canapés before the meeting opened. Melville Haggard was duly elected to serve as chairman for a further year, as were the other members of the Executive Committee, and Gary Lapidus was welcomed as the new treasurer. Following the chairman's address and reports from Committee chairmen, Steven Medway, CEO of the Knightsbridge Partnership (KP) was invited to talk about the KP's Knightsbridge Place and Public Realm Strategy over the next five to ten years – page 31.

Joe Powell, MP for Kensington & Bayswater, provided a brief update on the proposed redevelopment of South Kensington Station.

Other Events

Two events during the year proved popular – a visit to the Hyde Park Nursery and a garden party at the Athenaeum Club in Pall Mall. Please do let us know if you have any suggestions for events in 2026.



Voting at the 63rd AGM

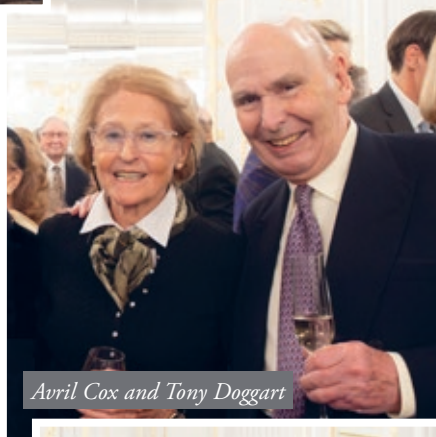
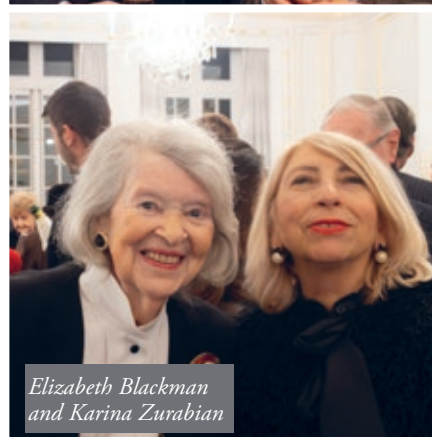
APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Most of the Executive Committee of the Knightsbridge Association have been with us for many years. Their expertise is varied and valued. However, we do need help, both with the extent of the work we address as well as expanding issues, notably relating to Licensing, Planning and Transport & Environment. If you have a love of Knightsbridge as we do and want to ensure that it improves its quality, please consider joining us as an advisor. Please contact Carol Seymour-Newton or Melville Haggard if you are interested or would just like to have an exploratory chat. Contact details below:-

carol.seymour-newton@knightsbridgeassociation.com

melville.haggard@knightsbridgeassociation.com

RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2024 AGM (Held on 20 January 2025)



RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2024 AGM (Held on 20 January 2025)



Olivia Cox and Tom Slator



*Carol Seymour-Newton, Diddi Malek
and Nazy Amini*



*Anica Alvarez Nishio
and Tony Duncan Jones*



Marc Forestier and David Lindstrom



Simone de Gale and Jeremy and Maya Taylor



Sue Price and Jason Taylor



*Tony Knight and
WCC Deputy Mayor, Frances Blois*



*PC Zack Slaney, PC Georgiana Meadows
and PC Paul Wyllie*



Anastasia and Michael Dionissiou



Victoria Larosa and Norbert Kurcz



*Mary Ann Masucci, James Vaughan
and Karolina Gantchar*



Colette Hubbard and Marlaine Fielding

MEMBERSHIP

Olivia Cox

Membership has remained more or less constant, although sadly we have lost some long-term members recently as well as gaining new ones.

We are continuing to try to streamline the subscription payment process. At the end of last year members who paid by PayPal were asked to cancel their PayPal subscription to the Knightsbridge Association. We then closed our KA PayPal account last January. The KA membership of these members continues until December this year when they will be encouraged to renew their KA membership

through a Direct Debit payment or a bank transfer.

Membership payment methods currently include Go Cardless (direct debit set up through the KA website), Lloyds bank transfers and standing orders, and payments through our NatWest account. The NatWest account was set up decades ago and some members are still paying old membership rates through this account. Others did not cancel their old NatWest subscriptions when setting up new subscription payments through Lloyds. We

hope to ensure over the next year that all members are paying one subscription at the current membership rates.

We have several new Corporate members and are aiming to improve the corporate invoice process with the help of our Treasurer Gary Lapidus.

The majority of members pay their annual subscription by standing order or direct debit. It would be very helpful if members who pay their membership subscription annually would consider setting up a Direct Debit payment or a recurring payment by bank transfer.

FINANCE REPORT

Gary Lapidus

The accounts for the financial year ended 30 September 2025, were presented on a cash basis. The Association recorded a deficit of £10,489 (approximately £6,800 after adjusting for the timing of Annual Report advertising income received in Financial Year 2024 but relating to Financial Year 2025).

Income declined primarily due to lower Annual Report advertising

and the loss of one corporate member although part of the former reflects a timing difference rather than reduced sales.

Expenditure rose mainly from higher newsletter and office costs (upgraded telephone system), while events were run at or near breakeven.

Some Newsletter expenses may also have a timing element with FY2024 costs appearing in FY25 and that this will be reviewed in 2026. Despite the deficit, the Association's financial position remains strong, with £78,000 in cash reserves.

The Committee agreed to focus on returning operations to a balanced position in FY2026.

APPRECIATIONS

Melville Haggard

CHRIS BARRASS

Thank you, Chris for all the support you give us in what has been an exceptionally busy year for the Transport and Environment committee on many fronts. With the bus lane consultation in Kensington Road, your work with the Knightsbridge Partnership and your leadership in co-ordinating 199 residents' concerns over the impending redevelopment of 1

Knightsbridge Green, we are very fortunate to have you devoting so much time to KA activities.

SIMON BIRKETT

Thank you, Simon, for the time you devote to running the Transport & Environment committee. You have made a formative contribution to the re-allocation of e-bike parking bays and, subsequently, to bringing pressure to bear on the e-bike platform operators to improve their parking arrangements. Your efforts

with the operators and Councils are starting to make a difference.

FRANCES BLOIS

Your experience at Westminster City Council is greatly valued as is your representation of the Association at Safer Neighbourhood meetings. Thank you too for your input at our Executive Committee meetings where your wide experience across all the Association's activities is greatly valued.

FRANCESCO BRENTA

Thank you, for playing an increasingly active role in the work of the Planning and Conservation committee and for your willingness to attend external events on behalf of the KA. Your experience as an architect is invaluable given the current intensity of development in Knightsbridge; and your assertive monitoring of the 13-17 Montpelier Street site is widely recognised.

NEIL CARTHY

Our email system works smoothly due to your careful oversight and management. We are very lucky to have access to your wise council on all matters digital and we thank you for always being available when called upon.

OLIVIA COX

For yet another year, Olivia has dedicated her energy to finding new members and updating our membership database. Thank you, Olivia, for your contribution at Executive Committee meetings by sharing your experience across all the Association's areas of activity; and for your continued dedication to KA's affairs.

NORBERT KURCZ

Thank you Norbert for representing the KA at external events and devoting time to responding to consultations in addition to day-to-day case work. You make a strong contribution to the work of the Planning & Conservation committee through your careful

assessment of cases and attention to detail.

BARBARA LINTON

Once again, our special thanks to Barbara who has designed and published the KA's annual reports and newsletters since 2001. Thank you for being such a patient, resourceful and unflappable curator of the Association's public face.

MATTEO MARGAROLI

Thank you Matteo for being available to attend Planning and Conservation committee meetings and allowing us to draw on your knowledge of the Knightsbridge area and professional architectural experience.

PAUL MEITNER

Thank you for your active contribution to the Licensing brief in 2025, which alongside your other commitments has made this an especially challenging year. Your role managing the communications brief for KA is widely appreciated by members as are your measured responses to external enquiries and your work on Licensing policy. Thank you for the time you devote to these activities.

PANDA MORGAN THOMAS

The Association is grateful to Panda for helping to organise the Annual General Meeting in January and KA's Summer reception in the garden of The Atheneum in bright summer sunshine complete with a sparkling attendance by members and guests.

ALEXANDRA MORGAN THOMAS

Our thanks to Alexandra for managing successfully Annual Report advertising against an adverse economic backdrop. You have also streamlined the registration procedure for the Annual General Meeting thereby bringing us into line with recognised practice in this field.

CAROL SEYMOUR-NEWTON

Carol is the anchor around which the Association revolves and continues to play a pivotal role in the running of the KA. She is the Association's third Hon. Secretary and, since 2022, its Life President. Through your engaging personality and astute editorship of our Annual Reports and newsletters, you create a very real sense of community amongst Knightsbridge residents. This is arguably the central achievement of a residents' association. Securing a positive licensing or planning outcome for residents is just a bonus! Thank you, Carol.

ANNE WRIGHT

We are very grateful to Anne for her active contribution to the Law & Order committee while continuing to work as a practicing lawyer. Thank you for keeping a watch on upcoming legislation while maintaining valuable contact with our respective Councils' Police teams – and for being the life and soul of the Trevor Square summer garden party!



Avril Cox

Avril died in September after a short but devastating disease, bravely faced. She and her late husband John were long-term Knightsbridge residents and both made significant contributions to local life – Avril as a member of the Knightsbridge

Association's Planning Committee and John as a former WCC local ward councillor. Avril also had a long and successful career as a property consultant, founding her own company in 2010. Our thoughts go out to her son and daughter Charlie and Victoria.

Lillemor Gardener

Lillemor sadly died in March following a long and bravely-borne illness.

She was a long time member of the Association and had helped organize some spectacular events. The best of these and one which she organized with her husband, Ken, was a historical musical evening at St Paul's Cathedral followed by a buffet in the crypt. Lillemor was beautiful, kind, always cheerful and proud of her Swedish heritage.



THE ROYAL PARKS

Alexandra Morgan Thomas

HYDE PARK – LONDON'S LIVING LANDMARK IN A YEAR OF RENEWAL AND CELEBRATION

Hyde Park stands at the heart of the capital's outdoor life and 2025 has seen a mix of cultural events, conservation work and community activity.

Run by the charity The Royal Parks, it is a refuge of calm but also provides cultural and economic assets. The organisation's calendar this year has been packed with nature walks, history tours, wellbeing sessions and major events. The Royal Parks Half Marathon, held in October, linked four of the Royal parks along a 13.1-mile route, while family programmes such as Nature Adventurers at Hyde Park's Learning Centre helped younger Londoners explore wildlife and conservation up close.

A STAGE for SUMMER and BEYOND

2025 has been a year of energy and variety. The summer months saw the return of BST Hyde Park - the British Summer Time festival - which brought some of the world's biggest music acts to the park. Olivia Rodrigo, Zach Bryan, Noah Kahan, Sabrina Carpenter, Stevie Wonder, and Jeff Lynne's ELO all performed across three weekends in June and July. Alongside headline concerts

ran the BST Open House, a free week-long programme offering outdoor cinema, children's theatre, yoga sessions and food from independent traders.

Later in the year, Hyde Park once again served as the starting point for the Royal Parks Half Marathon, filling its avenues with runners and spectators and the annual veteran car London to Brighton race, the world's oldest motoring event.



