

# THE CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

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55–91 Knightsbridge – elegance restored

It was a year of slow beginnings. How strange it is looking back to January when all thirty-two London Boroughs were in Tier 4 lockdown. 'Eat out to help out' came and went in August 2020 and by January 2021 Government had introduced a new 'stay at home' message which brought us back to where we were on 23 March 2020. By January 2021 our heightened sense of community was so well honed that it was second nature to shop for those who could not do so, or too afraid to venture out. Many streets, squares and mews developed their own 'pop-up' commissariats served by those with energy to burn and a strong sense of community awareness. Pandemics isolate while drawing communities closer together.

Behind our local preoccupations, much else was happening on the

wider stage. Over twelve months to October 2021 (at time of writing) the UK FTSE had risen thirty per cent, the price of oil had doubled to around US\$84 per barrel and the pound sterling had appreciated six percent against the US dollar but remained well below its June 2016 level. Closer to home, in fact right in our backyard, residents were busy staging their response to a restaurant application in Montpelier Street that posed an existential threat to those living in the immediate area.

This was just one of many issues to hit the Association in 2021. Others included the introduction of Use Class E that allows interchangeability of retail and restaurant use under the Government's now paused Planning Bill; a more onerous slate of Congestion Charging costs,

tariffs and times; the arrival of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ); RBKC's New Local Plan Review; and WCC's consultation on a Public Space Protection Order to facilitate the roll-out of acoustic cameras in Westminster. All our committees were fully engaged throughout the year and none more so than Licensing and Planning.

Possibly the most problematic issue is Use Class E and the unintended consequences for residents of vacant retail outlets being turned into licenced restaurants. An area that was once commercial and residential could easily, and rapidly, become a late-night entertainment zone with all the nightly disruption that follows. The lacuna in Licensing regulations around cumulative impact leaves residents with no more to rely on

than the Licensing objectives of preventing public nuisance or, in the case of large vehicles and fast cars in narrow streets, public safety. We will be working on this issue in 2022 with neighbouring Amenity Societies to ensure our views are more widely heard and understood while Government reflects on the recently 'paused' Planning Bill. These issues and many more are amplified later in the report.

On the bright side, the Brompton Road Business Improvement District ('BID') came into force on 1st October with some £6m in the kitty for improvements in its defined area over the next five years. Initiated by Cadogan in 2018, the BID brings together landlords, occupiers, residents and representatives of local authorities to come up with a plan to transform the district into one that reflects its International Centre status while being sympathetic to and respectful of, the surrounding residential area.

The timing is perfect. As foretold in the 2020 Annual Report, the Olyan / Chelsfield and Cheval Properties redevelopments at the Sloane Street / Brompton Road apex and at 55-91 Knightsbridge respectively, have just emerged from their scaffolding chrysalises to adorn this previously construction-ravaged stretch of Knightsbridge. The BID can now concentrate on repairing public realm and restoring Knightsbridge's lost lustre. The chairmen of both the Knightsbridge Association and the Neighbourhood Forum will be members of the BID's board.

The Association has been busy improving its own systems and organisation. We launched a new website in the Spring ([www.knightsbridgeassociation.com](http://www.knightsbridgeassociation.com)) with improved functionality that allows new members to join on-line. There are pages for our four principal committees and a new routine for updating them that we hope will keep content topical and current. For traditionalists who still prefer hard copy, there is a new membership application form that reflects the Association's latest objectives and access information. Thanks go to the many that contributed to the meticulous updating of this document.

Another important reflection of the Association's progress is the adoption of new accounting software, a project brought to fruition through the foresight and immense dedication of our Treasurer. Let's hope there are some good results to go with it at year-end!

So much needs to be run in parallel these days: hard copy and digital; face-to-face mixed with Zoom. Newsletters and the Annual Report itself are not immune to progress and, as some of you may have noticed, the electronic version of the Autumn newsletter arrived weeks ahead of the hard copy. This reminded me of the dialogue in Richard Gordon's novel *Doctor At Sea* between an ebullient Chief Engineer who predicts to a grudging Captain that his engines will arrive in San Paulo three days before the ship's hull! However, transitions are not instantaneous, and we remain of the view that hard copy is still appreciated for publications that many want to open, dip into and look back at days or even weeks later.

This brings me to two other areas of transition affecting Knightsbridge in different ways. First, the arrival of superfast broadband in fits and starts in streets and squares but, so far, not in cobbled mews. This latter point illustrates well the tussle between heritage and innovation and remains work in progress for the time being. The roll-out has not been without disruption but on a much-diminished scale to that which must have occurred, for example, with the arrival of the Metropolitan District Railway at South Kensington in 1868 or the line at Penge so vividly depicted by Camille Pissarro around 1880. Two modes of communication - mechanical and electronic - with lasting consequences although it remains to be seen whether superfast broadband has the staying power to be with us 150 years from now.

The second transition is the arrival of ULEZ on 25th October bringing with it radical and immediate change for those driving older diesel or petrol cars within the area bounded by the North and South circular roads - further details on page 26.

The year brought, for all its ups and downs, three notable anniversaries and one remarkable achievement. The anniversaries are the 150th

anniversary of the Albert Hall, celebrated in this edition by a feature article on page 41 and the 95th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh written up in more detail on page 37. The Association's 60th anniversary celebration was postponed last September but will now take place in person on Monday 10th January 2022. We have decided this year to split the drinks reception from the the Annual General Meeting which will be held over Zoom on Monday 24th January 2022 following the success of last year's event in providing a platform for wider discussion in the Q&A session at the end of formal proceedings. The remarkable achievement belongs to the Montpelier Square Garden team under the direction of Lady Marshall who won the garden square competition for the fifth year in succession!

This leaves us looking into 2022 at the exceptional prospect of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee to be marked by an extended bank holiday from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June.

Wishing you and your families a Happy Christmas and good health in the year to come.

*Melville Haggard*  
Chairman



The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 congratulates The Knightsbridge Association on its 60th Anniversary and we look forward to working with them for many years to come.

# PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

Carol Seymour-Newton

## SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION



*Fig 1: The view of the listed Station, the low scale Edwardian bullnose and the rear of the Victorian Thurloe Street terrace from Old Brompton Road today, and as it will look with outsized development. Note how the station itself is dwarfed and period character lost.*



The long saga over development at South Kensington continued through the summer and into the Autumn when a slightly amended design was submitted to RBKC. This was Native Land and TfL's third iteration of their hugely controversial scheme – designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour – and first submitted for planning permission in mid 2019. As the Annual Report goes to press the indications are that the application will go before the Planning Committee in mid-November so, by the time members read this a decision to approve or to refuse may have been taken.

The amendments made this time around (after application was withdrawn from the Planning Committee's agenda the day before it was due to be considered in early June) are minimal and do not address any of the fundamental concerns expressed in the barrage of objections to this scheme. The proposed new development is too big, too bulky and is highly damaging to the character of the Conservation Area.

The listed station arcade will be dwarfed and overshadowed by the substantial semi-circular structure on the bullnose (Fig 1); the much loved view of the museum towers from Onslow Square will be lost (Fig 2); and the façading of nos 20–34 Thurloe Street will make a mockery of Conservation Area policy as this attractive Victorian terrace of small shops will basically become a wholly



*Fig 2: The view looking north from Onslow Square before and after. The low scale of the listed station and bullnose give South Kensington its human scale and village heart. Views of the museum towers, a key feature of the current historic townscape, will be obliterated. Both visualisations are accurately depicted to scale by Rendered Image Ltd.*



new building. All the small shops, including Daquise and the Medici Shop, will go. The overtly modern rear elevation will be highly visible both from the Station platforms and from the south. Narrow Pelham Street will become a canyon with a cliff of new development running its full length, the beautiful Grade II\* Georgian terraces of Pelham Place will have a large, bland and overscaled end elevation looming over them, and the handsome Victorian terraces in Thurloe Square will have a substantial interloper dumped at the Square's south west corner. All this new development in one of RBKC's most iconic Conservation Areas.

Ahead of the June Planning Committee, Native Land had paid PR people at the Station soliciting e-support for their scheme, approaching Station users and getting them to tick boxes in support on the basis the development will provide the magic step free access so greatly needed. A similar systematic

generation of expressions of support followed in the Autumn when the revised scheme was re-submitted. But what these random e-supporters are not told, of course, is that Native Land's Around Station Development does not provide step free access. The much needed TfL station improvements, shelved indefinitely in 2020 due to budget constraints, remain stubbornly shelved. The Native Land scheme was never going to provide step free access to the Piccadilly Line anyway. That is way, way in the future, if at all. If the NL scheme goes ahead, the best that can be hoped for is a single lift

from Thurloe Street to the Booking Hall level (not to platform level) and instead of locating this lift within the Thurloe Street terrace as originally envisaged it is proposed this be located immediately adjacent to the northern exit of the Station Arcade involving the quite unnecessary destruction of one of George Sherrin's attractive and wholly unaltered listed shop fronts.

To add insult to injury, the Native Land scheme involves taking a chunk of the public realm where the flower stall to the south of the Station now is - to provide a lorry bay for

servicing the southern side of this large development. Back in 2010–12, RBKC redesigned the one-way gyratory traffic flow around South Kensington Station getting rid of traffic islands and dangerous narrow pavements and vastly improving the public realm and making the area around the Station people friendly. The present attractive public space to the south of the Station was created then, yet part of this is to be lopped off for a utilitarian lorry bay.

Where is the public benefit in any of this?

**STOP PRESS:**  
RBKC refused permission.

## NAMMOS 13–17 MONTPELIER STREET



The community was shocked by three complex planning applications that might have turned the popular but tranquil Montpelianos into a busy international destination restaurant called 'Nammos' with fears of a 'nightclub'. The KA Chairman mobilised residents, planning consultants, a barrister and councillors to submit a barrage of objections to the

applications. The combination of these objections and two or more robust policies in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (referred to elsewhere) contributed to Westminster City Council's planning committee rejecting all three applications in decisions dated 20th July 2021. The KA understands that the applicant has until January 2022 to lodge planning appeals. At the time of writing, the applicant was pursuing several detailed proposals related to listed building consent.

## 2–8 RUTLAND GATE

This is the large residential building at the Hyde Park end of Rutland Gate that was reportedly purchased by Cheung Chung-Kiu, a Chinese billionaire, for single family occupancy for £210 million in January 2020. The owner's team got off to a bad start when they installed dozens of cameras on tall poles across the local area (to monitor

the availability of parking spaces). Residents were furious and quick action by Councillor Robathan, the Leader of Westminster City Council, got them all removed with 24 hours. A sincere apology from the owner's representative, who explained that they had been well intentioned and suggested by others, reset relations. Subsequently, the owner's representative went to great lengths to modify their planning application to address the KA's comments and the neighbourhood plan. The KA's residual comments related mainly to technical design issues. The planning application received more support than objections and was approved by Westminster's planning committee in a decision dated 28th July 2021.

## SOUTH KENSINGTON ESTATES – SKE

It is taking time for retailers and restaurants to move back in to some of the empty spaces. The market is not particularly strong, but despite that SKE say they have interest from some suitable brands.

## 220–228 BROMPTON ROAD

A planning and listed building application for works to 220–228 Brompton Road, on the corner with Thurloe Place, was withdrawn due to concerns from the RBKC conservation team and the KA has been told that a heritage architect will be consulted to advise on a new application.



*Cgi view of the façade showing the extra storey and the arched windows at ground and 4th floors*

## 209 BROMPTON ROAD (formerly Lords mini-market)

Planning permission was obtained to install windows along the Yeoman's Row elevation of these premises and renovation is likely



to continue until February 2022. The food store proposal didn't go ahead and SKE are now looking for a retail customer to fit in with the mix of design and housewares brands that they have in Brompton.

## MAJOR CONSTRUCTION SITES

### THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE



*The corner of Sloane and Basil Streets*

Phase 1 of Chelsfield's plans to upgrade the Estate, involving the triangle within Brompton Road, Hooper's Court, Basil Street and Sloane Street, is nearing completion. The offices and retail are being actively marketed, with some such as Burberry's already open; the apartments will be completed towards the end of 2022, Hooper's Court should be open by the time this magazine goes to press.

The new tube entrance on Brompton Road was due to be open by the end of 2021. The step-free access at the entrance in Hooper's Court is due to open in spring 2022.

*We hope to include an article on the history of the Tube in Knightsbridge in next year's Annual Report*

In 2007 as the Knightsbridge Estate, once owned by BP Pension Fund, was again changing hands, the Association became increasingly concerned that

we might be landed with more ultra modern steel and glass constructions, which would completely destroy the character of Knightsbridge, which primarily dates from the late Victorian/Edwardian era.

Under the able guidance of Michael Wright, the KA's chairman of planning, we appointed Paul Velluet, formerly of English Heritage, to prepare a report on the Estate which we could present to RBKC.

