

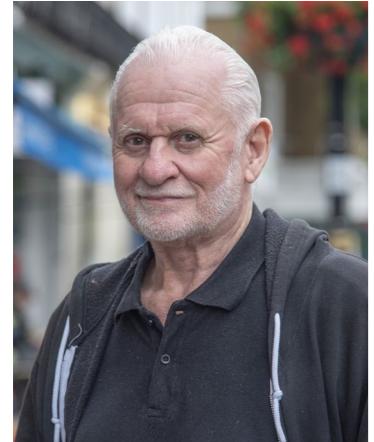
# SEBRA NEWS W2

FOOTFALL'S  
COMING HOME?

ISSUE No 102  
SUMMER 2021



THE MARBLE ARCH MOUND  
WILL IT BRING BUSINESS AND VISITORS  
BACK TO OXFORD STREET?



# From the Chairman

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## FOOTBALL ALMOST CAME HOME...

We delayed going to print by a day in the hope that we could congratulate England on winning Euro 2020.

Sadly it was not to be but the team and manager can hold their heads high knowing that their exploits lifted a nation.

Roll on winter 2022 and the World Cup in Qatar!

Welcome once again to SEBRA NEWS W2, another cracking edition and one which I hope will be the last produced under lockdown.

Firstly I would like to thank Councillor Melvin Caplan, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for City Management. I asked Melvyn to reply on many of the topics covered, and he never failed to deliver.

### MITZI BALES

On a personal note I would like to mention the sad death of Mitzi Bales. Mitzi was an unsung hero of this magazine, having proof read many editions for us. Despite her 90+ years she did a wonderful job, spotting things that only a professional could. She was a lovely lady and I will miss her.

### AN ACT OF FOLLY?

The Marble Arch Mound features on a number of pages and we decided it was right for our cover too. Will it bring footfall home? Time will tell.

### SEBRA SUMMER PARTY

In the last edition I wrote that cancellation of our summer garden party this year was likely, and since then we did indeed decide to cancel. The postponement of the final stage of restrictions ending proved our decision to be the correct one. It is disappointing to have lost our 2020 and 2021 events, let us hope that it can return in 2022.

### SHOPPING & RESTAURANTS

Once again I have left out this section of the magazine. Previously I have covered four pages with updates on our retail establishments and eateries, but Covid has meant there is not a great deal to report, only vacancies. There are however a couple of things to mention. Firstly, Barclays Bank on Queensway is closing down in September. There will be no banks or building societies on Queensway or



The last remaining bank on Queensway closes in September.

Westbourne Grove. On a more positive note there are a few good restaurant openings on the horizon.

There is also news that David Beckham and Guy Ritchie have acquired the Walmer Castle in Ledbury Road, which has been closed for several months.

### NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL

Another Covid victim is the Notting Hill Carnival, the cancellation of which was announced just a few weeks ago. On the same subject there is an excellent article from Jack Gordon on page 130, about Claudia Jones, described as *"The Mother of the Caribbean Carnival"*.

### A VERY GOOD READ



So much to enjoy in Issue No 102.

It seems that every time we put a magazine together we are blessed with excellent content, much of which is unique to these pages. I like to think that readers will enjoy every page, but there are some truly stand-out articles this time round. Page 52 features a

fascinating interview with Ian and Nicky Hessenberg, and we continue exclusive interviews on page 94 where SEBRA Member and travel writer Mary Moore Mason talks about her latest book. Christopher Penfold's *'Stand Up and be Counted'* on page 38 is quite superb, and I am very grateful to the Editor for a two-page spread entitled *'Bayswater's Building Boom'*.

### SUCCESS FOR SAFETY VALVE

Finally it is great to report two big victories on our Safety Valve pages. There is major news on National Express coaches, a subject which has graced our magazine for some while. Additionally we have had what many would consider a sensible decision with 'Big Black Bins'.



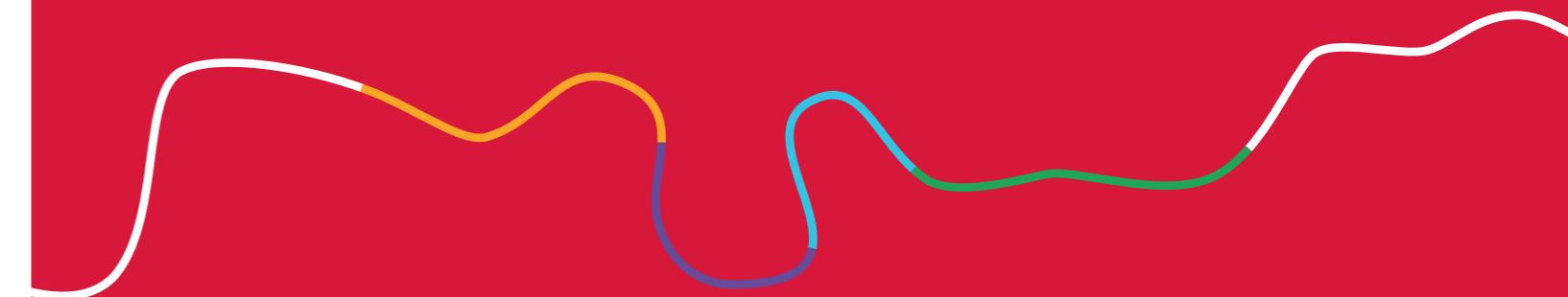
We have news so good that we commissioned an illustration!

In many ways Safety Valve encompasses what the work of SEBRA is all about. Whilst we encourage members to 'let off steam' the wider aim is to get issues that concern them in front of the people who can do something about them. We do not always get the results we want, but there have been many successes over the years.

I hope you enjoy the magazine as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Best wishes.

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Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward



# From the Editor

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I decided to write my page well in advance of 21 June ('freedom day' is what Mrs Editor has written on the calendar\*) because as we approach that date I am going to be very busy dealing with the other 140+ pages.

Whether all COVID restrictions are relaxed on that date will be a matter of history, but I am hopeful that as we progress through summer, life really will not be much different to how it was before the pandemic popped up and made everyone in London want to sell their flat and buy a mansion in Cornwall.

## FIRST MEMORIES OF LONDON

I must admit I do like the freedom I grant myself to write about whatever I choose here, so to start I thought I would mention my earliest memory of London. I joined the BBC in 1983, and after 12 weeks of training in Evesham, I found myself living in Bowden Court, a hostel on Ladbroke Road. It is still there today, looking a little more modern, but instantly recognisable after many years.

I remember listening over and over again to a cassette tape of Simon & Garfunkel's greatest hits whilst nodding off to sleep, and going to the local Wimpy for a Quarterpounder with Cheese. I used to jog around Hyde Park and make the occasional trip to Oxford Street.

I recall being quite scared of London back then. It was a big city, I was only 19, and whilst it was great working at Television Centre and seeing famous people day after day, I couldn't wait to get back to Somerset every fortnight.

Perhaps some of you SEBRA members have memories you'd like to share of your earliest days in the capital? Do drop me an email (address above) and if there are enough I'll put them on a page in the Autumn edition.



### A PUB CALLED "THE PUB"

I might live many miles away but it still seems like I have a duty to report goings-on here in Very West London. Well we have a new pub and it's called "*The Pub*". The name is a work of genius and I am pleased to report that it is better than 'Spoons in every measurable way. This is excellent.

*The Pub* is small, so even when there was just little old me and Karina the landlady in the place, it was perfectly busy enough. When two other chaps arrived it felt nicely full. *The Pub* plays just the right music at just the right volume. Better still there is none of this food nonsense. If you want a sandwich go to Greggs. They do sell Pork Scratchings though, a pub essential.

From my (frighteningly vast) experience what people want most from a pub is a top choice of tipple, comfy seats and a warm welcome. Boxes suitably ticked.

And so there I sat, with a fine pint of "*Dick & Willie's*" cider writing this very column. It occurred to me that I should let Mrs Editor know where I was, but what message to send? 'At The Pub' seemed a little too predictable, so I took another sip and typed "I'm helping out the local economy". Moments later a beer glass icon popped up on my phone. She understood.

### EUROVISION I LOVE YOU

A quick note about the Eurovision Song Contest. This is my TV highlight of the year so it was great to see it back. My Dad always thought that things peaked with ABBA back in '74, with a brief resurgence in '81 when Bucks Fizz brought it home from Dublin, but I think it has got better and better each year. This time round I did my own voting, making notes as I went: "Spain - bilge", "Bulgaria - woeful", "San Marino - weird", "Italy - no chance", "UK - potential winner". I know nothing, but then given that we Brits brought the Beatles, the Stones and Little Mix to the world, it is perhaps Johnny Foreigner who doesn't know his "*Ding Dang a Dong*" from his "*Boom Bang a Bang*".



Music legends Bucks Fizz.

### ICONIC? REALLY?

Is there anything not described as "*iconic*" these days? Tresemme Shampoo, The Big Mac, Southgate's waistcoat, the Nokia 3310, every Pink Floyd album, that blue door in Notting Hill... the list goes on and on. In fact only three iconic things have ever existed in all of human history. They are Concorde, the Omega Speedmaster and Elvis Presley.

\*Mrs Ed - Now redacted #AngryFace

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**"Letting off Steam"**

BR 2-10-0 Class 9F 92214

This loco was built in 1959 and was based at Banbury, Newport and Bath, mainly hauling heavy freight trains to and from steel works and coal mines, but also working passenger trains quite often.

Withdrawn in 1965, she was rescued from scrapping and restored by enthusiasts.

92214 was based at the North York Moors 'steam heritage' Railway from 2010. Here she is seen working another heritage railway, the Great Central in Leicestershire.



Photograph by Barry Duffin.  
Visit: [bit.ly/sebra-duffin](https://bit.ly/sebra-duffin)

# Safety Valve

Once again we feature a host of pages where readers 'let off steam' about the issues in Bayswater and beyond that concern them. There certainly isn't a dull moment in the section, which remains as diverse as ever. Parking, coaches, road signs, drug abuse, Heathrow and black bins all make an appearance, plus there are rather colourful pages on graffiti and the state of the phone boxes on our streets.

Many of our articles get sent to Council officials for comment, and we must thank Councillors Melvyn Caplan and Heather Acton, and Tony Devenish AM for taking the time to do so in this edition. Thanks also go to SEBRA's former President John Walton for supplying comment on behalf of PRACT (Paddington Residents Active Concern on Transport) and SEBRA.

First up though is a long-overdue reminder of why this section is titled 'Safety Valve' in the first place...

## WHY SAFETY VALVE?

During the editorship of Christopher Tanous, the 'Safety Valve' section of this magazine came into being. As a long-time railway enthusiast and amateur driver of locomotives, Christopher drew a parallel between the safety valve found on such locomotives and SEBRA members 'letting off steam'.

As Christopher explains: *'These valves operate when the pressure in the boiler reaches the maximum safe level. The valves are always mounted on top of the boiler, often in front of the cab or on the middle of the boiler.'*

*'It is not very usual for the valves to 'lift' in everyday service, but when they do a column of steam is 'blown off' noisily until the pressure is lowered.'*

The original header image for this section showed such a valve in action, but your current editor has chosen a different track, selecting images of various steam trains to mark the section with.



Above: The steam locomotive 'Goliath' leaves Kingswear Station on the Dartmouth Steam Railway.

Left: A close-up of her safety valves in their polished brass cover.

## QUEENSWAY - MONEY WASTED ON A 'VANITY PROJECT'?

**Roger Harding**  
Inverness Terrace, W2

Westminster City Council has spent a small fortune on the Public Realm of Queensway, W2, to create an environment of parking-free pavements/loading bays for pedestrians to freely walk upon from around midday - throughout the afternoons, evenings and overnight, until the following morning at 07:00 when parking for unloading and loading is permitted until around midday again.

Has the council wasted **OUR MONEY** with implementing a "vanity project"? Whatever the reason, **IT IS NOT WORKING!**

The 'Marshals' (Traffic Wardens by any other name) have a namby-pamby code of conduct to "advise and inform"



transgressing parkers, rather than penalise those who continually and consistently flout the regulations. Couldn't you require them to be stouter in enforcement of regulations? Single Marshals are intimidated by retailers. Other Marshals turn a blind eye to temporary parkers (who are just popping in for a purchase!).



**Response from Councillor Melvyn Caplan**  
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for City Management

The implementation of this section of Queensway Public Realm Improvements was completed in early 2021. The improvements included the introduction of wider footways together with loading and parking bays. The carriageway has been narrowed which has removed the double-parking problem that used to occur for many years.

I share the frustration with the continued problem with parking within the loading bays out of permitted hours. The majority of those parking improperly are the general public and not store staff. To help with messaging to them the Council has already increased the identifying line markings on the highway and added additional signage to make it clearer what the restrictions are.

When it comes to enforcement, there are legal limits on what the Council can do on-street enforcement of these rules can only be undertaken in person by Marshals. The Council is legally not permitted to enforce these restrictions by camera and can only enforce by the use of uniformed staff (our Marshals) who undertake their duties in a visible way. For example, if a driver is in the vehicle the Marshals must make themselves known and first ask the driver to move before any Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) issuing is commenced.

Our Marshals have been told to take a zero-tolerance approach to enforcement in the bays. We have also deployed more Marshals around Queensway and they now operate

The hours of parking prohibition on the loading bays amount to **EIGHTEEN HOURS PER DAY**, yet Marshals are present for a fraction of those hours.

Why aren't the enforcers more available and more forceful? Please increase the hours of **PROPER ANTI-PARKING ENFORCEMENT** – especially during the evenings and nights when residents and their families deserve peace and quiet. You've spent £millions on creating the Queensway Public Realm. Why can't you spend a few more £thousands on implementing the parking-free dream with more 'Marshals' with a stricter regime? The current reality is a complete nonsense!

**Editor's Note - Video on YouTube:**  
The author was kind enough to provide a link to a YouTube video on this subject. Readers might like to visit [bit.ly/SEBRA-QWAY-PARKING](https://bit.ly/SEBRA-QWAY-PARKING)

between 08:00 and 22:00 with occasional spot visits throughout the night. While the ability of the Marshals to issue PCNs is limited in law, they are making a real difference in moving vehicles on while still issuing a considerable number of actual penalties despite the restrictions.

I have viewed the position myself with your Chairman and we have discussed other options such as further changes to the signage and bringing in 'movable' planters when loading is completed and parking is not allowed. Schemes with parking layouts and restrictions like this have been a success elsewhere in the City, and we will keep working to ensure that we can remove these remaining issues to the benefit of people who live around Queensway.

## GRAFFITI - SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR

### Sue Burden Griffiths

Westbourne Grove, W2

I do hope you don't mind me getting in touch but my very long-standing friend, Fiona, suggested John Zamit would be the person to ask what can be done about some graffiti opposite our house. It is right by the bus stop on Westbourne Grove near the five-way junction - which includes Pembridge Villas.

I am attaching some photos but you may well know exactly where I mean - the old bank building on the corner which must surely be about to be redeveloped.

My sincere thanks in the hope that you can offer some guidance on this and my best wishes.

**Editor's note:** Our background image is of the old bank building mentioned by Sue. The graffiti can be seen along its Westbourne Grove side and to the front.



### Chairman's reply

Hello Sue and many thanks for getting in touch. Every time I pass by I try to close my eyes as the graffiti you have mentioned is absolutely terrible!

Unfortunately these buildings are in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (with Westminster City Council opposite) so I am powerless to do anything about it as I have no contacts in that Council area. If this graffiti was in Westminster I could get it removed in 12 hours!

That is why Bayswater is pretty free of graffiti and flyposting as I am always reporting anything I see in SEBRALAND.

You might have noticed that near where you live there is a BT phone box which has all sorts of graffiti on the glass. Sadly it will not come off so I am trying to get the phone box removed (see page 17 for further examples).

Many thanks for sending your photos, they prompted us to take our own on a sunny day to really help show the scale of the problem. I do hope you can find someone at RBK&C who can get the graffiti removed.

## SIGNS OF CONFUSION ON QUEENSWAY

### Simon Whittle

Queensway, W2

I would like to enter my photo for the 'most confusing sign in London' competition, assuming there is such a thing.

Inverness Place has just had its one way direction reversed for the first time in living memory, and the Council decides to erect a sign on Queensway just before the turn into it telling drivers they CANNOT turn right into the street (which they now can, but probably aren't expecting to be able to). So they don't. Very little traffic uses the street.

How many drivers actually have the time to read the tiny lettering underneath saying that vehicles under 7.5 tonnes are exempt from this ban?

A possible solution: remove the no right turn sign and instead put up signs at the entrance of Inverness Place stating that vehicles OVER 7.5 tonnes cannot enter?

Right: Confusion on Queensway. Many car drivers would obey the "no right turn" and not realise it only applies to heavier vehicles.



### Chairman's reply

Simon, thank you very much for your email regarding the confusing new 'No Right Turn' sign in Queensway, just before the junction with Inverness Place. There should indeed be a competition for 'Most confusing sign in London' and your entry would be a contender for the top prize. (See our article on page 99 from Nicky Hessenberg on this very subject).

You make a very good point though, the signage is confusing, and you will be pleased to know that SEBRA were already in discussions with the Council. New signs will be installed soon.

The images on the right show those new signs, so let us hope they encourage more vehicles to use Inverness Place.

For your reference the Inverness Place traffic flow was reversed to stop motorists 'rat running' through Moscow

Road and also to enable drivers who had been making deliveries or using the Q Park to exit Queensway without having to go through residential areas.

I look forward to receiving further suggestions from you and other members regarding signage in SEBRALAND.



New signs will be clearer for drivers.

## SIGNS OF CONFUSION ON INVERNESS PLACE

### Catherine Lamplugh

Queensway, W2

Here is my submission for the "Crazy street signs of Bayswater" which I am sure will confuse a great number of drivers

Here in Inverness Place we have two signs relating to the same stretch of parking bays, but giving return times of one hour and four hours. Do those parking get to choose perhaps?

I hope these make readers smile.



Left: One hour. Right: Four hours. Two signs relating to the same parking bays, but giving different rules.

### Chairman's reply

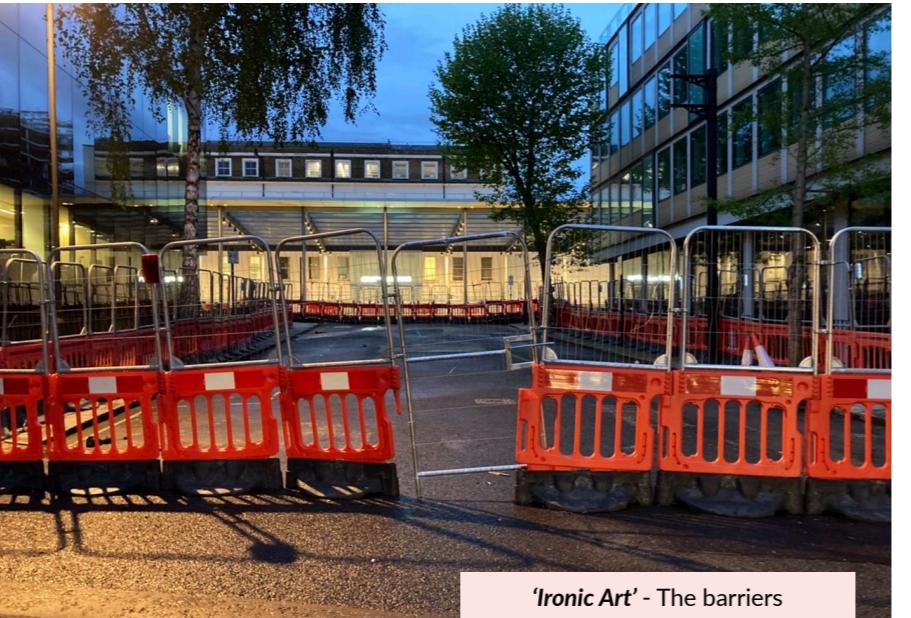
Well spotted Catherine and thank you for bringing this to SEBRA's attention! The good news is that the parking signs were sorted within a week of being reported, so that should put a stop to parking times confusion in the street.

