

56th ANNUAL REPORT

December 2017



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ASSOCIATION



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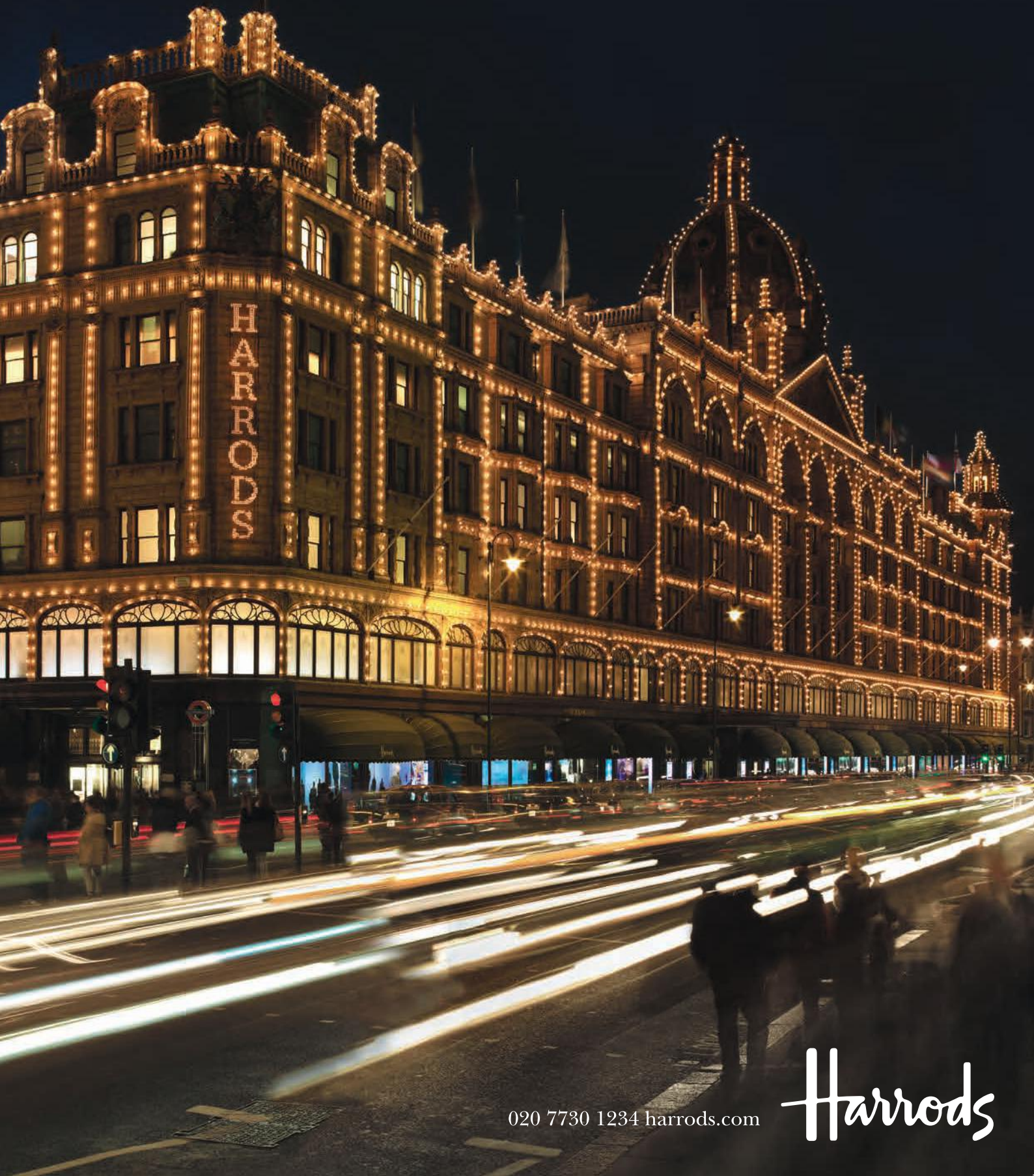
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CHAPTER 2017-18 | ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

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Gift membership also available. Offer valid until 31 July 2018.



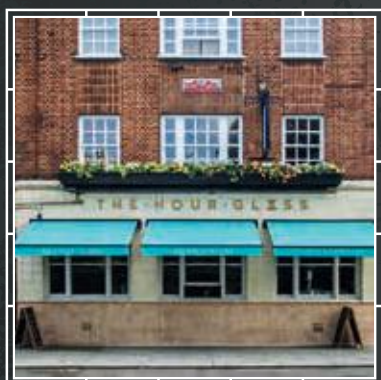
PUB AND DINING ROOM

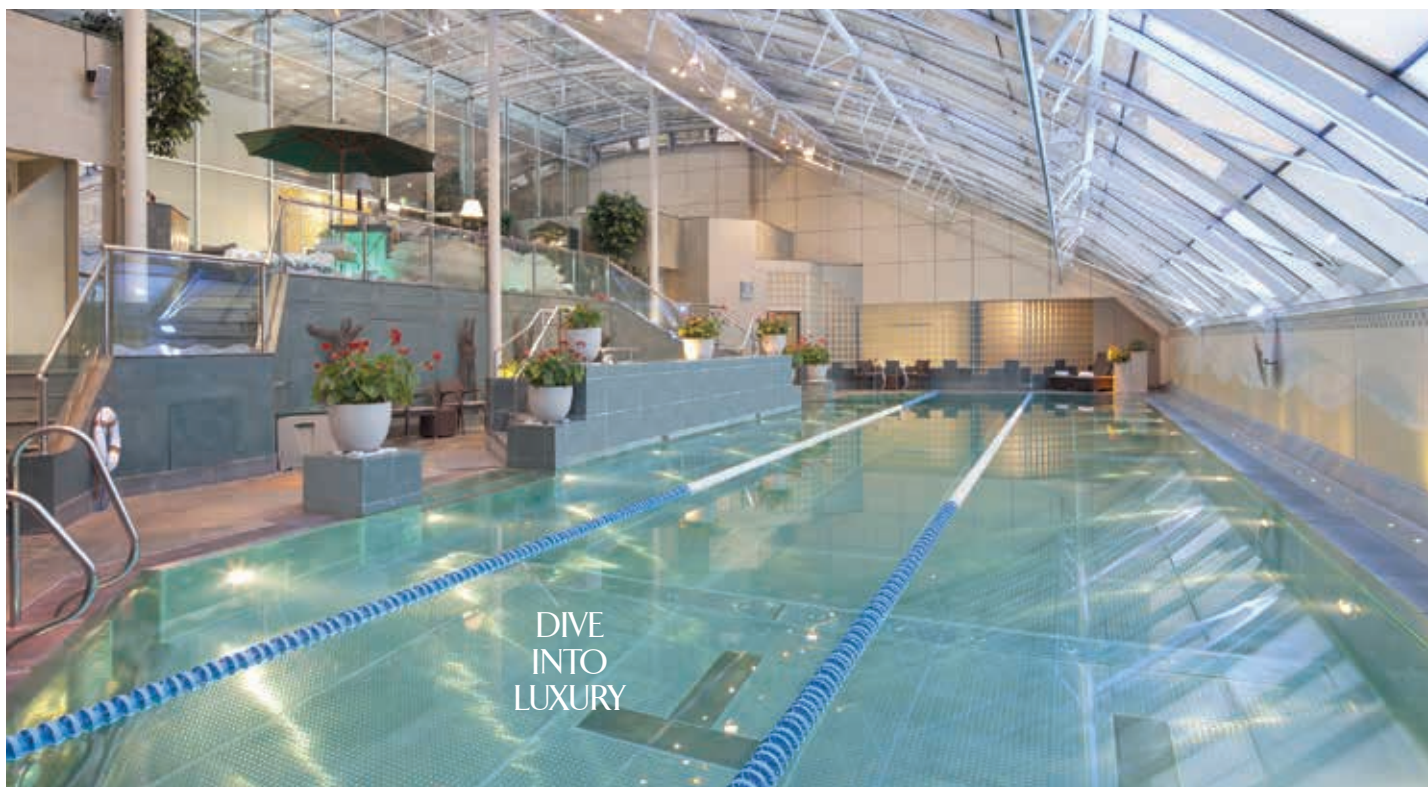
The Hour Glass pub in Brompton is under new management. It is offering good old fashioned British food, drink and service but with a cool contemporary twist.

The team of Brett Hardy and Sean Marsh bring a combination of hospitality expertise and Michelin star culinary excellence.

Sean is the new head chef, and has recently come to the Hour Glass from the St John Bar and Restaurant in Clerkenwell. Prior to that he had the privilege of developing his career in prestigious establishments such as the renowned Mugaritz in San Sebastian.

Brett and Sean look forward to welcoming you to The Hour Glass.





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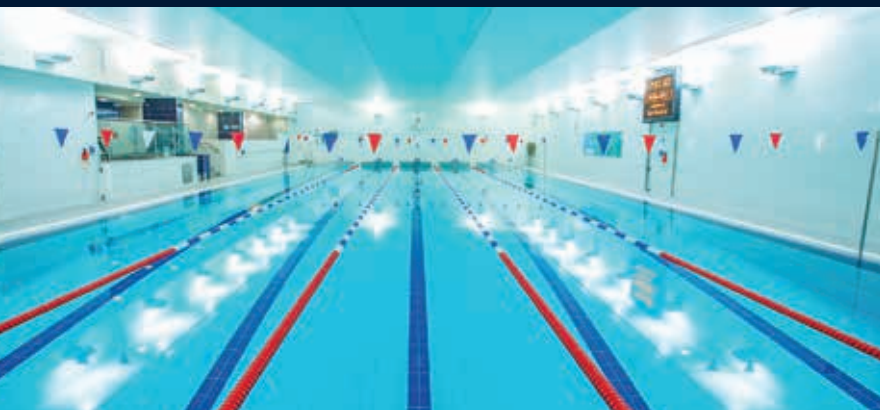
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Ceremonial in Hyde Park – The Major General's annual inspection of the Household Cavalry

THE CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

Welcome to the 56th Knightsbridge Association annual report! Some Guilds or Livery Companies have existed for 500 years or more – with a mixture of good fortune and stewardship – but fifty-six years for an amenity society is an equally impressive statement of resolve given the transience of residents and the voluntary nature of their work.

This year has brought challenges and rewards, as set out later in this report. The challenges remain familiar: the deteriorating state of Brompton Road; cumulative impacts of licensing and planning decisions; encroachment of tables and chairs into the public realm; poor air quality; and the sheer number of public consultations that even the most ably staffed residents' associations struggle to digest and respond to in the time allotted.

There is sunshine too: we have had success in moderating planning applications (pages 16 – 22) while knocking back some of the more aggressive licensing requests (page 24). We have worked closely with our Neighbourhood Forum whose Plan has now been submitted to WCC for its Regulation 16

consultation (page 38) – and our congratulations go to its authors for the speed with which this complex document has been drawn up.

During the year, and rather to our surprise, we identified a serious lacuna in the provision of high-speed fibre broadband in certain parts of Knightsbridge, occasioned by Openreach's refusal to invest in upgrading relevant infrastructure, unless funded by residents themselves. Having taken matters up with WCC councillors and MPs we will be approaching alternative infrastructure providers in 2018 (page 41)

Our Autumn newsletter recognised the considerable pressure on local authorities' resources as the impact of the fire at Grenfell Tower ripples across the sector. In response to this – and prolonged under investment in Knightsbridge's public realm – we continue to advocate an increase in Council Tax.

We also question the effect the UK's insatiable need for foreign inward investment is having on the provision of affordable rented accommodation, not only in our

two Boroughs but also in other parts of central London. The positive impression created by this construction activity, and the resulting acres of new flats, mask the reality of who is actually going to live in them and that they are unlikely to address London's chronic shortage of affordable housing.

We have maintained membership numbers by appealing to new audiences through the development of digital communications – like the eBulletin – that complement the annual report and newsletters. We are keen that younger people take an interest in KA's activities participating in committee work where compatible with busy working lives. The stewardship of the last fifty-six years cannot be allowed to falter as we cross the generational fault line!

I hope you enjoy dipping into this year's Annual Report which includes topical articles on air quality, the impact of business rates on the high street, tree diseases in the Royal Parks and an illustrated History of Hyde Park itself.

Melville Haggard

Chairman

PLANNING & CONSERVATION REPORT

Edward Davies-Gilbert and Carol Seymour-Newton

HYDE PARK BARRACKS

Things may be rumbling on in the background but nothing much is emerging into the public domain. An enquiry to the Government Property Unit received the following response: *'the MOD is investigating how best to deliver State Ceremonial and Public Duties in London, which includes the use of Hyde Park Barracks, and are conducting detailed assessment studies to determine the best way forward and consulting local authorities, as part of this work. No decisions have yet been taken on future arrangements.'*



However an Evening Standard article appearing in October indicated that the MoD were rethinking their plans for the barracks having failed to identify a suitable alternative site within 30 minutes' ride of Horse Guards Parade and on account of the terror threat level being raised to "critical".

The barracks and stabling will remain on one half of the site, leaving just enough space for a smaller number of luxury apartment blocks to be built on the other half. One major logistical hurdle would be how to site some of the stabling below ground level to save space without jeopardising the welfare or safety of the horses.