The report concluded that the majority of the buildings within the site contributed: *'positively and substantially to the character and appearance of the conservation area'*, and added that several of them, including 4a/5 Sloane Street (on the corner with Basil Street) and 39/41 Brompton Road were of sufficient architectural and historical worth to merit listing.

*Although the upper floors of the original frontages survive to a surprising degree, the shop fronts have been lost, and many of the replacements lack quality and pay little attention to the architectural character of the existing buildings. This is a weakness which is not confined to this group of buildings and calls for stricter control by the planning authorities to achieve the standards set out in their Guidelines on Shopfronts.*

*Looking to the future, the distinctive architectural character of this part of Knightsbridge should be maintained by the adoption*

*of a conservation-led approach to its planning and development.'*

The Report was discussed with RBKC councillors and chief planning officers. Assurances were received that they did not envisage any large scale redevelopment.

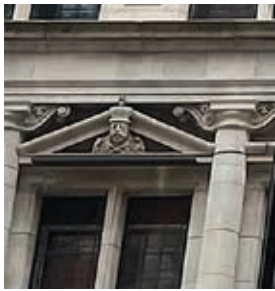
In 2010 the Estate was acquired by Chelsfield on behalf of the Olayan Group.

### 55-91 KNIGHTSBRIDGE AND 1-3 WILLIAM STREET

The beautifully restored façade (see in full on p.13) is something the KA can take some credit for, as in 1982 the Association's then chairman of planning, Richard Robinson, sought spotlisting for the façade. English Heritage concurred, describing it as 'eclectic classical style with Flemish touches' and it was saved for the future. In the Survey of London, Volume XLV, the architect WD Caröe's façade is credited as 'perhaps the most successful treatment of any of the late Victorian and Edwardian blocks along both sides of Knightsbridge'.



*The north east façade.*



Under Cheval Property's ownership the brick and stonework have been carefully cleaned and repaired, revealing the often quirky detail including a coat of arms and six busts set in pediments over the first floor windows, portraying Edward VII, (above), Queen

Alexandra and other influential people of the period. A plaque records the year of the building as 1902, the year of Edward's coronation.

The building had been developed behind the façade, two sections at a time, so that there was no unity – it was literally a rabbit warren on a myriad of levels. Hence the agreement that redevelopment behind the retained façade was acceptable.

The building and management teams have worked closely with residents and the KA throughout to deal with any problems that might arise. Currently the manager and his team are in residence managing day to day operations.

Marketing for the retail, office and apartments began in Autumn and occupancy is anticipated towards summer next year. Marketing for the apartments is anticipated to begin in the first quarter of 2022.

## THE PENINSULA LONDON

With spectacular views overlooking Hyde Park Corner and the Wellington Arch, The Peninsula London, designed by Hopkins Architects, will be open to guests from late 2022.

The design concept is based on the Italian Renaissance palazzo.

The hotel will provide 190 guest rooms and suites in addition to which

25 luxury residences will be for sale. Restaurants, a ballroom, spa and a one-storey shopping arcade will also feature.



As part of the project the owners will also provide affordable housing located in Buckingham Palace Road.

## THE BERKELEY AND 33–39 KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Proposals for extending the hotel building at roof level were shown to the KA in the Autumn. We expressed several reservations and a planning application has yet to be submitted.

With the external envelope nearing completion on the adjoining building at 33–39 Knightsbridge – designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners – the final phase to fit out the internal spaces is due to be completed in the next few months.

## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The Museum has now raised 75% of the funds needed to create the Urban Nature Project (UNP) which will transform their South Kensington gardens and they will be launching a public campaign in the Spring to give thousands of people the opportunity to become part of the project. They aim to start construction in Spring 2022. A bronze copy of Dippy, their much-loved Diplodocus

who used to be the main focus in the entrance hall, is currently being created to take his place welcoming visitors to the garden.

Meanwhile, terracotta repairs to the main entrance of the Waterhouse building were completed during the year and it is now fully open. The final stage of external railings refurbishment will commence after the ice rink closes to make way for the UNP construction.



*The refurbished railings*



*Pond dipping at the Natural History Museum*

## IMPERIAL COLLEGE

### Dangoor Plaza

A gift from the Dangoor family and The Exilarch Foundation is supporting the reinvigoration of outdoor space at the heart of Imperial's South Kensington Campus and will fund the development of a new plaza surrounding the Queen's Lawn and the Queen's Tower in Imperial College Road. Dangoor Plaza will open up the



ALERT by Antony Gormley

existing space to create a welcoming quadrangle enhancing the Queen's Lawn providing an inviting green space for staff and students year round.

The new landscaping will provide space for ALERT, an iconic piece of sculptural art by Antony Gormley gifted by an alumnus. The whole scheme was granted planning permission in October.

Meanwhile, the Queen's Tower, the only remaining structure from the old Imperial Institute, is undergoing costly repairs and restoration.

### ROYAL ALBERT HALL (RAH)

In September permission was granted for the four statues commissioned to fill the twin niches on the north and south façades of the Hall referred to in the Autumn newsletter. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, in stone, will face Kensington Gore and the Albert Memorial, while to the south Queen



Elizabeth and Prince Philip, in bronze, will face the steps leading down to Prince Consort Road. The Hall worked with the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust to find suitable artists from amongst their Scholars – Poppy Field was selected for the South Porch figures and Josh Locksmith and Tom Brown for the North Porch figures. It is planned to unveil them in Summer 2022. See article on p.41 celebrating 150 years of the RAH.

# EXHIBITION ROAD CULTURAL GROUP REPORT

Emily Candler – Executive Director

## DISCOVER SOUTH KENSINGTON 2021.

It was wonderful to welcome visitors, students and staff back to South Kensington last Summer. The South Kensington Green Trail\* launched in July 2021 was designed to attract both visitors and wildlife. Three pop-up architectural installations were introduced along Exhibition Road and a trail linked planting, displays and art across the cultural district. It was commissioned by Discover South Kensington with London Festival of Architecture, V&A, Goethe-Institut and Science Museum and supported by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, Kensington and Chelsea Council, Westminster



Algae meadow, one of the three pop-up installations

City Council and Mayor of London. The feedback on this project was really positive and as this report went to press, the cultural and educational organisations in South Kensington were shaping ideas and proposals for activity in Exhibition Road in 2022. The highlight will be the Great Exhibition Road Festival, which will return to a large scale event in Summer 2022 after the smaller event in 2021. There will be hands-on activities, talks and performances across the cultural and educational venues and in Exhibition Road. The Festival is the largest collaborative project of our local cultural and educational organisations, and now also has a year round programme with online talks.

\*referred to in KA Autumn newsletter

## GREAT EXHIBITIONS TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

The V&A has some exciting fashion related exhibitions. On until 16th January, at Bags: Inside Out, you can see Margaret Thatcher's iconic handbag or Winston Churchill's dispatch box. In March, the first major exhibition celebrating masculine attire opens with iconic looks by legendary designers and rising stars. *Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution* runs until 22nd May, tells the story of the man that symbolised Russian craftsmanship and will showcase 3 Imperial Easter Eggs which will be on display for the first time.

© The Moscow Kremlin Museums



The Alexandra Palace Egg. Chief workmaster Henry Wigstrom, 1908.

Building on the success of the V&A's family-friendly shows, *Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature* opens on 12th February 2022, tracing the personal journey and legacy



The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck artwork, 1908.

of the beloved author and her enduring love of nature. We are also delighted to see the return of the V&A Friday Late series packed with live performances, workshops, screenings and talks on the last Friday of every month.

Over the road at the Natural History Museum, *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* runs until 5th June 2022 where 100 powerful photographs tell the story of the planet under pressure. After an incredible 16 years, the Natural History Museum's festive ice rink returns for the final time. Up until 16th January 2022, come and skate surrounded by fairy



lights with the Waterhouse building behind and the smell of mulled wine in the air! In the run up to COP26 on climate change, many of the South Kensington cultural venues hosted events and exhibitions responding to the natural world's crisis. At the Natural History Museum, *Our Broken Planet* is a free display open until April which evolves over time and explores how humans have transformed the natural world. Equally, at the Science Museum, *Our Future Planet* focuses on solving one of the most significant causes of climate change as scientists race to develop different technologies to remove and store excess carbon dioxide. This free exhibition is open until September 2022.

Also at the Science Museum is a breath-taking photography exhibition – *Amazonia* – from internationally renowned photographer Sebastião Salgado which celebrates the indigenous peoples and varied landscapes of the Brazilian rainforest (open until March 2022). Further ahead, in May, a new exhibition – *Cancer Revolution: Science, Innovation and*



*Hope* – explores the science that is transforming cancer care. Heading into next autumn, the Museum will also be opening a new interactive gallery exploring the world of Technicians where you can analyse blood samples in a medical laboratory or operate a robot in a manufacturer's workshop.

Over at the Design Museum, climate change is explored further with *Waste Age: What can Design do?* Open until 1st January 2022, the exhibition explores new design ideas and how they are redefining the things we use every day. A series of related talks accompanies the exhibition.

Promising to be a hit with music lovers, *Amy: Beyond the Stage* opens at the Design Museum and runs until April 2022. Discover the story of Amy's early career through her recordings and teenage notebooks to unravel the creative process behind her music. For football fans, a new exhibition in April, *Football: Designing the Beautiful Game*, delves into the incredible stories behind the world's most popular game.

At Kensington Palace, it is the last chance to see *Royal Style in the Making* which closes on 2nd January 2022. The exhibition explores the intimate relationship between fashion designer and royal client, revealing the process behind the creating of a number of the most important couture commissions in royal history.

The Royal College of Music has welcomed the return of live audiences as well as the opening of a unique museum of music.





Princess Diana's wedding dress is on display in Kensington Palace

Following funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museum has undergone a complete redevelopment and is now open again to the public. The collection contains the earliest known guitar and stringed keyboard instrument as well as other fascinating instruments.\*\*

South Kensington has been international in its outlook and profile since the Great Exhibition – to give its full title The Great Exhibition of the Works of All Nations in 1851. That international spirit continues today and in 2022 Goethe-Institut will be celebrating its 60 years in Exhibition Road. Between 22nd - 29th January, Institut Français return with their annual *Night of Ideas* event. A series of debates, talks and screenings will focus on what 'Together' means today with an incredible line-up of journalists, philosophers, authors and historians.

*Cirque du Soleil* makes an eagerly awaited return to the Royal Albert Hall from 12th January to 12th February. Back by popular demand, Luzia will take audiences on a visually stunning and imaginative journey to Mexico with one of the most technically demanding shows ever to be staged at the Hall.

The Serpentine presents an expansive exhibition from Hervé Télémaque: *Hopscotch of the Mind* which is on until 30th January 2022. Through colourful paintings,

drawings and collages, he brings together striking combinations of historical and literary references with those of consumer and popular culture. Chicago artist Theaster Gates has been chosen to design the 2022 Serpentine Pavilion.

After such unprecedented times, it is wonderful to see the return of an incredible programme of exhibitions, live music, festivals and workshops at the cultural venues in South Kensington. We have shared some of the highlights coming up but if you want to discover more, visit our website [www.discoveringsouthken.com](http://www.discoveringsouthken.com) where you can also sign up to our fortnightly newsletter to keep up to date with all the latest news and events in the area



\*\*Congratulations to RCM student Alim Beisembayev from Kazakhstan on winning 2021 Leeds International Piano Competition.



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[www.localheroes.design/](http://www.localheroes.design/)

*LUZIA is inspired by the people, places, and stories that define Mexico*

## LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL 2021

For nine days each September, London provides the stage for thousands of individual designers and artists, companies, organisations and nations to come together to celebrate and promote London as the design capital of the world."



© Reuben Paris

Clockwise--Urpflanze 'The Lacy Tree Chandelier', MIRRL 'Fossil' Surface Material, '400' Chair, Chalk Plaster 'Wemys' side table

Knightsbridge also opened its doors to several enthusiastic artists. We spoke with Dr Stacey Hunter, who has written about, commissioned and exhibited the work of over 100 contemporary designers based in Scotland with her project *The Future of Home*. "It is time for Scotland to take its place in the world as a design nation. Our design culture is not yet well articulated or easy identifiable. However, contemporary design and craft in Scotland is flourishing."