As the year draws to a close, preparations are well underway for Winter Wonderland, the park's festive spectacular that draws millions of visitors between November and January.



With ticketed entry and timed sessions, it remains one of London's most beloved seasonal traditions.

Crowds gathered to see Stevie Wonder

NATURE, LEARNING AND COMMUNITY

Beyond the big stages, Hyde Park continues to nurture its quieter side. The Hyde Park Super Nursery, located within the park, supports planting across the Royal Parks estate, producing bedding plants and contributing to sustainability goals. Educational initiatives have also flourished. The Nature Adventurers series has invited children aged eight to twelve to explore habitats and ecosystems, fostering early connections to the natural world.

For those seeking reflection rather than revelry, walking tours such as Hidden Stories of Hyde Park have offered glimpses into lesser-known corners of the park, including the historic pet cemetery and long-forgotten landmarks. Meanwhile, the Lido Garden's 'Chef Takeovers' brought local food talent to the park's lakeside setting.

SERPENTINE GALLERY

The Serpentine Galleries' 2026 programme presents a dynamic year of major exhibitions and architectural innovation. Opening the season, David Hockney's first Serpentine solo show features his celebrated A Year in Normandy frieze and immersive 'Moon Room'. Simultaneously, Cecily Brown unveils new paintings and drawings inspired by nature and memory. In autumn, Amar Kanwar will transform Serpentine North with film and installation exploring colonial legacies and displacement.

Next year, Serpentine will stage the 25th Pavilion, celebrating a commission that began with Dame Zaha Hadid's inaugural structure in Hyde Park in 2000. With its



unique position in The Royal Parks, Serpentine will continue to bring art into daily life.

DIANA, PRINCESS of WALES MEMORIAL PLAYGROUND

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Playground will be closed from 3 November 2025 for a refurbishment and is due to reopen for summer 2026.



The playground in Kensington Gardens, opened in 2000 to commemorate the late Diana, Princess of Wales, who resided at the nearby Kensington Palace. Inspired by the adventures of Peter Pan, the playground welcomes over one million visitors a year.

After decades of adventures and play, some of the equipment in the playground has reached the end of its life and now needs a full replacement. The renewal will include: a new Galleon; a new tree house; a larger-than-life crocodile; and a refreshed under 3's area.

REPAIRS and RESTORATIONS

The KA has expressed concern to TRP about the length of time it is taking to repair the Serpentine Bridge, damaged over the Christmas period 2023 and the Joy of Life Fountain which has been switched off since Autumn 2019. In the case of the Bridge they anticipate that repairs should be completed by March 2026. Repairing the Fountain has proved to be extremely complex with further damage occurring during the winter of 2020 and, during the pandemic, TRP restricting all maintenance requirements across all eight Royal Parks for the duration. Some refurbishment did take place in the spring of 2022, but currently budget restrictions are holding back further progress.



A PARK for all SEASONS

Hyde Park remains both a global destination and a neighbourhood haven. From world-class concerts to quiet walks under autumn trees, it has once again demonstrated why it sits at the heart of London's cultural and ecological life. More than a stage or a garden, Hyde Park continues to be what it has always been - a living landmark, evolving with the city it serves.

EXHIBITION ROAD CULTURAL GROUP 2025: A Year of Celebration, Discovery and Transformation

Sarah Berresford, Head of Marketing ERCG

Home to world-leading institutions, museums, and cultural icons, the district continues to inspire visitors of all ages with groundbreaking exhibitions, bold new projects, and unforgettable events. As we head towards 2026, there is much to celebrate and look forward to – from world-class rankings for local universities to milestone anniversaries and ambitious transformations that will shape the cultural quarter for years to come.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE at THE HEART of SOUTH KENSINGTON

IMPERIAL has been ranked No.2 in the QS World University Rankings, cementing its place as one of the very best universities in the world. Known globally for its pioneering research, innovative teaching, and contributions to tackling the greatest challenges of our time, Imperial's achievement is a testament to the extraordinary talent of its staff and students.

Equally impressive, the Royal College Of Music (RCM) has been crowned No. 1 in the QS World University Rankings by Subject for performing arts. The accolade celebrates RCM's role as one of the world's leading conservatoires, nurturing generations of exceptional musicians and setting the gold standard for music education.

Adding to the success, the Royal College Of Art (RCA) has once again been ranked No. 1 in the world for Art and

Design in the QS World University Rankings by Subject. The RCA's consistent top ranking recognises its unparalleled contribution to developing creativity, innovation, and artistic excellence – producing some of the most influential designers and artists working today.

Together, Imperial, RCM, and RCA represent the academic brilliance that underpins South Kensington's reputation as a global hub of knowledge, creativity, and innovation.

INSTITUTION TRANSFORMATIONS on the HORIZON

Major projects are underway in South Kensington. At the V&A South Kensington, the much-loved Gilbert Galleries are set to double in size as part of a major transformation project due for completion in 2026. Home to one of the world's most important collections of decorative art, including intricate micro-mosaics, enamelwork, and goldsmithing, the expanded galleries will provide an even more spectacular setting for these treasures.

Meanwhile, the Design Museum (below) is looking firmly to the future, with ambitious plans to overhaul its permanent gallery, thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This transformation will allow the museum to reimagine how design's role in society – past, present, and future – is presented to audiences,

© Rob Harris for the Design Museum



Fables for our Time



Fabulous butterflies at The Great Exhibition Road Festival

ensuring the collection continues to inspire new generations of visitors.

The Science Museum has recently announced the largest international donation to date from the Serum Institute of India enabling a transformation of one of the museum's most iconic spaces – the *Making the Modern World* gallery – which is set to re-open in 2028 as *Ages of Invention: The Serum Institute Gallery*.

©science museum group



Ages of Invention: The Serum Institute Gallery which replaces the *Making the Modern World* gallery

The new gallery will feature the most significant display of objects from the history of science, technology and engineering anywhere in the world.

The Royal College of Art has unveiled ambitious plans to revamp its historic Kensington campus, beginning a phased transformation from 2025 through to 2032. The project centres on the Grade

II-listed Darwin Building, combining conservation and modernisation to create new studios, teaching spaces, accessible routes, a café, gallery and event zones. A reinstated 1851 Place entrance toward Exhibition Road will reconnect the campus to its cultural neighbours.

THE GREAT EXHIBITION ROAD FESTIVAL

The Great Exhibition Road Festival continues to become increasingly popular, as 55,000 visitors flocked to South Kensington on 7–8 June 2025 for a weekend of art and science. Staff and students from across Imperial put together a spectacular edition of this annual event in collaboration with our neighbouring institutions. Visitors went



Having fun with virtual reality



Fun for every generation

on a journey of discovery through hundreds of hands-on exhibits, creative workshops, engaging talks, music, dance and comedy performances, roaming acts, and street art.

Highlights of the weekend included Insect Yoga, a Butterfly Carnival Parade and the world's tiniest dance floor at the Quantum Disco!

Next year marks the 175th anniversary of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the first World's Fair, which drew a third of Britain's population and funded many of South Kensington's cultural institutions – including Imperial and its museum partners. Plans to commemorate this milestone are well under way: expect the 2026 Festival to be bigger and better than ever, so save the date for 6–7th June 2026!

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF LEIGHTON HOUSE

Leighton House, the former home and studio of Victorian artist and President of the Royal Academy Frederic, Lord Leighton, will mark 100 years since its opening as a public museum with a special programme of exhibitions, new art commissions, and public events starting in October 2025.

The exhibition *Leighton House: A Journey Through 100 Years* charts the museum's transformation over the course of the last century, using never-before-seen archival material and original photographs.

Ghost Objects: Summoning Leighton's Lost Collection, a commission by artist Annemarieke Kloosterhof, recreates four missing objects from Leighton's original collection as life-size paper replicas, reimagining the presence of these missing treasures.

©RBKC

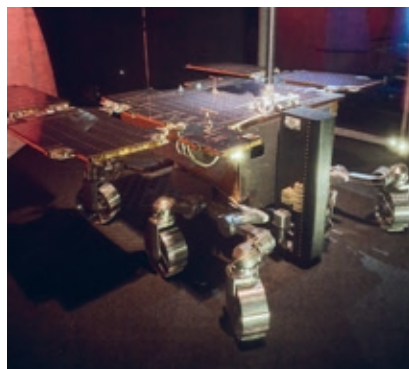


A brass jardinière complete with palm fronds recreated in paper by Annemarie Kloosterhof

Completing the Autumn programme is the exhibition *The View from Here: Contemporary Art from the Middle East and North Africa* – showcasing emerging creative voices from the MENA region exploring heritage, memory and identity through assemblage and collage.

SPACE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

The Science Museum has unveiled its new free space gallery, offering visitors a journey through humanity's quest to explore the universe. From historic spacecraft



A prototype of the Rosalind Franklin's Mars rover from the European Space Agency, *Could Life Exist Beyond Earth?* Natural History Museum

to cutting-edge technology, the gallery explores everything from the Moon landings to the future of interplanetary travel.

It's an experience that invites visitors to step into the shoes of astronauts, scientists, and engineers pushing the boundaries of discovery.

Just next door, the Natural History Museum's acclaimed exhibition *Space: Could Life Exist Beyond Earth?* invites visitors to explore one of humanity's biggest questions – are we alone in the universe? Get hands-on as you touch a real piece of Mars, smell the scents of distant planets, and encounter objects from across our solar system. Journey from Earth's most extreme environments to asteroids, Mars, the icy moons of Jupiter and Saturn, and far-off exoplanets in the search for life beyond our world. The exhibition runs until 22 February 2026.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

While space captures the imagination, closer to home the Science Museum is also asking one of the most pressing questions of our time: what will we eat in the future?

The museum's latest exhibition, *The Future of Food*, examines how science can help us find more sustainable ways to grow and produce, purchase and cook, eat and enjoy food and it features over 100 historic and contemporary objects that highlight major food milestones. The exhibition is free and on until 4 January 2026.

ART, DESIGN and FASHION: THREE MUST SEE EXHIBITIONS

Looking ahead to some of the exciting exhibitions opening in South Kensington in the coming months, include:

David Hockney at The Serpentine

Next spring, the Serpentine North Gallery will host an exhibition of recent works by David Hockney,



© David Hockney, Photo: Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima

David Hockney at work

running from 12 March to 23 August 2026. The free exhibition will showcase a major body of new and recent works, many shown in the UK for the first time. Highlights include *A Year in Normandy* – Hockney's sweeping 90-metre-long frieze inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry – alongside his luminous 'Sunrise' iPad paintings and an immersive new installation, *The Moon Room*, exploring cycles of light and time.

Wes Anderson: The Archives at The Design Museum

From 21 November 2025 – 26th July 2026, the Design Museum invites visitors into the meticulously crafted world of Wes Anderson with *Wes Anderson: The Archives* – the first major retrospective of the acclaimed filmmaker's work in the UK. Spanning three decades of distinctive cinema, the exhibition brings together over 600 objects including miniature sets, costumes, props, sketches and storyboards from films such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *Isle of Dogs*.

Marie Antoinette Style and Schiaparelli at V&A South Kensington

Fashion takes centre stage at the V&A South Kensington with two major exhibitions. *Marie Antoinette Style* – on now until 22 March 2026 – explores the

enduring allure of France's most controversial queen.

