

SEBRA NEWS W2

Paddington Station

PADDINGTON'S PANDEMIC PATROL



ISSUE No 99
SUMMER 2020

LOCKDOWN PHOTO TOUR WITH EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE BEAR PLUS MUCH MORE IN OUR BIGGEST EVER ISSUE

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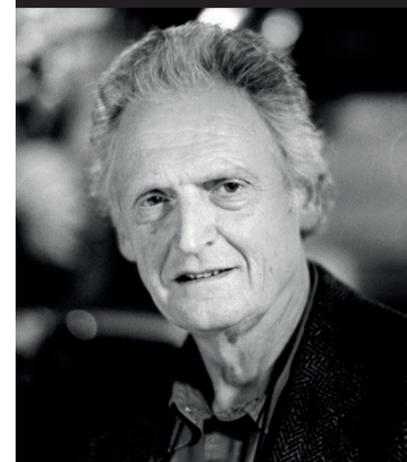
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From the Chairman

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STRANGE DAYS INDEED

The above is a line from John Lennon's song "Nobody Told Me" and whilst the music legend was certainly not writing about a global pandemic, those three words are very apt.

Strange days in fact that led to the Editor lying in the Arrivals Road at Paddington Station, taking a photograph for the cover whilst the British Transport Police looked on in amusement!

HINDSIGHT IS WONDERFUL

Our previous issue went to print at the end of February, when COVID-19 was prevalent in China. However, it was hardly being discussed in the UK at the time, though there is little doubt it had reached our shores. There was no mention of the disease on our pages, yet just under five months later the world has been turned upside down.

There will be an independent review of the Government's response and mistakes were certainly made. How was the Cheltenham Festival and at least one big football match allowed to go ahead?

I think the results of the review will make very sobering reading.

BAYSWATER BUILDING BOOM

Over the early days of the lockdown the streets in our area were very quiet, except for a constant flow of large trucks and cement mixers.

This was brought about by the amazing fact that, notwithstanding the lockdown, four major construction sites in our area continued to operate.

All four sites, with appropriate measures in place, continued without disruption and in this issue we are pleased to feature progress reports on them all.

What is disappointing is that there are no works carrying on at the Crossrail site at Paddington. One does wonder when Crossrail will finally begin to operate.



A MODERN DAY DAD'S ARMY

Throughout the whole lockdown I felt we were living through a modern day series of Dad's Army, with Boris Johnson as Captain Mainwaring, Matt Hancock in the role of Sergeant Wilson and Michael Gove as Corporal Jones.

The various U-turns and contradictions were farcical and to cap it all the excuses of the Chief Adviser beggared belief. Had a reporter asked him his name during that TV interview, Johnson might well have shouted "Don't tell him Cummings". Social distancing seems to have gone by the wayside too and as for hubs and bubbles I really have no idea what the rules are any more.

BEGGING & ROUGH SLEEPING

Once again we highlight throughout the magazine the problem with begging and rough sleeping in our midst. It cannot be right that begging persists along the entire length of Queensway.

For the past week we have had a rough sleeper curled up in his sleeping bag outside Bayswater station.

One wonders what is the point of spending over £5m on the Queensway Public Realm Project, if the begging, much of which is organised by East European gangs, cannot be stopped.

Have we been living through a modern-day version of Dad's Army?

SUPPORTING LOCAL SHOPS

When Coronavirus hit we really needed our local shops and those who worked in them. As restrictions ease it is now up to us all to do our bit to support local businesses. If we do not give them our full support many will simply not survive.

SUMMER PARTY & 2020 AGM

For me, one of the disappointments of the COVID-19 outbreak is the cancellation of our Summer Party. It also looks likely that our AGM in November will need to be postponed or even cancelled. This is particularly sad as this year we would have been celebrating our 50th anniversary.

So yes, these really are strange days, but I am pleased that we have been able to produce our magazine, I do hope you enjoy the next 142 pages...

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Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward



Life Under LOCKDOWN

Paddington Bear's photo tour of SEBRALAND

Our gallery of photographs were taken during April and May 2020, during the peak of lockdown restrictions in London. We are extremely grateful to SEBRA Member Teresa Stokes for the time and effort spent to provide this record of a historic time.



Advice to Joggers on the Broad Walk.



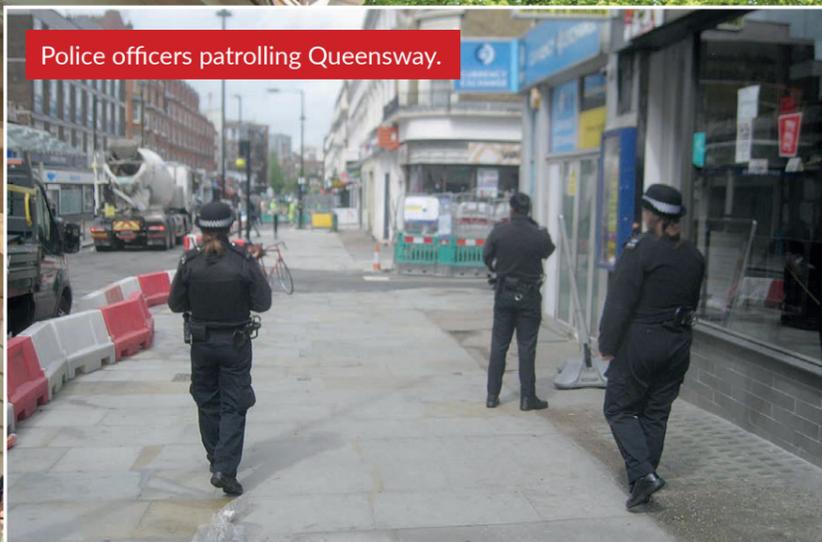
The inspiration for our cover. Your tour guide and a "We'll be back soon" message.



Work stopped at Crossrail site, Eastbourne Terrace.



Just one person at Sheldon Square.



Police officers patrolling Queensway.



Praed Street in lockdown. A great chance to clean shutters.



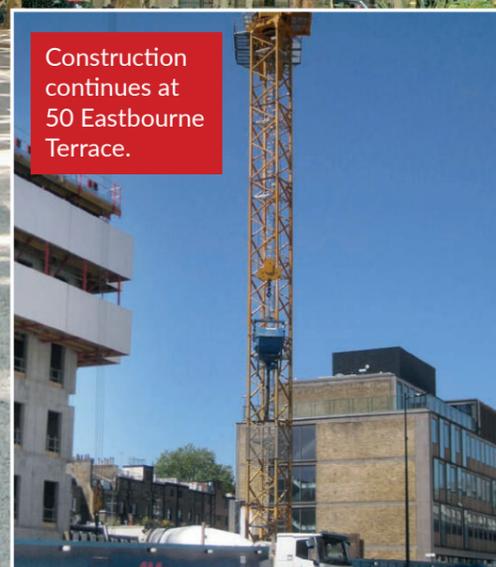
The Darcie Green and May Green barges at a near deserted quayside.



Graffiti got cleaned at 3-5 London Street.



Rules posted at Norfolk Square.



Construction continues at 50 Eastbourne Terrace.



This bear seems familiar and there's a lovely message.



The public toilets on Bayswater Road were opened.

More tour photos overleaf...

Life Under LOCKDOWN

Paddington's tour continues...

POLICE NOTICE

This area is covered by a [Community Protection Zone](#) To help combat on street begging & drink/drug related Anti Social Behaviour.

Due to COVID-19 all rough sleepers are being accommodated in designated hotels with 3 meals a day. This negates the need to beg!

If you are concerned about someone sleeping rough you can raise a report through www.streetlink.org

[@MPSBayswater](#)

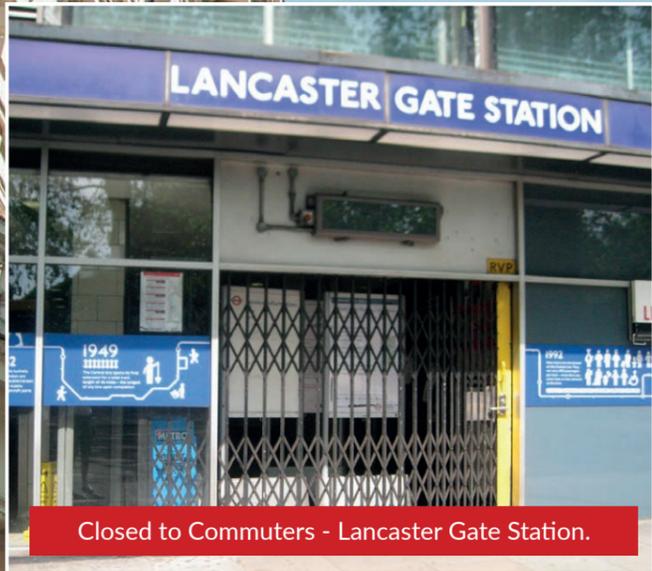
METROPOLITAN POLICE TOTAL POLICING



Workers social distancing at Paddington Square.



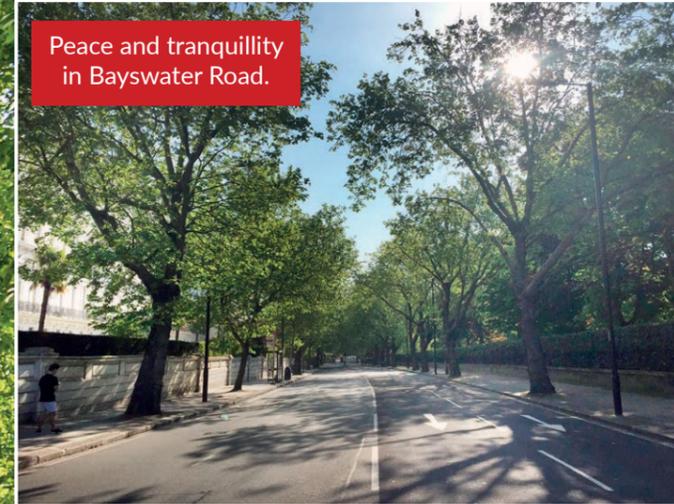
Queensway and Bayswater Stations were initially closed.



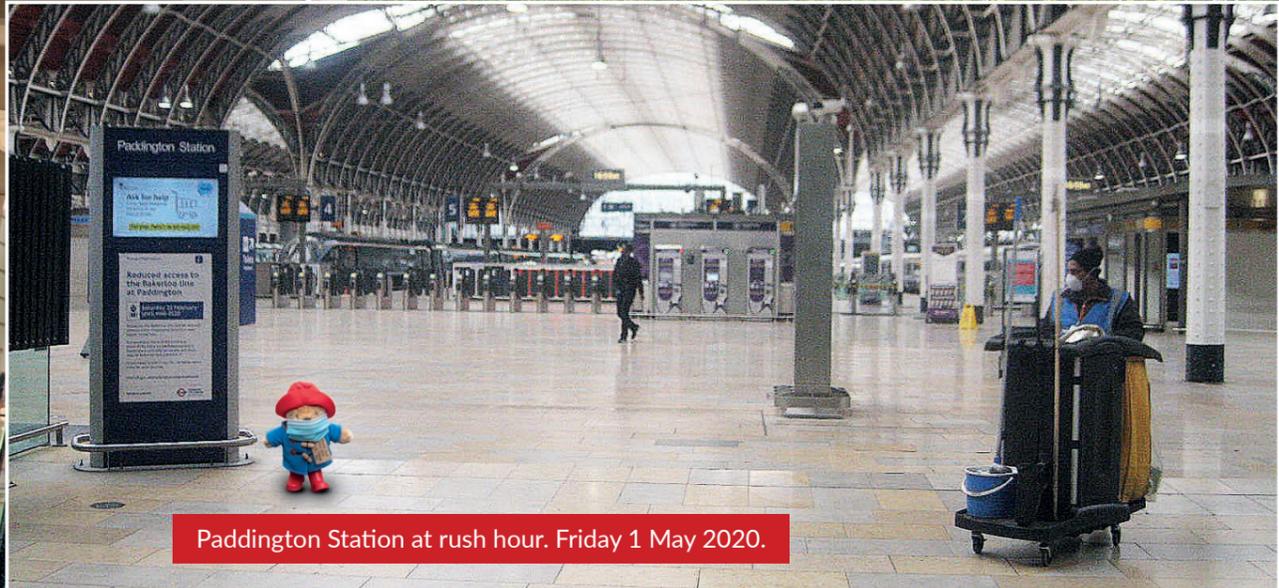
Closed to Commuters - Lancaster Gate Station.



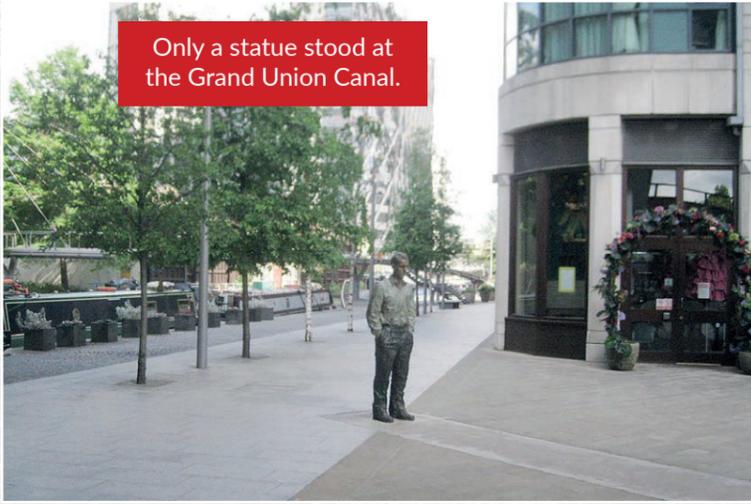
Shisha smoking on Queensway.



Peace and tranquillity in Bayswater Road.



Paddington Station at rush hour. Friday 1 May 2020.



Only a statue stood at the Grand Union Canal.



Begging at Tesco supermarket.



A Government advice banner on Bayswater Road.



Street sweepers were local heroes.



People were requested to limit use of pathways.



Private Ambulance at St Mary's Hospital.



"Letting off Steam"

"Mayflower" B1 class locomotive, built in 1948 by the North British Locomotive Company. It is pictured here in the Surrey Hills on its way to Bath.

Photograph by kind permission of www.steamdreams.co.uk

Safety Valve

As you might expect there are a number of subjects in this edition of Safety Valve which relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the page opposite there is a very interesting open letter to the Council Leader, and a letter about the "Sitting Ducks" in supermarket queues makes good reading. Away from the virus the problems associated with delivery scooters appear again plus two different "Pavement Problems" are highlighted by a SEBRA member. We begin though with a letter from Tim Ogden about difficulties on Inverness Terrace.

INVERNESS TERRACE - BECOMING A "NO GO" ZONE

Tim Ogden
Inverness Terrace, W2

Over the course of the COVID-19 crisis and the ensuing lockdown Westminster City Council and other Councils decided to home a large number of homeless, disturbed, drunk and drug addicted people in the southern end of Inverness Terrace together with a security detail to keep an eye on them.

I would say the security team are great but the antisocial behaviour is conducted away from them, these poor people seem to have no other support. Brent Council have re-housed some Council tenants in the sub-standard Airbnb hotel at No 80. I know the owner of No 82 was threatened with being beaten up when he asked one such tenant to move his car off his driveway.

Since this has happened the noise levels at night are very high, disturbed people are shouting on the road, drug dealers are operating openly and drunks are playing music late into the night.

Rubbish is thrown around and left in random piles, "hippy crack", gas-canisters often litter the gutters. The police are called here almost every night and during the day, a car had the back-



Inverness Terrace, where WCC "dump their undesirables".

window smashed in a robbery outside the hostel. I even saw an escort picked up at about 17:30 from near the bus stop. It is becoming a no-go zone after midnight as the various groups gather, argue and threaten each other.

We have lived here for over ten years and despite the community efforts to improve the street and the area, I actually think it has got worse and it is obvious Westminster Council think this is an area where they can dump their undesirables without proper support. This might reek of NIMBYism but putting so many disturbed people together in one area exposes residents and their families to raised levels of risk from burglary, criminal damage and assault.

Being constantly accosted for money by beggars on Queensway has sadly become the norm but it is more troubling to know that prostitutes and drug dealers ply their nefarious trade on the street, together with desperate, vulnerable and possibly dangerous people. I did see one arrested the other night and the police are making an effort but concentrating so many disturbed people in one place is a lethal cocktail for the residents.

Today a man staying in the AirBnB over the road was cautioned by police for holding a knife to his own throat on the balcony threatening to kill himself

I have to ask the question, how can the area improve like this?

ACTION NEEDED TO PREVENT "HEALTH DISASTER"

Open letter to Councillor Rachael Robathan - Leader, Westminster City Council

SEBRA Member
Craven Hill, W2

write as a matter of great urgency for Westminster City Council to take action to prevent a health disaster.

We see from parking suspension signs that have been posted outside 9A Craven Hill, W2 3EN that the major demolition and massive excavation of a new basement floor in a neighbouring property is to proceed from 22 June - at the time of writing just seven days away - despite the lockdown and the fact that the Government has compelled most school children to remain at home to do school work and decreed that any people who are able to should work from home.

This is a very urgent health issue for the following reasons: When the initial preparatory building work was conducted (apparently with mitigation measures in place to prevent dust and particles from escaping the development) neighbouring properties became full of a thick layer of particles inside and the gardens covered in a visible thick grey carpet of dust. This was noticeable to such an extent that the green trees - particularly conifers become covered in a dirty grey layer.

The much more ambitious demolition and incredibly noisy excavation part of the work will evidently recommence in just seven days despite lockdown still being in place. The children in the



Is a "health disaster" about to strike in Craven Hill?

neighbouring houses, obliged to be inside throughout the work period, will be subject to intolerable and deeply unhealthy conditions inside their own homes. They will have no possibility of venturing into their limited outside space or even keep windows open at the height of the summer.

As you know the Government advice during the health emergency created by Coronavirus is to have a well-ventilated environment. This will be impossible for those living close to this development.

The high level of noise generated, proposed continuously from 8.30am until 6pm, will prevent children from undertaking their studies as they are compelled to be at home.

For the adults living in the vicinity and working from home the hugely noisy building work taking place in very close proximity will prevent many people

from undertaking their work duties. It will prevent them from undertaking video, audio and telephone conference calls and meetings, whilst disrupting and disturbing residents - obliged by lockdown to be in their homes, with a very damaging impact between 8.30am and 6:00pm. This will debilitate people and is likely to have a permanent long-term impact on the health and welfare of the adults and children residing in the neighbourhood.

I would urge you in the strongest possible terms to take action to protect the health of all the residents. To postpone the works until lockdown has been lifted and children have returned full-time into the school classrooms and people are able to return to their workplaces, or at the very least have a means to escape the construction work.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Response from Councillor Rachael Robathan Leader, Westminster City Council

The current advice issued by Government is that construction sites are permitted to operate and unfortunately the Council has no powers to prevent building sites going ahead.

I have spoken to the department overseeing the development and have been advised that they are already engaging with the contractors to ensure minimal disruption to nearby residents.

The officer dealing with the construction site will instruct the contractor to drop leaflets to all sensitive residential premises in close proximity to the site before commencing particularly intrusive works, to establish communication with local residents. This information should include the start date, duration and nature of the project, principal stages of the project and details of contact names and numbers of appropriate site personnel in event of noise complaints.

The Council's main control over construction site noise is through restricting the hours of noisy work to 8am to 6pm on

weekdays and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays (only for non-noisy works) and no works at all on Sundays or Public and Bank Holidays. A Council officer will monitor the site to ensure that the contractors use Best Practicable Means to minimise noise, vibration and dust throughout the project; this includes using well-maintained and silenced plant and equipment including compressors, generators and power tools as well as dust suppression methods.

The officer will continue to engage with the contractors to ensure that they are using appropriate working methods and equipment and will serve a Section 60 notice under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 on commencement of works to formalise the working hours and the requirements of Westminster's Code of Construction Practice.

Anyone disturbed by building works can log a complaint either via the Council's website www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it or by calling the Environmental Action Line on 020 7641 2000.



Around Bayswater

Once again you will find a vast range of topics featured in "Around Bayswater", including a very interesting "Veteran's Tale", coverage of the new Lord Mayor of Westminster, an article from Paul Dimoldenberg about a book he has written, along with content about COVID-19 from various perspectives. Regular writers Bob Rogers, Andrew Beverley and Professor Lewis Lesley have provided contributions and there is a lot to read about the construction projects taking place around SEBRALAND. We remain grateful to everyone who has taken the time to write for the magazine, and as in the previous issue we begin with an update from WCC Leader Councillor Rachael Robathan.