THE ESTATES

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE K1



Works to redevelop K1, The Knightsbridge Estate, are now well underway. The site comprises the northern end of The Knightsbridge Estate, bounded by Brompton Road, Sloane Street, Basil Street and Hoopers Court.

The demolition works to 33–35 Brompton Road are now complete, providing access to the main part of the site to continue demolition. A Façade Retention System (FRS) with scaffolding and noise mitigation has been erected around the entirety of the K1 site. Demolition is on schedule to be completed in March 2018.

The developers are working closely with London Underground on future improvements to the Knightsbridge Underground Station, including a new relocated access on Brompton Road and facilitating a new step-free access at Hoopers Court. Exits 3 and 4 at the corner of Brompton Road and Sloane Street are planned for closure by the end of 2017. Exits 1, 2 (by the Mandarin Oriental and Harvey Nichols) and the exit by Harrods will remain open throughout the works. Construction works are scheduled to begin at the site in Spring 2018.

To receive the newsletter, join the K1 Construction Neighbourhood Liaison Group, or for general enquiries about construction or demolition works at the site, please

contact the K1 team at 0808 281 9554 or on construction@cascadepr.co.uk.

55-91 KNIGHTSBRIDGE



View of the demolition behind the retained façade

Demolition of the whole block behind the retained Knightsbridge façade is now complete, with the building demolished down to the existing basement. As mentioned in the Autumn newsletter, Skanska, who were the main contractors, have handed over to Blue Sky Building who will manage the site throughout the next phase.

This next phase sees the installation of interlocking piles to create the second level basement. Piling on the north side of Knightsbridge elevation commenced in late November, with piling on the southern (Duplex Ride) elevation taking place in the New Year.

Basement excavation will take place between the 2nd and 4th quarters of 2018; superstructure construction between the 4th quarter 2018 and the third quarter 2019; and the internal fitting out between the 2nd quarter 2019 and the 3rd quarter 2020.

Any queries to: 55knightsbridge@fourcommunications.com

SOUTH KENSINGTON ESTATE (SKE) 1–5 Cromwell Place

Planning permission has been obtained for the Cromwell Place art gallery buildings in South Kensington designed by the architects Buckley Gray Yeoman. The scheme involves the restoration of five listed buildings and the construction of a pavilion and basement storage area, which will house 25 art gallery businesses and 16 exhibition rooms. As well as providing display space for the



The pavilion to the rear of 1-5 Cromwell Place

resident galleries it will enable regional and international galleries to bring exhibitions to London.

Construction commenced in November, and the period of most disruptive work is expected to be the demolition phase which will be between February and May 2018. The

redevelopment will take about 18 months to complete and the gallery building is expected to open in the summer of 2019.

South Kensington Estates is continuing to work on improving the mix of tenants in their retail parade on the south side of Brompton Rd (from Ovington Gardens to Thurloe Square). When the opportunity arises leases are being ended to bring in new retail tenants, usually with a design element to their offering. Key to this is the retail development project at 197-205 Brompton Rd which is due to commence in July 2018. The five current shop units (including Costa and Boots) will be renovated and consolidated to create one retail flagship store. This will enable the Estate to bring in a good quality anchor tenant, and will help to facilitate a better mix of businesses in that area.

ALBERTOPOLIS



There is a central axis between the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens to the north and the central portal of the Natural History Museum.

This is the name given to the mainly cultural area centred on Exhibition Road and takes its name from Prince Albert. Following the advice of the Prince the area was purchased by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 with the profits made from the Exhibition which took place in Hyde Park.

Prince Albert was the driving force behind the Great Exhibition and President of the Royal Commission. The name 'Albertopolis' seems to have been coined in the 1850s to celebrate and somewhat satirise his role in Victorian cultural life. After his death the term fell into disuse. It was revived by architectural historians in the 1960s and popularised by the nascent conservation movement to bring attention to the complex of public Victorian buildings and the surrounding Victorian houses built on the Commissioners' estate, that were threatened by the expansion and development of Imperial College.

The following items are all within the area covered by Albertopolis.

The Sackler Courtyard and Cafe, V&A Exhibition Road Quarter.

*Front Cover picture:
The Aston Webb Screen, the
V&A Exhibition Road Quarter.
Both designed by AL_A
©Hufton+Crow*

THE V&A's NEW EXHIBITION ROAD QUARTER

Opened with a great fanfare by the Duchess of Cambridge in June, the new gallery served for one week as the site of a series of performances and interventions. September saw the opening of the inaugural exhibition, Opera: Passion Power and Politics.

Met with enthusiasm by press and public alike, the new galleries



and open air space are accessed via Exhibition Road through the slightly truncated Aston Webb screen. It has greatly enhanced the experience of visitors to the Exhibition Road Cultural Quarter.

Long-standing members will remember the fiasco of Polish-American architect Daniel Libeskind's Spiral, a building resembling a series of tumbling boxes, which would have been inserted into the courtyard space on Exhibition Road. Although much disliked by the KA and other groups, RBKC granted permission. In the event it proved impossible to raise the necessary funding, and in 2004 the Museum came to the conclusion that in any case it would not have provided sufficient exhibition space and the scheme was dropped.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



The Duchess of Cambridge, Patron, Sir David Attenborough and Sir Michael Dixon, Director of the Natural History Museum at the gala opening.

Following the gala re-opening of the main entrance hall, now named Hintze Hall, by the Duchess of Cambridge in July, the Museum is being reorganised to follow Alfred Waterhouse's original design.

The Eastern grounds will focus on the past history of life on Earth, including how life has evolved and the major extinctions that occur several times through geological

history. Visitors will first come into contact with the concept of Deep Time and start to understand their place in the history of the world. They will be taken on a journey from the origins of life through to the present day. A timeline will look at how life has changed over the incredibly long history of the Earth, while evocative planting specimens will highlight the variety in species during this time.



The magnificently restored railings

A spectacular bronze *Diplodocus* sculpture will draw visitors from Cromwell Road into the grounds and they will be able to fully comprehend the strangeness of dinosaurs' natural environment and the Museum's expert knowledge of *Diplodocus* behaviour.



Cgi of the eastern grounds with Dippy centre stage

Full planning permission was granted in July 2016 for this ambitious scheme designed by architect Niall McLaughlin and landscape artist Kim Wilkie. It includes an attractive new space under the retained East Lawn, and a new entrance from the Museum Tunnel which will do much to alleviate the long queues.

Fundraising efforts are ongoing and works are due to begin in January 2020. It will open to the public in September 2021.

SCIENCE MUSEUM



The old Sorting Office in Imperial Institute Road

In late July the Science Museum submitted a planning application for the former PO sorting office to be used as an exhibition, meeting, lecture, performance, corporate events space and members' room. This was followed by a separate planning application at the beginning of August to convert the former medicine galleries on the 4th & 5th floors into a commercial events space.

It was claimed that these proposed event areas were to replace the loss of the spaces in the Smith Centre.

However, by combining the old sorting office and the 4th & 5th floors approximately 3000 m² of floor space would be created, some 3.25 times larger than at present. The Association felt this could cause problems to local residents, especially at night, if the number of events weren't tightly controlled and strict conditions imposed. There were a number of concerns including the number of security personnel on duty at any one time; the catering arrangements, especially waste disposal, in particular glass; hours of operation and dispersal arrangements.

In our submission to the council we asked that these two applications be considered together. We pointed out that the V&A and NHM were also in the market for out-of-hours events and the numbers of people coming to the area would be substantial.

We are well aware of the financial challenges museums face and their need to find creative ways to make up any shortfall in income. However, we felt that these two schemes taken together were overly ambitious. In the event, RBKC granted permission with conditions.

IMPERIAL COLLEGE

South Kensington Campus Weeks Hall, Princes Gardens



Refurbishment and reconfiguration of the interior of the 1960s Grade II Listed building to provide academic use was on schedule to complete by Christmas.

The Nursery, nos. 8 – 9 Princes Gardens

Refurbishment works are proposed for the second half of 2018

Nos. 8-13 Princes Gardens

The College is considering options for future use.

Nos. 14-15 Princes Gardens

As above, but they are considering use as temporary accommodation for the Nursery school whilst the refurbishment works are carried.

Dyson Business School, Exhibition Road

Work on conversion of the old Post Office building will continue through to September 2018 ready for the start of the new academic year. However they expect to enable first access for the Dyson

The City & Guilds Building now refurbished

team from January 2018, to start teaching on the upper floors.

On the campus west of Exhibition Road refurbishment of the City & Guilds building has been completed; improvements to the Library infrastructure are due for completion in summer 2018.

White City Campus

The Molecular Sciences Hub (Dept of Chemistry) will be ready for occupation in mid-2018; the Michael Uren Biomedical Engineering Hub is under construction for completion in mid-2019 and the 34 storey residential tower (for the private-rented sector) is under construction with completion planned for early 2019.

ROYAL ALBERT HALL

The South West Quadrant



The great excavation

As they approach their 150th anniversary in 2021, they are excavating a two-storey, double height basement to provide much-needed space for artists, crew and promoters. The excavation will also enable them to provide more facilities for their audiences within the Hall.

The project has been fondly nicknamed 'The Great Excavation', as a tribute to Prince Albert



and Henry Cole's historic Great Exhibition of 1851, the success of which funded the creation of the area now known as Albertopolis.

The project is to be completed over the next two years.

Also in anticipation of their 150th birthday, they are undertaking extensive renovation and cleaning on the North side of the building.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC



Former Chairman, Lord Winston (4th right) Director Dr. Colin Lawson (3rd right) and architect John Simpson (right) accompanied by RCM trumpeters gets things underway

More Music, the £40 million philanthropic campaign to invest in the Royal College of Music's South Kensington campus, outlined in last year's Report, began in the summer when contractors Gilbert-Ash demolished some existing buildings in order to make way for the new spaces. This once in a generation development will ensure the Royal College of Music maintains its position as a world leading provider of music education with two new performance spaces, a new museum and better access and facilities for visitors just part of the scheme's ambition. Completion will be in 2019.

THE EXHIBITION ROAD CULTURAL GROUP

The Exhibition Road Cultural Group was formed several years ago to bring together the leading cultural and educational organisations in South Kensington - home of science, arts and inspiration - within the area known as Albertopolis - see above.

Examples of its collaborations include a music festival; a day

of free events for young people from 13–19 years providing career advice from leading designers, scientists and artists.

Discover South Kensington is an initiative of the ECRG to promote what's on and share news in the area.

OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS

South Kensington Station



Northern platform

Following on from last year's Report, TfL have now submitted a listed building application for works to the station. The application is the culmination of two years of discussion and engagement with the planners, local residents – including the KA – and other interested parties to ensure that the appropriate station design has been developed, which enhances and supports the station's current setting whilst continuing to serve local residents, alongside the millions of visitors who arrive each year. The design also safeguards provision of step-free access which TfL plan to deliver by 2022, to both District and Circle line platforms and the museum tunnel.

TfL are searching for a long-term joint venture development partner to work with them to restore and develop their land around the station. By refurbishing existing buildings and creating new opportunities along Pelham Street, they hope to enhance the area while also respecting the station's unique heritage setting. They hoped to have identified a 'preferred partner' by end 2017.

The main elements of development will include:

- Restoration of the historic shop fronts along Thurloe Street and the station arcade

- Restoration of the bullnose (the curved front of the station) and addition of a first floor to provide commercial space
- Opening up and making use of currently redundant areas to allow development along Pelham Street
- Appropriate development along Pelham Street with new homes and commercial space, restoring the active frontages to this side of the street
- Refurbishment of 20-34 Thurloe Street, creating a new station entrance with step-free access to the District and Circle lines

The Mandarin Oriental

In September last year, The Mandarin Oriental, embarked on an extensive multimillion-pound restoration swathing the front of the building in scaffolding. Internationally renowned designer, Joyce Wang was commissioned to oversee the design of the hotel's rooms and suites, while Adam D. Tihany oversaw the refurbishment of the two award winning restaurants, Bar Boulud and Dinner. The scaffolding was removed by the beginning of August revealing the extensive renovation work that had also been carried out on the Knightsbridge front. The second phase of the restoration has commenced, with a focus on the countryside of the hotel. Guest rooms and suites facing Hyde Park will be fully restored, along with The Ballroom and The Loggia, whilst two new penthouse suites with wrap around terraces will be added to the ninth floor, offering unparalleled views of the London skyline. Additionally, Adam D. Tihany will work on expanding the spa facilities with a new Mandarin Oriental Spa Studio. The completion of the second phase is scheduled for summer 2018.

The Berkeley 33-39 Knightsbridge

Demolition of these two buildings, part of The Berkeley was completed by November. Piling was expected to commence in December, continuing until the



summer of 2018 with basement excavation running from summer 2018 to the winter. The superstructure and fitting out taking about 18 months with completion due in summer 2020.

Currently the hotel's spa and gym are still open for hotel guests and members, although the pool's roof no longer opens and the gym has been relocated to the former Koffman's restaurant on the corner of Knightsbridge and Wilton Place.

A planning application for amendments to the consented scheme, seen by the KA and local residents earlier in the year, was submitted to WCC in August.