A complex historical figure and fashion icon, Marie Antoinette's timeless appeal is defined by her style, youth and notoriety. Through over 250 objects, from court gowns and portraits to jewellery and personal mementos, the show examines how Marie Antoinette's image has evolved from 18th-century icon to modern muse.

Following in March, the museum will unveil *Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art* (21 March – 1 November 2026), the first UK



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

From the *Schiaparelli Haute Couture 2021/22* collection, the plunging neckline perfectly frames a gilded brass necklace inspired by human lungs.

exhibition dedicated to Elsa Schiaparelli.

Fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli (1890 – 1973) was one of the most remarkable couturiers of the 20th century, known for her subversive, sometimes overtly surreal designs. Featuring over

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



200 pieces, the exhibition traces the house's daring dialogue between fashion and art, from the designer's surrealist collaborations with Dalí and Cocteau to Daniel Roseberry's contemporary reimagining of the couture label.



SUMO WRESTLING at THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

In 1991 the Hall played host to the first official sumo wrestling tournament ever to be staged outside Japan in the sport's 1,500 year history and this October, this unique tournament returns to the iconic Royal Albert Hall. This extraordinary event brings the centuries-old Japanese sport to one of London's most famous stages, offering audiences a chance to experience the spectacle, tradition, and discipline of sumo up close. South Kensington never stands still – 2025 has been a landmark year with bold new exhibitions and the announcement of major gallery transformations within the museums taking centre stage, and in 2026 there is still much to look forward to!

If you would like to discover more, visit our website www.discoveringsouthken.com where you can also sign up to our fortnightly newsletter to keep up to date with all the latest news and events in the area. If you would like to join our guest list for special events for neighbours, including early morning views, please email sarahb@exhibitionroad.com

A magnificent ballgown in the Marie Antoinette style

KNIGHTSBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

Steve Medway, CEO

As the Knightsbridge Partnership enters its fifth year, I look back on a period of progress shaped by collaboration and ambition. At the heart of everything we do is partnership, and this year that principle has been more evident than ever as residents, businesses, and local authorities have come together to shape a shared vision for the future of Knightsbridge.

One of the most significant milestones was the launch of the Knightsbridge Place and Public Realm Strategy in October. Co-created with residents, businesses, Westminster City Council, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Transport for London, the strategy sets out improvements that respect Knightsbridge's heritage while enhancing its experience for all. The current proposals include widened and decluttered footways, over two thousand square metres of rain gardens and green spaces to support biodiversity, and better traffic and safety management. Thank you to the many residents who contributed insights, your input ensures this transformation reflects the character and needs of the community. You can explore the full vision at www.ReimaginingKnightsbridge.com. Your next opportunity to engage with us on the strategy will be next year, where we will host a series of open meetings to provide a progress update.

Following feedback from Partnership members and the community through the Knightsbridge Place and Public Realm Strategy, Hyde Park Corner station and the connected subways have been identified as key opportunities for improvement. Working with Attis, LDA Design,



Rebecca Handley, Cllr Adam Hug, Leader WCC, Howard Dawber OBE, Deputy Mayor for Business GLA, Cllr. Elizabeth Campbell, Leader RBKC, Paricia Brown MBE, Director Central, Steven Medway.

and Michael Grubb Lighting Studio, and guided by feedback from residents, businesses and stakeholders, we are developing proposals that will enhance wayfinding, safety, and cleanliness while celebrating heritage through decorative lighting and design. This is partnership in action: creative solutions shaped by those who know the area best.

Knightsbridge is synonymous with excellence, and that must extend to sustainability. We have started work on a comprehensive Sustainability Strategy for the district which will be co-designed with residents, businesses and stakeholders to ensure Knightsbridge leads by example in creating an environmentally responsible and resilient future. As we're still in the early stages of development, we're keen to hear feedback on your sustainability priorities. To share your thoughts, please email sustainability@knightsbridgepartnership.com.

Keeping Knightsbridge safe remains a top priority. This year, we signed a new Data Sharing Agreement with the Metropolitan Police, one of the first 10 Business Improvement Districts to do so. This agreement enhances our ability to

share intelligence, respond to incidents, and support joint operations. We also extended our Street Team service into the evenings, operating Thursday to Sunday from 3pm to 11pm. In addition to patrolling our streets and combatting crime and disorder, the new team will also provide an on-call service where members of the Partnership can request for the team to escort customers and staff to key gateways and transport hubs in the district. If you ever need assistance, please call 07984 815209.

Finally, earlier this year we launched The Knightsbridge Club reward scheme, a first-of-its-kind loyalty programme for residents and workers. With exclusive offers and discounts from local businesses, it's a great way to support and enjoy everything Knightsbridge has to offer. In response to resident feedback, we now offer both digital and physical cards. If you haven't joined yet, sign up by visiting www.knightsbridgedn.co.uk/knightsbridge-club-reward-card.

Next year marks a crucial milestone as we enter our ballot year. The ballot will take place in August and September, giving us the opportunity to secure another five years of direct investment in Knightsbridge. Your continued support, alongside businesses and stakeholders, will enable us to continue delivering improvements, initiatives, and value for our members and the local community.

Knightsbridge is a place of heritage and aspiration, and together we are ensuring it remains a destination of global significance and local pride. Thank you for your continued support and involvement. Your voice shapes our work, and we look forward to building on this year's achievements with you.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Simon Birkett

The Forum has had another productive and decisive year. On 18 September 2025, Councillor Geoff Barraclough, WCC Member for Planning and Economic Development, approved our application for re-designation as the neighbourhood forum for the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area (Area) for a further five years. This makes us one of only four forums out of 15 in Westminster to have started a third five-year term. Our application received the highest level of support of any forum so far, with no objections. It had been backed by our achievements in the second

term including our groundbreaking 'Five-year review' of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) which showed that our planning policies have successfully influenced outcomes in Knightsbridge (whether supporting planning permissions or refusals). Our priority is always to strengthen our neighbourhood plan and bring it to life. A key focus has been the planning application for the major development at 1 Knightsbridge Green which seems genuinely to have sought to comply with the KNP policies (although height, bulk and massing remained a point of

difference). Looking ahead, we will engage constructively with the Council on its proposed New City Plan that would replace the current City Plan (April 2021). They are likely to focus on housing, updating site allocations and seeking to balance growth, heritage and climate goals across homes, offices, retail and infrastructure based on the latest evidence and need. We will also be looking to support applications for the spending of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) in the Area. Thank you for your continuing support.

THE LONDON FORUM of AMENITY and CIVIC SOCIETIES

The Forum was founded in 1988 drawn together from a group of societies who felt that it was important to take a London-wide view of planning. It also recognised the significant role played by London amenity societies in the conservation of London's heritage buildings.

It now represents the views and interests of over 100 amenity and civic societies in London – the Knightsbridge Association among them – on Planning, Heritage, Transport, Environment, Waterways and Open Spaces at London and national level.

Michael Jubb took on the chairmanship in 2024 from Peter Eversden MBE who had been in post for over 20 years. Peter is still involved with planning issues. The coming year promises plenty of national and local issues to get their teeth into.

WESTMINSTER AMENITY SOCIETIES FORUM (WASF)

The Association is amongst the 18 recognised amenity societies forming this group.

Over the last year the Forum has been preoccupied assessing competing views on ways to pedestrianise Oxford Street as proposed by Westminster City Council on the one hand and the Mayor of London on the other. This was resolved controversially earlier in the year by the imposition of a

Mayoral Development Corporation by Mayor, Sadiq Khan for the Oxford Street scheme. The burden of this work has fallen on the Soho Society and the residents' association for Mayfair and St James. Pedestrianisation of such an important shopping street is of serious concern to the elderly and disabled.

WASF has also been preoccupied with Westminster's proposals

for the nighttime economy, an issue of increasing concern to us in Knightsbridge. We view RBKC's recent willingness to approve licensing applications up to 2.00am, in contravention of existing licensing policy, as evidence of a determination by central Government to boost growth in the nighttime economy to compensate for UK's flagging industrial performance.

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA)

THE NEXT LONDON PLAN

The current London Plan was published in 2021 and is presently being reviewed as is required every five years. It is the special development strategy for Greater London and sets out a framework for how London will develop over the next 20-25 years and the Mayor's vision for 'good growth'.

The Plan is part of the statutory development plan for London, meaning the policies in the Plan should inform decisions on planning applications across the capital. Each Borough or Council's Local Plans must be in 'general conformity' with the London Plan. This ensures the planning system for London is joined up and reflects

the overall strategy for how London can develop sustainably, which the London Plan sets out. The Plans of local neighbourhood forums – such as our own, the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum Plan – must also conform to the London Plan. The Draft London Plan consultation is scheduled to begin in 2026.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Updates from our Local Ward Councillors

KNIGHTSBRIDGE and BELGRAVIA (WESTMINSTER)

**Cllrs Rachael Robathan,
Elizabeth Hitchcock and
Tony Devenish**

Residents of Rutland Gate would have been forgiven for believing that the scaffolding on 31-32 which had been a blight for so long was something that had become a permanent fixture. Thankfully, the enforcement team at the Council were finally able to launch proceedings to ensure its removal which finally happened in September. While this is welcome news, it does highlight issues in the Planning system which makes enforcement so difficult even in the face of no apparent works being undertaken.

Another issue raised regularly with us is that of cycling. We all want to encourage people to use bikes but only in a responsible way which respects others. Cllrs Hitchcock and Robathan joined forces with the police and also representatives of both Lime and Forest bikes on 25th September for an Action Day

to target these issues. Top of the list was stopping cyclists jumping red lights at the top of Exhibition Road, ignoring pedestrian crossings and riding on pavements. It was also really useful to take Forest and Lime to show them the bike dumping hotspots. It's early days, but their commitment to patrol and manage these more tightly certainly seems to be working so far - and we'll hold them to that.

Crime remains a major concern across the area and, while our local police team does a great job at responding to resident concerns, there remains a real problem with not enough police on the streets. This is likely to be exacerbated in November when the Mayor of London is withdrawing the dedicated Royal Parks police force. This is of concern for all users of the Parks and will inevitably put more pressure on our local team's resources.

Rubbish dumping remains a real problem, particularly on Montpelier Street at the junction with Brompton Road. While we always ensure this is cleared as quickly as possible, we need to identify who is doing this. In the meantime, we have secured funding for a series of street deep

cleans of the area.

Finally, some really good news. All residents and visitors to Exhibition Road will know of the dangerous and disruptive Car Meets which have been causing such a problem for the area. Back in February it was proposed that a non-friction surface should be laid on the roundabout with Prince Consort Road which would deter high speed stunts. It has taken eight months but I'm delighted that we finally now have the commitment that this will go ahead before Christmas. Some positive news to end the year!

We regularly hold surgeries outside Bonhams on Montpelier Street - it would be great to see any of you and hear how we can help in the local area.

BROMPTON and HANS TOWN (KENSINGTON and CHELSEA)

**Cllrs Sof McVeigh, Mary
Weale and Walaa Idris**

We are lucky in our area to have engaged residents and residents' associations. We're also fortunate to have engaged landlords who

the council works closely with to improve the public spaces.