Councillor Rachael Robathan Leader, Westminster City Council

Following Nickie Aiken's win in the 2019 General Election, Councillor Rachael Robathan was appointed to succeed her as Leader of Westminster City Council in January 2020. We are very grateful to Councillor Robathan for taking the time to write her second update for SEBRA NEWS W2, especially during this time of national crisis.

COUNCIL LEADER'S UPDATE

SEBRA NEWS W2 readers don't need me to tell them the last three months have been without equal in recent memory.

Coronavirus has left its scars across Westminster, and the Council has concentrated on two priorities – looking after vulnerable people and doing our best to ensure businesses have stayed afloat until lockdown eased. We were hugely helped in this effort by the army of 3,000-plus volunteers – SEBRA residents among them – who came forward to do everything from make meal boxes to deliver shopping.

The Council has worked at pace on helping businesses by distributing millions in Central Government grants

and helping our 3,700 licensed bars, restaurants and cafés get ready for reopening by encouraging them to serve customers in temporary outdoor areas.

As normality slowly returns, we are returning to our original City for All plan. You'll remember that a key part of that is affordable housing, so let me begin with that as the first in a series of updates on Council activities:

CONSTRUCTION:

All 17 of the Council-owned construction sites have now reopened. The latest site to begin operating was that at Ordnance Mews, Melrose and Keith House and Helmsdale House in Maida Vale. These three landfill sites

are in the final stages of construction and when completed will provide 15 properties, comprised of one, two and three bedroom homes, for social rent. So far, the Council has delivered 803 affordable homes since 2018 and is halfway towards its overall target of 2,400 new homes by March 2023.

All Council construction sites have reopened.



CITY PLAN

Through the City Plan's ten core strategic objectives, Westminster will remain a world class global city. We submitted our plan to the Secretary of State in November 2019. This followed an informal and statutory consultation and approval by the Council's Cabinet and Full Council.

CITY PLAN 2019 – 2040

Two independent Inspectors have been appointed to examine the plan and they control the timetable for examination. They have recently issued formal 'Matters, Issues and Questions' for the Council and other stakeholders to respond to – the Council has submitted nine statements in response which will be made available on the Council's website. Public hearings are likely to take place virtually in the autumn, following which if the plan is approved, it can be adopted by the Council.

WESTMINSTER WARD BOUNDARY CHANGES

Following the end of the consultation period, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England made final recommendations for Westminster Ward boundary changes on 12 May 2020.

A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force the recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements for Westminster City Council to be implemented at the local elections in 2022. The boundaries can be found on the LGBCE website at:

<http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

There are 18 Wards and 54 Councillors under the new arrangements, and this results in changes to 15 of the current wards in London.



OXFORD STREET DISTRICT UPDATE

Oxford Street to be "The Smartest Street in Europe."

We have been re-engaging with residents and businesses to help shape our thinking ahead of sharing updated plans in the autumn.

Our vision remains to improve and future-proof Oxford Street District as a key destination of vital importance within the West End. We are ambitious to go further and ensure our plans reflect the Council's environmental agenda and commitment to "smart cities" technology. That's why we are now taking a little time to update our Oxford Street plans so we can deliver the Smartest Street in Europe as well as the highest environmental standards. We remain totally committed to continuing to work in close collaboration with residents, businesses and landowners.

PUBLIC TOILETS REOPENED

The toilet in Broadwick Street is now open again after being closed for a period on police advice.



Bayswater Road toilets were briefly closed for maintenance but reopened.

Two other toilets in Bayswater Road and Wellington Place were closed briefly for maintenance but have now reopened.

In my last update I referred to the fact the Council was preparing to tender for a new public conveniences contract. Due to the pandemic that proposal has been put on hold for the next six months, but it remains our objective. *continues overleaf...*

BEGGING AND ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE

Lockdown presented the Council with enormous challenges as the rough sleeping population soared and we faced the challenge of ensuring this often difficult-to-reach community could self-isolate safely. At the height of the pandemic we placed 249 rough sleepers into temporary budget hotels with meals and medical help on hand.

At the start of July, we closed that hotel provision and worked hard to find follow-on sustainable accommodation for most of these people, as well as employment opportunities to help them move on and maintain a life away from the streets. Rough sleeping numbers remain high - in the Bayswater area we found 44 people on the streets on an average night in June, compared to 29 the previous month.



Rough sleeping numbers "remain high" in Bayswater.

Our rough sleeping team continues to do an outstanding job in very difficult circumstances. **SEBRA NEWS W2** readers should also be assured that we are working with police to tackle any anti-social behaviour begging associated with rough sleepers.

20MPH ZONES

As Westminster's streets begin to get busier and the Council works to kick-start the local economy, the implementation of the 20mph scheme is essential to making it easier than ever for people to safely travel around the City. We have commissioned 40 different schemes to open up the City for pedestrians and cyclists, including 11km of cycle lanes and swathes of wider pavements together with social distancing signs.



20 mph limits will be rolled out and 11km of cycle lanes have been commissioned.

The latest in the series of consultations on how the 20mph scheme will work has just closed and the new speed limits will be rolled out across the City over the summer.

The 20mph limit in Westminster will apply to all of the roads under Westminster's control. A series of 20mph speed limits have already been introduced around 39 schools in the City.

BACK TO CITY HALL

City Hall in Victoria Street has now reopened - but with a substantial difference. We have set aside space for front line staff who need to be in to work from the building, but for the majority of staff working from home will remain the norm. Like many businesses, we have found that many of our 2,000 staff have - with appropriate support - been able to do their jobs remotely, and that has translated to Council meetings too. In May we nominated our first Lord Mayor via an online meeting - a historic first for that position. We plan to use the remote working lessons learned during lockdown to reconfigure how the Council operates. But the important thing is none of this will affect residents - our excellent value for money services will be delivered just as before.

CHANGES AT THE TOP

There have been some changes to our senior team at the Council as we move out of lockdown.

We welcome Raj Mistry, who replaces Sara Sutton in the role of Executive Director, Environment and City Management. Raj joins us from the London Borough of Lambeth where he is Director of Environment and Streetscene. Sara moves to become a director in our adult social care team where her experience and drive will be hugely welcome.

Debbie Jackson meanwhile joins as Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing from the Mayor of London's office while Barbara Brownlee leads our work on new affordable housing. I am confident we have a really strong team in place to take on the next phase of our City for All programme.

That is something of a whistle stop tour of our activity in the last three months. May I thank SEBRA residents for their help and tremendous contribution during lockdown, and I look forward to updating you in the autumn when I hope our City will be recovering and back to the place we all love.



City of Westminster

FROM ROYAL LANCASTER WITH LOVE



The in-house team were quarantined on site and raised £1000.00 for MIND charity.



A HUGE MESSAGE OF THANKS

Since early April, the 18-storey Royal Lancaster London hotel on the border of Hyde Park has lit up every night with a special message in honour of our Health Heroes. The hotel also recently launched a "Thank You NHS" package offering 50% off future stays for NHS workers, as a little thank you for all their hard work during the coronavirus pandemic.

To make a booking please visit: royallancaster.com/promotions/thank-you-nhs/

A MARATHON FOR MIND CHARITY

On 26 April, the date of the original 2020 London Marathon, the in-house hotel team took part in the 2.6 Challenge to help fundraise for UK charities in need of donations.

The team, who have quarantined together onsite since the start of lockdown, collectively ran 26 miles on a treadmill in the lobby and raised over £1000 in support of Mind Charity, helping those suffering with mental health issues.

LOCKDOWN - "A RESTFUL INTERLUDE"

One of our regular contributors has found that the limitations of lockdown have brought some welcome tranquillity to her particular corner of SEBRALAND.

Nicky Hesseberg
Westbourne Park Villas, W2

I sit down to write this on Saturday, the day after the distanced VE Day celebrations. Apart from the birdsong and children's voices from a neighbouring garden, all is totally quiet. It is of course still lockdown. It seems a lifetime ago that I wrote my last contribution to SEBRA NEWS W2, when there appeared to be so many annoyances and irritations going on in the SEBRA area.

For example: In November 2019 we had our pavement in Westbourne Park Villas taken up and beautifully restored to a blissful flatness by Conway's men who worked tirelessly in pretty inclement weather, to get the job finished by Christmas - which they did. The New Year was welcomed in and barely had the newly installed pavement slabs begun to settle into their new slots, when suddenly notices were being hung to say that parking was suspended again - the road was about to be dug up, again by Conway on behalf of G.Network. What for, we asked, and the answer came back "4G cable" and so the process was started, the trough along the roadside kerb dug out and selected pavement slabs lifted and mysterious coloured marks appeared intermittently along the street. This was inconvenient, dirty, and noisy but nothing to be done about it - apparently this was something beyond the control of WCC.

After some weeks of parking inconvenience for residents, with relief we said goodbye to the machinery and the heavy duty lorries which ploughed



Gas main works at the junction of Porchester Road and Westbourne Park Villas.

up and down the Villas collecting and delivering and generally clearing the site. Then we had the news from John Zamit that the entrances/exits to Westbourne Park Road, leading into Porchester Road, were to be dug up so that the layout of the roads could be altered. The barriers arrived accompanied by the sheds, the piles of equipment and all the paraphernalia of road disruption. Never mind - it was Westbourne Park Road not the Villas. But suddenly, without warning and certainly no information about parking suspensions this time, the barriers were back in the Villas. "Now what is about to happen?" the inhabitants were wondering.

The diggers came in accompanied by yet more barriers and long yellow tubes piled high along the kerbs, and then the work started: long troughs were dug - again - this time exposing our gas main and this then proceeded to extend into Porchester Road which by then was sealed off at Lord Hill's Bridge which meant that only cyclists and pedestrians had direct access to Harrow Road.

By now we were all on the point of lockdown and things were becoming serious on the COVID-19 front, but the work continued. It appeared that the gas main needed to be re-sheathed into the large yellow tubing which was stacked up waiting to be used. The final blow was a water leak one night: a driver on a digger had gone through the main and there was a small river cascading down Porchester Road. The repair of that lasted a couple of days with the water being switched on and off at strategic times so that residents could fill up kettles and jugs with water for use when necessary.

This may seem to be a complaint but it is not because as a result of all this work carrying on and closing the Villas and Westbourne Park Road, we have been living in blissful peace. We were and are in lockdown so the usual traffic on the Westway in front of us dropped to a trickle and the trains going into and out of Paddington virtually disappeared with only an occasional tube train, and best of all no airplanes above us.

No delivery bikes zipping and down the Villas, no Uber-cabs delivering, collecting and speeding along to their next fares, no gigantic lorries full of goodness knows what driving down the Villas because their Google map tells them it is the way, omitting the important information that we have road narrowing through which they very often could not get through. And on Saturdays, no troupes of tourists looking for the Portobello Road again with Google maps as their guide.



Nicky has been "living in blissful peace" as a result of lockdown and roadworks.

The air has been fresh and unpolluted, the spring greenery on the trees and in the gardens beautiful. Our entertainment (which admittedly is pretty low in content recently) has been seeing the odd car rushing to get out at the end, only to have to turn around and come back again. And our admiration for the skilful drivers of the delivery lorries and vans, and the refuse trucks driving in reverse in front of us to the other end of the road to load or unload before driving back again.

Westbourne Park Road and Westbourne Park Villas have become havens of calm because of their blocked off ends - who could have imagined that these works could be regarded as a relief to the normal run of things. The Villas has become a road for exercise - dogs, children on scooters, joggers, cyclists, a road that one can walk down without worrying about what is looming behind one. Even Westbourne Park Road has been easy to cross without being in danger of being knocked off one's feet and sent flying to St Mary's hospital by some speeding vehicle.



"Yet another water leak" at Lord Hill's Bridge.

But I fear this will all come to an end soon, and we will be back to the normal flow of traffic, as word has now come to us that the end of the Villas, Westbourne Park Road and Porchester Road are due to be resurfaced and by the time this reaches the readers, our quiet life will have vanished. Already underway, Talbot Road currently has the G.Network trench yawning in front of them with

the accompanying diggers - and I wonder, who informed them that they are Key Workers as they proclaim? (see photograph below).

So by the time the next issue of SEBRA NEWS W2 goes to press, all ends of roads up here will be open for business again and the roar of London traffic will no doubt be returning to us once more as the lockdown is eased and those going back to work and discouraged from using public transport. Who could have imagined that our lockdown, in so many ways has been a restful interlude?



Digging up Talbot Road. Nicky wonders who proclaims key workers?

LOCKDOWN RELAXATION

Boris has just issued his new instructions with a slight relaxation of the lockdown rules. The end of the Villas, Porchester Road and Westbourne Park Road are going to have new tarmac laid. The enormous pieces of machinery and materials to do the job are parked behind barriers ready to begin BUT...there is yet another water leak at the start of Lord Hill's Bridge so work for the moment has stopped! A few more days of freedom with the Villas staying closed?

NICKY'S AFTERWORD

JULY 2020

And now life is returning to some kind of normal. There are still queues waiting endlessly to get into Waitrose, but they are not as long as previously.

Shops are opening, and virtually every restaurant is doing take-aways, so there is no need to rely on home-cooking.

The A40 (Westway) is full again, mainly delivery vans and huge Royal Mail lorries. Our street is open into Porchester Road, so the racetrack has returned with cars and motor bikes going as fast as possible over our speed bumps.

The trains are running again and we now have joggers and walkers, plus dogs, scooters, bicycles, roller skates and skateboards to add to our usual traffic. It is almost like normal, but not quite, we are still waiting for our liberty orders.



June 2020 - Major works completed on Porchester Road.

THE SHOW MUST NOT GO ON

From the Editor



Rafael Todes, daughter Isabella, wife Helena and son Max perform in Alexander Street.

A quiet part of Bayswater hit the headlines during the early days of the Coronavirus lockdown when police were forced to halt an impromptu concert.

Rafael Todes, a teacher at The Royal Academy of Arts, and his family, were performing works by Shostakovich, but apparently fell foul of laws designed to stop people gathering in groups.

Residents of Alexander Street had been enjoying live performances for a number of weeks, but the shows were brought to a halt in late April following safety concerns.

The story was widely covered on social media and in the national press, and a video on Facebook shows an apologetic police officer telling the musicians: "I don't enjoy this part of the job but it's going to cause the street to



keep gathering. I'm not here to fine you don't worry but the whole street can't be doing this".

Mr Todes' Facebook page reported: "The final pop-up Alexander Street Quartet Concert. Shostakovich's 4th Quartet closed down by the Police -tactfully!"

The concerts began when a neighbour requested "...a little concert for the lady who lives upstairs" and continued after the first performance proved so popular.

At the time of writing the lockdown regulations have been relaxed somewhat. Perhaps when the rules allow, the quartet might once again bring the sound of classical strings back to Bayswater.

Read more and view the videos on the Classic FM website: bit.ly/sebra1025



Just doing their job. The police intervention was handled "tactfully".

Bob ROGERS' CORNER



Bob Rogers is a bit of a SEBRA legend. He has been a member for many years and his regular contributions to our magazine have covered a diverse range of subjects.

A keen railway enthusiast and most certainly an expert on the Buses of Bayswater, Bob is also a regular at Speakers' Corner. With his trademark beret, he is instantly recognisable in our particular part of London.

THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF A LOCAL RESIDENT



Door Supervisor Liiban Shakat on duty at Marlborough Gate, Kensington Gardens.

COVID-19 AND TOILETS

We are living with strict COVID-19 social distancing best practice and the lack of public toilets. Having said that, it all depends which gate to the parks you enter or leave by and you are reminded in quite aggressive terms that the park is not a toilet or a rubbish bin and you are invited to take your litter home with you.

The message often reads "The park is not a toilet." There is, however, no suggestion as to how you tackle your bladder or bowel problems whilst in the park if there is no convenient toilet. This is not just a problem in London but a problem throughout the United Kingdom and one which will not reduce by saying the park is not a toilet.



The sign says it all.

At Marlborough Gate, for example, I discovered by chance that whereas these toilets have been locked for several weeks they have been reopened on a

staggered basis, which seems to imply that over the working day there would be two 2-hour periods when the toilet would be closed for deep cleaning, opening at 11 o'clock in the morning and closing fairly early in the evening.

THE NEW BENCHES IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

As indicated in the Spring 2020 issue of this magazine these benches have been installed for a little while, but having tested them out myself I think they look mean and they pinch.

Once one becomes bench-conscious, you rapidly become aware of how many different varieties of park bench there are scattered around the Royal Parks – some are much more comfortable than others, but I do appreciate the pit stop which goes with the benches, i.e. the sanded area which enables you to park a wheelchair, shopping trolley or baby buggy without damaging the grass because there is no grass to damage.



Just a few examples of park benches.



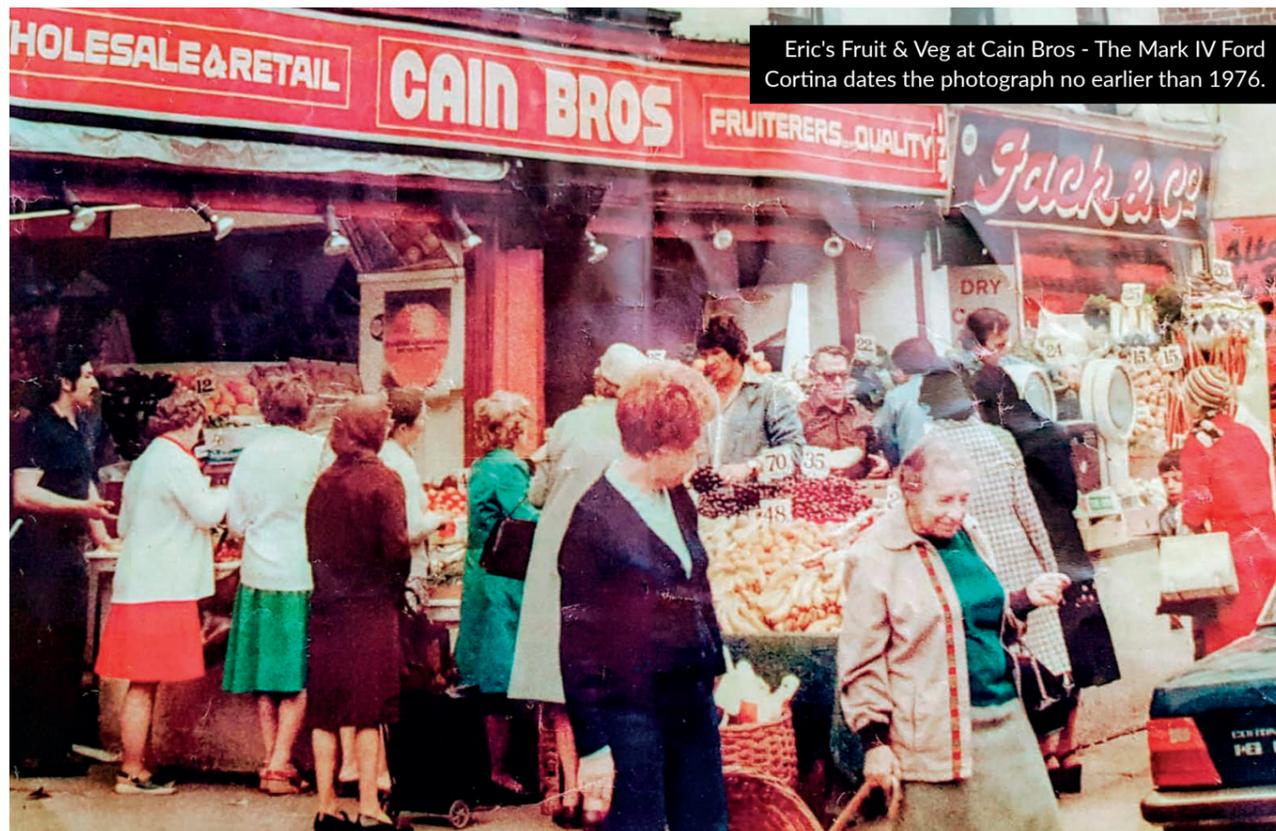
So a mere gesture at providing a toilet at a very, very busy point in the gardens, thereby increasing the complexity of our lives about a natural matter which seems to embarrass park authorities to a quite ridiculous extent. We do need toilets, we need them open and that going to such places is as respectable as going to the library, whilst they remain open (in the future) and any toilets therein remain available.

I am fully aware that the toilets are damaged from time to time but this means we must be more alert at protecting the toilets from being damaged. One trick is for people to leave the taps on so that they flood over the hand basin and make everything wet and miserable.

Places like Kensington Gardens and Rembrandt Gardens are very popular with families because they currently do

Editor's note

On our photo "walkabout" John and I stopped for a brief chat with Liiban. He advised us that the Marlborough Gate toilets (which are open from midday to 7pm) are now deep-cleaned for 30 minutes at 2pm and 4pm each day.



