

# 63rd ANNUAL REPORT

## December 2024



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TO LET



## Montpelier Street, SW7

This five-bedroom house on the corner of Montpelier Street in Knightsbridge strikes the perfect balance between luxurious family home, with state-of-the-art technology, and a stunning space to entertain.

### FEATURES

- Furnished
- Five Bedrooms
- Lift
- Air Conditioning
- Sauna Room
- Cinema Room

**ASKING PRICE: £6,500 PER WEEK**

TO LET



## Wilton Place, SW1X

A superb Grade II listed family house (approx. 3,030 sq ft) which has been finished to a high standard. This 5/6 bedroom house is ideal for family living and has excellent entertaining space which includes a spacious dining room on the ground floor and a large first floor drawing room with views to St Paul's Church opposite.

### FEATURES

- Part Furnished
- 6 Bedrooms
- 6 Bathrooms
- Garden
- Roof Terrace

**ASKING PRICE: £6,950 PER WEEK**



The boutique estate  
agency in the heart of  
Knightsbridge



## Montpelier Street, SW7

Situated in the sought-after Knightsbridge neighbourhood, Montpelier Square features a row of elegant Georgian townhouses built between 1825 and 1850.

### FEATURES

- Freehold
- Principal Bedroom with Ensuite Bathroom
- Three Double Bedrooms each with Ensuite Bathrooms
- Terrace
- Access to Communal Gardens

**ASKING PRICE: £5,650,000**



## Ennismore Gardens, SW7

Overlooking the finest manicured garden square in Knightsbridge this elegant and grand apartment must be seen.

### FEATURES

- Leasehold with 93 Years
- Double Bedroom
- Drawing Room
- Bespoke Fitted Kitchen

**ASKING PRICE: £2,550,000**



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Stephan, Chairman



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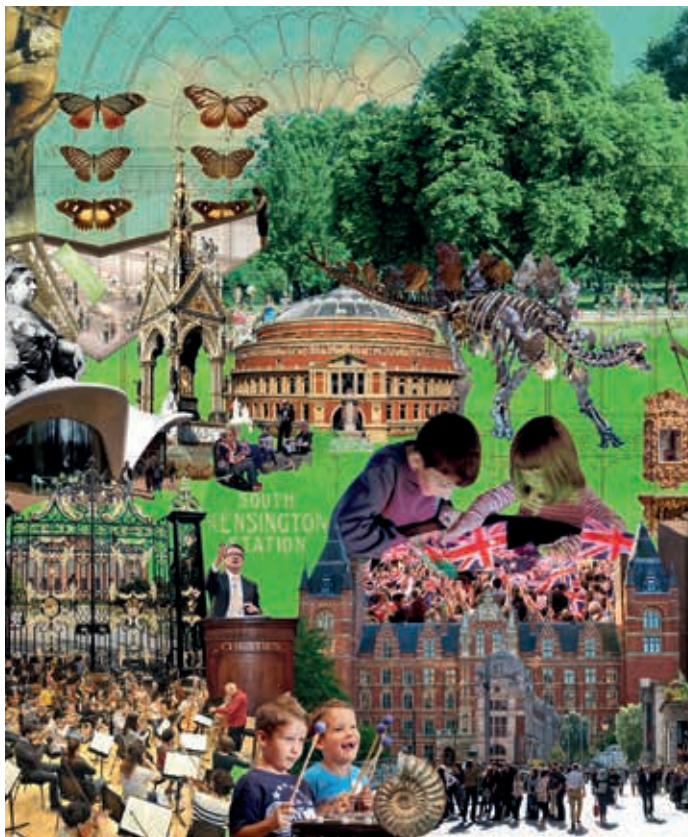
THE EMORY

LONDON

# Dining *Like No Other*

abc kitchens at The Emory brings chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's acclaimed abc brand to the UK for the very first time. Vibrant, approachable and contemporary, the restaurant's glass facade promises views of Hyde Park and Knightsbridge, while the menu brings together delicious elements from a trio of Jean-Georges' New York locations — abc kitchen, abcV and abc cocina.





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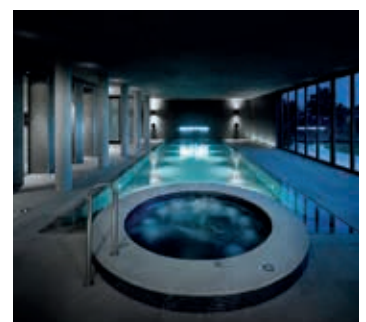
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# THE CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW



*South Carriage Drive "Clear for takeoff!" Contrast with the tailbacks caused (below) from Knightsbridge which can stretch as far back as Prince of Wales Gate*

In times like these when national and international news is not so good, our collective sense of community is more important than ever.

Let's start by looking at the good things happening around us as we enter a new 'era of anticipation'. Anticipation surrounding the outcome of two significant planning applications for 1 Knightsbridge Green and the Park Tower Hotel; anticipation surrounding the outcome of Knightsbridge Partnership's plans for the public realm in Brompton Road; anticipation surrounding the outcome of discussions about the much needed re-opening of South Carriage Drive; anticipation surrounding Hans Crescent's public realm improvements; anticipation regarding long awaited, power supply for TfL's Hoopers Court lift entrance; anticipation over the

use of the Nammos restaurant site in Montpelier Street; anticipation regarding the outcome of changes to 14 and 414 bus routes; and finally, anticipation surrounding the timing of a consultation on Pedicab Bill regulations and their implementation. I'm sure you can think of others. Collectively, they are 'game changers' for the

neighbourhood but when looked at individually – in isolation from the bigger picture – some may evoke 'objection' from residents.

I very much hope we can find a way to reconcile minutiae with the 'long view', the particular with the 'big picture', the immediate with the 'concept'. If we can, then the author of next year's annual report





should have much to write about!

The Knightsbridge Partnership's report on the progress of the Business Improvement District can be found on pages 33 – 34. It only happens once in a lifetime that residents are party to a plan for the public realm – to which they were given ample opportunity to contribute – alongside two major planning applications for buildings in the plan area.

It is up to residents to state clearly what they want and for Councils to use their planning powers intelligently. There is a balance to be struck between giving developers excessive development gain or outright rejection of an application; but it can be difficult to avoid the former in the absence of realistic demands from residents, and other interests, as to what they would like to secure from major developments. Councils are not being asked for money: they are being asked to use their planning powers for the benefit of public and residential amenity, at no cost to themselves.

Earlier this year, the Knightsbridge Association (KA), working jointly with the Knightsbridge Partnership, met The Royal Parks (TRP) to discuss proposals to re-open South Carriage Drive to motor traffic while ensuring the safety of cyclists at the Queen Elizabeth Gate junction. Despite constructive discussions, I regret to report that a trial cycleway layout pencilled in for summer 2024 was postponed until Spring 2025 to avoid Winter Wonderland interfering with cycling behaviour and the pending appointment of TRP's new Chair.

The closure of SCD since 2020 continues to affect residents and motorists along Kensington Road and Knightsbridge. Severe traffic congestion causes long delays and emits foul air while traffic filters slowly through to Scotch House Corner. We hope TRP will be as observant of the needs of Knightsbridge residents, as they are to their own interests when objecting to the increase in height proposed for the re-modelled Park Tower hotel opposite Albert Gate.

Nammos proved to be a vexatious case, as reported previously. We continue to keep a watchful eye on the site and the current position is covered on page 13. This case, and another in Rutland Gate mentioned in our Autumn newsletter, raise questions about the suitability of developers and restaurant operators whose provenance to fulfil works they apply for is never scrutinised during the application process. The King's speech at the State Opening of Parliament intoned "Ministers will get Britain building, including through Planning Reform..." We suggest a key part of any application process should include scrutiny of the creditworthiness and capability of freeholders / developers to deliver the outcome they applied for. Until the provenance of these parties is addressed, it will be difficult to secure better and more rapid outcomes rather than providing opportunities to 'game' the planning system.

Knightsbridge is not alone in having to face intimidation from noisy supercars and wristwatch and handbag snatchers. We received a call recently from a general manager of an internationally renowned Mayfair hotel seeking advice on handling the scourge. They knew Police and Local Authorities had reacted to 'doughnut' racing in Exhibition Road and that street security patrols funded by Knightsbridge Partnership were proving effective in the Brompton Road. Hotel guests in Mayfair are complaining about noise and street robberies; and hotel managements are concerned that this is affecting business and central London's reputation internationally.

We asked the V&A to write for this report on the subject of 'object restitution' – whether antiquities should be returned to their countries of origin and, if so, how, when and under what conditions. Their article can be found on page 38. We thank Tristram Hunt for kindly agreeing to do this while pointing out that views expressed in the article are those of the V&A.

I am delighted to welcome our two new MPs Rachel Blake MP, Cities of London and Westminster and Joe Powell MP, Kensington and Bayswater to the pages of this Annual Report and both agreed to introduce themselves, as set out on pages 38 and 39. We hope it might be possible for them to pick up the planning 'provenance' point referred to above during discussions in the House on planning reform. We also hope that they will be able to find time in their hectic schedules to join us at our Annual General meeting in January for which invitations are on their way.

By way of Valet for Felicity Buchan and Nickie Aiken, the Association wishes to express its gratitude for their support and active engagement while serving as MPs for Kensington, and the Cities of London and Westminster respectively, constituencies central to the KA's area of activity. Felicity's support for residents over the redevelopment of South Kensington station and Nickie's perseverance in pushing through the Pedicabs (London) Act 2024 were, and remain, campaigns of great significance for residents.

Finally, we are not alone in the UK having things that don't work out as expected. I travelled with my family in central Europe over the Autumn. A train journey from Vienna to Berlin started, like many journeys, with a train cancellation. Sold as a seven and a half hour, direct service through Austria and Germany, it turned out to be a twelve-hour marathon via Prague. Such was the glow from our experience in Vienna that the four extra hours passed without anxiety.

It remains for me to send Seasons Greetings to all our members and very best wishes for the New Year, which I hope will include realisation of all 'anticipations' mentioned in my opening paragraphs!

*Melville Haggard*  
Chairman



# PLANNING AND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

*Carol Seymour-Newton*

Much of the Committee's time has been taken up dealing with the two major developments below:

## 1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE GREEN

### BROMPTON ROAD



*Existing*

In the Autumn Newsletter we reported on this major planning application and our comments to Westminster City Council.



*The upper floors would come to the edge of the building line and protrude further out over the pavement*

Although we appreciated the need for redevelopment of the late 50s building, we felt that the proposed increase in height and bulk were excessive and would adversely affect the amenity of adjacent residential buildings and that the main entrance should revert back from Raphael Street to its current position on Knightsbridge Green; daylight and sunlight issues needed further consideration and further thought should be given to traffic management in Raphael Street and Lancelot Place.

A further meeting with the developer's agents took place at the end of October to show us a number of welcome amendments to the scheme. These included the main entrance reverting to Knightsbridge Green – a major improvement – several changes to address the issues of sunlight and daylight and an increase in 'greening' the building at ground and upper levels. The main objection remains the increased bulk and height.

As we went to press we were discussing these changes with the management of the affected residential blocks before commenting back to the developers.

It is not yet known whether this will be considered as revisions to the planning application, or whether it will necessitate a new application.

## THE PARK TOWER HOTEL KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Across the boundary to Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) the application for a major refurbishment and extension of the hotel is under consideration by the Council.

Built in 1973 to a design by architect Richard Seifert – replacing Woollands department store – the original plans were for a considerably taller tower.



In the event, it was reduced by about ten storeys.

The current, and previously granted permissions, seem to be seeking to claw back the extra storeys.

The Association welcomes the considerable improvements at street level which propose a new two storey podium (above) at ground floor with retail units; a grand new pedestrian entrance on the Knightsbridge frontage – currently a rather dead area; upgraded vehicular drop off on Lowndes Square, and a colonnade along William Street with cafés and shops.

Our objection is to the proposed increase in height which when added to the already permitted extra storeys will increase the height of the tower by a third completely dominating the four surrounding Conservation Areas and the view from Hyde Park.

We are waiting to see whether there will be amendments requiring further consultation.

## NAMMOS

### 13-17 MONTPELIER STREET

To those living in the Montpeliers waiting nervously for the opening





of this Greek-style restaurant, there is still no news on when this might be. Works were paused pending the arrival of interior fittings, but commenced again in October, and we understand will not be finished until early February. Apparently the awnings will not bear the Nammos branding which leads one to question the reasoning behind the decision. As soon as we are aware of an opening date we will be in touch with local residents in the immediate area.

## SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION REDEVELOPMENT

The Association understands that TfL and developers Native Land are looking at ways of reducing the costs of this controversial redevelopment of South Kensington station, opposed by local MP Felicity Buchan, RBKC and all local residents' associations and eventually granted at appeal in December 2023.

## PUBLIC REALM SCHEMES

### SLOANE STREET

At last the project is nearing completion. All who have visited the area in the past couple of years have experienced extreme frustration due to the amount of time wasted in trying to navigate round the system. Once Sloane Street is re-opened to two-way traffic it remains to be seen as to whether the narrowing of the road will adversely affect traffic flows, as some suspect, or whether their fears will prove unfounded. Let us hope it is the latter.

### HANS CRESCENT

First reported in the 2023 Annual Report, the proposals put forward by the Olayan Group – owners of the Knightsbridge Estate – and Harrods for improvements to the pedestrianised section of Hans Crescent received consent from RBKC in the Autumn, subject to the signing of a section 278 agreement with the Council and engaging with a contractor. It is hoped to start the works in February/March 2025 and complete by November 2025.



To recap, the proposals drawn up by landscape designer Andy Sturgeon, are to enhance this stretch of the Crescent with hard and soft landscaping. In time, this will entail removing the clutter of tables and chairs which were allowed to proliferate during, and remain after, Covid restrictions. Other improvements will include new paving down the centre; new raised landscaped planters with integrated seating, replacing the benches; retention of four trees with three new trees at the Basil

Street end; a more defined drop off zone, also at the Basil Street end; new heritage lighting; a zone for public art on a plinth.

### BEAUCHAMP PLACE



In recent years Beauchamp Place has increasingly suffered from an air of neglect. In 2023 RBKC decided to take action and developed proposals to improve the setting for visitors, residents and the vibrant collection of shops, restaurants and small businesses lining the street.

These included widening the pavements, improving the street surface, introducing traffic calming measures and planting new trees. Local businesses and residents assisted in addressing such issues as large volumes of traffic and street clutter.

Following RBKC's consultation and after considering the feedback, the Council put forward a number of measures to address concerns which had been raised.

They then commissioned detailed design proposals. The project team is now preparing a report to 'inform the decision to implement the project or not.' Let's hope the answer is positive.

Local councillors, Walaa Idris, Sof McVeigh and Mary Weale have been spearheading the need to bring some style back to the street.



CGI of Sloane Street



# AROUND AND ABOUT

## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

### URBAN NATURE PROJECT

Following the Urban Nature Project's hugely successful opening in the Museum's 5 acre garden, the new entrance from the underground's tunnel in Exhibition Road opened in the Autumn. Crowds have been flocking to enjoy the beautiful calm of the Nature Discovery Garden in the west, and the Evolution Garden in the East. This should help to reduce the pressure on the Museum itself which at half term and school holiday times can be even more intense.



A feature of the two buildings on the upper end of the west side, the vertical greening of the facades, is already well established. A separate development of five town houses on the lower half of the terrace is also nearing completion

### PARK MANSIONS

2-20 Brompton Road



The scaffolding surrounding much of the ground and 1st floors of this pivotal building at the Knightsbridge junction heralds the advent of a new French restaurant, which will be opening in the new year, and a boutique hotel on part ground and 1st floors. Together with two new two new Turkish patisseries, Knightsbridge seems to be becoming one vast new eaterie.

### 31-32 RUTLAND GATE

Eleven years on from planning permission being granted for redevelopment and still nothing



seems to happen. Scaffolding and hoarding remain in place. In recent months workmen have been repairing the roof, but it seems that completion of the work to transform the building back into two luxury houses, complete with basement swimming pools, is a long way off.

Meanwhile we continue to press the Council to get the scaffolding removed. It has disfigured the street for far too long.

### WHITE ELEPHANTS

2-8 Rutland Gate



The grandiose mansion appears to be on the market for £205m – down £5m from when it was last sold. The Association is attempting to contact the agents drawing attention to the dilapidated appearance and the poor effect it is having on Rutland Gate generally. It has been seriously neglected



Members may remember from the 2023 Annual Report that the tower was in serious need of repairs and renovations. Here you can see it swathed in scaffolding. Works are apparently progressing well and the scaffolding is scheduled to come down in early 2026.

### LANCELOT PLACE

At last after a long gestation period both residential developments on the west side of Lancelot place (above right) are coming to fruition.



and is now home to a rough sleeper. WCC's City Inspector and outreach teams have been trying to assist the homeless man and connect him to the various types of support which are available.

### 7-10 COTTAGE PLACE

This development by the well-known architect David Chipperfield was owned by Ukrainian billionaire Dmitry



Firtash, together with the adjoining site of the former Brompton Road tube station which he bought from the MOD. He has been under house arrest since 2014 in Vienna battling extradition to the US where a judge in Virginia issued a warrant for his arrest on bribery and other charges. So nothing much happening there either.

# LICENSING REPORT

*Paul Meitner*

## OVERVIEW of the YEAR

After a relatively quiet winter and spring the volume of licensing applications picked up in the second half of the year, perhaps driven in part by the 'Summer of Sport' (Football's Euro Championship, Wimbledon and the Paris Olympics).

### BULGARI HOTEL RESTAURANT AND BAR

4 Knightsbridge Green

This application involved live and recorded music, late night refreshments and the sale of alcohol, until midnight (Monday to Wednesday) and until 1.30 am – 2.00 am (Thursday to Saturday). We expressed our concerns, as the proposed closing times were well beyond Westminster's definition of core hours. The application was heard on 7 December; despite our objections (and those of several residents, including those at 199 Knightsbridge), permission was granted, subject to a set of mandatory conditions, including CCTV monitoring of patrons and noise restrictions.

### NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (NHM)

Although the surrounding area is largely institutional there are residential blocks nearby which would be affected by the proposed new terminal hour of 01.00 am, as well as the increase in noise, crowds and traffic around the new Queen's Gate entrance. That street has limited capacity and the noise from crowds could reverberate across the road. We suggested that the terminal hour be brought forward to no later than midnight and new conditions added:

- Restrictions on patrons congregating in Queen's Gate after 10 pm.
- Patrons leaving events after 11pm to exit via the main Cromwell Road entrance or the Exhibition Road entrance (i.e. not onto residential Queen's Gate)
- Daily rubbish collection and improvement of the current disposal options along Queen's Gate
- Monitor and enforce parking rules for coaches, cars and

delivery vehicles to prevent illegal parking on Queen's Gate and other local streets.

The application was granted by RBKC, with our first two suggestions included in the conditions attached to the approval, with the others rejected as they fell outside the ambit of licensing regulations.

## GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

### Consumption of Alcohol in Licensed Pavement Areas

Together with other Residents' Associations we were invited to comment on three options for amending the current legislation:

1. Make permanent the temporary regulatory easement of 'off-premises' sales, so that any on-premises sales premises licence would automatically cover them.
2. Amend the Licensing Act 2003 to extend the definition of 'on-premises' sales, so that it included any consumption in a licensed pavement area.
3. Amend the Licensing Act 2003 to permit 'on-premises sales'



only licences the right to extend 'off sales' to any area where there is a premises licence in place.

Option 1 was clearly very unattractive, as it would have given permanent status to many temporary applications that had not been subject to due process, with Option 3 being even worse, as it would have extended the boundaries of 'off sales' licensed activity into the public realm. We opted for Option 2, which would ensure the proper assessment of all 'off-premises' sales activity and maintain public accountability.

### **MCDONALD'S**

177 Brompton Road

#### **Temporary Event Notices**

McDonald's continues to submit numerous temporary event notices, mainly at weekends around public holidays. We have no right to object to these – only the Police and Environmental Health can – but we still monitor these occasions and ensure that any noise or anti-social behaviour is reported to RBKC's Licensing enforcement team.

### **FISH AND CHIPS in KNIGHTSBRIDGE**

138 Brompton Road



Eatbrit Enterprises Limited have applied for a premises licence at 138 Brompton Road, which will operate under the name of 'Mayfair Chippy Knightsbridge'. Terminal hours are 11.30 pm. Monday to Thursday and midnight Friday to Sunday. It opened to great fanfare on 11 November.

### **PAVEMENT LICENCES**

These were introduced in March 2024 and are not subject to the same degree of public scrutiny as other licensing applications, such as advertising in local authority notifications to residents. The KA recognises that it will need to be more vigilant in its review

of these applications and will tell our members about our planned approach shortly.

### **NAMMOS**

13-17 Montpelier Street

We continue to keep an eye on developments at the Nammos site (see page 14), in anticipation of it opening for business sometime next year.

### **HAFIZ MUSTAFA**

Meanwhile, the new Turkish café at 92 Brompton Road, on the north side, is proving so popular that booking is a requirement and queues form along the edge of the pavement blocking the way to passersby. WCC officers have been informed and are taking action.

### **WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL (WCC) LICENSING POLICY**

We and several other Residents Associations (RA's) joined a working party which met three times to review the existing licensing policy and look at possible changes. We will let you know once the exercise has been completed.

## **TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT**

*Chris Barrass and Simon Birkett*

### **CLEANER AIR**

Air pollution in Knightsbridge has fallen to record reported lows in 2024. The 'air' feels cleaner. At the time of writing (31 October), year-to-date concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), a toxic gas, were 28 micrograms per cubic metre (mg/m<sup>3</sup>) in Brompton Road – which is well below 33 mg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2023 and 32 mg/m<sup>3</sup> during COVID-lockdown. These continuing reductions are due to the ongoing shift to electric vehicles and buildings. Air quality will also have been helped by lower traffic

volumes in the area due to the managed closure of Sloane Street northbound. The latest data represents a near 70% fall since 'Clean Air in London' started campaigning in 2006. The new World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines (September 2021) for NO<sub>2</sub> are an annual mean of 10 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and a daily mean of 25 mg/m<sup>3</sup> three or four times a year. Population-weighted concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) in the City of Westminster were down to 9.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> in calendar 2023 from 10.5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and 16.5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2022 and

2010 respectively. The new WHO guideline for annual mean PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. We need to do more, faster.

### **DOCKLESS BAYS for RENTAL E-SCOOTERS and BIKES**

We have had two 'wins' with the move of dockless bays from Montpelier Square to outside 13-17 Montpelier Street and near Eresby House to outside 2-8 Rutland Gate, with help from Conservative and Labour councillors. Please email [tmo.westminster@wsp.com](mailto:tmo.westminster@wsp.com) as soon





## DRAINS and ROAD RESURFACING

We have worked with FM Conway and Westminster City Council for many years to improve the storm water drains in Knightsbridge. In early years this involved reporting many instances of street flooding

(ReportIt) and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (Report a problem) websites, when you are in different boroughs, or the Transport for London website when the road is a 'red route' – which is very handy with so many boundaries in our area. Councils and TfL will only fix problems in their own area. Thousands of issues have been reported in Knightsbridge over the years with action most likely when several people report them persistently. Please take responsibility for your street.

## KNIGHTSBRIDGE PLACE and PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

The Knightsbridge Partnership BID is progressing its exciting Knightsbridge Place and Public Realm Strategy See also page 33 This offers significant traffic and public realm improvements over the medium and longer term. A good example is the proposal from their traffic consultants to ban the right turn northbound from Sloane Street, except for buses and taxis which could do a 'left hook' to turn right, to reduce the number of phases of lights from four to three. This could unlock capacity at the bottleneck at Scotch House Corner for smoother running traffic and improvements for pedestrians. The KA shares concerns among residents and others that possible road narrowing in Brompton Road could displace traffic to Knightsbridge, Kensington Road or Exhibition Road and that residential areas need to be protected from the impact of new or increased commercial activity in the evening or at night. The KA will continue to highlight these issues and seek solutions. We are also grateful to the Knightsbridge Partnership for joining us in complaining to TfL about the possible consolidation of the 14 and 414 bus routes into a slightly more frequent 14 service. (See page 11)

## PICCADILLY LINE UPGRADE

TfL is modernising the Piccadilly Line in a £2.9 billion investment programme to 'help the line run more reliably, safely, inclusively and sustainably'. This includes a

as possible (quoting reference 8010/LH/3) to support these changes being made permanent and state your reasons. Our next priorities are to request that the dockless bay in Ennismore Gardens (on the corner by Kingston House South – see above) is moved to the east side of the road further north and seek an ambitious plan to resolve the chaos of dumped rental bikes and e-scooters in Exhibition Road. The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF) did a walkabout with a Westminster City Council officer in October 2024 to highlight relevant problems throughout the area and propose solutions. A great deal of action is needed to tackle this serious and growing problem in London. This is likely to need: new primary legislation by Government that includes a cap on ultimate numbers to avoid all the prime public space being lost over time and new enforcement powers; institutions, organisations or events (such as The Royal Parks) providing dedicated space on their property (as they have done for drivers in the past); the loss of some resident and pay parking; and new dedicated and virtual (trial) bays. It is important that adequate road and public space is allowed for pedestrians, private bicycles and vehicles including public transport. A sustainable solution across London, with a population of 10 million or more, is going to require a clear vision and careful management of the whole public space.

on the FixMyStreet website with photos and annual walkabouts. The Council has been responsive and replaced many gullies across Knightsbridge, typically before pavement or road resurfacing work. Works in 2024 included Montpelier Walk, Cheval Place and Rutland Street. New pavements in Cheval Place (below) and nearby are a great improvement on those that had been cracked by construction and other vehicles over many years.



