

Garden Square News

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SERVING CENTRAL LONDON'S COMMUNAL GARDENS VOL 28 ISSUE 1, SPRING 2023

Garden is no longer for sale

In an unexpected turn of events, the couple who put Prince's Square Garden, W2, up for sale now say it is no longer on the market.

In a written reply to a question by *Garden Square News* (GSN), Wayne Moretto and his husband, Kenneth Cassillo said, "The Garden is not listed or being marketed for sale."

When the issue of selling the one-acre Square was first raised in 2021, the sellers were reportedly expecting to achieve a £5 million gain by the sale.

When asked why they took the Square off the market, they did not re-
(continued on page 14)



Photo by James Millar

Shakespeare rules in the gardens again. Page 6.



K&C and Westminster are embracing "active travel", so soon there will be parking spaces created for electric bicycles, augmenting the already existing electric scooter parking bays like the one pictured here. See pages 4 and 5 for details.

Duke backs undies burying test

"Plant your pants" advises Hugh Grosvenor, Duke of Westminster. It's a way of checking the health of the soil in your garden.

An experiment, sponsored by the Country Trust charity, calls for volunteers to put a piece of 100 percent cotton, such as cotton underwear, into a hole in the soil, cover it up, and leave it for three months to see how degraded it is when dug up. The more degraded, the healthier the soil is because the decay indicates the presence of organisms, including fungi, bacteria, algae, protozoa, arthropods, nem-

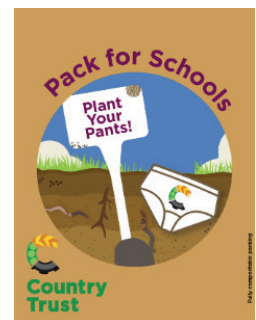
atodes, and worms, that can break down the fabric. They thrive when the soil has sufficient minerals, water, oxygen and organic matter.

The Duke, President of

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The Duke of Westminster



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Residents can share the wealth filming creates

Disruption can be profitable

The nuisance that TV and movie makers cause when they film in local neighbourhoods has led to a cash bounty for the residents of places like Notting Hill that are popular locations for filming.

The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea charges entertainment companies for using the Borough's streets and parking bays (prices vary depending on how big the operation is), but the Borough also encourages the companies to directly compensate those living nearby for the inconvenience caused, for instance by

making a donation to local residents' associations.

In the Notting Hill/Ladbroke Estate area, one of the recipients of these donations has been a long-standing conservation and amenity group called the Ladbroke Association. The donations can be around £300 per day of filming, with the amount varying according to how much parking space the production crews block off.

Association Chairman Sophia Lambert said that



since it was difficult to identify all those directly inconvenienced by filming, using the money for the general benefit of the area was considered the fairest way to share the funds.

Now the Association is asking residents to suggest how the revenue, which has accumulated to several thousand pounds, can be spent on community im-



provement projects.

Contact the Ladbroke Association at chair@ladbrokeassociation.org to contribute ideas.

Short lets restrictions discussed

Airbnb-type short lets may come under stricter control, depending on the outcome of government consultations now underway.

The government is asking the public two questions about Airbnb and other short let enterprises. The first is whether planning permission should be required before a property can be rented out for a short let. Second, whether operators of such short let properties should be obliged to register them.

In an April 12 an-

nouncement, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, said that while tourism brings many benefits, too many communities have found that local people are pushed out of their towns by "huge numbers" of short term lets.

"I'm determined that we ensure that more people have access to local homes at affordable prices, and that we prioritise families desperate to rent or buy a home of their own close to

where they work" he said.

"I'm pleased to launch this consultation to introduce a requirement for planning permissions for short term lets."

Meanwhile, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport started a consultation on a proposed new registration scheme that would allow the government to find out how many short let properties there are and where they are located. Having a clear picture would "help to understand the impact of short term

lets on communities," said Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer.

Subject to the outcome of the consultations, the changes would be introduced later in the year and would apply to England only.

Cllr. Adam Hug, leader of Westminster City Council, said on March 23, "In Westminster, short term lets have been widely abused – when you have one residential block renting out more rooms than

(continued on page 8)

Westminster's plans for "active travel"

The City of Westminster's leaders want a big shift to sustainable transport and what they call "active travel". To show how serious they are they have budgeted £35 million to make the changes.

Cllr. Paul Dimoldenberg, Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality at the Westminster Council, said: "This considerable budget allocation towards active travel and sustainable transport shows how committed we are to making the city a safer and more pleasant place to walk and cycle, and to tackle key pinch points for London's vital bus network. Improvements to walking safety, cycling connections and public transport priority schemes are vital if we are to improve air quality."

Among the new measures, agreed at the City's March Council meeting, are:

- laying out a city-wide network of parking bays for rental dockless e-bikes and rental e-scooters to keep the vehicles off pavements
- creating 400 new cycle stand places per year, especially where visitor parking demand is high
- making 1000 new secure residential cycle spaces between now and March 2024
- implementing 15 kilometres of new or upgraded cycle lanes to put almost all residents very close to a high-quality cycle route
- expanding the Transport for London Cycle Hire network in North Paddington
- adding five new "School Streets" a year (where cars are restricted during drop-off and pick-up time). There are already 11 such streets.
- redesigning dangerous junctions
- permitting two-way cycling on 20 more one-way streets to improve cycling connections
- making bus priority and performance improvements at a number of key pinch points

Westminster has also launched an e-cargo bike sharing service with a firm called Beryl. The bikes (pictured right) will be available for hire at four locations across the City.

As for the impact on the City's communal gardens, a spokesman for Westminster said "the specific locations for the parking spaces and cycle stand locations haven't been confirmed yet. It's something we are planning over the next year."

She added that the new School Street locations have also yet to be confirmed.

Dozens of garden squares in Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster will be impacted by new cycle lanes and cycle parking areas under plans by the two borough councils to reduce pollution.

This means some road and parking space will be eliminated in favour of space for bikes, e-bikes, and scooters.

Many residents will be surprised by these developments since council public meetings are poorly attended and information on council websites can be hard to find and often is not detailed.



A Beryl e-cargo bike

K&C wants more e-bikes used

The nuisance of battery-powered “e-bikes” abandoned on pavements or creating a hazard is being addressed by the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBK&C).