At the gallery on 6-7 Thurloe Place, Dr Hunter had curated a preview of innovative furniture, textiles, tapestry and lightning

# THE ROYAL PARKS

## Improving Biodiversity in 2021 and Beyond in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

*Peter Lawrence, Biodiversity Manager for the Royal Parks*

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Several biodiversity enhancements will take place as part of ongoing work to increase the resilience of the parks to climate change whilst also boosting access to nature. This includes those delivered through the Mission: Invertebrate programme funded by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

Woodland management continues across the two parks, with coppice management and planting of the Long Water woodland (below) and



ongoing work (started in 2020) to improve the Nursery Woodland in Hyde Park. This will include non-native scrub removal, planting of native scrub, trees and hedges; management and enrichment of the ground flora with native and wildlife-friendly plants and wildflowers; and enhancement of

the wildflower-rich glade at the Hudson Memorial (above). We will continue to add to the diversity of



habitats found in the Long Water and the Serpentine, with our work informed by aquatic surveys undertaken in 2021. These surveys have helped to identify existing aquatic flora and fish populations, using an innovative approach which analyses water samples for eDNA (environmental DNA) to identify species. This work will include improving and planting new



*A reed bunting*

reedbeds and marginal habitats, and providing new opportunities for nesting birds, fish and invertebrate communities.

We will also start to deliver the new Royal Parks Soil Strategy, which is currently in progress. This has been informed by a range of surveys undertaken in 2021 - from investigating the opportunities for acid grassland restoration in Kensington Gardens, through to identifying the diversity of life present in soils, from meadows to ornamental beds. The Soil Strategy will help us value, protect and restore our soils which are vital for the health of the parks, their habitats and landscapes. They support rich and often little understood biodiversity, manage water - including during times of heavy rainfall - and are vital carbon stores.

We will continue to enhance the grassland habitats across the parks to maximise biodiversity (for example, through increasing the number of 'meadow' cuts in some areas to improve wildflower diversity, whilst leaving refuge areas uncut elsewhere to provide shelter for invertebrates and small



mammals), and our partnership with the shire horses from Operation Centaur will continue to see traditional grassland management techniques employed in the park.

## LITTER – A PERENNIAL PROBLEM

The Royal Parks Charity is urging visitors to take their litter home with them. It costs the charity £1.3 million annually to collect and dispose of litter from across the eight Parks they care for. It is not only costly but



*Pelican tries to swallow a plastic bottle*

shows an alarming lack of empathy for nature. Nearly 2,500 tonnes of waste are collected each year on average – a truly appalling figure. Throughout the different lockdowns and beyond, piles of plastic bags filled with left-over picnic waste, pizza boxes, glass bottles, tins, dog poo bags and PPE have been proving hazardous to wildlife. It is insulting to the staff who spend so much time caring for the Parks and to members of the public who go to enjoy the green spaces.

Sir David Attenborough, said: “In busy London, the Royal Parks are a haven for wildlife and there are simple things we can all do to protect it and help it thrive.

Litter, and especially plastic, is a growing danger to wildlife worldwide, and we can all help by taking it home or using the bins. Please also leave the wildflowers and fungi, the acorns and deadwood where they are; all of them are vital parts of the Parks’ ecology. Remember to tread lightly and leave no trace of your visit.”



## WINTER WONDERLAND

After a year’s absence the Parks premier fund raiser, Winter Wonderland, returned to Hyde Park on November 19th and runs to 3rd January. Visitors need to purchase an entry ticket with a timed entry slot before entering the event. The list of attractions, new themes and returning favourites includes the UK’s largest outdoor Ice Rink, new Magical Ice Kingdom and Bar Ice experience, new Zippos Christmas Circus and Cirque Berserk shows, the Giant Wheel and more. In all there are more than 200 rides, attractions, shows, games and food and drink options.



*One of Winter Wonderland’s rides, the Euro Coaster with its 370 metre long track.*

Promoters IMG are working closely alongside the Royal Parks to ensure that Hyde Park is fully protected from the impact of the event.

This includes covering the entire footprint with durable flooring to protect the turf sub-structure and hording off protected areas that contain a large number of trees.

Work to take down the site will run from Tuesday 4th January to Sunday 23rd January and the aim is that the re-instatement programme will be completed in time for the re-opening of the Parade Ground by Easter.

## THE HALF MARATHON



On Sunday 10th October, the Royal Parks Half Marathon took place and around 11,000 runners completed the race via a new route that was announced in July to ensure that the event went ahead in a Covid-secure manner. For the first time, the half marathon started on The Mall and finished in Hyde Park. Sustainability was another priority for organisers and all runners were asked to be entirely self-sufficient with their hydration for the 2021 race, so no on-course water stations.

It was the first major event held by the Parks in a year.

## CONCERTS

As mentioned in the Autumn Newsletter, the nine concerts will take place over three consecutive weekends on the Parade Ground, starting on the weekend of Friday 24th June.

The area will be fenced off from Friday 10th June to Monday 18th July to include time for mounting and demounting the event. It will be open to the public from Wednesday 20th July.

**Parks Noise Number:  
0300 061 2222**

# LAW AND ORDER

Frances Blois

## MADDIE ELSDON

Maddie has now stood down as the Law and Order Chairman as she is sadly leaving Knightsbridge; she will be a very hard act to follow. Frances Blois has now taken over, ably assisted by Samer Younis.

## KNIGHTSBRIDGE AND BELGRAVIA SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD PANEL

This panel which also includes Belgravia has met quarterly online, replacing the in person meeting. The crime stats are presented and are also available on the Police websites where you also have the ability to report crimes as well as see where drop in meetings are being held. All contact details for the local teams are there including both the Westminster Council – Knightsbridge and Belgravia Safer Neighbourhood Team and the RBKC – Brompton and Hans Town Team. Both these teams cover the Knightsbridge Association area. The Royal Parks Police covers Hyde Park.

## CRIME FIGURES STATISTICS

Over the last year these have been lower, particularly as most people have been working from home and there are fewer cafés and restaurants open. The vaccination programme and subsequent return

to a new normal and the approach of Christmas will sadly increase these figures.

## THEFT FROM CARS

Unfortunately theft from cars is still occurring and takes seconds to accomplish. **Please do not leave anything valuable in your vehicle.** The culprits come on bicycles or sometimes the e-scooters. The police team is well aware and are currently planning an enhanced operation in the area. They are also frustrated when their vehicles cannot slip down an alleyway or past bollards.

## THEFT OF CARS



This is usually keyless high value cars stolen to order and they are usually out of the country before the theft is reported. The crook lock attached to the steering wheel is a deterrent.

## THEFT FROM PERSON

With the opening up of the cafés and more people around these

will increase. Please look after your personal belongings when you are away from home. Theft of watches and mobile phones are among the items stolen.

## ACOUSTIC CAMERAS

For many years the excessive noise from speeding supercars has been keeping people awake throughout the night. RBKC and Westminster now have acoustic cameras in Sloane Street and Exhibition Road and have been issuing fines as a result. This will potentially move noise to other areas.



Brompton & Hans Town councillors with the first camera

## TAKE CARE

The Covid-19 lockdown helped to reduce criminality but since the easing of lockdown and the reopening of shops crime is increasing. We are advised to remain vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour. You can call our Dedicated Ward Officers directly or leave a message.

## SCAMS

Scams are now much more frequent. The Action Fraud website has some excellent advice. If the contact seems to be too good to be true it probably is. Never be encouraged to respond if there is an undue sense of urgency to the call. The scammers are getting increasingly sophisticated and at a quick glance official letter headings seem correct; grammar and spelling is often wrong. They



Apprehending a suspect on Brompton Road

are now able to clone overseas numbers to look like local ones. Any message to contact your bank should be initiated by yourself and not as a result of a text or telephone call – never let them connect you as they leave the line open and include a dialling tone which enables them to collect all your details. Always check if



you are being asked to transfer money to a 'new' account particularly if this is a transaction you are expecting to make, the email may have been hacked. Unexpected calls from HMRC, the Police, Microsoft, who then take over your computer if you let them and COVID offers are often scams.



Mounted Police in Ennismore Mews



PC Dave Alford and PC Alex Kaye

## LOCAL SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAMS

**WESTMINSTER RESIDENTS**  
 KNIGHTSBRIDGE and BELGRAVIA WARD  
*(under Belgravia on the police websites)*

Email: [knightsbridge.belgravia.SNT@met.police.uk](mailto:knightsbridge.belgravia.SNT@met.police.uk)  
 Tel: 020 7321 9292  
 Mobile: 07769 164 785 (not 24 hrs)

**RBKC RESIDENTS**  
 BROMPTON and HANS TOWN CLUSTER  
*(under Knightsbridge on the police websites)*

Email: [Brompton.SNT@met.police.uk](mailto:Brompton.SNT@met.police.uk)  
 Tel: 020 7161 8982  
 Mobile: 07768 178 122

**Other useful links to note are:**

**Police websites** [www.met.police.uk](http://www.met.police.uk) and [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)

**Action Fraud** [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

**Call 101 if you require non-emergency police assistance**

**Contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if you wish to supply anonymous information.**

**IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 999**

# TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Chris Barrass and Simon Birkett

It has been a typically busy year for the KA's Transport and Environment Committee.

## CLEANER AIR



Brompton Road has maintained its major improvement in air quality in 2021 despite the return of traffic after successive lockdowns. In part this was due to the Cadent gas works on Brompton Road and the Knightsbridge carriageway until September (which meant that TfL was using traffic lights and signage to divert traffic away from our area). It was also due to the increasing numbers of electric or hybrid taxis, buses (such as the C1), vans and cars and the expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) on 25th October 2021. The nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) monitor in Brompton Road recorded no hourly exceedances of the legal limit or the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) hourly air quality guideline (AQG) in 2021 (for the first time) and year-to-date average concentrations of around 30 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m<sup>3</sup>) (as at 31st October) compared to the AQG (set in 2005/6) and legal limit of 40 ug/m<sup>3</sup>. This means that NO<sub>2</sub> levels have fallen by two-thirds since 2006 (when 'Clean Air in London' started campaigning on this issue). To keep us all on our toes however, the WHO announced new AQGs on 22nd September 2021 which include an annual mean of 10 ug/m<sup>3</sup> for NO<sub>2</sub>! Achieving

this guideline will require a further transition away from diesel vehicles and gas boilers over the next 10-15 years i.e. another two-thirds reduction in NO<sub>2</sub>. The WHO has also reduced its AQG for fine particles (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) from 10 ug/m<sup>3</sup> to 5 ug/m<sup>3</sup> (compared to an average of over 12 ug/m<sup>3</sup> across the City of Westminster).

## CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PLANS

Westminster City Council ("WCC") has a more holistic approach to managing the impacts of construction and demolition than RBKC (which focusses mainly on vehicles) but historically less public consultation on them. We are hoping to achieve the best of both worlds with Westminster's new Code of Construction Practice which is nearing completion. In our experience, genuine, positive and early engagement between developers and local residents and businesses may take a few weeks but can avoid two or more years of serious problems for all concerned. The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF) has excellent best practice guidance on construction standards and procedures which was developed in consultation with large and experienced contractors and many others.

See [www.knightsbridgeforum.org/](http://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/).

## CONGESTION CHARGING AND THE ULTRA LOW EMISSION ZONE

These two schemes are often confused. We explain them as two overlapping 'circles' of transport measures. Congestion charging tackles 'congestion' whereas emission schemes tackle 'emissions' by setting minimum standards for vehicles. The circles of measures overlap in that each can have

second-order benefits for the other. The Congestion Charge covers the Central Congestion Charging Zone whereas the ULEZ was extended on 25th October 2021 to cover the whole area within the North-South Circular roads (more or less). You don't need to pay the ULEZ charge if your vehicle meets the required standard. A Low Emission Zone covers the whole of London for larger vehicles. Confused? Check your position, including exemptions, carefully at <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/>. The KA would like to see all these schemes replaced by one stronger, simpler, smarter and fairer scheme that charged people depending on where they are and when and the quantity and quality of fuel they burn (or none if electric). Such a scheme could be introduced without further loss of revenue. It may anyway be required as the government struggles to replace lost fuel duty with new sources of revenue. The consequences of TfL's much-delayed COVID refinancing package, which was due to be finalised in December 2021, will be important too.

## FLOODING AND LOW WATER PRESSURE

We depend on clean, dirty and storm water systems. Issues arising may include low water pressure, smelly street sewers (particularly during dry weather when there is less rain water to flush them) and/or local flooding. You can report low water pressure or problems with sewers to Thames Water <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/report-a-problem> (or call them on 0800 316 9800) and blocked or flooding storm water drains to WCC (or TfL) via [www.fixmystreet.com/](http://www.fixmystreet.com/).

As you know, the KA has spent years reporting blocked storm



water gulleys to the councils and TfL and seen significant improvements. No-one can be complacent however as the recent serious flooding along the Knightsbridge carriageway east of Albert Gate has shown (where TfL is mainly responsible for the storm water drains). That flooding was triggered by over an inch of rain (26mm) in less than an hour. Please do take a moment to report blocked storm water drains, particularly after heavy rainfall, using FixMyStreet (with a photo and street number if possible).