Please report any instances of street flooding near your property so that the Council can address it – you may help increase network 'resilience' and reduce the risk of flooding in future.

## FIXMYSTREET.COM

Please continue to report any and all street problems via the FixMyStreet website (FixMyStreet.com). You can add their website to the Home Screen on your phone or download their app. It saves you having to go to different reporting pages on the Westminster





One of the new trains

new fleet of trains 'from the end of 2025'. Most visible and enjoyable will be walk-through carriages, air conditioning (for the first time in a deep Tube train), on-board CCTV cameras to improve customer safety and improved step-free access – which we hope will include Hooper's Court at Knightsbridge Tube station. These changes will be most welcome.

## ROAD CLOSURES

We have had another successful year of avoiding or minimising some of the biggest and worst traffic problems in Knightsbridge. For example, we successfully opposed the switch from northbound to southbound closure of Sloane Street in the middle of that long project – which would have caused unnecessary chaos. With luck, Sloane Street should have re-opened fully in both directions by the time of the KA's AGM in January 2025. This will be a major step forward. The inevitable 'pain' of the project works has created a much more attractive street.

Public realm improvement works are expected to begin on Beauchamp Place (see p.14) once Sloane Street is fully re-opened. We don't know the details yet but they could result in more traffic using Sloane Street in both directions (which could mean longer traffic queues at Scotch House Corner) and rat-running through Ovington Gardens (northbound) or Hans Road (southbound). Please bear in mind that TfL will let traffic return to our area (by automatically managing the phasing of traffic lights) once major local works are completed

and network capacity increases, so that similar works can progress in other parts of London.

The ongoing closure of South Carriage Drive (SCD) seven days a week annoys many people and pleases others. We understand that the Royal Parks' decision following the consultation to confirm permanent closure has been delayed by the delay in them appointing a new Chairman (following the change in Government). The Royal Parks is proposing to trial new cycling arrangements near Apsley House where bike routes converge from the Broad Walk, Hyde Park Corner, Park Lane and SCD. The Knightsbridge Partnership Business Improvement District's (BID's) traffic consultants have pointed out that cyclists could travel through the north side of the Queen Elizabeth Gate, leaving the south side for eastbound only traffic from a re-opened SCD five days a week. The Royal Parks' trial sounds sensible because new cycling arrangements are probably needed to unlock any benefits for drivers. The KA continues to press for at least eastbound opening of SCD five days a week.

## STREET LIGHTING



Many of our streetlights are old and/or listed for heritage purposes. We even have gas lights e.g.

Montpelier Walk. Some have been replaced and updated but others are 'out', have clouded or stained glass or whole posts missing. A recent evening walkabout identified about 10 streetlights 'out' at night, one temporary light not working, two lights permanently on, two posts damaged or lamps missing and several street sign lights out. We reported all these to FM Conway and the Council and will work with them in coming months to seek renewed action.

Please remember that action may not be quick or easy because of listed asset requirements and the need for new electric connections in some cases. Please keep reporting problems near you on [FixMyStreet.com](https://www.fixmystreet.com).

On a 'brighter' note, we have had a significant win recently with Westminster City Council imposing strict conditions on new display advertising on the two large media screens at the Piccadilly Underpass (below).



These have included 'brightness' being limited to 300 candela per square metre (cd/m<sup>2</sup>) at night in accordance with the latest guidance from the Institution of Lighting Professionals – Professional Lighting Guide PLG 05. This is half the previously recommended guideline so may help you sleep if repeated throughout the Knightsbridge International Centre.

## FOOD WASTE, STREET CLEANING AND DOG POO

Our streets are much cleaner than they used to be. In part, this has been due to the KA's zero tolerance approach for rubbish dumped out





of hours or illegally eg. fly tipping of household or building waste. Veolia, Westminster City Council's waste management contractors, work extremely hard to keep our streets clean. This usually begins by opening dumped bags or boxes

and searching for evidence. In one recent case, the KA gathers that the landlord of a problem property was surprised to receive a call from a council enforcement officer on their mobile phone overseas.

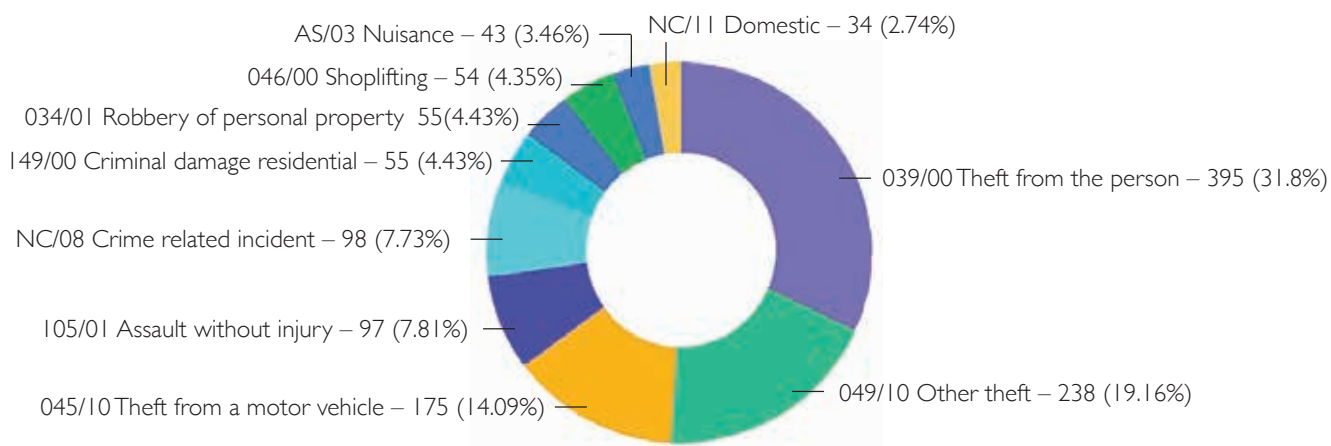
Westminster's food waste recycling scheme is easy and highlights how much waste can come from food e.g. bones, peelings and tea bags. It is more fun than it sounds and 'offenders' are obvious when you see black or recycling bags split by foxes or other vermin and spread across the road on a Friday (or other) morning. Don't forget – please report it to FixMyStreet.com.

Dog poo is a seemingly never-ending problem so please report any evidence to the Council using the FixMyStreet website or ReportIt tool on Westminster's website. Westminster would like a description of the dog walker, type of dog and place and time of day i.e. to aid enforcement action. Failure to clean up after your dog in a public area is an offence which can result in an on-the-spot £100 fixed penalty or prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000. Pretending or actually looking at your phone while letting your dog loiter (for you know what) is no defense in law. Please warn your dog walker if you have one.

## LAW AND ORDER REPORT

*Anne Wright and Frances Blois*

### Crime Statistics for our Designated Joint Knightsbridge and Belgravia and Brompton and Hans Town Metropolitan Police Ward Panel Teams



- **THEFTS FROM MOTOR VEHICLES**

The highest incidents of thefts from motor vehicles occurred in March and April this year but were significantly down in the last three months by 46% due to a combination of plain-clothed Police operations deployed in the hotspots of Imperial College Princes Gardens, Lowndes Square and Hans Place and arrests made.

- **THEFTS OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

Our Police teams have been carrying out successful plain-clothes and high visibility uniformed patrols, mounted patrols and regular leafleting advising and raising awareness amongst residents which has had the effect of bringing down thefts by two thirds in the last three months.

- **BURGLARY**

The highest incidents are found in the summer months of July and August although down by 35% in the last three months.

- **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (NON CRIME)**

The most common ASB in our area revolves around music, begging and illegal trading, the latter from in particular ice cream



vans over the summer months – all of which have been tackled and ASB notices issued.

- **ALL DRUGS OFFENCES**

These offences are found consistently between April and September and generally throughout the year particularly on the south side of the Brompton Road.

- **ROBBERY**

There was a high number of robberies in May and September, but robberies were marginally down by 4% in the last three months. The use of E-Bikes enabled robberies has increased particularly at the top of the Brompton Road and unfortunately is expected to go up further during with darker winter months. There will however be additional late night operations scheduled to tackle this. Certain high value handbag and watch thieves have been arrested and several culprits identified. Residents will have noticed the crime prevention stands and high visibility patrols particularly around Brompton Road and Hans Place.

### STATED POLICE PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING MONTHS

- ROBBERY
- BURGLARY
- THEFT FROM AND OF MOTOR VEHICLES
- Call 101 if you require non-emergency police assistance.
- Call 999 if you require emergency police assistance.
- Contact crime stoppers on 0800 555 111 if you wish to supply anonymous information.

### THE KING'S SPEECH November 2023

*"A Bill will be introduced to deal with the scourge of unlicensed pedicabs in London,"*

A year on the pedicab bill has been passed and – well not a great deal else. The Mayor Sadiq Khan together with Transport for London (TfL) has called for a consultation

on the new pedicab legislation "by early 2025" creating further delays to its implementation.

In April TfL was granted additional powers by the government to regulate pedicabs which had become an increasing nuisance to tourists, residents and other road users alike. Eye watering fares, loud



music and potentially dangerous, unlicensed and uninsured rickshaws were a blight on our City.

Knightsbridge's former Conservative MP, Nickie Aiken, was foremost in advocating the pedicab legislation through Parliament which had taken a long time coming. As a local MP she was fully aware that tourists were especially vulnerable to being ripped off by pedicab drivers and the effect this was having on the reputation of our city as a reliably safe and secure tourist destination.

TfL's lack of preparation and prevarication will necessarily result in the loss of momentum and delay in the preparation of the required regulations for enactment. This was not the intention of Parliament and will leave the unlicensed pedicabs unregulated and doing what they have always done unfettered.

### THE NEW "HIGHWAYMEN"

Our City of London Police seize more illegal e-bikes than any other force in the country – in the year to August they confiscated 295. An e-bike seized by officers in September in our area of Knightsbridge had 6,000 miles on the clock and was capable of hitting a motorway speed of 70 miles per hour. The number of modified e-bikes is soaring and used by criminal gangs mugging for

mobile phones for a fast getaway – the new highwaymen! More particularly these bikes are a threat to pedestrians who often cannot hear them coming at high speed which makes braking before collision more difficult.

Conversion kits are cheap and available online with a motor having a maximum power output of 500 watts – twice the legal limit – and once fitted looking pretty much like a normal bike making the illegal bike hard to detect.

People caught riding an illegally adapted e-bike could face prosecution for a variety of offences such as not having insurance and a number plate but on most occasions the action taken is to confiscate and destroy the vehicle.

### BEWARE SCANNERS – AND NOW YOUR KEYS

As car manufacturers improve security for newer keyless entry cars, that had been previously targeted in so called "relay attacks", thieves are now attempting to steal the actual keys instead. Relay theft remains a common method to allow vehicles to be stolen but stealing the keys to get direct access to the car is becoming increasingly the new tactic.

There is no single way car owners can protect their motor vehicle or keys other than to make it as difficult as possible. The advice is to hide the keys well away from the front door, use a Faraday pouch (below) to store key fobs and spares and use a steering lock. Clever car security makers are introducing motion-sensor key fobs which go to sleep when idle and do not respond to scanner unlocking equipment but not all cars have these.



We need all these techniques to keep ahead of the thieves. Stealing keys to gain access to a vehicle is a concern which insurers and manufacturers are increasingly aware of.

## NUISANCE VEHICLES AND ACOUSTIC CAMERAS



Kensington and Chelsea have installed Acoustic cameras around the Borough since 2020 so as to allow better monitoring and surveillance by the Police of those whose driving habits create a nuisance to the local community and enforce penalties.

In order for this measure to take place a Public Space Protection

Order (PSPO) is required renewable every three years. Since 2020 and up to the date of writing, there have been 1,615 recorded breaches of the PSPO by nuisance vehicles with 577 fixed penalty notices being issued for nuisance vehicle offences.