Taking the view that e-bikes are good thing,

RBK&C councillors have proposed marking out 164 dockless parking areas for the vehicles across the Borough. The parking spots will be similar to the 33 bays already created for e-scooters, and many, if approved, will be adja-

cent to communal gardens. Council officials held a six-week consultation on the proposals from early April to May 17th.

Speaking at a South Kensington area resident’s association meeting in April, RBK&C’s lead member for planning, place and environment Cllr. Cem Kemahli said he believes the Borough is “at the forefront” in London in arranging these bays. He later told *Garden Square News* that RBK&C has “entered into a memorandum of understanding” with suppliers of four brands of e-bikes: Tier, Lime, Human Forest and Dott. He said “I can’t comment on the financial income [to the Borough] as it is commercially sensitive between operators. We approached them, but they have been very willing to work with us.”

The companies have undertaken to fine users of their bikes who leave them on the pavement.

In a news release about the parking plans he wrote: “E-bikes are a convenient way for nipping to the shops or visiting friends nearby. It can, however, be really frustrating when abandoned rental e-bikes obstruct pavements. It causes problems for the disabled, pedestrians, wheelchair users and parents with children in buggies.

“That’s why we’ve



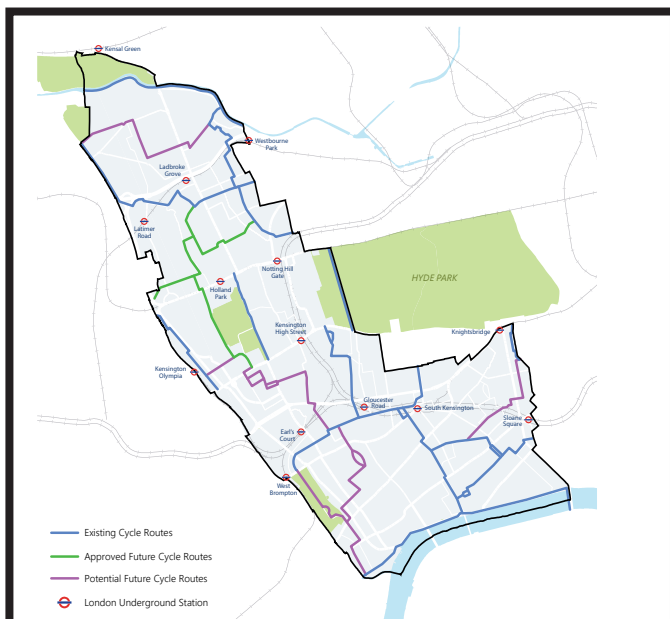
Bad bike parking like this at Onslow Square, SW7, will be targeted.

called upon the operators to work with us and now we’re proposing to introduce these 164 new bays for e-bikes to legally park in; keeping our pavements clear and helping make Kensington and Chelsea greener, safer and fairer for everyone.”

At least 34 of the proposed parking areas are adjacent to communal gardens. Below is a list, compiled by *Garden Square News*, of those among the 164 which appear to be in that category, although the list’s accuracy and completeness cannot be guaranteed:

Airlie Gardens, Ashburn Place, Barkston Gardens, Bina Gardens, Bramham Gardens, Cadogan Gardens, Cadogan Square, Chelsea Square, Collingham Gardens, Cornwall Gardens, Courtfield Gardens East and Courtfield Gardens West, Cranley Gardens, Earl’s Court Square, Egerton Gardens, Elgin Crescent, Evelyn Gardens, Gledhow Gardens, Kensington Park Gardens, Lansdowne

(continued on page 9)



Cycling routes through K&C

For the future, RBK&C is planning a Borough-wide network of cycle routes to allow more people to cycle. A map of the existing, approved and potential future cycle routes (see above) is contained within the Borough’s planning documents.

The communal garden squares which are included in the approved future routes are: Norland Square, Clarendon Rd, St John’s Gardens, Kensington Park Gardens, and Blenheim Crescent. The routes won’t be segregated cycle lanes, and they have not yet had feasibility studies completed on them.

As for the potential future cycle routes (coloured purple), the RBK&C press office said it would be premature to give out the street names, but from the map it would appear that Edwardes Square, Pembroke Square and The Boltons would be on the potential routes.

Secure hangars for private bikes prove popular in K&C and Westminster

Storage space for privately-owned bicycles has proved popular in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the City of Westminster.

There are now dozens of “Bikehangars” in the Royal Borough, and many of them are full, according to a Council spokesman.

The hangars are designed to provide weather and theft protection for up to six bicycles at a time. They are provided by the Royal Borough and administered by a company called Cyclehoop Rentals.

Spaces in the on-street hangars cost £72 a year to rent, plus a one-off refundable key deposit of £25.

Westminster City Council’s on-street residential cycle parking hangars are also popular. Every cycle hangar is full and has a waiting list.

According to the City’s website, the City’s cycle parking team now directly manages most of the cycle storage units located on the highway.

“We are accelerating the roll-out of new secure storage units, with 540 new secure spaces planned between August 2022 and April 2023. We will consult locally on these locations prior to installing any new units.”

Bicycle hangars, like this one (pictured right) in Cornwall Gardens, SW7, provide protection from bicycle thieves and damaging weather.

At Earl’s Court Square, SW5, some residents were initially sceptical about the hangars, but now the one at the Square is full and residents are wondering if another one might be desirable, and if the use of the spaces in the hangar could be restricted to Square residents.



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Houses tell her their story



Intriguing histories of communal garden properties turn up when Angela Lownie delves into them.

By Angela Lownie

I'm a house historian and in the course of my work I have uncovered the fascinating histories of many communal garden properties, ranging from large houses in some of the grander squares to more compact ones elsewhere.

Some of the most colourful stories can be found in newspaper archives.

An evocative picture is painted in a report in the *Morning Post* of the Countess of Galloway's ball at her new residence in Bryanston Square in Marylebone on a hot August night in 1822. "It is a very beautiful mansion, replete with every elegant accommodation. The three rooms on the drawing-room floor were brilliantly illuminated, and communicating with each other by folding doors. The floors were chalked [chalk provided grip for slippery soles] with the usual allegorical devices by a masterly hand." The aristocratic guests danced until five in the morning,

taking a breather to consume "all kinds of French wines, fruits, ices and confectionery".

My client, who lives in a maisonette in the now subdivided property, told me she loved finding out what had gone on in the house in its grand past.