## G-NETWORK



G-Network continues to lay fibre broadband cables in our neighbourhood, focusing initially on wider roads with side streets and mews expected to follow. One of their sections, up Lancelot Place, caused complete chaos when they failed to notify enough residents and businesses. The KA complained loudly and has seen much better communication subsequently e.g. in Trevor Place.

Eventually, Knightsbridge should have access to much faster internet connections. Register at [www.g.network/](http://www.g.network/).

## GREENING

We have become increasingly concerned about the absence of small birds and insects from Knightsbridge for much of the year. In a recent experiment, one of our committee members installed an RSPB four perch bird feeder on their roof terrace, full of nyjer seed, and was rewarded over a few weeks with up to nine goldfinches. It turns out that pigeons don't like nyjer seed but you still need to sweep up or wash down the sprayed seeds every day or two to keep the pigeons away. A few lavenders attracted bees over the summer. Why not give it a go? Also, please don't install fake plastic greenery which seems to plague London.

## HYDE PARK, PARK LANE AND SOUTH CARRIAGE DRIVE

There are mixed opinions among KA members about the full time closure of South Carriage Drive. Some favour its closure on the grounds it improves Hyde Park and reduces rat-running through Edinburgh Gate to and from Park Lane. Others dislike the impact on drivers and taxis. Recognising this balance of views, the KA has written to the Royal Parks and TfL

asking them to resolve the issues allegedly closing South Carriage Drive for more than the two days intended. In particular, the KA has urged a compromise between the Royal Parks and TfL whereby the Broad Walk would have segregated cycling (as alongside Constitution Hill) and Park Lane would have less i.e. creating more space for northbound vehicle traffic. We have also asked for improvements north and south bound in West Carriage Drive.

## PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS



We continue to comment on and support public realm improvements. Examples in 2021 included the Albertopolis works in front of the Royal Albert Hall (above) to widen pavements, improve pedestrian lights, eliminate the steps towards the Albert Memorial and deter speeding vehicles. Several traffic barriers have also been introduced immediately surrounding the Royal Albert Hall between noon and midnight each day as part of efforts to improve the experience and safety of visitors.

Other streetscape improvements planned or underway include pavement widening on the south side of Brompton Road and various improvements to William Street and Sloane Street.

## ROAD TRAFFIC AND CYCLING

We've mentioned a number of traffic matters under cleaner air above. Others include a request to Westminster City Council to install several vehicle activated

speed cameras in Kensington Road and an acoustic camera in Exhibition Road. Westminster is also pursuing powers across the City of Westminster to issue Public Space Protection Orders which would allow them to issue fines to noisy vehicles as RBKC has done successfully. We have also seen the introduction of 20mph speed limits across WCC's roads which was strongly supported. More enforcement is needed.

A London-wide e-scooter hire scheme was introduced on 7th June 2021 with three operators



*e-Scooter parking bay in Rutland Gate*

initially. On the plus side, we have seen lots of young people using this facility, the scooters are speed-limited to 12.5 mph, geo-fenced (in theory off pavements) and the scooters must be parked in designated bays e.g. in Exhibition Road and on the north west side of Rutland Gate. However, we are worried about the risks to pedestrians and the location of the parking bays – which seem to block the carriageway and sit beside a planned major construction site respectively. Similar problems exist



with Jump's red e-bikes but without the benefits.

On the electric vehicle front, we have been pleased to see more charging points appearing in local streets in Knightsbridge. WCC has worked hard on this front with most new ones installed in

Ennismore Gardens, Prince Consort Road, Princes Gardens and Rutland Gate. More are coming. Check out the latest availability on <https://www.zap-map.com/live/> or ask Westminster for one near you <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/request-vehicle-charging-point>. RBKC has allowed residents to install charging points on the side of their houses (e.g. in Rutland Street) but trailing charging cables across pavements is not ideal.

We have also worked with the excellent headmistress at the Princes Gardens Preparatory School (Alison Melrose) and WCC to seek road safety improvements in Princes Gardens and at the junction with Exhibition Road. We are most grateful to Alison and the school for the thoroughness of their school travel plan and their effort to minimise traffic impacts for local residents and school children.

Please note that the Piccadilly line will stay closed at South Kensington tube until at least Spring 2022 (to upgrade all five escalators at the same time) and the District and Circle lines may be closed there in early 2022. We hope that planned ticketing and reduced numbers at the Winter Wonderland will avoid the need for exit only restrictions at Knightsbridge tube station.

## STREET LIGHTS

We have worked with Westminster and its contractors FM Conway over the last two or three years to report dozens of faulty or dangerous street lights. Faulty lights continue to be fixed or upgraded to low energy versions but it can take a while. Reports of faulty lights through FixMyStreet are monitored by FM Conway.



## WASTE



WCC and their contractors, Veolia, have repeated their success of cleaner streets during Lockdowns once the economy started re-opening. We have worked closely with them and continue to urge everyone to adopt a zero tolerance approach by reporting any waste or recycling bags dumped out of hours to FixMyStreet. The FixMyStreet app lets you pinpoint a location. Please help Westminster's contractors by including a photo and street number so they don't need to walk all around large squares looking for rubbish! Bags dumped out of hours are usually picked up on the same day and Veolia is now helpfully running Westminster's enforcement scheme so they can use evidence gathered from dumped bags. Tips include: put your rubbish or recycling out as late as possible before the collection times; and consider hanging black bags from your house's black railings (if you have them) if they have food left in them i.e. to discourage foxes which may split bags and spread rubbish across the street. You can also report dog poo and lots of other problems on FixMyStreet so please play your part by taking action.



# LICENSING

Paul Meitner

## OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

After the reimposition of full lockdown in the first quarter of the year there was a steady return to normal life. Restrictions on public meetings, social distancing and the wearing of masks were removed although Transport for London still require them on buses and tubes. Business confidence has steadily returned and this has been reflected in the number of licensing applications submitted to our two local authorities. As well as renewals for existing premises an increasing proportion of applications relate to start ups. Three of these have been particularly concerning as they are for 'mega restaurants', which if granted would result in a fundamental change in the character of the area. Nammos, 13–17 Montpelier Street (page 16), Sheesh, 70 Brompton Road and, we understand, the former Burberry site (pictured above) at the junction of Brompton Road and Knightsbridge. At the time of writing none of these applications had been determined and it may be many months before they are – we remain vigilant. But our task has been made harder by changes to the planning landscape. As mentioned in last year's Annual Report, The 1987 Use Classes Order was amended by the addition of a new 'Class E' with effect from 1st September 2020. This is likely to have a major impact on including Brompton Road and other parts of Knightsbridge by allowing interchangeability between retail, restaurant, office and professional services uses, with no need for new planning consents. As a result local authorities, residents and their associations have lost an important check on the setting up of new business, leaving the licensing process as the only mechanism for representations (including objections) to be made.



With the gradual relaxation of travel restrictions the number of domestic and foreign visitors is expected to increase in the coming year, although a resurgence of Covid 19 cases in the winter months could put a stop to this.

The KA acknowledged the need to support local businesses during Lockdown and we only objected to the most egregious applications. Our concern now is that the 'light touch' approach that was appropriate for the worst of Lockdown becomes established in the policies and approaches of our local authorities, making it difficult to resist applications with a serious detrimental effect on our quality of life. This concern is shared by many other residents' associations (RA's) and we actively collaborate with them – strength in numbers. We keep a close eye on pronouncements from both WCC and RBKC. One of the more concerning of these was RBKC's consultation on a proposed 'Policy to support *Al Fresco dining on Streets and Spaces*'. This 'supported the delivery

*of attractive al fresco hospitality amenities on pedestrianised streets and spaces on an annual basis after 2022 or the termination of the Business and Planning Act', i.e. well after the back of the pandemic. Westminster City Council published a strategy document that included proposals to*

change public space, road and pavement layouts to facilitate social distancing, while allowing people to move more freely and support the reopening of bars and restaurants. This included temporary adaptations to the Planning and Licensing systems including permissions to move services outdoors, plus a fast-track process to assess applications for tables and chairs. For now, at least, the streets in our area are not included.

In a similar vein we reviewed Westminster City Council's proposed amendments to its Licensing Policy, last updated in January 2021. Our priority was to make sure that the 'core hours' for tables and chairs on pavements were not extended beyond the current 10 p.m. terminal hour, which thankfully was not proposed. However, other concerns remain, not least of them being a proposed new policy on the Ancillary Delivery of Alcohol and/or Late-Night Refreshment Policy, which could result in increased deliveries and noise and disturbance outside

restaurants, bars and private homes. We have asked that delivery vehicle engines running while couriers pick up food and drink for home delivery, nor when they drop them off, also that courier delivery services should be formally accredited by WCC. Finally, we expressed our concerns about the increasing use of TENs (Temporary Event Notices), to which only the Police may object. TENs permit any restaurant or bar premises to 'opt out' of core hours constraints up to 28 times per year. Taken in conjunction with the proposed policy changes this is likely to give rise to a substantial increase in noise and anti-social behaviour.

Both local authorities have consulted with residents' associations on draft Gambling Policies. Although we have reviewed these drafts so far we have seen limited potential impact on our area - currently there is only one casino operating in Knightsbridge - at the Park Tower and we have not, to date, suffered any adverse impacts from it.

Here is a brief update on the main licensing applications in the past year.

### **SHEESH 70 BROMPTON ROAD - formerly Top Shop**

Sheesh submitted a Licensing application for a restaurant with private dining rooms in the basement, restaurant / holding bar on the ground floor with members / diners' lounge and restaurant on the first floor at the former Top Shop site. The proposal for the ground floor alone caters for 116 covers, with the total number (across 3 floors) expected to be around 280. The KA lodged an objection based on the proposed deviation from Core Hours, the proposed non-standard conditions and the fact that there had been no consultation with Residents' associations in the vicinity. In an email to our members we



70 Brompton Road

made it clear that objections from individual residents were vitally important if we are to secure conditions to the License that respect residents' interests and local amenity. Although the deadline for responses was 23rd August 2021 the applicant recognised from the strength of feeling generated that further consultation with residents was required and arranged a meeting, at which concerns could be discussed. This meeting took place on 11th October, following which the solicitor advising the applicant amended the draft conditions to accompany the licensing application, including a dispersal policy for patrons leaving the premises. At the time of writing these conditions have yet to be finalized.

### **HANS CRESCENT – ELAN CAFÉ**

This application involves the placing of 47 tablets, 94 chairs, 20 heaters, 42 planters and 20

umbrellas in a large area of 'public space' in the pedestrianised zone on Hans Crescent. Many years ago, when pedestrianisation was approved by RBKC, we were assured that it would not be used for commercial purposes. As tourists and shoppers return post Lockdown the crowding in this area, which is next to one of the Knightsbridge

station entrances and Harrods, will only get worse and we have a very real concern about public safety.



Consequently we have made representations to both RBKC's Licensing Committee and our ward Councillors, who share our concerns. We have been assured that the planning permission currently in place is only temporary (to 30th September 2022), in line with the Council's support of Al Fresco operations, and that the applicant will have to reapply once the temporary permission has expired."

### **FAKE FLOWERS**

During the past year there has been an outbreak of fake flowers festooned over and around some of the cafés and other retailers. Let's hope they will disappear in the coming months once things get back to normal and be replaced with the real thing. Rather than enhancing the premises they give them a distinctly tatty appearance.



# THE BROMPTON ROAD BID LAUNCHES Business Improvement District

*Melville Haggard & Simon Birkett*

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Hugh Seaborn, Chief Executive of Cadogan, led the team that investigated and successfully established the Brompton Road Business Improvement District ("Brompton Road BID") on 1st October 2021 after a vote of overwhelming support from local businesses.

Cadogan's work began in earnest in 2019 with a feasibility study and an important meeting with the KA, KNF, councils, cultural institutions and other stakeholders that agreed to set up a commissioning group to develop a Strategic Vision for the Brompton Road District. The group appointed Arup whose final report recommended that freeholders and tenants along Brompton Road should focus on high-end luxury retail and quality amenities and build upon Knightsbridge's status as one of only two International Centres in London.

Important early decisions included defining the Brompton Road District around the Knightsbridge International Centre (i.e. Brompton Road from Brompton Square to Scotch House Corner and the

Knightsbridge thoroughfare from the Hyde Park Barracks to Hyde Park Corner) and agreeing that residents should be represented on the Board along with Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea which sit either side of Brompton Road (with TfL responsible for the road itself).

The KA has warmly supported the establishment of the Brompton Road BID and emphasised the need to achieve win-win-wins for businesses, residents and cultural institutions e.g. businesses should not benefit at the expense of residents. This approach was enthusiastically agreed by Cadogan and the BID project team.