Eric's Fruit & Veg at Cain Bros - The Mark IV Ford Cortina dates the photograph no earlier than 1976.

THEN AND NOW - ERIC'S FRUIT STALL

In our last issue we featured a few "Then and Now" photographs from SEBRALAND featuring train stations and also the District Line construction in Craven Hill. Here though, courtesy of William Kennedy we have some more modern history.



Almost all members will be familiar with Eric's Fruit Stall at the junction of Queensway and Westbourne Grove, and here we have a pair of photographs of the very same Eric in the very same location, along with a modern day one.

Both archive photographs are dated from the 1970s, the one above is certainly dated from 1976 onwards, the one below shows post-decimalisation prices so probably dates from the early 1970s. Eric started working for Mr Cain in 1966 as a "Saturday Boy" and went full time in 1968 when Mr Cain's sons took over running the shop. Also pictured (to the left) is Gary, who started full time work at the same time as Eric.

In 1981 the Cain brothers rented out the front of the shop to Eric, but retained the rear of the shop to concentrate their

efforts on an increasingly successful wholesale business.

Of particular interest is the prices shown from the early 1970s. Apples at 28p and grapes at 60p for a pound in weight is equivalent to £3.60 and £7.80 at 2020 prices. Visit Eric's stall today though and you will pay just £1.00 and £2.00 respectively. Fresh fruit really is very good value these days.

So if you are in the area, you might like to give the supermarket fruit a miss, and buy it from a man who has been in the trade for almost 55 years.



Eric Carter, still smiling and selling his wares after almost 55 years.



Paddington Square Welcomes Mace on site

Mace will shortly be taking over as Principal Contractor for Paddington Square, with responsibility for the main construction phase through to final completion and handover to Sellar and Great Western Developments Ltd. This follows completion of the site demolition and piling works which were recently concluded by Erith. Later in the summer you will start to see the Mace name appear on the hoardings and around site.

Mace is the international construction and consultancy firm which has built many of London's most iconic buildings and structures, including The Shard, the London Eye and Tottenham Hotspur Stadium which was completed in 2019. They were a key part of the delivery of the 2012 Olympics and are presently working at part of the regeneration of Battersea Power Station and delivery of the new art quarter in Stratford, where they are delivering projects for the BBC and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Project Director for Mace will be John Kennedy, who has worked on some of Mace's most prestigious projects including More London, Heathrow Terminal 5 and The Shard. John will be responsible for overseeing every aspects of the build, including the planning, execution, monitoring, control and closure.

He will be joined by David Redfern as Construction Director, Richard Doyle as the Main Build Construction Lead and Geoff Hall as the London Underground Ltd (LUL) Construction Lead.

John KENNEDY
Project Director, MACE



David REDFERN
Construction Director, MACE



The initial Mace site team will be comprised of Mark Jordan, Richard Byrne and Stuart Grix, with more names joining in due course.



Tanner Lane will be the name for the new section of road linking Praed Street and Winsland Street.

During the exceptional circumstances created by the COVID-19 crisis, Mace has implemented a number of changes to its site procedures to ensure that both site staff and members of the public are kept safe. As a result, all staff that can will be working from home and within site measures have been put in place to ensure social distancing can be maintained. This includes significant changes having been made to the staff and operatives' welfare and canteen facilities.

Mace has extensive experience in the creation of beautiful, functional and iconic buildings and Paddington Square promises to be another iconic part of the London skyline. Paddington Square is an integral part of Paddington's revitalisation and designed by world renowned architect Renzo Piano Building Workshop, it will be a mixed-use scheme housing retail, office space and one of London's best rooftop dining experience with views across the city's skyline. It will reimagine the approach to Paddington Station, featuring a new concourse leading to London Underground's Bakerloo line station. We look forward to providing further updates on how Mace will deliver the project in due course and look forward to engaging closely with all local stakeholders to ensure to smooth delivery of this prestigious project.



Location for the new Tanner Lane.

VEOLIA PROVIDES OUTSTANDING SERVICES FOR WESTMINSTER RESIDENTS



Paul Simon - 17 years of service to Veolia.

Veolia delivers recycling and waste collections and street cleansing activities for Westminster residents on behalf of Westminster City Council.

After the coronavirus outbreak, Veolia's waste operatives were recognised as key workers. Playing an essential role in protecting public health, Veolia's Westminster team has ensured the borough's waste services have been able to continue as normal throughout the pandemic.

Responding to the Crisis

To maintain Westminster's high standard of household collections and street cleansing services, Veolia undertook a carefully planned approach to managing its recycling and waste operations.

As residents continued to spend more time at home, collection frequencies were increased to make sure the borough remained clean and safe.

Deep cleaning activities were also amplified to include specialised disinfecting of public walkways, street furniture, mini-recycling centres, public bins and bus stops.

Veolia's team also rallied around Westminster's high-risk residents by using its vehicles to deliver food donations from supermarkets to local people in need. This significantly helped the North Paddington Food Bank.

Veolia Westminster Streets Teams continue to keep the borough clean and safe.



WCC Leader Rachael Robathan thanks Senior Contract Manager Helder Branco and the crews.



Westminster Residents Spread #StreetSmiles for Veolia Waste Workers

To acknowledge the outstanding contribution of waste workers carrying out essential services during the pandemic, Veolia launched #StreetSmiles.

The campaign asked people to place a smiling sun picture in their window or somewhere near to their bins where their waste collectors could see it.

Westminster residents showed their support by putting out thank you notes and drawings on their bins.

Ricardo Fernandes, a recycling collector in Westminster was overwhelmed by the local appreciation shown: "When I started to see the smiling suns and 'thank you' notes coming through for us it made my day. I'm proud to be doing what I do and keeping communities going. Seeing the public support out there makes a huge difference for us."

Here are some messages from Westminster residents that brightened the days of local waste crews.

"Veolia's waste collection teams continued to work around the clock to keep Westminster clean, clear and moving. Their dedication to carrying out this vital service for residents is hugely appreciated by all."

Councillor Rachael Robathan, Leader, Westminster City Council

Continues...

"On behalf of all those who live and still work in the Bayswater surrounds, 'THANK YOU, Team Veolia', your efforts have not gone unnoticed."

William, Bayswater Resident

"A big 'thank you' to all members of the waste and recycling teams at Veolia for keeping the trucks collecting and street sweepers sweeping. During the lockdown, seeing the service still being maintained at such a high level was the bit of normality we needed."

Colin, Westminster Resident

"I'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to our wonderful Westminster cleansing team. They are second to none - they keep our streets shining all year round. We are so lucky in Westminster to have such a brilliant cleansing team."

Julia, Westminster Resident



#StreetSmiles drawing dedicated to Veolia crews.

Unique Social Distancing Ambassadors Initiative in the West End

Veolia Westminster also played a significant role in the safe reopening of London's West End, combining daily cleansing activities with a unique scheme that has seen the introduction of 15 Social Distancing Ambassadors (SDAs) to help Westminster residents and visitors safely transition out of lockdown.

Launched between Veolia, Heart of London Business Alliance (HOLBA) and New West End Company (NWECA), the SDA initiative will provide three months of targeted hygiene and social distancing guidance, for those returning to the UK's busiest shopping and entertainment district.

34 hand sanitising stations have been installed between Bond Street and Piccadilly, with the SDAs in place seven days a week, manning and refilling the stations, monitoring social distancing protocols and handing out protective masks and gloves.

The SDA roles have been filled by Westminster locals through Westminster City Council's recruitment service, which helps the youth, the long term unemployed and those from vulnerable backgrounds to find sustainable workplace opportunities. Veolia has also provided the SDAs with specialised safety training to safeguard them as they help to protect the safety of others.

Helder Branco, Senior Contract Manager for Veolia in Westminster, said:

"The Social Distancing Ambassadors initiative is in line with the ongoing commitments of our street cleansing and collections teams to ensure the streets of Westminster are always clean and safe."

"Working with Heart of London Business Alliance and New West End Company, we recognised that delivering the safe reopening of the West End - one of the most visited locations in the UK - required a unique plan that puts public health at the forefront. I hope that the highly visible SDA staff and stations will remind people of the need to remain vigilant while in public and to always keep their hands clean."

Ros Morgan, Chief Executive of Heart of London Business Alliance, said:

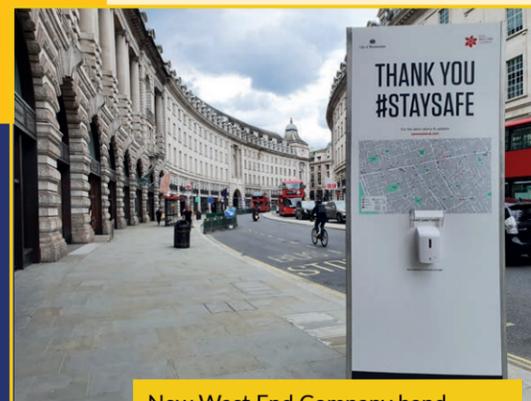
"Heart of London Business Alliance is pleased to be partnering with New West End Company & Veolia on this



SDAs at a Heart of London Business Alliance hand sanitising station in Leicester Square.

initiative, to aid the reopening and recovery of London's West End in direct response to the COVID-19 crisis. As a business improvement district, our sole aim is to support our businesses and drive the reopening and recovery of the Heart of London Business area."

Dee Corsi, Chief Operating Officer at New West End Company, said: **"The safety of those returning to the West End is of paramount importance to us, and over the past few months, we have been working closely with our partners at Veolia, Westminster City Council and Transport for London to ensure that the district is in the best possible position to welcome colleagues and customers back safely. The Social Distancing Ambassadors will provide a much needed reassurance to the public as more people return to the West End over the coming months."**



New West End Company hand sanitising station on Regent Street.

GREEN LUNGS IN LOCKDOWN

RUTH SULLIVAN

Our local parks, Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, have become an even more vital part of our lives since lockdown in March. Always a joy to dip into whether taking a scenic short cut from Bayswater to Kensington or strolling down cool, tree-lined avenues for the pleasure, they have been an essential, everyday safety valve to pandemic stress, offering a temporary escape route from cabin fever.

Egyptian Geese in Kensington Gardens.



parakeets – kept us company. All the ingredients of a physical and mental lifeline.

Except that it was not totally stress-free.

We marvelled at a deserted Bayswater Road at Lancaster Gate as we crossed into the park, agreeing it was an eerie experience. Inside the gate, Royal Parks had clearly marked out the two-metres social distance requirement in a yellow line on the ground. But then the traffic began. Not vehicles but two-legged hazards, joggers, many of who ignored the health guidelines, just intent on running in a straight line, fit-bit watching as if training for the Olympics.

We agonised over the benefits and risks of going to the park where panting runners, and sometimes

A deserted Bayswater Road.



... a lone runner, but there were many more.



cyclists, seemed to cut across from all directions. Mindful of scientific diagrams of the trajectory of droplets from sneezing, coughing or heavy breathing, we weighed our rising stress levels triggered by such close proximity. Should we abandon the park? Chatting to friends on Zoom or Face Time, we heard some had already abandoned their local parks and found the streets safer for walking. The Guardian ran a humorous piece on the war for footpaths. What to do and what not to do in public spaces.

Soon bold notices appeared at the park entry gates with images of joggers and a two-metre arrow between them. Aha, surely now?

But it didn't happen.

What did happen was that we developed new antennae. At the first "crossroads" just inside the park gate we stopped to look right and left carefully for the stream of joggers and made a dash for it. Just as we used to do on the Bayswater Road. Then we developed a different spatial awareness, always on the look out for runners or cyclists rushing by too close, our heads constantly swivelling round, listening hard for the sound of running shoes behind. Good neck exercise, we joked. We became expert dodgers, weaving in and out, trying to anticipate the unexpected. It worked better than shouts of "please, two metres apart!" and caused us less stress. It was also better than staying at home.

In time we developed a new way of being outdoors, of enjoying nature, and avoiding the high-energy, lockdown park users. We discovered new, less explored "off piste" tracks in Hyde Park and took a different route every day. Off the paths, late bluebell patches broke out under huge shady trees and from a distance we watched police

"Off piste" - A new way of enjoying nature.

regularly patrolling the parks on foot, by car, bicycle and even horseback. Joggers and clusters of people quickly changed their behaviour, for a short time, in a pattern that was often repeated. So why this daily disregard of the virus and other people?

One seasoned runner friend, expert in space sharing, suggested that some joggers were so focused on their activity they were totally locked into their own world. Others were struggling with their exercise routine, just gasping through. One young jogger told me that running was now very competitive as running time is shared via app networks, so keeping up momentum and energy levels means no swerving or slowing and losing time. Timing is everything.



"Uplifting" - A solitary skater.

On the north bank of the Serpentine, a solitary rollerskater executed perfect turns on an almost empty path. Just seeing his graceful movement against the stretch of long water was uplifting. Elsewhere two young parents ran behind their plastic-covered baby buggy, Copenhagen style.

Some mornings we crossed the road from Hyde Park to Kensington Gardens, passing Zaha Hadid's remarkable tensile structure, the Magazine restaurant, wishing we could go inside and order a coffee and croissant. But the gates were shuttered and a notice regretted closure due to COVID-19.

Running "Copenhagen style".



Over the bridge to the Serpentine Gallery, where the usual busy construction for the international summer pavilion was absent this year. The green lung of shady groves and stone benches flanking the gallery remained, offering a haven.

Although we have lived in the area for twenty years we rediscovered some of the remarkable corners of these amazing parks, once royal hunting grounds, that never failed to raise the spirits.

Like elsewhere in central London and the heart of other big cities, people didn't make eye contact in the park - no camaraderie even in a time of crisis - but followed a Tube-type stare-ahead convention. Once or twice, early morning, a runner thanked us for walking off the path and into the wet grass. I smiled, pleased at the acknowledgement that I wasn't invisible, raised a hand and said "hi."

After the first relaxation of lockdown rules, more groups appeared, more sunbathers and people in summer T-shirts and shorts revelled in their new liberty. Park cafés opened their doors for takeaway coffee.

Cafés began to reopen.



More trainers appeared, encouraging their clients to do tough workouts. A figure in the distance, slowly and gracefully moved to a Tai Chi or Qi Gong exercise. I hadn't tried doing my Qi Gong exercises outdoors but my Youtube instructor often flagged up the benefits of exercising in nature. At weekends, we walked around our local garden squares and enjoyed the Georgian and Victorian architecture. It was quieter than the park and provided a different slice of the bigger world.

Group exercise in the fresh air.



My husband was sent a birthday book of trees to identify the incredible range we encountered in the parks and squares. We furtively took a leaf here and there to identify later at home and are still enjoying the learning curve. Over the months we learnt to recognize different birds and even a few of their songs.

It has been a long, slow pandemic cycle which we are all still trying to come to terms with. As this magazine goes to press, we are entering a much bigger easing of lockdown rules in England, where restaurants, cafés, pubs, and cinemas are re-opening, and we hope we'll learn to adapt to a wider world again. But our daily walks to our two local parks will continue to be an important and remarkable part of our lives.

COUNCILLOR JONATHAN GLANZ THE NEW LORD MAYOR OF WESTMINSTER

Councillor Jonathan Glanz has been appointed as the new Lord Mayor of Westminster. We are grateful to him for writing a few words for us about the responsibilities of his position and about his chosen charity, Centrepoint. You can read more about Centrepoint on the facing page.

I am delighted to be taking on this new role as Lord Mayor of Westminster, a great honour and an opportunity for me and my wife Manuela, who will be Lady Mayoress during my Lord Mayoral term, to celebrate everything we have to offer in this vibrant city.

While the world we currently live in is different due to COVID-19, I want to make sure everyone in Westminster feels fully supported by us during this uncertain time. Although the huge diversity and hive of activity which takes place in our city has been put on hold, I very much intend to still lend my support to all those businesses, events and organisations as much as I can, even if just virtually.

As the first signs of lockdown are beginning to ease, my role will be to support the process of renewal and rejuvenation to ensure that Westminster

retains its unique character for which it is rightly famous.

Westminster is an extraordinarily diverse city, with over 70% of those living here born outside the UK, and one of my main aims during my time as Lord Mayor is inclusion, so all those people who live, work and visit Westminster have equal opportunities in the world-class services we have to offer.

I want to work to ensure that we give everyone access to education, jobs, training opportunities, access to all of our cultural institutions and to of course, have a roof over their head.

That is why I have chosen Centrepoint as my charity for the year. They were founded in Soho, and provide shelter and services for homeless young people aged between 16-25, and actively help to rebuild their lives at a stage which can make a real difference. They help provide



The new Lord Mayor of Westminster in his ceremonial robes.

young people with accommodation, teach them valuable life skills, working through their physical and mental health issues and work with them to get them in to education or employment.

My vision for this year is to help make sure that Westminster comes out of the pandemic as a stronger, kinder and more community-spirited place than before.

CLINCH ARCHITECTS A Work of Art Developments



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CENTREPOINT ANNOUNCED AS THE NEW LORD MAYOR OF WESTMINSTER'S CHOSEN CHARITY



Councillor Jonathan Glanz, the newly appointed Lord Mayor of Westminster, announces his support for Centrepoint via a YouTube video.

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to our young people needing an increased amount of support with their mental health and access to basic provisions that they cannot afford such as food parcels, hot meals, hand sanitisers. Hostel staff are having to rely on the kindness of small businesses and personal networks to keep hostels safe.

“Homeless young people need our help now more than ever before and with the support of the new Lord Mayor of Westminster, we hope to support vulnerable people to get through these testing times safely and to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of this pandemic.”

The new Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Jonathan Glanz, has announced youth homelessness charity Centrepoint as his charity for the year.

Councillor Glanz visited Dean Street in Soho, where the charity was founded, to make the announcement and explained the important work Centrepoint and Westminster Council’s outreach teams are doing for homeless young people.

Councillor Glanz hopes to raise an ambitious amount during his term in office for the charity, which provides accommodation, training, education and health and well-being support to homeless young people in the City of Westminster and across the capital.

The campaign comes at a hugely challenging time for Centrepoint which, like the majority of charities, is facing an unprecedented crisis in the wake of coronavirus. The charity has seen costs increase as they struggle to meet the urgent need to source PPE and other essential items, while losing a significant amount of fundraising income due the cancellation of events, individual donations and corporate partnerships. For the young people Centrepoint supports the pandemic has meant visitor bans and self-isolation policies for young people already at an increased risk of loneliness and anxiety. The charity also reports there has been an increase in the number of calls from vulnerable young people to the Centrepoint Helpline.

Centrepoint runs hostels across London supporting homeless young people into a job and a home. Between January and March 2019 an estimated 24,455 young people approached their local council in England because they were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, with over 3,500 of them in London alone.

Commenting on his decision to support Centrepoint as his chosen charity, Councillor Jonathan Glanz, said:

“Centrepoint has been supporting homeless young people in Westminster for over 50 years and I am hugely thankful for the work the charity has done. The homeless young people in Westminster need care and support and, by selecting Centrepoint as my chosen charity, I hope that we can leave a lasting legacy for the young people here.”

Seyi Obakin, Chief Executive of Centrepoint, said:

“I am honoured that the new Lord Mayor of Westminster has chosen Centrepoint as his charity for the year.

The Lord Mayor’s duties include supporting the city’s most diverse communities, celebrating the achievements of Westminster’s citizens, promoting Westminster locally, nationally and internationally and representing Westminster at important civic and ceremonial events.

FUNDRAISING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Those who wish to support homeless young people in the City of Westminster can donate to Centrepoint via the Lord Mayor of Westminster’s Charity Appeal fundraising page: bit.ly/sebra1029

The videos of support for the charity can be found on Westminster City Council’s YouTube channel: bit.ly/sebra1030 and bit.ly/sebra1031.

Follow the Lord Mayor and Centrepoint on Twitter. Visit [@LM_Westminster](https://twitter.com/LM_Westminster) and [@centrepointuk](https://twitter.com/centrepointuk).

You can also follow the Lord Mayor of Westminster on Instagram: [@lordmayorofwestminster](https://www.instagram.com/lordmayorofwestminster)

ABOUT CENTREPOINT

Centrepoint is the leading charity for homeless young people aged 16-25. It operates nationally, with bases in London, Manchester, the North East and Yorkshire.

15,000 vulnerable young people are supported each year by providing accommodation, teaching valuable life skills, tackling their physical and mental health issues and working with

them to get them into education or employment.

HRH The Duke of Cambridge became Centrepoint’s Patron in 2005.

Visit: www.centrepoint.org.uk



"Cheer Churchill. Vote Labour"

The Story of the 1945 General Election

Paul Dimoldenberg



1 945 was a momentous year for Britain – the end of six years of war against the Nazis and the Japanese, the liberation of the concentration camps and the landslide election of a Labour Government.