## CHILWORTH STREET - CLOSED FOR A FURTHER TWO YEARS!

**Oliver Ingram**  
SEBRA Member, W2

**A**fter occupying Chilworth Street for 12 years (!), Crossrail has finally moved its cabins. In true Crossrail fashion, it took forever to move this eyesore, with only a worker or two on site, barely working a couple of hours a day whilst Eastbourne Terrace was blocked 24 hours a day for eight days. Somehow, Crossrail appears to also have been allowed to leave the street in an awful state. Infrastructure of all kinds is sticking out of the road, lighting has not been reinstated, and the pavement is destroyed at the intersection with Eastbourne Terrace.

Huge barriers have also been installed. Maybe this is another ironic art piece in line with the cloud roof at the station. In that sense, I must admit that an unfinished and abandoned construction site is quite an apt representation of Crossrail.



**'Ironic Art'** - The barriers installed at Chilworth Street.

In the mean time, garbage of all kinds is already accumulating behind those new barriers. I would have productive suggestions of what could be done to improve this new eyesore but the last 12 years have demonstrated that this would be a complete waste of my time.

Instead, I have grown to accept that Chilworth Street will forever remain a dumping ground. Maybe when enough refuse has been accumulated, it can be compete for tourists with the new Marble Arch Hill.

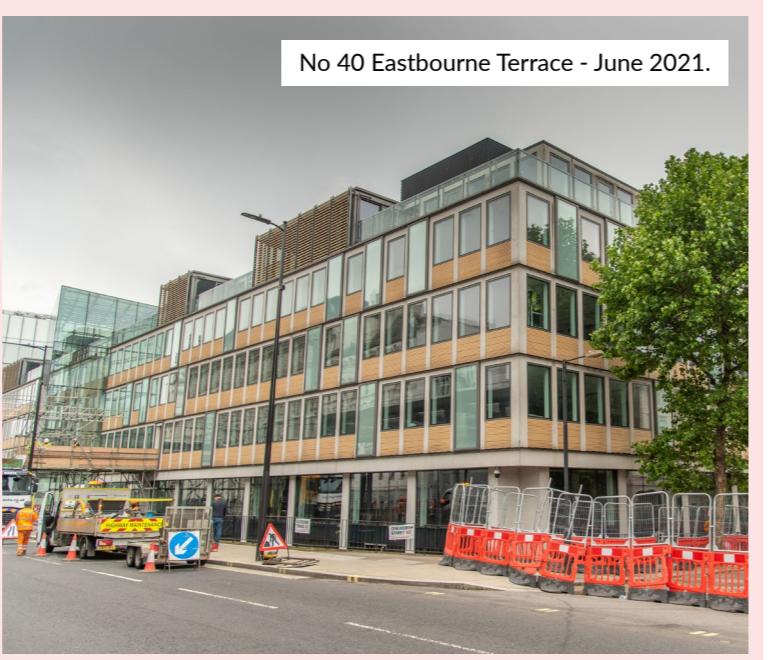
## ON THE SAME SUBJECT... AN OPEN LETTER TO LOCAL COUNCILLORS

**Dear Local Councillors,**  
Chilworth Street was been cordoned off a couple of weeks ago, and there has been no sign of activity since. It has been gathering junk ever since and looks increasingly awful. Are there any plans to one day restore the street?

**Emilia Garber**  
Local Resident, W2

**Dear Ms Garber**  
Thank you for raising this matter with you local councillors; having made enquiries on your behalf, I understand that the site is shortly to be handed over from being the responsibility of Crossrail to developers working on 40

Eastbourne Terrace. I have been assured by council officers that they will look at having the site brought back up to acceptable standards while it continues to be fenced off.  
Kind regards  
**Ian Adams**  
Hyde Park Ward Councillor



No 40 Eastbourne Terrace - June 2021.

**T**he works at No 40 Eastbourne Terrace mean that Chilworth Street is proposed to be closed for another two years. If so all traffic for these works, including large trucks, will be using Westbourne Terrace to access the site and Eastbourne Terrace to exit.

This is a fairly major construction project and includes the addition of two floors to the existing building, in addition to re-cladding taking place.

The site will be home to a Premier Inn (with 275 bedrooms) and a Hub by Premier Inn (with 91 bedrooms). There will also be a Bar + Block Steakhouse as part of the project.

Clearly the ongoing closure of Chilworth Street will be very inconvenient for residents, but I can at least promise that SEBRA will continue to do what it can, certainly with respect to the concerns expressed above.

## PHONE BOXES - A PLAGUE ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

**Sophia Thomas**  
Westbourne Terrace, W2

**O**ver the years, I have seen the state of numerous BT phone boxes in the neighbourhood get progressively worse to now reach the level of absolute scars.

I am not referring to the heritage boxes, but to the featureless, systematically broken, modern BT-owned ones.

My understanding is that everyone is powerless to address this because BT falls under some authority that clearly does not care about this issue.

Surely, we can't just give up and accept this. These boxes are inevitably full of graffiti, have broken windows, and even still sometimes have prostitutes' cards. Truly anachronistic in every way. And let's not be fooled by the phones that some on them still have inside them. None are actually functional.



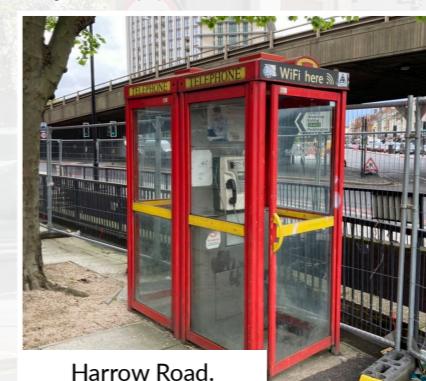
Bishop's Bridge Road.



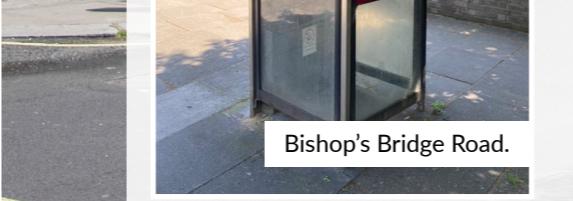
Craven Road.



Bishop's Bridge Road.

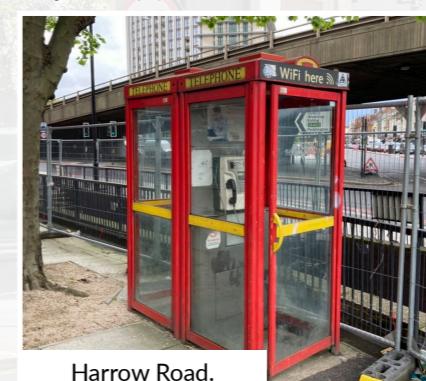


Harrow Road.



Bishop's Bridge Road.

Furthermore, it is not as if BT was using them as billboards. Those that have ads contain ones that have simply not been removed for years, whilst most boxes are just simply abandoned.



Harrow Road.

Outside London, I have seen some of those being turned into attractive flower pots. It might be a solution if for some reason these steel frames have to remain for eternity.



Westbourne Street.

In any case, I can't believe that this situation will last for another twenty years, simply because of some bureaucratic issue. These boxes are a plague on the neighbourhood, and removing them should really not be so complicated.



Craven Road.

### Chairman's Comment

I am very grateful to Sophia for once again highlighting the terrible state of phone boxes in SEBRALAND. In the past we have enjoyed great success in getting phone boxes removed, and SEBRA member Roger Harding has been especially helpful in this respect.

Two boxes in Bishop's Bridge Road should be gone soon, but there are many others that really need to be removed. Off the top of my head I can think of boxes that are in a terrible state in Moscow Road, Porchester Road and Westbourne Grove. Some boxes are not the responsibility of BT, and can be harder to get removed, but this is certainly an ongoing task that SEBRA is actively pursuing.



**Councillor Rachael Robathan**  
Leader, Westminster City Council

## THE LATEST UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**A**s this edition of SEBRA NEWS W2 appears, we should at last be enjoying the first month out of lockdown restrictions since March 2020. For readers, these have been gruelling and testing times. Throughout the pandemic, the City Council has endeavoured to keep our services running as usual – keeping the streets clean, the vulnerable looked after and our Westminster Connects volunteers ensuring nobody has been overlooked.

As we inch back to normality, it is time to rebuild and revitalise all parts of Westminster. And we have bold and innovative plans in the pipeline to do just that.

### THE MARBLE ARCH MOUND

I hope SEBRA NEWS W2 readers enjoyed seeing the Marble Arch Mound taking shape – the 25-metre man-made hill which now stands next to the famous monument of the same name. This structure, covered in grass and trees and with commanding 360-degree views of London, is the newest tourist attraction in London.



Visiting the Marble Arch Mound and meeting the team.

I enjoyed a sneak preview visit recently and can safely say it is a stunning vantage point – once you have climbed its 130 steps – from which to see the capital.

Inside, the hollow structure is home to a café, shop, and exhibition space. The Council is working with Marks & Spencer as its exclusive food partner for the venue while W1 Curates will stage art shows. So, after a visit to the viewing gallery (where we anticipate 1,000 visitors a day) there will be time to have something to eat, see some art and hopefully go on to other attractions in the area.



At the top of the Mound with Jonathan Glanz, the Lord Mayor of Westminster.

That is why I believe the Marble Arch Mound is a good investment for the City. We will be able to cover almost all of the construction and operating costs over its six-month lifespan from ticket sales and sponsorship – much of which has already been committed – and the Mound is part of a much bigger plan to revitalise Westminster's economy and attract visitors.

The hope is that people interesting in seeing an attraction that has already caught the imagination will go on to see other parts of our City, eat out, take in a cultural attraction or two and call by our great shops.



Marble Arch Mound will complete and open to visitors by the time you read this.



Footfall's coming home!  
The Oxford Street redevelopment.

### OXFORD STREET LATEST

Alongside the Mound, readers may have seen the recent announcement about the creation of two pedestrian-friendly piazzas either side of Oxford Circus. These are part of the ongoing £150m redevelopment of the Oxford Street District and are part of the drive to make the area more attractive to those who visit and live locally.

For people who live nearby, I am confident there will be clear benefits from the Oxford Street District overhaul – cleaner air, more green space and easier access for pedestrians and cyclists. Work on the new piazzas will start later this year but in the meantime I encourage you to have a look at the updated plans at [osd.london](http://osd.london)

### OTHER TOPICS - ROUGH SLEEPING

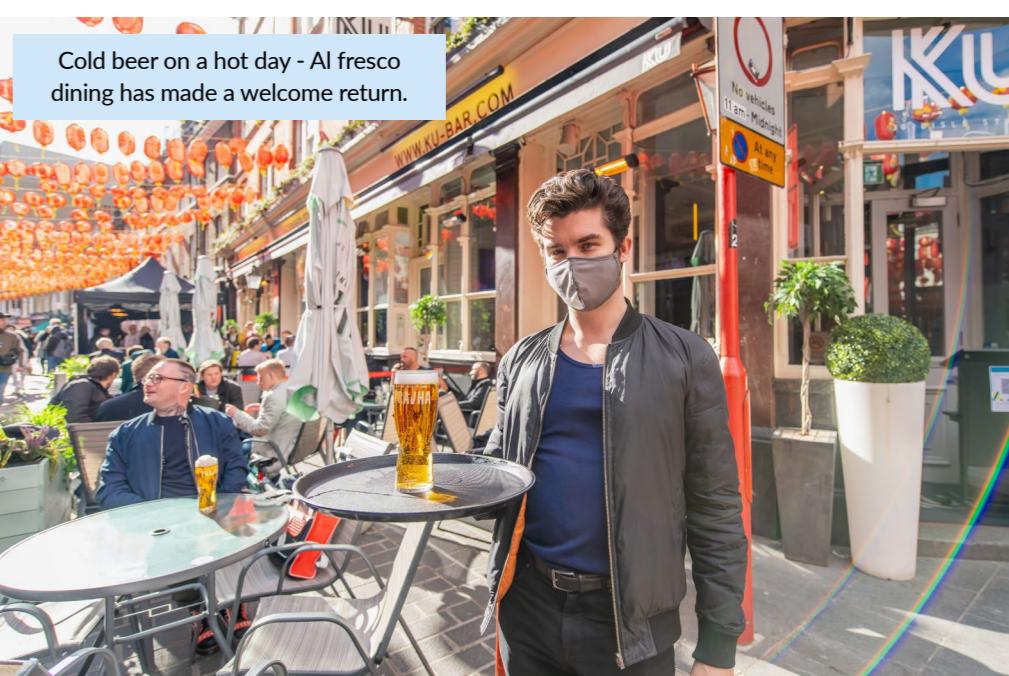
So much for the big picture on regeneration at Marble Arch; let me now update on a few other items which I know are of running interest to residents: The Council did an enormous amount of work to ensure 266 people were moved off our streets and into sustainable accommodation during the pandemic year. While we spend more than any other Council offering help to the homeless, joint work with the Government through schemes like Everyone In and Protect has allowed us to be even more effective.

not the shelter people might think – instead frequently acting as covers for drug abuse and other anti-social behaviour. While rough sleeping will continue to be among the post-pandemic challenges we face, the Council will also be working at pace on our City for All priorities – a thriving economy; greener and cleaner; vibrant communities and a smart City.

### AL FRESCO DINING RETURNS

We reintroduced al fresco dining this year as soon as hospitality restrictions allowed, and I am pleased to say the scheme has proven as popular as ever. With the support of residents, temporary pop-up areas in parking bays and streets have allowed our restaurants, cafés, and bars to offer nearly 16,000 additional covers a day – that's equivalent to several hundred new restaurants. The fact we have more than 700 pavement licences currently operating shows the strength of demand from the hospitality trade.

Inevitably there can be occasional issues with noise and disturbance, which is why I truly appreciate the support of local people who know this scheme has been a lifeline for the embattled hospitality industry. This sector supports around 80,000 jobs in Westminster, with local people among those employed. The current al fresco scheme – always intended to be temporary – closes at the end of September, and we will discuss with residents in every area and on a case-by-case basis which schemes continue.





## WORKING FOR A CLEANER AND GREENER LONDON

You will have noticed traffic levels creeping back up in Bayswater and across Westminster, and the last thing anybody wants to see is a return to pre-pandemic levels of air pollution. Westminster suffers some of the poorest air quality in the country and we are taking action to combat that. The Council is leading the way with initiatives like the diesel surcharge scheme, the Schools Clean Air Fund and investing in electric vehicle infrastructure. We recently installed Westminster's 1,000th electric vehicle charge point and we are on track to deliver a further 500 chargers by April 2022 - making us a UK leader in electric vehicle charging.



Charge points are high on the agenda.

I feel so strongly about this issue because I know it matters to residents. That came over clearly when the Council recently hosted an air quality action day on the Strand and Regent Street, complete with a 'smogmobile' (an electric van fitted out with monitoring

The 'Smogmobile' takes lungfuls of Westminster air.

equipment to track air pollution). Events like this allow Councillors, taxi drivers, shoppers and business owners to come together on the street and discuss how we can collectively take action to limit air pollution.

To play our part in reducing carbon emissions and to meet the UK's national climate targets, Westminster City Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. We aim to become a carbon neutral Council by 2030 and a carbon neutral city by 2040.



WCC is carrying out works outside the Royal Albert Hall to make it more accessible to visitors as the RAH opens up. Rachael Robathan on a recent visit with Royal Albert Hall CEO Craig Hassall.

A significant long-term way we will do this is by ensuring that building developments have a commitment to the environment at their heart. The Council has just finishing consulting on what's called an 'environment supplementary planning document', or ESPD. It will ensure that new developments - and where applicable refurbished buildings - cut down on resources and the emissions they produce. As four-fifths of emissions in the City come from buildings, I want to ensure that sustainability is in the DNA of our planning process.

## WELL-EARNED BREAKS

In the height of August, I hope readers are managing a break of some kind. For anyone staying in Westminster, I really recommend having a look at the events calendar on our website. It is bursting with things to do in Westminster

- from sculpture tours to culture trails and music performances. Our Inside Out art exhibition, developed in partnership with the most famous institutions in the art world, puts performances and artworks into public areas for everyone to enjoy. And next month (September) our sorely missed West End LIVE returns - an established highlight on the theatrical calendar which provides a free weekend taster of West End shows in Trafalgar Square. I look forward to talking to you again in the autumn edition.



# Around Bayswater

**T**he word 'Bumper' doesn't begin to describe the Around Bayswater section of Issue 102, and over these next 83 pages the subjects are as diverse as they are interesting. From Oxford Street to Heathrow and to electric scooters, to old favourites such as cycle lanes and building in Bayswater, you will find it here. The Porchester Baths and Westbourne Terrace appear in a historical context and there's a discussion with Nicky and Ian Hessenberg which sits firmly in the 'must read' category.

We have Blue Plaques and Green Living, coverage of our favourite shop in Craven Terrace, plus a quite superb article from Christopher Penfold. But there is more, much more. You will find the second instalment of our fictional series 'On Westbourne Grove', the Editor makes up for lost time, and there is a fascinating interview with Mary Moore Mason about her new book. But just like England v Germany, we begin with a win...

## SEBRA SUCCESS - A 'WIN WIN' AT WHITELEYS from The Chairman

**M**any of our members will have spotted that new hoardings at Whiteleys (now known as 'The Whiteley' or 'The Whiteley London') have been installed.

The originally approved hoarding at this major construction site was entirely black, which made for a very depressing outlook along Queensway, and the revised alternating black and white panels are a vast improvement.

Readers might like to refer to my article on page 32 of the last issue 'SEBRA VERSUS GOLIATH ON QUEENSWAY' which covers a long journey ending at the main planning committee. In that article I wrote '*watch this space*' as despite the Planning Committee having no powers to insist on the hoarding being changed, I was confident that a change would happen.

As you can see from my headline, I do feel that this is very much a 'win win' for all concerned. It is a win for the local community and our Ward Councillors who fought the original application and it



New advertising hoardings at Whiteleys - Everyone's a winner.

is a win for the Queensway Conservation Area as this new hoarding is far more attractive than the old one.

For the developers too this is a win, because not only do the hoardings help to promote their massive investment, they have shown that they are prepared

to take the views of local residents on board which can only be good for community relations.

Finally, we are sure that the previous requirement for advertising lights to be turned off at night will be repeated on this new consent.

In all corners of SEBRALAND, the construction continues. From huge hotels to office blocks, to massive retail and residential projects, changing W2 forever as the skyline grows higher. Even COVID couldn't stop the work, indeed, quieter streets may well have helped with access and reduced disturbance. Here we take a brief look at the five biggest projects in the area.