Living with the construction works that these entail has not been easy, but the outcomes look great. From Sloane Street, Basil Street and Draycott Avenue the paving, lighting and planting looks stunning. Hopefully playing a part in keeping Knightsbridge and Kensington looking fresh and desirable, which is more important than ever in these challenging financial times.

Regular rubbish collection and

street cleaning is also essential for this. Now we've introduced time banded rubbish collections for our businesses to stop bags piling up. We've also paid for an electric buggy to nip around the area picking up errant bags as well as cracking down on fining the offenders.

After leading the way with Acoustic cameras to tackle loud cars, we're now focusing on dockless electric bikes.

They are great to get around the City, but not when they are just

dumped in large numbers on our pavements either by the companies or by irresponsible users. Just as we were the first with the Acoustic cameras, Kensington and Chelsea is the first to seize the bikes and charge the companies for the storage and return of the bikes.

Until the London Mayor gets round to regulating these bikes, we will continue to do what we can to help solve the problem. If you have any local issues you need our help with, please get in touch, and we wish you a very happy 2026.

PARLIAMENT

RACHEL BLAKE MP



CITIES of LONDON and WESTMINSTER

Over the past year, I've been proud to represent Knightsbridge and to work hard on the issues that matter most to our local community. From tackling crime and anti-social behaviour to standing up for leaseholders, I've been focused on delivering both safety and fairness for everyone who lives here. It is an honour to represent you and I'm sharing in this Annual Report some of the work that I have been doing. I look forward to continuing to represent you in Parliament and hopefully seeing you soon out and about in the constituency.

One of the biggest concerns residents have raised with me is the rise in crime, anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping. I can reassure you that I take this very seriously. That's why I've been pushing for more police officers on our streets,

stronger enforcement, and closer partnership between the police, council, and local organisations to deliver real, visible change.

This summer, I've worked directly with Westminster City Council and local services to demand faster, more joined-up responses. Following that work, we've seen the introduction of a Street-Based Intervention Team, increased patrols, and more coordinated operations involving local police, British Transport Police, and neighbourhood security teams.

The newly expanded CCTV network is already making a difference, improving intelligence gathering and supporting enforcement. In the past four months, over 40 arrests have been made in the area, with dozens of enforcement notices and warnings.

Alongside enforcement, support must be part of the solution. I've welcomed the recent announcement of £2.35 million in Government funding for Westminster City Council to strengthen homelessness and recovery services. This investment will go directly into frontline support, including drug and alcohol treatment, and assistance for children and families facing homelessness.

I've also convened roundtables with local partners, and led walkabouts with residents and police, to ensure your voices are heard and acted on. Since being elected just over a year

ago, I've fought for safer streets and fairer housing. I introduced a Ten Minute Rule Motion in Parliament to reform the Right to Manage, giving leaseholders more control and transparency over how their homes are managed.

I've also coordinated more than 150 Labour MPs to take action against rogue managing agents summoning them to Parliament and demanding change on behalf of residents.

I'm also proud to have launched a national Commission on Short-Term Lets to crack down on law-breaking landlords, because homes should be for living in, not treated like hotels.

On the issue of policing in our parks, an area many residents have contacted me about, there are changes ahead. All local ward teams bordering parks will be trained in park-specific policing, and for the first time, Royal Parks staff will be able to feed directly into the Met's tasking system, so officers can be alerted to issues on the ground. This is a positive step and something I've been pushing for.

The Met will still be responsible for responding to major incidents in the parks, such as protests or large-scale events. The Royal Parks Board will be meeting in November with this issue at the top of their agenda, so I'll continue to follow developments closely and press for a sustainable, properly resourced solution.

I'm here to represent everyone in Knightsbridge. I'll keep working to make our neighbourhood safer, more compassionate, and fairer for all.

If you're concerned about crime, anti-social behaviour, housing, or any other local issue, please don't hesitate to get in touch. It's an honour to represent you.

Rachel.blake.mp@parliament.uk

JOE POWELL MP



KENSINGTON and BAYSWATER

It's just over a year since I was elected to represent Kensington & Bayswater in Parliament. In that time, we've made real progress by focusing on what matters most to local people: safer streets, stronger communities, and a more accessible city for everyone.

Protecting Our High Streets – New Powers on the Way!

Our high streets should be the beating heart of our community, but in Knightsbridge – as in other parts of the Kensington & Bayswater constituency – we've seen a proliferation of gambling venues, souvenir shops, and dodgy operators take over. Independent businesses are being priced out by those who play fast and loose with the rules, often hiding behind shell companies and tax-dodging schemes that give them an unfair advantage.

I'm determined to tackle this issue, and I'm delighted the government have responded to our campaign by promising new powers for local authorities to stop these types of premises opening up in the first place. I am also calling for HMRC to be more proactive in investigating potential evasion of VAT and business rates by companies that simply disband themselves and then set up with new directors – so-called 'phoenixing'.

I'm also continuing to campaign against new adult gaming centre licenses and would welcome support from residents in Knightsbridge for our efforts: www.joepowell.org.uk/stop-the-24-hour-notting-hill-gate-casino

Short Term Lets

Knightsbridge has a very high concentration of short-term lets, and I have heard from many residents about the issues associated with them. These include anti-social behaviour, rubbish left on the streets, and violations of London's 90-day cap on short-term lets that can affect building management and even insurance. More than half of short-term lets in London are estimated to breach the city's 90-day limit, which also removes thousands of homes from the rental market.

The Government's proposed national register for short-term lets is a welcome step forward, and I look forward to it coming online in the coming months so that we can use it as a tool to address some of these issues, including cracking down on short-term lets in buildings where the lease prohibits it entirely. I know this is a huge frustration for residents, so please do write to me with any details you think would be helpful to try and get these properties delisted from the major letting platforms like Air BnB.

Tackling Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

I am glad that we have had some important local wins on crime and policing. A landmark recent operation dismantled London's biggest serious organised crime gang behind the theft of over 40,000 mobile phones. We know that mobile phones stolen on London's streets are shipped overseas within hours and sold on in international markets, with criminal networks profiting. This type of operation is essential to keeping our streets safer.

We've also made progress tackling supercar gatherings that cause disruption across Exhibition Road and Brompton Road. These events often cross borough boundaries, making enforcement difficult. That's why I've been working with Westminster Council and local police to coordinate patrols and explore new noise-control powers.

A major crackdown in August saw 72 luxury vehicles seized, including twin Lamborghinis flown in from Dubai. One driver had been in the country just 15 minutes before his car was impounded. Using noise cameras and targeted patrols, police sent a clear message: London's streets are not racetracks.

Regulating Dockless e-Bikes

Dockless e-bikes have brought convenience but also chaos, cluttered pavements, blocked crossings, and unsafe riding. Hundreds of residents responded to my survey calling for tighter rules, and I am delighted that the Government has agreed and included new powers in the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill for London to act to regulate the sector more effectively.

We have also secured provisions in the Crime and Policing Bill to give the Police more powers to seize and crush illegally modified e-bikes that are able to go at speeds way above the 15.5mph limit.

Taken together, these measures will go some way to addressing the concerns I have heard from Knightsbridge residents.

Step-Free Access and Transport Improvements

In April, I joined the Mayor to open the new step-free entrance at Knightsbridge station, a long-awaited upgrade making travel easier for wheelchair users, parents with prams, and older residents.

At the Knightsbridge Association AGM, several people asked me about the proposed improvements to South Kensington station. With 30 million annual visitors and key hospitals and museums nearby, this upgrade is essential. We have secured over half the money towards the scheme, and I am working hard with Transport for London, the local authorities and other local partners to raise the rest and finally get the modernised and step-free station our community needs.

I look forward to continuing to work with residents and community groups across Knightsbridge on these campaigns and on the overall vision for the area, including the investment that we know could transform the area for the better.

joe.powell.mp@parliament.uk

HORSES IN HYDE PARK

Riding in Rotten Row

Olivia Cox

The recorded history of Hyde Park can be traced back to Saxon times when a Saxon nobleman Asgar, who owned the land, was listed in the Domesday Book of 1085 as 'Stallere', a title similar to Master of the Horse. King Henry VIII acquired the land in 1536 for hunting and falconry and Queen Elizabeth I developed the Park as a review ground for mounted troops, a use which has continued to this day.

King James I opened the park to the public and by the 17th century it was a popular place for riding and coach driving activities. When King William III acquired Kensington Palace in 1689, he created a lamp-lit carriage road across Hyde Park between Kensington and Westminster, and this riding avenue became Rotten Row. In the 18th century intensive use of the park led to a continuous programme of improvements and extensions of the riding paths.

Famous riders in Hyde Park have included royalty, including King George V who rode out regularly in Rotten Row until the 1930s, accompanied only by an equerry. The Duke of Wellington valued riding as a form of exercise and rode daily, either hacking along Rotten Row or taking his favourite route down the Constitution Hill bridle way to Horse Guards Parade.

Hyde Park Barracks have existed on the same site in Hyde Park since 1795, although they moved to Wellington Barracks from 1965-70 while the new Basil Spence Barracks were built on the site. The only surviving feature from the original barracks is the Tympanum above the entrance facing Hyde Park.

The Household Cavalry exercise regularly along Rotten Row and in the outdoor school. The Major-General's Inspection is held annually in May on the sports field to check that the Household Cavalry is ready to go on parade. It is a magnificent sight and a good opportunity to see



Household Cavalry rehearsing in Rotten Row

the Household Cavalry parade in full ceremonial dress without the crowds.

Although carriage-driving as a pastime no longer takes place in Hyde Park, the Royal Mews horses and carriages can be seen exercising and rehearsing in the park.

In 1836 the Mounted Police began as the mounted patrols of the Bow Street runners. A special police station with stabling attached was built within the Park in 1866 to act as a base for these patrols. These stables continued until very recently, but sadly The Hyde Park Mounted Police branch has now moved and the stables have closed.

I learnt to ride with the Household Division stables inside Hyde Park Barracks as a child. My father, a Foot Guards officer, was not a horseman, but was required to ride in ceremonial dress on parade. He was trained and mounted by the Household Division stables, whose horses were beautifully schooled.

Our family had a wonderful opportunity to ride out in Hyde Park as well and I continued to do so for about 25 years. The military horses were generally very well-behaved, and at that time the horses were allowed to have a good gallop up Rotten Row from Hyde Park Corner up to the top, but would stop automatically at the end. It was not unknown for the brakes to fail, and a few circuits of the sports fields were required to get back under control. Such action was usually forgiven by the Park managers, but understandably would not be tolerated today.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Hyde Park was surrounded by numerous riding stables which offered riding lessons and hacks for hire. In 1927 there were said to be six riding stables with over 100 horses on the north side of Hyde Park alone. Even in 1935 there were still nine riding schools near Hyde Park. World War II led to the closure of most of the stables. The railings

along Rotten Row were removed to be melted down as scrap metal for the war effort, but have since been restored.