The Second World War has an indelible and enduring place in the psyche of today's Britain. It remains a significant reference point when modern events are discussed and debated. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, politicians of all colours (and others) regularly invoke the *'Dunkirk Spirit'* and advise us to *'Never give up, never despair'*.



Election campaign posters on display in 1945.

Starting with the creation of the wartime Coalition Government and the harnessing of the entire machinery of the state to serve the war effort, *'Cheer Churchill. Vote Labour'* charts the political currents and events which led to Labour's sensational General Election victory on 26 July 1945.

So, 75 years ago, what was happening in Paddington during this ground-breaking election campaign?

After Winston Churchill had successfully led the country through the war, very few people expected anything other than a Conservative victory in Paddington and everywhere else. But housing conditions were appalling following the Blitz and six years of war where the priority was to build more aircraft, not homes. And memories of the 1930s had left an indelible mark on many people. Labour put housing, health and jobs at the top of their election promises.

In 1945, there were two Parliamentary constituencies, Paddington South (which includes SEBRALAND) and Paddington North.

There was no change at Paddington South, where the sitting Conservative



A Labour Party election poster from May 1945.

MP, Vice-Admiral Ernest Taylor MP fought Labour's Charles Wegg-Prosser, a local solicitor and Paddington Borough Councillor who had served as a Major in the London Irish Rifles. Ernest Taylor won comfortably with 13,131 votes to Charles Wegg-Prosser's 9,601 votes.

The campaign was lively and one of Labour's campaign organisers was fined 40 shillings (£2). for using a loud-speaker that, according to a neighbour, sounded like *"a brass band in the room"*. Vice-Admiral Taylor retired at the 1950 election, but Wegg-Prosser never gave up and unsuccessfully fought the seat again in 1950, 1951 and 1955.

But at Paddington North, Labour chalked up one of its many gains in London. Sir Noel Mason-MacFarlane, who had served as Governor of Gibraltar during the Second World War, was elected as the Labour Member of Parliament. He defeated Winston Churchill's close ally, Brendan Bracken MP who was Minister of Information during the war. Mason-McFarlane won convincingly with 16,638 votes to Bracken's 10,093.

While in the Abbey constituency in Westminster, the 20-year-old Tony Benn tells the story of canvassing the staff at 10 Downing Street with the Labour candidate Jeremy Hutchinson and his wife, the actress Peggy Ashcroft.

Unable to vote because he was too young, Tony Benn was not alone. Winston Churchill, after his herculean efforts, could not vote as he was left off the Electoral Register. How could Westminster Council fail to include Winston Churchill on the Electoral Register? After all, he was the country's most famous man who lived at London's most famous address for the past five years!



Winston Churchill, pictured in 1945, was left off of the electoral register of that year.



Victorious in the 1945 General Election. A smiling Clement Attlee pictured with his wife Violet.

Labour's General Election victory surprised everyone, including the self-effacing Clement Attlee and his family. According to the historian Peter Hennessy, Attlee's daughters, Felicity and Alison, found out the result in the early edition of the *'Evening Standard'* at Oxford Circus Station as they *"glimpsed over a fellow passenger's shoulder. There was a picture of our father smiling and a banner headline, 'The New Prime Minister'. Alison and I joined hands and danced our way down Oxford Street"*.

At 7:00pm, Winston Churchill went to Buckingham Palace to resign. Half an hour later, at 7:30pm, after tea with Lord Portal at the Great Western Hotel at Paddington Station, Clement Attlee arrived at the Palace, driven by his wife in the family Standard Ten.

"I've won the election", Attlee told the King. *"I know, I heard it on the six o'clock news"*, was the King's reply.

Over the next five years, Attlee's Labour Government built one million new homes. The National Health Service was introduced in 1948. The Bank of England, the coal mines, civil aviation, cable and wireless services, gas, electricity, railways, road transport and steel were all nationalised.

In 52 by-elections from 1945 to 1950, the Labour Party lost no seats except for one held by the Independent Labour party in 1948. After narrowly winning the 1950 election, Labour was defeated by the Conservatives in the 1951 general election, despite winning more votes.

Paul Dimoldenberg

Cheer
Churchill.
Vote
Labour

The story of the 1945
General Election

Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg represents Queen's Park Ward and was first elected to Westminster City Council in 1982 for the Harrow Road Ward.

He was Leader of the Labour Opposition Group from 1987-1990 and from 2004-2015.

He is the author of *'The Westminster Whistleblowers'*, published by Politicos in 2006, which tells the story of the Westminster 'Homes for Votes' scandal of the 1980s and 1990s.

"Cheer Churchill. Vote Labour" is available in e-book and paperback at bit.ly/sebra1019. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to food banks in Westminster.



We must once again thank Professor Lewis Lesley for another article in his "Blue Plaque" series, specially written for **SEBRA NEWS W2**. These remain ever-popular with members and this time we feature two household names, though for very different reasons.

Professor Lewis Lesley

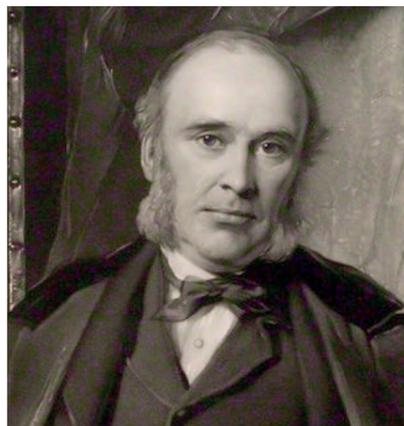
In these stressed Coronavirus crisis times there appears to be little to laugh at or raise our spirits or thoughts to a more healthy future, which might include eye testing in Barnard Castle, for the more intuitive? Humour has always been a relief during times of stress and our two Blue Plaque Heroes did just that in different ways and centuries.

The ubiquitous WH Smith station stalls and shops are one result of an amazing 19th century revolution. Before 1830 most people never strayed more than walking distance from their homes, as my earlier piece on Thomas Hardy showed, walking daily from his village to "Casterbridge" for school. What changed this and helped spread the gene pool to prevent inbreeding was railways and Thomas Cook. At first railway travel was the reserve of the privileged rich, which treated it as a faster version of Stagecoach travel. On 5 July 1841 Thomas Cook hired a train and ran an excursion from Leicester to Loughborough, selling the seats for a shilling, and making himself rich.

This led to railway travel becoming affordable by poorer people, who thanks to elementary schooling could read. Whilst trains were faster than Stagecoaches on turnpike roads, journeys still took a long time. London to Birmingham was five and half hours in 1837 but by 1850 was only three hours. Someone was ready to exploit

the boredom of long and smooth train journeys, when reading had not been possible in stagecoaches.

WILLIAM HENRY SMITH JNR 1825 - 1891

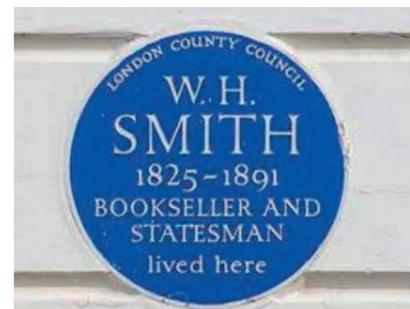


That someone was William Henry Smith, born in 1792 and father of our hero, also WH Smith. WH Snr. was raised by his widowed mother, who earned a living by running a small news vendors in Little Grosvenor Street, a street no longer there.

WH Snr. married Mary Cooper in St. Georges Hanover Square in 1817. When he was 20 he joined his mother and brother in partnership to run the business but his mother died four years later. So he and his brother continued with the business. WH Snr. however was the better businessman, and opened a reading room in 1821 on the Strand with the bye line of "First with the News".

When his wife produced a baby boy in 1825, after seven girls, he was also christened William Henry, like his father and the company was renamed WH Smith, "and son".

WH Jnr. was even quicker at seizing a chance. His big business breakthrough came when he opened in 1850 the first station bookstall at the Euston terminus of the London and North West Railway, to sell cheaply printed books. Often these were in weekly instalments, as much of Dickens was first published.



Plaque at 12 Hyde Park Street, W2.

Not only did this make railway travel more interesting but also was a boost to authors and book publishers. WH also saw the opportunity to move newspapers quickly and reliably by train throughout the country, growing from a London business to a national company. This business growth led to his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1878. He was not knighted or ennobled, so remained the Right Honourable, a member of the Privy Council.

With his growing wealth he moved into fashionable Bayswater at 12 Hyde Park Street, a stone's throw from the park itself. His political ambitions were realised when elected a Conservative MP for Westminster in 1868. Within ten years WH was The First Lord of the Admiralty. Without any naval experience he became a laughing stock, exploited by Gilbert and Sullivan in the 1877 Operetta "HMS Pinafore", where Sir Joseph Porter sings

*"When I was a lad I served a term
As office boy to an Attorney's firm.*

*I cleaned the windows and I swept
the floor,*

*And I polished up the handle of the
big front door.*

*I polished up that handle so
carefullee.*

*That now I am the Ruler of the
Queen's Navee!"*

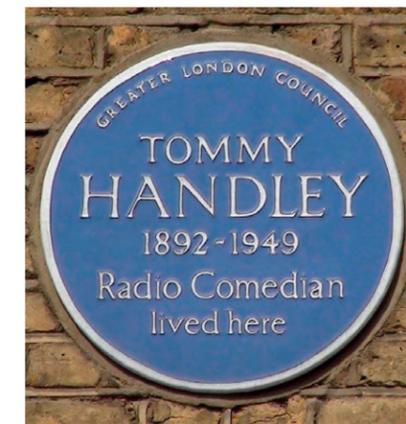
This satirical attack and Disraeli's aside that his First Lord was 'Pinafore Smith' did not prevent a further enhancement of his political career, ending as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1891. Shortly after he died, at the young age of 66, on 6 October in Walmer Castle, his country seat. His wife survived until 1913.

TOMMY HANDLEY 1892 - 1949



In contrast Tommy Handley was born in Toxteth a poor part of Liverpool on 17 January 1892. In 1981 Toxteth was the scene of widespread civil unrest and some of the worst rioting of 20th Century Britain.

Unlike WH Jnr., Handley was in the military, serving in the Royal Naval Air Service during the First World War. After that he went into variety and the Music Hall, big entertainers before cinema and radio. Like WH however he saw a chance and took it, becoming a broadcaster from the early days of the BBC founded in 1922, with the call sign 2LO, or as Handley put it "ello ello", typical scouse wit. He lived at 34 Craven Road, where his plaque can be seen.



Plaque at 34 Craven Road, W2.

Liverpool spawned many comedians, and Handley worked with Arthur Askey born nearby in the Dingle, though eight years younger. Together they wrote radio comedy scripts. Handley became a household name with the long running show "It's that man again", shortened to "ITMA", like many of his catch phrases. Some remained in common English until recently:

"Don't forget the diver", "This is Funf (a German spy) speaking", "I don't mind if I do", "Can I do you now sir", "After you, Claude - no After you Cecil", "I'll have to ask me Dad", "But I'm alright now", "It's being so cheerful as keeps me going", "Good morning, nice day" and "TTFN" (Ta ta for now).

ITMA run from 1939 until his sudden death in 1949. The title ITMA reflected the news before the Second World War, when increasingly frequent mentions were made of Hitler and his actions but people did not want to grace him by using the name. ITMA commented on current situations comically, and was important in maintaining morale on the home front during the Second World War. Even the King (George VI) listened every week.

During the War the show visited military bases to entertain service men and women. ITMA was usually broadcast from Bangor in Wales, since Broadcasting House in London was a target for German bombers (nearly successful when Queen's Hall next door was hit and destroyed in 1941 by incendiary bombs). The radio show spawned films including "ITMA" in 1942 and "Time Flies" in 1944, all based on good clean comedy without any malice. Indeed his humour laid the basis for later shows like "The Goons", "Monty Python" and "Spitting Image".

This can be seen from the increasingly zany fictional characters he played in ITMA. He was humorously a private radio station operator. Then he became the Minister of Aggravation He revealed the "Mysteries at the Office of Twerps". Then like the later "Dads Army" he became the Mayor of "Foaming in the Mouth", a seedy seaside resort. Finally he was the Governor of Tomtopia, a south sea island colony. Handley also helped other comedians start their careers, including Deryck Guyler, who later was in "The Men from the Ministry" on radio, that morphed into "Yes Minister" on TV. Hattie Jacques, even then renowned for her ample size, was Sophie Tuckshop, who later joined Tony Hancock, Sid James and Kenneth Williams in "Hancocks half hour".

Why did Handley die so young? (Just eight days short of his 57th birthday). The intense workload of producing ITMA every week led to him developing high blood pressure. On 9 January just before a ITMA show he had a brain haemorrhage and died shortly afterwards. ITMA was cancelled, never to be restarted, showing the crucial role Handley played. At his funeral service in St. Paul's Cathedral, John Ward the Bishop of London said in his Eulogy: **"...He was one whose genius transmuted the copper of our common experience into the gold of exquisite foolery. His raillery was without cynicism, and his satire without malice"**.

Clearly this is exactly the kind of humour we need today to raise our spirits in these dark times and incompetent leadership.

CYCLISTS, NOT CARS, IN OUR AREA?

John Walton
Secretary, PRACT

Readers have probably spotted many recent changes on our local roads, and more are to come.

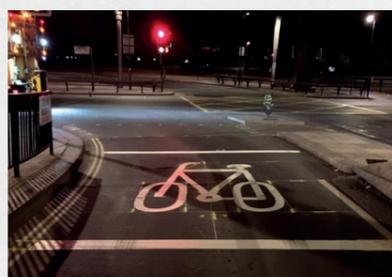
Those done so far:

- Pavement widening in Praed Street, and London Street and newly marked cycle lanes in Spring Street and elsewhere in W2
- Marked cycle lanes in Westbourne Terrace between Craven Road and Orsett Terrace and across Westbourne Bridge in the southbound direction



Southbound cycle lane on Westbourne Bridge.

- Marked cycle lanes in the Queensway/Porchester Road/Inverness Terrace 'corridor'
- Marked cycle lanes in both directions in Bayswater Road from the Broad Walk up to Lancaster Gate
- Reopening of pedestrian access from Praed Street to Paddington Station on its western side, through the 'Horse Arch', near to Sainsbury's
- More boxes giving cyclists priority at traffic lights, e.g. at Lord Hill's Bridge, Porchester Road and Inverness Terrace



Advanced cycle box on Lord Hill's Bridge.

Southbound traffic and the new cycle lane at the Westbourne Terrace junction with Bishop's Bridge Road.



- Temporary cycle racks in some parking bays, e.g. in Connaught Street and Monmouth Road



Temporary cycle racks in Monmouth Road.

Those to come:

- At the end of July, closure of the northern section of London Street as part of the 'Paddington Square' development and transfer of both people and vehicles to a new road behind the site. It is to be called Tanner Lane, after Sir Henry Tanner (1849-1935) who designed the former Royal Mail sorting office located at London Street. This change will add a lot of traffic to Praed Street through diverting traffic, on its way to the entrance of the new road, that now uses the northern section of London Street.
- Extension of the cycle lane across Westbourne Bridge, including a new link between the bridge and Harrow Road, thus completing a cycleway between Harrow Road/Little Venice and the cycling 'superhighway' across the park and into Central London

- More cycle parking racks, including Queen's Gardens and Westbourne Grove, and curiously shaped 'hangars' for cycles, the latest one being in Porchester Square



Cycle hangar in Porchester Square.

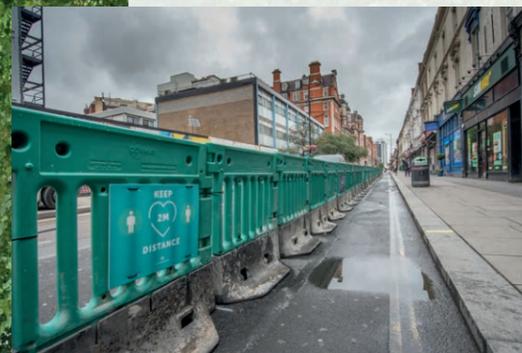
- Later, widening of Eastbourne Terrace and its reopening for general traffic, with a new pavement, and bus stop, on its eastern side
- A 20mph speed limit throughout Westminster City

PROLONGING THE BENEFITS OF THE LOCKDOWN

All these changes have been driven by the objective to hang on to the side benefits of the lockdown through reduced noise and air pollution - a once in a lifetime opportunity. There is also the risk that people would seek to use cars more, so as to avoid getting infected on public transport. They have been authorised as temporary measures, in consequence without consultation, which could cause problems. This so called 'Movement Strategy' was initiated by the Mayor of London and followed by the Boroughs, enthusiastically in the case of Westminster City. The purpose is to encourage people to walk more or to use bikes.

SOME FURTHER COMMENTS

- Footway widening in its initial form - barriers along part of what used to be carriageway - is of little use to people walking, until it is raised up to pavement level



Pavement widening in Praed Street - of little use at its present level.

- Cycle lanes must be separated from vehicle space; but this is not what is to be found in London Street
- The cycle lanes in Bayswater Road were introduced initially 24/7, without informing the artists who display there every Sunday; but we are now pleased to report that they will only operate from 7:00am to 7:00 pm on Monday to Saturday



The new cycle lanes on Bayswater Road will not operate on Sundays.

- In Bayswater Road there will not be carriageway markings on the northern side to warn cyclists of vehicles coming from behind and turning left into the side roads - unlike in Westbourne Terrace



A cycle lane being ignored on Westbourne Terrace by Craven Road.



50 Eastbourne Terrace. One of SEBRALAND's five major construction projects.

- There appears to be a safety issue where the cycle lane in Bayswater Road conflicts with bus stops
- The new space for pedestrians in Praed Street outside the Station hotel should prevent taxis queuing up there and obstructing traffic; and once the hotel opens they will also be excluded from attempting to rank in the hotel's service road

Thus there will be conflicts between the new 'temporary' traffic measures, which reduce capacity for vehicles, and the need for access to these sites by construction vehicles. For instance, vehicles bringing materials for 'Paddington Square', including very long articulated lorries, which will add further pressure on Praed Street. This will be increased very soon by diversion to it of most traffic for the Hospital, including ambulances on emergency calls. In consequence, pavement widening in the critical two-way section of Praed Street (between London Street and Norfolk Place) may no longer be feasible.

The prolonged delay in restarting work on the Crossrail site at Paddington is shocking. Other construction projects have continued throughout the lockdown. Our best guesses are: full reopening of Eastbourne Terrace, the autumn of this year; opening of the new Elizabeth Line in its central section, who knows, perhaps by the end of 2021?

With the full reopening of Eastbourne Terrace, access both to the main line station to buses will be easier. There appears to be no good reason why completion of the surface works should be delayed, even if we have to wait much longer for the benefits of the new line in operation.



The cycle lane in Queensway, on the approach to Porchester Road, has resulted in a loss of parking bays.

FIVE MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Everything is complicated by the five major construction projects going on in our area:

- Park Modern, 123 Bayswater Road (at the Inverness Terrace junction)
- Whiteleys, Queensway
- Crossrail station at Paddington
- Paddington Square, major project on the east side of the mainline station
- 50 Eastbourne Terrace, a major development of offices and shops



Andrew Beverley
Bathurst Mews, W2

What a difference a few weeks makes. For a short period of time, we had an insight into what London would look like with significantly reduced traffic. Pollution was down by almost a half; lots of people were exercising outside; families were out cycling together.

Sadly it was short-lived, and as I write we are back to normal traffic levels, even before schools and businesses have fully reopened. The key is what happens next. Once you read this you will probably already know, so it will be interesting whether we have gone the way of Wuhan, where use of private cars has doubled, or whether we go the way of Paris, where at the time of writing congestion is lower and bicycle use higher compared to this time last year.

A common theme is emerging from cities around the world, and that is to reallocate road space from motor vehicles to active forms of transport. Not to be left behind, this has started happening in London. Sadly, however, this is being hamstrung by politics and the lack of authority that the Mayor has to implement a city-wide strategy. Will we see a coherent, joined-up, useful network of cycle routes, or will we see one with gaps at borough boundaries, which don't work for anyone?

An early achievement was the temporary cycle lane on Park Lane. In a very short space of time, a high quality route was installed, useful for all ages and abilities. This certainly hasn't pleased everyone: it's reduced some parts of the road to one lane for private vehicles (plus a dedicated bus/taxi lane), and some have questioned the reason for having a cycle lane right next to an equivalent one in the park.

It is worth noting, however, that the cycle lane in the park is too narrow and that it results in lots of conflicts with other park users, so a properly-

CYCLE LANES: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

separated facility is better for both users of the park and cyclists. A slight plus for Bayswater is that the narrowing is in the northbound direction so it does reduce the volume of vehicles piling into Bayswater Road.