# BAYSWATER'S BUILDING BOOM



## FIFTY PADDINGTON

Developed at the site formerly occupied by HSBC bank, **Fifty Paddington** has been a regular feature in this magazine since the project began in 2016. (Though referred to as **50 Eastbourne Terrace**).

The building offers 75,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of office accommodation and 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of retail space across six storeys and a lower ground floor. Seven new houses have also been constructed at Chilworth Mews.

The roof will be home to a bank of solar panels, plus multiple roof terraces totalling 3,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.

YardNine developments employed the services of McLaren Construction Ltd to and no doubt members will have read their updates in this magazine.

The project is very near completion, as is the Crossrail station opposite. Works at 40 Eastbourne Terrace continues but the road has now reopened.

## PADDINGTON SQUARE

No stranger to SEBRA members, "The Paddington Pole" came onto our radar in 2015 as a design for 224m tall tower that would have overlooked all of SEBRALAND and beyond.

A huge amount of campaigning saw the plans scrapped and replaced by what then became "The Cube", a 17 storey structure to be constructed next to Paddington Station.

Paddington Square is a development by Sellar on behalf of Great Western Properties, and is due for completion in mid 2022.

The development contains no residential accommodation, it is composed of flexible office workspaces, a very large public square and an art walk plus retail, leisure and wellbeing facilities.

Our photo to the left, taken from Merchant Square, shows construction in May 2021 and the image to the right is a computer-generated model of the finished structure.



## THE WHITELEY

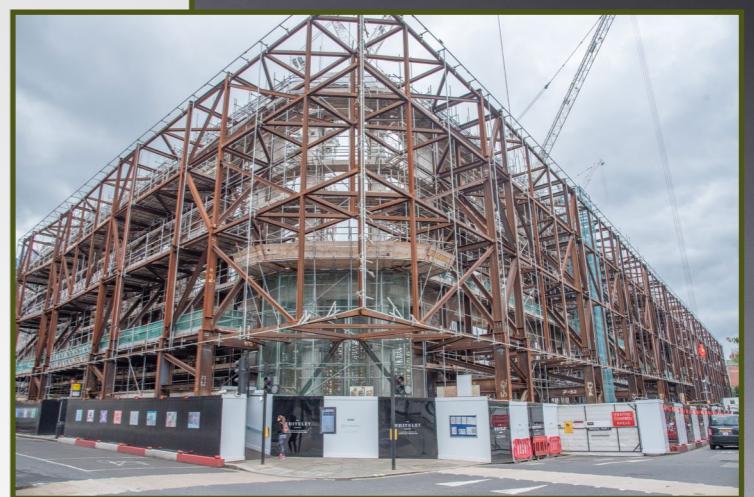
The demolition and reconstruction of what was formerly Whiteleys, London's first department store, has perhaps been the biggest story in SEBRALAND for the last few years.

We have given extensive coverage to this massive project, which has required some complex engineering and a vast, temporary steel 'exoskeleton' to allow the building's facade to be retained.

Designed by Foster + Partners, The Whiteley will provide 139 apartments and townhouses, 20 retail outlets, restaurants a cinema, gym and a Six Senses hotel & spa. The project is a joint venture between MARK investment and Hong Kong developer CC, with Finchatton acting as development managers.

The original dome that was such a prominent feature of the original building (which dated from 1911) will be retained, and the famous Italian staircase will be incorporated into the hotel's reception area.

Work remains on schedule with completion due in 2023.



## PARK MODERN

This Fenton Whelan development will provide 176,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of living space spread across 57 residences, plus 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of commercial and retail space.

The site fills a block bounded by Queensway, Bayswater Road and Inverness Terrace.

Construction is being undertaken by Ant Yapı and the construction cost is estimated to be around £90m.

Residents will have access to valet parking, a private lounge, gym, spa and cinema.

Completion of the project is expected in 2023.



## NORTH WHARF GARDENS

Located at the very northern boundary of SEBRALAND, this construction project has received considerably less coverage in our magazine than the others listed here, but it is most certainly worthy of inclusion.

Two hotels are being built, a 393-bed Premier Inn alongside a 249-bed Staycity aparthotel. There will also be 27,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of social and community floorspace.

McAleer & Rushe are the design and build contractors behind the project, and completion is anticipated in August this year.

Our photograph below was taken in May 2021 and shows a view from Paddington Basins.



## ELECTRIC SCOOTER TRIALS COMING TO SEBRALAND

### From the Chairman

My Q&A article on page 60 includes a question about electric scooter trials coming to the three Wards in SEBRALAND. This is an important subject which divides opinion (as you will read in the Editor's article opposite), and Councillor Melvyn Caplan was kind enough to give us such a comprehensive answer we felt it deserved a separate page.

**Q.** We understand that Westminster, along with other cities, will shortly be trialling the use of electric scooters. Can you please let us have details of this trial and how many sites have been identified in W2?

**A.** Some headlines for the trial are included below, followed by some maps that show the parking bays at Ward level.

- Transport for London (TfL), London Councils and e-scooter operators Dott, Lime and TIER launched a trial of rental e-scooters in the capital on 7 June 2021. The trial will last for up to twelve months and has safety at its core throughout.
- The trial is taking place in Ealing, Canary Wharf, Hammersmith and Fulham, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Richmond upon Thames. Tower Hamlets is participating as a ride-through only borough with Southwark and Lambeth seeking participation. More areas are expected to join the 12-month trial as it progresses. Westminster are due to join the trial in August.
- Rental e-scooters offer a number of benefits over private e-scooters which make them more suitable for a trial on London's streets, including mandatory customer education, GPS-controlled parking which means they can only be parked in specified locations not obstructing the pavement, and a unique identification number on every vehicle.
- The safety standards required go further than those set out at a national level, by requiring a lower maximum speed of 12.5mph, compared to the 15.5mph set nationally - Lights at the front and the rear of the vehicles that are always on throughout any rental - Larger wheels at least 12 inches in diameter, making them better able to navigate road surfaces.
- The operators will also have other safety mechanisms in place, including 'first ride policies' where riders will need to take an e-learning safety course before they hire for the first time as well as having lower maximum



Operators Dott, Lime and TIER are providing e-Scooters for the trials across London. The trials began on 7 June and are expected to expand to Westminster in August.

Below - Proposed e-Scooter bay locations in SEBRALAND.



from the Editor

## ELECTRIC SCOOTERS

### A SILENT MENACE OR A GREEN TRANSPORT DREAM?

**I**t was only via Roger Harding's excellent article in this very magazine (Issue No 100, page 24) that I really became aware of electric scooters and having now encountered them on city streets I find my own opinion on them well and truly split.

Electric transport is of course all lovely and green. Yes, there are some caveats, but by and large if you are going to move from A to B, electricity trumps oil. Electric cars will become the norm, electric bikes seem to be doing very nicely, and then... well then we have electric scooters and I'm not quite so sure that I know what I think.

#### THE CASE AGAINST - A SILENT MENACE

During my last trip to London I encountered quite a few electric scooters, and I have to say I found them quite menacing. Riders didn't seem to care for the rules of the road, or indeed for the rules of the pavement. They sped around silently, and quickly, weaving around other traffic and other people.



Speeding along a Praed Street pavement, flagrantly breaking the law.

In fact, every one of them was breaking the law. At the time of writing (14 June) electric scooters cannot be ridden in Westminster, other than on private land. Other boroughs now have rental schemes as part of a TfL trial, but to all intents and purposes you cannot buy an electric scooter and ride it on the UK's public highways, cycle lanes or pavements.

The Metropolitan Police do seem to be on the case though, and whilst researching this article I read that they have seized at least 1,300 privately owned scooters this year. My guess is that this represents a small fraction of the number in use, but it is a start and I applaud them enforcing the law.

These things are fast too, and should you be unfortunate enough to get hit by one it will most likely damage you. The illegality means the rider will be uninsured, and with no licensing or registration my guess is that in the event of a collision, the rider might well just speed off anonymously.

As things stand, electric scooters are most certainly a silent menace, but there is another side to this...

#### THE CASE FOR - A GREEN TRANSPORT DREAM

As we all know there are two sides to every story, and any mode of transport as clean and green as an electric scooter surely has a part to play in moving people around and helping to keep our air clean.

Whilst electric scooters don't offer the exercise that electric bikes do, they do have the huge advantage of being ultra-portable. Carrying one onto a train and then riding to your destination is an extremely convenient way of covering a fairly big distance quickly. The fact that electric scooter rental trials are being carried out at all probably means that these little machines are here to stay. Basic models cost just a few hundred pounds, so they are most certainly an affordable method of transportation, and let's be honest, they are probably quite an enjoyable way to get around. Battery technology means that a range of 20 miles is not uncommon.

Cycle lanes are another factor here, and it doesn't take a genius to conclude that such lanes are ideal for electric scooter users too.

#### REGISTRATION AND INSURANCE

The subject of compulsory insurance and a registration scheme is one issue that crops up when this subject is discussed, and of course rental schemes have this



Sensible use. The safety of a cycle lane on Bayswater Road.

well covered. Insurance will be included in rental costs and riders will need to provide ID to be able to rent at all.

It's not so clear cut with private ownership though. Anyone can buy a bicycle, or an electric bicycle and ride it pretty much anywhere without a legal requirement for registration/insurance. I find it hard to make a case for electric scooters to be treated differently.

Also, whilst it is true that electric scooters seem more likely to be ridden on the pavement, I see enforcement and confiscation as the way to deal with this. (I suspect that where a cycle lane exists, pavement riding won't be very common, but that's another discussion).

#### IN SUMMARY

I really have stood on the fence here, but as with all things there is probably a centre ground to be taken. I see very little difference between electric cycles and electric scooters. The former have been used on our highways for many years now, I think if electric scooters can be successfully kept off of pavements, and legally limited to an agreeable speed, they have a transport future in our towns and cities.

# STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

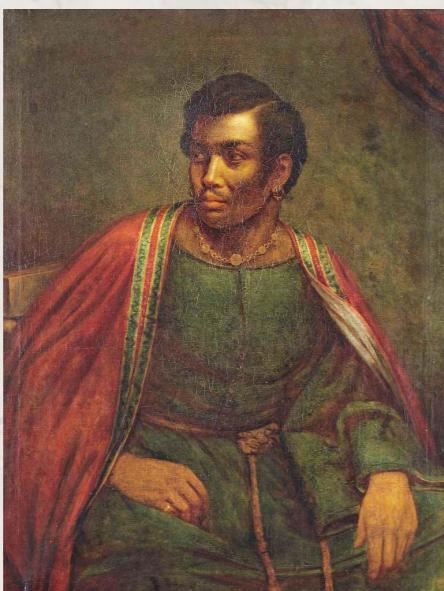
*Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.  
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;  
But he that filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.*

**I**t doesn't help, of course, that these immortal words of wisdom were spoken by one of Shakespeare's greatest villains and that they were deployed with the worst possible intent to bring about the downfall of the Noble Moor, Othello. But it's a variation of the adage that the Devil has all the best tunes and that these words come from the iniquitous lips of Iago does not alter the fact that they ring with an indisputable truth.

"What's in a name?" cries Juliet to her Romeo when their love falls foul of the divisive battle lines between Montagu and Capulet. But name, of course, is crucial to identity and the name given to a new born child provides the very first definition of the place in the world that will be taken by the infant newcomer.

And although that first "naming" may not be quite so crucial now as it was in 1862 when to be 'born out of wedlock' was so much of a social infamy that Wilkie Collins was driven to mitigate the unjust stigma of such a curse by writing his novel "No Name", our given name is the absolute necessity we carry with us to the registry office, to school, to hospital, to the bank, to the polling booth, to any interaction we may have with the complexities of the human society into which we have been born.

So why is it that so much of our on-line discourse is now so openly contaminated by the curse of anonymity? Do we really have to accept that it is alright for on-line abusers to troll out their poison without having to reveal their identity? Whilst accepting that "comment is free" is, in principle, a good thing in that it "gives voice to the voiceless", do we have to abandon absolutely the "name and address supplied" requirement of the letters page? My own response to silly pseudonyms is to pass over them until I reach a comment from an author who is sufficiently confident of the quality of their submission to put their name to it.



Othello, Shakespeare's Noble Moor, a victim of Iago's words.

In the aftermath of the appalling murder of Jo Cox MP it transpired that, like many who devote their lives to public service, she had long been on the receiving end of inexcusable torrents of anonymous on-line abuse. But, by some cyber quirk or maybe even whistleblowing, one of the abusers was outed and, in consequence, took her own life. That dying of shame is not a good way to depart goes without saying but would this benighted individual have poured out her bile without the (in this case faulty) security blanket of anonymity?

Is it really beyond the powers of the Almighty Algorithm to detect and deter such anonymous haters and to command them to cease and desist?

There is, of course, a noble tradition of anonymous whistleblowing in our society and we collectively owe debts of gratitude to those who have been courageous enough to tell truth to power when power corrupts. We (mostly) accept that when diligent journalists expose corruption and cover-up in high places, they should not be compelled to reveal their sources. And when, on occasion, the protection of anonymity breaks down (as in the case of the Pentagon Papers) the whistle-blower, Daniel Ellsberg, had to endure a rocky ride from State Pariah to Popular Hero. But history now lauds his courage and credits him with having made a significant contribution to bringing an end to the Vietnam war.

In our own times, it was Edward Snowden who famously exploded the illusion that, as private citizens we live private lives, by exposing the infamous and illegal gathering and storage of personal information

in the vast and formerly secret databanks owned and operated by the state at huge public expense but without any public accountability. The irony in his case is that in exposing the Orwellian tendencies of the supposed liberal democracy of the U.S. Edward Snowden has not yet escaped the

status of state pariah and, although popular hero to some, he is still holed up for his own protection in the most overtly repressive state of all in Moscow.

Edward Snowden - exposed US global surveillance programs.

But although there can be no clear line between genuine whistleblowing and on-line trolling, there is at least a grey area whose boundaries could surely be posted with cybersigns saying the equivalent of "Danger — Keep Out" or "Enter At Your Own Risk".

We live in times when the forces that seek to divide us and tear us apart are in the ascendancy and the impetus to unite and bring us together appears to be fading away on an ever-distant horizon. When state legislatures feel it necessary to enact laws to prohibit the teaching of "divisive issues" on university campuses we instinctively feel that the eternally swinging pendulum of human sanity is heading for an astronomical apogee.

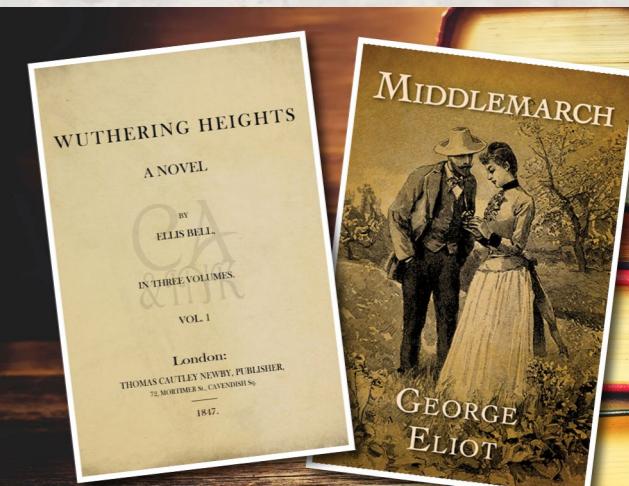


Does banning the teaching of "divisive issues" at universities say something about where human sanity might be heading?

Fortunately, the pages of this magazine are sufficiently grown-up to contain contrary points of view with confidence. Some of us like cycle lanes, others abhor them; some of us fight for the protection of heritage buildings, others see only dated decay and celebrate the development of modernity. But, when we express those contrary points of view we are sufficiently unashamed to put our names to them.

Is it so unhealthily divisive to play the debating game? We draw lots as to which motion we will promote: "This house believes that the British Empire was a force for good in the world" or "This house believes that the British Empire was a racist, exploitative infamy that shames us all." Is it unhealthy to encourage the young to research and argue for the pros and cons of such an issue? Would it be illegally divisive to mount such a debate? And when the debate is over and we are asked to vote on the outcome by a show of hands, would we be ashamed to stand up and be counted?

The days when Emily Bronte and Mary Ann Evans had to submit their work to publishers under masculine sounding pseudonyms in order to give us the wonders



Literary classics published "under masculine sounding pseudonyms".

of "Wuthering Heights" and "Middlemarch" are long past but we still have good reason on occasion to "change the names in order to protect the innocent" and there may be other valid reasons for the deployment of a pseudonym. But every young journalist looks forward to the publication of her first by-line and every wannabe author looks forward to his name in print on the cover of his first book. In whatever field of public service or private endeavour we choose in life, each accomplishment adds something to the weight of the name we were given at birth as we go with Shakespeare's Jaques through the seven ages of man "seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth."

Well, the cannon's mouth is nothing if not wide open today as both media and social media spew forth from its gaping maw their fake news, their anonymous trolling of on-line abuse, and their conspiracy theories.



But would that torrent of cruel, malign and venomous verbiage be

quite so overwhelming if its perpetrators were legally obliged or publicly shamed into pinning to them "the immediate jewel of their souls" the "good name" that was given them at their pure and innocent birth?

Christopher Penfold – June 2021

(Name and address supplied! - Ed.)

## UNVEILING OUR PLANS FOR 'ICONIC' OXFORD CIRCUS

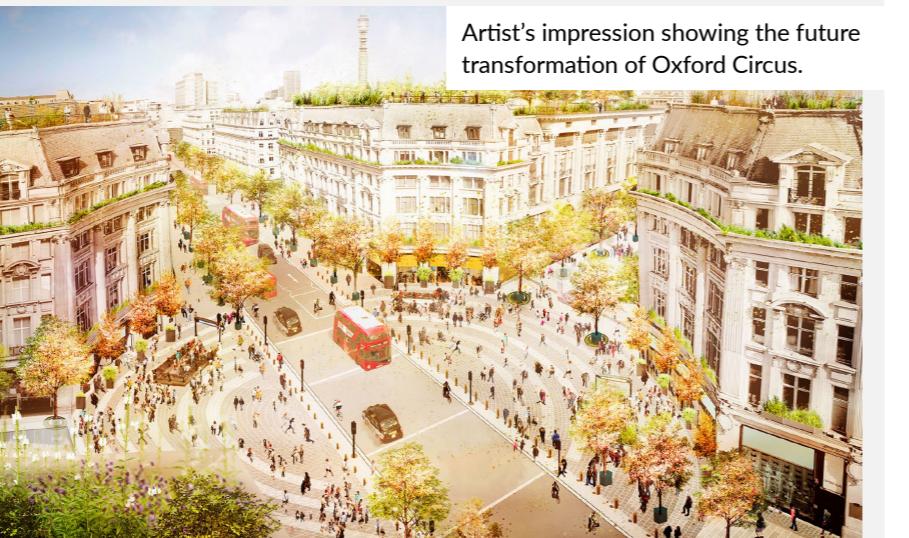
Oxford Street District Council's E-newsletter

We have unveiled our plans in partnership with The Crown Estate to transform Oxford Circus into two, pedestrian-friendly piazzas.

The new piazzas will become London's front door and will be the subject of an international design competition.