The extent of the offences covered by the PSPO are:

- Revving of engine(s) (as to cause a public nuisance)
- Sudden and/or rapid acceleration (as to cause a public nuisance)
- Repeated sudden and/or rapid acceleration (as to cause a public nuisance)
- Racing by two or more vehicles
- Performing stunts (as to cause a public nuisance)
- Sounding horns (as to cause a public nuisance)
- Playing music from a vehicle (as to cause a public nuisance)
- Using threatening, intimidating behaviour towards another person
- Causing obstruction on a public highway, whether moving or stationary, including driving in convoy.



*On the beat in Brompton Road*

The current PSPO prohibits these activities between the hours of 12pm and 6am.

As members of the Knightsbridge Association, you will have received at the end of last year a request for you to positively respond to the latest consultation which asked for your support for the renewal of the PSPO to address antisocial driving to allow this work to continue over the whole Borough. We hope that by the time of reading this report the consultation has proved sufficiently positive for the renewal of the PSPO to allow the current prohibitions to remain in place.



*Investigating a traffic incident in Brompton Road*



*On patrol in Ennismore Mews*

**If you need to contact a Ward team for Knightsbridge and Belgravia**

PC Aadil Baqar Aadil.Baqar@met.police.uk; Claire.Napper@met.police.uk;  
Paul.WYLLIE@met.police.uk; Zack.Slaney@met.police.uk

**If you need to contact a Ward team for Brompton and Hans Town**

PC Ben Tivey (M. 07825966793); PC Chris Meade-King; PC Step Mustard; PCSP Charlotte King  
Email: BromptonandHansTown@met.police.uk

[www.met.police.uk](http://www.met.police.uk) [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)  
[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org) [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)



# THE ROYAL PARKS

Carol Seymour Newton

HTA Design LLP



## A MEMORIAL GARDEN for THE LATE QUEEN

Permission has been given for a new garden in Regent's Park which will commemorate the life of our much-loved Queen Elizabeth II. Designed by HTA Design LLP and their team the garden is scheduled to open in 2026, the late Queen's centenary year. Work has already begun on transforming a former plant nursery within the park into a two-acre garden.

It is intended to complement the park's existing historic gardens whilst incorporating modern sustainability practices.

## SERPENTINE BRIDGE



The bridge was seriously damaged in March when a driver lost control

of his car, crashing into the bridge and causing serious damage. A spokesman for the Parks told us that in depth surveys have been carried out but due to the intricacies involved in it being a 'heritage bridge' repairs can only be carried out in appropriate weather which will be in summer next year. Meanwhile barriers were installed to make it safe for the pedestrian and cycle paths and the road to operate as normal.

## FOUNTAINS

There is no news yet as to when water will be restored to the Four Winds/Joy of Life Fountain to enable them to function again.

## HYDE PARK EVENTS

### WINTER WONDERLAND

This ever popular winter event returns for its 17th year with over 100 rides and attractions. Highlights include Zippos Christmas Circus, the iconic Giant Wheel (right) and the UK's largest open-air ice rink.

Also back by popular demand are Wilde Maus XXL, Munich Looping, Hangover and Aeronaut Starflyer, the legendary Magical Ice Kingdom featuring an immersive

experience and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, created from over 500 tonnes of snow and ice with scenes such as The Queen of Hearts' castle and the Mad Hatter's Tea Party.

Tickets are available in advance via the Hyde Park Winter Wonderland website.

### BRITISH SUMMERTIME CONCERTS 2025

These will take place on the last weekend in June and the first two weekends in July, with a myriad of other activities during the weekdays. Headline acts announced for 2025: Zack Bryan – Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th June and ELO – Sunday 14th July

### ROYAL PARKS HALF MARATHON



This annual event takes place in October and since it was first run in 2008 has raised nearly £65million

Liv Williams



for more than 1200 UK-based charities. Those running for a charity team are guaranteed entry into the race. It starts and finishes in Hyde Park, snaking its way through Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park and on to Green Park and St James Park to the Strand and back again. Entry is open for the 2025 event.

## SWIM SERPENTINE

This event takes place annually in September. The maximum distance is 2 miles, or twice round the Serpentine, but there are lesser distance options to choose from. As with the half marathon there are opportunities to raise money for charities whilst enjoying what can be a bracing swim!

## NEW CHAIRMAN

Following the election of the new government in May it was announced that Dame Mary Archer would not be confirmed as chairman of the Royal Parks charity, and that Loyd Grossman, who has already completed two four year stints as chairman, would continue in the post until a new chairman is appointed in 2025.

# FLOODING, REPAIRS AND RESTORATIONS

*Darren Share and Edward Strickland*

Flooding from short burst heavier rainfall is becoming a new phenomenon in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens but due to the small catchment is manageable. The water level in the Serpentine Lake does not therefore fluctuate widely at present. This is monitored on a regular basis. Even if there was a sudden increase in water the dam has an emergency drawdown facility (sluice) and additional bank protection has also been installed recently (kerb down past Dell) in the unlikely event of a lake overflow.

Local flooding in the park has been addressed in past years, particularly



outside Serpentine Bar and Kitchen and on the footpath below The Dell. Additional local flooding will be reviewed/addressed subject to funding, over the next few years on Serpentine Road (2 spots), North of

Old Police House (ponding) and on West Carriage Drive (near the Bridge). Most of this flooding is due to blocked underground drainage.

On the Parade Ground, moderate rainfall is collected via soakaways and additional temporary drainage (Winter Wonderland only), but this approach is under constant review as the rainfall becomes more intense.

In future, subject to funding and governance, we plan to attenuate more water, such as the swale up near the Northern Manege (North Carriage Drive) which works well and potentially re-purpose or recirculate all water and reduce water going to sewer.

## NATIONAL TREE WEEK

National Tree week takes place every year in November.

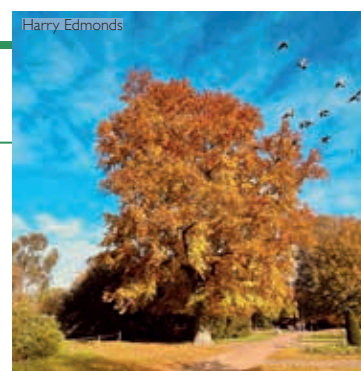
It is the UK's largest annual tree celebration marking the start of the winter tree planting season.

It dates back to 1973 when two MPs, Peter Walker and Sydney Chapman, launched a campaign to raise awareness of the threat of Dutch elm disease which was killing a substantial number of trees across the United Kingdom. Dutch elm disease hinders trees from efficiently absorbing water, so this was considered a major concern.

The celebrations were initially

called Plant a Tree in '73 and called upon communities across the country to plant as many trees as they could throughout the year. The UK's tree planting season lasts from November until March and National Tree Week signals its beginning.

Trees have a critical role in the natural ecosystem that cannot be overstated. They help collect carbon dioxide from the air and release it as oxygen, making them important pollutant controllers. More trees provide better air quality and more pockets of shade to shield us from the elements,



*A magnificent specimen near Hyde Park Corner*

all of which are good for human existence. The presence of trees also aids the surrounding species by providing them with shelter and food, while the soil obtains the nutrients it requires to develop stronger and more fruitful.

*Main source The Tree Council*



# MEMBERS' SECTION

## EVENTS

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

Monday 15 January 2024

The magnificent Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park presents a splendid backdrop for our AGM.

We are delighted to report that, London's Air Ambulance, our charity for the raffle last year, successfully secured the funds for the two new helicopters needed to replace their aging fleet.



*Chairman Melville Haggard addresses the meeting*



*Deputy Mayor of RBKC, Cllr. Dori Schmetterling drew the winning tickets*



*Members of London's Air Ambulance were on hand to sell raffle tickets*

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and NEW YEAR RECEPTION 2024

Monday 20 January 2025

Our grateful thanks are due to the management of the Mandarin Oriental for again making the Ballroom available to us for what will be our 63rd AGM and New Year reception. This will take the usual format with the champagne reception immediately prior to the AGM followed by reports from Committee Chairmen and

Question and Answer session. The raffle will again feature three magnums of champagne, a custom introduced by our then Life President, the late Lady Grade.

Our chosen charity for this year's Raffle, Royal Trinity Hospice, is the local hospice for south west and central London.

They provide free specialist palliative and end of life care for people living in Wandsworth

and parts of Lambeth, Merton, Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Richmond. Founded in 1891, by a member of the Hoare banking family, they are the oldest hospice in the UK. Today, they provide free, specialist support and care for around 2,500 people every year.

They are based in Clapham and have charity shops all over London including in Kensington and Chelsea.

## BARRACKS VISIT



In October some members of the Association were privileged to visit Hyde Park Barracks by kind invitation of Lt. Col. Matthew Woodward, Commanding Officer, The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. It was a very generous visit arranged by the adjutant, Capt. James Bruce-Crampton, where we saw all the workings within the Barracks. We were met by our hosting officer Capt. Henry Tregear and shown the forge where the farriers were busy keeping the Regiment on the road shoeing the horses.

We watched the King's Life Guard Inspection when each of the guard is inspected having to pass 61 points of dress before they set off for Horse Guards. We were then shown the Full

Dress Store and explored all the uniforms and accoutrements of the Officers. The prized possession of the Regiment are the silver drums (below) carried by the drum horses, one of which was solid silver melted down from silver cutlery seized from the White House during the War of Independence.



US Ambassador Woody Johnson offered \$40 million for the drum which was politely turned down! We then met the stars of the show, the drum horses, in their stables before we were given a brief by the Master Saddler. The Regiment makes and repairs all their saddles in the Barracks. Finally, we watched the Kings Life Guard dismount before we left. We remain very grateful to Lt. Col. Woodward for his very generous invitation to visit the Barracks, a memorable day for us all.

These visits are always a great success, but numbers are necessarily restricted, so we hope to be able to organise another one before too long.

*Ian Shackleton*



*The farriers are kept busy*



## RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2023 AGM



*Ian Shackleton and Melville Haggard*



*Felicity Buchan MP, Deputy Mayor of RBKC  
Cllr Dori Schmetterling*



*Cllr Rachael Robathan and Anne Wright*



*Cllr Sof McVeigh and Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock*



*Deputy Mayoress of RBKC,  
Fariba Schmetterling, Norbert Kurcz  
and Mary Ann Masucci*



*Teri and Asghar Sherkat*



*Cllr Elizabeth Campbell and Steven Medway*



*Ted Thompson, Andrew Thompson,  
Allison McGuinness and Joan Street  
of London's Air Ambulance*



*Edward Davies-Gilbert and Gary Lapidus*



*Paul King and John Whelan*



*Tony Knight, Frances Blois  
and GLA member Tony Devenish*



*David Lindstrom and Matteo Margaroli*



## RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2023 AGM



*Clifford and Soozee Gundle*



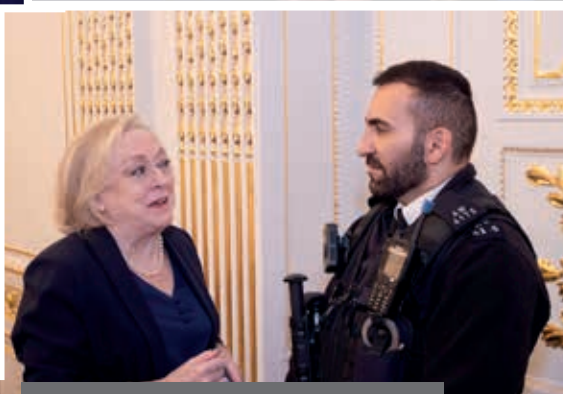
*John Zamit, Michael Bolt and Richard Lovell*



*Dr Ursula Manduca and Alma Jetha*



*Lina Kvac, Albert Jayaseelan and Eena Maze*



*Panda Morgan Thomas and PC Aadil Baqar*



*Paul Meitner, Yoshi Nishio and Francesco Brenta*



*Christine Campbell Cotter and Emma Rees*



*Tom Slater, Lucia and Philip Dinkel*



*Chun Quing Li and Alexandra Morgan Thomas*



*Tony Daggart and Angharad Bethan*



*Elizabeth Blackman and Douglas Temple*



*Karina Zurabian and Denise Brahms*



## MEMBERSHIP

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Membership has remained fairly constant and we have welcomed new members as well as losing others who have moved out of London or sadly departed. We are aiming to streamline the membership process by removing the PayPal payment option which was linked to the previous Knightsbridge Association website.

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

## FINANCES

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The Annual Accounts for the Financial Year October 2023 to September 2024 total £88,412, with a surplus of £7,265 for the year. Income from the Annual Report advertisements increased by £4,400, with many thanks to Alexandra Morgan Thomas for her hard work. More funds have been put into fixed deposits, rising from £58,000 to £66,868 over the year, with the benefit of income from interest doubling compared to the previous year.