Not to be left out, Westminster City Council are starting to implement their own measures, including in Westbourne Terrace and Inverness Terrace/Queensway. Whilst they are well-intentioned and there is an overall coherent plan, the problem is in the implementation. Some road space has been reallocated to cycling, but unfortunately much of it is simply white paint, which has long been recognised as ineffective to improve safety and enable new people to cycle. Some research has even shown that a painted white line is less safe than nothing at all.

The latest guidance from the Department for Transport on managing roads in response to COVID-19 states "**Lanes indicated by road markings only are very unlikely to be sufficient to deliver the level of change needed**". It also states that cycle facilities should be installed with "**a minimum level of physical separation from volume traffic**". There are even seen some painted lines that don't allow enough physical space for a vehicle to pass, such as in London Street; others just stop and start intermittently, interspersed with parked cars, bus stops and left-turn vehicle lanes. Whilst the actual routes are well thought-out, it's difficult to see how the quality is good enough to enable all ages and abilities to use a bicycle.

Around Bayswater there have been a number of pavement widenings, including Praed Street, London Street and Spring Street. People have observed that these are of little use, as someone walking has to keep stepping on and off the pavement. As the area becomes busier, however, it will be interesting

to see whether they are better utilised and beneficial for social distancing. In any case, these temporary widenings do show how much wider pavements could be with the loss of a relatively small number of parking spaces.



Lane encroachment on London Street.

Certainly on London Street there will be a strong case for making the pavement permanently as wide as its current temporary width. Edgware Road has also seen pavement widenings, reducing most of the road to one lane each way, and also pushing cyclists into this single lane. So far these measures seem to be universally disliked; will they be better accepted and more useful once pedestrian footfall increases?

Finally, in wider Westminster, the Council has just published proposals to help the hospitality sector reopen. If enacted, these will see a variety of measures – from pavement widening to timed street closures – to enable restaurants and bars to extend onto the pavement, allowing social distancing at venues that would otherwise have been uneconomical to reopen.

At the time of writing proposals have been published for Covent Garden and Soho, and plans are being worked on for Connaught Village, which should help the restaurants to reopen with enough covers to make it economically worthwhile (fine weather dependent!).



The joy of cycling in Hyde Park.

UNANNOUNCED CYCLE LANE THREATENS BAYSWATER ROAD ARTISTS' EXHIBITION

Haydn Dickenson
Secretary, BRAA

Dear Councillor Andrew Smith and Ms Rebecca St Rose, This morning, July 5th, Bayswater Road Licensed Exhibitors arrived for the Sunday Art Exhibition to find - to our horror - a new cycle lane on both sides of the Bayswater Road, most importantly the exhibition side (south).

This has caused consternation and considerable stress. As in most previous instances of alterations to street signage and to periods of significant road and footway works, the exhibition was neither consulted nor warned about an impending cycle lane. Westminster Council Licensing Department's abject sidelining of the Bayswater exhibition shows no sign of abating, and the lack of consideration demonstrated to licensed traders in matters such as the present one is lamentable. As none of the current Licensing team has ever accepted our invitations to visit the exhibition, the department seems blissfully unaware



The new cycle lane on Bayswater Road will not operate on Sundays.

that Bayswater Artists are professionals who depend on the exhibition for their livelihoods, and are not a band of dilettantes.

The Exhibition is already suffering critically, now emerging after enforced COVID-19 hibernation, with artists giving all they have got to keep the show running, upbeat and viable. It is monumentally hard. A cycle lane, if enforced on Sundays, means:

- a) Artists are unable to park
- b) Clients are unable to park
- c) Ipso facto The exhibition is killed

Councillor Smith and Ms St Rose, would you kindly reply to this mail tomorrow Monday to the following effect:

1) Why does the Council not show due respect to exhibitors in announcing intentions? (One can only imagine the uproar that would ensue if you were to sideline one of the mainstream markets, such as Berwick Street or Church Street, in this manner).

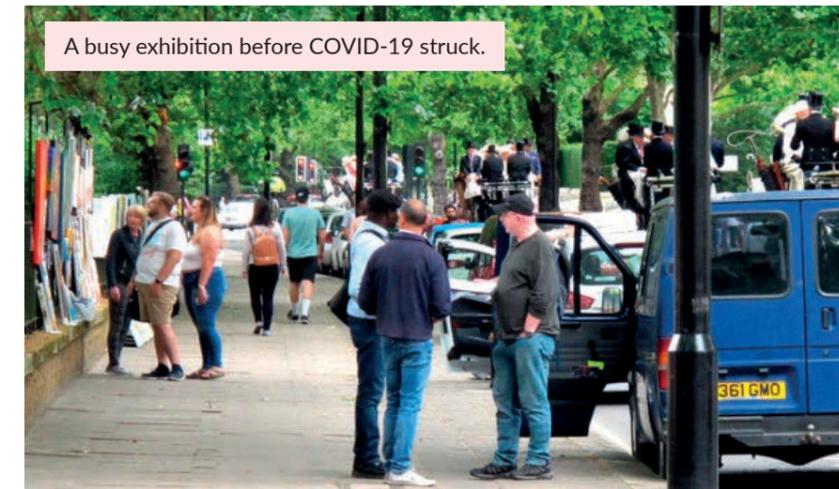
2) To confirm that the following article bit.ly/cyclelanes

I quote "**So, if the lane was there before the update, no parking is allowed; if afterwards, it's fine - unless there is a double yellow line (which, of course, often get ignored by many drivers anyway).**" means that parking IS allowed on Sundays, i.e. that the single yellow line overrides the cycle lane on that day.

3) If 2) is true, to confirm categorically that no alterations to legislation will be made to alter that fact, going forward.

Perhaps Councillor Smith, you might be prevailed upon to visit the exhibition one Sunday. You would be warmly welcomed.

Please address this matter with the urgency it deserves.



A busy exhibition before COVID-19 struck.

Response from Councillor Andrew Smith Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways

Over the past few weeks, the Council has moved with unprecedented speed. We have installed 11km of new temporary cycle lanes and over 800 cycle parking bays. The extension of the cycle lanes on Bayswater Road provides an important link between Notting Hill Gate and the superhighway running through the parks.

The esteemed John Walton alerted me to the potential problem this would cause to the Sunday art market, which I passed on to our team before the lanes were installed. Unfortunately, there was a mistaken belief that the art

market had not recommenced since the lockdown and the organisers were not communicated with before the lanes were installed, which I apologise for. I know that the team were in touch with Haydn Dickenson as soon as it was clear that the art market was up and running. The issue has now been resolved with the cycle lane operating 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday.

Paddington the Artist, where the eponymous bear visits the art market and is inspired to make his own work, is a favourite of my daughter. I am therefore sure that a visit to see it will be on the cards soon.



The Enabling Specialists: Safety 24:7

ABOUT ERITH

The Erith Group is a family run business with over 50 years' experience in the demolition and Construction industry, which is now an employee owned trust with a reputation for providing a quality service and consistent client satisfaction together with the highest levels of Health and Safety, which has been recognised over the years through numerous awards and accolades.

Since its formation in 1967, the company has grown and now comprises: Erith Holdings Ltd; Erith Contractors Ltd; Erith Haulage Ltd; Erith Plant Services; Erith Training Services and Swanton Consulting Ltd.

Through experience of large redevelopments, such as the London Development Project (LDP) in Farringdon, 33 Grosvenor Place in Belgravia, the Whiteleys Redevelopment in Bayswater and currently Paddington Square, to name but a few, we have built an excellent reputation with Local Authorities, Clients, various Amenity groups, Stakeholders and the Considerate Constructors Scheme, for our personal engagement and the ability to deal effectively with difficult projects in demanding and sensitive locations.

Erith is now well known in the industry for its proactive, professional reliability which provides a complete range of development Enabling Services from the very earliest planning and budgetary advice through initial feasibility studies and remedial advice to asbestos removal, demolition, earthworks, temporary works, basement construction and infrastructure.

As a business we are able to synchronise all these service streams and provide a fully coordinated single source solution for clients.

Background image: Bulk excavation and temporary works.

Further Information

If you would like to know more, please visit our website at www.erith.com, email us at bd@erith.com or give us a call on 0370 950 8800.



RECENT TESTIMONIALS

“ Erith took a proactive approach to the Works and showed a client facing attitude to the technical issues as they arose on site, Erith proved their capabilities in overcoming them and producing a product that achieved the right result of the client and a smooth handover for the follow-on works. ”

“ 101 on Cleveland St. was a challenging development with ambitious subterranean plans for a constrained central London site. We were delighted that the client appointed Erith as we were then able to work side by side with their in-house temporary works division and project managers to optimise the scheme and to evaluate and deliver value engineering options. Working with Erith was harmonious and allowed a free exchange of ideas to help integrate construction sequence with the design and modify the scheme to integrate the relationship between temporary and permanent works. The result being the delivery of a complicated basement package within budget and one time without encountering any significant issues. ”

Paddington Square continues to progress...

Despite restrictions and many challenges in recent months, the project has been progressing well. In April, all excavation works for the main basement were completed. All basement and concrete works up to ground level on site is expected to be complete by August 2020. In May, construction works for the core slipform began and is expected to continue through to September 2020.



Emerging main building core and managed ambulance access road to hospital.

This level of progress has only been possible in such unprecedented times by close communication and involvement of the wider community together with the hard work and dedication of all our staff and operatives.

With agreement from Westminster City Council, backed up by local amenity groups such as SEBRA, and St. Mary's Hospital at the beginning of June, extended shifts to conduct quiet works for the construction of the new main buildings core, located in the Centre of the site and indiscernible outside of the hoarding line was implemented. The extension of hours, which was initially for 1 month only, was closely monitored by Westminster City Council's environmental officers and subsequently extended to September following zero complaints,



Road cleaning vehicle in action.



New road and protection gantry under construction.

helped us to minimise the numbers of workers on site at any one time and ensure that social distancing guidelines and practices are adhered to. Following evolving Public Health England and industry guidance, extensive risk assessments and changes to management systems have taken place such as increased disinfection and cleanliness on site and around the welfare facilities, minimising travel risk and any impact on public infrastructure for workers travelling to and from the site, with staggered start and finish times to reduce crowding, segregated and controlled deliveries and updated protocols for illness/infection reporting and communication as just a few examples.



Currently, works are taking place around the site to complete remaining utility installation works by various utilities contractors. Also, works to the new road and the temporary pedestrian gantry are in their final stages and are expected to be ready for opening early in August.

Erith's phase of works, which included demolition, piling, enabling works, basement construction and erection of the new main buildings core is currently on schedule to complete at the end of October of this year. The steel frame, cladding and construction of the building superstructure will follow on from our works.

The Paddington Square Redevelopment project as a whole currently remains on schedule for completion in the Spring of 2022.

HEATHROW AIRPORT HEALTH RISKS FROM POOR AIR QUALITY

From the "Stop Heathrow Polluting Us" Campaign Group

Your health and well-being is at risk from air pollution from Heathrow Airport detected in central London (including North Kensington and Marylebone Road).

The COVID-19 pandemic has sadly shown that having an underlying health condition can mean the difference between life and death.

London's population is exposed to pollution levels that exceed the levels mandated by the European Union and the World Health Organisation. This can lead to people of all ages developing chronic diseases as well as stress and difficulties concentrating.

A study published in January 2020 shows that air pollution from Heathrow Airport is being blown more than 11 miles into central London.

Researchers from King's College London have, for the first time, measured ultra-fine particles across four major European cities including London.

They found airports were a significant source of ultra-fine air pollution particles.

The study, published in Environment International, found London had the highest concentration of ultra-fine particles compared to other cities, with

the greatest concentration coming when wind was blowing from Heathrow Airport towards the city centre.

Most air pollution studies have looked at the levels of larger particles, smaller than 2.5 micrometres, but this latest study looked at smaller ultra-fine particles of less than 0.1 micrometres in size.

The smaller the particle, the deeper it can penetrate into the lungs, and ultra-fine particles have been linked to brain cancer.

Air pollution from aviation is not limited to fine and ultra-fine particles but also includes NOx, CO, HC, Sox.

Flight paths over densely populated areas provide a lethal cocktail of air and noise pollution which seriously affects the mental and physical health and well-being of people in London.

Protecting the mental and physical health and well-being of people living, working, studying or visiting London has never been more critical.



Mental and Physical Health Impact	Air pollution	Noise pollution
Ischemic heart disease	X	X
Stroke	X	X
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	X	
Asthma	X	
Lung cancer	X	
Brain cancer	X	
Premature Deaths	X	
Diabetes	X	
Cognitive decline	X	X
Obesity	X	
Arterial hypertension		X
Sleep disturbance		X
Cognitive response		X
Depression		X
Annoyance		X

Impact on health of air and noise pollution.

We must oppose Heathrow Airport's proposals to change flight paths to fly directly over our area and to significantly increase the number of flights directly over London.

HEATHROW STILL INTENT ON PURSUING EXPANSION

- The planned Heathrow Airport consultation due in April 2020 has been postponed.
- However, Heathrow Airport is resolved on introducing new flight paths over our area and seeking approval for 700 additional flights a week (primarily between 5:00 and 7:00am), and wants to commence as soon as possible.
- Heathrow Airport has continued to work tirelessly during this national health crisis, ironically to progress its toxic expansion plans: the new flight paths, the increase in annual flights over London, Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA) and the third runway proposal.
- On 7 and 8 October 2020, Heathrow Airport will seek to reverse the decision made by the Court of Appeal in Feb 2020, by taking the case to the Supreme Court. It wants to challenge the Appeal Court finding that the Heathrow expansion does not meet the targets in the Paris Climate accord.

- In parallel Heathrow Airport will push for the introduction of the Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA) – simultaneous landing on both existing runways.
- It will seek permission for 25,000 extra flights a year (700+ extra flights a week) on top of the existing 480,000 flights that, pre-COVID, Heathrow handled.
- British Airways and other major carriers may consolidate their operations, including moving many of their long-haul flights from Gatwick to Heathrow.
- There is now a significant risk that Heathrow will want to exploit this additional capacity by increasing the concentration of long-haul passenger and cargo traffic through Heathrow Airport.
- COVID-19 gives Heathrow Airport a

golden opportunity to exploit the situation to knock out competition from other airports in the South, and regional airports which have struggled over the past months, thus strengthening Heathrow's historic structural, subsidised monopoly and resulting in more flights over London.

Please register your interest on our website so that we can update you on further developments.
Visit: stopheathrowpollutingus.org



PLUCKY RESIDENTS FOILED AGAIN BY A POWERFUL DEVELOPER

Sophie Massey-Cook
Chair, Hillgate Village
Residents' Association

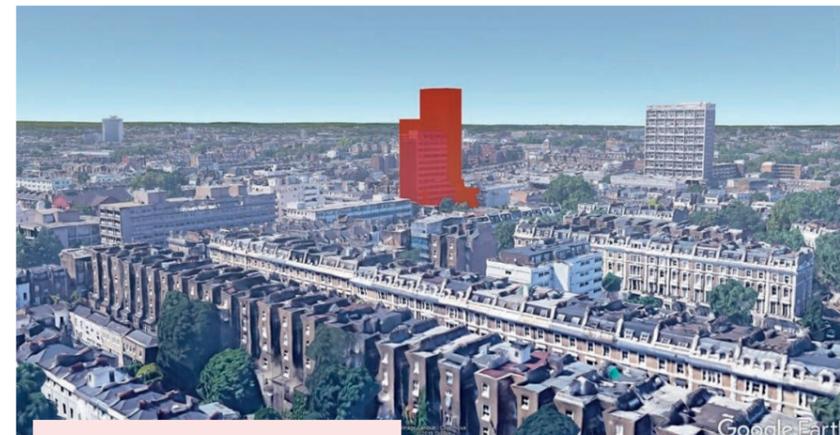
The battle to protect Notting Hill Gate from the 18 storey Newcombe House development appears to be over and lost. The Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick MP, has given his consent for this development, following a final public inquiry and a recommendation by a Planning Inspector.

Over a thousand residents signed an online petition against the plans and more than 800 submitted objections directly to the RBK&C planning portal. The strength of local feeling was evident when large numbers of local residents turned up to the RBK&C planning hearings and the Mayoral hearing at City Hall to voice their concerns, politely but firmly, from the stands. The Public Inquiry in November 2019 was also well attended by local objectors.

For anyone interested in protecting the architectural heritage of the borough, the Inspector's report makes depressing reading. The poetic "architect-speak" description of the proposals and hazy computer-generated images had attempted to justify the crudeness of the design and dismiss the crushing impact of the Newcombe tower on tiny Hillgate Village. We were astonished to learn, however, that the Inspector apparently believed "the quality of the architecture and design of the scheme is exemplary". She envisaged it as a "landmark" creating a new urban quarter which "could be described as a mini bit of City" in Notting Hill.

The dismay of the campaigners was summed up by Barbara Weiss of the Skyline Campaign, who said:

"This embarrassing scheme has been rejected over and over again; so it is a total disgrace that it should have been recommended for approval by an inspector who was briefed in great detail as to why this opprobrium went against all planning policies and local advice. Since its first conception it was branded as architecturally mediocre by the Council's own Design Review Panel. Not only does building this



Newcombe House, described as "a crass and clumsy tower".

crass and clumsy tower add nothing to the character and identity of Notting Hill, it perpetuates the gross planning mistake already embodied in the original Newcombe House - a structure far too tall for its context, but - unlike the new Newcombe House - that nevertheless has some architectural quality. The proposed building will be seen from all the local Conservation Areas, a sad reminder of financial greed and of the architecturally illiterate custodians of London's future, who are currently accelerating their 'race to the bottom', competing in terms of how much of our city's heritage can be destroyed as quickly as possible. When will this end? Maybe the pandemic will at least stop these follies."

Brockton Capital, the owners of Newcombe House, have long been trying to offload the site. A controlling stake of Brockton was acquired by an Israeli investor last year. The proposals included carefully targeted incentives of marginally improved tube access, a new medical centre, 23 affordable housing units. The upper six floors, each with a single luxury apartment and lift access, may now be tricky to market. In a post-COVID deep recession, the value of these benefits and the viability of the scheme are likely to remain uncertain for some time.

It is fair to say that Newcombe House is in need of redevelopment after a period of studied neglect. Residents will remain hopeful for a more sensitive developer to enter the field.

In the meantime, the Hillgate Village Residents' Association (HVRA) would like to express its deep gratitude to all those individuals and organisations within and outside the community who have given practical and financial assistance and, most generously, their time to fight this cause. We have been fortunate to have significant support from both the outgoing and incoming MPs for Kensington: Emma Dent Coad and Felicity Buchan; Barbara Weiss, Action Disability K&C, The Pembridge Association, RBK&C and hundreds of residents of Hillgate Village, Notting Hill, Kensington and Bayswater. We are indebted to SEBRA and BRA for their generous donations of £500 and £400 to the fighting fund.

"... a poke in the eye of the residents."

Simon Jenkins on Newcombe House, in the Evening Standard, 2017.

The residents of Notting Hill and Bayswater can at least be proud that they did not take this lying down. They spoke out in their hundreds and thousands to protect their skyline from desecration. The proposers were certainly put to the test, having been forced to field an extremely aggressive QC at the public Inquiry to intimidate the residents.

The hope remains that by delaying this particular scheme, the eyesore dubbed by Simon Jenkins as "a poke in the eye of residents", might never be built.

CHURCH LIFE CONTINUES DESPITE CHALLENGING TIMES

Jem Sewell
Pastor, Westbourne Park Baptist Church



WESTBOURNE PARK
BAPTIST CHURCH

We continue to be passionate about keeping connected and we do this using Zoom, WhatsApp, Facetime, phones and all sort of gadgets, people have even been using the post!

Our Family Centre has continued to connect as well, seeking to build stronger families in Westbourne and in Bayswater, much has been moved on-line and they have benefited from some emergency grants to help improve the ability to connect.

Like you, we can't wait for things to get back to normal, in the meantime, we are looking at how we might help others begin to work again, using our space to help others socially distance when their own resources don't allow.



Westbourne Park Baptist Church arranged for socially-distanced worship.

What a challenge we have all faced in the last few months. Compared to many, our struggles as a church fellowship, although very real and very demanding, have been daunting but not deadly.

Many of us have asked (both those of us with faith and those unsure), 'Where is God in all this?' And of course, there are no simple answers but just because the answers are not glib or simple does not mean that there are no answers!*

A long view of history shows that Christians have not only survived similar times (Plagues and fires come to mind in London, not to mention wars and natural catastrophes) but have often taken a lead in caring for and provided for those affected. Foodbanks and CAP debt counselling being great current examples that were started by Christians wanting to put their Faith into Action.

Christians do have the comfort that God has promised that he will never leave us or abandon us and that helps us in times of great pressure and distress.