Any queries to:
33-39knightsbridge@
fourcommunications.com

HARRODS



Harrods has been granted permission to reinstate historic features to their ground floor facades. This will include two original Edwardian Baroque entrances on Brompton Road, retractable awnings and the lost façade elements of the Brompton Road display windows, and associated internal window refurbishment; and the addition of a canopy over door 5 in Hans

Crescent. The first phase – Hans Crescent – has been completed. Work to the Brompton Road façade will be carried out in 2019. The KA is always keen to see the restoration of heritage features and fully supported the scheme.

2-8 RUTLAND GATE

Western terrace at the top of Rutland Gate facing the Barracks



In 2016 permission was granted to convert the building from a single house into 13 flats with significant improvements to the pastiche 19th century facades. It was previously rebuilt in the 80s when the last remaining Victorian terrace house and the modernist 30s flats which, post war, housed the German Consulate, were demolished to be replaced by a rather clumsy attempt at a period terrace containing four flats with individual swimming pools. Subsequently converted to a single house for the then Lebanese prime minister, it was once more on the

market following his assassination. At that time it was supposedly rocket and bullet-proof with ugly blue reflecting windows.

The current revisions involve demolition behind retained facades and include alterations to the exterior to regain the external appearance and grandeur of four substantial houses; replacing the lost individual porticos; reinstating missing tall chimneys and expressing party walls where visible above roof level in painted stucco masonry; adapting the roofline and removing the 80s double mansard; raising the ridge height to add verticality and to screen roof mounted plant; re-establishing a traditional hierarchy for the windows which would be reglazed in clear glass.

LANCELOT PLACE

No. 15 and 1 Trevor Walk

This development, granted planning permission in February 2016, seems to be on hold.

Nos. 3-11

In the summer there was further consultation on revised plans for this terrace, but no planning application has yet been submitted.

SOME PROGRESS

31 Brompton Square

This long-running saga has reached another watershed.

To recap, to the KA's surprise, and horror in 2004 RBKC gave planning

permission to increase the living accommodation in this Grade II listed house, to 22,000sq.ft – more than tripling it in size. This included several layers of basement to house a pool, a spa, media room and a car lift. Work started – the house was stripped out and the garden excavated to a depth of some 30 ft. Work stopped when the workers downed tools in 2008, the bank foreclosed, the owner went to gaol, and in 2011 it was sold to the current owner for £28m. Further revisions were consented by RBKC culminating in the most recent one in 2016. In spite of promises that work would again commence, nothing happened. The garden remains a 30ft hole dominated by a retaining structure of heavy duty struts to prevent the sides falling in.

In September, the company owning the house, seemingly registered in BVI, was taken into receivership and liquidators appointed. It was then put on the market for £25 million, £3 million less than the current owner paid for it.

As we go to press it seems a buyer has come forward and paid the asking price.

31-32 Rutland Gate

Although planning permission was granted in 2013 to convert these Grade II listed houses, formerly home to the Sudanese diplomatic service, nothing has since happened, and with the property market in its current state, it is unlikely that further progress will be made for the foreseeable future.

HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS

In July, the Prince of Wales, in his capacity as the first Patron launched the new charity, The Royal Parks (TRP), an amalgamation of the Royal Parks Agency and the Royal Parks Foundation.

Over time TRP is expected to slowly step away from Government and Ministers, which, to quote Andrew Scattergood, the chief executive, will 'free the Parks from a number of government controls, and see evolution not revolution,



Lloyd Grossman, Chairman of The Royal Parks, Prince Charles and Andrew Scattergood at the launch

and no dramatic change'. The KA hopes this does not lead to any increase in the number of major events entailing huge areas being fenced off for long periods of time.

TRP expect to see a continuing cut in government funding, which has declined from around 95% in 2001 to around 25% in 2017, although they will continue to receive funding as part of their contract for services, which include supporting ceremonial and national events.

The future challenges facing the parks include generating sufficient income, managing an ever-developing array of pests and diseases (see page 28), and coping with the ever-growing popularity of the parks – not helped by social media facilitating ad hoc and unauthorised events and satnav directing cyclists away from the super cycle highway on to pedestrian paths.

The Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens



Adhoc Swedish picnic – one of the problems that the Park's staff have to contend with.

HYDE PARK SUPER NURSERY

The new nursery, outlined in last year's Report, was fully completed by the end of November. The size of a football pitch, the new greenhouse will enable the Parks to grow nearly all the 500,000 flowers and shrubs, some 2,000 varieties, which they plant across their eight London parks. The roof can be opened or closed, depending on the fickle English weather, and will aid the acclimatisation of young plants so that they do not have to be moved outside for hardening. Sustainability has

been at the forefront of the project and the design meets the highest environmental standards. 99% of materials from the demolished nursery have been recycled.

SHEEP MAY SAFELY GRAZE



The Royal Parks project to understand the grassland invertebrates – wasps, bees, butterflies and other insects – that call the Parks their home, launched in August when six rare breed sheep spent a week grazing peacefully in Green Park (see picture above) in the company of their shepherd and his dog.

Over the next coming months and into 2018 they will be monitoring the success of the project, and if proven they will consider extending the trials to other of their Parks. Hyde Park is distinct possibility as it has a potentially suitable wildflower meadow area.

The KA and the general public were hugely in favour and very much hope to see sheep in Hyde Park.

KENSINGTON PALACE

The Orangery Project

The plans to create a new garden to the south of the Orangery and build a new facility to the rear, outlined in last year's Report, took longer than expected to be processed. Permission finally came through from RBKC in September. Work will start in the new year on the first stage of the project which will be to carry out some enabling



work, with the full archaeological investigations scheduled for late 2018 and the build beginning in earnest in early 2019.

The new garden designed by Tod Longstaffe-Gowan, inspired by the 18th century garden, will frame the views of this beautiful building.

SERPENTINE PAVILION 2017

Inspired by a large tree used as a meeting place in his native village of Gando, architect Francis Kéré brought a piece of Burkina Faso to London. According to Kéré, who established his practice in Berlin in 2005, the community always gathers in the tree's shade and he wanted to create a place that would encourage people to come together, with spaces where you feel enclosed and protected, or choose to look out to the Park. Like an upturned hat, the 25m-diameter roof appears to float above four curving walls made of deep blue-stained wood arranged in a staggered triangular pattern, with gaps providing glimpses through the structure. In some lights, it looks like translucent fabric, in others a massive opaque wall. On the outside, the wood is subtly chamfered so the walls shimmer in the sunshine like woven silk.



HYDE PARK EVENTS

WINTER WONDERLAND (WW)

WW enjoyed a successful 10th anniversary year in 2016/7 the weather was good and some 3 million people attended. Security was heightened - and is again being increased this year - and TRP worked hard to manage the impact on local residents and this year they received no sound complaints over the event period. Every year they hold a pre-brief and debrief with key stakeholders (includes KA and all the local associations



adjacent to the park) before and after the event.

This year WW runs for 6 weeks from Friday 17th November to Monday 1st January 2018 and sees many new attractions as well as the return of old favourites. The Magical Ice Kingdom returned – Deep Sea Adventure is the theme, featuring ‘an awe-inspiring underwater journey of myth and mystery made completely of snow and ice’.

THE BRITISH SUMMERTIME HYDE PARK CONCERT SERIES

This year the concerts took place over two weekends in July, the first artist being Phil Collins. Mid-week events included open-air cinema, Gorilla Circus, choirs and sports activations.

Noise complaints were at a record low but crime was slightly up on the previous year, mostly due to more people being on site and an increased police activity.

BBC LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS AND RADIO 2 LIVE

The Last Night was again broadcast into Hyde Park and to various other cities in Britain on 9th September, followed the next day by Radio 2 Live.



Noise complaints reduced by 50% and crime numbers were very low, due to enhanced security. They were mainly concerned with petty theft.

Other returning events included the Royal Parks Foundation Half Marathon in October which since 2008 has raised £35m spread between some 750 charities.

HERITAGE VALUED

A Short History of London's Garden Squares

The london parks and gardens trust's
Londongardens.online.org.uk

Squares are one of the defining features of London. Like other European cities, London has its grand civic spaces, but no other city has developed the garden square in quite the same way.

London squares are different because they were built for people to live in. The layout of Georgian and Victorian squares created an ordered, spacious arrangement of streets and leafy open spaces which has made an enduring contribution to the quality of life in London.

Today, London's squares are a vital part of the city's fabric: a focus for local communities, attractive to tourists, and pleasant places for Londoners in which



Ennismore Gardens

to live, work and relax. They can also be a haven for wildlife, important links in the green chain between the city's parks and back gardens, and occasional oases in built-up areas.

Social changes, two world wars, building development and neglect all took their toll on squares in the 20th

century. The London Squares Act of 1931 was hugely important in protecting more than 400 of the city's squares from being built over, and without it many of the squares we enjoy today may not have survived.

Today, private squares with their mysterious, shady gardens co-exist with those run by councils, more open in their layouts and often with playgrounds and sports facilities. Public ownership has allowed more people to enjoy the delights of squares, which provide vital access to recreation and green surroundings in poorer urban areas.

Events such as Open Garden Squares Weekend

allow public access each year to many of the private squares, ensuring that their contribution to London's environment can be appreciated by all.

Awareness of the value of London's parks and gardens has grown in recent years, and there is renewed commitment to the conservation and improvement of squares, both public and private. English Heritage has undertaken several major restorations, and many smaller renovations have been completed, thanks to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, local authorities and others.

This website tells the story of squares, and highlights how much has been done - and remains to be done - to preserve this integral part of London's landscape.

Ennismore Street

Congratulations to the owners of the Brompton Square house which backs on to Ennismore Street. As part of their upgrading and extensions to the house owners,



architect Houston Morris and his wife, have replaced the tatty concrete wall that had for years blighted Ennismore Street with a mellow London stock brick.

HERITAGE - DEVALUED

Rutland Gate upper garden

Another long-running saga stretching all the way back to the 1970s. Lack of any works to the trees by the current owner, believed to be living in the United States, resulted in a falling tree causing the tragic death of a local housekeeper in 2014.

More recently it appears that the owner applied to WCC for permission to carry out 'various tree works and removals' and the Council has attached an informative to the permission regarding future inspections.

This hopefully will provide protection for the public, but does nothing to move matters on regarding responsible maintenance of the garden.

31 Egerton Gardens



This property has been the subject of no less than seven planning applications in recent few years. The latest proposal was to gut the interiors, reconfigure the

five flats and add an extra storey. In spite fierce opposition and its recently being considered by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) a *building of some architectural quality and strong local interest (in particular given the treatment of its façade and surviving original features)*, RBKC's planning committee, by a majority of one, voted in favour of granting permission.

26-31 Princes Gate

The garden strip in front of these embassies continues derelict, uncared for and full of litter. Lamps and railings have been missing since the second World War and the wall and pillars are damaged. It is under private ownership and represents a sad lack of civic pride.

LICENSING

Paul Meitner

It's been a busy year for licensing applications and as a result we have had to lodge a number of objections. Consistent themes have included Tables and Chairs on pavements, extended hours for fast food outlets and the spread of Shisha lounges and open air cafés, notably the Victoria and Albert. As ever there is conflict between

businesses wanting to serve visitors to the area, including many from overseas, at all hours of the day and night, and residents who value peace and quiet - as well as a good night's sleep! Many of our responses have resulted in applications either being rejected / modified by the licensing authority or, in some cases, withdrawn before a formal

hearing takes place. Successful interventions have included 17 Knightsbridge Green, Cafe Taboo Shisha (where enforcement action was taken by RBKC following our continued monitoring), The Wellington Club, The Magazine, Serpentine Gallery and Tyros, a fast food outlet in Montpelier Street. In many cases we have joined forces

with neighbouring businesses and residents' associations to share our thoughts and plan our actions. Inevitably not all of our efforts have been successful - the V&A's plans for an open air café, despite significant public opposition, was the biggest disappointment in the year. Even when this happens we put a marker in the sand and make it clear that we are ever vigilant in our efforts to maintain and

improve the quality of life of local residents. As ever, we appreciate the support and assistance of Richard Brown of Westminster CAB during the year.

At the time of going to press we are contesting McDonalds' application to bring forward their Brompton Road outlet's opening hours to 5 am, which if approved would result in additional noise and disruption to local residents.



Tables and chairs continue to encroach on pedestrian pathways on our main thoroughfares.

COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUPS

In addition to the numerous liaison groups concerned with WCC, RBKC, the Parks and the Police, the KA attends regular liaison meetings with the Natural History Museum, Imperial College, The Science Museum, South Kensington Station (TfL), the Knightsbridge Estate, 55-91 Knightsbridge, The Berkeley and South Kensington Estates.

THE LONDON FORUM OF AMENITY AND CIVIC SOCIETIES

In the past year the Forum has been as busy as ever representing the interests of over 130 local societies

– the KA amongst them – at Government and London-wide level.

Responses were given to many national and GLA consultations and the Forum has submitted evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees and to scrutinies by committees of the London Assembly – including on air quality, ultra low emission zones, Neighbourhood Planning, Heathrow expansion (opposed), tall buildings and pedestrianisation of Oxford Street. Following concern expressed at the amount of new home developments left empty on a buy-to-leave investment basis, the London Assembly undertook an inquiry into foreign ownership of property.