Freeholders and tenants voted overwhelmingly on 23rd September to establish the new



*Hyde Park Barracks*

BID which started its five year term on 1st October 2021 with a total budget of £6 million. The BID's first full board meeting including property owners, rate paying businesses, representatives of both local authorities and a residents' representative, was expected to take place in December.

A Chief Executive was being recruited at the time of writing this report.

The Brompton Road BID's five priorities include: Supporting COVID-19 recovery; Harnessing the power of partnership; Leveraging the benefits of the International Centre Designation; Driving transformational change; and Providing business support and insight.

## KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

*Simon Birkett, Chair*

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It is three years since the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) was supported overwhelmingly in a referendum of residents and became the first 'made' (i.e. adopted) neighbourhood plan in Central London on 12th December 2018.

Three neighbourhood plans have been 'made' in the City of Westminster (Fitzrovia West, Mayfair and Soho) since then with at least four others hoping to follow in 2022 (Belgravia, Marylebone, Pimlico and Queen's Park), out of 16 in total.

The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum's (KNF's) main priorities in 2021 were to 'bring the plan to life', protect the plan, submit one or more applications to the Council to spend the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure

Levy (NCIL) that it collects and to consider updating the KNP. In turn these have involved: commenting selectively on significant planning applications; submitting comments and giving oral evidence to planning inspectors on the new London Plan (eventually adopted in March 2021) and Westminster City Plan (eventually adopted in April 2021); proposing funding towards special lighting to highlight new statues of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in niches on the north side of the Royal Albert Hall; and reviewing the KNP for 'general conformity' with the higher tiers of the planning hierarchy which include the changes to regulations (such as creating one planning class for shops and restaurants), the National Planning and Policy

Framework and in a possible new Planning Bill.

We are pleased with all the outcomes on the above so far. Highlights have included WCC's approval of the major refurbishment of 2-8 Rutland Gate (where the owner's representative went to great lengths to follow the KNP in their planning application) and WCC's rejection of three planning applications at 13-17 Montpelier Street in decisions that referred to conflict with two KNP policies (among others). Other highlights include the London Plan and Westminster City Plan generally strengthening not weakening the KNP. Our review of the KNP showed that little needs to be changed other than tidying up references. It may be worth making 'minor' changes

to our plan, which wouldn't require another referendum, so that it takes account of the expected new Planning Act and is considered the most up-to-date plan and therefore given extra 'weight' in planning decisions. In other good news, it is possible that the full or partial sale of the Hyde Park Barracks land is 'off the table' which would please the majority of local residents.

In general, the experience of neighbourhood planning across Westminster has been extremely positive though it has taken some forums twice as long as us to complete their plans e.g. in areas that have required resident and business support in separate referenda or where multiple amenity societies are involved.

# COMMUNITY GROUPS ACROSS LONDON

*Simon Birkett*

The Knightsbridge Association (KA) and Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF) are members of three main wider community groups. The first is the 'London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies' which represents the views and interests of over 100 amenity and civic societies in London and their members on issues that are important for those who work and live in London. Its main focus is on Planning, Development Management, Heritage, Transport, Environment, Waterways and Open Spaces. They did outstanding work, for example, on the new London Plan and have held successive Mayors to account on the issues mentioned.

The second main group is the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum (WASF) which represents some 20 amenity societies in Westminster. It has been running for over 20 years and was recently energised by a new Chairman Richard Cutt from Mayfair. A recent initiative involved a joint letter to the Leader of the Council emphasising the need for consultation with residents on Westminster's larger schemes and highlighting genuine and hard to address problems in Soho where residents have struggled with the impact of looser regulations on tables and chairs during the post-COVID arrangements. WASF had a positive response from the Leader and it is hoped

that the initiative will eventually lead to greater dialogue in future.

The KNF is a member of the youngest of the three groups called the Westminster Forum of Forums (WFF) which comprises all the neighbourhood forums in Westminster. WFF is finding its feet but has been a valuable forum to share experience and lessons from neighbourhood planning and encourage those still working on their plans. In general, it is likely to focus more on strategic planning issues and possible changes in legislation than the amenity societies.

# MEMBERS' SECTION

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS AND 60th CELEBRATION

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### 2020/21

As the pandemic was in full swing and the country under lockdown, the AGM which had been booked for Monday 11th January 2021 at the Mandarin Oriental had to be cancelled. So we held our first ever virtual AGM. Our host was Ian Crossley an experienced IT professional and advisor to a range of voluntary sector



*Collage of participants at the virtual AGM*

organisations. We had a dummy run a few days prior to the 11th, with Melville, our chairman, and the heads of other committees from their various different settings, participating. After a few false starts we got the hang of it and felt confident enough to face the music on the day.



*How times have changed! Members and guests at the AGM 2000*

### 2021/22

The Mandarin Oriental very kindly held over the booking for our anticipated 60th Anniversary celebration to cover the booking for the 2021/22 AGM. As the time comes for decision-making, we have decided that the 60th Anniversary celebration will go ahead on Monday 10th January at the Hotel, but, since last year's

Zoom AGM went rather well we will again go virtual for this year which will be two weeks later on Monday 24th January.

News of the change was sent to members in late October, and full details and AGM papers sent out at the end of November. We look forward to seeing as many members in person at the

Mandarin Oriental on 10th January, and virtually for the AGM on 24th January.

### OTHER EVENTS

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For obvious reasons we have not been able to hold any events for the last two years, and at present the outlook for 2022 is still uncertain.

# MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES

## FINANCES

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There was a small deficit of £236 for the financial year ending 31st March 2021, compared to a profit of £2,885 the previous year. Advertising revenue covered the cost of the 2020 Annual Report. Investment in the Association's new website amounted to £1634. A full financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2021 will be presented at the Annual General Meeting to be held on 24th January 2022.

A secondary KA Lloyds business account was set up in May 2021 for the Nammos Appeal funds. We received £30,518 in donations and have paid out £11,190 to Walsingham Planning, and Landmark Chambers for Barrister Fees. The current balance in the Nammos Appeal is £19,328.

In November 2021 we closed the HSBC Knightsbridge Association account and transferred it our Knightsbridge Association Lloyds account. This has simplified our banking arrangements.

We would like to thank Tom Slator of Maccallum Slator very much for again checking the Annual Accounts.

## MEMBERSHIP

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Membership has remained fairly constant through the Covid period and the Nammos Appeal brought in some new members. Through the new website The Knightsbridge Association is encouraging new members to set up Direct Debit membership payments instead of Standing Orders.

We are very grateful to Neil Carthy who created a new Membership database following IT incompatibility problems with the previous database. The new database offers more scope and improved functionality and is GDPR compliant.

We are looking at ways to improve our communications with members so that we can keep them informed in a timely manner, particularly on consultation matters. We still have about 60 members for whom we do not hold an e-mail address and who receive our information only by post. It would be very helpful if these members could provide us with an e-mail if they have one.

## APPRECIATIONS

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### CHRIS BARRASS

We are grateful to Chris Barrass for chairing the Transport and Environment committee on top of his other full time management responsibilities. Detailed minutes from the T&E committee keep us well informed on changes in this arena, particularly on congestion charging and ULEZ

### SIMON BIRKETT

Thanks to Simon for keeping abreast of changes to planning policy and their potential impact at street level and for his continuing work with the Transport and Environment committee.

### FRANCES BLOIS

We thank Frances for her many timely and informed interjections on both Planning and Law and Order issues

### FRANCESCO BRENTA

Our thanks to Francesco for playing a key role in mobilising support from neighbours on the Nammos planning application case. Your work is not over but thank you for your energy and perseverance so far!

### NEIL CARTHY

Neil makes a very important contribution to keeping the KA email system up and running and has handled the transition to our new website with great dexterity. Thank you, Neil, for your patience

with the rest of us on these technical matters.

### OLIVIA COX

After her forensic updating of the membership database last year, Olivia devoted much time in 2021 to setting up a Quick Books online account and transferring records across, in addition to rationalising KA's banking arrangements and automating payments on the website.

### MADELINE ELSDON

It is with great sadness that Madeleine leaves us for California at the end of the year to live near her daughter. Her chairmanship of the L&O committee for some fifteen years is widely respected and has served as a model for successful neighbourhood cooperation with the Police. Your tenacity is greatly admired and will be much missed.

### BEN LEGG and HENRY DINKEL

With Ben's help, Henry joined us in 2021 to tackle digital communications. We welcome their enthusiasm and patience for showing us how new media can streamline activities and bring life to our website.

### PAUL MEITNER

We are grateful to Paul for following Licensing's several transitions into and out of pandemic; and for ensuring that residents' interests were not forgotten in the rush for 'al fresco' dining. Thank you for your valuable contribution in containing the many cases now taking advantage of the new Class E freedoms and for acting as Hermes to our members.

### CAROL SEYMOUR-NEWTON

We are indebted to Carol for work on the Spring and Autumn newsletters while continuing to play a pivotal role in the preparation

of the annual report. Thank you, Carol, for also channelling untiring energy into running the Planning and Conservation committee and nurturing your wide-ranging contacts with Local Government.

#### ELMAR TOIME

Thanks to Elmar we now have access to a seamless process for printing and distributing Newsletters and Annual Reports on a cost-effective basis. This makes a material contribution to KA's finances for which we are most grateful.

#### MELISSA WOOLFORD

Melissa gamely volunteered to procure and manage the advertising for this year's Annual Report. Thank you for taking time out from other activities to help the KA for this important annual event in our calendar.

#### SAMER YOUNIS

Samer joined the Planning and Conservation committee in early 2020 and is providing invaluable support to Carol in running the committee. His considerable construction management

experience is a valuable resource, and he has generously offered to work with Frances Blois on L&O matters after Madeleine's departure. Thank you, Samer, for the time you give to the KA.

#### BARBARA LINTON

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

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA) AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

## GLA

Sadiq Khan was re-elected Mayor of London at the May elections. Many of his team have retained their previous portfolios including:

Jules Pipe CBE, Deputy Mayor, Planning, Regeneration and skills; Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor, Policing and Crime; Heidi Alexander, Deputy Mayor, Transport and Deputy Chair, Transport for London; and Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor, Environment and Energy.

The Mayor's plan to move City Hall to east London at the end of November, for financial reasons, was delayed due to a number of changes being required and by unexpected snags at the new Crystal building.

Controversial plans to extend the congestion charge zone and the introduction of ULEZ are referred to in the Transport and Environment section.



*The new Crystal building*



*Jules Pipe*



*Sophie Linden*

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Both Councils are drawing up plans to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

Consultations during the past year on which the KA commented, included, from WCC, *Draft Early Community Engagement, Licensing update* and from RBKC their New Local Plan Review, Experimental

borough-wide 20mph speed limits and Draft Greening Guidance Document.

Planning Committee meetings are now held in person, and both Councils continue to hold regular meetings with local associations via Microsoft Teams. In some ways this is helpful as it obviates time spent travelling to and from the town and city halls.

Next year sees Council elections in May. Time to register to vote if you have not already done so.

## MEMBERS

Cllr. Andrew Smith, Lancaster Gate ward councillor was elected Lord Mayor of Westminster in September, following Cllr. Jonathan Glanz whose year of tenure had been extended by four months

due to the difficulties of arranging an in person election during the pandemic. Cllr Smith had served as Cabinet Member for housing amongst other roles.



At RBKC in May Cllr Gerard Hargreaves was elected Mayor for a second term. Prior to first becoming Mayor in 2020 he had

been part of the Cabinet and Leadership teams since 2013

### Local Ward Councillors

Our three Knightsbridge/Belgravia ward councillors continue to represent us, Rachael Robathan, Elizabeth Hitchcock and Tony Devenish. Rachael is also Leader at WCC and Tony combines his role as ward councillor with that of GLA member for West Central London.

In the Royal Borough Mary Weale, Walaa Idris and Sof McVeigh are our Brompton and Hans Town ward councillors. They have been particularly supportive of local residents in their objections to the proposed redevelopment of South Kensington Station.

## WCC WARD FUNDING

### Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock

The ward budget programme in Westminster City Council is one of the most flexible and immediate sources of funding available. Every year, each Westminster City Council ward grants £46,000 to fund worthwhile initiatives within the Ward. Any unspent money each year is rolled over to the next within the four-year election cycle. As we are coming up to the elections in May 2022, the remainder of the budget should be spent to fund various projects before May. Your Knightsbridge & Belgravia councillors would like to hear from you on projects within the ward that will be of benefit to local residents. Applications can be found here: [www.westminster.gov.uk/apply-ward-budget](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/apply-ward-budget). In Knightsbridge & Belgravia we have funded a ward planning enforcement officer, a church access ramp, heart defibrillators and an environmental-themed cultural project on Exhibition Road, to name but a few.

With only a few months left to go before the funding window closes, we are looking to hear from residents for ideas to make Knightsbridge an even better place to live. *See cllr emails below*

The KA has applied for Ward funding to be made available for the repainting of street furniture.