A Trevor Square house in Knightsbridge was brought to life by an inventory attached to an 1840 will, providing minute information about the furniture, pictures, fabrics, silverware and kitchen utensils, and the different grades of beds. An earlier resident in the 1820s was an army colonel, who crammed into the small house with his much younger mistress, formerly the housekeeper, and their seven children. His 'amiable wife', as she was invariably called in the press, was tucked away in Ireland where she ran the estates. Soon after her death, the colonel married his mistress, but by a cruel twist of fate he was killed on the way home when their carriage overturned.

Researching a history usually takes about two weeks, depending on the age of the property. It might involve visiting the National Archives, the London Metropolitan Archives and local archives, consulting estate and manorial records, rate books, drainage records, directories, electoral registers, plans, maps, photographs, Civil Defence records, title deeds, newspaper cuttings and other historic documents.

Rate books are invaluable for properties built before the first census was taken in 1841, often pinpointing a build date as well as owners and residents. Unusual changes in the rateable value of the house may indicate it has been rebuilt or enlarged. But early rate books sometimes did not include street names or house numbers – the latter only introduced in the 18th century – both of which could change over time. So great care is needed, if necessary working backwards from a known point to track any changes.

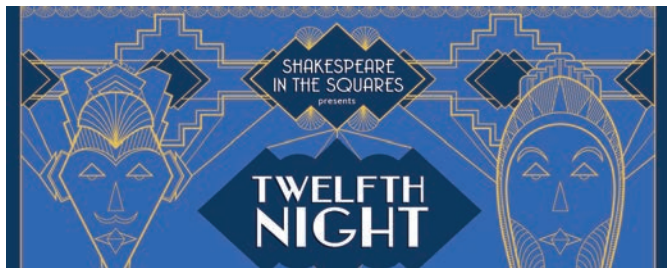
But thanks to the ever-expanding resources on the internet, much of the hard graft can be removed by the click of a mouse. Genealogy sites such as Ancestry, Findmypast and The Genealogist are added to constantly, providing a wealth of information.

One newspaper clipping I came across related to a house close to one I was researching in a Chelsea square. In May 1870 an elderly clergyman was

killed with a blow to the head with a heavy shovel by a plasterer he had hired for repairs, and his body was hidden in a drain in the house. The plasterer realized that the clergyman's housekeeper, who lived in a nearby Chelsea square, might realize he was the murderer, so he went to her house and strangled her and squashed her into a box. (Names of the squares withheld to save the residents any discomfort.) The plasterer, when caught, was wearing the clergyman's clothes, had a quantity of cash in his pocket and also the blood-stained deeds to the house. By this time he was wearing a fake beard, and, trying to speak with a French accent, he pretended to be the dead man's nephew.

Angela Lownie runs London House Histories, an individual research service for London properties. www.londonhousehistories.co.uk. – Ed.





More squares than ever step up to host Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* this summer

The Shakespeare in the Squares company has expanded its annual run of shows to 22 outdoor venues, the highest number yet, and plans to present 27 performances this summer. Belgrave Square, SW1, is one of the new communal gardens where the play can be seen.

Featured this year will be one of the most popular of William Shakespeare's plays, *Twelfth Night*, a romantic comedy romp of mistaken identity. The play is being given a 1920s setting.

The tour, directed by Sioned Jones, opens on June 13 at Arundel and Ladbrooke Gardens, W11, and runs until July 7.

The Shakespeare in the Squares company has, since 2016, brought Shakespearian plays to the communal garden squares and other outdoor spaces in London, offering audiences professional actors and innovative staging that is tailored to each individual venue.

Founders of Shakespeare in the Squares, Sue Fletcher and Martin Neild, said, "We are delighted to be embarking on our sixth

annual summer tour and we are proud that Shakespeare in the Squares has become a well-established and much-loved part of London's Summer theatre scene. We continue to spread our reach right across the capital and are excited to be performing in new venues."

Tickets have sold quickly in the past

The goal of the not-for-profit company is to "provide a showcase for talented young theatre practitioners and to introduce audiences to the stars of the future", according to the founders.

For details of the performance locations see the company's advertisement on page 17, or go to www.shakespeareinthesquares.co.uk. As *Garden Square News* went to press tickets were available for all venues, but have been known in the past to sell out quickly in some squares.

Pictured on page one: Sasha Wilson, a star in last year's production.

Short lets rules being reconsidered

(continued from page 3)

the Ritz every night, you know the system needs reform.

"Westminster City Council has had a long-running campaign to introduce a short term lets [regulating] system in London, and the comments from Michael Gove, coupled with legal moves in the House of Lords, mean we are in sight of getting the powers we need. This will be a huge relief to local people whose lives can be made a misery by non-stop partying, dumped rubbish and anti social behaviour.

"As home to more short term lets than any other part of the country, we are ready to set up and lead on a new registration system. I invite Michael Gove to work with us on that."

While many communal garden residents witness the damage that short term renters can cause to a neighbourhood and would be glad to see them gone, those who rent out the properties stand to lose significant amounts of money if their business is curbed.

Under current rules, short term letting does not require planning permission as long as the property is not let for more than 90 nights in a calendar year.

To find the consultations, use these internet search terms: "Consultation on a registration scheme for short-term lets in England" for the registration question, and "Introduction of a use class for short term lets and associated permitted development rights" for the planning permission question. June 7 is the response deadline.

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The gate isn't locked

More than 100 gardens across 13 London boroughs will unlock their gates on June 10 and 11 as part of the London Open Gardens weekend.

Most of the gardens are closed normally to the general public.

Spokesman Robin Clegg said gardens opening for the first time as part of the weekend include 25 Cannon Street's "innovative and stylish 5,400-sq-ft roof garden, a recently created jewel in the heart of London."

Another new entry is the "secret and rewilded" OmVed garden in Highgate, which has a wildflower meadow and vege-

table patches.

Again this year Number 10 Downing Street is on the list of open gardens, although there are special conditions for access.

Nathan Oley, Chair, London Open Gardens, said: "London Parks and Gardens are proud to offer an unrivalled selection of green spaces for the public to enjoy this year – and at affordable prices. They offer something for all ages – from nature lovers seeking peace and tranquillity, to budding bug finders and gardeners who want to be inspired. The generosity of everyone involved helps us to protect London's great legacy of green spaces and

we hope that the weekend inspires thousands to enjoy it in the future."

The weekend also provides guided walks and cycling tours.