WASF – WESTMINSTER AMENITY SOCIETIES FORUM

Elizabeth Virgo, who organised these meetings so efficiently for many years – no easy feat as it involved finding three or four dates a year when representatives from 20 or more societies could meet with senior Council members and officers to discuss various pressing topics – has proved a hard act to follow. Finally, one took place in November with WCC Leader Cllr Nickie Aiken and Chief Executive Charlie Parker in attendance for a question and answer session.

LAW AND ORDER REPORT

Madeline Elsdon

Members of the Law and Order Committee regularly attend meetings, talks and demonstrations. This year a group of us attended a presentation at Charing Cross Police Station by SO19 Firearms officers on the use of Tasers as police chiefs are considering whether every frontline officer should be armed with a Taser.

THE THREAT OF TERRORISM

At a presentation in Belgravia Police Station we were given details of the Prevent Strategy designed mainly to combat Islamic radicalisation, right wing extremism and the threat from Northern Irish dissident republicans. Britain is

facing an unprecedented terrorist threat. Members of the public and police officers have been killed in attacks and hundreds injured. Every single day the intelligence services face a massive challenge trying to keep us safe. We were told that returning jihadists should be welcomed back, supported and rehabilitated. These people, who have been indoctrinated to loathe our way of life, have been trained in terror camps to use bombs and firearms to kill and maim. A heated debate followed as some attendees felt that ISIS terrorists who had made this lifestyle choice should now either be denied re-entry to the UK or face prosecution upon their return.

CLOSURE OF FRONT COUNTERS IN POLICE STATIONS

A presentation by Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, outlined the proposal to close many of the front counters in police stations across the Capital. The MET has made £600m of savings as a consequence of Government cuts to policing. This is now being compounded by the need to make another £400m of savings. To ensure that the front line is protected we were informed that this means resources should be diverted from under-used services and the revenue generated invested in front line police officers. There

are currently 73 front counters across London. 33 are open 24 hours a day (two in Westminster and one in Kensington and Chelsea). Londoners are increasingly choosing to use the internet to report crime and the use of traditional front counters has diminished. Officers are tied up manning counters with hardly any members of the public visiting, spending time when they could be out in the community. With violent crime increasing we support the idea of extra money for police out on the streets fighting real crime, catching criminals and keeping public order. At the same time residents say they cannot understand the justification for millions being spent on investigations into historic sex abuse allegations or the endless man hours spent scouring the internet for offensive comments.

NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL



Figures show that 31 police officers were attacked during the two-day event this year. Officers were slashed with broken bottles, spat at, bitten and had acid thrown at them. Four people were stabbed, more than 300 arrested and dozens of weapons seized during the street carnival. A three week crackdown in advance banned hundreds from attending and the Met threw a ring of steel around the parade. Officers seized weapons including knives, CS spray, batons and a hammer. It is totally unacceptable and a disgrace for police officers to be injured just doing their job. There is a growing lobby calling for this "peaceful" carnival to be moved to Hyde Park which the Knightsbridge Association will vigorously oppose.

MOPED GANGS



A record crimewave is being carried out by groups of thugs on stolen mopeds and Knightsbridge has not been immune to this new "highway robbery". Mobile phones, high value watches, jewellery and expensive fashion items from retail outlets have been snatched in this escalating criminal activity which appears to be carried out mostly by youngsters who have been known to throw nasty substances in victims' faces or even stab them. Officers have to follow approved tactics on pursuing motorcycles and need to be appropriately trained and equipped to minimise risk to the people being pursued, as well as the officers themselves and the wider public. We view moped crime as an extremely serious and traumatising offence and we urge the Met to crack down London-wide on perpetrators by increasing the number of officers who receive highly specialised training in order to enable the pursuit of these criminals. Police officers who have engaged in pursuits have, in the past, been charged with dangerous driving, even if no one was injured. Officers have to make a judgement



call whether to initiate a pursuit, as there is a very real chance of being prosecuted if anyone is injured.

COMMUNITY ROADWATCH



Residents participated in a meet-up in Knightsbridge where police support officers trained us in the use of hand held speed cameras. It was terrific fun and no cars were actually prosecuted.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS



The Law and Order Committee meet three times a year. In January our guest speaker was a lead Immigration Enforcement Officer from the Home Office. In August we were delighted to welcome the excellent Chief Supt. Ellie O'Connor, Borough Commander RBKC and at our November meeting Sgt. Clint Sturgess exhibited a horrifying selection of weaponry he routinely removes from individuals. Our three police teams exchange information with officers from both councils, committee members, faith group representatives, local business leaders and invited residents. If you would like to attend one of our meetings or join the Committee please contact the Association.

SAY HELLO TO OUR DEDICATED OFFICERS



The Brompton and
Hans Town Team



The Knightsbridge and Belgravia
Safer Neighbourhood Team



THE ROYAL PARKS
Dedicated Parks and Wildlife
Officer Stephen Barnes

In the event of an emergency always call 999

AIRBNB

**Cllr Rachael Robathan, WCC Cabinet Member for Housing
and Knightsbridge Belgravia Ward Councillor**

Knightsbridge has always been an attractive destination for visitors. However, the growth of short term lets, and Airbnb in particular, has led to increasing problems for residents in the area. While not many suffer to the extent of Williams Mews over the summer where an impromptu rave had to be dispersed by the police and the Council's noise team, the impact in terms of noise, rubbish dumping and other factors can be huge.

Much of the recent escalation in short lets stems from the Deregulation Act 2015, which removed exemptions for London to restrict short lets. This means that any household can let out their property for up to 90 nights in any year on a short let basis without needing planning permission – unless it is prohibited elsewhere such as in a tenancy agreement or lease. Westminster Council's planning policies do not allow short lets for over 90 nights unless the owner has applied for planning permission as a business. However, the amount of rent available in Westminster means that the 90 night rule is often not adhered to, particularly in certain areas such as Knightsbridge where there is a high demand for such lets.

Over the last few years, it has become obvious the impact this is having on other residents and the Council has lobbied hard for more controls to enforce around this. However, we do have some sanctions which we use.

Planning Enforcement

As stated previously, many of these properties are breaching the 90 night rule, therefore, the first step with any short let is to find out if they have planning permission and, if not, we can pursue enforcement. In Knightsbridge, we are fortunate to have our own planning enforcement officer, funded by the Councillors through our ward budget, so she can swiftly follow up on any instances raised.

Noise/ASBO

Any examples of noise or anti social behaviour should be reported in the normal way either to the Council noise team or to the police. In the case of Williams Mews, it was the noise team who were able to shut down the party, before the police attended and made an arrest.

Waste Dumping

Even if the tenants are reasonably well behaved, there is almost always an issue with waste dumping or at least bags being put out on the wrong day. This is, of course, unsightly but, more important, can lead to rats and also bags being ripped with contents strewn across pavements. Our City Warden will monitor all such instances and these are liable to an on the spot fine of £80.

For some time, Airbnb has caused huge problems for residents around Hyde Park and areas around Oxford street. Sadly this has now extended to Knightsbridge. It is important that any resident raises any concerns with us. Not only can we look into what can be done, but it helps to document the extent of the problem when lobbying government for action. Residents living in blocks with communal parts insurance, should also be aware that allowing Airbnb visitors to stay in the building may invalidate building insurance. Therefore, residents need to be vigilant.

TREE HEALTH IN THE ROYAL PARKS

A commentary

Ian Rodger TRP Arboricultural Officer



There are approximately 170,000 trees across all The Royal Parks.

They form the backbone of the Park landscapes and have considerable aesthetic, environmental and ecological value.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens are two of the busiest parks in London in which a high proportion of the estimated 77 million Royal Parks annual visitors spend time in or moving through these historic landscapes. The past decade has seen a significant rise in tree pests and diseases which threaten our

park landscapes, both from a visual and health and safety perspective.

As an organisation we are totally committed to the preservation of our treescape but also providing a safe environment for people to enjoy which requires a careful balance between risk management and conservation.

Three tree pests are of particular concern within the central parks: a fungal disease called Massaria, *Splanchnonema platani*; Oak processionary moth; and a bacteria which causes Bleeding canker, *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *Aesculi*.

Massaria, *Splanchnonema platani*

A quarter of the trees in Hyde Park are London Planes and since 2008 there has been a significant rise in a fungal disease called Massaria, *Splanchnonema platani*; this kills the bark and decays the wood so rapidly that branches can snap out within three months of the infection being identified. With a large

proportion of TRP's Planes growing in high occupancy areas it was decided to recruit a new member of staff solely to inspect Planes for Massaria and work with our tree contractors to remove the infected branches before they fail.

Published studies have indicated that drought is one of the main triggers of Massaria so in 2012 a research project was initiated to investigate soil improvements to try and mitigate water stress. Several groups of Planes were selected in Kensington Gardens and different combinations of de-compaction, mulching and aerated compost 'teas'. Soil samples have been analyzed and show a very positive rise in beneficial fungi and micro organisms; canopy densities have also improved over the untreated controls.

Oak processionary moth

A recent introduction from Europe, Oak processionary moth has colonised most of west and central





London and has been present in both Hyde and Kensington Gardens since 2012. In large numbers the caterpillars can completely defoliate trees but the main issue is with public health as they are covered in detachable poisonous hairs. The caterpillars form dense clusters, later nests on main stems which are protected within silk tents, these can be found anywhere on the tree from ground level upwards and from these they 'process' along branches to feed on the foliage.

Since 2013 preventative spraying of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) has been used in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens to control numbers of the caterpillars. This biological control affects the larva's ability to feed and kills it before it develops the poisonous hairs but it will also kill other non-target species of caterpillar which hatch at the same time so application is carefully planned and rotated each year.

Horse Chestnut leaf miner and Bleeding canker

Pseudomonas syringae pv. *Aesculi*

One of the more noticeable pests in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens is Horse Chestnut leaf miner, the larva of which eats the central layer of the leaf; these become brown and distorted by mid-summer and often fall early. Although very unsightly it only has a moderate effect on overall tree health unlike the Bleeding canker *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *Aesculi* which has had a dramatic effect on Horse Chestnuts across all the parks. This bacteria kills strips of bark on the trunk and major limbs;



symptoms visible on affected trees include areas of weeping rusty brown to black exudates, wilting and die back in the canopy and strips of dead, rapidly degrading patches of dying bark. Death in young trees can be rapid as the lesions quickly coalesce due to the smaller stem diameter, however the impact on the environment can be particularly profound when large, mature trees are infected and disfigured by subsequent limb failure and pruning due to the decaying lesions.

Management of this disease is difficult as the bacteria is endemic and research into treatments or resistance has so far been minimal, the only recourse is to monitor infected trees and prune to reduce the risk of limb failure and in the worst cases total removal.

These three pest and diseases are the main and most costly current problems in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens but there are other very serious diseases on the horizon which could prove devastating to London's tree population.

Canker stain of Plane, *Ceratocystis platani* is a vascular wilt (similar to Dutch Elm disease) which affects London Plane causing wilt and die back in the canopy and death within a few years. Plane avenues will be particularly susceptible as

the disease can spread rapidly through natural root grafting but the main concern is that the spores can be spread on the tools of tree surgeons during pruning; this is also the most likely method for its entry into the country! This disease

is mostly found in southern Europe but is slowly spreading northwards in France; The Royal Parks is very active on the local and national working parties established to prevent its entry into the country.

Having devastated the entire native Chestnut population in north America, Chestnut blight *Cryphonectria parasitica* has spread throughout Europe and there have been sporadic outbreaks in the UK. This fungus causes rapidly spreading cankers on the bark of Sweet Chestnut, *Castanea sativa* which disrupt the physiological processes of the tree eventually leading to death. There are some very valuable veteran Sweet Chestnuts in Kensington gardens and a significant young avenue in Hyde Park all of which are closely monitored by the park's arboricultural team.

Other devastating pests such as Asian longhorn beetle and Emerald Ash borer and diseases such as *Xylella fastidiosa* could be imported into the country on plant material or wooden packaging. The Royal Parks, working with other organisations, developed its own bio-security policy which restricts the purchase of any susceptible plant material, inspects all deliveries and insists on a robust bio-security management from its suppliers.

Combating the challenges

Along with the management of the current range of pests and diseases The Royal Parks is proactive in the improvement of the soil and growing conditions across the parks with a programme of de-compaction works and the use of mulch and other soil conditioners. Over time these will help to increase in beneficial soil fungi and micro organisms and this will increase the trees vitality and make them more resilient to drought stress, a major predisposing factor in tree diseases.

This vital work to monitor and protect our trees will make them safe for the public to enjoy and help preserve them for future generations.

KA EVENTS

55th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



*Chairman Melville Haggard
addressing members and
guests at the AGM*



We were extremely fortunate that, by moving the AGM to January 2017 from our usual December date, the Mandarin Oriental once again generously invited us to hold the event in their beautiful Ballroom.

There was a record turnout and a lively question and answer session. Lady Grade's champagne raffle raised a substantial sum for the Metropolitan and City Police Orphans' Fund.