Although the costs of Newsletters have risen, the Annual Report costs were less than the previous year.

The Nammos account currently stands at £7,878 and the only payment this year was £982 to Winkworth Sherwood.

We are very grateful to Tom Slator of MacCallum Slator for again checking the Annual Accounts.

## APPRECIATIONS

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### CHRIS BARRASS

We are grateful to Chris for taking the lead with residents at 199 and 10 Lancelot Place over proposals to redevelop 1 Knightsbridge

Green while continuing to chair the Transport and Environment committee. Your time commitment over and above your 199 duties is greatly appreciated.

### SIMON BIRKETT

Thank you, Simon, for the time you devote to running the Transport & Environment committee. Consultations on revised arrangements for parking e-scooters and e-bikes have been time consuming and have gone a long way to alleviating the menace of randomly abandoned / parked scooters and bikes on pavements and roads. Your efforts are much appreciated.

### FRANCES BLOIS

Your experience at Westminster City Council is greatly valued as is your representation of the Association at Safer Neighbourhood meetings. We look forward to having greater participation of the Law & Order committee at Executive Committee meetings in 2025.

### FRANCESCO BRENTA

Our thanks to Francesco for maintaining good relations with Rigby & Rigby and finding out what is likely to happen next at the Nammos site. His persistence in holding contractors to account for multiple parking infringements is laudable and neighbourly.

### NEIL CARTHY

Our email system works smoothly and without a hitch due to Neil's careful oversight and management. Thank you for your continuing, quiet, and reassuring help on vital technical matters and for being available when called upon.

### OLIVIA COX

Olivia now devotes her energies to finding new members and maintaining the membership database. Nothing is too difficult for Olivia to manage! Thank you for

your continued dedication to KA's affairs.

### NORBERT KURCZ

Norbert makes a strong contribution to the work of the Planning & Conservation committee through his meticulous assessment of cases and his attention to detail. Thank you Norbert for covering Local Plan consultations as well as day-to-day case work.

### BARBARA LINTON

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

### PAUL MEITNER

Paul has become the 'face of the KA' through his membership communications activity on top of his role as principal licensing scrutineer. Both functions are vital and, in the case of licensing, 2024 has seen applications that required robust rebuttal. Thank you for your active contribution throughout the year across both fronts.

### PANDA MORGAN THOMAS

The Association is again grateful to Panda for her contribution as Treasurer to the wellbeing of the Association's finances and also, as a member of the Executive Committee, to her help in organising the AGM.

### ALEXANDRA MORGAN THOMAS

Our thanks again go to Alexandra not only for managing the advertising in the Annual Report, but also for helping set up the registration system for the AGM.

## CAROL SEYMOUR-NEWTON

Carol plays a pivotal role in the preparation of the Annual Report and Autumn and Spring newsletters that provide the glue that binds our Knightsbridge community together. Her encyclopaedic knowledge of the area never fails to come up with the article, contact or precedent needed to solve any dilemma. Thank you, Carol, for continuing to radiate

the KA's message to the wider community.

## ANNE WRIGHT

We are very grateful to Anne for her active contribution to the Law & Order committee while continuing to work as a practicing lawyer. Thank you for renewing and maintaining contacts with our respective Council's Police teams and for your contributions at Licensing hearings.

## SAMER YOUNIS

Thank you for photographic evidence of things going well and not so well within the Knightsbridge street-scene despite overseas commitments that have kept you away for much of 2024. The floral displays in Ennismore Mews continue to bring joy to residents and passers-by and are being emulated by others in the neighbourhood.

# EXHIBITION ROAD CULTURAL GROUP

*Freya Stannard, Director*



*The 2024 Festival in full swing*

I have been exceptionally lucky to have worked in this unique, historic cultural district for nearly five years. However, it was only this summer that I took on the role of Director of Exhibition Road Cultural Group (ERCG) and our external marketing brand Discover South Kensington. A role of what dreams are made of! ERCG is the coming together of 22 leading museums, galleries, academic institutions and performance venues in art, science and innovation. The Group exists to support the enrichment of the cultural quarter and enhance the

experience for people who visit, study, work and live here. A huge part of my role is to work with residents to understand how the group can support the thriving community that lives in the area.

## SOUTH KEN ZEN+

Over the last year, the ERCG team, has been focusing on our ambitious sustainability programme: South Ken Zero Emissions, Nature Positive (ZEN+). We aim to support the neighbourhood in reducing carbon emissions and increasing biodiversity by 2030. We have

made huge progress and for the first time we have set an emissions baseline for the Group which will help focus interventions and track changes over time.

We have also developed a collective 'Charter for a Sustainable Supply Chain' which our members are gradually adopting. Most organisations' Greenhouse Gas Emissions derive not from the fuel we burn directly, but from the fuel that is burned in our value chain – by our suppliers and visitors. The Charter helps us set a standard for ourselves in terms of what we



buy, and sets a benchmark for our suppliers, encouraging them to decarbonize their activities too.

In September we launched our website [www.southkenzen.org](http://www.southkenzen.org) which outlines some of our ambitions and programme activity as well as showcasing sustainability case studies from across our membership.

It also hosts a pilot project, which we are calling the Circular Economy Reuse Hub which fosters more circularity in exhibitions by enabling those members who put on exhibitions to share and re-use materials.

During the summer we worked with Allies and Morrison to understand local stakeholder attitudes towards greening projects and climate adaptation in the neighborhood. Our activities reached over 20,000 people, including a letter-drop to 10,000 local addresses, social media posts, small group discussion sessions, interviews, presentations, walking tours, 'walkshops' and an online survey – for which we received 350 responses.

Our primary aim was to reach people with a longer-term vested interest in the area, and we made concerted efforts to reach out to as many local groups as possible. In total we engaged with mostly local stakeholders including:

36 large local employers

23 resident associations and amenity groups

18 schools and student bodies

15 community organisations and places of worship.

Only 15% of survey respondents were visitors to the area. The remainder live, work or study here.

In terms of results, 97% of survey respondents were concerned about climate change and biodiversity loss and 77% believe that ERCG organisations have a responsibility

to take action. The vast majority of respondents expressed a desire for more trees, nature, biodiversity and pocket parks, places of rest and refuge from the hustle and bustle; and to enjoy the grand architectural character of the neighbourhood.

Moving forward, we intend to work with local stakeholders to help bring some of these ambitions into reality. We look forward to having many more constructive exploratory discussions with members of the Knightsbridge Association along the way.

## A CULTURAL SPOTLIGHT on BIODIVERSITY and CLIMATE CHANGE

living laboratory where museum scientists and volunteers can develop best practices to protect urban nature. It is also a wonderful destination for those living and working in the area to enjoy a pocket of green space away from the bustle of Exhibition Road!

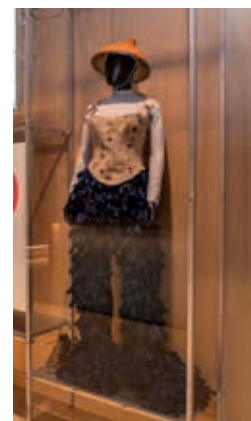


Just outside the Natural History Museum, you may have spotted our new planters (above) on top of the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation blocks.

This is a pilot scheme funded by an NCIL application and installed by RBKC. The planters are made of recycled material and contain drought tolerant, pollinator-friendly herbaceous plants. We hope we will be

able to introduce more of these kind of green initiatives to the neighbourhood.

The Design Museum has showcased a number of inspiring free displays in the museum's new Future Observatory space which highlights ongoing design research responding to the climate crisis. The current display, Tomorrow's Wardrobe, celebrates a more sustainable future for fashion and is on until August 2025.



Trustees of The Natural History Museum London



Schoolchildren chose the name 'Fern' for the dinosaur

Many of our members have given us a thought provoking and inspiring programme of events, displays and projects which highlight the crisis of climate change and depletion of biodiversity. Most notably, the recent opening of the new gardens at the Natural History Museum.

The reimagined five-acre site has been transformed into an accessible, free-to-visit green space as part of its Urban Nature Project. The new Nature Activity Centre combines facilities for scientific research, training space for future urban ecologists and provides a hub for school workshops in the gardens. The new gardens are a

Earlier in the year, the Science Museum opened a new gallery exploring the urgent energy transition needed to limit climate change – the Energy Revolution: The Adani Green Energy Gallery (below). The free gallery showcases how the world can generate and use energy more sustainably, highlighting technologies and projects from around the world.



The museum has also continued their programme of Climate Talks – a series of panel discussions and events exploring the problems caused by climate change, all of which can be viewed online via their website.

Photography has also shone the spotlight on nature, habitats and climate change with several exhibitions including Earth Photo (below) at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) highlighting the impact of climate change.

Earlier this year, the Royal Parks unveiled the winners of its competition, Creating Spaces

for Life, where visitors were invited to photograph new life emerging during spring. Wildlife Photographer of the Year at the Natural History Museum is back celebrating its sixtieth year with more captivating stories from nature. The breathtaking images capture the beauty and complexity of life, telling powerful tales of survival, fragility and the delicate balance of

the natural world, and the impact of our actions. The exhibition is open until 29 June 2025.

## GREAT EXHIBITION ROAD FESTIVAL

Exhibition Road came alive in June for another bumper year of the Great Exhibition Road Festival which celebrated how science and the arts help people, communities and nature to flourish. Over 50,000 people attended with over 1,950 going to one of the 12 talks. Visitors of all ages enjoyed live music, future food demos, space shows,

science experiments, crafts, and more. The rich and diverse cultural offer was supplemented by exciting learning opportunities with over 30 schools participating and mind-bending talks from notable academics such as Professor Al-Khalili about how we experience time! Plans are underway for the next iteration which will take place 7–8 June 2025.



©LUKEVARLEY

## TEAM LONDON AMBASSADORS



Over the summer we worked with the Greater London Authority to host the Team London Ambassadors on Exhibition Road for three weeks during August. This year 129 volunteers helped welcome visitors to the area and share some of the amazing events and exhibitions happening in the area. Exhibition Road is always a popular location for the volunteers and as a thank you for their support we arrange complimentary access to some of brilliant exhibitions and tours in some of the cultural venues. We know that some of the volunteers live locally and we are very grateful for their time and commitment to making visitors feel welcome.

## WALKING IN SOUTH KENSINGTON

We have collaborated with Footways to create an interactive map of scenic walking routes to and around South Kensington to encourage visitors to explore the area on foot. The routes connect key locations such as tube stations, museums and shopping destination and includes points of interest connected to the history of the area. The map can be found on the homepage of our website.

We have shared some of the projects and highlights happening in this incredible cultural district but if you want to discover more, visit our website [www.discoversouthken.com](http://www.discoversouthken.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.



# THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

Steve Medway CEO

Dear Neighbour,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the unwavering support from the Knightsbridge Association. Your ideas, insight and support have been invaluable to shaping the work we do, particularly the once in a generation opportunity we have to work together to transform Knightsbridge through our Place and Public Realm Strategy.

2024 has been a rewarding year for the Knightsbridge Partnership and we are pleased to share a short summary of the year in view.

## KNIGHTSBRIDGE PLACE and PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

The Knightsbridge Partnership, which represents over 200 local businesses, is developing an ambitious public realm strategy for the Knightsbridge area in collaboration with the Knightsbridge Association, the local community and stakeholders. The Knightsbridge Association chairman sits on the Partnership's board.



Steve Medway

Until the creation of the Knightsbridge Partnership in 2021, responsibility for the Knightsbridge area, particularly its roads and public spaces, was fragmented across the three highway authorities consisting of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster City Council and Transport for London.

This resulted in a neglected and unsafe public realm and no single organisation was able to coordinate much-needed changes, inevitably resulting in the area's decline.



Brompton Road future



Knightsbridge thoroughfare future

Consequently, Knightsbridge has been losing ground to other luxury destinations globally and only a third of respondents in a survey felt Knightsbridge is improving as a place to live or visit.

The public realm proposals for Knightsbridge will deliver a number of improvements including: – improve 13 existing pedestrian crossings to straight-ahead, rather than two-stage staggered crossings, introduce two new pedestrian crossings, provide 5000 square metres of new footways, introduce 2000 square metres of new planting



Security guard

and 170 new trees. These will benefit residents and the area's 37 million visitors a year; and contribute to maintaining the heritage and character of Knightsbridge.

The next stage of design and modelling of traffic movement commences from November, which will take 12 months to complete. The first stage of design involved residents, businesses and stakeholders in three co-design workshops. Residents and stakeholders will continue to be closely involved and kept up to date throughout the next stage of design and formal consultation.