For tickets and more information, including a list of all the participating gardens, see the website for

the sponsors, the charity London Parks & Gardens, at londongardenstrust.org.

The event has become so popular that some visitors from abroad time their UK visits to match the open weekend. It attracts up to 40,000 participants.



Lincoln's Inn, WC2, photographed by Miranda Kimberley, is one of the gardens that will be opening.

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K&C cycling promotion

(continued from page 5)
Walk, Lexham Gardens, Lowndes Square, Nevern Square, Norland Square, Onslow Gardens, Onslow Square, Ormonde Gate, Paultons Square, Pembridge Square, Philbeach Gardens, Rosmead Road, St. James's Gardens, and The Boltons.

(There are many other RBK&C garden squares where the proposed parking areas might go, but they are public squares, not communal.)

Already, according to RBK&C Cllr. Janet Evans, if a bike is inconsiderately or dangerously abandoned, a complaint containing the address or postcode of the bike can be sent to the operator as follows:

Dott: support@ridedott.com,

Lime: london-ops@li.me

Tier: support@tier.app

Human Forest: cs@humanforest.co.uk

The Borough's proposed Local Plan (see story page 12) includes goals to make cycling and walking easier in the Borough.

It says new developments have to provide cycle routes through them and furnish secure cycle parking facilities.

Furthermore, the Plan states, in the existing roadways "significant" improvements are needed to make residents believe that cycling is safe, including improved lighting, better road crossings, and the provision of seating and cycle parking.

Comedy shows

Cable installers get in a tangle



Having cleared 15 parking places to carry out the wiring of a Wetherby Gardens building, the 5-man crew gave up on the job.

Residents have a front row seat to see the problems



Wiring left behind at one aborted installation site

Anecdotal evidence indicates that high-speed cable installers G.Network (GSN Spring and Autumn 2020) may be having trouble with their wiring installations, given the problems that could be seen on just one street.

Earlier this year a team turned up at a Wetherby Gardens, SW5, house to install “full fibre optic” cables up the six-storey façade. The owners of the flats in the building were puzzled since they had not asked for the work to be done. A visiting friend recommended that they ask G.Network to produce their wayleave document, which would show they



The cherry picker shown here was deemed to be too short for workers to safely run wires up the outside of the building. The wide pavement was blamed.

had permission for the installation at that address and spell out how the wiring work would be carried out.

The installers made several phone calls then conceded there was no official permission, but asked, wouldn't the residents like to have the higher speed broadband service that the cables would make possible? No, they said, they were happy with their current supplier.

The installers went away, but left behind the wiring they had hoped to install (pictured left), and, despite requests by the residents, have not been back to retrieve it.

Later in the year further down the street, where a genuine order had been placed, installers came to do the work but seemed to

have accidentally booked their work truck parking spaces on the wrong side of the road, so they departed without doing the wiring.

Some time later residents along the street were warned that 15 parking spaces along the road were being suspended for cable work. With the street cleared on the day of the job, a team of about 5 workers (pictured above left) gathered around a tall cherry picker (pictured above) – this time parked on the correct side of the road – ready to try again to string the cable wires up the building.

However, they later retreated, saying the machine couldn't reach high enough, partly because the width of the pavement hadn't been allowed for.

“Skills gap” tackled in Urban Nature Project

As part of its Urban Nature Project (UNP), the Natural History Museum (NHM) has promised to encourage biodiversity across cities and towns in UK, and to help “citizen scientists” monitor their green spaces and share the information they find.

To this end the NHM has been developing toolkits that volunteers, such as garden square residents, can use.

Workshops were held between 2019 and 2022 with diverse groups to dig into the best way to build the toolkits. A Museum spokesman said that one

key issue that arose was a skills gap, particularly in taxonomy (the science of naming, describing and classifying organisms) and survey methodologies. This lack of skills would affect the reliability and comparability of data.

The spokesman said, “To help address this, we are creating an online UNP toolkit aimed at entry-level users who wish to monitor, manage, and improve outcomes for nature in their local area.

“The initial toolkit content to go online will be a variety of entry-level ‘survey packages’ and



Newts waiting for a taxonomist to arrive.

seasonal ‘activity days’, as well as a survey calendar. The aim is to have this initial content on the [NHM] website by spring 2023.” Once the initial toolkit content is online it will be tested by a range of groups and feedback will be used to improve it. The remain-

der of toolkit will then be built, refined, then rebuilt and each section will be tested with users.

As *Garden Square News* went to press in early May the toolkits had not yet arrived.

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Local Plan charts K&C's future goals

In planning its future, the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBK&C) appears to be trying to curb some of the excesses of its past.

Its 311-page new Local Plan Review, now out for final approval, calls for “resisting” basement digging in communal garden homes and now adds that rear extensions on homes in communal gardens should also be discouraged.

It also newly advises, for climate change reasons, renovating or repurposing existing buildings rather than pulling them down.

The draft Local Plan Review, which contains some surprising statistics about the Borough, sets out the blueprint for growth over the next 20 years, and includes planning policies to help achieve the goals. It incorporates much of the existing Local Plan but adds some new elements.

It identifies suitable areas for growth as well as for conservation, and sets development guidelines. It aims to provide good quality homes, improve residents' health, and “enhance the economy and the environment”. It was drawn up after extensive consultation with residents and others involved with the Borough.

The draft Plan notes the following facts about the Borough:

- Its residents have the highest life expectancy in the country, for both

men and women. They live more than five years longer than the national average.

- The median house price in the Borough is 36 times the median income level in the Borough, the highest “by

far” for anywhere in the country. The median price for a home in the Borough in 2020 was £1.3 million.