TOUR OF THE BARRACKS

Cavalry and Cuirasses

Hyde Park Barracks – the horses, the ceremonial – the highly polished boots, the flashing helmets and cuirasses, the jingling of spurs – all are a quintessential part of life in Knightsbridge, and have been since the late 18th century. A visit to the Barracks is always oversubscribed and our visit in September was no exception. Members and guests foregathered to watch the daily inspection of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment before they rode out to mount guard in Whitehall. We were all very impressed to learn that six hours of preparation goes into the

immaculate turnout of each horse and rider. After a welcoming coffee, kindly hosted by the Commanding Officer Lt. Colonel James Gaselee in the Officer's Mess, and an introductory talk on the ceremonial and operational roles of the two regiments, the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals, our well-informed guides showed us round the Barracks. We visited the forge, the saddlers' and the store where the ceremonial uniforms, swords

and immense silver kettle drums are kept, weighing an impressive 35 kilos each. No wonder the drum horses have to be so sturdy! The drum horses themselves were magnificent, and we met three of them relaxing in their looseboxes, as well as the black and grey cavalry horses, both veterans and the newly-arrived remounts who are just starting their training. It was a most enjoyable visit which gave us all a fascinating insight into the history and hard work behind the scenes at Hyde Park Barracks.



*Lt. Colonel James Gaselee talking
to members*

2017 AGM AND NEW YEAR RECEPTION

Monday 15 January 2018

The move to January for the previous year's AGM proved successful, so we have decided to continue this way. The 2017 AGM will take place on the 15th January 2018 in the Flett Theatre of the Natural History Museum via the Exhibition Road entrance. The reception starts at 6.45pm. Lady Grade has once again generously provided the raffle prizes – three magnums of champagne. Funds raised will go to The Firefighters Charity.

RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2016 AGM



Cllr Mrs. Elizabeth Rutherford, Mayor of RBKC, Victoria Borwick MP



Ian Stewart and Melville Haggard



Cllrs Rachael Robathan and Tony Devenish, Maddie Elsdon



Lt Col James Gaselee, Fiona McWilliams, Georgie Rogerson



Diddi Malek, Asghar and Fereshteh Sherkat, Isaac Khodri



Julie and Richard Bond, Etta Carnelli



Anne Wright, Greg Carling and Reda Gifford



PC Darby, PC Alford, Sgt Howard, PC Kaye



Gill Weavers, Naseem Malik-Noor, Joan Melvin



John Calloway, Juliet Ho



Simon Gartshore, Cllr. Heather Acton



Constantine Wolf, Lucy Sun

RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2016 AGM



Anna Birkett, Kathy May



*Graham Stallwood,
Virginia and Richard Stephens*



*Cllr Louise Hyams, Deputy Lord Mayor
of WCC, Hon. Alderman Frances Blois*



David and Mary Frances Lindstrom



Mark and Maureen Pittaway, Roger Delaney



Barry Smith, Adam Hilton



Tamara Haggard, Joan Hinds



*Malcolm McIvor, Andrea Geser,
Terence Bendixson*



James Ainscough, Satya Cristal



David Morgan, Ambika Maliah



*Chief Inspector Stephen Mangan,
Lucy and Philip Dinkel*



Colin Buttery, Matteo Margaroli

MEMBERS' SECTION

The Association

FINANCES

Once again there was a deficit over the year, although it was less than the previous year, and overall the KA's financial situation remains healthy. Expenditure was considerably reduced as, unlike the previous year, most of the production costs of the Annual Report were paid within the current financial year. Advertising income, though lower than before, covered the costs of producing the Annual Report. Our meeting costs were higher than the previous year when the Mandarin Oriental generously sponsored a large part of the Annual General Meeting.

Unfortunately our subscriptions have not increased as we had hoped, but the Committee, and John Pollard in particular, are working hard to encourage new members to join the Knightsbridge Association. We have, however, reduced office costs, and plan to do so further in the next financial year.

APPRECIATIONS

Carol Seymour-Newton

Carol's tireless energy, knowledge of the area and people, combined with a fastidious attention to detail, remains an inspiration to us all. All this alongside the timely production of meeting agendas and minutes contributes hugely to the professionalism and smooth running of the KA. Long may it continue!

Edward Davies-Gilbert

Edward's work as Vice Chairman of the KA and Chair of the Planning committee is central to the KA's mission. We appreciate the

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has remained fairly constant over the last year, and we have welcomed some new members to take the place of those who have departed.

We are trying to encourage a wider range of members to join us by engaging with schools and groups in the area, and we hope that those who are interested in the many and varied issues in the neighbourhood will sign up and support the Knightsbridge Association.

WEBSITE

The new website of the Knightsbridge Association has finally settled in and is proving to be extremely useful to an Association without a paid staff to maintain it.

It is very novel in that updating information on the designated specialist areas of the site can be performed by the individual

members of the Executive Committee without the need to contact the "Webmaster" and his computer.

It can in fact be performed by anyone with a modern mobile telephone from the top of a moving bus. This has meant that our website remains completely topical.

The introduction of a Twitter feed "@KAKnightsbridge" and its addition to our front page means that a greater public is made aware of our Association. This awareness, plus our online eBulletin and Newsletters, has been reflected in a steady increase in the number of visitors to our site, which we hope in due course will lead to an expansion of our membership.

Communication is changing so rapidly it is hard to keep up, but members can rest assured that we will not fall behind.

enormous amount of time devoted to filtering through and responding to the inexorable flow of planning applications and consultations without which unwelcome proposals would slip through the net. Thank you, Edward for your diligence and enthusiasm.

Madeleine Elsdon

Madeleine has decided to step down as Chair of the highly regarded Law and Order committee after 11 tireless years of leadership. Our thanks go to her for developing the role of this committee so successfully, bringing

in high level speakers from the Police and security services and attracting such strong attendance at committee meetings. John Pollard has agreed to take on the chairmanship and we wish him every success in this vital work.

Olivia Cox

Apart from controlling our finances and maintaining membership lists, Olivia plays a crucial role in helping to organise events like the visit to Hyde Park Barracks in September 2017 with all the attendant detail needed to get us in through the gate!

John Pollard

John has directed his creative energies to launching the e-Bulletin, a light-hearted roundup of topical issues and events that now appears monthly via MailChimp. This, alongside his work as Webmaster, is instrumental in bringing KA into the digital space and keeping us updated in the intervals between newsletters and the annual report.

Paul Meitner

Licensing remains one of our key battle fronts and Paul's efforts in responding to the incessant flow of applications is greatly appreciated. It is a task that calls for engagement with Councillors, Officials, residents and businesses with occasional outreach to the wise council of the Westminster CAB. Thank you Paul for your

application to the detail of this task.

Mark Winer

Marc has brought together an informed and diligent Transport and Environment committee that includes responsibility for highways, lighting, cleansing. His successes include the establishment of Keep Clear boxes at crucial road junctions and advising on traffic management plans for the many on-going Knightsbridge developments.

Simon Birkett

Through his continued membership of the Planning and Conservation committee, Simon provides an essential link to the work of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum and its emerging Plan. His efforts in both capacities are greatly

appreciated and have allowed KA to input into the Plan's development in a timely way.

Elmar Toime

We were delighted to welcome Elmar onto the Executive Committee early in 2017 since when he has made invaluable contributions in connection our printing and distribution arrangements, database management and steering us towards ways of organising on-line petitions. This latter may prove a useful tool with ever more challenging Licensing applications in prospect.

Committees

KA's committees provide an excellent opportunity to serve your community and we urge members with interests, skills and time to step forward.

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT

HIGHWAYS, LIGHTING AND CLEANSING

Marc Winer

This year, the "quality of life" improvements noted below were achieved for our neighbourhood, but ongoing observation and frequent interaction with WCC and RBKC will always be needed. In our efforts, input from individual residents is always helpful. For that reason, please note of all the contact information at the end of this report.

A "Keep Clear" zone was established at the bottom Lancelot Place. Great thanks to Transport for London and the Westminster Council.

Several street lights have been repaired.

Untrimmed, unsightly and dangerously overgrown bushes in front of the two large redevelopment projects in Lancelot Place have been cleaned and trimmed, but this is going to have to be a recurring effort on our part.

The two Lancelot Place developers have now stated that they

want both their projects to run simultaneously. If that plan is adhered to, it will limit inconvenience to residents considerably by limiting the time frame.

A number of blocked drains around the neighbourhood have been cleared.

Permission has finally been achieved to remove signposts in the pavement on the north side of Raphael Street, which will make it easier to use that narrow pavement and for the Council to clean it.

In 2018 we expect to spend more time on these areas:

- **Speeding** – usually late at night, and mostly in the west-bound lanes of Brompton Road and Knightsbridge.
- **Better placement of signs** warning about road closures ahead.
- **Cleansing**. There has been a deterioration in the standard of

street sweeping. Rubbish dumped at street corners by residents and commercial premises results in stained pavements which require, but seldom get, deep cleansing by the councils.



Rubbish dumped by retailers from both sides of Monpelier Street and Brompton Road

- **Busking**. We will also join the efforts of KA management to fight the increasingly obtrusive noise and crowding caused by busking at the tube station entrance next to Harrods.

Action by individual residents remains terribly important for keeping our neighbourhood in order. It's often easiest to alert the councils to problems by using either their website or their smartphone apps.

WCC:

Use WCC website www.westminster.gov.uk and click on "Report It"

Call the Noise Action Line: 020 7641 2000

Report rubbish problems: 020 8305 6319

If, after trying the above, you are not satisfied, or if you have traffic-related or other issues that need attention, or you simply want to voice your view on any subject noted above, write us at: transportandenvironment@theknightsbridgeassociation.com

RBKC:

Name of App: RBKC Local Services

Or use RBKC website www.rbkc.gov.uk and click on "Report a Problem"

In addition, some key RBKC [phone numbers and email addresses](#):

Action line: 020 7361 3001 or streetline@rbkc.gov.uk

Street cleanliness: 020 7361 3002 or environmentalhealth@rbkc.gov.uk

Customer service: 020 7361 3000 or rbkccustomerservices@rbkc.gov.uk

Out-of-hours line: 020 7361 3913

EXHIBITION ROAD

Residents are extremely concerned that there is a move on to completely pedestrianise Exhibition Road. The terrorist attack on Westminster Bridge and recently the traffic accident at the junction with Cromwell Road have drawn attention to the potential hazards which are encouraging the idea in some quarters.

Local associations, including the KA, have called for proper consultation to take place before any proposal is put forward to alter the current two way system. Everyone wants to ensure the safety of the millions of visitors who stream up Exhibition Road every day to the Museums, the Albert Hall and the Parks, but closure of this vital north south artery across the Park, home to many residents, is not the answer.



RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MARKET UPDATE

Charles Curran, Managing Director Maskell's Estate Agents Ltd

The 25 basis point increase in the BoE's base rate was expected and yet drew gasps of "we've never seen a rate rise" from many mortgage borrowers. True – but this is only reverting the rate back to pre-Brexit times where it was already the lowest in history. Some of us still remember the 70's and 80's where base rates and mortgage rates were well over 14%! Nevertheless many eligible mortgage loans have been funded by the BoE's Term Funding Scheme which the bank announced it was going to close in February 2018. The scheme provided for term finance for these loans at 0.25%. Even with the change in base rate yesterday, the terms of the TFS *remain unchanged* at 0.25% making the overnight rate rises by some lenders quite mercenary.

What it will do, we hope, is to help people focus on their spending and help reduce the very high debt to household income ratio of over 138% as we do expect interest rates to carry on rising (albeit slowly over the next 2 years to 1%). This will have an impact on borrowers and particularly their ability to re-finance at the end of any fixed terms period they may have. A 2 year fixed loan at say 2% will revert to Standard Variable Rate of say 4.5% after the fixed period. The new Regulations require borrowers to be stress tested to 3% on top of the reversion rate (4.5% in the above example). If they pass, it is assumed that they can carry the burden of additional payments that future rate increases will demand. Ability however does not necessarily amount to affordability and many will have to cut back on other items (cars, TV's, domestic help etc...) if faced with this additional burden and therefore we must be prepared for this drop in consumer spending.

In other news, new regulations for Estate Agents have also been a focus for us. Of note, is the Criminal Finance Act 2017, and particularly new corporate offences of 'failure to prevent the facilitation of tax evasion' in the UK or overseas, punishable by unlimited fines – this will mean that Agents have to tighten up their due diligence so apologies in advance!

We have now also seen the Draft Legislation seeking to ban Tenant Lettings Fees. We knew this was coming and we will absorb the additional costs but it raises an interesting question for

Agents: When drafting an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement, we, as Agents charge the Tenant a fee and consequently a contract exists between the 2 parties. As a consequence of the contract, our Professional Indemnity Insurance attaches. With no fee, we still have a duty of care but we are still waiting to hear from our PI insurers how they will respond to any negligence claims given our duties are no longer contractually explicit. Whilst we as a firm have never had a PI claim, it does add an extra risk dimension which we need to assess and is an un-intended consequence of this type of legislation which seeks to be a "catch-all" but so often opens up different issues.

The Market: Viewing Numbers increased dramatically over September and October which was expected after a quiet summer – up over 15% year on year. Applicants remain split between the domestic and international market but with the domestic market showing a touch more urgency, whereas our foreign applicants are, for the most part, just browsing. We are seeing transactions up to £3.5m for the time being with more expensive properties being considered and often rejected simply due to stamp duty, which often makes renting more cost effective, particularly for foreign buyers.