After the war stabling was lost to development, although various stables continued to operate around Hyde Park. Ross Nye, an enterprising Australian, set up his stables in Bathurst Mews in 1965 and they continued for 60 years, only closing this summer. Ross and his daughter Kirsty also provided ponies for three local branches of Riding for the Disabled Association. Their sessions took place at Hyde Park Barracks, thanks to the generous support of the Household Cavalry. These activities have now moved to new facilities at Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre and there is only one commercial riding stables still operating in Hyde Park, The Hyde Park Stables also based in Bathurst Mews.

Hyde Park is no longer the centre of equestrian activity as it was over many centuries, but I hope the Household Cavalry will continue to ride out in Rotten Row for many years to come.



Olivia riding in Hyde Park in 1967

THE PUBS OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Staying Alive?

Nigel Cox

A time-traveller from the past would no doubt find many things to surprise them in today's Knightsbridge, not least the profusion of cafés, including those with Middle Eastern characteristics. But they would be astonished to find that there are only two public houses or pubs: Knightsbridge and the wider area used to abound in them.

Knightsbridge (North Side)

Indeed Knightsbridge used to boast its own brewery: the **Cannon Street Brewhouse** was built in 1804, just west of the old Knight's Bridge over the Westbourne River. The river was covered over in the 1840s for the building of Albert Gate and the houses on each side of it (including the one which in 1853 became the French Embassy. The first Ambassador to live there was an illegitimate son of Napoleon).

To the east (Hyde Park Corner side) there was a chapel, later upgraded to Holy Trinity Church, flanked in the 1840s by two pubs, the **Queen's Head Tavern**, which bore the date 1576, and the **White Hart Tavern**,



White Hart Tavern c.1820

which had previously occupied the site of the French Embassy (before which there had been a leprosy hospital). Both pubs seem to have survived until the building



Knightsbridge in 1820

of the Parkside block of apartments and shops in 1906–1907.

On the other side of Knight's Bridge, a third pub, the **Fox & Bull**, which dated back to 1702, also had to move for the construction of Albert Gate. It survived between the sites of today's Royal Thames Yacht Club and the Mandarin Oriental Hotel until the 1880s, when it was replaced with a branch of the London & County Bank, now offices.

Thirsty travellers heading west did not have to wait long for the next watering hole. On part of the present One Hyde Park site there was a **Swan Inn** in the 18th century, and just west of it a **Queen's Arms**, which survived redevelopment in 1894 and lasted until the early 1930s.

Further along the road what is now Park Close was once (under a different name) one of three parallel courts and boasted 2 pubs: the **Nag's Head**, later the **Life Guardsman**, on the eastern corner with Knightsbridge, where the Wellington Club stood until recently; the **Queen & Prince Albert** at the Park end on the western side. The **White Bear**, later **Brown Bear**, stood on Knightsbridge a few paces

to the west of Park Close. Both it and the **Queen & Prince Albert** bit the dust in 1887 with the building of Albert Gate Court.

Knightsbridge (South Side)

The opposite side of Knightsbridge was also well-provided for as far as today's Trevor Street.

First came one of our two lone survivors which, since

a rebuilding in 1851, has been named the **Paxton's Head**. The signboard shows Sir Joseph Paxton (1803–1865), the designer of the 'Crystal Palace', the glass structure first erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851.



A pub, originally a village inn, has stood here since at least 1632, initially known as the **King's Arms**, then the **Golden Lion**, **Red Lion** and **Sun**. In the 1760s it took the name the **Marquis of Granby**, to honour a hero of the Seven Years War, who was noted for his concern for his troops' welfare. He set some of his retired soldiers up as inn-keepers, and at one time it was said that more pubs were named after him than any other commoner (non-Royal).

When Park Mansions were constructed from 1897 to 1902, the *Paxton's Head* was rehoused within the building.



The pub has preserved many of its 'Gin Palace' fittings from this time, including the island bar counter and central lobby and clock, with much finely etched or cut glass. It is Grade II listed.

Unusually for the City of Westminster, the Paxton Head's licence allows it to open from 10am on Sundays, though in practice it opens at 11am at weekends and 11.30am on weekdays. It is licensed until midnight on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The English pub licensing system goes back at least until 1495 when Justices of the Peace (magistrates) were given authority to close down 'useless ale-houses' which kept men from archery practice. But licensing hours only began during the First World War. Until 2005 national legislation defined the maximum possible hours, but since 2005 local councils have been free to set any hours they judge appropriate.

Next until 1688, on part of today's Bulgari Hotel site, came a tavern called the *Grave Maurice*. This commemorated Prince Maurice of the Palatinate, a nephew of King Charles I who, like his brother Rupert, commanded Royalist troops during the Civil War. 'Grave' is probably an Anglicisation of the German 'Graf' or Count, another of Maurice's titles. (A pub of the same name on the Whitechapel Road in the East End, which survived into

the 21st century, was once a haunt of the notorious gangsters, the Kray twins.)

Further along the road, on the site of today's *The Knightsbridge*, there was a longer-lived establishment, the *Rose & Crown*, formerly just the *Rose*, which bore the date of 1679 and was said to have quartered Cromwell's troops during the Civil War. For a time in the 1840s it was called the *Cromwell*. It had a large stableyard at the rear, overlooked by timbered galleries.

Next came the *King's Head* (in existence by the 1790s) and, adjacent to it, the *Rising Sun* of round 1830. Between these two pubs and today's Trevor Street was an elegant Regency terrace, similar to and built at the same time as today's 235–241 Knightsbridge. But in 1844 the corner house became the *Trevor Tavern*, and later the *Trevor Arms*.

During the 1850s and 1860s local JPs granted all these three hostelries licences for music and dancing, despite local residents' objections, and they enjoyed a musical heyday, building a concert room and music halls at their rear. The Sun Music Hall was the scene for the first performances of the songs *Champagne Charlie* (1867) and *By Jingo* (1878). As the Trevor Music Hall this survived the 1886 redevelopment of the pub and surrounding houses as an apartment block with restaurant. In 1890 it became flats, rented by the War Office for soldiers and their families.

Earlier, in 1874–1875 the *Rose & Crown* and neighbouring houses were demolished and a taller building constructed, including a Rose & Crown Coffee Palace, later a temperance hotel – a far cry from the two centuries when a pub of that name stood here.

Knightsbridge Green area

Knightsbridge Green also offered opportunities for refreshment. In the 1840s a *Pakenham Tavern* was built on the corner of Raphael Street and the part of Knightsbridge Green leading down from Knightsbridge. It probably

takes its name from Major-General Sir Edward Pakenham, a brother of the Duke of Wellington's wife, Kitty. Pakenham served with Wellington in the Peninsular War. He then was sent to the American war but was killed at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. This pub was demolished in 1956–1957, along with other houses in Raphael Street for the Mercury House development, which preceded the 199 Knightsbridge apartments.



Our second surviving pub, the *Tattersalls Tavern* dates only from another redevelopment in the late 1950s. But it makes a bow to local history by taking its name from the former Tattersalls establishment here, which included a yard where horses were shown and auctioned from 1865 to 1939. Like the *Paxton's Head* it is run by the Greene King brewing and pub company, founded in 1799 in Bury St Edmunds, and now owned by the Hong Kong-based CK Assets (Sir Ka-shing Li).

Lancelot Place boasted two pubs, the *Royal Oak* at Numbers 19–20, which has left little trace, and the *World's End* or *Fulham Bridge* at the eastern corner with Brompton Road. Many pubs were called the World's End from the reign of Charles II, but one in Chelsea became famous and gave its name to a district. Fulham Bridge, a



wooden structure dating from 1729, was replaced by the present Putney Bridge in 1886. The Knightsbridge pub originally had stabling for 43 horses at the rear and a yard for exercising and showing horses before Tattersalls moved from its former home at St George's Place near Hyde Park Corner (1766–1865).

The pub was rebuilt in the 1930s but was totally destroyed by a bomb on 4 August 1944.

Montpeliers & Brompton Road

The Montpeliers are now a desert for pubs but were once also well supplied.



The earliest was the *Crown and Sceptre*, built at the corner of Montpelier Street and Brompton Road in 1766, part of the first development of this part of Brompton Road by a prosperous attorney called Elisha Biscoe. This pub ceased operations in 1990 and the site is now occupied by a Prêt à Manger sandwich shop and café.



At 44 Montpelier Square the *King George IV* was built round 1827. It was closed and demolished in 1991, when the Oman Embassy was built on the site. This only lasted here until 1997, when two traditional style houses replaced it, as part of a redevelopment of South Lodge.

At 19 Montpelier Street, another pub was built round 1839, the *Talbot Tavern* or Talbot Hotel, later renamed the *Tea Clipper*.



This relaxed and convenient watering place closed in 2014 and was converted into a private house (which has apparently not been much occupied since).



Another quite recent casualty was the *Swag and Tails* at 10–11 Fairholt Street. This started life at No 11 in the mid-19th century as the Prince of Wales Beer Shop, expanding to take in the next-door building in the 1860s, rebuilt in 1908 and again remodelled in the late 1940s. As the *Swag and Tails* it became more a restaurant than a pub, open only on weekdays and well-liked by local residents. The actor Boris Karloff (1887–1969) was apparently a regular, but it closed in 2009 and was converted to residential use.

Two other nearby houses, once formerly pubs are 24 Montpelier Place, on the corner of Sterling Street. This was the *Nelson*, formerly Nelson Beer House. Finally the *24 Bar* which closed around 1990. Also, 38 Montpelier Walk, on the corner of Rutland Street was called simply *The Montpelier* and survived for a century from its construction in 1826 or 1827. Since 1927 this home has been grandly styled 'Montpelier House'.

Continuing along Rutland Street



Formerly *The Nelson*

and through the 'Hole in the Wall', one could reach the *Ennismore Arms*, built round 1845–1847 at the bottom of Ennismore Mews, on the east side.



This was one of the first buildings to go up in the area, part of the former estate of the Duke of Kingstown, which had passed to the Earls of Listowel. Ennismore is one of the family's secondary titles, used as a courtesy title by the Earl's eldest son. (The last Secretary of State for India to 1947 was an Earl of Listowel.) Over the years many English pub signs have shown the coat of arms of a distinguished family, and have taken their name from it; but this was the last such example in Knightsbridge.

The Ennismore Arms was long a popular haunt for local residents, including some members of the Knightsbridge Association and staff and students of Imperial College. It was damaged by a bomb during the Second World War but rebuilt in the 1950s. Like several other local pubs, it was owned by Watneys, whose beer was not always very highly esteemed, but it also offered a sophisticated range of other drinks and a white-coated barman.

The actress Ava Gardner lived at 34 Ennismore Gardens and is said both to have enjoyed spending time

in the pub and to have installed a jukebox with a large stock of records by her former husband, Frank Sinatra. Charles Gray, whose villainous roles included Blofeld in the Bond film *Diamonds are for Ever*, was also a regular.

The Ennismore Arms closed in 2002 and has since been converted to a private home.

Not far away, on the corner of Brompton Road and Cottage Place was the **Gladstone**. William Ewart Gladstone, a Whig and later Liberal, was four times Prime Minister between 1868 and 1894. Until 1885 this area was part of the Chelsea constituency which always returned at least one Liberal MP, but a South Kensington constituency was then created, which always voted Conservative.