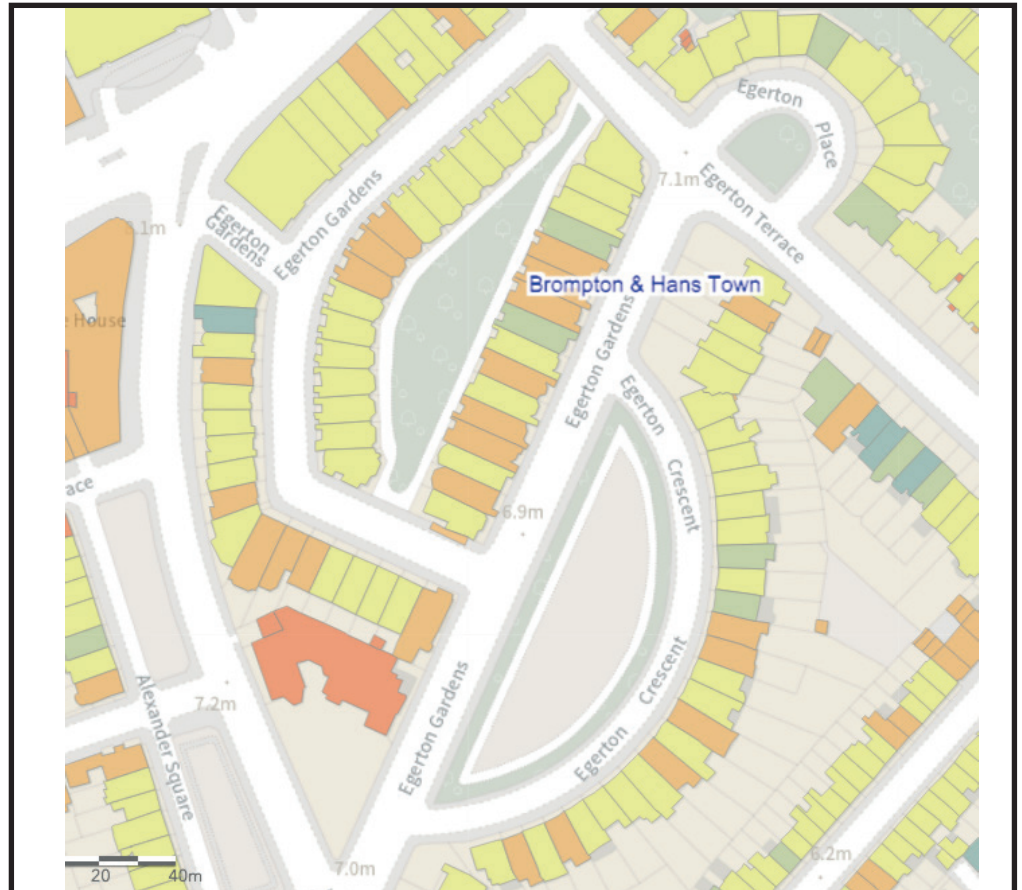
- More than 2,000 households live in temporary accommodation.

- One in every four children is living in pov-

erty.

- One in every four residents, and one in every two children in secondary school, speak French, Arabic or Spanish as their main language.

- The Borough has 156,000 residents (as



The view from the sky: poorly sealed homes show their colours

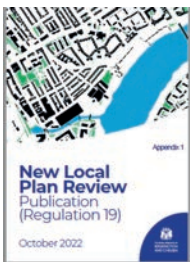
The heat loss survey commissioned in 2015 by RBK&C, a detail of which is above, shows how much heat was escaping from each building. The closer a building shows to the colour red, the more

heat it is losing. Buildings coloured blue are emitting the least heat. The map makers caution that the readings can be influenced by temporary conditions. For example, blue buildings might be poorly insulated but are

currently vacant, and a house that appears to be giving off a lot of heat might have just had many people in the house that night, or, for example, a party was going on at the time the aerial survey was done.

measured by a 2020 projection) living in an area of 4.7 square miles, making it the smallest borough by area in London, and one of the most densely populated areas in Europe.

- One hundred percent of its schools are rated “Good” or “Outstanding” by Ofsted. The Borough has the highest number in Inner London – 77 percent – of students continuing their education after completing their A-Levels.



The RBK&C Council Plan anticipates growth, especially in market and social housing (target: 4,727 additional homes over 10 years). That growth will be predominantly focused in two “Opportunity Areas: Kensal Canalside and the RBK&C section of the Earls Court exhibition site. (Draft plans for this latter zone, which is close to Philbeach Gardens, Nevern Square, and Earl’s Court Square, SW5, have been drawn up by the developers, the Earls Court Development Company, (see story page 19 and earlscourtdevco.com.)

Much of the language of the draft Local Plan concerns preserving the character of the Borough’s neighbourhoods, improving the environment, promoting healthy life, reducing heat loss and fostering “walkable neighbourhoods” with shopping and recreational facilities close at hand. The Plan

also includes a detailed list of the localities where significant changes are anticipated in the next decade – these include Notting Hill Gate, South Kensington and the eastern end of King’s Road.

The draft Local Plan has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by a Planning Inspector, and is expected to be confirmed in June or July.

The document points to ways energy can be conserved, and garden square residents will find the Borough’s “Heat Map” (sample on previous page) of special interest since it shows how much heat is escaping from every building in K&C.

In 2015 the Council commissioned a graphic imaging company called BlueSky to do an aerial thermal survey of heat



The highest air pollution is found along the Borough’s major roads.

leaking from each building in the area.

The results are available in a map on the Royal Borough’s website, which can be found by writing “Heat Map” in the search

box on the Royal Borough’s home page. Once on the Heat Map page, site users can type a street name into the search box and up comes a detailed, colour-coded map of that street, showing house by house how much heat each building was losing at the time of the survey.

Whereas heat-saving measures such as double glazing were resisted in conservation areas in the past, homeowners are now allowed to install double glazing although guidelines have to be followed. However, the Plan encourages measures such as draft-proofing windows as the more desirable way of curbing heat loss, where possible.

The same freeing-up of regulations applies to solar panels, which were previously not allowed in conservation areas. They too can now be installed, following guidelines.

(continued overleaf)

Councillor ‘walks the walk’

At a recent resident’s association meeting, RBK&C’s lead member for planning, place and environment, Cllr. Cem Kemahli, told the audience he had added double glazing to his house plus a heat pump in his garden. He later supplied the details to *Garden Square News*.

“I live down in Lots Village just off of Westfield Park. My nine [double glazed] sash windows cost approximately £12,000 and they replaced single-paned aluminium framed 1960s panel windows. They are now working sashes with glazing bars once more.

“My heat pump was £6,000 and came as a package with all the pipes and pumps and the water storage tank.” He said the bill for his all-electric house now averages just £3 a day.

“It is hard to calculate the payback period as I never lived in the property before renovating it, but I suspect I am saving approximately £5/£8 a day. I also plan to install solar panels when I do my roof extension and that energy will then power the heat pump to produce hot water for the underfloor heating and showers.”

Prince's Square Garden is "not being marketed for sale"



Ownership battleground

(continued from page 1)
spond.