The Lettings market has strengthened from a Landlord perspective, as the year has progressed: our average rent per calendar month for September was £2,669 vs £5,486 in August 2017 and £2,608 in September 2016. Of note is that September tends to a month of greater volume of transactions at lower prices – as these numbers demonstrate. Applicants range from young professionals to families and expats returning to the UK – a broad and varied mix. Of note however is that the higher value properties, provided they are well presented, remain in high demand, simply due to Stamp Duty: Foreign Nationals are tending to rent for the equivalent of what the cost of purchase and stamp duty would yield, after tax, if those funds were invested in the financial markets. This is simply a Brexit hedge, as they do not want to lock their capital into the UK for the time being, as much as they may love the country.

AIR QUALITY

Patrick Mocatta, Chairman Gasrec

"The best is enemy of the good and a present constraint on air quality improvement in London".

The mayor's Environmental Strategy for London in 2050 assumes a population of 11.1 million, zero emission transport with street and neighbourhood layouts which encourage walking and cycling. It ignores the inconvenient truth that Heavy Commercial Vehicles ("HCVs"), including long haul trucks and Refuse Collection Vehicles ("RCVs") are 5% of vehicles on UK roads but emit 30% of harmful emissions. It ignores the fact that electric and hydrogen solutions do not work in HCVs and will not for decades to come.

The Mayor's focus is on electric and hydrogen, because they already meet the 2050 target of zero emission at the tail pipe. Electric should be the fuel of choice for cars and possibly light commercial vans travelling limited distance in urban environments. But charging points need to be built before mass adoption of electric cars can be contemplated and the electricity grid will need to be reinforced. Transport for London ("TfL") is also experimenting with a few hydrogen buses at a capital cost of £1 million each. In short electric and hydrogen in transport will need more than a decade to make a meaningful contribution to urban air quality improvement.

Neither Whitehall nor the Mayor seem ready to address or tackle the HCV road transport segments, where the quickest improvements from a low base could be gained, where fleets are centrally managed and are replaced according to fixed cycles. Here natural gas, possibly blended with bio-methane sourced from waste, would be the alternative fuel to diesel. The engine technology works and is used in many other European and US cities. The refuelling station infrastructure can be installed relatively fast. Natural gas is plentiful and is cheaper and cleaner than diesel. Lacking guidance from government much progress still has



An ultra-clean "whisper" refuse truck at the CNG refuelling station in Alperton

to be made in this sector of urban transport.

In London the first compressed natural gas ("CNG") station for refuse collection vehicles ("RCVs") was opened in July 2017. It is located at Alperton at a Veolia depot, from where fourteen RCVs are contracted to Camden Borough Council. They are cleaner than their diesel equivalents both from an air quality and a carbon footprint point of view. The carbon footprint point is noteworthy because the most modern diesel truck catalytic converters work well on motorways but inefficiently in urban conditions when the engine is not running "hot". In fact there is growing evidence that when running "cold" the catalytic converters release N₂O, which is a greenhouse gas, which is 300 times more potent than CO₂.

Nevertheless in the bus sector TfL is opting to retrofit over 1,000 older diesel buses with modern catalytic converters. Let us hope that their engines run "hot"! TfL also continues its high profile hybrid programme. These buses' purchase price is double that of other alternatives with 60% of the price accounted for by the battery. It is also expected that the battery will need replacing during the bus life. In other UK cities like Reading, Nottingham and Bristol councils have compromised on the immediate need to adopt technologies with zero emission at

the tail pipe and have gone for gas. They are not alone with 1,050 gas buses in Madrid and 23% of all US municipal buses being gas powered.

Enabling legislation is finally expected in 2018, which will allow all ordinary driving license holders to drive 3.5 tonne "dot.com" delivery vans. Presently gas and electric powered 3.5 tonne powered vans can only be driven with by HGV license-holders because gas storage and batteries weigh more than diesel tanks. Today the HGV license-holder wage premium renders the use of alternative fuels in this sector uneconomic.

Other simple solutions are available. Boroughs could be forced to seek bids for at least one alternative to diesel when they put their waste collection business out to tender. It would show the councils that natural gas powered RCVs are cheaper and cleaner than their diesel equivalents to operate. We could copy the Dutch and hit at a root cause of pollution by "congestion busting". In Holland night deliveries are allowed using electric or gas powered vehicles, with special sound dampened doors and trollies, because they are quieter than diesel ones. Productivity is doubled or tripled in a night shift and daytime congestion reduced.

In short incremental steps with today's best technology would lower pollution faster than today's emphasis on waiting for perfect solutions.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Simon Birkett, Chairman

One last consultation before a referendum of residents on the electoral roll

The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (Forum) was established to give people who live, work or study in Knightsbridge the opportunity under the Localism Act 2011 to develop planning policy and influence neighbourhood management locally. It is supported by the Knightsbridge Association (KA).

The Forum was designated by the City of Westminster (WCC) on 21 July 2015 with an exclusive mandate for five years to write a neighbourhood plan (the Plan) for the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area (the Area) to sit alongside WCC's own development plan. The Area is bounded by Albert Gate, Brompton Road, Exhibition Road, Kensington Road, Kensington Gore, Knightsbridge, Queen's Gate and South Carriage Drive.

The Forum developed the Plan in six stages including: consulting the KA and other long-established stakeholders on local needs; holding two public consultations to establish priorities; writing its draft plan; holding a Pre-submission (Regulation 14) statutory consultation; and revising its plan before submitting it formally to WCC in November 2017. Final steps are organised by WCC and include: a further public consultation which should be underway before the KA's AGM; a planning examination; and a referendum of residents on the electoral roll – hopefully before Summer 2018. If approved, the Plan will then become part of the formal development plan for Knightsbridge until 2037.

The strongest message from residents, businesses and cultural institutions has been a desire to preserve or improve the character and appearance of Knightsbridge and reinforce its sense of community. People want Knightsbridge to remain a special place to live, work, bring up children and enjoy life.

The Plan's vision is therefore to make Knightsbridge the best residential and cultural place in London in which to live, work, study and visit. This vision is supported by six values: community; conserving; clean, safe and quiet; iconic; inspirational; and international. Five themes are used then to group 10 objectives (and 42 planning policies):

Character

- Enhance the special character of Knightsbridge including its architecture, heritage, townscape and trees while recognising its status internationally as a prime residential neighbourhood and centre for retail, culture and education
- Improve the public realm and enhance and restore heritage features
- Protect and enhance Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) including the Hyde Parks Barracks land

Community

- Promote the sense of community
- Protect and enhance existing residential amenity and mix
- Culture and education
- Foster an environment that enables our world-class cultural and educational institutions to thrive as centres of learning and innovation within a flourishing community

Public spaces and utilities

- Enable active travel and personal mobility
- Encourage superb public transport
- Encourage superb utilities and communications infrastructure
- Healthy environment and healthy people
- Be an exemplar in sustainable city living by complying fully with international laws, standards, guidelines and best practice

These themes and objectives are a constant thread in the three main documents of the Plan:

- **Part One – Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan** consists of the planning policies. Examples include: restoring heritage features; protecting and improving local green spaces; defining a 'Neighbourhood Stress Area'; protecting and enhancing the Hyde Park Barracks land; improving utilities; and reducing air pollution.
- **Part Two – Knightsbridge Management Plan** proposes 85 specific actions to address matters that are not land use matters and so could not be included as planning policies. Examples include: better licensing; 20mph limit in local streets; improved street cleanliness; and no 'tattiness'.
- **Part Three – Knightsbridge Evidence** base includes supporting information.

Part One also includes eight principles that should guide the spending of planning obligation monies and a list of projects.

Going forward the Forum expects to: apply to WCC to renew its mandate in 2020: update its Plan from time to time; comment selectively on planning applications; undertake the actions in its Knightsbridge Management Plan at least once; and monitor and report annually or biennially on outcomes.

Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area can apply to become a member of the Forum through our website at knightsbridgeforum.org.

[Please support the Forum's work by responding to WCC's consultation and voting to approve the Plan in the referendum. The Knightsbridge Association and we will be circulating details.](#)

BUSINESS RATES

Phil Vernon Head of Rating at PwC

Impact on the High Street of changes in Business Rates and any accompanying mitigation measures

Business rates are once again a 'hot potato', which is remarkable for a tax that still has its roots in the Poor Laws of the 1600's. Rates are at their heart a tax on occupation, based on the value of the occupation to the ratepayer. In modern times, the value of the occupation is measured by reference to rental value, known as a 'Rateable Value'.

Business rates are calculated by the Local Authority, based on the Rateable Value and a multiplier set by the Government. Since 2008, the charges have applied to empty properties as well as occupied ones.

Since 1990, every property in the UK is revalued on a regular basis, usually every five years (although we have had to wait seven years between the last two revaluations). The purpose of the revaluation is to capture change in the rental market to ensure that the tax base is fairly comparable between different taxpayers.

In April 2017, the latest revaluation delivered something of a shock for many parts of the country. While the nationwide picture has seen an overall decrease in Rateable Values, there have been significant spikes in certain areas. Certainly London and the South East have seen a healthy rental market reflected in higher Rateable Values.

The Government would probably argue that the revaluation is 'mission accomplished' because it has achieved exactly what it set out to do and ratepayers in other parts of England will welcome the opportunity to pay lower rates bills as the rental market has not kept up with the South-East.

Reducing business rates liabilities

If a ratepayer feels that their Rateable Value is wrong, they can instigate an appeal to the Valuation Office Agency. From 1 April 2017, the Government introduced a new appeals system called 'Check, Challenge, Appeal' to enable them to dispute the valuation.

However, be warned that the Appeals system is slow, with time scales of at least 18 months anticipated before an appeal could be successfully settled. It also requires access to

the HMRC online portal, which can take some considerable time to register on.

To alleviate some of the worst effects of the revaluation, the Government continued the post-1990 practice of having a 'transition' scheme to protect ratepayers from the worst rises. The relief is an automatic part of the rates bill calculation. However, there are several levels of relief based on the size of property, so it is worth checking whether the right amount of relief has been allocated. This transition scheme also limits decreases in bills, but many companies have seen their annual rates bill rise by as much as 50%.

The Government has recognised that there are some extreme cases and so there is also a £300m package of additional reliefs nationwide for certain categories of property that have suffered disproportionately as a result of the revaluation. Many Local Authorities have designed their relief schemes and can provide details on request, but they are awarded by application, not as an automatic reduction.

Smaller businesses (RV £15,000 and below) are also entitled to assistance through the Small Business Rates Relief scheme. A simple application process through the Council should secure any relief due.

The Council also has a number of discretionary powers to reduce rates liabilities, including partly-occupied properties and properties occupied by Charities.

There are also exemptions available for some empty properties, and as part of good housekeeping it is good practice to claim these in a timely manner from the Local Council. Beware of any schemes that promise to remove empty rates liabilities, many of these don't always deliver the results promised and could be picked up and scrutinised by the Council.

If professional advice is sought, make sure that any advisor is a member of either the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) or the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). Up front fees should be the exception rather than the rule, and make sure any contracts signed are clear about what constitutes a saving; and how those fees are calculated.

PARLIAMENT

The snap election in May did not produce the expected result. Locally in Westminster, Mark Field held his seat by a reduced majority and has been appointed Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. But a major upset was caused when Emma Dent Coad, local RBKC councillor won this traditionally

Conservative seat for Labour from sitting MP, Victoria Borwick, by a tiny margin - 20 votes. Emma Dent Coad was elected to RBKC Council in 2006. She served as a member of the Council's tenant management organisation and has been a member of the Planning Applications Committee since 2013 and the main Planning Committee

since 2014. She has also been a member of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.



Emma Dent Coad. MP

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Following his election in 2016, Mayor Sadiq Khan produced a consultative document - 'A City for all Londoners' - setting out his policies and priorities to be embodied in a revisions to the 2016 London Plan.

During the latter part of 2017 the Mayor released a number of documents which provided a clear policy preview of the new draft London Plan which was published in November. These included his draft Transport, Environment and Housing Strategies and reports on the impact of overseas buyers on London's housing market and office policy review.

His **Transport strategy** indicated that by 2025, petrol and diesel drivers would pay substantially more than the £24 ultra low emission levy that comes into force in spring 2019. Hybrid and electric vehicles would face the lowest charges if intelligent road-user pricing was introduced. Transport for London (TfL) would continue to clean up the public transport vehicles, with all taxis and minicabs at zero emissions by 2033 and all buses four years later. The Mayor would like the central charging zone to be expanded across inner London by 2040 and the whole capital by 2050. His £10 'toxicity' charge came into force on 23rd October and will be replaced by a £12.50 Ultra Low Emission Zone charge from April 2019, on top of the £11.50 congestion charge in central London.

Mr. Khan's draft **Environment strategy** is also aimed at improving air quality by discouraging private cars and encouraging walking, cycling and greater use of public transport, and has ambitions to make London 'a zero waste' city - by 2026 no biodegradable or recyclable waste would be sent to landfill, and by 2030 65% of London's waste would be recycled, a substantial amount of which is plastic. Surprisingly, the strategy made no reference to the oil price, a key determinant for the economic viability of plastic recycling.

Many of the aspirations seem fine. Whether he has the ability to realise them is another matter.