Works on the transformed Circus will begin later in the year with the scheme also set to include:

- Delivering significant improvements to the public spaces in and around Oxford Circus, creating more pleasant places to eat, drink, shop and enjoy the centre of the city.
- Introducing additional planting and seating to improve the overall look and feel of the area and encourage dwell time.
- Significant improvements to public realm, including working with Transport for London to create improved access to Oxford Circus tube station.
- Road closure through the introduction of Experimental Traffic Orders, between Oxford Circus and Gt. Portland Street to the East, and Oxford Circus and John Princes Street to the West, turning it into a pedestrian-first zone.
- The launch of the RIBA International Design Competition in Summer 2021 to deliver the final scheme, ensuring 'world class' designs and value for



Artist's impression showing the future transformation of Oxford Circus.

money. The competition will be run by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and will be a fully open competition, inviting entries from around the world.

The new Oxford Circus plans will be delivered through a phased approach, starting with two 'car free' piazzas on Oxford Street, either end of the Circus, with a target delivery by end of 2021.

The plans for Oxford Circus will improve the experience for people living in, working in and visiting the area. The safety and security of pedestrians is paramount, and will be improved through the introduction of pedestrian-only piazzas at Oxford Circus to reduce pedestrian congestion; a much-needed measure that will be made even more necessary with the arrival of the additional people who will come to the district on the newly built Elizabeth Line.

Traffic will continue along Regent Street, north and south of Oxford Circus.

By prioritising people over vehicles, the changes also aim to improve air quality. Works on Oxford Circus are expected to reduce vehicle traffic and improve efficiency of bus journeys across the area.

The reinvention of the Circus as a world-leading, forward-facing, urban space, is the latest step in our ambitious plans to revive Oxford Street and the wider District, for its vision for a greener, smarter future for the West End.

We have already committed £150m to kickstart the OSD programmes and attract inward investment, taking full advantage of the Elizabeth Line opening in 2022 and the area's links to the wider West End and beyond.

### Editor's Note:

You can read a wealth of information and view a full brochure at Westminster City Council's website by visiting: [bit.ly/SEBRA-OxfordSt](http://bit.ly/SEBRA-OxfordSt)

### Comment by John Walton Secretary, PRACT

A feature of these changes is to reduce the number of buses in the section of Oxford Street from Selfridges up to Oxford Circus, from the present seven routes to four. This will be the most direct effect on those living in Bayswater. The bus route mainly affected is No. 94, which would no longer run along Oxford Street and Regent Street. It would be terminated at Marble Arch from late this year, if the scheme goes ahead as planned.

We are concerned about the difficulty that a need to change buses will cause for the elderly, who rely on the buses.

It is critical that at all times people should be able to change to another bus only once in order to reach their destination, and without walking to another stop.

We understand that this is planned for the No. 94 bus by creating a stand for it in a narrow street parallel to Oxford Street, called North Row. Then, in both directions the change from the 94 to one of three other bus routes would be at a stop at the beginning of Oxford Street. But it seems far from certain that this arrangement will be ready in time and, if not, the last stop of the No. 94 bus could be

## OXFORD STREET PIAZZAS - ICONIC OR IDIOTIC?

Michael Bolt  
Chairman, Marylebone Association

After Westminster Council wisely pulled out of the Mayor's scheme to pedestrianise the whole of Oxford Street West during the 2018 Council elections, various promises were made to the electorate. One was to keep the street open to traffic, another was to consult and listen to residents on any future schemes for the area, and a third was not to do anything on Oxford Street which would damage the amenity of the surrounding residential areas.

In fact, it is arguable that the Council has already broken all three of these promises by the so called "temporary" narrowing of Oxford Street, which has reduced it down so much that most traffic is deterred from using it. But it is beyond argument that the latest proposal to close the street either side of its main junction and divert the traffic through Marylebone and Fitzrovia flies in the face of the guarantees given back in 2018.

It is argued that closing Oxford Street will only entail buses clogging up a few of the nearby streets and therefore the disruption is acceptable. But that is not correct - all the other displaced traffic such as taxis and delivery vehicles will find their own routes through, and these routes will have a negative impact on a much wider area. These will mainly be the streets, many of them residential, running north of Oxford Street in Marylebone and Fitzrovia. Indeed, the proposed road revisions are designed to give a clear east - west run through Fitzrovia and Marylebone via Mortimer and Wigmore Street as an alternative to the blocked Oxford Street. But when these streets fill up, Mayfair and Soho will also receive Oxford Street's displaced traffic.

So what could justify this? It is claimed that pedestrian numbers at Oxford Circus will increase to such an extent, that for safety reasons, "doing nothing is not an option". But no evidence is produced to back this. On the contrary, all the available evidence shows the opposite. The future of physical retail is widely acknowledged to be in long term decline, and the appeal of the area to shoppers has diminished; over the longer term 30% of retail may go, to be replaced by offices. Crossrail is cited as generating huge numbers of additional visitors, but it will not be disgorging them into Oxford Circus; in fact, it will be taking



the pressure off the Central Line, which should see a drop in numbers coming into Oxford Circus as a result.

Anyway, if it really is all about pedestrian safety, why is it proposed to fill the space where the traffic was with seating, trees, planters, and street entertainment and encourage "dwell time"? Also, there are plenty of pedestrianised areas nearby, and many further possible contenders - so why is it necessary to pedestrianise Oxford Street's primary intersection instead? What gain will shoppers really get from this that they cannot already find elsewhere?

Safety is merely the convenient cover for this scheme - the real reason is because it is perceived to be a desirable piece of real estate by big business, particularly the Crown Estate. They are joint partners and are underwriting much of the cost of it for one reason only: they see it increasing the value of their property portfolio around Oxford Circus. The creation of the Piazzas is therefore a political decision made on commercial grounds to the detriment of the area that will receive its traffic - and yet the Council have the audacity to claim that it will improve the area for residents - but the balance of inconvenience to our area versus the gain to big business is totally disproportionate.

However disappointing we find Westminster's broken promises, its failure to consult on this is even worse. Ever since the Oxford Street District plans were introduced by Westminster Council in 2019, they have constantly assured us that there would be extensive consultation before anything significant was done, indeed the latest publicity states that the scheme has been "underpinned by consultation" - but it has not been. WCC have always promised that any scheme would be justified by

Above: Red areas newly pedestrianised.

traffic modelling to show that surrounding areas would not be impacted, but again - it has not been. Neither could it be, because, of course, the modelling could not but fail to show that the surrounding areas would in fact be severely impacted.

When WCC also came to realise this, the Piazza proposal was quietly put to one side. Then along came Covid and as a consequence WCC discovered the wonders of the "experimental traffic order" which enabled it to take draconian steps - without the need for any form of consultation at all. Unshackled from this onerous and tedious obligation the ETO was used to put cycle lanes down Portland Place and then to narrow Regent Street - they then went on to use it to narrow Oxford Street - and now this.

We have therefore, with this scheme, many of the same problems that felled the Mayor's attempt to pedestrianise Oxford Street in 2018: the loss of accessibility to get through central London by bus and major congestion issues with the resulting pollution problems in the surrounding streets. Little wonder then, that Mr. Sadiq Khan has expressed his delight with it. We have, in short, the populations of Marylebone and Fitzrovia majorly inconvenienced for the benefit of the Crown Estate and their property portfolio around Oxford Circus. We have it forced on us on the false grounds of pedestrian safety, on the real grounds of creating a very profitable shopping mall, and we have absolutely no say in the matter.

This cannot be right, and it certainly isn't democratic. It wasn't right in 2018, and Westminster realised this, neither is it right in 2021 for Westminster Council to continue to ignore the wishes of their residents in this way.



An oasis in W2. Nicky and Ian Hessenberg plus Scrumpy the family dog.

## In conversation with Nicky & Ian Hessenberg

Part One

from the Editor

You would be hard pushed to find a recent edition of **SEBRA NEWS W2** which doesn't include the name "Hessenberg", with "rants" from Nicky (her word) and photographs from Ian being regular and welcome inclusions on these pages. Having got to know these two SEBRA stalwarts pretty well during my editorship, and knowing that they had a few tales to tell, I sat down with them in their Westbourne Park Villas garden oasis, and recorded the conversation. We chatted for quite some time, and I quickly realised this was going to be a two-part feature. So here we go with Part One, words from Nicky and Ian, edited by yours truly.

**Nicky:** "Before anything else I would like to declare that we live in BAYSWATER, NOT, as described by developers and estate agents, in Bayswater Village, Bayswater Vale, Notting Hill, Notting Dale on the edge of Notting Hill etc, but Bayswater!" Ed: I raised a smile, I expected nothing less.

"We were both born in 1943 and after the end of the war my family moved back to London and Ian's to Bromley, Kent. Both of us went to boarding school in Dorset, aged 13 or thereabout, and by chance both schools were quite progressive and were linked, although Ian and I did not meet until many years later."

**Ian:** "I went to Regent Street Poly after school to do a course in photography and Nicky followed the very traditional step of going to a secretarial college, mainly because she was rebelling against the very intensive art immersion of her family – both of her parents were working architects and teaching at the Royal College of Art for many years until retirement. My father was a solicitor".

**Nicky:** "In 1964/5 we both decided to go to New York, individually of course, we had not yet met. Actually, Ian's mother decided for him, she thought he needed to leave home and become independent. I went because my boyfriend of the time – a photographer – wanted to go and my older sister and her future husband - also a photographer – were already living there, so it seemed like a good idea".

**Ian:** "Unbelievably it was cheaper to go by ocean liner rather than fly (especially with the required amount of luggage!) so I sailed on the Queen Elizabeth and Nicky sailed on the Queen Mary. Those were the days! (The customs men were totally baffled by the Christmas pudding that Nicky had taken for Christmas dinner with my sister).

"This was the time of Beatlemania in the US, which was great for Brits as we were employable by the arts world. I got a job as a photographic assistant with James Moore a top fashion photographer for Harpers and other top flight

magazines, and Nicky worked in a studio in the office for a commercial photographer and his agent. Her then boyfriend also got a job with a top photographer – Hiro". Ed: I'm getting a strong sense of envy now, this must have been an incredible time.

**Nicky:** "Our social life was among a group of Brits like us working for all the big name studios; Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Bill Klein etc. and being given fantastic opportunities to travel around the world for fashion shoots. It was at this point that Ian and I met each other".

**Ian:** "Of course the Vietnam war was hotting up and the military were looking for more recruits: also the age range of recruits was going up and there were fewer excuses for exemptions. At that point if, as a Brit, you wanted to stay in the US you needed a green card. You were given six months to

Ian working at James Moore's photo studio - 1964.



work and then, if male, you had to register for the forces. The idea was that if you were aiming to stay and become a resident, you should be willing to fight for your elected country". Ed: Suddenly I'm not feeling quite so envious...

**Nicky:** "This was the point at which if you hadn't put your details in the right direction the government immediately swept up the miscreants and sent them off to train and then to Vietnam. Ian and I went to register him, in order to stall instant army training, but we reached the registration office too late and it had shut. We had stopped in Chinatown for a rather good lunch and too much chat!

"As a result rather urgent action needed to be taken – and we booked with Cunard to return to the UK together. By this time my boyfriend had become ex- and had returned to UK a few months earlier: (would you believe that in those days in order to be able to book a shared cabin with Cunard, I had to say that Ian was my half-brother who had just been diagnosed with diabetes and I was accompanying him back to London. Also that it was very important that I should be with him to help with his insulin injections. The booking clerk had to go and ask his boss if that was allowed – which it was! And this was in the '60's!.

**Ian:** "My future brother in law was diabetic and lent us some kit to make it all look authentic while we were at sea!".

"Back in the UK, Ian shared a studio in Maida Vale with three other photographers and I got a job at the Roger Wood Studio which was in Garway Road. (Roger Wood was THE Royal Ballet photographer but by the time I got to work with him, others had inevitably taken over and he was doing advertising and travel work). My desk was on the ground floor and I was able to watch the Kenyon undertakers' cars coming and going from the garage underneath the flats opposite Roger's studio".

**Ian:** "Westbourne Grove was a neighbourhood street – cheap furniture from Frederick Lawrence. I think they were in the premises which Whiteleys had originally occupied before the fire which destroyed the original shop and before it was rebuilt on Queensway. We had several pubs, ethnic grocery shops and three cinemas (one of which showed "continental" films – ie pornography judging by the audiences arriving and departing!)".

**Nicky:** "Alex de Molnay was the hairdresser opposite where I had my hair styled and occasionally I did some work for them as a receptionist at weekends. Two of Peter Rachman's (Ed: Infamous landlord) henchmen lived in the flat above. One was Big Jim O'Houlihan, and he really was BIG, but I can't remember the name of the other. It would have been terrifying to be on the wrong side of them, but very friendly to us since we weren't tenants to be dealt with.

"By this time my sister had returned from New York as she was pregnant and we were all back in the family home. My parents decided that the only way we were ever going to be able to afford to move was to buy us a house to share. My mother and I looked at several and then she found No. 58 Westbourne Park Villas which cost £11,500. My sister, her

son and husband lived upstairs, Ian and I lived cosily in the basement. We got married in 1967"

**Ian:** "The street was shabby but I do not remember it as threatening – we had a new block of flats virtually next door to us, and Alf Dubbs (Labour MP now Lord) was our next door neighbour. The residents were a mixed bunch – Lydia, further up the street, had been born in the Villas, we had David & Cynthia living three doors away: David worked for Kenyons the undertakers in Westbourne Grove. Next door (No. 60 where we now live) was owned by a Property Company and the ground floor and basement was let out to an elderly man whose kitchen was unchanged from the day the house had been built. The top floor was occupied by an elderly Irish couple who had only cold running water! Peter Rachman was still in the area and his reputation and authority was still evident. There were apparently two brothels in our street and probably a drugs seller as well!

The railway was still steam and the trains from Paddington rattled past us belching clouds of smoke. The construction of Westway was underway but the housing was still standing opposite, but not for long as the motorway took shape".

**Nicky:** "Our family expanded with two children and despite having extended our flat, space was a bit of an issue. By that time No. 60 had been bought by another property company with a really bad reputation. The poor man in the basement had died and the Irish couple had been moved to more suitable accommodation, in Tavistock Gardens I think. Negotiations took place between my next brother in law (my sister having divorced her first husband) and the seller while we were on holiday on our narrow boat. When I rang to tell everyone where we were I was told that the house had been bought by my parents and grandfather, and that we could move into it once the repair work, which it needed due to squatters, had been done.

"So that was our arrival in the Villas – my mother, an architect, joined the two houses so that we had access to each other's houses, and converted our exited flat in the basement of No. 58 so



Our engagement photo from the *Evening News*.



58 Westbourne Park Villas in 1966.

that my aunt (her widowed sister) could then move in as she was disabled and had to be on one level. And so we lived very happily – we could babysit for each other with no problem of having to leave our respective houses, and we could help our aunt as she grew older."

Read part two in the next edition, where you'll find out about Ian working for Mary Quant, knitted "hot pants" and Nicky becoming a real-life Hugh Grant at a book shop in Notting Hill.



**Antonia Cox**  
Hyde Park Ward Councillor

**W**e have money to spend together in SEBRALAND! I do feel local people need to know that funds are still available in the Hyde Park Ward Budget, a pot of Council cash which is open for applications from groups with ideas about how to improve the places where we all live.

In every issue of **SEBRA NEWS W2**, your Ward Councillors report back to residents on the projects they have backed. You have probably noticed these articles, and in this edition you can find the latest report on page 136.

#### PREVIOUS PROJECTS

In the past the Ward Budget has funded new trees, planters, defibrillators and other physical improvements for the street scene, as well as funding for capital works at institutions such as St John's Church, Hyde Park, which perform an important community role. They also include contributions towards events and programmes such as regular lunch clubs for older people, play groups and benefits advice for those in difficulties.

Pedestrian-friendly capital projects can be considered, but Ward Budget contributions would not be enough to fund a pedestrian crossing on their own. Sums granted can be in the hundreds of pounds only, or larger, subject to rules set out in the guidance.

#### SAYING 'THANK YOU' TO OUR NHS

We in Hyde Park Ward have just paid for a new bench outside St Mary's Hospital, as a practical gesture of thanks for NHS staff at a time when they have

## FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM THE HYDE PARK WARD BUDGET

done such a fantastic job coping with the pandemic and its wider health consequences. Nothing is too small for consideration, but it must meet our criteria of community benefit.

#### HOW AND WHEN TO APPLY

You need to apply at least two months before the intended start of your project. If you are applying for over £10,000 or you wish to approach more than three Wards, we would strongly advise you allow at least three months as projects this size need to gain approval from our legal and finance teams, as well as the relevant Cabinet Member.

The intention is not to plug holes in funding which should be provided on a regular basis, but instead to go beyond what is currently being provided by taxpayers. Only groups, not individuals, may apply. There must be a clear benefit to the community and the projects must not be in conflict with Council policies and services. Naturally this is public money so everything must be properly accounted for.

Looking at the issues that provoke and engage **SEBRA NEWS W2**, contributors, such as traffic, cleansing and the need to build community spirit, I feel sure that there are ideas out there which could benefit from our support. Please encourage your groups

to put together proposals using the information on the Ward Budgets page.

#### WARD BUDGET PAYS FOR WINDRUSH PLAQUE

We recently used some of the Ward Budget to contribute to the expenses of our Windrush Day event. On 22 June a plaque was unveiled at the newly decorated west gate of Paddington Station to commemorate the many members of the Windrush Generation who came from the Caribbean to help rebuild 'the Mother Country' after World War II.

At a station which many passed through on their way from Britain's ports to new jobs and lives, Councillor Heather Acton, the Lord Mayor and I joined Windrush Generation members and their descendants, some of whom now play key roles at Westminster City Council, to celebrate the community's contribution to London.



## PUBLIC ART ON PRAED STREET

**Teresa Stokes**  
Orsett Terrace, W2

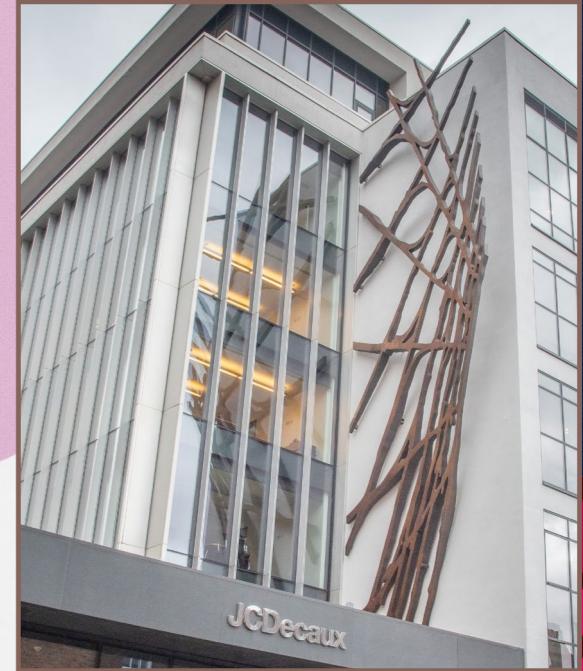
**T**he artwork that has been installed at the Paddington Square site on Praed Street and Tanner Street, and at the former entrance to the Bakerloo line is really rather impressive and I thought that given its temporary nature it should be recorded in **SEBRA NEWS W2**.