## IMPROVING SAFETY and SECURITY IN KNIGHTSBRIDGE

We understand how important improving the safety and security of Knightsbridge is for residents, visitors, workers and businesses alike. Everyone is united by the common goal of a safe and welcoming destination to enjoy and spend time in. London, and indeed the UK overall, is experiencing increased levels of criminal activity, and that's why we joined the New West End Company and King's Road Partnership to deliver a roundtable with our three local MPs, Rachel Blake, Joe Powell and Ben Coleman in September to bring resident and business

concerns to their attention.

The session was very productive, and it was reassuring to learn that tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, including shoplifting, is a key priority for the new government. We have received commitment to deliver together a Crime Summit, which will delve deeper into issues, and how through better partnership working with the Metropolitan Police, The Mayor of London, RBKC & WCC we can identify the challenges and agree solutions.

The Knightsbridge Partnership plays a vital role in funding a private security presence seven days a week along the Brompton Road. We know this investment makes a significant impact in not only detecting criminal activity, but also acting as a deterrent. In 2024, our team were responsible for recovering almost £100k of stock and personal items, achieving a strong 84% prosecution rate for prolific offenders. We are exploring how this important service can extend into the evening and have recently launched a plain clothed operation running until December in participating stores across the district to further detect criminal activity.

## NEW SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME

The Knightsbridge Partnership has launched a new sustainability programme for businesses in the area. With almost sixty percent of the area's commercial buildings currently not compliant with 2030 minimum energy standards, many buildings might not be lettable unless they improve their environmental performance.

To help businesses get ready for tightening energy and related standards for environmental performance, The Knightsbridge Partnership offers businesses the opportunity to sign-up to receive a FREE energy audit, carbon footprint and action plan to help reduce their energy costs and carbon emissions. Government funding has been secured by the Knightsbridge

Partnership to deliver the green businesses programme.

Increasingly the sustainability performance of businesses is crucial to attracting staff, customers and inward investment. This new initiative is being launched as part of the Knightsbridge Partnership's plans to make the area one of the most sustainable places to work, live, visit or invest in.

Through the Knightsbridge Partnership businesses can access sector-specific advice, such as on the requirement for all organisations to separate food waste from March 2025. The UK currently throws away 9.5 million tonnes of food waste a year. Separating food waste will enable it to be used to create biofuel or nutrients to support farming and contribute to a circular economy.

## NEW OPENINGS!

Knightsbridge continues to attract leading brands across retail, leisure and food and beverage to the area. Here is a snapshot of new openings to explore, just in time for the festive period – Aēsop, Alo.Yoga, Café Erol, Les100ciels, Levis, L.K. Bennett, The Mayfair Chippy, Paradox Museum and UGG.

## SIGN UP FOR EXCLUSIVE PROMOTIONS and COMPETITIONS

The Knightsbridge Partners funds the monthly online magazine 'The Edit', providing latest news from across the area, including exceptional competitions and reader offers.

We now have almost 13,000 subscribers, be in the know and sign-up by visiting [www.knightsbridgedn.co.uk](http://www.knightsbridgedn.co.uk).

If you have any questions, or would like further details, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards



# KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

*Simon Birkett*

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The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (the Forum) has had a busy year commenting on significant planning and licensing applications, seeking to strengthen the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) by responding to major planning consultations and publishing two large documents. Our focus is strategic.

On 28 September 2024, the Forum published its 'Five-year review' on the impact of the KNP on the Council's decisions on about 150 planning applications in our area since the plan was 'made' (i.e. adopted) on 11 December 2018. It shows that the Plan's policies have successfully

influenced planning outcomes in Knightsbridge (whether supporting planning permissions or refusals). This has been the case particularly with 'significant' planning applications where the Forum has focused its resources. Importantly, the report made more than a dozen recommendations for the Council, Forums and others about using the KNP (and other neighbourhood plans), supporting effective decisions and enforcement and the application of plan policies. The review has received very positive feedback and aims to promote and improve the impact of neighbourhood planning across Westminster, London and more widely. Earlier in the year, the Forum published an updated

Knightsbridge Evidence Base Document, which supports the KNP, on 9 February 2024. These are both available on our website.

Our immediate next priority is to make progress on the use of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL). We hope to submit an application early in 2025 for the restoration of several heritage lamps on posts along Kensington Road and progress others for public CCTV and to encourage biodiversity in Knightsbridge. Please consider becoming a member if you live, work or study in Knightsbridge.

[www.knightsbridgeforum.org/about/membership/](http://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/about/membership/)

## THE LONDON FORUM

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Peter Eversden MBE, who has chaired the Forum with dedication for over 20 years, has announced his retirement from the Chair and confirmed that he will continue to be actively involved with planning issues. His contribution over the years has been invaluable. The new chairman will be Michael Jubb who is a member of the Executive Committee.

The Forum, of which the Knightsbridge Association is a member, represents the views and interests of over 100 amenity and civic societies in London and their members on issues that are important for people who live and work in London. Its main focus is on Planning, Development Management, Heritage, Transport, Environment, Waterways and Open Spaces. It does invaluable

work attending meetings and consultations held by the Mayor of London, Transport for London, other London-wide bodies, and departments and agencies of national government; responding to the Mayor's policies and decisions; liaising with London Councils and taking part in Examinations in Public of Amendments to the Draft London Plan and a whole host of other issues.

# WESTMINSTER AMENITY SOCIETIES' FORUM

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The Westminster Amenity Societies Forum (WASF) – of which the Association is also a member – represents the views and interests of all the officially recognised amenity / civic societies in Westminster and their members on issues that are important to those who work and live in Westminster. WASF's main focus is on planning, development management, heritage, transport, environment, and open spaces.

Eighteen Amenity Societies are currently formally recognised by the Council for the purposes of consultation on planning and other matters within their designated areas. The current chairman is Tim Lord, chairman of the Soho Society.

WASF is currently focused on three principal issues: Westminster After dark and the consultation expected in January 2025; the Mayor of London's unsolicited proposal to establish a Mayoral

Development Corporation for the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street; and the Licensing Policy Review due early in 2025. The first of these is linked to Licensing, and a long overdue acceptance that crime and the approval of alcohol licenses are strongly correlated. Westminster is also embarking on a new Waste Strategy and we expect a survey document to be published early in 2025.

## NEW FACES

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### IN PARLIAMENT

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**RACHEL BLAKE MP** for the City of London and Westminster, worked at the Treasury under Gordon Brown advising on planning policy and economic development and for the last 10 years had been a local Councillor for Tower Hamlets. See her article on page 38.



**JOE POWELL MP** for Kensington and Bayswater was deputy CEO of the Open Government Partnership for 11 years. He was the deputy chief executive officer of the Open Government Partnership, which was founded by former U.S. president – Barack Obama – for 11 years.



**BEN COLEMAN MP** for Chelsea and Fulham, had previously been a councillor on Hammersmith and Fulham Council since 2014 and more recently Deputy Leader. He led the public health response to save Charing Cross Hospital.

### AT THE GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

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**JAMES SMALL-EDWARDS** is the London Assembly member for West Central having won the seat in May from Tony Devenish, who had

represented the area since 2016. Like Tony he is also a Westminster City councillor where he is currently Deputy Cabinet Member for Regeneration.





# LOCAL AUTHORITIES

## WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL (WCC)

Following the Council elections in May when Labour took over as the majority party, Adam Hug became Leader. Appointments to the Cabinet included Cllr Geoff Barraclough Cabinet member for Planning and Economic Development, Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg, Cabinet member for City Management and Air Quality, Cllr Ryan Jude, Cabinet member for Climate, Ecology and Culture. Cllr Robert Rigby was elected Lord Mayor for 2024/25

Our local Ward councillors, Rachael Robathan, Elizabeth Hitchcock and Tony Devenish continue to support our local community and hold local street surgeries for residents to raise matters of local concern – most recently on a rainy day outside Bonhams in Montpelier Street, when issues addressed included the major development proposals for 1 Knightsbridge Green, Montpelier Street lights not working, dumping of e-bikes and scooters and when the Nammos restaurant might open. Ward councillors are currently serving on the following committees:

Cllr Robathan, Planning (Major Applications) Sub-Committee, Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock, Planning Sub-Committee (1).

WCC public consultations we have commented on during the year include Westminster Draft City Plan (partial review); Westminster's Streets and Spaces – Public Realm Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); and the Westminster After Dark consultation on the city's night-time economy. We are also in the middle of a major planning application for the proposed 1 Knightsbridge Green development, referred to on p13.

## ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA (RBKC)

The Conservative party retained their majority at the May elections. Cllr Elizabeth Campbell remains the Lead member – a position she has held since 2017. Cllr Cem Kemahli is Lead member for Planning & Public Realm. Councillor Will Lane was elected Mayor for 2024/25 Local Ward councillor Walaa Idris is vice chairman of Planning, and borough Champion of The Bee Superhighway

(she will appreciate the article by Ian Shackleton on p 42). Our other two local Ward councillors are Cllr Sof McVeigh who chairs the Licensing Committee and Cllr Mary Weale who is currently Lead Member for Finance and Customer Delivery.

Issues we have discussed with our Ward councillors are plans for revitalising Beauchamp Place, see p14, the need for repairs to Ennismore Gardens Mews wall – and when will the Cabmen's Shelter, currently locked and marooned on the pavement outside the V&A, be re-sited and back in use. It's site – mid Thurloe Place – remains empty. At a recent meeting with councillors Elizabeth Campbell and Cem Kemahli we took some comfort from their assurance that they were seeking a solution.

Consultations we have contributed to include the New Local Plan Review – adopted in July – Beauchamp Place Public Realm proposals, see p14, and the renewal of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), see p22. We are also responding to RBKC's Public Realm SPD while commenting on a significant planning application for the Park Tower Hotel, see p14.

## CABMEN'S SHELTERS – LITTLE GREEN SHEDS

These historic green shelters first appeared in Victorian London when it was prohibited for horse and carriage drivers to leave their cabs unattended in a cab rank.

Victorian drivers had nowhere to rest, hide from the rain, or get a hot meal during their working hours; consequently many risked leaving their carriages with someone else to mind them while they took refuge in a nearby pub. As a result, carriages could be broken into or stolen by the minder.

Colonel George C Armstrong, the editor of 'The Globe' came up with the idea and helped start the Cabmen's Shelter Fund in London in 1875 with a group of influential philanthropists.



The small green sheds at the side of or in the middle of roads, usually consist of a small kitchen and a hatch that food and drinks can be passed through. Some have a few chairs or benches and tables in them, while others may put seating outside on sunny days. Thirteen of the 61 originally built between 1875 and 1950 are still in existence. All are listed Grade II and the nearest to us are in Thurloe Place (the Association contributed to its restoration in 1990), Kensington Road and Pont Street. However, controversially, the Thurloe Place shelter has been unceremoniously removed and dumped on the pavement.

It is said that the cost of reinstating the Thurloe Place shelter – and the temporary closure of Cromwell Road to facilitate this – along with the cost of insurance once reinstated, are factors causing the shelter to remain stranded. The Association queries both these reasons.

# CITIES OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER

*Rachel Blake MP*

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The first months as your Member of Parliament have been a whirlwind.

## IN PARLIAMENT

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I made my Maiden speech, speaking about being a proud Londoner, and what an enormous honour it is to represent your home city. I thanked and paid tribute to Nickie Aiken, the previous MP, for her important and tireless work as a local representative.

We are getting stuck into the Bills introduced in the King's Speech. For example, I spoke in the debate on the Renters Rights Bill, supporting measures to improve recourse to justice for the tenants of unscrupulous landlords, and to bolster tenant rights for families, and those with pets.

In September, I led my first debate in Westminster Hall on the regulation of short-term lets. An increased number of short-term lets in small geographic areas hollows out our communities and creates all kinds of practical issues. It can also mean there are fewer homes available for local people to rent, worsening the housing crisis. It was good to hear that the Government are reviewing the options for regulation of short-term lets.

At the time of writing the first Budget delivered by a Labour Chancellor in 14 years is just a few days away. That won't be without challenges considering the economic legacy of the last Government, but it is an important

milestone as we begin to deliver change, and improve the lives of residents in the Two Cities and beyond.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

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I've been out and about in the constituency, taking advantage of our rich civic life. I've visited mosques, synagogues and churches, speaking with our community faith leaders about what I can do to support their work on community cohesion and supporting vulnerable people. I've spoken to young people about how they can influence politics before they can vote and met various Residents Associations.

## WORKING FOR RESIDENTS

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I run a regular series of surgeries at venues across the constituency, speaking to local people on an individual basis about the challenges they face in accessing the support they need.