The Brompton Road station on the Piccadilly line was built in an L-shape round the pub. It opened in 1906, but was underused so was closed in 1934. During World War II it was used as headquarters of an Anti-Aircraft Division. It had five Gun Operations Rooms (GORs), and the Gladstone pub was popularly known as GOR 6. It was the furthest that staff could go while on duty.

Both the pub and the Brompton Road frontage of the disused station were demolished in 1971 and 1972 as part of road-widening scheme, which also saw the removal of the other buildings on Brompton Road as far as Cheval Place.

Others

Finally, two other pubs which survive just outside the boundaries of Knightsbridge may also deserve a mention.

First, the **Bunch of Grapes** at 207 Brompton Road.



The first pub here is said to date from 1644, and it was already

known as the **Bunch of Grapes** by 1770. It was rebuilt in 1844–1845 and retains many of its original fittings, carved woodwork, including a now rare 'snob screen' (concealing patrons in the saloon from those in the public bar), decorated glass doors and fine painted mirrors.

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) approve of the Greene King beer sold here, as well as of the pub's heritage. Because of its proximity to the Brompton Oratory and convenience for after-Mass refreshment, the **Bunch of Grapes** is sometimes known as the 'Vatican Arms'.

Second is the **Grenadier**, tucked away in Wilton Row and accessible from Knightsbridge by Old Barrack Yard, former site of a barracks of the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards.



This has given rise to plenty of myths, with habitués said to have included King George IV, the Duke of Wellington, Madonna and Prince William. It has been claimed that it was originally (from 1720) the Guards' Officers' Mess and opened to the public in 1818 as 'The Guardsman'. Legend says that a subaltern called Cedric was flogged to death here that year for cheating at cards and that he continues to haunt the building. Other ghosts have also been reported.

In fact the present building seems to date, with other buildings in Wilton Row, from round 1828, succeeding an old tavern further north. It was at one time one of three Belgravia pubs called 'The Grenadier'. The Prince Regent renamed the First Foot Guards

'Grenadiers' after the Battle of Waterloo.

The sentry box outside the pub is a modern addition. As the pub's neighbours disliked people driving into their quiet mews to patronise the **Grenadier**, a notice outside spells out that it is allowed to serve only people arriving on foot or by taxi. The ceiling is papered with bank notes donated by people hoping to exorcise the ghost of Cedric by enabling him to pay his debts. In honour of the pub's alleged links to the Duke of Wellington, the back room is called the Wellington Room, while the front room is called the Boot Room. From 1957 to 1982 a larger-than-life barman called Tom Westwood, dressed in white coat with gold epaulettes, used to preside over the pewter-covered bar, serving customers with Bloody Marys and gigantic sausages.

Two other historic and atmospheric pubs nearby are the Wilton Arms and Nag's Head, both tucked away in Kinnerton Street.

Conclusion

All over Britain, pubs have been closing in large numbers in recent years. Some have likened the social and cultural impact to Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. If we want to keep the pubs of our own neighbourhood alive, we ought to try to use them more. Non-drinkers will find they offer a range of low- or zero-alcohol options, from beers to cocktails. Why not give them a try?

This article draws on Volume 45 of the Survey of London (2000)

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North Side of Knightsbridge:
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Knightsbridge (White Hart Tavern) & Crown & Sceptre 1980
Image source: The London Archives
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Fulham Bridge Tavern:
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SEWER CITY

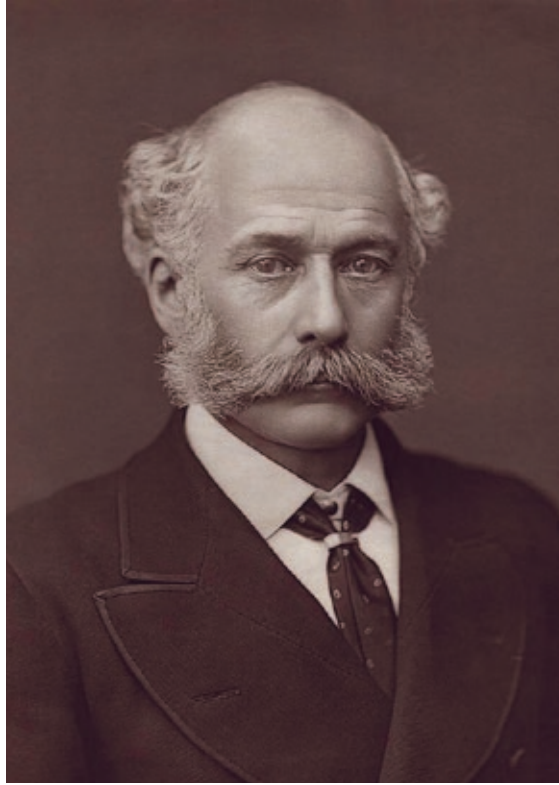
Sir Joseph Bazalgette's Hidden Metropolis that Saved London

Winifred Axworthy

Walking through London's streets in the year 2025 is a mostly enjoyable experience. One might perhaps be irritated by the bustling traffic or an improperly discarded piece of rubbish, but, especially on a sunny day, this city is a delight. Rays filter down through our great guardian London plane trees, lining our streets and creating vaults of green above our heads. People meet, laugh, gasp, whisper as they cross cobbles and gather with a drink outside the pub. We gaze longingly into shop windows, we doze in shady parks, we bumble through markets and bask in the sun of a café terrace. So much of life in London is outside: on its streets and in its parks and squares. But in the mid 19th century this picture of London was all but alien. Cesspits overflowed, sewage was dumped in streets and thousands died in cholera epidemics which tore through the city every few years. A solution to the problem of sewage disposal was desperately needed. One man, Sir Joseph Bazalgette, was to clean up the face of the London by building a whole new city of pipes and passages beneath our feet.

The sewage system before 1800

London had a waste disposal system that worked adequately for centuries. A common misconception is that since medieval times Londoners would dump their waste in the streets and let it be washed into the Thames. But, before 1800, this was not the case. In fact there were a number of laws preventing this.



Portrait of Sir Joseph Bazalgette

Londoners' waste was collected in cesspits, usually one per household, which they paid to have emptied by 'nightsoil men'. These men would empty the cesspits and sell their contents to farmers just outside the city as fertiliser. Sewers in the city were designed to carry surface water into the Thames and had been built in the Tudor times. The river was clean enough for many fishermen to earn their living from the fish in its waters, as well as for writers to comment with pride on the cleanliness of the river at the start of the 19th century. Although the system was far from perfect, it functioned well enough for centuries. But all that was to change with the Industrial Revolution and the rapid expansion it brought.

A city at bursting point

A number of factors built up during the first half of the 19th century which made it impossible for the system that had functioned for centuries to continue. Firstly, population growth. Between 1800 and 1860 the population of London more than tripled. The borders of the city expanded into the surrounding countryside and farmland, meaning nightsoil men had to travel much further to sell their smelly wares to farmers. Prices increased for cesspits to be emptied, as well as for the farmers wanting to buy their contents as fertiliser. As a result, many Londoners could not afford to have their cesspits emptied, and had no choice but to let them overflow, or empty their waste into the streets. In addition,

many farmers turned to cheaper alternatives for their fertiliser, such as Guano, imported bird droppings from South America, leading to the collapse of the nightsoil men's industry.

You can't flush all your problems away...

Another main factor for the rapid decline in sewage management was the introduction of the Water Closet. Although iterations of the flushing toilet had existed for a while, improvements to the design in the early 19th century meant that by the 1830s they were becoming more and more common, and by the mid 19th century scarcely any households still used a cesspit. The problem was that the Water Closets drained into sewers which had only ever been intended for much smaller quantities of liquid. In addition to this they were now



An illustration of how cesspits and unclean streams can infect water sources with Typhoid from 1939

draining the majority of the city's excrement and other waste into the Thames.

Because the sewers were not designed for the disposal of human waste, their outlets were built such that their contents were released into the Thames at low tide. This meant that the waste was not washed out to sea, but rather it was washed back upstream with the incoming tide, resulting in an exponential buildup of filth in the river. At times of high rainfall, the river would flow back up the sewers, sometimes flooding people's houses with raw sewage.

Poisoned pumps

Human excrement was festering in the Thames and infecting water sources. Roughly half of London's water usage, including drinking water, came from the Thames. Many communities collected their water from local pumps, but these were hardly safer than the Thames. Unemptied cesspits leaked and overflowed into underground springs which fed the pumps.

Disease

The growing population and lack of good sanitation in London meant that diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever ran rampant in the city. Cholera is a disease caused by the *vibrio cholerae* bacteria which is spread through water contaminated with faeces of a person that had the disease. The bacteria prevents the body from absorbing

water, dehydrating the body until it cannot survive. Cholera first arrived in London in 1831 in a pandemic that originated in India. Two more outbreaks followed in the decades after, killing over 14,000 in 1848-9 and over 10,700 in 1853-4.

What we know about cholera today, however, was more or less completely unknown in the mid-19th century. Miasma theory was the popular explanation for how the disease was transmitted; it was believed that bad air caused

people to fall sick. Although research by John Snow, published in 1849, showed that cholera was waterborne, his findings were dismissed by the Scientific Association and it took many more decades for science to shake public belief in miasma theory.

A final cholera outbreak took place in London in 1866. By this time most of Bazalgette's sewer system had been built, but East London had not yet been connected. The outbreak killed 5,596 people in the area, but the disease did not spread to the rest of the city; Bazalgette's sewers saved London from a much more devastating epidemic. In 1870 London was fully connected to the sewerage system and there has not been a cholera outbreak since.

Typhoid fever, while also transmitted by contaminated water, develops more slowly than cholera and was more difficult to eradicate, although cases did decline sharply after the sewer works were finished. Queen Victoria's beloved husband Prince Albert died in 1861, the cause of death being recorded as typhoid fever. None were safe from disease, and with every death, pressure steadily mounted on those in power to do something.

The Great Stink

By the mid 19th century the situation was past bursting point and impossible for politicians to ignore any longer. For decades the disintegrating sewerage system had been affecting people in the lowest echelons of society, but, like a stink, it gradually reached everyone.

An exceptional heatwave of 1858 made the problem inescapable. As rotting sewage sat in the Thames, simmering in the summer heat, it released a foul stench which permeated the whole city. It became known as the Great Stink of London. Bazalgette himself recalled in an interview: 'At that time, the river at Westminster was in such an abominable condition that they were obliged to close the windows of the Houses of Parliament and there was talk of



Cartoon from 1866 promoting the view that cholera was spread by unclean water, as demonstrated by John Snow over ten years earlier in his analysis of the Broad Street pump outbreak

Parliament having to shift to other quarters altogether.' The smell physically forced MPs out of rooms facing the river and the belief that disease was spread through foul odours made them fear for their lives. The time had come for action against the stink.

Formation of The Metropolitan Board of Works

One of the main problems that blocked development of a sewer system for the whole city was that up until this point, the sewage and waste management of the city was overseen by councils, or 'vestries' of smaller areas of London. The 'Bill of Sewers' in 1531 divided responsibility for building London's sewers between eight vestries which developed their own sewer systems in their separate areas. This made unifying them into one sewage system a challenge when



Ornamental emblem of the Metropolitan Board of Works

the time came in the 19th century.