Designed by London-based artist and illustrator Kelly Anna, the work "Nurture Nature" is described as

*'Adopting powerful stances and looking to the future, silhouetted figures move between portals, exploring uncharted places and bringing fruits from around the world, reflecting Paddington's position as a super-connected international gateway to London.'*

Further along Praed Street, at the junction with Sale Place, there is another piece of public art, this time permanently installed at Summit House. This striking piece of work by

Rona Smith is formed from cast iron and was installed by Spiers Major Light Architecture. Their website explains that: *'The inspiration of Rona's sculpture was the railway points outside of Paddington Station. Taking this reference to the railways also inspired the lighting concept, with light subtly moving to play with the shadows of sculpture on the wall behind.'*



# HELP US CALL FOR A CYCLE SAFE WESTMINSTER!



Helen Jones - *The Westminster Cycling Campaign*

**I have lived in Bayswater for nearly 15 years. For the first 10 of those years I commuted by bike to the City (of London). I found cycling a great way to start my day. I also trained as a British Cycling Guided Ride leader.**

Leading rides in London for women made me realise how important it is, especially for women returning to riding and their families, to feel safe cycling on city streets. Having spent time living in and visiting other countries in Europe, I could see the positive impact that investment in facilities for cycling can have on the public realm, so I decided to join Westminster Cycling Campaign. The group is passionate about everyone being able to cycle safely in our city, as we Westminster residents are lucky to have the world's best culture, shopping, eating and drinking establishments within a 15 minute bike ride. In May we launch a new campaign, Cycle Safe Westminster.

## COVID-19 CHANGED EVERYTHING

One of the truly startling sights of that first lockdown was streets full of families riding bikes, including tiny children, on roads that are normally rammed with traffic. With the traffic all but gone, suddenly Westminster's streets were safe for anyone aged 8 to 80 to ride a bike. It didn't last of course, but then pop-up bike lanes began to appear across London, as local and national

government tried to help people travel without risking infection on public transport - and to provide everyone with an alternative to jumping into our cars.

Westminster City Council got on board, and its Movement Strategy created 11 kilometres of new cycle lanes across Westminster, reallocating traffic lanes (such as on Bayswater Road) and removing car parking bays on an unprecedented scale. However, unlike the pop-up bike lanes seen elsewhere in London - which follow government guidance and are protected with barriers such as wands - Westminster's have only a line of paint. And now even those, such as London Street, are quietly being removed.

Our campaign for a Cycle Safe Westminster has three asks - to make these temporary lanes 1) permanent, 2) protected and 3) connected, forming a safe network across the borough. Do you agree? Read on to find out how to get involved. You can also read about our asks in more detail on our website: [www.westminstercycling.org.uk/cycle-safe-westminster](http://www.westminstercycling.org.uk/cycle-safe-westminster)

But first, why do we need to make Westminster safe for cycling? Here are four reasons.

### 1. FOR SAFETY

I don't want to put you off riding a bike locally, but Westminster's frightening road casualty statistics put it at the 'top' of the charts for London, year after year. It's especially bad if you're in anything other than a motor vehicle. Over the last five years, more than two-thirds (66.6%) of all serious and fatal road casualties in Westminster have been the most vulnerable road users: people walking or cycling. In the past decade (2010-2019), almost 500 people (484) have

been killed or seriously injured cycling on our roads. This is by far the most of any London borough - but not even one death or serious injury should be acceptable.

### IN THE LAST DECADE

**484**

**PEOPLE IN WESTMINSTER  
WERE KILLED OR  
SERIOUSLY INJURED WHILE CYCLING  
- THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF ANY  
LONDON BOROUGH**

Source: Transport for London

Recent academic research shows that kerb-protected cycle tracks reduce the odds of injury by 40-65 percent. Meanwhile, an advisory cycle lane (marked with a broken white painted line) actually increases the odds of injury by 34 percent.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. FOR EVERYONE

Protected bike lanes give people the confidence to cycle who wouldn't otherwise: older people, Disabled people, children, women.

**67%**

**OF WOMEN SAY...**

**'CYCLE LANES SEPARATED  
FROM TRAFFIC'  
IS THE #1 THING  
THAT WILL GET MORE WOMEN  
CYCLING**

One survey found that the number one thing to get women cycling is 'cycle lanes separated from traffic'.

This proved true in Paris last year, where pop-up lanes saw more women start cycling - and don't forget that Georgia told us in the last issue of **SEBRA NEWS W2**

**(Ed: p82)** that it was Transport for London's Park Lane (protected) cycle lane that got her on her bike. If we want streets where everyone is free to travel safely, whether that's disabled people traveling independently, or school children getting to school on their own or being ridden in the family cargo bike, we need protected bike lanes.

### 3. FOR CLEAN AIR AND CLIMATE

We all know how badly polluted Westminster's air is; it's equivalent to smoking 157 cigarettes a year according to the British Heart Foundation in 2019, and most of that comes from road pollution. Those transport emissions are bad for us and bad for the climate. And switching to electric vehicles is not enough to save us either. EVs still pollute, through wear on brakes, tyres and road surfaces; and carbon is embedded into their manufacture. Not to mention the fact that cars in traffic are still traffic, electric or otherwise!



Cycling in cities can have many positive impacts on health, safety and business.

Decarbonisation experts tell us it's far more effective to shift car trips to walking and cycling than rely on EVs. Emissions from cycling are ten times lower per trip than electric cars when you take into account the manufacture, fuel and disposal of each vehicle, according to a new Europe-wide study, and people who cycle daily have an 84% smaller carbon footprint from all their daily trips than those who don't.<sup>2</sup> It's also true of freight emissions. Electric cargo bikes have a much smaller impact on climate than electric vans.

### CYCLING IS

**10 x**

**MORE IMPORTANT THAN  
ELECTRIC CARS  
IN ACHIEVING  
NET ZERO CITIES**

Source: Brand et al., 2021

### How can you help?

We want the Council to take our asks very seriously. This is not about making cycling nicer for a few enthusiasts. This is about public health, the climate crisis, the economy. Please take the action on our website to email the Council! It takes two minutes: [www.westminstercycling.org.uk/cycle-safe-westminster](http://www.westminstercycling.org.uk/cycle-safe-westminster)

streets are generally lower in traffic and nicer places to be. If it felt safe and convenient to cycle with your family to the West End, and easy to park your bikes when you get there, how much more often would you visit and spend money?

1 - Adams & Aldred (2020), *Cycling Injury Risk in London: Impacts of Road Characteristics and Infrastructure*.

2 - Brand et al. (2021), *The climate change mitigation impacts of active travel: Evidence from a longitudinal panel study in seven European cities*.

The more people who do it - especially us as Westminster residents - the more likely we are to be heard. We're also looking for schools, businesses and organisations to endorse our campaign, so if you can suggest any, please let us know at [cyclesafe@westminstercyclists.org.uk](mailto:cyclesafe@westminstercyclists.org.uk).

Thanks in advance for your support!

## RETAIL SALES CAN INCREASE BY UP TO

**30%**

**AS A RESULT OF WALKING,  
CYCLING & PUBLIC REALM  
IMPROVEMENTS  
ON HIGH STREETS**

Source: Lawlor, 2013



## TEMPORARY CYCLING MEASURES REVIEWED

Andy Beverley -Chairman, Westminster Healthy Streets

**“**You lot are so ungrateful **”** was how our esteemed SEBRA Chairman opened the conversation. This caught my attention. Was this really the case and was it a fair accusation?

I thought about other social-justice campaigns that people have run over the years. Should they have been grateful for small concessions or should they have continued doggedly until gaining what they considered only fair and right? I suppose there is always going to be an element of compromise, it's just a case of how little or much of a compromise one is prepared to make.

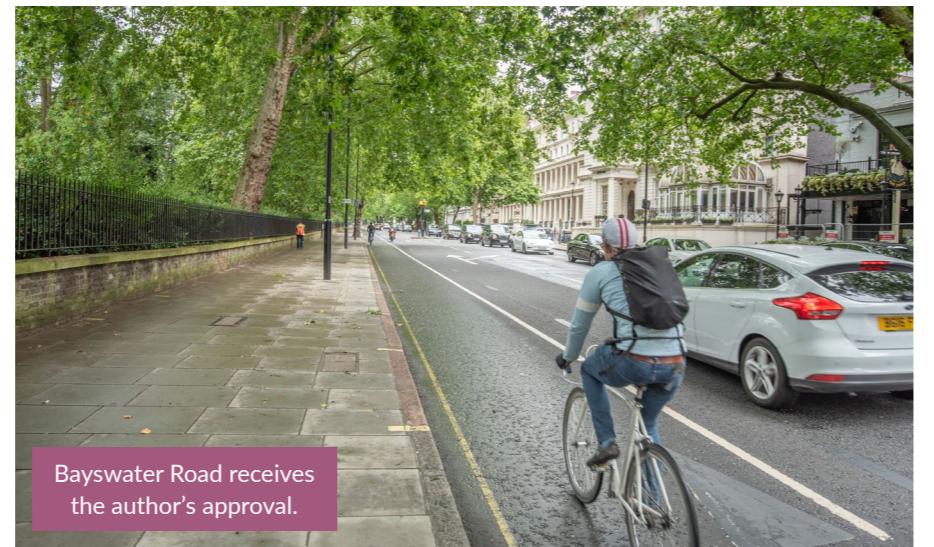
In the case of infrastructure to make cycling safe, we know from research that a painted line does not reduce injuries and deaths on a particular stretch of road for those deciding to travel by bicycle, and in fact a dashed advisory line has actually been shown to increase injuries, so I think it's fair to call that out as an unacceptable compromise. Westminster has the highest number of serious cycling casualties of any London borough, and worryingly this figure is no longer reducing, meaning that the borough is not on target to meet its obligations of nobody being killed or seriously injured on the roads by 2041.

To me, the solution is obvious: protected cycle lanes have been shown to reduce injury risk by 40%.

All that aside, and some debate later, I agreed with John to write a review of the temporary cycling measures that have been implemented in the Bayswater area. I will do my best to strike a positive note whilst also being realistic about their usefulness!

### BAYSWATER ROAD

On the whole I am personally very positive about the Bayswater Road cycle lanes. Previously this road's inside lane was seemingly mainly used by vehicles undertaking, something that is a terrifying experience when on a bike,



when vehicles cut immediately in front. The new cycle lanes prevent this from happening, and drivers are generally very adherent to the mandatory lane. In fact, for me it has made the difference to cycling and not cycling on the road.

The main downsides are its abrupt end, just before it gets to other quiet cycle routes, and also its disappearance on a Sunday: there is a certain irony to it being replaced by large numbers of parked cars of visitors to Hyde Park avoiding parking charges. Of course, it needs some light segregation in order to make it truly useful to a wider demographic of people.

### LONDON STREET, BROOK STREET, STANHOPE TERRACE, SUSSEX PLACE, SPRING STREET

This roundabout route is actually quite a popular little route (facilitating a connection from the canal to the park) and has been a nice thought to include as part of the temporary measures.

London Street previously, now replaced with a “token gesture”.



### QUEENSWAY / INVERNESS TERRACE; LORD HILL'S BRIDGE

The idea of this route is to provide a link from Harrow Road in the north to Bayswater Road and Bayswater generally. Whilst well-intentioned, and with some good short sections, the reality is that with the volume of motor vehicles on this route and with the amount of parked cars, it's of little use for any but the bravest of cyclists. The short section at the south end of Inverness Terrace is of definite benefit, but it's difficult to argue that the whole route should be kept in its current form.

John would tell me that this is surely better than nothing, but I don't think I can honestly agree with that. There comes a point when token measures are worse than no measures at all, and I think that applies to the majority of this route. Let's not give people a false sense of security, when we know from all the objective evidence it's just that.

### WESTBOURNE TERRACE & WESTBOURNE BRIDGE

The Westbourne Terrace route has been covered before in this magazine. On the whole it seems to be popular, even with those who don't choose to cycle but live nearby, as it keeps the vehicle pollution further from the pavement. The main downside are the junctions, which can still be quite intimidating, with “left-hooks” from vehicles all too much of a risk.

For me personally, whilst it's not too bad and a definite improvement from what was there previously, the risk at each junction forces me to choose the parallel route along the canal. This is a shame, as the canal is busy and I'm sure those who walk along it would prefer bikes to be using the road. This has probably led to the facility being not as well used as it might otherwise have been, which leads

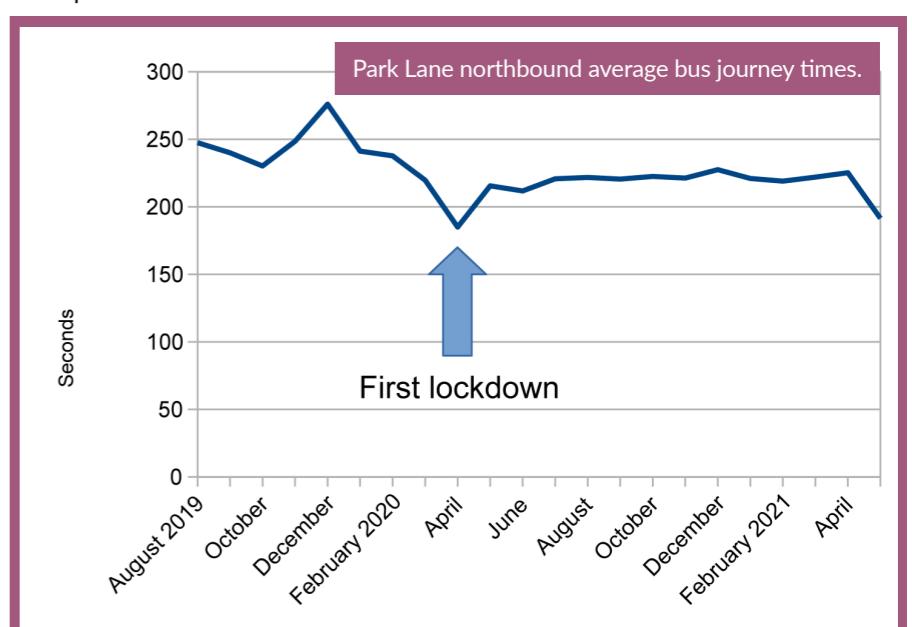
### PARK LANE

Onto the gold standard, which is actually a TfL scheme rather than a Westminster Council scheme. Sadly it seems that the measure of a cycle lane's effectiveness is the level of noise it generates. The laws of physics dictate that any meaningful cycling facility is going to involve some reduction in space for motor vehicles. In the case of Park Lane, this was a significant change to the status quo, reducing general vehicle traffic to only one lane.

It's worth noting, however, that the measures included a new dedicated bus lane which was not there before, and TfL data has shown that as a result bus journey times have improved. It's also worth noting that overall journey times haven't been impacted as much as anecdotal evidence would suggest: TfL data shows that general traffic journey times have broadly matched pre-pandemic levels. This could partly be because the queuing traffic has effectively been rearranged from a stumpy three lane queue to a long single lane queue.

The green traffic-light time exiting onto Marble Arch has been increased, and this means that when the traffic does start moving, a good amount of vehicles are able to get through on one sequence than would otherwise have been possible.

All that said, there's a cycle path right inside the park, so why need another one? Well, cycle counts are now almost 2,000 daily on this route; that's a lot of extra bicycles to accommodate on an already congested path in the park. Far better for them to be on a road surely? The cycle and bus provision have changed Park Lane from a hostile urban motorway to a much healthier, more sustainable street.



# Dedication & Discovery

Sir Alexander Fleming and Sir Arthur Pearson

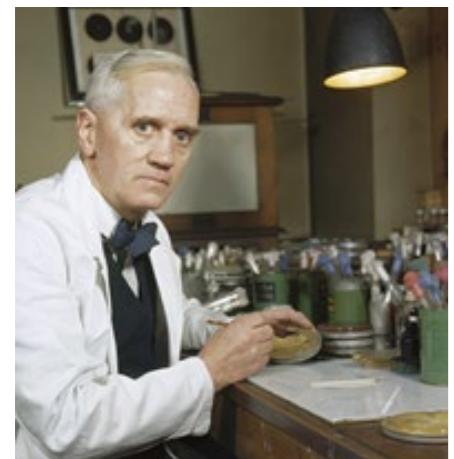
The discovery of Penicillin at a laboratory in St. Mary's hospital is surely one of Bayswater's greatest "claims to fame", and featuring Sir Alexander Fleming on these pages is a wise choice by Professor Lesley. The second figure on our Blue Plaques article, Sir Arthur Pearson, is someone not quite as well known, but his dedication to blind veterans certainly justifies his place in history. The work that began on Bayswater Road continues to this day as the Blind Veterans UK charity.

## Professor Lewis Lesley

With the present COVID 19 crisis playing out, not just in Britain but around the world, this article looks at two men whose work performed miracles for those left with terrible injuries from the First World War, and in fighting diseases that had plagued the world for millennia.

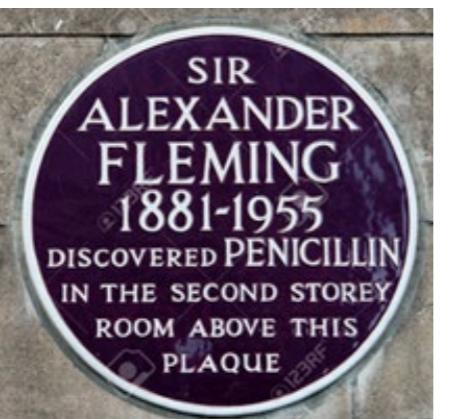
There are two microscopic causes of disease, viruses and bacteria. Whilst COVID is a virus driven pandemic, our two heroes fought and won the battles for those with injuries. Bacteria, live organisms can get into our bodies and disrupt normal and healthy functions, with luck only for a short time or worst fatally. Sadly blindness is normally permanent.

## SIR ALEXANDER FLEMING 1881 - 1955



Alexander Fleming was another Scotsman who came to London and made good, like JM Barrie, subject of an earlier plaque article. Fleming was born into a farming family in 1881 in East Ayrshire, with three sisters and four

brothers. He was obviously gifted since his time at the local school was rewarded with a scholarship to Kilmarnock Academy. From there he graduated to the Royal Polytechnic Institute in London, the precursor of the University of Westminster.



Sir Alexander Fleming's plaque at St Mary's Hospital.

If he had medicine in mind that was not clear since he went to work as a shipping clerk in London. His life changed when he got an inheritance from an uncle. Not knowing what to do, he consulted his older brother Thomas, who was a physician, directing him into medicine. He enrolled in 1903 at St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, from where he graduated in 1906 with a distinction in his Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery Degree.

Like many Edwardian young men, Fleming volunteered in the London Scottish Regiment, where his marksmanship with a rifle was highly prized. The Rifle Club Captain pushed him into research at the hospital as an assistant bacteriologist looking at

vaccines and immunology, which led to a BSc in Bacteriology, and the gold medal for student of the year. Now he was on a roll, appointed as a Lecturer at St. Mary's, which he did until 1914 when he began war service in the Royal Army Medical Corps in battlefield hospitals in France. Captain Fleming from 1917 only did one more year but not before an important discovery that wounded soldiers were dying from sepsis but when treated with antiseptic agents got worse and died faster. A paper on this failed to change the treatment of wounded soldiers, who continued to die in large numbers.