For us as a church family, it has been frustrating to close a brand-new building, just as it was being increasingly used by the local community and others. Our only opening since lockdown was as a temporary haven for those evacuated in the Gaydon House fire in May.

Despite not being able to meet in person, Church Life and Family Centre life have continued.

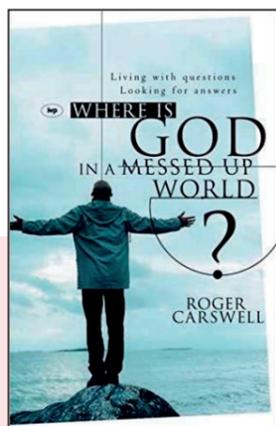
Church services are available on our website, Facebook and YouTube and are available on demand. If you have been curious about what happens in church life, why not check us out from the comfort of your own home and at your own time? www.wpbc/sunday-service

Some of us have found the book "Where is God in a Messed up World?" by Roger Carswell helpful. I have five spare copies for anyone who would like one. First come first served.

Contact me at jem@wpbc.co



Church services went online.



MORE ZOOM, VICAR? ST JAMES'S GOES ONLINE

Father Owen Dobson
Assistant Priest,
St James' Paddington

As we prepare with great joy to welcome Paddington back into its Parish Church and to public worship after such a long exile, you might be wondering just what the last three months have looked like for St James's. A quarter-year break for the congregation and a long holiday for clergy? Definitely not!

Exiled from our building and (at least physically) from one another, Church life has continued, albeit in rather new and creative manifestations!

But while lockdown has been the perfect summons to put our faith into practice - that part of our life of worship lived 'out there' in the world - through works of mercy and generosity to neighbours in need, the challenge we and all churches have faced is how to maintain our primary expression of worship, which is the people of God gathered together at the Lord's Table. And with lockdown descending rather suddenly, we had to think on our feet! How could we continue the beating heart of worship and allow as many people as possible to participate in it from home?

Mercifully, there wasn't the luxury of time for over-thinking! On the day when public worship was suspended, what we



The Revd Paul Thomas featured on the BBC "Click" programme.

had was a smart phone, a tripod and an existing Church Facebook group. We clicked 'live' and that was that!

And we kept doing it. Every day. When for a month the clergy could not even enter Church, we live-streamed from our homes, including all the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter! We even managed a live-streamed Evensong with one priest at St James's Vicarage and the other singing the responses on Hallfield Estate!

Then we really started to get creative - a Virtual Sunday School for children, with songs, costumes, drama and other things no self-respecting clergyman wants to be seen doing! Face to face contact with Zoom study groups and coffee mornings; video resources; even school assemblies for St James & St John Primary School. It even attracted BBC 24 who featured St James's on its 'Click' programme!

And, amazingly, people have tuned in! We have had messages from Ireland, Wales, even as far away as the USA and Italy, saying what a comfort it has been to see the Mass taking place, and to pray along at home. Sunday School seems to have been a hit for adults as well as children! In such a time of sadness and hardship regular worshippers and strangers alike have found spiritual strength, peace and even a bit of joy!

Our digital outreach is here to stay, there is no doubt. But our hope and prayer as we welcome people back into Church again is that you who have glimpsed the life of this Parish Church will take the plunge and come in person, and experience the fullness of life in Christ in the fellowship of his Church. You will be welcome indeed!

To view some of what we've done, visit fb.com/stjamesusssexgardens/video

VE DAY SERVICE GOES AHEAD DESPITE LOCKDOWN

Plans to celebrate this 75th anniversary year of Victory in Europe across the nation and continent were sadly scuppered by COVID-19: the street parties, commemorations and sing-songs all had to be abandoned for staying in and staying safe.

Here in Paddington we felt we could not let the day go completely unmarked at our places of remembrance. While the main Parish War Memorial is in St James's Church - alas, at that point, closed to the public - we have a second, outdoor Memorial. It stands outside Spire House, what remains of the former Christ Church, Lancaster Gate: an elegant column topped by a gilded crucifix, all designed by Sir Walter Tapper.

And so, on Friday 8 May, the clergy from St James's kept a Two Minute Silence

at 11am, and laid a wreath at the foot of the memorial, holding before God the sacrifice of the many who paved the way for that victory and the ensuing peace. Although it could not be a publicly advertised event, some members of the congregation and community, including SEBRA's John Zamit, participated from a distance, and passers-by stopped to pay their respects.

Though it was sad the anniversary could not be kept in as full a way as the occasion deserved, nonetheless, in this modest way Paddington remembered and gave thanks. Perhaps Remembrance Sunday this year will give us another opportunity to give thanks for Victory in

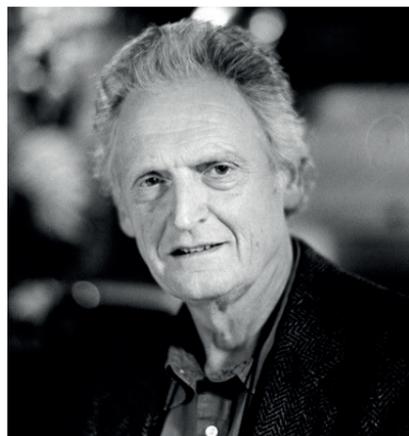


VE Day at the Lancaster Gate War Memorial.

Europe, not least because a new stained glass window is to be dedicated at St James's, commemorating the Ukrainian Canadian troops stationed at the old vicarage during the years of the Second World War.



Health & Wellbeing



Christopher Penfold
Co-chair, Garway Medical Practice PPG

"O Earth, Thou Art Sick"

For the past few issues of SEBRA NEWS W2 I have contributed articles about our Garway Medical Practice Patient Participation Group. But patient participation has been just one of the many casualties of the invisible worm that has found out our bed of crimson joy.

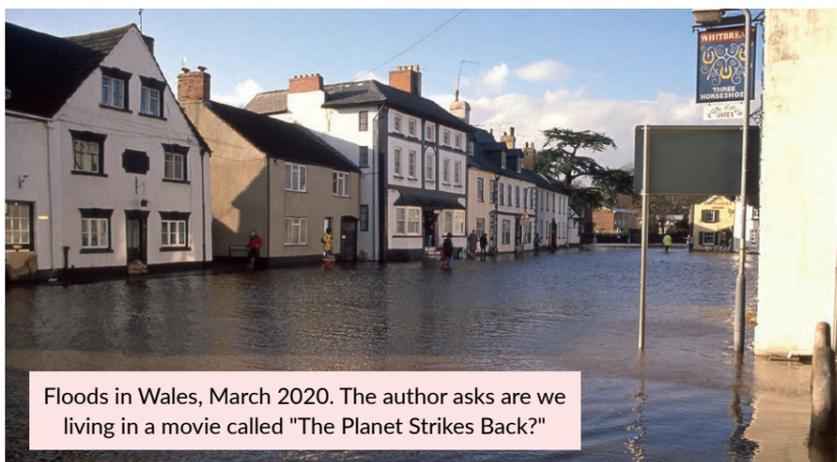
Mental health and well-being have, for far too long, been the poor relations among the conditions that make up our National Health. But, in the prevailing circumstances of self-isolation and social distancing, they have come to the fore. And the art form in which many have sought solace has been poetry.

There have been a number of candidates suggested as the poem that meets the moment with W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" scoring lots of votes and quotes. But, having plundered, plagiarised and possibly polluted William Blake the title of this piece, I would like, by way of apology to him, to cast my vote for "The Sick Rose" and to quote it in full:

*O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.*



For the past three months, I have passed the time of self-isolation, not in the deserted streets of the capital but in the hills of Mid-Wales. Enforced separation from family and friends has not been good but, with weather suggesting that the gods may be using us for their sport, it has felt as though we have been living in our own little paradise bubble whilst the nightmare pandemic has been raging all around.



Floods in Wales, March 2020. The author asks are we living in a movie called "The Planet Strikes Back?"

We came here at the beginning of March to plant some trees and, at the time, the rains were torrential, roads were flooded, and thousands of unfortunate people had to be rescued from their deluged homes. At the same time, in Australia, fires were raging in record temperatures with the same result: thousands of homes and lives destroyed by what insurance companies like to call "acts of god".

And then came the virus. It has been difficult to evade the thought that we might be living through a movie called "The Planet Strikes Back". Does Gaia live?

I have written quite a bit of science fiction and in one episode of the 1970s series "Space 1999" humanity itself is identified by more civilised beings as a dangerous virus on the point of bursting out of the sealed cell of the Earth's atmosphere to spread contagion through the wider universe. And when great naturalists like David Attenborough and Chris Packham identify humanity as the most dangerous species on our sick planet, perhaps they have a point.

There has been much celebration of the supposed upsides of the lockdown: less polluted air, fewer problems for asthmatics, cycle-friendly streets, clearer skies at night and celebratory birdsong.

But they all sit uncomfortably with the downsides: the threnody of lamentation for the likely millions of lives that will have been lost, the disappearance of jobs and livelihoods, the hopes of a younger generation dashed.



Our Blue Planet. Will COVID-19 be a wakeup call for humanity?



Fires raging in Australia. Does Gaia live?

People read and write science fiction for a variety of reasons but, for me, it has always been a way of examining the way we live now with the benefit of foresight rather than hindsight. And I've been doing some of that during lockdown with American and Canadian colleagues as we have worked on a new science fiction project which may or may not come to fruition in some post-coronal future.

In our story the solar system is visited by an alien civilisation which evolved aeons ago in another universe. Their planet, orbiting a star not dissimilar to our Sun, once had physical characteristics that were somewhat similar to those of Earth. But as their civilisation developed, they transitioned to the non-corporeal or virtual form in which they now exist.

As they have achieved space exploration through time travel, they have spotted the Blue Planet. It has excited in them an atavistic desire to recover their lost 'humanity' – to recover their lost mortality. They have come to regard Earth as a possible home from home. They have studied the Blue Planet for years and have closely observed the development of the human race. They have learned the ways in which humans communicate with

each other and they have watched with anxious interest the development of Earth technology.

In more recent years, they have seen the ways in which humans have wantonly destroyed much of the planet's bio-diversity. They have watched humanity set on a course which will destroy the very riches they have lost and sought to recover for so long. It is time to intervene.

But how to approach so paranoid a species to whom alien means hostile? Perhaps with the help of William Blake they might induce us to accept the hand of friendship, to abjure our bed of crimson joy, to dissuade us from allowing our dark secret loves to destroy the miracle that is human life.

Would humans permit them to share Earth's lebensraum and to use their skills to restore the Blue Planet and the human species to health and happiness?

But that is fantasy. It is what it says it is on the tin – fiction. Better still, of course, when this COVID crisis is over, when the howling storm has passed, will we accept that it has been a wake-up call? Will we put our own minds to the task and set about achieving the same result – all by ourselves?

Chairperson Garway Medical Practice Patient Group

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Pickering House, Hallfield Estate
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Sue Price

Chairman, Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Photography by Paul Shelley.

RESTING YOUR WEARY BONES

It's amazing how such unassuming little benches have generated so much coverage in SEBRA's Spring edition of your magazine.

Named after Bill Cathcart, manager of Richmond Park in the late '80s early '90s, he designed them specially for use in semi-rural locations.

Our manager, Andrew Williams, used them for the same kind of place when he was working in Regents Park. Bill Cathcart went on to become Superintendent of Windsor Great Park.



New benches - a clever design idea.

Perhaps these latest Cathcart benches don't look quite so rustic since they have a surround of self-binding gravel. But nobody could object when they learn that this clever idea is designed so that a wheelchair user can sit next to their companion or one of those giant baby-buggies can also sit comfortably beside the bench.

SECRET WORLD STAYS SECRET

For those of your readers who are also members of the Friends (FHPKG) this Secret World is the destination of a twice yearly pilgrimage, much appreciated and looked forward to



In secret - Elmer the Elephant.

judging by the large number of emails we've had on this subject during Locked Down Spring.

The Hyde Park Super Nursery is tucked away and in March was full steam ahead growing 250,000 specimens of summer flowering planting destined for all the Royal Parks. The rest of the world was closing down bit by bit, until on 23 March we too were told that, from the next day, we would be locked down.

There are key members of staff at the nursery who one would count as vulnerable and so immediately the nursery became out of bounds to everybody except a few recognised members of staff.

"It's easier getting into North Korea than it is into that Nursery" I was told (I know which one I'd rather go to).

So sadly we've already missed our evening visit when manager Mike Jones takes us round and we finish with a few drinks in a glass house. I have been told that the Green Man for Regents Park has, this year, become Elmer the Elephant.

And the Plant Sale which we are lucky enough to be invited to so our members can buy beautiful plants at bargain prices, has been abandoned for this summer. We have all loved this event and we are keeping our fingers crossed that we might be back to some kind of normality in October for an Autumn bedding sale.

We have missed Mike and his helpful staff who are so good at answering questions and he is kind enough to say that he is missing us.

EVERYBODY LOVES THE LIDO

For the Friends' Spring newsletter we visited Colicci's new Lido Cafe.

It had recently opened and all sorts of wonderful state-of-the-art kitchen equipment was being put through its paces. Everything was exciting and new.



Colicci's new Lido Cafe is open.

There was new furniture inside and out, a totally new menu, slick systems to eliminate the perpetual queuing of the old Lido, dream coffee machines, retro vans helping with service out of doors for drinks and ice cream and nothing forgotten.

This was late February and after such a significant rebuild and refurbish a triumphant relaunch was ready for the Spring visitors.

No need to elaborate on what happened next. A very serious blow for the Colicci family business which will take time to get over, and normal service still far from being resumed.

Our photo shows the smiling team, ready and waiting to serve their customers once again.

But this is a drop in the ocean compared with what had been planned for this spot this summer.

When you can, and things are normal again, it's a great place for an early morning breakfast in the sun.

Meanwhile at the other end of the Serpentine.....

PIZZA PARADISE IS BACK

The Serpentine Bar and Kitchen has managed to open their Grab and Go section and their outside kiosk is open.



Pizzas are now being served at the Serpentine Bar and Kitchen.

I believe they are also providing the Pizzas from their usual much longer menu.

These are best consumed on a deck chair on their terrace facing West into a late afternoon early evening sunset with St Mary Abbots Church spire in the distance....but, as they say, "Then I woke up and it was all a dream".

There are no tables, chairs, benches, deck-chairs or high stools at the time of writing so there is no alternative but to take your food away with you. So the glorious breakfast in the early morning at the Lido and the sunset Pizza at the Serpentine Bar and Kitchen, reclining at eye level with the swans, is something to look forward to.

Do support them both when they are able to open fully. The Royal Parks also depends on the strength of their income so, indirectly, do we.



Thank you! - The NHS logo in flowers.

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE

We've been clapping (or whistling, banging saucepans, clashing pan lids or ringing bells) on Thursday evenings for many weeks now.

And to add to our rounds of applause we want to thank all those in the nursery, delivering the best quality plants for the gardeners to fulfil the designs planned many months ago by the managers and their teams.

Also to the whole group, loud clapping for designing and planting at very short notice the amazing Blue and White NHS beds at Buckingham Palace. Have you seen them yet? They will get bluer and bushier as the summer goes on.

Applause and thanks to everybody involved in delivering such a lovely surprise to all of us who are lucky enough to live sufficiently close to get to see them.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

It was an odd place for a swan couple to choose to build their des.res. and it gave Parks Wildlife Officers a bit of a headache. The happy pair seemed oblivious of all the hectic action round their chosen spot.

They built a nest hard up against the railings on a busy footpath close to the Lido. They were in easy reach of inquisitive small dogs noses and perhaps, much worse, visitors with malevolent intentions.



Swans nested near a busy footpath.

Parks staff erected a temporary barrier round the area to give a degree of safety, at least as distance was concerned.

Enchanted regular visitors watched developments and member, Susan Barnes, gave us regular updates and photographs. Eggs started hatching at the end of May and at one time there were seven cygnets.

Nature is red in tooth and claw (or beak and webbed foot) and a crow reduced numbers to six then, with other prey as well, numbers seemed to be down to four. Both mum and dad (Pen and Cob) were together on the nest and seemed unaware of the media circus going on round them.

We wish them and their family well.

SAINTS AND SINNERS

I will deal with Sinners first, let's get it out of the way.

From the start of lockdown the Royal Parks were positive that they should remain open for precious hours of the once a day fresh air and exercise. Despite other spaces closing and even some local authorities parks locking their gates, the Royal Parks stayed open. Sometimes this meant changes, limited opening hours, reduction in cyclists for some, and of course facilities closures needed to comply with safety measures and guidelines.



The Parks have experienced anti-social behaviour.

Very quickly the Parks and especially Kensington Gardens became very busy and there was some thoughtless and anti-social behaviour. Some of this involved social distancing, cyclists passing too close and on footpaths and joggers running through pedestrians, spraying sweat and spitting. We had plenty of reports from members.

Even so there were areas where visitors told us they were able to get away from it all.



Political Commentary



Karen Buck MP (Lab)
Westminster North

This is not, of course, the regular report to SEBRA members that I expected to write. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequential lockdown on the families affected and who have lost loved ones, on the public services on the front line of the response and on the economy, are even more profound than we realised.

Whilst the overall number of fatalities has thankfully been contained below what it could have been without action, we have still ended up with one of the world's highest death rates, alongside one of the strictest lockdowns, and now face one of the deepest recessions.

COVID-19 revealed the best of us, but also some profound weaknesses. The best of us has been extraordinary courage and dedication of so many people- those working in an NHS that rose to the occasion magnificently, care workers who continued their duties at enormous risk, and other key workers- public and private,

from transport to food production, distribution and retail.

Many were concentrated in the lowest paid sectors but they kept the country functioning. The Imperial NHS Trust, including St Mary's helped 1,053 patients recover from COVID-19 and be discharged, although sadly 420 patients also died as a result of the virus.

There was also an outpouring of community spirit as people have helped their neighbours, informally or within the network of new and existing voluntary organisations. Thousands needed help with food supplies. North Paddington FoodBank alone saw numbers soar from 193 to 1,172 in three months. Others struggled with isolation, with pressures at home, or to get advice as their income disappeared. The response has been brilliant and we must hope some of it will continue, as the needs are not going away any time soon.

We will, however, need a proper debate about what went wrong too, from the initial shortage of protective clothing and equipment to the failure to protect care homes to the decisions around testing and tracking. We need to understand exactly why death rates have been so much higher in the poorest neighbourhoods, and amongst black and minority ethnic communities. It's been clear that whilst anyone can catch COVID-19 it is far from an equal-opportunity disease in its impact.

Meanwhile, we brace for the economic fallout from the pandemic, with latest figures suggesting a fall in economic activity unprecedented in modern times. As with the aftermath of the banking crash of 2008, Government spending is soaring and income collapsing- but this is on a far bigger scale.

I believe the Government were right to try and save jobs, effectively taking on the costs of keeping as many workers on payroll as possible. Yet many people and businesses, particularly in self-employment, fall just outside the scope of these Government schemes, lots of people are discovering for themselves the harshness and limitations of the social security system and some employers are using this time to restructure their workforce and cut staff numbers, pay and conditions.

Key sections of London's economy also remain highly vulnerable as social distancing continues - from the hospitality sector to our arts, creative and cultural institutions. Councils have also seen income collapse (Westminster Council normally generates more from parking charges of any in the country, and that source of funding has dried up) and demand rise.

The Government promised to cover those costs, but has backed away from that promise, so there may well be further big cuts in spending on local services next year, after a decade of cuts to council funding which has seen services from social care to environmental protection to youth provision slashed (to say nothing of what happened to policing) Personally, I do not see how further reductions in services will improve the quality of life for residents or protect us from any future threats.

During recent weeks I have seen a massive increase in workload from people seeking advice and assistance on both personal and policy issues. Here is a selection of issues I have been working on which may interest SEBRA residents.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS

Rough sleeping more or less doubled over recent years, and as we know, Central London has the highest concentration in the country.

As COVID-19 struck, the Government rightly sought to get people off the street, for both their safety and in the interests of public health. This was never going to be easy - because of the speed with which it was done, the challenging circumstances and the highly complex needs of the homeless population.



Rough sleeping in London. "Better interventions" would have been a more sensible strategy.

By far the more sensible strategy would have been to have prevented the increase in rough sleeping and/or managed the situation with better interventions, including rehousing in smaller, supported, units distributed across the city, rather than have to cope with this in a crisis. But come mid-March there were not many alternatives.

Many Lancaster Gate residents have expressed concerns about criminal and anti-social behaviour in the area during recent weeks, and I have been in pretty much constant contact with the police over this time, including going out with them on several occasions.