Possibly the reason was the legal arguments that residents have gathered to combat the sale, although the couple added, "We are not aware of any proposed legal action."

Two separate groups fought the sale. The first was the Friends of Prince's Square Ltd., composed of people who paid a yearly fee to use the garden, and the second, The Prince's Square Gardens Association (PSGA) was made up of people who live around the Square and have access to it through their deeds.

The Friends researched

the history of the garden, then handed over the research, and the lead of the campaign, to the PSGA (*GSN spring and autumn 2021 and 2022*).

A spokesman for the Friends of PSG Ltd., who asked not to be named, said,

"The result of our evidence gathering was that the garden company [of which Mr. Moretto and Mr. Cassillo are majority shareholders] was set as a non profit for the benefit of the freeholders who live around the Square that have access on their deeds. We then passed this evidence and analysis to the freeholders. It is the

freeholder group that have rights and can proceed legally."

A spokesman for the PSGA, who also asked not to be named, said: "Individual freeholders have had to appoint their own solicitors to enforce their automatic right to access the garden. This has meant that the directors of the garden company have conceded that residents of Prince's Square have an automatic right to become members of the garden and that they have no discretion in that.

"To ensure that these rights are enforced going forward in the future, the freeholders have come to-

gether through the Prince's Square Gardens Association to ensure that they will never have to act individually. If any resident on the Square has any trouble getting access to the garden, then they should contact the PSGA on info@psgassociation.org so that the PSGA can assist them.

"The PSGA, as the representative of the freeholders, will be taking legal action to reinstate the garden company as a Not for Profit and will be using the evidence gathered by Friends of PSG to do so."

Local Plan seeks changes

(continued from page 13)

The Plan promotes the idea of a "circular economy". The goal is to create environmentally sound construction policies that favour retention and refurbishment over demolition and rebuilding.

The Plan notes: "We have a high concentration of heritage assets which have been occupied, sometimes by different uses, and refurbished over a long time.

"Construction traffic has also been an issue in the Borough with its narrow streets, and applying circular economy principles to minimise waste can help to reduce this."

The Plan addresses the need to improve air quali-

ty, noting that there are areas within the Borough that exceed EU recommended nitrogen dioxide levels: Earls Court Road and Warwick Road from Cromwell Road to Cremorne Road, Knightsbridge to Kensington High Street plus Kensington Church Street to Notting Hill Gate, and the Cromwell Road from Talgarth to Knightsbridge.

The Council has produced a new five-year Air Quality Action Plan (2022-2027), which includes a list of measures to reduce pollution, reduce exposure, increase resilience, and influence behaviour change, including stricter control of construction dust.

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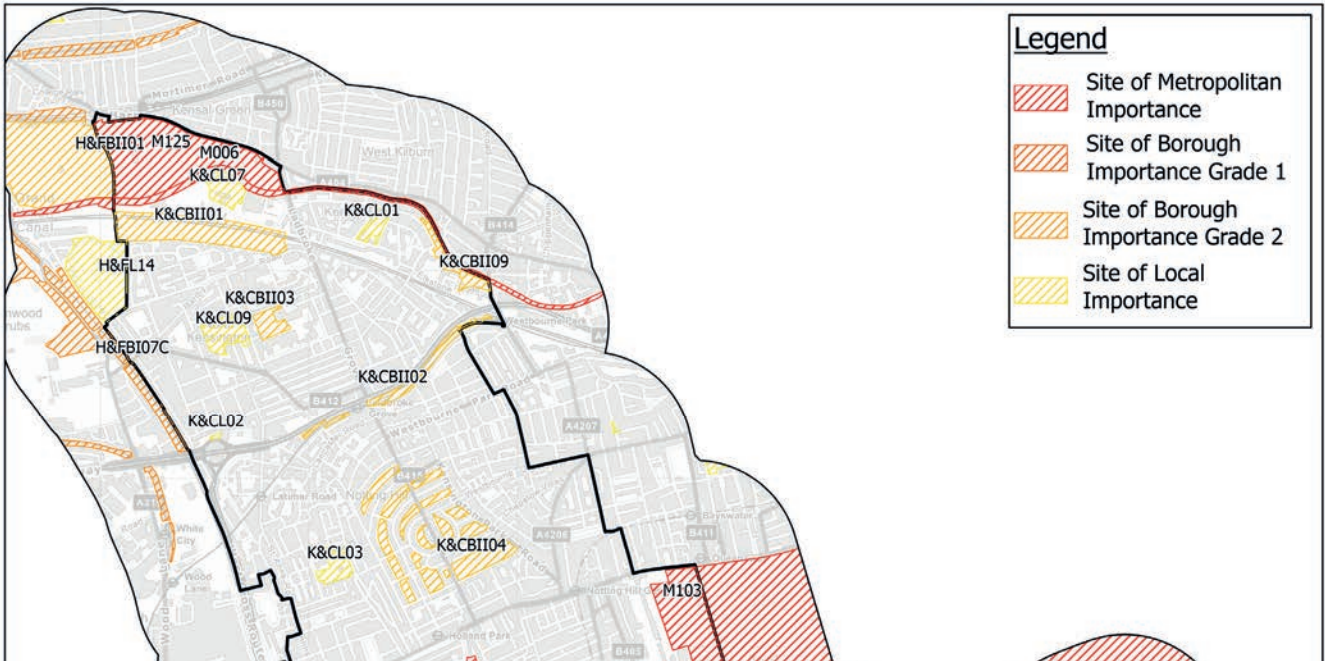
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SINCs in RB Kensington and Chelsea

Produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC, on behalf of RB Kensington and Chelsea, June 2022



Special protection for Notting Hill’s 16 communal squares

Here’s a mystery. Sixteen communal Notting Hill gardens have been designated as a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) since 1994. Yet other clusters of communal gardens in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea – the Courtfield

Ward and the Cadogan/Wellcome Trust Estates – do not have that designation.

The question arises because the Local Plan Review (see page 12) makes particular note of SINCs, promising “to protect biodiversity [in SINCs]...and/

Above: a portion of the Royal Borough’s SINCs map. The Notting Hill cluster is designated K&CBII04

or require the provision of significantly improved habitats to attract biodiversity.”

Could other communal garden areas achieve a SINC designation, *Garden Square News* asked Alice Laughton, Ecology Service Manager for the Royal Borough. “The gardens would need to meet

the criteria for a SINC site (which would need to be assessed by an ecological consultant) and there would need to be significant public consultation,” she said.