In 1847 the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers was established to find a way to improve the city's drainage and overall sanitary conditions. This was the first of six commissions that would be formed over the next eight years. Each made contributions to the eventual establishment of the Metropolitan Board of Works and the work it would carry out. An Ordnance Survey was made of London's existing sewers and drains, and a competition gathered 137 plans for a sewerage system for the city. Although none of the plans were accepted, Bazalgette himself said that his final design was largely made up of elements from previous plans.

However, these commissions were haphazard and underfunded. They succeeded in abolishing cesspits and connecting houses

to the ancient drainage systems, but these systems were steadily disintegrating.

The second commission saw infighting between consulting engineer Henry Austin and Chief Surveyor John Phillips, both of whom proposed plans to collect and sell the city's sewage as fertiliser, hoping with true Victorian entrepreneurship to turn a profit from London's waste. Neither plan could be agreed upon and so both were scrapped.

The third 'Engineers' Commission began implementing a plan by Frank Forster – Engineer to the Commission at the time. But works on the plan were halted when they ran into a number of embarrassing difficulties. Bad workmanship led to structures collapsing and damage to nearby buildings, and quicksand at work sites meant costs skyrocketed. The commission resigned when it became clear that the sewer rates, their only source of funds, would never cover the works.

Finally, in 1855, the Metropolitan Board of Works was formed with John Thwaites as its Chairman. It had gathered its members from the vestries of London and was given full authority to construct a drainage system for the whole city. However, any plans still had to be approved by parliament, which prevented works from taking place for another three years. It was the Great Stink that motivated MPs to remove parliament's veto powers over the Board and to provide £2.5m for the works, as well as another £1.7m in loans guaranteed by the Treasury.

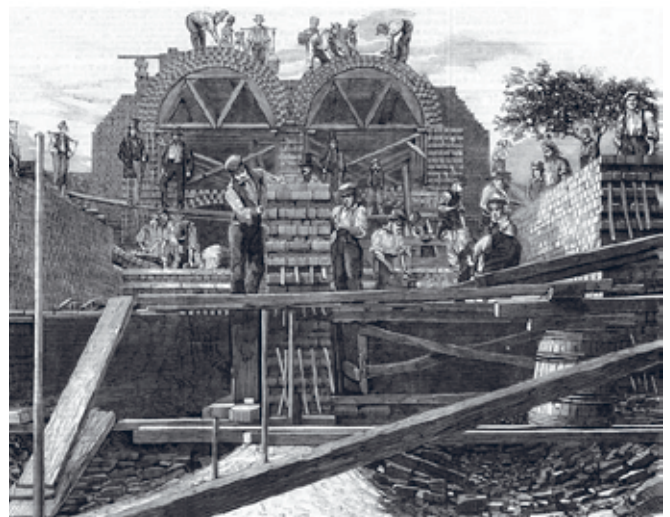
The Metropolitan Board of Works was the first unified government for London and the first modern municipal council in the world. Although it only lasted until 1888, it led to the creation of the London County Council and, despite its problems, was the blueprint for the government of London.

Sir Joseph Bazalgette

Bazalgette has been hidden from history, but like his sewers, his influence lies in the foundations of modern London. His achievements changed London and the lives of its citizens beyond recognition. Born in Enfield, Bazalgette began his career working on the railways, developing an understanding of drainage and tunnelling which would be essential when it came to designing the London sewerage system. Bazalgette had been active in many of the earlier commissions formed to tackle the problem of London's sewage, and in 1856 he was made Chief Engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The board encountered further problems of disagreement and parliamentary interference, but in 1858 the Great Stink focussed MPs' minds. In August 1858 a bill was passed in just 18 days to give the Metropolitan Board of works all the authority they needed to start building the sewers.

Building works begin

Initial construction was swift, although the sewerage system would not be fully completed until fifteen years later. A system of brick-lined main sewers intercepted waste from over 1,200 miles of local surface-level sewers that Bazalgette also oversaw the construction of. The sewage flowed through the 82 miles of main sewers to outfalls at Barking and Crossness where it was



Etching of the sewers under construction

collected before being released into the river at high tide and carried out to sea.

Bazalgette's work ethic

Bazalgette oversaw the whole of the construction process, inspecting as much as he was able to do first-hand. In the first few years of the project Bazalgette would often work until one in the morning and his signature can be seen signing off plans for specific sections of the system. He communicated with and approved of the work of all the contractors who were hired to carry out different sections of the work. As well as this, he inspected every single connection between sewage pipes himself.

He also had incredible foresight. Knowing that such a large-scale sewage system was unlikely to be redone anytime soon, and painfully aware of the years of bureaucracy and debate that had been suffered throughout for his plan to be authorised, Bazalgette made the sewers much larger than they needed to be for the city's sewage output at the time. He lived in a time of rapid expansion and the increase in population of London only accelerated after the construction of his system. The system Bazalgette designed is still used today by a population over three times the size it was originally designed for.



Bazalgette (top right on the bridge) overseeing construction of the sewers

Bazalgette was meticulous about finding the best solutions to the various requirements of his grand project. He invested in the innovative Portland cement which, unlike other types, hardens when wet, as well as bricks which were fired at extremely high temperatures, making them exceptionally hardy. But he did not go with innovation for the sake of it. If a method was tried and true, Bazalgette kept things simple. The four engines at Crossness were built to pump sewage six metres up into the Southern Outfall Sewer. The engines are the largest of their kind ever constructed, but the design is a common one. Bazalgette knew that these engines were reliable – they still run today.

Palatial pumping stations

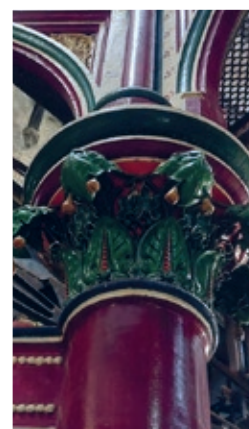
Much of London is below the high water line of the Thames, meaning that the system could not rely on gravity alone for sewage to flow into the river. Bazalgette's solution to the problem was to build pumping stations at Deptford, Abbey Mills and Crossness to pump the sewage into the outfall pipes 6 metres or so higher than the sewers. These pumping stations were a feat in their own right. Crossness pumping station houses four rotative beam engines: the largest steam engines in the world. Its magnificent decorative cast-iron work can still be seen today as the station is now a museum and is largely run by volunteers who keep



Ornate cast-iron work at Crossness Pumping Station

the engines in full working order. The Abbey Mills pumping station stands next to the Greenway which runs along the embankment holding the Northern Outfall Sewer, and is also occasionally open to the public.

Charles Driver was the architect of Crossness and Abbey Mills pumping stations, and they share the same Italianate neo-Gothic style. Driver was a follower of Owen Jones and Christopher Dresser, both designers who sought to utilise advancements in technology to mass produce art and make it accessible for all classes of society. This idea is evident in the beautiful cast-iron work in both stations. Faster and cheaper to produce than the



Decorative cast-iron figs and senna leaves: these plants are used to make laxatives

medieval, hand-carved wood that they were inspired by, new cast-iron technology made it easier to adorn large structures with beautiful artwork. There is also a self-aware, tongue-in-cheek humour to the architecture of the pumping stations. Decorations at Crossness include cast-iron figs and senna leaves: plants used in commercial laxatives. Inspiration from Greek Cross plan buildings led to the stations being affectionately dubbed 'Cathedrals of Sewage'.

It was initially planned that there would be a smaller outfall station at Chelsea, where sewage would be 'de-odorised' by the addition of lime, before being released into the Thames. However, this plan came to the attention of the Society of Medical Officers of Health and was quickly snubbed. Instead a further pumping station was built at Chelsea to connect with the main southern drainage system. The pumping station is still operational and can be seen to the north-east of Battersea Power Station, on the north bank of the river, between Chelsea Bridge and Grosvenor Bridge.

The ancient river of Knightsbridge becomes a sewer

Many of London's ancient rivers were incorporated into the sewer system as they had been collecting the city's waste for decades. Jonathan Swift describes the horrors entering the Fleet river, one of the Thames' tributaries, now covered and part of the sewerage system:

- Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Guts and Blood,
- Drown'd Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench'd in Mud,
- Dead Cats and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood.

Another such river was the Westbourne, or Kilburn that ran through Hampstead, into the Serpentine in Hyde Park, through Knightsbridge and Chelsea, and into the Thames. Knightsbridge gets its name from a bridge over the Westbourne river and the



Hand-coloured lithograph by Giles Firman Phillips of the 'Bayswater' (another name for the Westbourne) flowing out of the Serpentine in Hyde Park, into Knightsbridge before it was disconnected from the Serpentine and culverted in 1834. This was roughly the location of the original medieval bridge.

Anglo-Saxon word 'cniht' meaning 'youth' or 'lad' – the bridge likely being a haunt for local boys in Anglo-Saxon times. Knightsbridge was one of the first areas to be connected to Bazalgette's sewers as the Westbourne had been culverted in the 1830s, meaning it only had to be connected to the main interceptor sewers which were completed by 1865 – just seven years after the full authority was given to the Metropolitan Board of Works.

The Princess Alice disaster

By the mid 1870s Bazalgette's system was completed. However, the Victorians were still dumping untreated sewage into the Thames estuary. The Metropolitan Board of Works received steady pressure to do something about this as complaints began to resurface about the quality of the water flowing in what were becoming significant suburbs of London. But the matter came to a head when a pleasure boat called the Princess Alice sank near the outfalls, killing 600 people. A number of those who survived died later from

swallowing the river water. This brought attention to the need for sewage treatment and it was decided that a processing station would be built which would separate solid and liquid sewage. The liquid would be treated and released back into the Thames, while the solids would be dumped at sea.

The modern system.

When Bazalgette designed the sewerage system he included weirs which meant that in times of exceptionally high rainfall, the sewers would overflow into the Thames so that they did not block up and flood back up into people's homes. This was a precaution for extreme weather conditions, but in recent years it has led to mass dumping of sewage into the Thames as the population of London, as well as climate change, has finally begun to push the limits of Bazalgette's system, over 150 years after it was first built.



Between 2020 and 2023 Thames Water dumped 72 billion litres of sewage into the Thames at times of high rainfall. Although the Thames Tideway Tunnel has alleviated much of the strain on Bazalgette's system that caused the dumping of sewage in the river, London's water company continues to struggle under £15bn in debts, as well as a £120m government fine. It seems very possible that the company will go into administration and control of London's water and waste will return to the hands of the government.



A postcard from the 1890s showing Bazalgette's Thames embankment. The embankment narrowed the river so that it flowed more strongly and also avoided destroying Londoners' properties to house the main interceptor sewers. In addition the embankment replaced much of the river's foreshore which collected waste, providing a modern, sophisticated face for the Thames

The Thames Tideway Tunnel is the first major improvement to Bazalgette's sewerage system. The £4bn 'Super Sewer' intercepts overflow from the 19th century sewers at 21 points along the river, which, in previous periods of heavy rainfall, would overflow into the Thames. The Super Sewer now collects the overflow and it is pumped out into a treatment centre at Beckton. Bazalgette's impact is central in this project: the name of the company is Bazalgette Tideway Limited, trading under the name Tideway. In addition, the company is building a Bazalgette Embankment at the Blackfriars Bridge foreshore. An intercepting tunnel is already in place and construction of a public space on top of the embankment is underway.