*Cllr. Rachael Robathan tries out an electric bicycle, one of WCC's new fleet of electric vehicles.*

### USEFUL NUMBERS

Noise: WCC 0207641 2000  
 RBKC 0207361 3002  
 The Parks: 0300 061 2222

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### WCC Knightsbridge/Belgravia Ward Councillors

Cllr. Tony Devenish  
[tony.devenish@london.gov.uk](mailto:tony.devenish@london.gov.uk)  
 (Tony is also our GLA/TfL member)  
 Cllr. Robathan  
[rrobathan@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:rrobathan@westminster.gov.uk)  
 Cllr. Elizabeth Hitchcock  
[ehitchcock@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:ehitchcock@westminster.gov.uk)

**Problems with lighting, potholes, rubbish dumping and other street issues should be reported on [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com)**

#### RBKC Brompton and Hans Town Ward Councillors

Cllr. Mary Weale  
[cllr.mary.weale@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.mary.weale@rbkc.gov.uk)  
 Cllr. Walaa Idris  
[cllr.walaa.idris@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.walaa.idris@rbkc.gov.uk)  
 Cllr. Sof McVeigh  
[Cllr.sof.mcveigh@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.sof.mcveigh@rbkc.gov.uk)



# ENNISMORE MEWS

## A Mews in Bloom Scheme

Anyone passing from The Hole in the Wall to Hyde Park via Ennismore Mews will have noticed a verdant phenomenon: a spectacle of flowers, shrubs, climbing plants and trees relieving the symmetry of the Mews houses and creating a colourful, convivial atmosphere.

It is the initiative of two residents who decided to improve the quality of their environment and increase the value of properties by a process of greening-up. The Scheme involves:

- ❖ the appointment of a professional plantsman to provide maintenance services. This caters for situations where residents are too busy or away on holiday, when without attention plants would suffer;

- ❖ a simple scale of contribution depending on how much members wish to maintain their plants themselves, and how much support they require.

Residents unfamiliar with horticulture can consult the plantsman on what is most suitable for the features they have in mind and the qualities or shortcomings of different planting options. They can then commission him to supply both plants and planters, or source them independently.

Two-thirds of residents have joined the Scheme and there are several who have a frontage where planting is impossible. We think that other



Mews in the area may wish to follow suit. Many already have, and it needs but one resident to take such initiatives which benefit everyone.

The Scheme's architects, Samer Younis and Tony Jones, would be happy to explain details to anyone wishing to emulate them ([sameryounis@gmail.com](mailto:sameryounis@gmail.com) / [tonyduncanjones@gmail.com](mailto:tonyduncanjones@gmail.com))

# WINNIE-THE-POOH

## The 95th Anniversary of Winnie-The-Pooh

Charlotte Zenhäusern

Winnie-the-Pooh, the iconic part of UK's heritage, is back, just in time for Christmas!

The new book, "Winnie-the-Pooh: Once there was a bear", draws on real history.

This time, the honey-loving bear stars in an authorised prequel that steps into the world of the younger Christopher Robin, the author's son.

"Once upon a time there was a bear sat on a shelf in a very grand department store called Harrods. There were in fact many bears (...) But among all these bears, there was only one who really matters to us". This quote from chapter two states how the original Winnie-the-Pooh was purchased at Harrods.



*Winnie-The-Pooh with friends and Harrods uniformed doorman*

Later on, Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore and Christopher plan a picnic at the honey-coloured Natural History Museum and play with the dinosaurs!

Jane Riordan is the author of the new book with decorations by

Mark Burgess and the book is published by Farshore. "The wonderful thing about Winnie-the-Pooh is that there are no adults", Riordan says. And the readers are not always children. "There is so much in the books that resonates with adults, and they're actually a bit tricky to read for anyone under the age of six."

The estates of A.A. Milne, the original author, and E.H. Shepard, the original illustrator, have authorised this new story exploring the famous bear's beginnings. The book was published in September 2021 to mark the 95th anniversary of the release of Milne's original stories.

# THE BOMBING OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE

## 1940–1945

*Nigel Cox*

2021 marked the 80th anniversary of the worst air raid of the German Blitz during World War II. This took place over the night of 10/11th May 1941. 505 Luftwaffe bombers took part in the attack, which was timed to coincide with a full moon for maximum night visibility. All London's bridges were targeted, and damage was intense, including the destruction of the House of Commons. 1436 people were killed and more than 2000 seriously injured.

In Knightsbridge the Alexandra Hotel was destroyed, when a high explosive bomb fell on it at 1230 am. There were 24 deaths and 16 serious injuries.



This opulent hotel had opened in 1864 on the site of an old inn the entrance to Old Barrack Yard (just east of today's Berkeley Hotel). It was named after Princess Alexandra of Denmark, who had married the Prince of Wales in 1863; she was Queen Consort from 1901 to 1910.

Despite a scandal in the 1890s, when the Managing Director was discovered to have been

defrauding the hotel systematically for some years, with the help of a local butcher, the Alexandra acquired a high reputation, and it was said in 1907 that almost every European Royal Family was represented in its guest lists, as well as many aristocratic families staying in London for the season.

The blitzed shell of the hotel was demolished in the early 1950s, and between 1954-1963 a new building, Agriculture House, went up on the site as headquarters for the National Farmers' Union. This in turn was demolished in 1993, and two new office buildings, numbered 25 and 27 Knightsbridge, took its place.



*25-27 Knightsbridge Today*

The main Blitz, which had begun on 7th October 1940, ended on 6th June 1941. During this period 331 high explosive bombs fell on Knightsbridge and Belgravia wards. 42 fell on the Brompton ward and 27 on Queen's Gate ward. However, even after this, London remained under attack, notably from V1 and V2 flying bombs in 1944 and 1945.

At the end of the War two large hand-coloured maps were prepared, showing bomb incidents and bomb damage. The bomb incident map may be consulted at the Westminster City Archives (WCA) or London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) or on the websites [www.layersoflondon.org.uk](http://www.layersoflondon.org.uk) or [www.bombsight.org](http://www.bombsight.org)

(though the latter is currently only in maintenance mode). The bomb damage map, held by LMA, was published in book form in 2005 and again in 2015 by Thames and Hudson (The London County Council Bomb Damage Maps by Laurence Ward). It may also be seen at [www.babel.hathitrust.org](http://www.babel.hathitrust.org). Maps 74 and 75 cover Knightsbridge. Unfortunately the key to colouring does not always correspond exactly with the colours on the maps.

The bombing took a heavy toll throughout the then County of London. 19,415 were killed and 35,716 seriously injured. Nearly 70,000 buildings were totally destroyed or damaged beyond repair. Another 67,000 were seriously damaged but judged capable of repair, with a further 56,000 damaged but still habitable, and 518,000 slightly damaged.

WCA holds two hand-written registers of the nearly 2000 bombs dropped in the City of Westminster. Within Knightsbridge some of the locations of bombs (mostly high explosive) were:

- Brompton Square (houses at northern end)
- Cheval Place (Nos 12-14)
- Ennismore Gardens (road opposite No 16)
- Ennismore Gardens Mews
- Ennismore Street (at bottom of Ennismore Mews – see below for "The Hole in the Wall")
- Hyde Park Barracks (stables at western end)
- Kingston House, Kensington Road (see also below for First Aid post)
- Lancelot Place (western side largely destroyed. New houses were built in 1951 – recently demolished)

- Montpelier Walk (No 6 – an exploded anti-aircraft shell)
- Park Mansions, Knightsbridge Green
- Prince’s Court, Brompton Road
- Prince’s Gardens (particularly the southeastern corner, including the complete loss of Nos 33 – 35. Imperial College later redeveloped the area.)
- Prince’s Gate Mews (including buildings in the grounds northwest of Holy Trinity Brompton church)
- Prince’s Gate (No 64, on Exhibition Road, and surrounding buildings behind. The Mormon Church was built here in 1961.)

64-68 Prince’s Gate: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints



- Raphael Street (including Nos 13 and 24 on the north side: later part of Mercury House, now part of The Knightsbridge apartments)
- Rutland Court, Rutland Gardens
- Rutland Gate (No 43 & other houses at the southern end: Rutland Gate House was built on the site in the 1950s)

Source: Historic England Archive



- Trevor Square (a bomb at No 7 on 23rd December 1940 left Nos 5–9, so seriously damaged that it was doubtful if they could be repaired)
- Trevor Street (8th March 1941 at top, at rear of the Trevor Arms pub – now part of The Knightsbridge apartments)

Two particularly notable attacks were:

19th February 1944: a high explosive bomb destroyed 184 and 185 Queen’s Gate (on the corner of Prince Consort Road). No 185, a building of 1890 by Norman Shaw, was the Maison de l’Institut de France, a place for French scholars to stay in London, bought and donated by Baron Edmond de Rothschild in 1919. This raid was particularly damaging as a gas main caught fire and the water main ruptured hindering the fire brigade’s operations. 8 people were killed and another 8 seriously injured. According to a note in the Civil Defence records, the front wall of the building was blown off, but it proved possible to recover the notes for a speech the French Ambassador was due to give on the day after the raid. (After the War the Maison re-opened at 8 Queen’s Gate Terrace. Imperial College’s Blackett Laboratory, built in 1961, now occupies the former site.)

3rd August 1944: a flying bomb severely damaged the auction yard and stabling of Tattersalls at Knightsbridge Green, Nos 58-66 Brompton Road (destroying a long-established pub, the Fulham Bridge Tavern), as well as houses in



Blast damage at Harrods

Lancelot Place and Raphael Street. Harrods, opposite, was damaged by blast. Six people were killed and there were 27 other casualties. Some long-standing residents understand that there remains an underground lake under Lancelot Place created by this devastation.

Tattersalls, the famous firm of horse and bloodstock auctioneers, had been founded in the 1770s close to Hyde Park Corner, behind St George’s Hospital (founded 1733, now the Lanesborough Hotel). In 1857 it bought buildings with two acres of land at Knightsbridge Green and moved into new premises on the site in 1865. For over 70 years horse sales took place here once or twice a week through the year, with a diverse cast in attendance, from grand aristocrats to shady “sportsmen”. As well as stabling for over 100 horses, there was a “subscription room”, where bets on horse races could be placed, at a time, when the only lawful betting was at the racecourses themselves (off-course betting, including bookmakers’ shops, was finally legalised in 1960). In 1939, at the outbreak of war, sales had moved to Newmarket and never returned to Knightsbridge.

© Westminster City Archives



185 Queen’s Gate before and after



*The Triga sculpture*

After the War Tattersalls sold the damaged premises to a furniture company. They were demolished in 1955, and the site is now occupied by Caltex House (with a "triga" sculpture of three racehorses on the podium at the corner of the Brompton Road) – and Tattersall Tavern, which replaced a mid-19th century public house on Raphael Street, the Pakenham.

Hyde Park Hotel (now the Mandarin Oriental) had a lucky escape. On 19th October 1940 what was initially identified as a small high explosive bomb dropped in the roadway outside. Work on repairing the roadway took several months and was almost complete in February 1941 when an air raid warden, recalling a lecture he had attended from the bomb squad, drew attention to unusual pieces of metal he had found in the hotel basement area. These were identified as part of the "Kopf Ring" of a 1000 kg bomb. The incident was now reopened, and digging revealed that an unexploded bomb of this size had been lying under the pavement for four months: it was safely removed.

In addition to the direct results of bombing, swathes of houses in Knightsbridge suffered serious blast damage, including most of the Trevors and much of the southern part of Rutland Gate.

One early blast casualty, on 25th September 1940, was the high brick wall along the south side of Ennismore Street, which was apparently put up in the 1850s to protect the new houses on the Rutland Estate from the Brompton Road and the less salubrious denizens of the houses near it.

Following its destruction local residents found it convenient to be able to walk directly to the Brompton Road area and petitioned for a right of way to be kept open when the City of Westminster rebuilt the wall in 1948. The result is the "Hole in the Wall" leading into Rutland Street. In 1998, at the initiative of the Knightsbridge Association the Council placed an explanatory plaque on the wall. \*

### Housing the Bombed-Out

During the War, a number of Knightsbridge houses were requisitioned (for example Nos 48-65 Rutland Gate), or lent, to accommodate families from bombed-out houses. (Elsewhere in Westminster, houses used for this purpose included the grand Londonderry House on Park Lane.)

### Bomb Shelters

Bomb shelters in the City of Westminster accommodated round 100,000 residents, including in Tube tunnels, large shelters in the basements of business premises and trench shelters in the Parks and squares. In Pimlico the Council arranged for the coal vaults of private houses to be painted, lit, fitted with bunks, and linked to their neighbours in order to serve as shelters; I have not established whether this was also done in Knightsbridge (where some coal vaults remain blocked today by debris from bomb explosions).