“While not a legal status, [SINC designation] could potentially have knock-on consequences for any future developments that local resident/businesses might apply for,” she added.

Ms. Laughton said she is “very happy to come and visit any spaces and discuss with residents/land managers how the gardens may be improved”. This would apply to the 16 Notting Hill gardens and other communal gardens.

She added, “I’m planning to produce some general guidance notes for the communal squares in the next year.”

There are a total of 24 SINCs in the Royal Borough.

New pressure to solve flooding causes and insurance headaches

By Neil Osborn

Thames Water must improve its sewers “at pace” to alleviate flooding problems in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBK&C). This is the number one recommendation of RBK&C’s flood risk working group, which reported in April.

The RBK&C working group also demanded the water company to:

- modernise “at pace”

the Lots Road pumping station, which can rapidly rid the north and the south of the borough of flash flood water. (The pumps were slow to turn on in the July 12, 2021 storm which affected 76 streets and 340 properties.)

– give clear explanation of why some properties have been given FLIPs (valves to prevent sewer water entering basements) while others have not.



The floods of July 2021 affected 340 K&C properties.

– update the RBK&C Council on its sewer cleaning programme and identify blockage points.

As for the RBK&C Council, the working group asks it to install more Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). These are areas where floodwater can be captured and given time to soak away.

Residents, the report adds, should be incentivised to remove hard surfaces in gardens to allow water to dribble into the

ground instead of rushing away.

The acute problem of flood-prone residents finding it hard to find insurance is prominent in the report. Flood Re, the government scheme, excludes buildings containing multiple homes. The Government and the Association of British Insurers must be pressed to change the rules, the working group says.

Insurance can be obtained, one resident informed a public meeting of the working group, but at a very big price. Aviva, she said, had charged her building of 41 flats £5,600 per unit annually for flood coverage. The residents paid because without insurance their homes were unsaleable.

At that meeting, Cllr. Joanna Gardner noted the south of the Borough “is much more at risk [of flooding than the northern wards] but most residents are not aware of that.”

Garden square communities can help lessen flood risks by removing impervious paved areas within the garden, says James Latham, Principal Floods and Water Management Officer for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Such areas should “only be retained where there are no alternatives.”

Water butts could be of use also. “Buildings or sheds, however small, could include rainwater harvesting,” Mr. Latham said in a written reply to *G&SN*. “Areas where water flows or pools during heavy rainfall could be looked at as an opportunity to store more water, rather than allowing it to flow towards neighbouring properties,” he added.



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Owners miss deadline to repair the damage they did to an historic building

Five years after being ordered to rectify the damage done to an historic listed building, the owners of the Harrington Gardens, SW7, property haven't complied with restoration requirements.

The owners, represented by Mr. Giuliano Lotto, have told enforcement officials they are planning to do the remedial work. They are eight months past the time the construction work was required to be completed.

A listed building enforcement notice (LBEN) was served on April 24, 2018, for the "unauthorised formation of a terrace and pavilion on the roof, including the construction of an internal staircase leading up to the pavilion and terrace, including the planters fixed to the parapet on the roof".

The owner lodged an appeal but it was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in August of 2021. The Inspector upheld the notice in full. This meant the steps required to comply with the notice had to be completed by August 20, 2022, 12 months after the date the notice was upheld.

A spokesman for the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea said, "The Council has been in contact

with the planning agent to advise that it is an offence to not comply with the enforcement notice and advise that those responsible are liable to prosecution in the Magistrate's Court.

"We requested an inspection of the property to determine whether the LBEN had been complied with. The agent has advised that the remedial works have not been carried out but that the owner intends to comply with the enforcement notice. A scope of works has been drawn up and the owner is currently in the process of getting a signed contract in place for a contractor to undertake these works."

The spokesman said, "Whilst the owner is engaging with the Council and is taking steps to comply with the notice, we will not be instigating prosecution proceedings. Our aim is to gain compliance with the notice and remedy the harm caused to the listed building."

Garden Square News has covered the many stages of this enforcement saga, (*GSN* spring and autumn 2016 and 2017, spring 2018, spring 2020 and autumn 2021) which earlier included the adjacent house, No. 26 Harrington Gardens.

Pictured above is a portion of the facade of No. 24.



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One person's clutter can be a treasure to another

Check your shelves...

Those Notting Hill residents who are reluctant to throw things away might find that some of their archives are in demand.

The Ladbroke Association, a 52-year-old conservation and amenity society serving the Notting Hill/Ladbroke Estate area, is looking for back issues of its newsletter, specifically those before 1983. It would like to borrow them to copy.

Association Chairman Sophia Lambert can be reached at chair@ladbrokeassociation.org.



Game still in vogue

Connaught Square's ping-pong table, pictured above, has remained popular since being installed in the spring of 2019 in the W2 garden. Spokesman Karen Scarborough said it is used by both children and adults, and is most heavily used in the spring, summer and autumn.

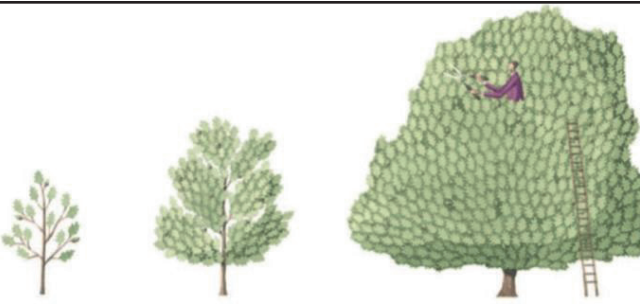


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High-rise towers planned

Developers of the 40-acre site which once housed the Earls Court Exhibition Centre have published their draft master plan for the complex.

Proposed plans include 4,500 new homes, some 35 percent of which will be affordable.

The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) is part of the Earls Court Partnership Limited, a joint venture between a real estate investment and management firm Delancy (on behalf of its client funds and the Dutch pension fund manager APG) and Transport for London (TfL).

A spokesman for the ECDC said the site would have around 60% residential units and 40% commercial, cultural, community, and retail space, totalling more than seven million square feet of development, if the plans are approved

High-rise buildings, up to 38 storeys in height, would be clustered near the centre of the site around the existing 31-storey Empress State Building, and also near West Cromwell Road/A4. Other buildings would range from less than 5 storeys to 34 storeys high. The spokesman said the total number of buildings has not yet been determined, and she was unable to give the total estimated cost of construction.