I have written to the Post Office about the closure of their Eccleston Street branch, to the Deputy Mayor of London about the delays in implementing Pedicab regulations, and I have spoken with the senior NHS team locally about investment in St Mary's hospital and leaders from the City of London and Metropolitan Police

about improving safety in our neighbourhoods.

I have begun discussions with the Department for Transport regarding the regulation of e-bikes and e-scooters. I also met recently with two companies which provide e-bike and e-scooter hire in London, to talk about what more they could do to prevent dangerous parking. Cycling is a key part of our transport mix, and there is of course a place for new technology in encouraging more people to use bicycles to get around, but they have to be managed in a way that works for the local area. At the moment, that's not happening, so I will continue to call for councils to have the powers to fine riders who park dangerously, and to fine the companies who fail to remove hazards.

It's a privilege to represent you, and if you ever need to raise anything with me, I can be reached via [rachel.blake.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rachel.blake.mp@parliament.uk)





# KENSINGTON AND BAYSWATER

*Joe Powell MP*

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I am honoured to introduce myself as the new Member of Parliament for Kensington and Bayswater, which includes the vibrant community of Knightsbridge in the south of the Borough.

I'll be hosting regular constituency surgeries and coffee mornings. Please email me at [joe.powell.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:joe.powell.mp@parliament.uk) to book an appointment, find out when our next event is, or invite me to your local community gatherings.

I was fortunate enough to meet many of you during the General Election campaign, but if we haven't had the chance to have a conversation yet here are some of my top priorities for Knightsbridge:

## TACKLING THE HOUSING CRISIS

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One of my main goals is ensuring safer, affordable and quality housing for our community. Since becoming your MP, I've been holding social housing landlords to account and calling for stronger protections for private renters, including abolishing section 21 no-fault evictions. I have been campaigning for better regulation of the Short-Term Lets market, so that Councils have the power to hold companies accountable for the 90-day maximum letting rule in London, anti-social behaviour and ensure too many properties

are not leaving the private rental market. I am also pushing the government to deliver on our manifesto commitment to end the outdated feudal leasehold system, ensuring a fairer, more secure housing market for all.

## SUPPORTING KNIGHTSBRIDGE BUSINESSES

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Knightsbridge is home to some of the world's most iconic businesses, yet they continue to face challenges, from rising operating costs to rampant shoplifting and the lingering effects of the pandemic. I am actively working to ensure that our local businesses receive the support they need to thrive. I'm pleased that in this Labour Government's first budget, the Chancellor confirmed that, starting in 2026-27, permanently lower tax rates will be introduced for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties. This means Knightsbridge shops, cafés, and pubs will see lasting financial relief. Additionally, to prevent a jump in business rates next year, the Chancellor has extended a relief scheme introduced during the COVID pandemic, providing much-needed stability for our local economy. I have also been campaigning for tougher police action on shoplifting, and I'm pleased that the government has ensured the "£200 rule" will be scrapped, ending the effective immunity for low-value crime.

## E-BIKE MANAGEMENT and TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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Many Knightsbridge residents have written to me about out-of-control dockless e-bike parking. I know many people enjoy using e-bikes but there are also valid concerns about inappropriate parking and anti-social behaviour. I am committed to working together with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council to improve the management of e-bikes in our community.

I want to hear from you about what you think is working and what you want changed. Please fill in my resident survey: <https://www.joepowell.org.uk/survey/e-bikes/>

## STAY CONNECTED

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To keep up with local news and updates on my campaigning work, join my newsletter. If you have any concerns or would like to discuss specific issues, please reach out to me at [insert email].

SIGN UP FOR KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEWS FROM YOUR MP



# REPATRIATION?

*Tristram Hunt, Director, Victoria and Albert Museum*



From Benin Bronzes to Captain Cook spears, the restitution of contested heritage has emerged as a defining challenge for cultural institutions. It is one that must be addressed if museums are to thrive as meaningful repositories of social and educational value.

In the United Kingdom, stubborn debates surrounding the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, housed in the British Museum, often dominate headlines. Yet numerous successful returns both from the UK and abroad have quietly gained momentum. These recent developments – from the Horniman Museum in south London to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York – illustrate that museums are in fact increasingly addressing the complex legacy of artifacts acquired through colonialism and other coercive means in collaborative and innovative ways. When managed well, this can turn the return of objects from a net loss for the outgoing institution into a valuable opportunity for enrichment and learning.

In South Kensington, the Victoria and Albert Museum stewards over 2.8 million objects spanning 5000 years of human creativity. Inevitably, many of those objects contain complicated histories, and some were acquired as a direct result of British colonial violence. Colonisers plundered not just land and its resources but the cultural property of the colonised. Prized possessions and treasures of both monumental and routine significance were looted and shipped to museums and private collections in the West.

Such was the case for 17 pieces of Asante gold court regalia in the V&A collection looted by British troops during the 1874 Anglo-Asante Wars in Kumasi, Ghana. The intricate and beautifully crafted objects are exquisite examples of the techniques and artistry for which Asante goldsmiths are renowned. And moreover, they are of enormous cultural, historical and spiritual significance to the Asante people, having been invested with the spirits of former kings and decorated with a complex visual lexicon.



Yet despite a growing countrywide consensus around restitution (in 2021, 62% of Britons said they support returning historical artefacts to their country of origin on a permanent basis), national museums like the V&A face significant legal constraints. Under The National Heritage Act of 1983, Trustees are prohibited from deaccessioning items from the national collection except in very narrow circumstances.

While that legal obstacle could have brought an end to any dialogue, and indeed, it still too often does, thanks to

the leadership of Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II, King of the Asante people, the V&A entered into a Renewable Cultural Partnership with the Manhyia Palace Museum in Kumasi. The agreement is based on the exchange of knowledge and skills between both parties and sees all 17 objects returned to Ghana for the first time in 150 years on long-term loan, renewable for up to nine years.

It was, earlier this year, both educative and humbling to be part of the important celebrations in Kumasi returning the regalia as part of the Silver Jubilee of Otumfuo Tutu II and the anniversary of the Sargrenti war (as it is known). At South Kensington, meanwhile, we have commissioned V&A curator and jeweller Emefa Cole to collaborate with the Asantehene's official goldsmith to create a new work of art in response to the objects' absence from our galleries and the new partnership with Kumasi.

In Edinburgh, the National Museum of Scotland has decided (permanently) to 'rematriate' the Nisga'a totem pole to the Nisga'a Nation. The totem pole was carved and commissioned around 1860 to honour the memory of an ancestor killed in battle. A matrilineal people, the pole would have been passed down through the maternal family line. But in the 1920s, Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau collected and later sold the pole to what was then the Royal Scottish Museum in an attempt to 'save,' as he saw it, the work of indigenous art from the threat of Canadian colonialism.





*Tristram Hunt addressing Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II*

For the Nisga'a people, the pole is not a museum object but a sacred ancestor. Descendants of the pole's commissioner, led by Dr. Amy Parent, rejected NMS's ownership and demanded its repatriation. Thanks to rigorous provenance research and collaboration with the Nisga'a people, the NMS trustees decided the pole's removal lacked proper community consent and cultural authority. This, along with recognition of the Nisga'a as a 'nation within a nation' and support from the Scottish Minister of Culture, allowed the museum to proceed with repatriation.

Across Europe, new laws are proving a great deal more supportive of repatriation policies. In the Netherlands, the Rijksmuseum has taken steps toward restitution, acknowledging the colonial origins of several objects in its collection. The Dutch government has established a statutory Colonial Collections Committee dedicated to assisting museum dialogues with former colonies such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Ireland too has created an 'expert committee on the restitution of historically and culturally sensitive objects.'

France has committed to returning African artifacts, with President Emmanuel Macron announcing in 2017, to a crowded lecture theatre

at Ouagadougou University, in Burkina Faso, that objects taken during colonialism should be returned to their countries of origin. 'I cannot accept that a large part of cultural heritage from several African countries is in France ... In the next five years, I want the conditions to be created for the temporary or permanent restitution of African patrimony to Africa.' This pledge has resulted in legislative changes aimed at facilitating the return of cultural objects to countries like Nigeria and Senegal – although the pace of return has been limited. Germany has focused on West Africa, with plans for the return of Benin material to modern-day Nigeria.

Even the Vatican has been involved in restitution efforts, with Pope Francis signalling a shift in the Holy See's approach to cultural heritage. In a landmark move, the Vatican recently returned three fragments of the Parthenon sculptures to Greece, symbolizing a growing recognition of the need for restitution even within religious institutions.

As cultural institutions across the globe increasingly redefine their roles, we have to balance historical awareness with the need for transparency and collaboration. The UK legal framework prevents institutions from fully engaging with calls for the return of cultural

objects and will, increasingly, place us outside the mainstream debate.

A responsive restitution policy does not mean 'everything must go.' In fact, the question usually revolves around a very small number of objects which – rightly handled – have the capacity to assist in cultural and curatorial understanding. To my mind, one must always begin with the object and not the politics. Museums cannot absolve the crimes of colonialism and they should not be mobilised to assist contemporary geo-political objectives. What is more, the provenance of each individual artefact is different: not everything acquired during the colonial period was looted or stolen. Objective, detailed research is vital.

It also pays to have some appreciation of the agency of the maker, whose work in museums can sit alongside displays from comparative periods or materials. This sense of a global civilization – and the particular contribution of different races, nationalities, and communities – is what museums are uniquely able to provide. But we now need to have the humility to appreciate that this can happen in museums and galleries abroad as well as here.

# CREATING A BUZZ

## Knightsbridge's Hidden Hive Life

Ian Shackleton

Believe it or not there are some twenty hives of honey bees in and around Knightsbridge. There are over 270 species of bee, from bumble bees to solitary bees, one of which is the honey bee. The honey bee is voracious in its ability to collect nectar for honey, so setting it apart from the other bees.



The honey bee starts to emerge from the hive as spring warms up. Inside the hive the queen increases her laying to build up the colony from the winter low of 7,500 bees to a July colony of some 40,000 bees. These numbers enable the colony to collect sufficient stores to successfully over winter.

During April, May and June, the colony can swarm. This is a natural process whereby the colony reproduces itself by splitting into two. Swarms are not dangerous as the bees are only interested in swarming around their queen. If you find a swarm, ring Ian Shackleton on 07768362466 and he will contact London Bee Keepers Association swarm team and they will come and take the swarm away. The person who captures the swarm then owns it.



After July, the colony decreases in number so that it has less mouths to feed during winter when no nectar can be collected. Such is the honey bees' ability to produce honey, the beekeeper can harvest some of the honey in July and August, leaving sufficient to see the colony through winter.

That these Knightsbridge colonies can survive in the urban environment is the result of the availability of forage. With 384 acres of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, there is a lot of nectar to be found despite the large amount of mowed grass. The Royal Parks are doing a lot to improve the diversity within the park. There is the Tyburn Meadow near Lancaster Gate, as well as the beds in Kensington Gardens. And there are the many lime trees that provide large quantities of nectar during flowering. Park your car under a lime tree for a week during flowering and you will see the nectar on your car!

You can see the effects of the efforts to improve bio-diversity by walking through the Tyburn Meadow and the flower beds of Kensington Gardens and counting

the variety of bees at various times of the year.

Bees face a number of problems from pesticides to man himself. The highly efficient organic pest killers also kill bees. When there is a dearth of nectar, the beekeeper will feed his bees whereas the solitary bee doesn't have that friendly helping hand. So when the nectar flow returns there are many more honey bees around than solitary bees to compete for the nectar. A new arrival on our shores is the Asian Hornet, slightly bigger than the European Hornet but with marked yellow legs. Bees have no defence against them. They wait at the hive entrance, decapitate the bee and take the body back to their nest. They need 11kg of bees to feed their nest during the year.

What can we do to help the bee? Two things are important. We should stop using organic pesticides. Aphids can be controlled by spraying with soapy water – it clogs them up and they cannot move! Report sightings of Asian Hornets to the National Bee Unit on [nbu@apha.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@apha.gov.uk) But most important is to surround ourselves with flowers in both window boxes and our gardens. It makes Knightsbridge attractive to ourselves as well as the bees.



Hives on the rooftop of  
The Royal Albert Hall



# MONUMENTS, STATUES and MEMORIALS of HYDE PARK (North)

*Nigel Cox*

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## INTRODUCTION

This article provides a short account of the main statues, monuments and memorials in the central and northern parts of Hyde Park. A few notable buildings are also mentioned. It is set out in the order that they might be encountered on a long walk through the park, starting at Hyde Park Corner. (Articles in the Annual Reviews of 2023 and 2019 looked at the monuments in the south of the Park and in Kensington Gardens.)