In 1918 he returned to St. Mary's and began serious research into bacteria and antibacterial agents. He got a reputation for his untidy laboratory but this led to two of his major breakthroughs. The first was that drops of mucus from his nose killed rogue bacteria in a petri dish. He persevered with other potential bacteriicides, blood, egg white, pus, semen, sputum, and tears. All showed the same ability to kill bacteria. He reported this work at the Royal Society but failed to rouse any interest. In his paper to the Royal Society he noted "*a substance present in the tissues and secretions of the body, is capable of rapidly dissolving certain bacteria*", the first 'discovered' antibiotic?

His enquiring mind led from 1927 to investigate staphylococci bacteria, still a major source of infections. Before taking a holiday in 1928 he left some dishes with staphylococci growing. On his return he noticed that in one of the dishes, the bacteria had been killed by an unknown mould. On investigation he identified it as Penicillium. As we now know, the rest is history.

He was knighted in 1944 and in 1945 awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine. In his acceptance speech he said, "*Penicillin was not the first antibiotic I discovered*". When he learnt that two Americans were patenting the production of penicillin he was furious. "*I found penicillin and have given it free for the benefit of humanity. Why should it become a profit-making monopoly of manufacturers in another country?*" A cry that has been echoed more recently. Very much later his first discovery of lysozyme was also recognised as part of the human innate immunity.

During this lifetime of achievement he married nurse Sarah McElroy from Ireland in 1915. Robert Fleming was their only child, who also became a medical doctor. Sir Alexander died at home in 1955 from a heart attack and his ashes are buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, where there is a plaque, to complement the Blue Plaque on St. Mary's Hospital under the window of his laboratory, preserved as he left it.

## SIR ARTHUR PEARSON 1866 - 1921



Our second Blue Plaque commemorates another aspect of the carnage of the First World War, not the soldiers who died from wound infections, but the soldiers who survived blinded. This inspired the setting up of a charity to help rehabilitate blinded soldiers and sailors. The first location of this work started St. Dunstan's in 1915 at 6 Bayswater Road, now demolished but with a Blue Plaque of record. This Charity still exists, known now as "*Blind Veterans UK*". The moving force behind this work was Sir Arthur Pearson, a man made rich by publishing, who whilst never living in Bayswater, the Charity he founded in the First World War started in Bayswater, so we can commemorate

that, and the life of the man who saw the carnage and injuries of the War, and the needs of blinded veterans. He did something about it. The Publishing House C. Arthur Pearson he founded in 1890 continued after his death until 1961, when it became part of the International Publishing Corporation. A number of magazines were published at first, including: '*Home Notes*', '*London Opinion*', '*Men Only*', '*Pearson's Weekly Magazine*', and '*The Royal Magazine*'. Comics were another part of his publishing empire, with '*Big Budget*' (1897) and '*Dan Leno's Comic Journal*' (1898).



Sir Arthur Pearson's Plaque at 21 Portland Place - See editor's note.

He worked closely with Baden Powell founder of the Scout Movement, subject of an earlier article, by publishing "*Scouting for Boys*" (1908) one of the most influential books ever for young people, and '*The Scout*' a weekly paper for members. Later Pearson published '*The Wolf Cub's Handbook*' (1916) written when the age for Scout membership was reduced to seven, in response to the number of scouts who joined the army.

He set up in the provinces and launched the '*Birmingham Daily Gazette*'. Already owning the '*Morning Herald*', in 1900 he merged it with a new paper the '*Daily Express*', which revolutionised the newspaper world by having news, not classified adverts on the front page. He went on to buy the '*Evening Standard*'. But both ventures began to lose money and he sold out to Sir Max Aitken, who later became Lord Beaverbrook, reflecting his Canadian origins.

His book publishing was not restricted to the Scout Movement, including notable authors; H.G. Wells, Bram Stoker, Baroness Orczy, Norman Hunter, Fa'iz El-Ghusein, Robert Leighton, Marie Connor and Catherine Christian.

The reason for giving up his newspapers was accelerated by glaucoma. Despite an operation he lost his sight completely and in 1913 became a Council Member of the National Institute for the Blind, later given a Royal seal of approval. He had already founded in 1892 '*The Fresh Air Fund*' giving holidays to disadvantaged city children. With the outbreak of war in 1914 he met returning soldiers who had been blinded and set up the '*Blinded Soldiers and Sailors Care Committee*'. In 1915 he took a house on the Bayswater Road, until moving to a bigger place in Regent's Park, '*St. Dunstan's Lodge*'.

He had had three daughters with his first wife Isobel. They were married in 1887, when he was 21. After Isobel died, he married Ethel, and they had a son and three daughters.

His driving philosophy in working with the blind was that it is not an affliction but a handicap and opportunity. So blinded soldiers and sailors were trained to read braille, typewrite, become small-holder farmers, do physiotherapy, make baskets and work in the growing telephonic industry. He was made a Baronet (of St. Dunstan's) in 1916, and then a GBE (Knight of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in 1917. From this experience in 1919 he wrote '*Victory Over Blindness: How it was Won by the Men of St Dunstan's..*'

In 1921 he founded the Greater London Fund for the Blind, with an annual '*Geranium Day*' appeal. Sadly he died shortly after, aged only 55, as a result of a domestic accident. His funeral was attended by 1,500 blind veterans and many others paying tribute, and is buried in Hampstead Cemetery, where an annual commemoration service takes place.

This article reflects upon two men greatly influenced by the injuries sustained by soldiers and sailors in the First World War. Both went onto create new ways to prevent deaths from septic injuries, and to make new lives for those blinded. Sir Alexander Fleming spent most of his life working in St. Mary's Hospital, and Sir Arthur Pearson's '*St. Dunstan's*' started life in Bayswater. No doubt in 50 years time we will be able to look back on some people today, who have had a similar and positive impacts on mankind during the COVID crisis.

**Editor's note:** Despite our best efforts we have not been able to get a photograph of a blue plaque at No 6 Bayswater Road.



**Sue Price**  
Chairman, Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens



#### THE LONGEST DAY

**A**s I write we have just passed midsummer, the longest day features as a major milestone in our year. I see I started our Friends' members blogs/newsletters/updates at the Spring Equinox.

What a winter, and sadly the summer, so far, has not been very kind to us either although the parks are looking luscious after masses of rain and some earlier warmth.

#### VOLUNTEERS RETURN

Our Friends' elite team of gardening volunteers anxiously shook their heads over the showpiece beds at the Albert Memorial. They knew what needed doing but weren't allowed to all through the winter, as COVID rules reigned.

Following a relaxation of these, the team was back into action very quickly and, thanks to our expanding membership numbers, we have recruited more volunteers to help here so there is now a double team to work on two days a week. Always worth a visit, this area (South Flower Walk) is stunning at this time of year.

Summer bedding started being put in on 1st June over a two-week period. 2,500 plants go into the showcase bed and another 15,500 in the rest of the South Flower Walk, so it's well worth visiting all over the summer to see what treats have been laid on.

Meanwhile up at the Allotment our other trustee volunteer, Simon Cox, was also hard at work and reported that the chickens have new turf (how long will that last?) and a small pool is to be built by the bench.

#### KENSINGTON PALACE AND THE ORANGERY

I am sure that elsewhere in your magazine you will read all about the reopening of Kensington Palace and the new exhibition showing Princess Diana's wedding dress and focussing on Princess Margaret and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Historic Royal Palaces have had a terribly difficult time as the pandemic stopped all their income flow at a stroke.



They all appeared and can just be picked out in our photo, although now past their best. Congratulations to the team. Seasonal planting takes place in Spring and Autumn, except for Snobs Crossing which gets trampled by dogs and feet passing in all directions, so needs frequent topping up.

Conservation work continued and it now looks wonderful. During the work our photographer, Paul, and I didn't dare to climb the barriers for fear of being cast into the dungeons at the Tower (another HRP building) but we did reach very high to take the photo of the Flemish Bond brickwork (that's stretcher and header in a line together with the fine feathered pointing).

It's now easy to see and admire.

#### KENSINGTON GARDENS HISTORIC TREES

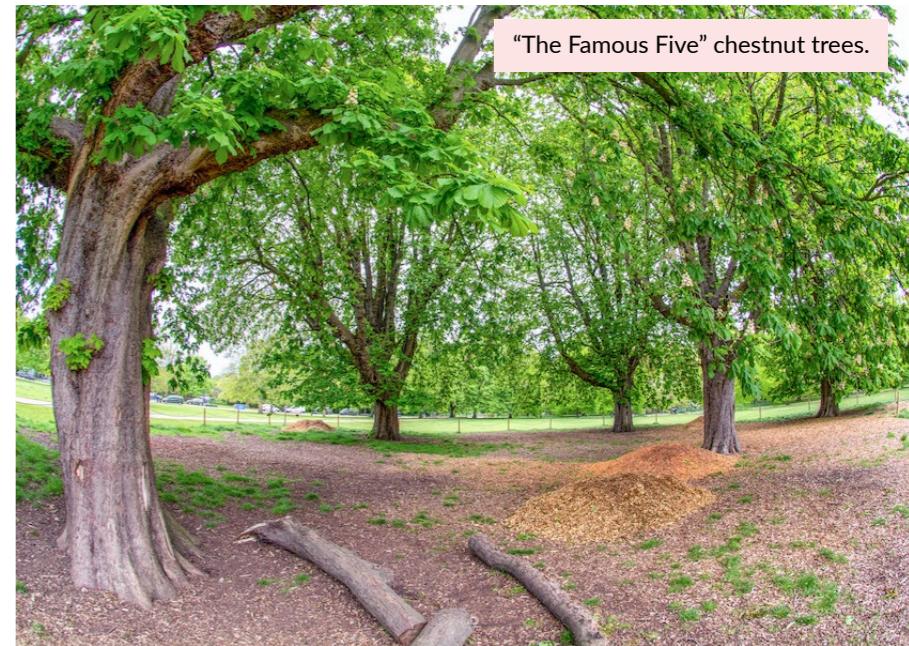
As much as Hyde Park has a wonderful collection of trees, Kensington Gardens trees are generally much older and has the Veterans, the real elder statesmen of the tree world, to look after.

These have been under threat of all kinds in the last few years and SEBRA members will, I'm sure, have noticed how many have had to be taken down or are now protected by surroundings of thick undergrowth.

Everybody will have heard about these threats in the form of pests and diseases which eat away at the foliage, timber or roots. A man-made one comes from compaction from excessive foot fall around trees in certain areas, and this is particularly noticeable where mass parakeet feeding has become an unwelcome activity. You will have noticed that here (close to Peter Pan), areas have had to be fenced off to save whole groups of ancient oaks and unusual and rare trees.

All the trees, especially those under threat, are regularly inspected to assess root and branch decay, and hard decisions have to be made. If the tree is close to a busy path, the decision may be easier than when it is standing in an out of the way area full of undergrowth. *"It's a difficult balancing act to judge when to take down a fine old tree, against the possibility of keeping it a little longer"* says Andy Williams, Manager Kensington Gardens.

Whenever a tree has been lost and is finally felled, it may not be carted off. More are left where they are to rot gently and provide a home for invertebrates. Others provide informal seating which is most welcome, as the parks have become so much busier during the many months of lockdown and restricted travel. And some look wonderful as informal playgrounds with children clambering all over.



#### THE FAMOUS FIVE

This little group is well guarded. They are at the north end of the Broad Walk and are surrounded by a split chestnut and rope barrier. They are chestnuts, with a genetic make-up special to the Gardens. Risk of compaction around them, and any other abuse, is headed off. They are Kensington Gardens tree treasures.

Our photographer lay on the ground in the middle of them to take the photo.

#### EATING AND DRINKING EN PLEIN AIR

No piece from me would be complete without some encouragement to eat and drink in both Parks.

And in this case it's on a roof top in Hyde Park.

As summer visitors return to London, the days get longer, the weather warmer (we hope, the longer days have already past us) and the cafés in the Park get busier.



The Lido Cafe has a limited area in front of it which can get quite hectic. It's a lovely spot on the edge of the water, but with social distancing there's not enough room to put out sufficient tables.

Up the outdoor steps to the Terrace, above the swimming changing rooms, is a lovely garden over-looking the lake.

For the time, being Colicci have turned this area into a wonderful space to sit and enjoy food and drinks. It's generally open later in the day, early evening and also more at weekends. I've not got lucky (several weeks ago for an early lunch) but have been told that it is very calm with a beautiful view. Opening hours will extend to meet demand during July and August.

For those of you who want to swim in the Serpentine, the opening date has been delayed as the Covid rules have been extended. When they do allow reopening, there will be limited slots which need pre- booking. A burger and chips is the only way to recover (in my experience) from a cold swim.

### INSPIRED PLANTING ALONG WEST CARRIAGE DRIVE

Look closely at the difficult area of land alongside Will to Win, at the south end of the road. Usually drivers sitting in the queues of cars here probably notice very little, but for those of us on foot there have been some wonderful things to spot right back from the very early Spring. Photography is rewarding but rolling on the ground to take the photos probably not to everybody's taste.

The area has been difficult to deal with, waterlogged in parts and suffering from some very invasive weeds which fight back at every opportunity.

Hyde Park Assistant manager, Phil Newcombe, started in the very late Autumn (almost too late he thought) by planting large natural swathes of tete-a-tete narcissus. The key word is natural and Phil told me that, get it wrong, and it looks as though you have planted double yellow lines down the edge of a road. A specialist planter with a clever bit of kit, a small tractor-like item from Holland, came and planted hundreds of bulbs and, amazingly, very shortly afterwards they all came up and looked glorious. Many of you know that these are really early flowering bulbs and were particularly welcome when we were so restricted.



Beautiful flowers (above) have resulted from using specialist planting equipment (below).



Closer to the hedge, and in a really tricky spot, a selection of tiny Spring wildflower looking bulbs, came up in steady waves, earlier ones being overtaken by later ones as the months progressed. Friends' members were really on the lookout by now.

Now we can look through a haze of corn chamomile and cornflowers towards the Van Gogh Alive exhibition (well worth a visit). [Ed: bit.ly/SEBRA-Van-Gogh](https://bit.ly/SEBRA-Van-Gogh)

And close by at the bee beds, friendly foxgloves are creating a great display. Hopefully even the stationary car drivers notice these.

Phil and his gardeners threw down the gauntlet to Van Gogh Alive and has a wonderful bed of iris in the rose garden area closer to Hyde Park Corner.

### A LITTLE HELP NEEDED

Thanks to Mission Invertebrate (funded by The Peoples Post Code Lottery), all sorts of initiatives have been popping up in the Parks and especially round the Long Water and the Serpentine. The Long Water enclosures are designated as nature conservation areas. The management of these is to let them naturally be more wild. Without public access, the tree management can relax the levels of risk and let the trees behave more as they would in a normal life cycle. There are dead wood invertebrates (saproxylic) which inhabit aerial dead timber, which would not be possible in other areas of the gardens which are open to the public. Timber which falls into the lake also provides cover, and an ideal breeding and nursery ground for lake fish and aquatic invertebrates. The dead hedges look like sculptures by Richard Long and are created from brushwood and tree trimmings. They provide cover for smaller birds and protection from larger more predatory birds and animals, as well as insects, and gently settle down and finally collapse back into the ground leaving no man-made rubbish behind.

Close by and near to the Italian Gardens, a small pop-up Island has appeared. This is a perfectly formed des res for nesting swans. Swans used to try to nest on the banks here but despite railings, were bothered by human intervention and dogs. Now surrounded by water, they are safe from these as well as foxes. It was quickly put into use by nesting waterfowl. The water is home to so many fishes .... bream, carp, perch, pike, rudd, roach, possibly a crucian carp, and even a tench. Their peril comes from above.



Hang over the parapet on the north side of the Serpentine Bridge on the Hyde Park side and, just under the water, you will see a series of metal cages recently restuffed with brash from the coppicing work in the Long Water Enclosures. These are fish refuges which provide shelter for the hundreds of tiny fish which hatch in there. As they emerge in the Spring, masses get snaffled by the heron but there are always a few which survive.

No shelter along the very hard surface, along the northern edge of the Serpentine, for the Egyptian geese and their goslings. This group shared their time between here and the much more comfortable grassy area around the Henry Moore sculpture. This is safely enclosed with a good fence, so people and dogs can see but not get in. Notice the little gate left open onto a tiny bit of shoreline built up for the waders and water fowl to come and go.

### HELP NATURE THRIVE

**A Campaign Launch**  
**by The Royal Parks**

There are two strands to this important initiative:

- **Keep Wildlife Wild**
- **Leave No Trace**

Messages through the press and media, social messaging, websites, partner

communications, signs and notices on the new bins are aimed at educating the 13 million visitors to Hyde Park alone each year.

High volumes of wildlife feeding is upsetting the Park's delicate ecosystem, and now there has been extensive research done over the last year or so to show just how this is impacting on our balance in both Parks.

Excessive feeding of junk food into the water bodies, has resulted in an imbalance of the bird population which is now detrimental to all small birds, and over-breeding of larger birds which are far too many for the area to support. Swans are now evident in huge numbers, and herons too, in an area which would naturally happily support a very small number. Rats increase along with gulls and crows which feast on smaller birds, fledglings and eggs. Water quality has deteriorated at an alarming rate. The message is **NO FEEDING**, not even "good feeding" because this only continues to encourage this over-large population for a small area. The same goes for squirrels which cause no end of damage, as do parakeets, to the natural habitat of the Parks.

There will be a lot more messages coming out in a push to get it over to the population of visitors. Your readers help is needed too, this may be the time

A little help goes a long way when it comes to nature.

to observe birds with your children and grandchildren instead of turning up with a plastic bag of white sliced bread (or even bird seed).

Look on the Royal Parks website as there are so many answers to the questions and arguments which you will have heard over and over again. But our eyes and memories can't deceive us. In 1990 there were 13 swans present on the water in our Parks, last December there were 175. The actual size of the area means that only 3-4 pairs can breed successfully. The message is a hard one, and seems heartless and stops something "we've always done" but like all these changes in life, and the world around us, it's high time we paid attention and did something about it.

With best wishes to all readers of **SEBRA NEWS W2** and I hope you have found something of interest in all these different pieces of news and information.

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# Serpentine Galleries

We are delighted to welcome visitors back to the Serpentine for a season of exhibitions, architecture, live performance, digital commissions, conversations, sound commissions, family activities, outdoor art, talks, food, music and more this summer.



Date: 1966 Caption: Drum Cover Girl Erlin Ibreck Kilburn, London Courtesy Autograph

## JAMES BARNOR: ACCRA/LONDON - A RETROSPECTIVE

At Serpentine North Gallery, we present upwards of 200 photographs in James Barnor: Accra/London- A Retrospective. This major survey of British-Ghanaian photographer James Barnor spans his six-decade career as a studio portraitist, photojournalist and Black lifestyle photographer and records major social and political changes in Accra and London. The show runs until 24 October.