Bazalgette's vision for London

A walk round Crossness pumping station might cause one to reflect on a dichotomy hidden between the imposing engines and the delicate cast-iron decoration. The infrastructure itself is efficient, innovative, but also reliant on tried-and-true engineering. Bazalgette ensured the best methods were used to ensure functionality and reliability, whether that meant

implementing new technologies, or sticking with the old. But if efficiency was a priority, why the elaborate decoration of a building with an admittedly rather dirty purpose? It is hard to imagine the government of today investing in a beautiful pumping station or sewage treatment centre, in fact all the modern examples are decidedly ugly. Crossness demonstrates Bazalgette's commitment to the people of London. He was aware of the great impact his sewerage system had on the city and decorated the pumping stations to celebrate their noble purpose.

Bazalgette's whole project was for the benefit of society, specifically

those affected by cholera, which was disproportionately the poor. Plans had been previously discussed which would utilise the sewage and potentially profit from selling it as fertiliser. Other plans proposed treating the sewage to make it less harmful when dumped back in the river. But Bazalgette's priority was 'to drain those localities that are now without drainage, where the people are really suffering from want of it'. Although understanding at the time of the cause of disease was rather misplaced, the combination of this goal, with Parliament's priority to clean up the river outside their windows, resulted in the end of cholera epidemics in the nation's capital.



Sir Joseph Bazalgette memorial, Thames Embankment

DANGEROUS WASTE PUTS OUR PEOPLE IN DANGER

Veolia sees one preventable fire every day across its UK operations caused by **dangerous items such as vapes, electrical items, and batteries** being incorrectly placed in household waste bags or on-street bins. This includes Westminster, where Veolia delivers essential recycling, waste collection and street cleansing services.

Behind each incident is an operational team facing life-threatening situations, expensive equipment damage, and disrupted services. To help reduce the risk, make sure you know where to recycle items safely:

- ⚠ **VAPES:** Take them back to where you bought them or to your nearest electrical recycling bin.
- ⚠ **ELECTRICALS:** Items with plugs, cables or hidden batteries such as those found in children's toys and electrical toothbrushes can be recycled in one of Westminster's on-street electrical recycling bins, find your nearest here: www.westminster.gov.uk/recycling-electrical-appliances
- ⚠ **BATTERIES:** Can be taken to a battery bin at your local supermarket, library, City of Westminster housing estate office, or the Household Waste and Recycling Centre at Smugglers Way. Find your nearest recycling point at: www.westminster.gov.uk/a-z-recycling



You can visit: www.veolia.co.uk/dangerous-waste to see footage showing the devastating impact of dangerous items in recycling and be reminded of how to dispose of these materials safely to prevent future incidents.



City of Westminster

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



Ad astra per aspera

Led by Alexandra Morgan Thomas who has over fifteen years experience in event planning, management and delivery, our team works with you to exceed expectations.

We deliver high quality events ranging from special occasion celebrations; corporate events; charity fundraisers; community endeavours; and a wide variety of virtual and hybrid offerings.

Planning an event? Do get in touch!

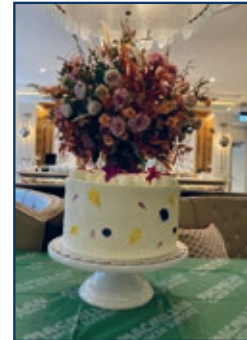
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www.amtfocus.com

*Discounts are offered to
Members of the Knightsbridge Association*

Let us FOCUS on your successful event!

AMT Focus: Bespoke Events Consultancy



'Our Gala Dinner was faultlessly delivered by Alexandra and her team with exquisite attention to detail.'



Their nourishment – Our future

Our vision is for everyone to have access to healthy and affordable food. Our mission is to give families access to fresh fruit and vegetables in their communities.

Through the **Rose Vouchers for Fruit & Veg Project** we help to increase access to fruit and vegetables by giving families the spending power to be able to make healthier food choices.

We know there is a crisis in the way people are eating, with too much junk food consumed and not enough fruit and veg. We understand that a family's economic situation can have a direct impact on the food choices they make on a daily basis. Poor eating

habits can start in early childhood and there's growing evidence that a child's capacity to learn in school is affected by what they eat.

We currently are able to provide Rose Vouchers in four London boroughs (Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Lambeth and Southwark) as well as in areas of Liverpool, Barnsley and Glasgow.



**Alexandra
Rose
Charities**

**To donate please visit our website –
www.alexandrarose.org.uk**

DARCY RESIDENTIAL

Nazy Amini

Director of Darcy Residential



Darcy Residential wishes all Knightsbridge Association members a prosperous, joyful, and successful 2026! As we step into the new year, we remain committed to serving our community with excellence and a personalised touch.

We are a property management company specialising in buildings across Knightsbridge and surrounding prime London areas. We pride ourselves on delivering a luxury service tailored to each client.

What our clients say

★★★★★ The team at Darcy work extremely hard and care about doing the right thing for their clients. As the chairman of one of the property's they manage, I can honestly say we work well together in maintaining the property and controlling the costs. We definitely get our money's worth out of Darcy!

- *Building Chairman*

★★★★★ Nazy founder of Darcy Residential Management Company is best in class, best in town. From day to day management of prime properties to complicated subjects such as major works, I can strongly recommend her for your building. And you get the coolest TikTok videos as well.

- *Building Director*

★★★★★ Finding a good property management company has always been a challenge for us in the past, but working with Darcy Residential has completely changed my perspective. They are a breath of fresh air in an industry where responsiveness and attention to detail can often be lacking.

- *Resident*



Do not fear, Nazy's here!

Contact Information

t: +44 (0) 2037 272 618

info@darcyresidential.co.uk

Knightsbridge Office
64 Knightsbridge
London
SW1X 7JS

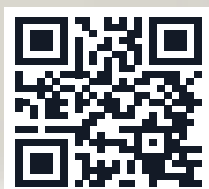
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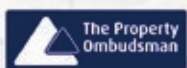
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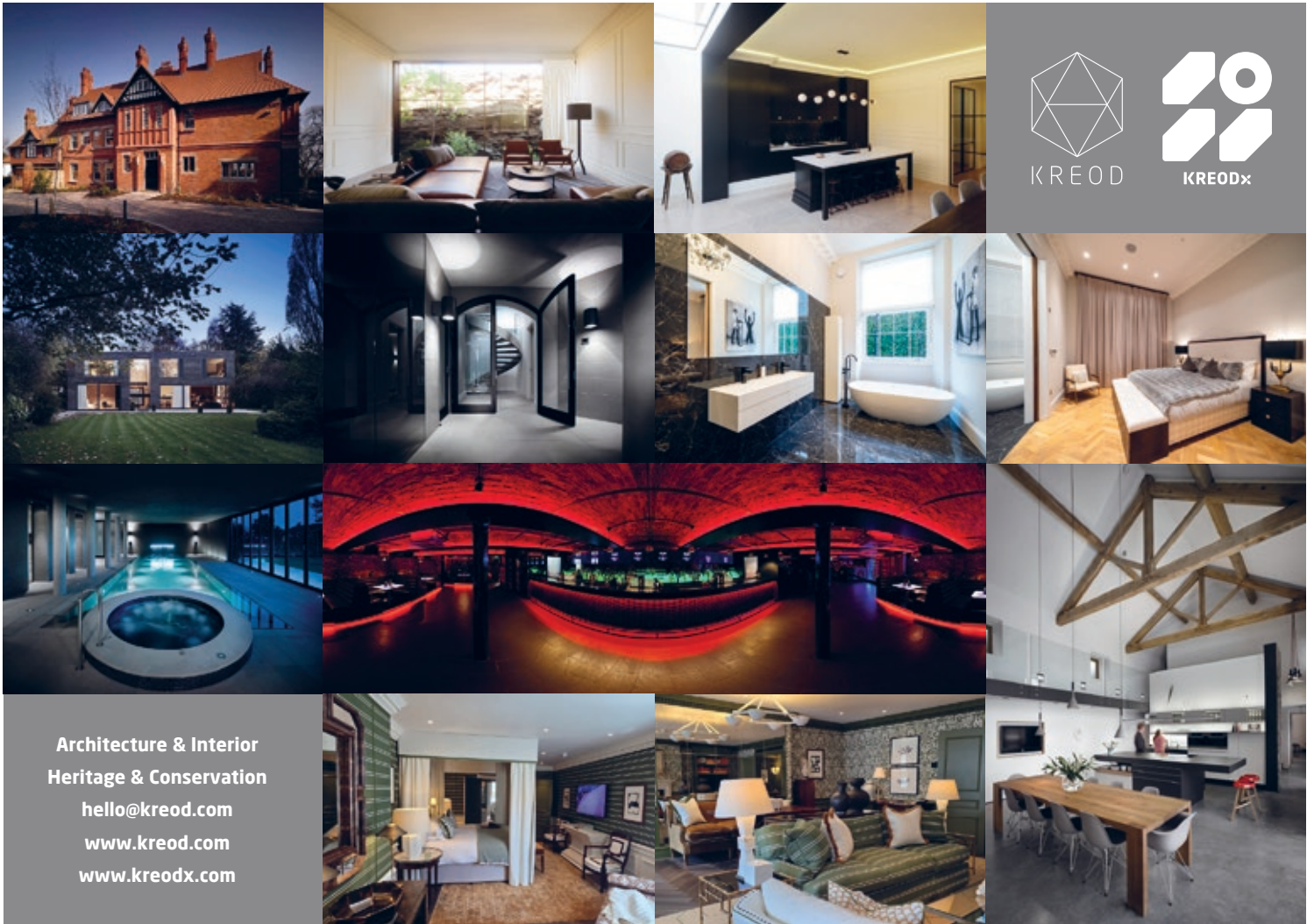
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A festive advertisement for Harrods hampers. The background is a deep red, decorated with green holly leaves and red berries in the top corners. In the center, the Harrods logo is written in its signature white script. Below it, the text 'THE HOME OF EXTRAORDINARY HAMPERS' is displayed in a white serif font. A paragraph of text follows, stating 'Full-to-bursting with delicious confectionery and feasting favourites, there's a hamper for everyone on your list'. The main visual is a collection of wicker hampers and red gift boxes. Two large hampers are in the foreground, with two smaller ones stacked behind them. Several red gift boxes, some wrapped in patterned paper and others in plain red paper, are tied with dark red ribbons and are scattered around the hampers. The entire scene is set on a light-colored wooden floor.

Harrods

THE HOME OF EXTRAORDINARY HAMPERS

Full-to-bursting with delicious confectionery and feasting
favourites, there's a hamper for everyone on your list

DISCOVER HAMPERS

Food Halls - Ground Floor | Hamper Ordering Desk - Lower Ground Floor

[harrods.com/hampers](https://www.harrods.com/hampers)

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6 MONTPELIER STREET LONDON SW7 1EZ
T: 020 7823 9103
info@knightsbridgeassociation.com
www.knightsbridgeassociation.com

Cover: Ennismore Gardens Mews