THE EAST/WEST SUPER CYCLE HIGHWAY

This has now been rolled out across London from Tower Hill to Lancaster Gate taking in Hyde Park via the Queen Elizabeth Gate. Has it been a success, has it reduced congestion and increased safety?



TfL are non-committal. WCC have been pursuing TfL for pre and post scheme modelling figures but say TfL are loath to share them and that they are less than transparent, when they do. The Parks have experienced problems with cyclists using satnav being directed away from the cycling lane, and cyclists complain that joggers are taking advantage of the open spaces.

ELECTRIC CHARGING METERS



These are being rolled out across London. To date two have been spotted in Knightsbridge, but is this the answer to improving air quality? How many cars could one meter service in a day? Surely enormous amounts of electricity would have to be generated if they were widely available. Is it practical to have them on the streets, which would involve one vehicle blocking it for several hours whilst it charged?

Tony Devenish is our GLA member and sits on the housing committee, the regeneration committee and the planning committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Both Councils are working on revising their Local Plans.

TRIBOROUGH

We asked for a comment from WCC and received the following:

Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea announced in March

2017 that we would be ending our Tri-borough relationship with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Since March, we have been working exceptionally hard to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible. The main services affected are Children's Services, Adults Social Care and Public

Health where services will remain Bi-Borough between Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. Residents should see no difference in services as a result of the changes and we are minimising any financial impact to the Council. The agreement formally comes to an end in March 2018.

WCC

In June Westminster City Hall, the 19 storey building on Victoria Street, was closed for extensive refurbishment and will not re-open until early 2019. Whilst the works take place Council staff normally based there have temporarily moved to two other buildings – 5 Strand, WC2, where the majority of council committee meetings are taking place and Portland House, Bressenden Place SW1 where

licensing meetings will be held. Council services which operate out of their other buildings, will continue to operate as normal during this time.

HIGH SPEED BROADBAND

Following a constructive meeting with Cllr. Jonathan Glanz, Cllr Rachael Robathan and Officers at WCC to discuss the poor

availability of fast broadband in parts of Knightsbridge, we were given contact details for two broadband infrastructure providers as alternatives to Openreach. KA will contact these companies to explore their interest in building out infrastructure to large apartment blocks and residential terraces in the KA area.

Members and Officers



Cllr Ian Adams, Lord Mayor

Cllr Ian Adams was elected Lord Mayor in May. Knightsbridge Belgravia councillor, Philippa Roe, awarded a peerage in 2016, stood down as Leader and will not be standing again at the elections in May 2017. She will be focusing more on her work in the House of Lords. Cllr Nickie Aiken was elected to replace her in January. Cllr Aiken is also a member of the Royal Parks' Board.



Cllr Nickie Aiken

At the end of December Chief Executive, Charlie Parker left to take up a new appointment as Chief Executive and Head of the Civil Service in the Crown Estates of Jersey. Stuart Love, Executive Director for City Management and Communities, takes on the role of Acting Chief Executive from January 1 until a permanent appointment is made.

Martin Low was Westminster City Council's 'City Commissioner of



Stuart Love

Transportation' for many years. He was famous for being wise, and infinitively knowledgeable about transport matters.

Godfrey Woods, Head of South Area planning also retired to the disappointment of those of us who had worked with him for many years. His detailed knowledge of planning and lightness of touch made him a pleasure to work with. Both Godfrey and Martin are greatly missed.

SLOANE STREET PROJECT

We would like to correct the article in our Autumn newsletter that stated that "the bulk of public opinion" opposed the Sloane Street proposals, consulted on by RBKC and supported by the Cadogan Estate. Having emailed the council officer on several occasions to obtain a copy of the consultation's findings, we received

no further information until we received a copy of the report from Cadogan later in the year. The report makes clear that "...75% (to some extent) support the proposals for Sloane Street; this included 51% who 'strongly' support the proposals. Over a fifth (22% oppose the proposals including 13% that strongly oppose ..."

The KA did not support the proposals and our view remains unaltered on the grounds that the changes risked increasing traffic congestion – and thereby air pollution – at both the Knightsbridge and Sloane Square ends of Sloane Street.

Members and Officers



Cllr Marie-Therese Rossi

As a result of the tragic circumstances surrounding the Grenfell Tower fire, there were changes both at member and officer level, including a complete overhaul of the Cabinet. Cllr Nick Paget-Brown, long-time Leader of the Council stood down and will not be standing for re-election to the Council in May. As one of the Brompton and Hans Town



Cllr. Elizabeth Campbell

ward councillors we found him supportive of the KA's work and we particularly appreciated his regular newsletter and Meet Nick meetings.

Cllr. Elizabeth Campbell has replaced him as Leader, supported by two Deputy Leaders, Cllrs Will Pascall and Kim Taylor-West. Cllr. Gerard Hargreaves has the Planning and Transport portfolio.



Barry Quirk, OBE

The Chief Executive, Nicholas Holgate resigned and Barry Quirk, OBE, formerly CEO of Lewisham has taken his place.

Cllr Marie-Therese Rossi was elected Mayor in May. She has chaired the Public Realm Committee for the past four years. Until her election as Mayor, she served on the Licensing Committee, the Planning Committee and the Appeals Panel.

A HISTORY OF HYDE PARK *from ROYAL PLAYGROUND to PUBLIC FORUM*

Lara Basirov MA Courtauld Institute



© Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

The Serpentine, Hyde Park. Attrib. George Sidney Shepherd, 1784-1862

Hyde Park is the largest and most visited of London's Royal Parks, covering an area of 350 acres and attracting over seven million visitors annually. Its history, dating back nearly a thousand years – from royal hunting grounds, scenes of vicious duels, military parades, remarkable feats of town planning, The Great Exhibition, and the advent of Speakers' Corner – is intimately connected with the development of London.

Following the Norman Conquest, William the Conqueror appointed nobleman Geoffrey de Mandeville to oversee several lands in London. Included amongst these

was the Estate of Eia which, as detailed in the Domesday Book, was composed of three manors: Neyte, Ebury and Hyde. Hyde was the north-east area of Eia and the present Hyde Park occupies a portion of its site. The name is apparently of Saxon origin, and denotes a unit of land, 'the hide', that housed a single family. At this time Hyde was a vast wilderness, home only to wild boar, bulls, wolves, deer and small game. Mandeville's custody of Eia was short-lived, and on the death of his wife he bequeathed it to Westminster Abbey. The Abbey monks

retained the Manor of Hyde for nearly five centuries.

In July 1536, Henry VIII ejected the monks and took possession of the church lands along with its tenements and rents. In exchange, he bestowed them the dissolved priory of St Mary at Hurley, in Berkshire. This sequestration extended the king's already substantial private hunting grounds to the north and west of London, affording him an uninterrupted area extending from his palace at Westminster to Hampstead Heath. It was probably around this time that Hyde was converted into a



A Family in Hyde Park. Paul Sandby, 1731-1809

park and enclosed with a paling, thereby improving the rearing and preservation of game. It remained a royal hunting ground throughout the Tudor era. In 1550, the boy-king Edward VI is recorded hunting there with French ambassadors, and in 1578, one of Elizabeth I's party, the Duke of Bavaria allegedly 'killed a barren doe with his piece from amongst three hundred other deer.'

The House of Stuart brought about many changes in the park. James I was a hunting enthusiast and was a regular presence there with his favourite hounds, Jowler and Jewel. In his reign, limited access to gentlemen was permitted, especially during horse races. However, it was thanks to the benevolence of Charles I that in 1637 the park was opened up to the public. Charles was fanatic about sport and was frequently present at the races there. During his reign, he created the Ring. This was formed of a circular space set within a square of trees in the park's northern section, around which it was fashionable to ride and drive. During these years, and even throughout the turbulent years of the Civil War, it became

a popular gathering place – the rendezvous of the fashionable. At the beginning of the Civil War in 1642, several fortifications were constructed along the eastern boundary of the park including a strongpoint at Hyde Park Corner where visitors to London were vetted.

In November 1652, Cromwell's parliament resolved 'that Hyde Park be sold for ready money'. Then comprising roughly 620 acres, it was sold in three lots to Richard Wilcox of Kensington, John Tracey of London, and Anthony Dean of St Martin-in-the-Fields for £17,000 plus £765, 6 shillings, and 2 dimes for the resident deer. In this way, the park was privatised and entrance fees were levied. In 1653, diarist John Evelyn noted, 'I went to take the air in Hyde Park, when every coach was made to pay a shilling, and horse sixpence, by the sordid fellow who had purchased it of the state, as they

were called.' Nevertheless, it continued to be well visited. May Day in the park was a particularly popular occasion for celebrations, parades, and donning one's finery.

It was probably on his way to the Ring that Cromwell narrowly escaped sudden death. He was driving a coach of six horses, who, having been severely whipped, became uncontrollable and flung him from the coach-box. His feet were entangled in the tackling and he was dragged for a considerable distance, during which a pistol accidentally fired in his jacket. He did not suffer much beyond bruising. During the last years of the Commonwealth, Hyde Park became much neglected and attracted significantly fewer visitors. The last incident of note during this time was a coach race, now a national sport, in 1658. Cromwell died later that year.

Following the restoration of the royal family in 1660, Charles II immediately set about imitating the life of splendour that he had witnessed at Louis XIV's courts, and so the park, once more, became a central meeting-point for fashionable Londoners. Its 1652 sale was retrospectively nullified on the grounds that it had never been ratified by parliament. It once again became royal property, was restocked with deer and enclosed with a brick wall. Apple trees were planted on the condition that Charles was to be given half of their apples (or cider).



*Two avenues of walnut trees:
View of Grosvenor Gate in Hyde Park
During the Encampment, 1780.
Paul Sandby, 1731-1809*



The Great Plague of London in 1665. Edward Henry Corbould, 1815-1905

It was also around this time that the park became the favourite location for reviews – the ceremonial display and formal inspection of military forces. Shortly after Charles's ascension to the throne in 1660, he transformed the Trained Bands, increasing their numbers to 20,000 men and 800 cavalry. Once fully remodelled, he reviewed them in Hyde Park. Both the king and his

brother, the future James II, were fond of open air and exercise, and found a further strong temptation in the park in the form of the renowned beauties that are immortalised on the canvases of Godfrey Kneller and Peter Lely. The famed Mrs Bagot, the Duchess of Cleveland and the Countess of Chesterfield, to name a few, were frequently spotted in the park.

Both Pepys and Evelyn were regular strollers in the park, and from their diaries we learn much about its appearance, customs, and visitors. Tragedy struck London in 1665 in the form of the Great Plague. Many of the poorer inhabitants, who could not escape to the countryside, set up camp in Hyde Park under the direction of the Duke of Albemarle.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, Hyde Park was no longer a royal hunting ground. It was, rather, very much a royal park for the people. In 1689, William III purchased the Manor of Kensington (present day Kensington Palace) from the Earl of Nottingham



Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, c.1666. After Peter Lely, 1618-1680

and fashioned it as his royal residence. He established a new road through Hyde Park and Green Park to connect the palaces at Kensington and St James's, installing three hundred lamps by its side in order to deter highwaymen. So common were robberies that William enforced night patrols in the park, and, during his 'casino nights' at the new palace, patrols would be doubled so that his



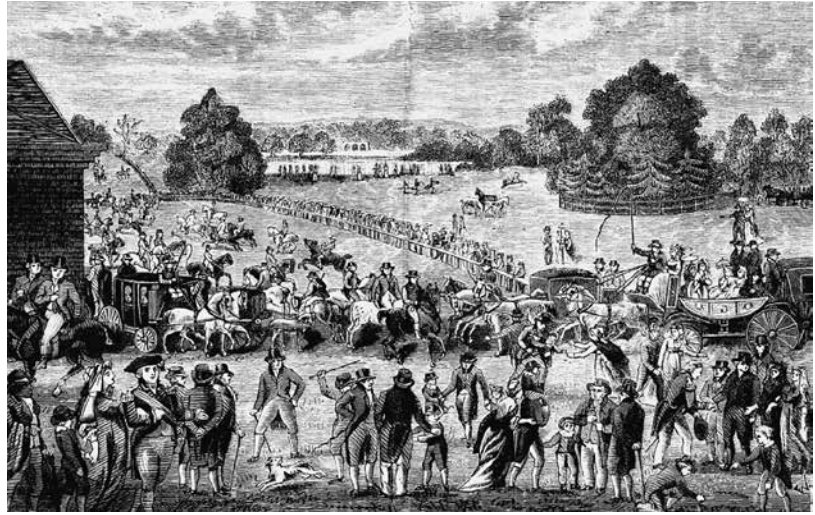
A London dandy of 1646



Rotten Row, c1890

guests might have a chance of transporting their winnings home undisturbed. The new road, known as 'Rotten Row' or 'Route du Roi', was probably the first public road in London to be illuminated at night, and was described by contemporaries as 'very grand and inconceivably magnificent'. Fashionable people took to riding or driving on it right up until the late nineteenth century.

The first coherent landscaping in Hyde Park began in the reign of George I. The 1720s witnessed the implementation of five rows of walnut trees with fine gravel



The Ring, created by Charles I



Duel between the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun, 1712

walks in the middle. They ran parallel to the eastern wall and existed until 1811 when they were felled to make soldiers' musket-stocks. In 1726, George devised a plan to shave off a large area of the park in order to create private grounds for the Royal Family, Kensington Gardens.