### Kingston House First Aid Post

During the Blitz a large First Aid Post was established at Kingston House (the first two modern blocks,



*Kingston House nurses*

Kingston House North and South (Nos 1-32) had been built in 1937-38; two more blocks followed in the 1950s and 1960s). Kingston House was also the seat of the Norwegian Government-in-exile.

### Conclusion

The War was less devastating to the architectural heritage of Knightsbridge than in some other areas of London. Except for the area between Knightsbridge Green and Lancelot Place, one now needs to look quite hard to spot the gaps and the post-War replacements. One reminder deliberately preserved is the shrapnel-damaged walls of the Victoria & Albert Museum in Exhibition Road.



THE DAMAGE TO THESE WALLS IS THE RESULT OF ENEMY BOMBING DURING THE BLITZ OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945 AND IS LEFT AS A MEMORIAL TO THE ENDURING VALUES OF THIS GREAT MUSEUM IN A TIME OF CONFLICT

It is perhaps fitting that one great symbol of post-War reconciliation, the Goethe Institut (German cultural centre), has since 1962 been housed just up the road at 50-51 Prince's Gate.

\*See [www.knightsbridgeassociation.com](http://www.knightsbridgeassociation.com) for full story

This article draws on Volume XLV (Knightsbridge) of the Survey of London, published by the Athlone Press for English Heritage in 2000,

with support from the Knightsbridge Association. Bomb damage photographs and the extract from the Bomb Incidents map are by courtesy of Westminster City Archives.

# ROYAL ALBERT HALL AT 150

By Craig Hassall, CEO



*Craig Hassall on the Royal Albert Hall's roof with Leader of Westminster City Council, Cllr Rachael Robathan and Leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council, Cllr Elizabeth Campbell on the occasion of the Hall's 150th anniversary concert.*

On 29th March 2021, against the backdrop of the most challenging conditions it has ever faced, the Royal Albert Hall celebrated its 150th birthday.

Since its opening, this extraordinary venue has borne witness to, and played a central part in, seismic cultural and social change. The interests, manners and social mores of the people may have changed, but this beautiful building and what it represents remains the same a century-and-a-half later: a meeting place, a reflection

of contemporary Britain, and a home for exhilarating live performance and events of international significance.

Despite the devastating impact of the pandemic, which has closed our treasured building to the public for the first time since the Second World War, we were determined to host a celebration of our 150th anniversary.

And on Monday 19th July 2021, four months late, we managed to do just that – with the first full capacity event since 17th March

2020 being our 150th anniversary concert, A Circle of Sound.

But before we talk about the present and the future, let's have a meander through the Hall's history...

## ROYAL BEGINNINGS

The Royal Albert Hall was the brainchild of Prince Albert. Although Albert had no official power or duties himself he was a man of extraordinary vision, and, together with Queen Victoria, he shared his passion for global arts,



Prince Albert

education and culture with the nation. Albert was a progressive, a reformer and an innovator who, with Henry Cole, masterminded the Great Exhibition in 1851 – the first international exhibition of its kind, held in Hyde Park.

The profits from the Great Exhibition were used to purchase land in South Kensington where Prince Albert had ambitions to create the first cultural quarter in the world where people could access history, culture, art, music and science in free museums and institutions.

Although he died suddenly on 14th December 1861, the Central Hall of Arts and Sciences was opened in 1871, renamed by Queen Victoria the Royal Albert Hall in memory of her husband.

Although many people often think of Last Night of the Proms when they think of the Hall, it is far from representative of the Hall's present, or indeed its past. Rule! Britannia has its place – but so have Bovril, balls and the Bard.

## FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

In 1871, our opening year, we staged just 36 shows. We now host almost 400 events in the auditorium and many hundreds more around the Royal Albert Hall every year, with the notable exceptions of 2020 and 2021. We are the 'nation's



The opening ceremony, 29 March 1871

village hall' – it is easier to list the artists and events that haven't appeared here than the ones that have.

The Hall very nearly wasn't built. The committee in charge of the design, finance and building of the Hall couldn't raise enough money, so they sold seats on 999 years leases – the first 20 were bought by Queen Victoria. They still make up the Queen's box.

Today, 1,268 seats, out of the Hall's total possible capacity of 5,272, remain in private ownership. Their owners are the 'Members of the Corporation' and they have the right to access their seats for the majority of events at the Hall. They elect from among themselves 19 of the 24 Trustees of the charity (including the President).

The building was designed by the Royal Engineers rather than architects, with the emphasis placed firmly on functionality. Taking almost four years to build,

it cost the equivalent of more than £20m today.

The glazed-iron roof of the Hall measures 20,000 square feet and when it was built it was the largest unsupported wrought iron dome in the world. It was built in Manchester, then transported to London where, on 11th May 1869, after evacuating the building, the engineers stood at the top of scaffolding and knocked the props supporting the dome away. The dome dropped



Royal Engineers work on the construction of the dome



The construction of the Hall

just 0.8mm before settling into position on the supporting walls of the Hall, where it has remained ever since.

## SO GOOD YOU HEARD IT TWICE

However impressive it was in terms of engineering, the dome created an unfortunate echo, which our predecessors attempted to solve by suspending a canvas awning below the dome. This helped, and also sheltered concertgoers from the sun (staff have been known to grow tomatoes under the glass roof) but the problem was not solved: it used to be jokingly said the Hall was 'the only place where a British composer could be sure of hearing his work twice'.



*The acoustic 'mushrooms' today*

In 1969, following acoustic tests the famous 'mushrooms' were installed in the ceiling. There were originally 136 of these fibreglass acoustic diffusers but in 2001, following more advanced acoustic testing, 50 diffusers were removed and the remaining 85 were reconfigured. The Hall's natural acoustic was transformed.



*Testing the mushrooms 1968*

However, the sound challenges for amplified concerts remained, as sound bounced around the oval auditorium. Using modern expertise, we completed a huge improvement to the



*Part of the new audio system*

sound in 2019, 50 years after the mushrooms. Costing over £2 million, the project took 693 days of labour, using 15,291m of cable and 465 individual speakers for the world's largest loudspeaker install in a single room. The new system features the first-ever circle, gallery and box speakers, bringing the sound closer to all seats, radically improving levels, tone, and clarity for every seat in the house, meaning sound quality is now equal throughout the Hall. It has been transformative.

## THE WORLD'S FIRST SCI-FI CONVENTION AND OTHER 'FIRSTS'

While it is of course primarily a concert hall, the history of events is sometimes surprising. In March 1891, it was transformed into a 'city' inspired by Lord Lytton's science fiction story, *Vril: The Power of The Coming Race* in which Earth is threatened by a

winged master race called Vril-ya.

At this event, the first ever sci-fi convention, exhibitors included a fortune-telling dog, various Vril-themed magic shows, and mannequins representing the Vril-ya. Victorians dressed in costume for the event, with many donning wings. But the surprising legacy of the event was – believe it or not – Bovril.

Worn-out attendees could pep themselves up with a cup of the hot beef extract, which had a display stall at the convention. Its name combines the words 'bovine' and 'Vril', symbolising the energy a mug of the salty liquid would give the drinker, and was probably an improvement on its original name of 'Johnston's Fluid Beef'.

## FIRSTS

- ❖ 1873, first public display of electric lighting at a concert hall
- ❖ 1874, foundation of the Wine Society
- ❖ 1891, first sci-fi convention
- ❖ 1901, first bodybuilding contest
- ❖ 1909, first indoor marathon
- ❖ 1919, foundation of Save the Children



*The first ever sci-fi convention, 1891*

- ❖ 1938, first table tennis World Championship
- ❖ 1963, first of four times the Beatles and Rolling Stones appear on the same bill
- ❖ 1991, first sumo tournament outside Japan
- ❖ But NOT the first First Night of the Proms – that was at Queen’s Hall, home to the Proms until the building was hit by an incendiary bomb on 10th May 1941 during the London Blitz

Initially lit by gas, the Hall contained a special system by which thousands of gas jets were lit within ten seconds. But in 1873, the Hall hosted the first public display of electric lighting, with full electric lighting installed in 1888 prompting one disgruntled patron to write to *The Times*, declaring it to be ‘a very ghastly and unpleasant innovation’.

Beneath the Hall runs a complex catacombe of passages and rooms. In 1874 the Hall was given a large quantity of Portuguese wine to store, which was quickly forgotten about. Subsequently General Henry Scott, one of the Hall’s architects, founded a Wine Society with this stash. The Wine Society is now recognised as the oldest and most respected wine society in the world.

In 1901, the world’s first bodybuilding contest saw 60 competitors trying to prove to a group of three judges, one of whom was Sherlock Holmes author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who had the brawniest muscles. The sell-out event saw the competitors

stride in wearing black tights, black jockey belt and leopard skins.



*Bodybuilding Contest, September 1901.*

In 1919, Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton launched Save the Children at a packed public meeting at the Royal Albert Hall. The sisters faced some fairly hostile elements among the crowd that had gathered that day. Some had even brought rotten fruit and vegetables to throw at the ‘traitor sisters’ who wanted to ‘give succour to the enemy.’

Britain’s first indoor marathon was held in December 1909, when two athletes – Italian Dorando Pietri and London-based C W Gardiner – attempted to run 524 laps of the auditorium, which was covered in coconut matting. Dorando pulled out 15 miles in, leaving Gardiner to finish the race in 2 hours and 37 minutes and win the £100 prize.



*At the start of the first indoor marathon*

The first table tennis World Championship was played at the venue for five days in January 1938.

The Great Pop Prom in 1963 was the first of only four occasions which saw the Beatles on the same bill as the Rolling Stones. Paul McCartney said “Standing up on those steps behind the Albert Hall in our new gear, the smart trousers, the rolled collar. Up there with the Rolling Stones we were thinking, “This is it – London! The Albert Hall! We felt like gods!”.



*Grand Sumo Tournament, October 1991*

And the first sumo wrestling tournament held outside Japan in the sport’s 1,500-year history took place in the hall in October 1991, an event that necessitated the reinforcement of chairs, installation of extra-large showers and the weight-testing of toilets.

## ECCENTRICITY AND ECLECTICISM

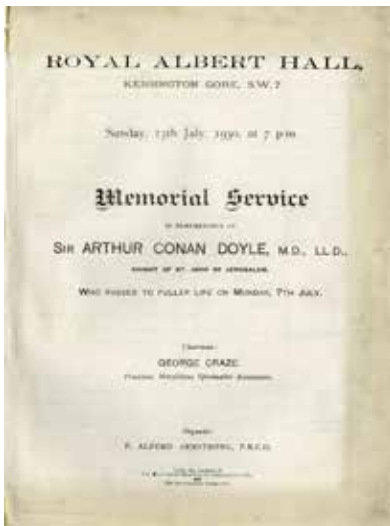
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wasn’t just a judge for the bodybuilding competition, he also (allegedly) made an appearance from beyond the grave. A séance was held days after his death in July 1930, in which a clairvoyant tried to contact him in front of an audience of 10,000 people and his widow, Jean.

Apparently her husband was reached, he passed on a message, and Lady Conan Doyle was ‘perfectly convinced’ by the

*The Beatles at The Great Pop Prom, 1963*



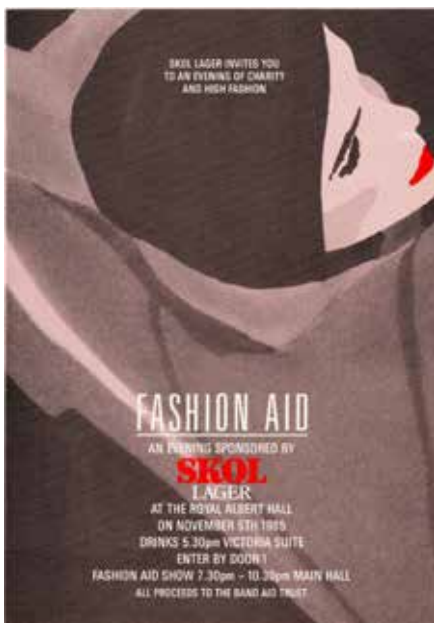




experience, which she found both 'cheering and encouraging'.

In 1968, John Lennon and Yoko Ono presented *Alchemical Wedding*, in which they sat in a large white bag while a man played a flute. Some of the crowd showed their appreciation by getting naked in the auditorium.

By contrast, clothes were on the menu in 1985 for Fashion Aid, a star-studded fashion-based off-shoot of Band Aid. It culminated with a fake runway wedding between Queen singer Freddie Mercury and actress Jane Seymour.



1985 Programme from Fashion Aid Music, comedy, remembrance, film, dance, circus, sport and speeches... we've seen it all.