It was particularly helpful to spend time with the specialist unit dealing for our police command, as they do have a really in depth knowledge of the issues and challenges, and they were providing some invaluable focus on the area. Government funding for the hotel bookings is, of course, coming to an end (though it was extended a little longer in Mid-June) These hotels were never intended as a long term solution, and the change will relieve the pressure locally, but I do also fear we will also end up with lots of people back on the streets...

CRIME, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR... AND NOISE!

COVID-19 and lockdown have had a big impact on patterns of crime, with a dramatic falling off in robberies and burglaries, for example. Amongst many

other reasons, the decline in tourist numbers reduced the number of potential targets.

However there has been a marked increase in domestic abuse and both the police and my own casework have confirmed a jump in neighbour nuisance and complaints about anti-social behaviour, from noise to harassment, and most recently some unlicensed music events. I have huge sympathy with anyone caught in such a difficult situation, all too often made worse by being shut indoors for weeks on end, although no-one, from the police to the council, landlords or I find many of them easy to resolve.

It seems likely that we will also be experiencing an intensification of mental health problems as part of this, and we do need to make sure that alongside an enforcement strategy we have the services to support vulnerable people and deal with crises as they arise.

More generally on noise, my Labour Council colleagues and I made strong representations to the Government to restrict non-essential construction during lockdown, as some people's lives were being made hell. At the very least, we thought the Council should have the powers to intervene. Unfortunately we were overruled and, to the distress of many, the work went on...

GETTING AROUND - AND CLEANING UP OUR TOXIC AIR TOO

Unfortunately, Transport for London has been just one of many public services hit by a catastrophic drop in income as the pandemic took hold. It was inevitable that the Government would need to step in financially, as with the national railways, but the terms of the deal have been very harsh indeed.

The Government insisted that TfL fares are increased above inflation next year, that the scope and hours of the Congestion Charge are widened, that free travel for Freedom Pass and 60-plus card holders is temporarily suspended during peak hours, and that free travel for Under-18 pass holders is suspended at all times.

London has been the only major city in Western Europe that hasn't received direct Government funding to run day-to-day transport services, and we have to accept now that the old model for funding public transport in London simply won't work in this new reality - fares income will not cover the cost of running services while so few people can safely use public transport. This will be a space to watch.



Air pollution increases COVID-19 infection and death rates.

As a vice-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on air quality, I was very struck by research presented by Harvard, Queen Mary's and York universities suggesting that COVID-19 death rates and the likelihood of infection are both directly related to air pollution. Specifically a 1 micro-gramme per cubic metre increase in PM2.5 particulates equates to a significant increase in infection rates and an 8% increase in COVID-19 deaths. Air pollution was already contributing to 64,000 early deaths before the pandemic, being linked to conditions such as strokes.

So we need a much more integrated strategy to reduce air pollution This should include encouraging cycling, working practices that allow technology to reduce travel, more frequent and cleaner public transport, more pedestrian space, and the adoption of World Health Organisation air quality targets. More cycle lanes and provision (including cycle parking spaces) are needed with sensitivity to context (some roads work better for cycling provision than others).

The north west of Westminster has historically been under-provided with safe cycling options including the Santander bike schemes, so I am particularly pleased that new docking stations are due to be constructed by Westbourne Park station and in London Street, amongst other locations.

I welcome your comments and questions, and hope that we will all be meeting soon in a less challenging set of circumstances.

Karen Buck MP (Lab)

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St Mary's helped over 1,000 patients recover from COVID-19.



Nickie Aiken MP (Con)
Cities of London & Westminster

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Since writing in the Spring Edition of SEBRA NEWS W2, our lives have dramatically changed. We have spent more time inside, forgone face to face contact with close friends and family, worked from home, had to queue to enter the supermarket, worn facemasks on public transport and more to limit the spread COVID-19.

It has challenged and tested all of us in ways that we could not have imagined this time last year and been particularly tough for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Many of us have lost loved ones to this dreadful disease. If you have lost someone close to you I send you my condolences.

If there is one positive thought to take from the events of the last few months, it is that communities across the UK have pulled together to support the most vulnerable. The SEBRA neighbourhoods are no exception. London, and particularly Central London, has a reputation amongst people who do not live here of being a cold and unfriendly place where no one knows their neighbours. You and I know differently. Westminster neighbourhoods have always benefitted from strong communities and COVID-19 has done nothing to dampen them. Those living in Paddington and Hyde Park in my Constituency and others in Bayswater and Lancaster Gate in Westminster North have worked closely together to ensure that no one has been left behind during this pandemic.

Volunteers and essential workers have combined with incredible speed and efficiency to deliver support to those that have needed it. The community spirit that has powered them, and others

across both Westminster and the City of London, is one of the many reasons why, in my humble opinion, we live in one of the best places live in the UK.

A huge thank you to everyone who has given their time and energy to support others as we have transitioned into a new normal.

REOPENING WESTMINSTER

It's clear that we are going to be living in the "new normal" for some time to come, but the signs are that aspects of life as we knew it are slowly returning. The Government is taking steps to kick start our economy. In the last few weeks non-essential shops, pubs, restaurants, and hairdressers have all started to reopen. Nail bars and beauty salons are now also reopening with gyms following suit later this month.



Reopening Westminster. Restaurants, cafés and bars will need local support.

I certainly welcomed the £30bn worth of measures the Chancellor announced in his Financial Update, particularly the reduction in VAT from 20%-5% for the tourism and hospitality sectors, the £3bn green investment package and the Kickstart programme to help our 16-24 year olds who have been really hit by the economic fallout of the pandemic.

I was particularly pleased that the Prime Minister announced changes to the two-metre rule, altering it to one-metre plus, as I had been pushing for this change. I hope it will be a game changer for the hospitality and leisure sectors. It will save jobs and for some businesses will be the difference between reopening or not. We must all do our bit to support our local businesses. I know so many of you have done so during the lockdown and will now be out supporting restaurants, cafés and bars. It really will be a case of us locals helping these premises remain open as the workers and visitors not expected to return until at least the Autumn and even then not in the numbers needed for our hospitality industry to turn a profit.

I know that many local people have concerns about possible legislation to allow off sales after 11pm for those premises with later licenses. I have been lobbying Ministers to ensure that their concerns and those of Westminster City Council are heard, and plans are put in place to ensure our neighbourhoods remain safe. As a former Licensing Chairman for Westminster I know full well the cumulative impact a concentration of bars, restaurants etc can have on local neighbourhoods and I absolutely do not support off sales after 11pm.

The Government is fully aware of this and of the difficulties that COVID-19 has caused businesses. The Chancellor's Plan for Jobs, which includes several incentives to encourage businesses to retain staff and reopen safely, should

help minimise job losses going forward.

Locally, I have been doing what I can to support businesses including launching an online business directory to support businesses that were open during lockdown. More details can be found on my website.

SUPPORTING THE ARTS

I am absolutely delighted with the Government's £1.57 billion support package for the arts sector. I had been working alongside several theatres and cultural venues in the Two Cities to secure a package. This included producing a recovery plan with industry leaders which we presented to the Government.

The arts play a fundamental role in maintaining our nation's wellbeing. Without them our society would be a lot poorer. What I have also learnt though over the last few months working



Government support for the arts will boost Westminster's economy.

with the cultural sector is that it is fundamentally linked to the hospitality sector. Both sectors are dependent on each other.

For example, for every pound spent at a West End theatre, a further £5 is spent in our local economy boosting the incomes of restaurants, bars and hotels. Without these restaurants, bars and hotels, West End theatres would not have the same magnetic appeal they did before COVID-19.

If one failed, it is highly likely both would, risking thousands of jobs in our part of London.

The package the Government has announced will help safeguard jobs in both sectors going forward. With the security it provides, the arts can look to the future and be ready to play its part in our economy's recovery with its iconic venues remaining a great source of pride, not just in the Two Cities, but for the whole of the UK.

CHANGES TO ROAD LAYOUTS

In the last few weeks, I've had more correspondence from local people about changes TfL have made to allow more people to walk or cycle rather than use public transport than anything else. It's right that TfL is encouraging people to do so.



Better traffic flow is needed to deliver clean air benefits.

As a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling & Walking, I am an enthusiastic backer of both. The individual health and clean air benefits for us all are obvious but in too many places TfL's measures are causing congestion and adverse effects on air quality.

I fully support the Mayor's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) and its planned extension. Most car journeys in the Central London are not made by local people. They are travelling through, ruining our air quality. We need better traffic flow for vehicles to limit engine idling. As Leader of Westminster City Council I launched the #DontBeldle campaign to tackle engine idling head on.

I completely understand local people's concerns about the changes and have written to the Mayor of London encouraging him to engage with them. I am sure, together, a way forward can be found that reduces congestion while making cycling and walking as safe on London's roads as possible.

PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE

My proudest moment to date as an MP was securing an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill. As it was drafted the definition did not include children as victims of domestic abuse.

I know from my time as Cabinet Member for Children Services and Public Protection as well as the Executive Lead for Children for London Councils that children are deeply affected when living in a household with domestic abuse. As well as mental health issues their education attainment and ability to secure healthy relationships can all be life-long affects.

I thought it was important to persuade the Government to accept my amendment to include children in the definition of victims of domestic abuse whether not directly abused themselves. And the Government agreed and my amendment was included at Report Stage and passed at Third Reading. The Bill has now passed to the Lords.

PEDICABS UPDATE

In the last edition of SEBRA NEWS W2, I wrote in my column about my intention to table a Private Members' Bill in the House, which if it is passed into law, would bring the regulation of pedicabs in line with taxis and private hire services. I am pleased to be able to report back that I have now tabled the Bill. To become law, the Bill will need to pass through several different stages in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Parliament's website has a particularly good explanation of these stages for those that are interested.

The first of these stages, the Bill's first reading, was originally scheduled to be back in April. However, it was postponed as readings of Private Members' Bills were suspended in order to free up

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Parliamentary time to pass the legislation required to combat COVID-19. I was therefore only able to present the Bill last month.



The pedicab regulation bill is due a second reading.

Unfortunately, readings of Private Members' Bills have again been suspended to free up Parliamentary time, further stalling its progress. I have received a provisional date of 11 September for the Bill's second reading however, its lateness in the life of this Parliament makes it incredibly difficult to successfully make the Bill law this time around. I am determined to do all I can to secure this legislation. I will keep going. I am continuing to impress upon my colleagues' the need for regulation of pedicabs across London to be brought in-line with taxis and other private hire services. This will hopefully mean that the Bill avoids opposition when it returns to the House.

LOOKING AHEAD

Dealing with the fallout from a global pandemic was not something I expected to have to deal with during my first six months as an MP! It's been incredibly challenging but also incredibly rewarding. I hope to be able to focus more in the next few months on tackling some of our areas longer term issues, including rough sleeping, and anti-social behaviour problems that often surround short term lettings among many others.

If you have any issue or concern, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details below. The office has been incredibly busy as a result of COVID-19. We continue to respond to correspondence as quickly as possible.

Social Affairs



Jack GORDON

Jack is Chair of the Westbourne Ward Safer Neighbourhood Panel and a SEBRA committee member.

EDUCATION FALLS VICTIM TO COVID-19

The pandemic has cut a swathe through all our communities bringing with it devastation and tragedy on an unprecedented scale.

And it is far from over yet with death rates still on the rise – albeit on a reduced rate – and restrictions still in place that threaten more devastation to the economy, particularly the leisure, catering and hospitality sectors.

Yet, amongst the hardest hit in this country are the children, our future generation. At the time of writing, more than 1,600 paediatricians have called on the Prime Minister to reopen schools or risk what they maintain would risk “scarring the life chances” of a generation of children, as reported in The Times newspaper.

This claim was made in an open letter which went on to note that vulnerable children were suffering greatly whilst schools remained closed whilst the lockdown remained in place.

The letter was reported to have been signed by members of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and called on the Government to set in place a back to school blueprint as a first step in a nationwide recovery plan for young people.

Of course the apparent stand-off between Government and the unions who say that whilst social distancing rules are in place schools will not be able to fully open even in September. And there are also many parents who have concerns about the safety of their own children; they prefer to keep them at home...

Some pupils haven't seen inside a classroom for over three months.

open even in September. And there are also many parents who have concerns about the safety of their own children; they prefer to keep them at home...

Meanwhile, it had been pointed out by the Chairman of the Education Select Committee in Parliament that children and parents can have access to high street stores over the next few months but not schools.

Indeed, as England's Children's Commissioner observed, Lego Theme Parks and even pubs will be opened before schools take in all their pupils. That feels like a surreal sense of priorities that ought to shame everyone involved.

Yet, whilst this argument rages on most children have been out of school for more than three months putting a blight on the life chances of so many of our young people.

Whilst primary schools have reopened to pupils in reception, year 1 and year 6 and secondary schools began opening for Year 10 and Year 12 full time hours are not offered by many schools.

In these circumstances, the burden is felt even more strikingly in less well off households. There is little doubt that the brunt of the pandemic is falling on families that are struggling the most because of a lack of resources, and those that need more help and support. Education is fast becoming the poor relation in this pandemic.

Whether it is access to technology, to help the learning processes, or just the space in crowded households to be able to settle down and concentrate on their studies. More often than not, parents realise that they do not have the time, the capacity, or even the patience, to make sure that their children continue learning or at least practise what they have already learned.

The gap between north and south of the country was widening, as was the gulf between rich and poor,

reflected in the stark differences thrown up by state and private schools. This divide was illustrated forcibly through research from UCL Institute for Education which found that in the South East 28 per cent of children worked more than four hours a day compared with less than ten per cent in the North East.

At the same time, the Education Endowment Foundation estimates that the rate of current school closures has set back a decade of progress in narrowing the gap between rich and poor. This is a terrible indictment as it is clear that inequality remains a structural problem with fault lines embedded deep within our society.

With the spotlight on the plight of less advantaged families struggling to maintain some form of learning for their children and trying to avoid them falling further and further behind, a hero has emerged in the unlikely person of Marcus Rashford, the Manchester United and England striker.

Rashford's campaign to extend food vouchers for some of England's poorer families has forced the Government into a humbling U-turn. It pushed Boris Johnson to

the decision that free school meals should be extended over the summer holiday. In the event it forced the Government to help feed this country's most underprivileged and poorest children. With the

“... the Education Endowment Foundation estimates that the rate of current school closures has set back a decade of progress in narrowing the gap between rich and poor.”

pandemic still bearing down on all of us, exacerbating existing inequalities, this was extraordinary news and gave us some feeling of exhilaration.

Although raw politics may have been on display here with such a sudden and remarkable about-face, it seemed that dozens of Tory MPs were extremely unhappy with the One Nation Caucus, and the backbench 1922 Committee group, about to spark a rebellion with Labour motion looming which is what may have shown Boris Johnson the light and finally changed his mind.



The nation's poorest children will receive food vouchers over the summer holidays.



England striker Marcus Rashford. His school meals campaign forced a Government U-turn.

But we mustn't take anything away from Rashford's brilliant, incisive and well-orchestrated campaign that propelled him to TV studios and the columns of Britain's national press titles.

His outstandingly impressive efforts embarrassed a Government with an 80-seat majority and made the Prime Minister think again.

It threw a searching light on child poverty; it made an otherwise tin-eared Government listen, and respond in a positive way; it also demonstrates what can be achieved when your cause is a just one.

Above all, it will allow underprivileged children to benefit from the action of an extra-special role model of whom we can all be justly proud, someone who benefited from free school meals himself whilst his single mother went out to work, and has, himself, recently given large sums to the food waste charity FareShare.

This endeavour must stand amongst the brightest of lights that have shone through the dark clouds of the coronavirus.

And, whilst the Government has announced a £1 billion coronavirus fund for schools it was Marcus Rashford's initiative that has grabbed the headlines. The youngest English player to score at his debut for the national team has played another blinder!

“... His outstandingly impressive efforts embarrassed a Government with an 80-seat majority and made the Prime Minister think again..”



City Hall News



Murad Qureshi AM
Former Westminster
City Councillor

My favourite sign on the Tube when going down to the platforms is "Keep to the Left". I am certainly intending to stay that way on my return to City Hall.

The main issues dominating City Hall in this momentous year have of course been the response to COVID-19 and the impact of the pandemic on London's economy. However, I've been careful not to lose sight of other issues in Central London.

TRANSPORT IN LONDON

One of the top priorities continues to be keeping transport staff and passengers safe. We need Londoners to continue avoiding public transport unless they have no other alternative, and for businesses to allow staff to work from home unless they too have no alternative. It is crucial that the demand on services is as low as possible to enable social distancing.

With an approximate 90% drop in fares income, TfL had no choice but to go to the Government for financial support. However, the Government's deal is a bad deal for Londoners. It wasn't what

KEEPING TO THE LEFT IN CITY HALL

the Mayor wanted but he felt he had no choice but to accept it to keep services running. The conditions attached to the deal - including the suspension of free under-18s travel, the saddling of TfL with £500m debt, and the suspension of free peak travel for over 60s are punitive. We are urging the Government to reconsider some of its decisions.



TfL - "Government's deal is a bad deal for Londoners".

BUSINESS RATES HOLIDAY

Since returning to office, I have been approached by many local businesses - such as my local pubs, hotels and theatres - seeking help to cope with this pandemic. Whilst the Government have issued a business rate holiday, a business is only eligible if their rates are no higher than the £51,000 threshold.

We all know that this is too low for Central London businesses and particularly those dependent on tourism in the hospitality trade. Many businesses are struggling with their rents, with little respite offered by their commercial landlords. And all of this worry and uncertainty is compounded by the Government's unwillingness to rule out a No Deal Brexit.

ROUGH SLEEPERS

It's not just public services and businesses who need support right now. Some of the most harrowing illustrations of austerity are seen with the numbers of rough sleepers in Westminster (30% of all rough sleepers in London). The threat of an economic crisis worse than any other could only make things worse unless the Government steps in. The joint effort between Government, City Hall, Councils and charities during the pandemic shows we can tackle rough sleeping.

These efforts resulted in 90% of London's rough sleepers being helped into places where they can self-isolate and receive support, mostly in hotels. The hospitality sector, which has been facing its own crisis, deserves praise for helping the Mayor of London's team put otherwise empty rooms to good use.

Let us be clear, this emergency response was swift and effective, but it must not end there. What happens now that hotels can reopen? How do we make sure that we do not end up sending vulnerable people back onto the streets? These are questions I've put to the Mayor, but they must also be answered by Government.

"WHATEVER IT TAKES"

The Government has promised to do "whatever it takes" to get our public services, business, and the British people through this crisis. We now need to hear what long-term support they'll put in place to see this happen.

Murad Qureshi AM

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Tony Devenish AM
GLA Member, West Central
Knightsbridge & Belgravia
Ward Councillor

I will start by wishing all readers of SEBRA NEWS W2 very best wishes at this unprecedented time as lockdown is slowly lifted. On a lighter point the weather has been marvellous for most of the time since March, a real silver lining during this global health crisis.

In the last issue of SEBRA NEWS W2 I looked ahead to the May 7 2020 Mayoral / Greater London Authority election. Of course, coronavirus meant this was postponed until May 6 2021.

In this issue I'll recount the last 13 weeks as your Assembly Member and the Mayor of London's activities, or rather quite often a lack of them.

"Post 23 March has shown how important public service is and why it is with regret, that I was right about Sadiq Khan."

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

Once the crisis began I'm glad to say Westminster Council, under our new Leader Rachael Robathan, led from the front locally and participated fully in the Gold Command London resilience work. Both the NHS and Government succeeded in as the mantra says "Protect the NHS - Save Lives". The way most people behaved both by staying at home and volunteering in our communities was very heart warming.

The big issue going forward is jobs - jobs - jobs, the engine of our economy and the necessity to keep funding our nation's public services.

A VIRTUAL DISAPPEARANCE

The one disappointment was the virtual disappearance of Sadiq Khan who failed to meet with the London

KEEPING TO THE RIGHT IN CITY HALL

Assembly for six weeks. He appeared in the media intermittently to nit pick on Government actions while struggling to keep bus and tubes running in sufficient numbers to support social distancing due I'm afraid to the transport unions running the Mayor of London rather than the proper way round.

As well as supporting volunteer efforts in Westminster and participating in daily online meetings and phone calls to reassure residents' and business in Westminster on a wide variety of case work I have led the debate against Sadiq Khan with Shaun Bailey AM, the Conservative Mayor of London candidate on two transport - environment issues which follows on from my last SEBRA NEWS W2 article:

1. TRANSPORT FOR LONDON - TfL budget bail out. My GLA Conservative colleagues and I have been telling the Mayor for four years that his failure to manage the TfL budget would end in tears, and during the lockdown the drop in fare income was the final nail in the coffin which meant taxpayers had to bail out the Mayor - a £1.6 billion price tag.