Following his death in 1727 plans continued under the supervision of his daughter-in-law Queen Caroline, and Kensington Gardens formally

came into existence in 1728. Caroline was a woman of considerable taste who was determined to improve the park's general appearance. In 1730 she conceived the idea of the Serpentine by means of draining the park's pools and expanding the River Westbourne. Incidentally, 'Knightsbridge' allegedly derives its name from a bridge over the Westbourne upon which knights frequently congregated. The Serpentine's bend,

which was thought sufficient to justify its name, was an innovative feature in landscape gardening where contemporary designs generally adhered to the Dutch fashion for more formal, square

water features. The Ring – which, since Charles I's time, had remained the place to be seen displaying one's horses, carriages and finery – was largely destroyed in the Serpentine's formation. The project was completed in 1733 at a cost of £8,500 and the employment of two hundred men. It was soon frequented by fishermen and was allegedly a favourite spot for drowning illegitimate children. Shelley's first wife Harriet Westbrook drowned herself there in 1816.

George II believed that Caroline was personally funding changes to the park, and only learned after her death that Horace Walpole had in fact disbursed £20,000 from the Royal Treasury for her projects. George was himself involved in the construction of a new road to Kensington Palace running to the south of William III's 'Rotten Row'. It was disastrous, and was



The Serpentine Bridge today, separating Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens



Skating in Hyde Park, 1785.
Julius Caesar Ibbetson,
1759-1817

described by contemporaries as 'a great impassable gulf of mud'.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Hyde Park was a popular duelling spot. In November 1712 the notorious duel between James, Duke of Hamilton, and Lord Charles Mohun was fought, during which both men died. Mohun's body was returned to his house in Marlborough Street whereupon it is said that his wife was 'vastly displeased at the wet, bloody corpse being laid upon the best bed and spoiling her Chinese counterpane'. The combat

had been so bloody and both men suffered such appalling injuries that soon afterwards, pistols began to replace swords in duels, thereby resulting in shorter, cleaner confrontations. Many duels gained notoriety and featured in contemporary news reports. In George III's reign, no fewer than 172 were fought in Hyde Park, the majority of which arose from disagreements and jealousy over women.

Military executions were also common there during these times. For theft, insubordination and desertion, soldiers were

tied to a tree and flogged. More serious offences included running the gauntlet and whipping. Unforgiveable transgressions resulted in death by shooting, and bodies would often be buried by the park wall. Robberies continued to occur with frequency despite the introduction of lamps, guards, patrols and hangings at Tyburn. Indeed, on one evening in 1749 Horace Walpole was attacked there and robbed of his gold watch and eight guineas. The park continued to be an unsafe place throughout most of the eighteenth century.



© British Library

Re-enactment of the Battle of Trafalgar: View in Hyde Park with the Fleet at Anchor on the Serpentine River, 1814. Unknown artist



General View of the exterior of the Crystal Palace, Hyde Park.
Taken from Dickinson's comprehensive pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Originally published in 1854

George III frequently visited Hyde Park to take exercise. It was, at this time, still very rural in character: cows, deer and foxes all resided there, wild strawberries grew, and the paths across it were few and far between. The

two freezing winters of George's reign in 1767 and 1784 bore daily witness to ladies and gentlemen ice-skating on the Serpentine and sleighing in carriages without wheels, drawn by horses. In the last years of the eighteenth

century, a further door for foot passengers was opened at Hyde Park Corner, along with an additional gate between Kensington

Gardens and Hyde Park, where crushing crowds would emerge, especially on Sundays.

In the summer of 1814, the park hosted a lavish fair marking the end of the war with France. Napoleon had been defeated and was in his first exile. A naval re-enactment of the Battle of Trafalgar was performed on the Serpentine, and the French ships were slowly sunk to the sound of the British National Anthem.



Statue of Achilles



The Weeping Beech, known as 'the upside-down tree'



The Old Police House, 1900-09, now the HQ of the Royal Parks

*Albert! Spare those trees,
Mind where you fix your show;
For mercy's sake, don't, please,
Go spoiling Rotten Row*

The exhibition was the first in a series of world fairs. Its success was phenomenal, attracting over six million visitors, with a daily average of forty-three thousand, and raising sufficient capital to purchase the land extending from the park to South Kensington, on which the Albert Hall and museums were built. In October 1951, the venue was moved, piece-by-piece to Sydenham Hill in South London. In 1861, Albert died of typhoid and Victoria commissioned Sir George Gilbert Scott to design the Albert Memorial. Completed in 1872, its cost of £120,000 was met by public subscription.

It was around this time, too, that Hyde Park was established as a venue for free speech. In 1855, a protest was organised in opposition to Robert Grosvenor's proposed Sunday trading ban. Over 150,000 people gathered there and the following day Grosvenor rescinded his bill. This was the beginning of regular meetings, debates, marches and protests for which the park has, over time, acquired an international reputation. As a

Upon George IV's ascension to the throne in 1820, coronation celebrations were, for the first time, held in Hyde Park. Festivities included a boat race, a hot air balloon, two elephants, and a lavish fireworks display. In 1822, the Statue of Achilles was installed at Hyde Park Corner in commemoration of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington. It was the first statue to be erected in the park and was commissioned by an upper class, patriotic society called 'Ladies of England'. At the colossal height of eighteen foot, it was executed by Sir Richard Westmacott using thirty-three tonnes of bronze from cannons seized in Wellington's French campaigns. Originally nude, it caused such controversy amongst the English public that a small fig leaf had to be added shortly after its installation.

In George IV's reign, significant architectural improvements were made in the park under the authority of the young architect Decimus Burton: Hyde Park Corner's Apsley Gate and Arch (now called Wellington Arch), the Guards' Magazine House, and many lodges, gates, drives and pathways. These lent the park a newfound dignity and coherence. The other important architectural feature from this time is the Serpentine Bridge. Built in 1825-8 to a design by George and John Rennie, it separates Hyde Park from Kensington Gardens. In the same period, Charles II's brick

wall was replaced with new iron railings and it was not until the 1860s that flowers were planted, under the direction of William Andrews Nesfield. Today, a much-visited botanical curiosity is the Weeping Beech, known as 'the upside-down tree'.

One of the most important events to take place in the park's history was The Great Exhibition. Organised by Henry Cole and Prince Albert, it was opened by Queen Victoria on 1st May 1851. Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace of iron and glass was situated in the southern area of the park between 'Rotten Row' and Hyde Park Barracks. It covered about nineteen acres and encased three great elm trees. Smaller trees, however, were cut down, leading to ridicule in Punch:



Decimus Burton's Apsley Gate at Hyde Park Corner



Socialist orator Tony Turner addressing a huge crowd at Speakers' Corner in c.1940

speech there was thus formally acknowledged and in this way Speakers' Corner was inaugurated. Orators increasingly brought along placards, stepladders and soapboxes in order to stand out from the others, and heckling was commonplace. The suffragettes campaigned there in the early 1900s, and Karl Marx, William Morris and Vladimir Lenin were all frequent orators there. In 2002 and 2003, it was the site of enormous rallies against military combat in Iraq. Speakers' Corner

result of such demonstrations, policing of the park was, in 1867, entrusted to the Metropolitan Police, the only park to be so managed.

In 1872, a poster was displayed near a tree known as 'Reformers' Tree' stating that 'No public address may be delivered except within 40 yards of the noticeboard on which this rule is inscribed'. The right to



Suffragette's march in Hyde Park



The Coldstream Guards, the crack infantrymen of Great Britain, passing through Hyde Park in heavy marching order on their way to Paddington and the front during the First World War



Queen Victoria's Jubilee Procession, Hyde Park Corner, June 1887

is a significant part of the park's social history and it continues to serve today as a forum for preachers and campaigners on a wide range of topics.

The last great event to be held in the park in the nineteenth century was Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1887, at which the queen gave lunch and a medal to 26,000 school children. In her last years, she was frequently seen in the park, often driving there twice daily. With the growth of London and the increasingly distant countryside, more and more of the working classes began to use the park.

Like the other parks, Hyde Park played a significant role during the First and Second World Wars. It was used for camps, military training, anti-aircraft gun stations and experimental bombing grounds. It also provided refuge from bombs and grew fruit and vegetables. As the wars dragged on, it was increasingly used for the rest and recreation of military

personnel, those on leave, and those wounded. At one point during the First World War, it was even closed and turned into a milk distribution centre.

In 1970, Hyde Park Barracks (also known as Knightsbridge Barracks) were completed to a design by Sir Basil Spence. Located on the southern edge of the park, they accommodate the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment including 514 army personnel and 273 horses. The building was voted number eight in a Country Life poll of Britain's 'top ten eyesores' and a campaign to have it listed was rejected in 2015 by the Ministry of Culture.

Today, Hyde Park continues to enjoy a very public outlook. It remains a venue for mass celebrations and public events. In 1977, an exhibition was held there to mark Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee. In the late twentieth century it hosted many large-scale free rock music concerts, featuring groups such as Queen, The Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd. Commercial concerts continue there today, such as Live 8 in 2005. Since 2007, the park has hosted the



The Knightsbridge Barracks

annual Winter Wonderland event which has become one of the largest Christmas events in Europe, attracting over fourteen million visitors in 2016. In 2010, the park was the setting for a prayer vigil with Pope Benedict XVI and was attended by around 80,000 people.



© Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

*View of the Serpentine River looking from Kensington Gardens, 1796.
Francis Jukes, 1747-1812*

An attempt to assassinate the Pope was foiled after five street cleaners were noticed in the vicinity. Sporting activities are a major feature of the park and include horse riding, cycling, tennis and football. Boating and swimming on the Serpentine have, for many years, been enjoyed by the public: boating was first allowed in 1847, and the Lido Pavilion, which provides bathing and sunbathing facilities, opened in 1930. During the summer 2012 Olympics, the park hosted both the triathlon and the 10km open water swimming events. Hyde Park is truly the people's park: it is one of the city's most popular attractions and is undoubtedly its greatest open space.

Lara Basirov has recently finished a Master's degree in 15th and 16th century Italian and Netherlandish painting, at the Courtauld Institute of Art.



A policewoman chasing a gang of skinny dippers by the Serpentine Lido, 1920s

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*Fashionables of 1816 Taking the Air in Hyde Park, 1816.
Unknown artist*



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Robert Hobart and Roger Slater are pleased to announce that Nicolas Pejacsevich and Patrick Alvarado, directors at Nicolas Van Patrick have acquired Hobart Slater. The companies are neighbours and have known and collaborated with each other for some time. In early January, the companies will begin the merge and move into Hobart Slater's prestigious offices in Montpelier Street. The NVP name and brand will absorb Hobart Slater.

"We have much enjoyed building up Hobart Slater over the last 36 years and we are delighted to pass the flaming torch to Nicolas Van Patrick. We feel that the time is right and we are confident that they will continue to develop the joint business with the same integrity and high values that have always underpinned our success" – Roger Slater

Nicolas and Patrick both come from an international background and have lived in Central London for most of their lives. They have an excellent reputation and have over 30 years of combined experience. They have grown their business with a personal and 'hands on' approach and will add a new dynamic. They will also bring in additional services including developments and investments.

Both Hobart Slater and Nicholas Van Patrick will work closely together over the next few months to ensure a very smooth transition, and many of the incumbent staff will remain. Robert and Roger will also continue to be present to support the takeover.

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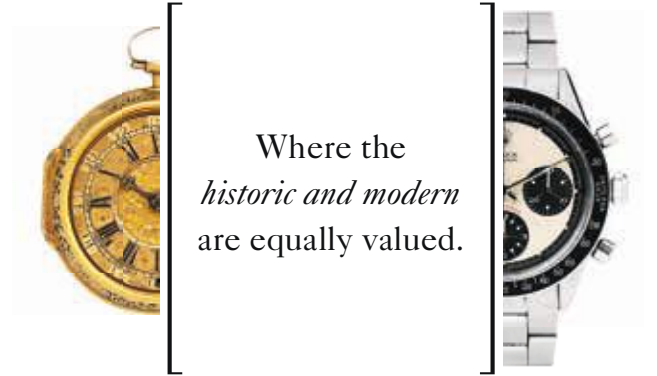
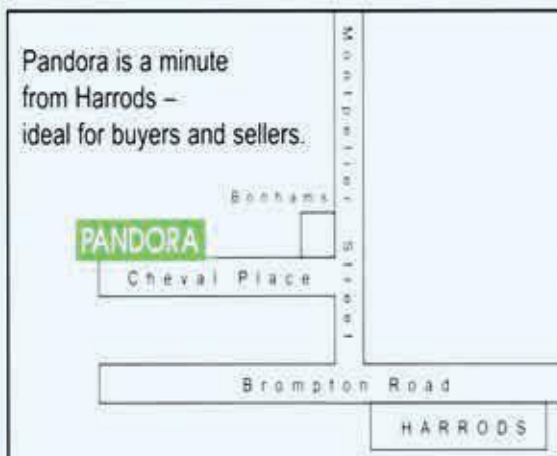


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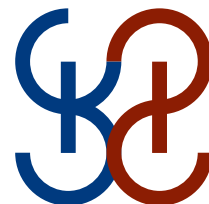
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