Enter the park through Apsley Gate at Hyde Park Corner. Cross the road and continue north, across Serpentine Road, to the Broad Walk. Take the first path slanting off on the left alongside the railed-off shrubbery. Cross one junction. At the end of the shrubbery on the left is the "Little Nell" statue.

## "LITTLE NELL" STATUE



This statue, in artificial stone, was installed in 1975 and is a copy of a lost Art Nouveau statue of 1896

by William Robert Cotton (who also sculpted the Royal Artillery Memorial in the Mall). Originally described as a "winged child with fish", the name "Little Nell" was later associated with it, recalling the (more decorously clothed) child character in Charles Dickens's "Old Curiosity Shop". Dickens described her death scene with such mawkish pathos that Oscar Wilde opined that one would have to have a heart of stone to read it without laughing.

The statue previously stood near the junction of the paths opposite the Serpentine Café (formerly Dell Café). In 2006 it was decapitated by vandals, but it was restored and then moved to this location, thanks to an American donor living in London.

Retrace your steps to the first junction and head left (east), crossing over the Broad Walk and taking the path ahead. At the end, after a junction and near the Park's eastern railings, north of Curzon Gate, is the 7 July Memorial.

## THE 7 JULY MEMORIAL

This Memorial commemorates the 52 people killed in Islamist terrorist attacks in London on 7 July 2009. It was unveiled on the event's fourth anniversary by the then Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, now The King and Queen.

It consists of 52 stainless steel pillars or stelae, collectively representing the 52 victims, grouped together in four inter-linking clusters reflecting the four locations of the incidents. Constructed from solid-cast, long-lasting stainless steel, each



stela measures 3.5 metres high and is unique, with individual characteristic finishes brought about by the casting process. They are inscribed with the date, time and locations of the bombings. A stainless-steel plaque listing the names of the victims is sited on a grass bank at the far eastern end of the memorial.

The memorial was produced by a design team including architects Carmody Groarke and engineering team Arup, who worked in close consultation with representatives of the bereaved families and advisors from the Royal Parks and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. It was cast by a Sheffield foundry, Norton Cast Products.

Retrace your steps but now take the first path on the right – Lovers' Walk (an avenue mainly of walnut trees, but with an unusual spreading narrow-leaved ash on the right) – north to the Four Winds fountain (opposite Aldford Street).

## THE FOUR WINDS (or JOY OF LIFE) FOUNTAIN

This area originally accommodated a reservoir supplying the royal



palaces with drinking water. In the 1860s, when improved main water supplies meant the reservoirs were no longer needed, a sunken garden was created here instead, including the Boy and Dolphin Fountain now in the Rose Garden. In 1960 the sunken garden fell victim to the project to widen Park Lane, which involved encroaching on the Park. (Some find it ironic that this multi-lane highway, constructed at great expense, now offers only one northbound lane for motorists, with a speed limit of 20 mph.)

However a charity called the Constance Fund (set up by the philanthropist Sigismund Goetz (1866-1939) to promote outdoor sculpture and named after his wife) donated this new Fountain, then named the Joy of Life Fountain. Designed by T. B. Huxley-Jones it was erected in 1963.

It depicts two bronze figures holding hands while appearing to dance above the water, with four bronze children emerging from the pool.

In 2000-2001 the fountain's basins were redesigned and it was renamed the Four Winds Fountain. Sadly the fountain seems not to have been in operation for some years.

Each spring the area round the Fountain is a sea of daffodils: in 2008, the charity, Marie Curie Cancer Care, marked its 60th anniversary by planting 60,000 daffodil bulbs here.

Continue north, passing Upper Brook Street Gate (from where one can easily visit the modern

Memorial to Animals in War) to Speakers' Corner (see background below under Reformers' Tree).

Here, on the left, two recently installed panels tell some interesting anecdotes about 20th century speakers and hecklers, including a comment that even the rudest of hecklers never plumbed the

abusive depths common in today's social media.

Turn left and continue with the Park's northern railings to your right, until the start of North Carriage Drive (west of Cumberland Gate – access to underground parking, but closed to most vehicle traffic).

Cumberland Lodge, built in 1857, originally stood beside Marble Arch which was moved to this area from Buckingham Palace in 1851). It was moved in 1908 for traffic improvements, and then both Arch and Gate were moved again in 1961 as part of the widening of Park Lane. Until 1867 there was a matching East Lodge along Park Lane.

Cross North Carriage Drive and take the path opposite towards Stanhope Place Gate. In the grass on the east side of the path is the Vijnagram fountain plaque.

## VIJINAGRAM FOUNTAIN PLAQUE

This modest plaque was erected in 1965 to commemorate a spectacular fountain erected just to its west in 1867 by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association and donated by an Indian Prince, the Maharaja of Vijnagram, Gajapati III (1826-1879). (His state, now usually spelt Vizianagaram or Vijayanagaram, is now part of Andhra Pradesh). The fountain was an elaborate gothic work by Robert Keirle, similar to his Drinkwater Fountain of 1869 which can still be

seen in Regent's Park. The Hyde Park fountain was demolished in 1964 as the costs of repair were deemed prohibitive (and Victorian Gothic was unfashionable).



Cross back over North Carriage Drive and walk a little further westward (right), where at the junction of a path southwards and just before a manna ash tree (fine blossom in April), is the Freeman Family Drinking Fountain

## THE FREEMAN FAMILY DRINKING FOUNTAIN

This sphere of mirror-polished, marine-grade stainless steel has four drinking fountains at different heights to cater for different users. The gift of Mr Michael Freeman, a property developer, it was unveiled in 2009, the first public drinking fountain installed in Hyde Park for 30 years. The designer was David Harbor.

Now walk south to the right of the grassed expanse of the Parade Ground, often the site of commercial events which generate vital revenue for the Royal Parks. At the point where 11 paths converge is the Reformers' Tree monument.

## REFORMERS' TREE MONUMENT

This circular floor mosaic commemorates the Reformers' Tree, an old oak (or possibly an elm) which in 1866 became the rallying point for protests by the Reform League, a group campaigning to give all adult men the right to vote. During one protest the Reformers' Tree was





## YEAR OF THE CHILD DRINKING FOUNTAIN

In 1981 180,000 children attended a huge party on the Parade Ground to mark the International Year of the Child and 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. This fountain was designed by Theo Crosby and erected that year as a tribute to

set alight (possibly by mischievous children), but they continued to meet by the charred stump and used it as a notice board and viewed it as a symbol of the right of the people to assemble. It was the forerunner of Speaker's Corner, established in 1872 when an Act of Parliament allowed public speaking in the northeast corner of Hyde Park. People could talk about anything and say what they liked, provided they did not use indecent or obscene language

The mosaic was unveiled in 2000 by a left-wing politician, Tony Benn, father of the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hilary Benn. It appears to have replaced an oak tree unsuccessfully planted on the spot in 1977 by the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan. (However there are several healthy young oak trees to the north and west nearby, including a very large-leaved Hungarian oak.)

Walk south from the Reformers' Tree, towards the porticoed public conveniences (1900s), in front of which is the Year of the Child drinking fountain.



park staff.

North of the public conveniences is the Look Out Education Centre, a former police observation post and kennels.

Retrace your steps to the Reformers' Tree, then turn left down the slope to the Old Police Station.

## OLD POLICE STATION



It was completed in 1902 on the site of an earlier barracks and is in Queen Anne Style; today it houses the Royal Parks Headquarters. (The Royal Parks also use the cottage and store-yard to the left and Ranger's Lodge below, which dates from 1832. At the bottom of the hill on Serpentine Road is Serpentine Lodge, which is recorded in 1830.)

## MEMORIAL TO POLICE RESERVE CONSTABLE JACK AVERY

On the left side of the facade of the Old Police Station a plaque was erected in 2007 to commemorate a police officer based here, who was knifed to death in the Park in July 1940 when he questioned a man he believed to be a spy making drawings of anti-aircraft guns. The assailant was convicted of manslaughter and jailed for 15 years.

Leaving the Old Police Station to your left (and New Lodge over to your right – it was built for the Head Gardener in 1877) and continuing down the slope (past the police horse stables and Magazine Cottage (1861-1862), both on the left), you will see over to your right a path leading to the fenced-in Park

Central Nurseries or Super Nursery. Take the path and turn left at the nurseries, following the railings to the Hudson memorial.

## HUDSON MEMORIAL BIRD SANCTUARY

This wildlife sanctuary centres round a carved stone memorial commemorating the 19th century writer and naturalist, William Hudson

(1841-1922). He helped to establish the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and campaigned for wild areas in parks, at a time when the fashion was to keep everything within them neat and tidy.

The carving, by Sir Jacob Epstein (also responsible, 45 years later, for the Rush of Green statue at





Edinburgh Gate mentioned above), represents Rima, the child goddess of nature who featured in Hudson's novel "Green Mansions", published in 1904. The engravings are by the designer Eric Gill. The memorial was unveiled by Stanley Baldwin in 1925 and was immediately controversial. The Daily Mail described it as a "piece of artistic anarchy" and demanded that "this horror" should be taken out of the park. However several leading artists and writers wrote in its support.

H J Massingham (1888-1952), a writer on rural matters, commented that:

"The large eagle-like bird in the sculpture must be a portrait statue of old Hudson himself. When I used to ... lunch with him at Whiteley's, it was like taking one of the hunched eagles at the zoo out of his cage for an airing."

The sides of the central pool are too steep for birds to drink or bathe, but the area remains a refuge for smaller birds, such as robin, tits, blackbird, wren and goldcrest.

Now cross the grass (or if too wet or muddy make a dog's leg along the paths) south-eastwards towards the Serpentine to the path leading from the Rangers' Lodge (south of the Police Station) towards the Serpentine Car Park. In the area known as the Cockpit, north of the West Boat House, stands the Norwegian War Memorial, in the centre of a stand of Norway maple trees.

## NORWEGIAN WAR MEMORIAL

This was presented in 1978 by the Norwegian Navy and Merchant Fleet as thanks for British support during the Second World War. It consists of a boulder of pre-Cambrian granite, mounted on three smaller stones. The front is engraved: "You gave us a safe haven in our common struggle for freedom and peace". The back



reads: "Worked and shaped by forces of nature for thousands of years".

Walk across the grass down to Serpentine Road. Here just right or west of Serpentine Lodge and opposite the Boat Houses is a drinking fountain.

## LUTYENS DRINKING FOUNTAIN



This elegant metal fountain, presented by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle

Trough Association, was one of a number designed round 1950 by Robert Lutyens (son of the great architect Sir Edwin Lutyens) and Harold Greenwood. Another may be seen at the Serpentine Lido.

## RECEIVING HOUSE PLAQUE

In 1956 a plaque was put up, either on this fountain or nearby, to mark the site of the Royal Humane Society's Serpentine Receiving House. The Society was founded in 1774 by London doctors aimed at "Affording Immediate Relief to Persons Apparently Dead From Drowning". The

Serpentine, where local people sometimes missed their footing while washing clothes and which also attracted drunks, revellers and suicides, was a natural focus for their resuscitation services. From 1794 they used a converted farmhouse as a Receiving House. This was replaced in 1834, but then damaged by a bomb in 1940 and demolished in 1954. The plaque has now disappeared.

This concludes the walk. Should refreshment now be required, the nearest options are the Magazine (west along Serpentine Road to the Serpentine Car Park (north) and then across West Carriage Road) or the Serpentine Bar and Kitchen (east along Serpentine Road and past the Royal Parks Shop), just before the footbridge.

*Main Sources:*

Andrew Kershman  
*London's Monuments (2007)*

The Royal Parks  
*Buildings and Monuments in the Royal Parks (1997)*

Royal Parks website:  
[royalparks.org.uk](http://royalparks.org.uk)

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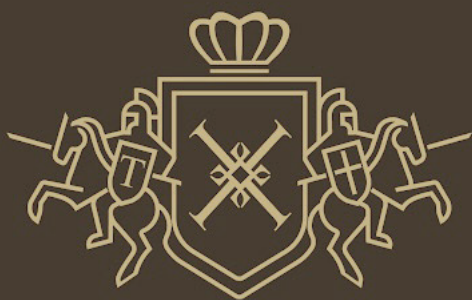




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A festive advertisement for Harrods hampers. The background is a deep red, adorned with green holly leaves and red berries at the top. In the center, several wicker hampers of various sizes are displayed, some with dark blue or black cross-hatch patterns. They are surrounded by numerous red gift boxes, many of which are tied with dark red ribbons. The scene is set on a light-colored wooden floor. At the bottom, there is a small red gift box, a round clock, and a small red bow.

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