2. WAR ON THE MOTORIST - the Mayor has continued and indeed accelerated his ideological attack on those who wish to drive in London at a time when the message was supposed to stay off public transport unless you are a key worker....

Not everyone can walk nor cycle but Sadiq Khan will not listen. Park Lane and Edgware Road have been defaced with bus lanes / cycle lanes enlarged to "nudge cars off road space".



Sean Bailey - Conservative candidate for Mayor of London.

The congestion charge has been increased to £15 a day and until 10pm at night, including weekends from 22 June - my constituency in-tray is bulging with complaints from retail shops struggling from the shutdown and faith groups and pensioners who feel they are not wanted in Central London.

What I cannot forgive is the lack of public consultation: a cornerstone of our democracy. TfL have got round the legal niceties by claiming these are "temporary measures". I will fight to ensure proper consultations take place once Coronavirus is over. Sadiq Khan's measures are neither practical nor green, if anything air pollution will get worse.

PLANNING "MEDDLING"

Our London Boroughs are more than capable of deciding planning applications in consultation with residents' associations like SEBRA. Unfortunately the Mayor thinks he knows best.

Two of the six major London applications which are still with the meddling Mayor are close to SEBRA's area: 5 Kingdom Street (Westminster) and Kensington Forum (RBKC) - I will be keeping a close eye on these as I'm sure will you!

WELCOME BACK MURAD

Finally I should say how honoured I am to have a 5th year as YOUR AM and to welcome back my "old sparring partner" Labour's AM Murad Qureshi who returns to City Hall because a Labour colleague has been promoted from AM to Deputy Mayor.

Stop press - as I wrote the above critical words on the Mayor, the Sunday Times ran an interview with Khan where he admitted his Leadership had been lacking and said he had suffered mental health issues during the virus. I am of course sympathetic to anyone who has suffered during this crisis but will be seeking clarity on what this means for Mr Khan and Londoners.

Do please keep writing to me re police - housing - transport - environment matters.

Councillor Tony Devenish AM

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WARD BUDGET SUMMER 2020 UPDATE

Since its inception, the Ward Budget has been used as a flexible and dedicated resource to address specific local issues and priorities.

This spring, the Bayswater and Lancaster Gate Councillors agreed to continue to fund the hanging baskets within their Ward throughout 2020. The baskets have always brought colour to the local area and are greatly appreciated.

In May, the Hyde Park Councillors agreed to fund the Liberty Drives project by the Hyde Park Appeal Charity. The project aims to provide free transportation in Hyde Park to anyone less mobile, to make their day that little bit easier and more pleasant.

This month, the Lancaster Gate Councillors approved funding for a contribution towards the Hallfield

Primary School Science Lab. The school is currently working towards an award for the teaching and learning of Science, and this funding will help create a dedicated space for Science lessons and greater learning opportunities for the children.

The Lancaster Gate Councillors have also continued to fund the Lancaster Gate

Lunch Clubs, which have always proven to be very popular.

The Councillors have also been approached to consider funding defibrillators in your Ward. If you know a location that might be suitable, please feel free to get in contact with your Ward Councillors.

Are you an organisation who can benefit residents in your Ward area?

If so, you may be eligible for Ward Budget funding. The Ward Budget is granted at the discretion of Ward members to address specific local issues and priorities.

More information can be found about the programme via Westminster City Council's website:

westminster.gov.uk/ward-budgets.

Proposals for funding can also be submitted via the website. Your local Ward Councillors are always keen to hear your views on how these funds should be allocated, so please share your ideas with the Ward Budget team by emailing:

wardbudgets@westminster.gov.uk or by contacting your local Councillor.

NEWS FROM YOUR BAYSWATER WARD LABOUR COUNCILLOR



Maggie Carman

NORTH PADDINGTON FOODBANK

It's certainly been a strange time since I last wrote, and for many a very sad and frightening time. While some of us were doing jigsaw puzzles, baking banana bread and curating our living rooms so we didn't have the washing drying in the background during Zoom meetings, others found themselves suddenly facing unforeseen hardship.

The number of people relying on emergency food aid from North Paddington FoodBank jumped from 208 in one week in February to 1,296 a week in May.

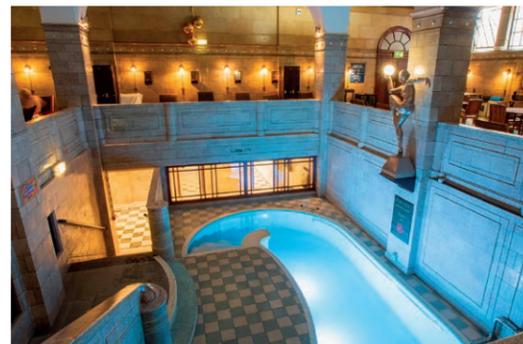
At the beginning of lockdown, neighbouring Labour Wards used all the spare cash in their 2019-20 councillors' Ward Budgets to provide funding to enable NPFB to pay for food wholesale as collections dropped and demand sky-rocketed. Moving out of lockdown the balance of need is moving from the acute priority of getting food to the isolated, to the chronic problems driven by poverty. Residents are struggling to cope in the aftermath of lockdown with rising unemployment, disrupted support networks, a punitive benefits system and unaffordable rents.

A recent survey found that private renters in Westminster paid 60% of their wages in rent. The need for foodbanks is still pressing and they receive no financial aid from Westminster Council, despite the Council referring residents to them during the COVID-19 crisis. I think it is time for that to change.

PORCHESTER SPA VICTORY

I am so pleased to announce that, after I called on the City Council to intervene, the proposed shocking price increases for use of the Turkish Baths have now been abandoned.

The local resident entry charge will be £17.08 not £21.55 and the local concessionary rate, which was initially proposed at £18.45 has been reduced even further from the 2019 price of £9.40 to £8.07. I am really looking forward to visiting when they reopen.



The Porchester Spa. Price increases "abandoned".

LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

I have been very heartened by the wonderful response from our Bayswater community to the crisis. The Bayswater COVID-19 Mutual Aid and Community Based Response Team was the brainchild of Nicola Spurr who quickly marshalled an enthusiastic team of volunteers to carry out such tasks as shopping, dog walking, telephone befriending, delivering meals and driving people to hospital appointments.



With Elaine Arthur, one of the many amazing volunteers in Bayswater.

Inevitably volunteers came across many cases of real hardship. One young couple had come from abroad to work in a restaurant and were left high and dry with no work and threatened with eviction if they didn't pay the excessive rent demanded for the small flat they were occupying. Mick Beirne from Westminster Council quickly stepped in to stop the eviction and negotiated the rent down to half of what was being asked. The wife soon found another job cleaning in a local hotel that was being used to house rough sleepers.

Another case uncovered by the Paddington Emergency Response Group was of an elderly disabled man living in a fifth floor flat with no lift. He hadn't been out for at least two years and it took three strong men to get him down the stairs for a hospital appointment. His health had deteriorated so much that he really needed more support and his current living conditions were unsuitable. Howard Goodall of Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association was alerted and he is currently working alongside Elaine Arthur of the Emergency Response Group and Westminster Social Services to rehouse him in a more suitable flat that he will be happy with.

I could continue with many stories but for now, huge thanks to Nicola, Mick, Elaine, Howard and all those who are making such a valuable contribution to the community.

MAGGIE'S BAYSWATER QUIZ

Test your local knowledge with ten questions - answers on p130.

Q1 - What year did Waitrose open on Bishop's Bridge Road and which shop stood on the site before?

Q2 - Which famous writer, who set his novels in fictional Wessex, lived in Westbourne Park Villas from 1863 to 1867?

Q3 - What year did the Porchester Turkish Baths open and what is the current entry price for a local resident?

Q4 - Which Westbourne Grove restaurant, established in 1967, whose proprietor appeared in "Britain's Got Talent", was closed due to fire in 2019?

Q5 - Which Bayswater entrepreneur dubbed himself The Universal Provider and boasted that he could provide anything from a pin to an elephant?

Q6 - The top three non-UK nationalities registered to vote in Bayswater are French, Italian and Irish. What's the fourth?

Q7 - Name these pubs that have disappeared from the Bayswater streets:

- a) 40 Porchester Road, 1856 - 2016
- b) 1 Westbourne Grove, 1856 - 2018
- c) 47 Hereford Road, 1841 - 2016

Q8 - Which SEBRALAND underground stations opened in:

- a) 1868 - Two stations
- b) 1871 - One station
- c) 1900 - Two stations

Q9 - Which notorious landlord had an office in Westbourne Grove? The first house he purchased and used for multi-occupation was in St Stephen's Gardens. His mistress was Mandy Rice Davies of the Profumo scandal fame.

Q10 - Which of the following jobs has John Zamit held in the past?

- a) Male model
- b) Wonderbra salesman
- c) Puppeteer

POLICE SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM



Joining the Safer Neighbourhood Team on patrol.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team is a team of police officers who are dedicated to long term problem solving, crime prevention, enforcement and community engagement on your ward.

I recently joined PC Andy Burgin and PC Harriet Mandeville on a Ward patrol, speaking to many residents and shop owners. It is so helpful to have officers who really know the place and the people. Hallfield Estate, Gloucester Terrace and Westbourne Grove are to be added to the Queensway Area Community Protection Zone. This means that nuisances such as begging can be dealt with by the issuing of community protection notices which if breached may result in a fine or other penalty.

The organised begging gangs tend to be seasonal and some have returned immediately prior to quarantine regulations being imposed so do make sure you report them if you spot them.

Finally, have a go at my Bayswater Quiz; I'd love to know how you got on so do email me. Contact details below.

Write to Maggie at:

64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP

Telephone: 020 7641 4299

Email: mcarman@westminster.gov.uk

Website: www.westminsterlabour.org.uk

Twitter: @BayswaterLabour

Visit Maggie's surgery: Porchester Library, every first and third Saturday of the month from 2pm to 3.30pm



Your Letters

We welcome your letters on any subject that might be of interest to the readers of **SEBRA NEWS W2**. Send your contributions to: editor@sebra.org.uk or by post to John Zamit, Chairman (address on page 2). Note that contributions may be subject to minor editorial changes. Please include your full contact details. The writer of the "Star Letter" in each edition will be presented with six bottles of wine.

KEEPING THE STREETS CLEAN OR TAKING THE PISS (I WISH THEY HAD!)

Since the first signs of the pandemic hitting the UK I am sure we have all said thank God for the NHS and for all other public carers whether they are the delivery people, the shop assistants, the bus and tube drivers, the broadcasters and all the emergency services, and for those who sit at the end of a telephone answering the same questions. In other words for all of those who have kept London moving under the most extraordinary and trying circumstances.

But rarely included in the paeons of praise are those brave teams of street cleaners who are out regularly sweeping, emptying bins and cleaning up the mess that we residents seem to find acceptable to leave on the pavements for someone else to deal with.

Not long ago an Amazon van pulled up outside our house. The young woman driver got out, went to the rear of her van and pulled out a polythene bag which I thought she was going to deliver. She chucked the bag under her van, pulled out a box which she then went to deliver – came back and drove away leaving the polythene bag behind in the road. It was full of pee. I reported this to WCC online and within two days (by which time of course it had been squashed and emptied by



Local Heroes - A Veolia crew.

cars driving over it) a pristine lorry drew up with hoses, vacuum cleaners and brushes. The driver collected it and then proceeded to wash down the road.

Our regular street sweeper Wayne is outside in all weathers, collecting up what we and the local foxes have just dropped. Just today when walking along our road I saw two plastic bottles with what looked suspiciously like more pee collections lying in the gutter waiting for our poor chap.

Our regular recycling and refuse collections have continued during the lockdown to empty our overflowing bins and to take our Amazon boxes away. (which we have been told not to touch because of the long survival of the virus, but the teams take them away without hesitation).

Finally I must thank the graffiti team who spend time scrubbing the walls to get rid of the ugly and quite often racist scrawlings. What a job to have to do, and what frustration they must feel when residents complain.



Graffiti removal continues to be appreciated by Nicky.

They are all "local heroes" and by working so hard on our behalf they are not only cleaning the streets but keeping rodent pests at bay. I hope they will be given a big bonus from Veolia when this is over, to reward their valiant efforts, but they most certainly get a vote of thanks from me.

Nicky Hessenberg
Westbourne Park Villas, W2



THANK YOU SEBRA, THANK YOU RICHARD BROWN!

John, I cannot thank you and SEBRA enough for your work and for looking after our interests with respect to the late night alcohol license application by the Thistle Hotel Hyde Park in Bayswater Road next door to our building.

Residents really appreciate your efforts and one person commented to me that "It shows exactly the community spirit we hoped for when moving to Barrie House".

We are not opposed to change but the license in its original form would have made life quite intolerable for many residents, especially as some bedrooms would have been only a few metres away from late evening noise and music.

We had expected that Westminster City Council would likely grant the license, since the Thistle had prepared their application not expecting much opposition. However, we have to thank you for securing the very significant concessions and for addressing the various loopholes that would have otherwise impacted on our security and quality of life.

My thanks must also go to Richard Brown at Citizens' Advice Westminster for his expert and valuable advice at the hearing.

Mike Somekh
Barrie House, Lancaster Gate, W2

"SEBRA'S LIFE AND SOUL"

I am writing to convey my admiration for **SEBRA NEWS W2** - always full of important local news. I am also writing to express my admiration for John Zamit - SEBRA's life and soul - whose dedication to Bayswater is simply remarkable.

During the time I lived in the neighbourhood to work as an intern for local charity Youmunity, I happened to bump into John on a number of occasions. This gentleman is always busy with something for the benefit of the local community.

As a young female, I am also grateful to John for ensuring that unsightly sex call cards are promptly removed from public telephone boxes. I have seen him removing these myself.

In a nutshell, I have never met a local resident to be as proud of the area as John, and I applaud him!

Ciara Ronzoni
Hatherley Grove, W2



Heathrow Airport - Murray Fuller points to health worries.

HEATHROW AND YOUR HEALTH - TAKE ACTION FOR CHANGE

Since COVID-19 lockdown we have enjoyed clean, clear skies, reduced Heathrow plane noise, better sleep and consequently less stress from our environment.

We have been made aware that our lungs and heart are really a matter of life and death with many perishing to COVID-19. But many other diseases/weaknesses to these organs, have been caused by air pollution.

I appeal to you to read the article on page 78 which cites Kings College scientific evidence that Heathrow generated air pollution in the form of micro particles are reaching our lungs in Bayswater.

Common sense has told us for years that Heathrow jets disgorge on us trapped below, gases and all shapes and sizes of pollutants. We know this is not improving our health.

We breath it in, our lungs deteriorate, we die earlier. Similarly the relative quiet and peace of the lockdown period, with only a small percentage of jets above, has meant better sleep, especially at 5:00am to 7:30am, and better mental health for us all.

But all this will soon change - Heathrow is working hard to increase flight numbers on the existing two runways, and to overturn the High Court ruling against their proposed third runway.

All of this will mean 700 plus flights per day compared to pre-COVID times. Furthermore it will ramp up road and public transport.

Not only will all forms of pollution rise to unprecedented and hugely damaging levels, Heathrow will drain the life blood out of all the regional airports and supporting infrastructure.

How can we allow this to occur to the rest of our country and for it to be perpetrated by Heathrow Ltd, a company which is 92% owned by foreign wealth/investment

funds. Any London and UK benefits are far out weighed by what it costs us, taxpayers, in infrastructure contribution and health costs.

COVID-19 has shown business we can increasingly work from home, use Zoom or similar and thus reduce unnecessary flights to a minimum. It has given society a free ticket, to consider how we can create a more sustainable society while still enjoying the benefits we expect. So I appeal to you to :

- Read the article on page 78 - it may save your life or that of a loved one

- Join the campaign: www.stopheathrowpollutingus.org

Enjoy the clear skies, cleanish air, peace and quiet, for now.

Murray Fuller
Sunderland Terrace, W2

MONEY WASTED ON CYCLISTS SAFE ZONES

have no idea what Westminster City Council pays their sub-contractors to paint these traffic light safe zones for cyclists, but I do know it is far too much.

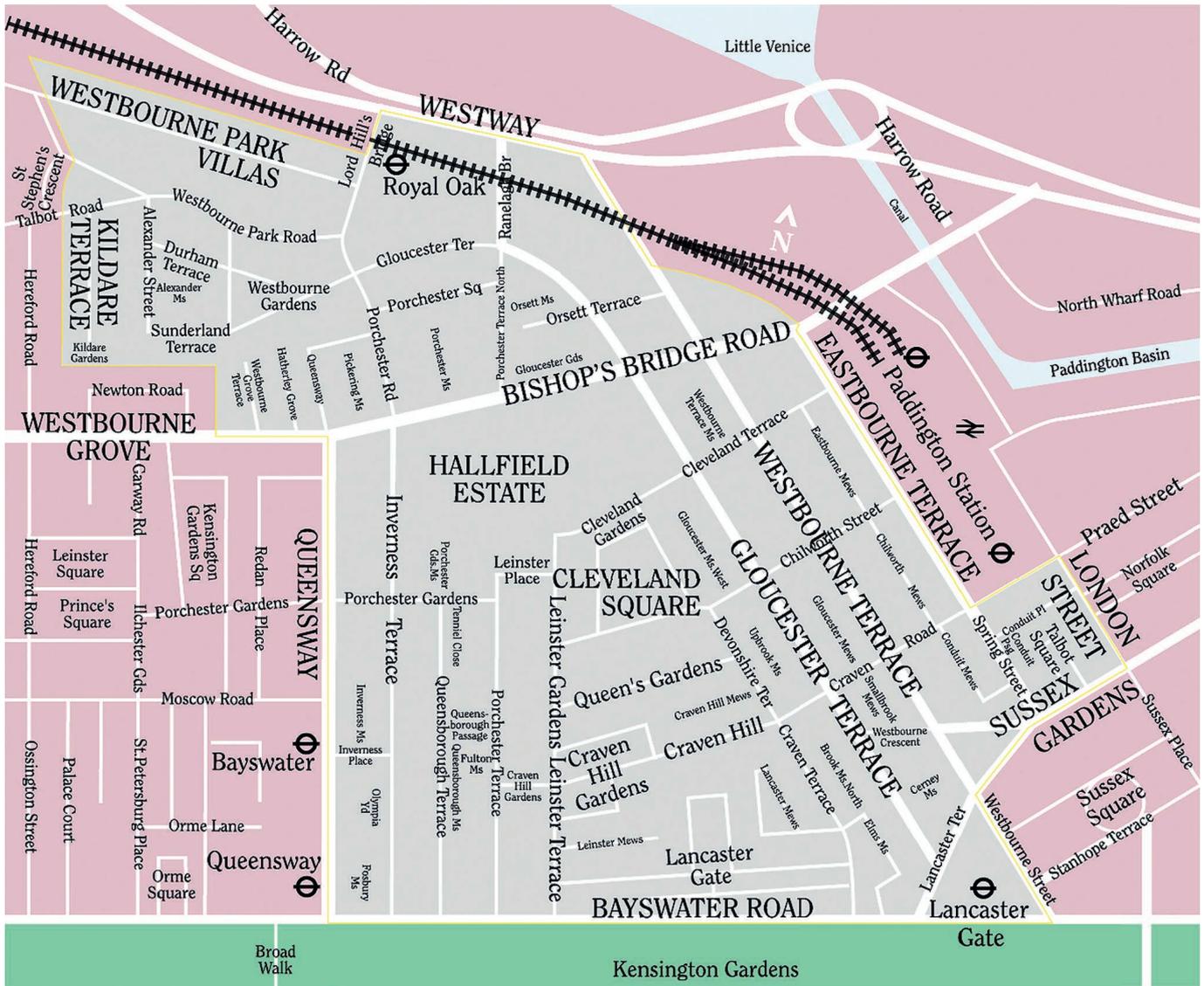


Cycle zones - often ignored by cyclists.

My experience is that cyclists just completely ignore traffic lights anyway and pedal on regardless, with the boxes being exclusively used by moped riders or BMW drivers.

SEBRA Member
Inverness Terrace, W2

SEBRALAND W2



CITY HALL: 020 7641 6000
 Website: www.westminster.gov.uk
CITY INSPECTORS: 020 7641 2000
FIX MY STREET:
www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it

LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACTS

Police - Emergency 999
 Police - Non Emergency 101
 Police - Royal Parks 101
 British Transport Police 0800 405 040
 TfL - Congestion Charge 0845 900 1234
 TfL - Highway Problems 0343 222 1234
 Crossrail Helpdesk 0345 602 3813

Environment and Noise 020 7641 2000
 Graffiti and Flyposting 020 7641 2000
 Highways and Lighting 020 7641 2000
 Paddington Library 020 7641 1300
 Parking Hotline 020 7823 4567
 Karen Buck MP 020 8968 7999
 Nickie Aiken MP 020 7219 4553