Say Her Name, 2017 Oil on canvas 101.6 x 121.9 cm, 40 x 48 inches Private Collection. Courtesy: The Artist, Corvi-Mora, London and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York Photo: Matt Grubb

## JENNIFER PACKER: THE EYE IS NOT SATISFIED WITH SEEING

At Serpentine South Gallery, New York-based artist Jennifer Packer presents 34 works dated from 2011 to 2020 in the exhibition The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing. Portraits, monochromatic paintings, intimate interiors and drawings are included alongside flower still lifes such as Say Her Name (above - 2017), painted in response to the suspicious death of Sandra Bland, a Black American woman who is largely believed to have been murdered while in police custody in 2015. You can see the works on show until 22 August.

## SERPENTINE PAVILION 2021 DESIGNED BY COUNTERSPACE

The long-awaited Serpentine Pavilion 2021, designed by Counterspace, comes in five parts, all inspired by past and present places of meeting, organising and belonging across several London neighbourhoods.

Referencing places of gathering, the main structure in Kensington Gardens hosts our live Park Night series of encounters as well as sound commissions from both our Back to Earth environmental programme, with artists Brian Eno and Torkwase Dyson, and our Listening to the City programme, which picks up the sounds and stories of London with artists Ain Bailey and Jay Barnard. It also hosts a café, so grab a coffee or an ice cream and listen to the sound commission playing that day.

Off-site, there are four Pavilion Fragments hosted by partners in four locations around the city: The Tabernacle in Notting Hill, New Beacon Books in Finsbury Park, the Albany arts centre in Deptford and the new Becontree Forever Arts and Culture Hub at Valence Library in Barking and Dagenham. The Fragments support the everyday operations of these organisations while enabling and honouring gatherings of local communities.



Serpentine Pavilion 2021 designed by Counterspace, Exterior View © Counterspace Photo: Iwan Baan

## SOPHIA AL-MARIA: TARAXOS

If you are looking for a place to slow down, meditate and to take time to listen, we recommend visiting our new public sculpture, Taraxos, by Sophia Al Maria, situated within the Serpentine South Gallery's grounds.

Unveiled on the summer solstice, Taraxos is a sonic installation that can be played by the wind or by visitors. Inspired by the life cycle and geometry of the dandelion (*taraxacum officinale*), it is a model for understanding and listening to the world.

Sophia Al-Maria, taraxos, 2021 Serpentine x Modern Forms Sculpture Commission  
21 June 2021 - 24 April 2022 Photo: Hugo Glendinning



## TOMÁS SARACENO: WEBS OF LIFE

If you have noticed a proliferation of spiders this time of year, you'll be charmed by a new Augmented Reality app, Webs of Life, by Tomás Saraceno with Acute Art, which can be found via your smartphone on the drive and grounds at Serpentine South Gallery.

Introducing audiences to the extraordinary physicality of spiders, their reading of the world through the webs they weave, and encouraging greater awareness and protection of their habitats, Webs of Life encourages us to move away from a fear of spiders (arachnophobia) and towards a love of spiders (arachnophilia).



## NEW RESTAURANT AND CAFÉ

The Magazine restaurant and café is now open Tuesday to Sunday with a contemporary menu that puts sustainability and seasonality at the heart of the kitchen, ensuring maximum taste and minimum waste.

Chef Tomas Kolkus has worked with Cooking Sections, a duo exploring how to eat as humans change climate, on exciting new CLIMAVORE dishes, including rope-grown mussels, slow-roasted cauliflower and bonfire potatoes. Let us know which CLIMAVORE dish is your favourite [@themagazine\\_sg](#).

With so much on offer and after such a long time, we look forward to welcoming you back to the park this summer.





# Political Commentary



**Karen Buck MP (Lab)**  
Westminster North

**M**ingled with the massive relief we all feel as the on-off lockdown measures of the last year draw to an end, is the sense that Covid will still cast a long shadow over our lives in many different ways.

## COVID - VACCINATION RATES IN CENTRAL LONDON

This is more true in Central London than in many other places. Firstly, it remains a worry that our vaccination rates are still the worst in the country - and the Bayswater area ranks particularly low.

Some of this can be explained by the fact that information on our population

Central London's vaccination rates are the lowest in the country.



is clearly inaccurate (though that raises some other big questions about the allocation of resources). Yet it isn't the only factor. A very high turnover of people, especially in private rented flats, and a high proportion of younger people with few if any connections to the community in which they live, isn't unusual in inner cities but it means that the NHS and Council have to have tailored solutions that can be adapted to the specific needs of the local area, or the strategy will fail.

## COVID - NHS EFFECTS

The national vaccination programme may have eased the threat that the NHS will be overwhelmed but Covid hasn't gone away. The past year has left a legacy of 'long Covid' and has shown that new and dangerous variants can crop up which will, in the coming winter, have to be dealt with alongside the real risk of a more traditional flu epidemic - and all while the NHS has to manage a massive backlog of treatment for other conditions. In my regular meetings with local NHS officials, for example, there is concern that attendances at the emergency services have soared recently, with critical mental health problems being a particular issue.

## COVID - ADAPTATION AND SUPPORT

Despite government plans to essentially lift restrictions across the board, there is little doubt that many the changes people have made to their patterns of work and socialising will continue for the foreseeable future and we will have to adapt to it. What we do need is proper support to do so. It is, for example, simply no good for the government to refuse adequate funding for Transport for London, throwing a growing burden onto Londoners, whilst bailing out the national rail service - equally hard hit by a collapse in passenger numbers - without conditions.

London is unusual as a capital city in receiving so little national support for our transport system, a situation made worse when the Government removed TfL's £700m operating grant in 2018.

## COVID - ECONOMIC COSTS FOR CENTRAL LONDON

There are other shadows, too. We may all crave a return to a normal, social life but in reality the life of Central London - with its shops, offices, cultural institutions and hospitality sector - is far from normal. Weekends are becoming extremely busy, weekdays less so and it is clear the face of central London is going to continue to change fundamentally, with massive implications for jobs, revenues and taxes. As the furlough scheme winds down and business rate liabilities return, more damage could be done.

As it is, the local economy has been hit hard, with a higher percentage of the population out of work than the national average, which is highly unusual. More than 4,000 local people are out of work than was the case last spring, including 700 more young people. Vacancies that are available don't always fit the skills of those out of work either (not everyone is suited to work in social care, for example) so investment in training and skills development is essential.

Now as a condition of emergency post-covid support, TfL has to find £0.5 to £1 billion of new income and make hundreds of millions of extra savings. The government's 'Levelling Up' agenda is aimed at investing in the north of England, and these communities desperately need investment, but that won't be achieved by 'levelling London down', limiting our ability as a city to rebuild the economy which then contributes to the country as a whole.

## ALSO IN PARLIAMENT

Other issues which have absorbed Parliament in recent months include the government's proposed changes to the planning system, which are proving highly contentious as they reduce the right of communities to have a say in planning decisions.

Although conservation areas enjoy a considerable degree of protection, 'permitted development' rules, designed to encourage building with fewer regulations, are already causing problems in the borough and I do not want to see this spreading!

Few would argue with the idea that the planning process should be faster whenever possible, but to exclude local communities from any part of the process to decide planning applications once design guides and codes have been determined is undemocratic and likely to be highly unpopular.

## UNDER THE FLIGHTPATH?

Since the spring, I have received a number of complaints from the W2 area regarding an increase in the number of flights over central London. Heathrow maintain that there has been no major operational change and that essentially the flight paths remain governed by the same factors as before lockdown.

*"The area is affected by arriving aircraft making their way to the final approach path during periods of 'westerly operations'. When the wind blows from the west, planes land over London and take off towards the west. There are no set routes for aircraft moving towards the final approach path. The point at which aircraft join the final approach varies on a flight by flight basis depending on how aircraft need to be sequenced by the controllers."*

Understandably, many residents feel that in order for there to have been a sustained and perceptible increase in the disturbance from flights over the area, there may have been some systematic change in the way the landing pathways are managed. There is



a concern highlighted by some resident groups I have heard from that such plans were consulted on as part of wider discussions over the third runway back in 2018/19 and I believe a greater level of transparency is required if this is the case. If there have been or will be significant operational changes at Heathrow, I believe residents ought to be consulted and at the very least informed.

In the meantime, I have written to the Minister for Aviation, Robert Courts who maintains in his response of last week that there has been no major operational change at Heathrow. It may be that further work needs to be done in understanding the perceived increase in noise from flights in the area if Heathrow and the Government claim the system has not changed. I have also joined the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Heathrow Expansion and Regional Connectivity which seeks to examine issues relating to the proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport as well as the broader impacts on regional connectivity and neighbouring communities. I am also still involved in the All Party Group on Air Pollution, which also looks at aviation alongside the damaging effects of poor air quality arising from traffic and other pollution sources.

## IN BRIEF

In other news, I continue to work with my Labour colleagues on the Council on a number of local issues, which have included Westminster Council's options to dispose of the building which (until cuts in funding drove the closure of many children's services) hosted the Bayswater Children's Centre; the failure to include adequate provision for affordable housing in the Bourne Capital scheme in Queensway; the proposed closure of the Barclays branch in Queensway and Maggie Carman's support for residents seeking to protect access to Prince's Square.

I have reconvened the All Party Parliamentary Group on Short Lets to maintain a focus on the impact of Airbnb/short-let accommodation here

in Central London, and am pleased that Airbnb themselves have now accepted the importance of having a registration scheme so we know who is letting out holiday and short-stay properties and can therefore deal more easily with those who breach the rules and cause nuisance to their neighbours.

## ALL CHANGE (AGAIN) ON THE CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY

Finally, as some residents may be aware, the Boundary Commission for England and Wales has once again proposed a fundamental redrawing of the Parliamentary constituency - the third proposal in a decade but one which may this time actually come into force. This returns Bayswater and Lancaster Gate to the south Westminster constituency, now decoupled from the City of London and linked with Chelsea.

North Westminster effectively disappears as a constituency, with three Wards being attached to a redrawn Kensington seat, and five Wards in the northeast of the borough becoming part of a new seat which will be largely in Camden and stretch almost up to Highgate. Changes aren't easy to make as the Boundary Commission has to work within very tight constraints and any alteration has knock on effects across the region but we are studying the proposals closely to see if there is a way to minimise the splitting of Westminster in this way. If you'd like to know more, or have your say, it's all online at [www.bcereviews.org.uk](http://www.bcereviews.org.uk)

In the meantime the work continues and I welcome comments, questions and casework as always.

Hoping to see many of you in person before too long.

## Karen Buck MP (Lab)

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## Nickie Aiken MP (Con)

Cities of London & Westminster

**T**he hugely successful vaccine rollout has been our way out of this pandemic. Whilst it was an incredible disappointment to me that the final unlocking on 21 June paused for a short number of weeks, I am now able to see the light at the end of the tunnel for the first time since the pandemic began.

In the middle of June, another milestone was hit, with every adult eligible for their vaccine, a tremendous achievement. The vaccines have shown to be hugely effective at combating Coronavirus, and I urge you to get yours if you haven't already. I am proud to be double jabbed! Summer is here and with restrictions now lifted, I will be taking advantage of all the wonderful things the Two Cities has to offer.

### UPDATE ON PEDICABS

Since the previous edition of **SEBRA NEWS W2**, I have been working hard to bring back to Parliament my Bill that would regulate Pedicabs. Many readers will know from my previous column, the Bill I put forward would require Transport for London (TfL) to issue licences to Pedicabs drivers, requiring them to meet a specific safety standard, whilst TfL also gain the power to regulate the prices they charge.

At the beginning of June, I met with the Leader of the House of Commons, Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, to discuss the Bill's legislative journey and what route would be most successful in allowing the Bill to finally become law. I am very aware that as lockdown restrictions have eased over recent months, pedicabs are coming back with a vengeance to the SEBRA area and beyond. The noise and disruption are just as bad, if not worse, than before! I am continuing to discuss the issue with my colleagues; lockdown has shone a light on the desperate need for regulation.

Monday, 21 June saw the next step in my aim to ensure that Pedicabs gain regulation for the safety of those who use them as I, again, introduced legislation to the House of Commons. If my second attempt fails there are other avenues that I am pursuing, more details of which I will share with **SEBRA NEWS W2** readers at a later date – I may need your support on my next steps if my second attempt fails!

### PROGRESS WITH THE SHORT-TERM LETTINGS SECTOR

One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to secure a registration or licensing regime for short-term letting. I know how nightly lettings booked on the likes of Airbnb, Booking.com, and other platforms can have a detrimental effect on local neighbourhoods. A small minority of those renting on these sites cause noise, anti-social behaviour, and generate rubbish.

Since arriving in Parliament, I have held several meetings with Airbnb to really push them to support my calls for a registration scheme. If implemented, the scheme would require those renting their property to notify their local authority, empowering authorities to inform platforms about issues with listings in their area. Landlords would pay a small fee and have to show as part of their registration all the health and safety certification, insurance and permission from their mortgage provider and freeholder if necessary. The scheme would cross all short-term letting platforms, not just Airbnb.



Airbnb – "not shying away" from the challenge of short-term lets.

To be fair, Airbnb is not shying away from the challenge. Instead, they are working with me to lead its industry to end short-term letting abuse. As one of the most prominent players in the industry, their support will hopefully galvanise the competition to come on board and back the scheme. Airbnb has responded to my call for action with a proposal to create a registration scheme for short-term lets. I am delighted that Airbnb took my views on board when developing their proposals.

I was pleased that on 11 June, the Government announced it would be launching a consultation on the introduction of a Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme, which, once established, I encourage all **SEBRA NEWS W2** readers to contribute to. More details will be on my website and across my Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram pages once launched.

Looking ahead, I will continue to make a case for the registration scheme and push Ministers across Government to accept Airbnb's recommendations. Legislative change will be required, but I am positive change will be achieved, and we can reduce the disruption to local people.

### ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL PROPOSALS



St. Mary's Hospital - The Government has committed to a major rebuild.

I think we would all agree that St Mary's Hospital in Paddington is in need of redevelopment. I understand from speaking to the Imperial Hospital Trust that NHS chiefs believe they are just 7 - 10 years away from having to close services due to the possibility of a catastrophic failure on the site. The cost of fixing all of St. Mary's high-risk maintenance represents a third of all high-risk maintenance jobs across the NHS in England at £224 million. There is no more room to add any additional capacity, with bed occupancy at peak times now often running over 100%.

The Government has committed to the rebuilding of St Mary's Hospital as part of the broader £3.7 billion hospital building programme, which will see 40 new and rebuilt hospitals across the country. As we are all aware, the present plans are to build an entirely new St. Mary's Hospital, with a new building built on the eastern part of the current site making up the first phase of the redevelopment.

The hospital Trust is proposing to move the existing Western Eye Hospital from Marylebone Road, onto the main St. Mary's site, as part of a development which would see a new Accident & Emergency (A&E). The Hospital will remain fully open throughout the rebuild. I appreciate the major disruption such a redevelopment could have on the local area, and I have made my views known to the hospital's senior management team that I would not welcome another tall building in the area. I will keep a close eye on the plans and will work with SEBRA and local Councillors to ensure local people's voices are heard and can influence the plans. We do need the major acute and specialist services that the new St. Mary's would offer but we also need to balance resident amenity.

### NEWBORN BABY SCREENING

Over the last 18 months, I have been raising awareness around the UK's newborn screening programme along with ArchAngel MLD Trust, a local Westminster-based charity. Currently, the UK only tests newborn children for nine rare diseases under the heel-prick test, one of the lowest testing rates in Europe and a minuscule figure compared to Iceland and Italy. They test their babies for 47 and 43 rare diseases, respectively.

We urgently need to expand our newborn screening programme in the UK so that babies are tested and treated early for rare and severe diseases. That's why, in June, I raised the issue again in a question to the Health Secretary in the Commons. I'm delighted that he agreed that more could and should be done.



Expansion of newborn baby screening programme is urgently needed.

I am pleased to say that I have now met with Lord Bethell, Minister at the Department of Health and Social Care, and will hopefully meet with Jo Churchill MP, Minister for Public Health, Primary Care & Prevention, to keep the issue at the front of the Government's policy agenda as we recover from the pandemic. I hope I can ultimately persuade Ministers that a full overhaul of the newborn screening programme is required.

### REPEALING THE 1824 VAGRANCY ACT

As many of you will be aware, improving the life of rough sleepers and helping them change their lives around is one of my personal and political ambitions. Since entering Parliament, I have continued to campaign to secure more services, resources, and powers to end rough sleeping. I'm proud that the Government has made ending rough sleeping for good by 2024 a priority. I firmly believe that if the Government is to meet this laudable ambition, then repealing the Vagrancy Act (1824), and replacing it with a new approach to address why people end up on the street in the 21st Century, is critical.

The problem with the Act is that rather than seeking to help those on the street, it criminalises them. I have been hugely supportive of the Government's 'Everyone In' strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw an incredible 90% of rough sleepers provided with accommodation. I applaud Westminster City Council's ongoing outstanding work to help more rough sleepers off the streets.



The Vagrancy Act means rough sleepers are being criminalised, not helped.

To raise the profile of my campaign, I have led several parliamentary debates on rough sleeping and calling for the repeal and replacement of the Vagrancy Act. The latter debate saw the Government commit to working "at pace" to conclude their review of the Act. I am now working with Crisis, St. Mungo's, The Passage and legal experts, to work with the Government on the best possible replacement.

### Nickie Aiken MP (Con)

Email: [Nickie.Aiken.MP@parliament.uk](mailto:Nickie.Aiken.MP@parliament.uk)  
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 Facebook: [fb.com/twocitiesnickie](http://fb.com/twocitiesnickie)

We must focus on mental health and addiction services and offer rough sleepers specialist health, mental health, and social support alongside the safety of a bed.

### LOOKING AHEAD - PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Throughout the Summer, I'm looking for the Two Cities' best photographer. That's why I've launched my Summer Two Cities Photography Competition in Memory of Neil Jolley. Neil was a well-known Westminster resident and photographer who sadly died earlier this year. The competition is open to all ages from 4 years and above.

I am delighted that I have been able to secure a brilliant team of judges: renowned journalist Dominic Lawson, committed youth worker and CEO of Caxton Youth Organisation; Rachel Akehurst, distinguished photographer Gemma Levine. And myself! I hope that we can invite the winners and runners up to a special awards ceremony in Central London in the Autumn (restrictions allowing). Visit [nickie.news/summersnaps](http://nickie.news/summersnaps) to find out how to enter, and learn more.

### 10 FOR 10 CHALLENGE

Over the last few months, I have been raising money for Caxton Youth Organisation as part of the 10 for 10 Challenge. Caxton is Westminster's only Youth Club exclusively for young people with learning difficulties and autism. It is a lifeline for many young people and their families. The Challenge sees me take ten 10,000 step walks, and I have been out and about across the whole of the Cities of London & Westminster, supported by many friends and colleagues. By the time you read this, I will have completed my tenth fundraising walk, but you can still donate and support my campaign by visiting: [www.nickie.news/Caxton](http://www.nickie.news/Caxton)

As always, if you have any issue or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details below. The office has been incredibly busy as a result of COVID-19, but we will continue to respond to correspondence as quickly as possible.

# HOW A MARXIST REVOLUTIONARY REINVENTED NOTTING HILL



JACK GORDON

JACK IS CHAIR OF THE  
WESTBOURNE WARD SAFER  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PANEL AND A  
SEBRA COMMITTEE MEMBER



## Race Riots (1958)

...one of the worst racial clashes in post-war British history.

When the former Tory Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan was asked what was most likely to knock governments off course he was said to reply: "Events, dear boy, events."