James Bond film premiere

From the annual Cirque du Soleil performances to the Royal British Legion's Festival of Remembrance, from tennis to wrestling, Yo-Yo Ma to Nine Inch Nails, Albert Einstein to Winston Churchill, the Dalai Lama to Stonewall. We've hosted film premieres, schools events, charity fundraisers, ballets, operas and balls.

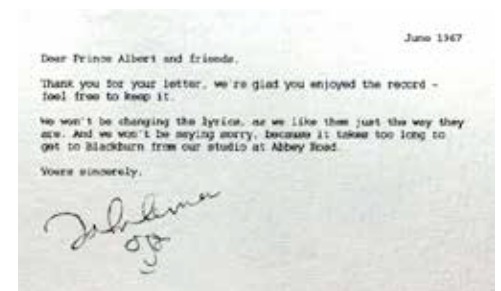


Interstellar Live

As is fitting for a Hall of Arts and Sciences, the Hall has played host to the world's biggest science lesson and, in 2016 Tim Peake appeared at *Science in Space*. *Interstellar Live* brought together the film's composer Hans Zimmer (his Academy Award-nominated score was performed

by a 60-piece orchestra, Professor Brian Cox hosting a pre-film talk with Zimmer, legendary physicist Stephen Hawking, director Christopher Nolan and executive producer and theoretical physicist Kip Thorne.

Embracing our eccentricity, since 2014 we have been creating annual April Fools jokes. From a retractable roof to the Hall being used as a Small Hadron Collider, these April Fools steer perilously close to being believable (and are all available on our website), but the one which has the greatest longevity is the complaint about the lyrics to the Beatles song *A Day in the Life*. The story goes that Mr Ernest O'Follipar (look closely at that name) wrote to the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein in



John Lennon's 'response' to the furious letter from the Hall. Allegedly.

1967 to object "in the strongest conceivable terms" to the song lyric "Now they know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall". The original Fool ends with a ridiculous reference to Milli Vanilli which gives the game away, but the story has been reported several times as fact in respected newspapers, which makes it all the sweeter.

## A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Not just the perfect place for the peculiar, the Hall has seen its fair share of politics. Suffragists, suffragettes and anti-suffrage campaigners all rallied in the Hall, which the suffragettes named their 'Temple of Liberty'.



Suffragette Helen Ogston disrupting a meeting, 1908

It was where Emmeline Pankhurst famously announced: "I incite this meeting to rebellion. Be militant each in your own way. I accept the responsibility for everything you do."

Women would literally take off their jewellery, their rings, their necklaces to put in the collection basket. The Hall hosted more than twenty suffrage meetings between 1908 and 1913, not all of them in favour of universal suffrage.

Jamaican political activist, publisher and orator Marcus Garvey who founded the anti-colonial Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1920, spoke at the Hall in 1928: "The cotton mills of Lancashire, the great shipping port of Liverpool, tell the tale of what we have done as black men for the British Empire... your industry has prospered and you have been able to build the great British Empire of today. Have you no gratitude for a people who have helped with all God gives them?"

The results of a nationwide Peace Ballot were announced here by President of the League of Nations Union, Lord Cecil in 1935. Almost 12 million British adults voted unanimously for disarmament and for peace above all.

The auditorium was also the destination for several large meetings held by the British Union of Fascists during the 1930s. *The Times* newspaper reported that at one, in March 1935, the aisles were filled with Blackshirt squads who beat drums and sounded bugles.

In 1933 Albert Einstein gave his last public speech in Europe here at the Refugee Assistance Committee Fundraising Meeting, where he said "If we want to resist the powers which threaten to suppress intellectual and individual

freedom we must keep clearly before us what is at stake, and what we owe to that freedom which our ancestors have won for us after hard struggles. Without such freedom there would have been no Shakespeare, no Goethe, no Newton, no Faraday, no Pasteur and no Lister."



Programme from Marcus Garvey's appearance, 1928

In 1937, Paul Robeson, American singer, actor and civil rights campaigner entered the struggle against fascism during the Spanish Civil War "Every artist, every scientist, every writer must decide now where he stands... the battlefield is everywhere."

HRH Prince Phillip spoke at the World Forum of Youth about the power of the youth of today to shape the future in 1949. This belief was reinforced when seven



Professor Albert Einstein, 1933

years later he established the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

In 2006, the President of the United State of America, Bill Clinton, encouraged the audience to embrace global citizenship. This sentiment has been reflected through the years, including at the inaugural Global Citizen Prize at the Hall in 2019.



Bill Clinton 2006

The Hall as the epicentre for learning and debate is celebrated in a *Radical Albert Hall* exhibition in the corridors of the Hall so do take a look the next time you visit.

## BANNED AT THE HALL

Although we have hosted opinions of many hues, we have not been averse to banning great swathes of British cultural life. We have banned the entire genre of rock and pop music, poetry events, the sport of boxing, bottoms, the Women's Social and Political Union and elephants.

We now have a long association with amateur and professional boxing, including Nicola Adams' defence of her WBO World Flyweight title in 2019, but for the first 47 years of our history all boxing events were banned.

King George V voiced his disapproval against 'the introduction of professional pugilists into the Hall' after an application in 1893, and it was not until 11-12th December 1918 that the first proper tournament took place. Since then,

Muhammad Ali, Frank Bruno, Lennox Lewis and Henry Cooper have been among the stars to have fought at the Hall. Perhaps more astonishingly, the Kray twins, the notorious twins Reggie and Ron Kray, appeared on the bill on 11th December 1951.

The Suffragettes have the dubious honour of becoming the first political group to be banned in 1913 after some of the trustees became concerned that Pankhurst's call for militancy could lead to trouble. The party was allowed back into the building on 16th March 1918, to host a Celebration of the Women Suffrage Victory meeting, as women began to be given the vote.

In 1929, Chelsea Arts Club Ball organisers requested permission to bring a live elephant into the Hall as part of the decorations for that year's theme, Noah's Ark. Mr Troup, the Hall's own architect, calculated that the floor of the auditorium could not

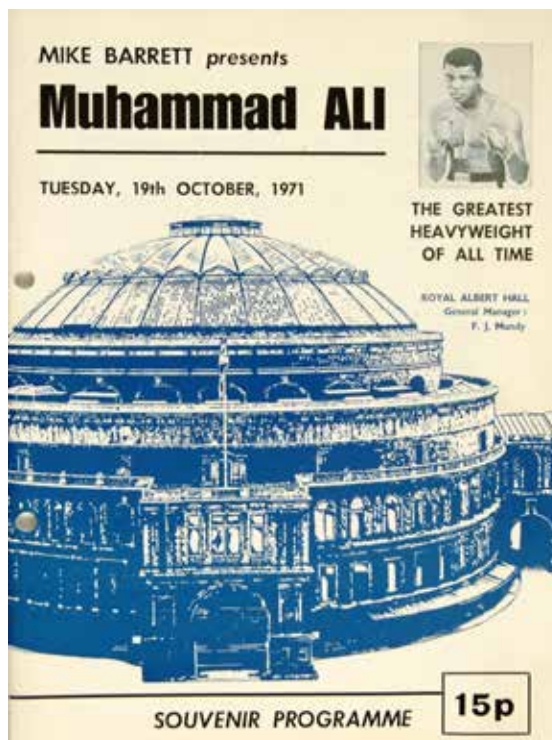


Suffragette newspaper cutting

take the weight of a fully grown elephant. A new standing order was made that no living animals be permitted on the floor, and the



Chelsea Arts Club Ball papier maché elephant



1971 programme for Muhammad Ali bout

Chelsea Arts Club had to make do with papier-mâché substitutes thereafter.

Despite the 'large animal ban', there have been many instances of smaller animals appearing at the Hall in recent years. For example, until 2010 a fountain filled of goldfish would be constructed in the centre of the arena during the BBC Proms season. Most recently, Salty the Dog appeared on stage at the CBeebies Prom on 27th July 2014. However, to this day, the elephant ban has not been contested again.

In 1966, the Hall council decided to ban all events

dedicated to poetry, after one particularly chaotic evening at the New Moon Carnival of Poetry in The Round.



Carnival of Poetry

Without a running order to follow or a compere to control events, the poets and performers, as well as audience members, harassed and heckled each other with loudhailers. During the event, a 10 gallon drum of paraffin oil and thirty homemade torches soaked in paraffin were found in the basement. The police were called to evict the show, and subsequently poetry events were banned for 18 years.

It is more of a surprise to find out that our management attempted

to indefinitely ban rock and pop concerts at the height of the pop revolution in March 1972!

Having welcomed in the world's biggest bands and artists, including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix during the 1960s, the Royal Albert Hall started the next

decade with a very unloving attitude towards the rock and pop genre.

In 1971, only one of the 23 pop concerts held at the venue passed without disorder, vandalism, rioting, injury or destruction. With curtains torn, door and chairs broken, property stolen and extensive damage caused to boxes by people dancing, bands caused tens of thousands of pounds of damage to the Hall in this year.

In 2015, rock legends The Who were handed one of the most belated apologies in the history of rock and roll. In their 50th anniversary year, The Who were given a belated apology for cancelling what would have been an unforgettable evening and to thank the band for 50 years of fantastic music and legendary performances.



The rock and pop ban press release

## THE WHO RECEIVE AN APOLOGY FROM THE HALL

Dear Roger/Pete,

We would like to take this opportunity to apologise for banning your show here on 9th December 1972.

We've had a long think and, on reflection, you're welcome back any time.

Thank you for 50 years of fantastic music and legendary performances.

Kind regards,

All your friends at the Royal Albert Hall



The Rolling Stones provoke a mini riot

## THE MIGHTY ORGAN

It is not just the Hall itself celebrating its 150th birthday in 2021, the Henry Willis Organ, known as the 'the Voice of Jupiter', is also celebrating its birthday this year. It was built in just 14 months at a cost of approximately £8,000, and it has a surprisingly good sense of humour on Twitter @RAHOrgan.

It is still the second largest organ in Britain, after that of Liverpool Cathedral. It is four storeys high, measures 70' high and 65' wide, and weighs in at 150 tonnes. If laid end to end, the pipes would span approximately nine miles.

Today the largest of the 9,999 pipes is 42' high and weighs almost 1 tonne – the smallest pipe is a quarter of an inch and about as wide as a drinking straw.



*The Grand Organ Celebration*

free to roam the corridors and the organ.

Between the 1920s and 1950s we actually housed many cats, all named Albert, who lived in the organ and were, apparently, terrific mousers.

### CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, having foregone about £60m income, refunded a further £10m of ticket income and in debt to government to the tune of £20.74m, we hope for a brighter dawn.

The 150th anniversary concert on 19th July was on 'Freedom Day' – the first day the Hall was permitted to open at full capacity



*Michael Broadway, the organ curator, inside the organ*

It was played at the Hall's opening ceremony in 1871, where its wind system was powered by two steam engines.

The roll-call of musicians who've performed on it includes Camille Saint-Saëns, Anton Bruckner, Pink Floyd's Richard Wright, Don Preston from Zappa's Mothers of Invention, and British rock band Muse.

Until the 1950s the Hall's staff included a very special, furry member – Albert the organ cat. Albert's job was to catch mice and to keep the boiler man company. The staff at Stage Door would feed him, and Albert was



*Organ pipes being refurbished, 1974*



*Albert the organ cat*



The BBC Proms in 2021

– and since then we had an almost-full BBC Proms season culminating in a joyous Last Night of the Proms.

“The BBC Proms... are on their way to achieving the near impossible: an almost complete season, with live audiences, despite the pandemic. London’s Royal Albert Hall may have been quieter than usual, but it has still welcomed audience members who are double-vaccinated, or have tested negative, by the thousands into its expansive auditorium... In fact, the 2021 BBC Proms could be seen as a legitimate excuse for a modicum of national pride” Guardian.

As we look to the future, we again have a packed schedule of performances, from

a week-long festival celebrating the lives and contributions of immigrants over the last 150 years by Nitin Sawhney, Matthew Bourne’s spectacular new staging of *The Car Man*, headline shows from musical icons and major contemporary artists including Patti Smith, Jon Hopkins, Gregory Porter, Tinie, Brian Wilson, Jonas Kaufmann, Bryn Terfel and Alfie Boe. Nile Rodgers, founder member of Chic, will compose a

pop anthem for the anniversary, with a full orchestra and singers from across the community.

The Royal Mint have issued a £5 coin to mark the 150th anniversary, Royal Crown Derby has produced a commemorative tea set in a design inspired by the Hall’s architecture, and the Hall’s anniversary book, with a foreword from Her Majesty The Queen, is titled *A Celebration in 150 Unforgettable Moments*.

It might not have been the anniversary we planned, but we are determined to share this milestone with our audiences and our supporters. Thank you for being a part of our history and here’s to the next 150 years!

photo David Liff



The exterior of the Royal Albert Hall