And, although never reliably authenticated, those few words have gone down in quotable folklore and remain part of the political vernacular: many believing it may have been a response to the Profumo affair.

When it comes to events, political, creative, artistic, shocking, Notting Hill has never been short on incidents that have, in themselves, shaped the district's identity and its personality.

Perhaps it was the serial killing activity of the necrophiliac John Reginald Halliday Christie who during the 40's and 50's killed at least eight people, including his wife, by strangling them in his flat at 10 Rillington Place, renamed Runton Close, and since demolished, that was instrumental in giving W11 a new-found notoriety.

**"North Kensington, in the 50's, had entered a proto-Black Lives Matter movement".**

That era of notoriety continued with the gangster-style exploits of the slum landlord Peter Rachman and his former henchman Michael de Freitas.

Yet there can be no greater notoriety than the infamous race riots that started on the night of Monday 1 September 1958. Notting Hill was left indelibly scarred as the event turned into one of the worst racial clashes in post-war British history.

Another event that certainly ravaged the area was the Westway, a 2.5-mile elevated dual carriageway that runs from Paddington to North Kensington and which brought havoc in its wake as the needs of the motor car were literally placed above local people. It was the first urban motorway project in London and brought ferocious criticism for distinct lack of care for the environment, the well-being of the residents and the wider community, and the

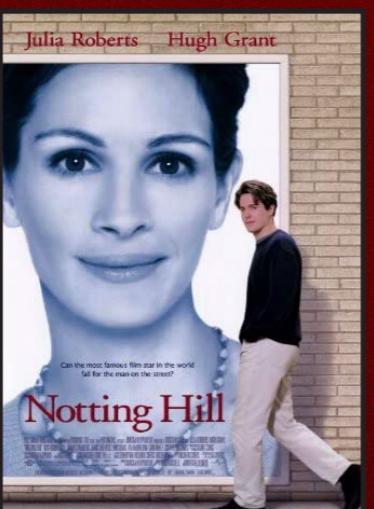
insensitive handling of those whose homes would be demolished.

And livid scars are still evident following the horrific fire that broke out in the 24 storey Grenfell Tower block causing 72 deaths in the worst UK residential fire since the Second World War.

Meanwhile, the fire is currently being investigated by the police, a public enquiry, and a coroners' inquest with issues surrounding the tower's now infamous cladding, fire safety and building regulations being central to reviews.

Notting Hill's recent history was not all picaresque; it certainly had its more picturesque moments which enhanced the unique character of a fabled area.

Such a moment was the eponymously named and critically acclaimed film *'Notting Hill'*. A romcom starring Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant became the highest-grossing British film of all time.



**Notting Hill (1999)**  
...a rocket under house prices.

The film, and the two leading actors, won an array of nominations, including for the Golden Globe Award and two BAFTAS, at the same time winning a British Comedy Award, and a Brit award for the soundtrack.

Yet, apart from those accolades, arguably, by far and for many, the biggest impact the film made was to put a rocket under house prices all around!

With all those events, the good the bad and the ugly, the most remarkable happening in the annals of Notting Hill must be the Notting Hill Carnival. And for that monumental festival we need to offer thanks to a card-carrying member of the Communist Party, Trinidadian Claudia Jones, who, almost single-handedly, recast Notting Hill.

The Carnival, which for many is an outstanding testament to multiculturalism, and stands as the second largest street party in the world, was developed as a beacon for the Caribbean community and to unify a neighbourhood wrenched apart by racism and xenophobia.

Claudia Jones was born in Trinidad and Tobago in 1915. As a child Claudia migrated with her family to the US where she dedicated her life to the struggle against inequality, and intolerance, as a Communist, political activist, feminist, black nationalist, and pioneering journalist.

Partly, because of McCarthy's rabid anti-communist purges, in the late 40's early 50's, characterised by heightened political repression and persecution, Claudia was convicted for what was described as 'un-American activities', and jailed, serving prison time at Ellis Island amongst other penitentiaries.

Eventually, in 1955, Claudia was deported, and subsequently settled in Britain. Coincidentally, that was at the height of post-war immigration, including the arrival of the Windrush generation, (celebrated as a special day at the time of writing), of which she was something of an atypical member.

Once in Britain, and still attuned, she could not help but notice the knot of anti-immigration tensions: *'No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs'* signs in windows of houses to rent were not uncommon.

It was not long before Claudia became a fearsome advocate for the growing, yet voiceless, Caribbean community in London.

To establish such a voice, for the West Indian Community Claudia, founded Britain's first Black newspaper in 1958, the *West Indian Gazette*.

It was in August of that year when the fierce and devastating riots broke out on the streets of Notting Hill, lasting for five nights over the Bank Holiday weekend.

This unrest was fanned and fomented by Oswald Mosley's White Defence League, along with so called Teddy Boys indiscriminately, attacked members of the Black community.

Yet, it was within this mayhem and madness that the seeds of the Notting Carnival were sown. It was, thus, a remarkable contradiction that the harm, suffering, and despair wrought by violence, was, in the end, to be the Carnival's *fons et origo*.

Unsurprisingly, the Carnival was, at first, dubbed *'Claudia's Caribbean Carnival'*, with the first event taking place at St Pancras Town Hall on 30 January, 1959, and subsequent annual events celebrated in town halls and community centres.

Colin Prescod, a Black history archivist and sociologist whose mother, the actress and singer



**Claudia Jones (1915 - 1964)**

"Almost single-handedly recast Notting Hill".

Pearl Prescod was a close friend of Jones's, felt that North Kensington, in the 50's, had entered a proto-Black Lives Matter movement.

This was, in essence, a route towards uplifting, and inspiring, the Afro-Caribbean community by throwing a spotlight on people's talent and artistry, and, above all, heightening their sense of heritage and cultural consciousness.

In Claudia's own words: *'A people's art is the genesis of their freedom.'*

Since then the Notting Hill Carnival, that carries Claudia's imprimatur, has grown into a global spectacle that draws two and a half million visitors to a vibrant and pulsating party that celebrates the warm embrace of multiculturalism.



**The Notting Hill Carnival**

First dubbed *'Claudia's Caribbean Carnival'*.

Again, in Claudia Jones's own words, inscribed in a souvenir brochure: *'Our Carnival symbolises the unity of our people here and of all our many friends who love the West Indies.'*

Claudia Jones died in 1964 at the age of 49 after succumbing to the ravages of tuberculosis.

And although the Carnival is cancelled, again this year, her transcendent spirit lives on, as the sacred flame, that sustains the noble force for enlightened change, is passed down from generation to generation.

Claudia Jones's revered standing as a cultural and political touchstone in the struggle for equality, the battle against the bacillus of racism, and in support of fundamental rights and freedoms, remains undimmed and undiminished.

**Claudia Jones, Mother of the Caribbean Carnival,**  
has her commemorative plaque corner of  
Tavistock Square and Portobello Road.

# WCC News

## WARD BUDGETS - SUMMER 2021 UPDATE

Ward budgets are a flexible resource that Westminster Councillors can use to address local issues and priorities. Funds are granted at the discretion of Councillors for projects within their Wards that benefit local residents and are managed by an organisation, community group or charity. An initial budget of £46,000 per year is allocated to each Ward which rolls over each year across a four-year electoral cycle.

In this Summer 2021 update, we enter into the final year of the four-year electoral cycle as Councillors continue to allocate funds to projects which benefit local residents.

In March, the Hyde Park Councillors approved capital funding for St John's Church, Hyde Park, to help them carry out essential electrical works. The church plays a key role in the community and has relationships with local organisations in the holding of community events, such as after-school groups. Ensuring the safety of the building is therefore paramount in facilitating its continued use as a community space.



St John's Church - Funding approved.

Also supported by the Hyde Park Councillors was the construction of a bespoke commemorative bench thanking the NHS, key workers and volunteers for their dedication and sacrifices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bench, which is to be situated at St Mary's Hospital directly to the left of the Cambridge Wing entrance, will act as a lasting reminder of



Key workers commemorative bench.

their amazing work during this extremely difficult year and will hopefully raise a smile to those who come across it. The bench can also be seen elsewhere in Westminster, including outside Lord's!

Elsewhere, the Lancaster Gate Councillors contributed to the rejuvenation of the planter on Queensborough Terrace.



Planter should "raise a smile".

It is hoped that the replanting and maintenance this planter will attract a variety of birds and bring bright colour to the area to raise a smile for local residents. Further, Lancaster Gate and Hyde Park Councillors together will be supporting the Windrush Day Plaque Dedication on 22 June at Paddington Station, through the funding of a live steel band and photography for the occasion. This event will act as an opportunity to support the Windrush Generation and show sympathy for the hardships they have endured.

In June, Lancaster Gate and Bayswater Councillors agreed to support Westbourne Park Family Centre with their 'Club Xpress' project. The Centre aims to support and strengthen families in North Westminster by providing an integrated provision for children from 0-18 to play, learn, build friendships and receive support. Funding will support the delivery of a variety of exciting sessions

and workshops for children to thrive after lockdown. Bayswater Councillors also supported the 'Acorns' project, which will facilitate playgroups for children aged 0-4.

The Bayswater Councillors recently agreed to support the Metropolitan Police Service in setting up multiple bike marking schemes across the year. Due to the increase in bike thefts in Westminster, specifically the W2 area, it has been recognised that bike register marking kits are required and these will be supplied to 500 Bayswater residents. The kits not only reduce the thefts once installed, but also allow for a more thorough investigation which will ultimately lead to the owner of the bike being traced.

Further activity in Bayswater included recent agreement to support 'Pregnant in West London' deliver free ante- and post-natal classes and support to local families. The project aims to empower expectant and new parents to self-manage their pregnancy through education and by accessing support networks. Other Bayswater supported projects include 'Group Singing for Good' run by South Westminster Community Choir for the delivery of 45 choir sessions to spread the joy of singing for local residents. Funding will also go to Z2K, an anti-poverty charity, to deliver holistic advice and advocacy for clients in need of support with complex housing and benefit issues. The aim is to ensure those in urgent need can access advice and support, to maximise income and prevent homelessness.

**Are you an organisation who can benefit residents in your Ward area? If so, you may be eligible for Ward budget funding.**

To apply for Ward budget funding or simply find out more information, please head to the Ward budget page on Westminster City Council's website at [bit.ly/budget-summer-2021](https://bit.ly/budget-summer-2021).

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](mailto:wardbudgets@westminster.gov.uk), or by contacting your local Councillor directly.

## NEWS FROM YOUR BAYSWATER WARD LABOUR COUNCILLOR



Maggie Carman

### PRINCE'S SQUARE GARDENS

One of the great assets of Bayswater are the beautiful garden squares. Some of them, like the magnificent Porchester Square Gardens are open to the public and maintained by Westminster Council.

The majority though are privately managed by the people who live on them and are run by and for the residents on a non-profit basis, relying on annual subscriptions, volunteers and donations. Imagine the shock and surprise felt by residents of Prince's Square when they received an email saying that all membership would cease within a month and that the Gardens were to be put up for sale. The gardens were duly advertised by Savills as "*a once in a generation opportunity to become the owner of a one-acre garden in central London.*" A speculative phone call to Savills revealed that the owners were asking for offers, "*upwards of £5m*" and that it was thought likely to appeal to a buyer as, "*a trophy project*".

Stunned residents quickly started to organise among themselves and soon articles started appearing in the press including: the Times, Daily Mail, Westminster Extra, Financial Times and an illustrated article in Garden Square News with the headline, "*Prince's Square owners seek £5 million for land they got for free.*" Meanwhile, the newly formed Friends of Prince's Square Gardens were investigating whether the Gardens could be sold outright without retaining residents' rights of access. They found that several properties in the Square had access to the Gardens in their deeds of sale.



Prince's Square Gardens - Residents were stunned at proposed sale.

They also sought expert legal advice which questioned the rights of the owners to sell in this way, arguing that the Gardens had always been run as a not for profit organisation in the manner of a Trust.

This challenge prompted a significant change and the details of sale were amended to read, "*Please specify how you intend to use, manage and preserve the Gardens and how you would propose to allow local residents access to the Gardens.*" The Friends of Prince's Square Gardens put in a reasonable bid, based on prices paid for similar Gardens in Kensington. This bid was rejected. They also put in an application to the Council to make the Gardens an Asset of Community Value. This ACV application also included the option of opening access to the wider public.

So where are we now? At the time of writing, bidding has closed and an undisclosed number of bids received.

One of the bidders we know is Whiteleys or should I say the Whiteley Development? I spoke with their representative who said they had "*No intention of changing any access rights that exist.*"

Another mystery bidder has let it be known that it would be bought by a charity, a Trust would be set up and the status would be maintained.

Meanwhile the Asset of Community Value application would take eight weeks to process but if approved any sale could be delayed for six months. So watch this space and huge thanks to the Friends of Prince's Square Gardens for their tireless commitment to saving this peaceful oasis for local residents.

### OTHER LOCAL NEWS

#### Westbourne Grove Zebra Crossing

Westminster Council have approved a new zebra crossing to be installed across Westbourne Grove, near Garway Road. This will be especially useful for College Park School.

#### Barclays Bank

Barclays Bank at 93-97 has announced it is to close on Tuesday 23 September, much to the dismay of local residents. This means there will no longer be any national bank branches or building societies on Queensway or along Westbourne Grove.

#### Bus Stop Move

The Council's Highways Team has agreed to move bus stop J by No 27/29, where the 36 bus stops, 50 yards up the road. People, including myself, were fed up of waiting patiently at the bus stop only for the bus to sail past and stop further up the road leaving us to rush to get on, often carrying heavy shopping.

#### CCTV - Westbourne Park Passage

CIL funding (Community Infrastructure Levy) of £40,000 has been approved for the installation of CCTV around the area of St Stephen's Church, including Westbourne Park Passage.

#### Surgeries to Resume

I plan to restart my fortnightly surgery at Paddington Library, Porchester Road on Saturday 17 July 2pm - 3.30pm.

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020 7641 4299  
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Website:  
[www.westminsterlabour.org.uk](http://www.westminsterlabour.org.uk)

# Property Market

## LONDON RESIDENTIAL UPDATE

Nicholas Barnes - Head of Research at Chestertons

### SALES MARKET

The prime London residential property market has remained extremely busy so far in 2021 with buyers still very motivated to move despite the obstacles presented by the coronavirus and the national lockdown. Chestertons recorded a 57% increase in the number of agreed sales in the first five months of the year compared to the same period in 2020 and a 43% increase compared to 2019 – the last full pre-Covid year. There are four principle factors which have driven buyer demand:

1. The re-assessment of future housing requirements in light of the experience of lockdown, which has manifested itself principally in the increased demand for properties with gardens and more internal space to facilitate working from home.
2. The Stamp Duty holiday which has triggered an explosion of activity from buyers, even if for the multi-million pound properties a saving of £15,000 is unlikely to have been anything more than a small carrot rather than a deal maker.
3. The fact that property values, especially in prime central London, have reached their lowest level for several years and are showing signs of rising again for houses, which are in increasingly short supply.
4. Finally, low interest rates have encouraged buyers to use debt to fund purchases, including taking advantage of the Government's new Mortgage Guarantee Scheme which effectively enables 95% mortgages.

Having been very much a buyers' market last year, we are seeing signs that this is changing as the year progresses. Supply is reducing, especially as noted above for houses, and prices are stabilising in Central London and returning to growth outside Travel Zone 1. In the prime locations where Chestertons has offices, we noted a 19% reduction in the number of sellers reducing their asking price in May compared to April. We have also seen the return of multiple offers on properties in recent months, with above-asking prices having been achieved on occasion.

CHESTERTONS

Conveyancing delay remains an issue and in response we have seen a number of owners selling their home and moving into temporary rented accommodation in order to be able to position themselves as chain-free buyers and hopefully make themselves more attractive to sellers when they see a property they like.

The prospects for the remainder of the year look favourable. We are close to finally emerging from national lockdown and the Bank of England has already stated that the economy is likely to recover more quickly than previously anticipated, notwithstanding that a third coronavirus wave would likely dampen growth again. Assuming international travel restrictions are eased, we anticipate the large-scale return of foreign buyers, including a likely flood of Hong Kong residents eager to take up the Government's offer of a route to UK citizenship. The impact will be most apparent in Central London locations such Hyde Park, Bayswater, Mayfair, Kensington and Knightsbridge where foreign buyers have at times accounted for well over 50% of demand. The Brexit impact remains unclear but has so far had no significant impact on the residential market. Meanwhile, there is still unsatisfied buyer demand and I expect the market to remain active until well into the autumn, although the phasing out of Stamp Duty tax saving is likely to dampen demand at the mid-lower price levels.

### LETTINGS MARKET

The prime London lettings market has also so far enjoyed a very active 2021. New tenant registrations with Chestertons between January and May were 77% higher than in the same period last year and 42% up on the 2019 equivalent figure. The number of agreed tenancies was 71% higher than last year and 63% above the 2019 figure. Tenant demand has been driven by a combination of low rents – which had fallen by an average of around 20% in the prime locations last year – and the Covid-related demand for more internal space for homeworking and an outside area of some description, be it a garden, patio or courtyard.

Chestertons Hyde Park

020 7298 5900  
[www.chestertons.com](http://www.chestertons.com)

## LOCAL PROPERTY MARKET UPDATE

*When you move, so do we.*

**H**ow is the market doing? I mean how is it really doing? It's a common question we are often asked by clients eager to get behind the headlines. And as we enter the traditionally busy Summer period, we are pleased to report a positive picture of what's happening in the world of property, especially when it comes to the local Hyde Park & Bayswater market.

As you walk down the pretty streets of W2 the attraction is clear to see: a largely tranquil area offering beautiful architecture and hidden mews houses, not to mention the anticipation that accompanies new developments such as Park Modern and Whiteleys. Add in the deceptively central location and proximity to the wide, open green spaces of Hyde Park – this all puts the Hyde Park and Bayswater property market in very good stead. Unsurprisingly, demand in both the local sales and lettings market has been strongly upheld by the domestic market, driven by needs-based movers and weaker demand from international buyers due to the pandemic.

The periods of lockdown have helped bring property decisions forward for some. It's a great environment for buyers in Central London, as interest rates remain very low and there's the comfort that the market is moving up, having reached a low ebb during the past five years. But as we know, buyers are not the challenge.

However, as we look towards the summer, this trend may be starting to shift, or at least we know our international buyers are looking with

international buyers in the market are serious and not simply window shopping."

Stronger demand is also helping to reverse the rental value declines that have taken place in prime London property markets over the course of the pandemic. Underlining the extent of the increase, the number of new prospective tenants in the three months to May was 76% higher than the first three months of 2020. In addition to domestic tenants returning to work, demand from international students is building once again.

And if you are thinking of selling or letting your home, you can rely on us for the frankest possible advice when it comes to pricing, timing and achieving the best outcome.

Simply call us on 020 3544 0657 or email us at [hydepark@knightfrank.com](mailto:hydepark@knightfrank.com) We'd love to help you.

**Knight Frank**



### Recently let

Cleveland Square.  
 Guide price £1,100 per week.  
 Cleveland Square is in high demand and we currently have a number of properties under offer with more buyers and tenants looking to make their next move.



Recently sold  
 Cleveland Gardens. Guide price £975,000  
 Achieved over the asking price after best and final bids.