Philbeach Gardens features prominently in the foreground of this 3-D model illustrating the 40-acre development site being proposed in Earl's Court. High-rise buildings can be seen in the background.

The project is set to be built in phases over a 20-year period, with off-site construction “wherever possible”.

The complex is being promoted as a “transformative” city of the future, including a “next-generation heating network” which, the developers say, “means energy generated by our site could help heat the wider neighbourhood” by capturing warmth from the air and ground.

It would promote walking and cycling on low-traffic streets, and rainwater and grey water would be recycled to reduce water waste.

The developers said: “The number one ask we’ve heard is to provide a range of green and open spaces for all to enjoy. At the heart of the site will be a public park, connected through and beyond the site by a network of greened public spaces

which integrate biodiversity, water, play and leisure.” The park would be built over existing rail lines that cut through the site.

The complex would include houses for rent and sale, student housing, plus specialist housing for older people, shops, restaurants, and entertainment centres. There are also plans for health facilities. There would be a skills centre to offer construction training and other skills.

According to ECDC promotional material, “Our plans will bring a diverse range of jobs for around 15,000 people... this will be an emerging hub for bio-diversity and climate tech research and development.”

The ECDC expects to submit a planning application this winter. In 2025, if the plans are approved, construction begins, with people starting to move in by 2028.

The development land is directly adjacent to Philbeach Gardens, SW5, a 2.4-acre communal garden in Earl's Court. The garden committee there has not yet formulated its official reaction to the plans.

Up until 2019 a company called Capital & Counties Properties PLC (CapCo) was in line to develop the site, (*GSN Spring 2011*) but plans were blocked by fierce protests from residents from two housing estates on the site that were slated for demolition. CapCo then sold its interests to the ECDC.

More information can be found on the ECDC website: earlscourtdevco.com.

In terms of local reaction to date to the plans, Andrea Level, co-chair of the Earl's Court Society Planning & Conservation Group, representing the area, said: “The building heights indicated by these preliminary designs well exceed that of the 2013 CapCo consented scheme. This topography is out of keeping with the surrounding Conservation Areas.

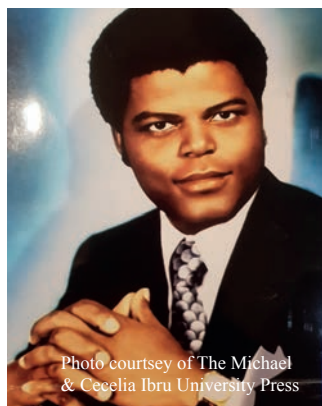
“The promised large cultural facility is absent from the present design.

“It is to be a resident parking permit-free development, but vehicles will need to supply and service the 4,500 new housing units and all the business units planned for the site.

“We have not been privy to a solution to this concern about traffic congestion and servicing that we find credible.

“It is our hope that these issues will be reconsidered prior to submission of a new planning application.”

Plaque mounted for Nigerian tycoon known for generosity



Chief Michael Ibru

The large home, backing on to Ladbroke Square, of one of Nigeria's most successful businessmen was marked with an historical plaque on April 8th. The ceremony was led by the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's mayor and attended by other dignitaries and family members.

Chief Michael Ibru was hailed in the ceremony as being a man who helped to redefine Nigeria's fishing industry through his deep-sea trawling companies and popularization of frozen fish, giving opportunities to thousands of people in the process. He expanded his empire to include a variety of businesses, including shipping, car importation, agriculture, banking, hospitality, aviation, and oil and gas, becoming a billionaire in the process.

In addition to his business success he was a generous philanthropist, and well known as a major donor to educational institutions.

After speaking of the Chief's many accomplishments, the Mayor, Cllr. David Lindsay added, "As a man, he was understated and humble, as well as a man of faith. He was a regular member of St John's, Notting Hill – reflected in the fact that Rev'd Canon Dr William Taylor will deliver the blessing for the plaque ceremony."

Chief Ibru moved his family to London and bought 6 Kensington Park Gardens in 1974. This remained the family home for 45 years, even after they moved back to Nigeria in 2007. At the unveiling ceremony Chief Ibru's



The plaque placed on the Notting Hill house.

widow Cecilia explained that they chose the house over a house they were considering on The Bishops Avenue in north London because it had easy access to trains, neighbours close at hand, places for children to play outside safely, and a nearby church. She said there were

many good times there and it was a gathering place for lots of young people too – "We'd have 21 people in the house on a weekend", she laughingly told the audience of 60 who gathered for the unveiling.

Her son Obaro Ibru, one of several of the strikingly tall descendants of Chief Ibru who attended the ceremony, recalled his happy days growing up in the house. "We always felt like a basketball team", he said, adding "it was like Disneyland."

Others attending the ceremony included Mayoress Catherine Lindsay, Cllr. Emma Dent Coad, a representative from the Nigerian High Commission, The Right Reverend Bishop Dr. Michael Steele, and Dr. Jak Beula from the Nubian Jak Community Trust. The Trust, founded in 2006, focuses on memorialising the historic contributions of Black and minority ethnic people in Britain and beyond through commemorative plaques and sculptures.



Chief Ibru's daughter Osio Ibru, pictured above, was part of the crowd attending the ceremony.

Charity is urging volunteers to test their soil's health

(continued from page one)

Country Trust, has a strong interest in the environment and studied countryside management at Newcastle University. He owns more than 300 acres of central London's prime properties as part of a global, family-owned property empire. Many communal garden squares in the City of Westminster are under his control.

More information about

the campaign can be found at www.countrytrust.org.uk.

Participants are asked to share their findings online to be used in the charity's new interactive soil map, designed to build up a picture of soil health across the country.

The UK government is concerned about the state of the nation's ground health and is seeking to have all soil managed sustainably by 2030.

Parliament may need to resolve garden voting rules

Following a number of disputes over the use of proxy and postal voting to swing a decision on a garden square issue, solicitor Robert Barham has been asked to advise garden committees about the validity of these ways of casting votes in garden meetings.

Mr. Barham acts for almost half the gardens in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBK&C)

He believes that use of proxy and postal votes is not entirely clear in the Kensington Improvement Act 1851, and the Town Gardens Protection Act 1863 which govern 46 RBK&C communal gardens.

He told *Garden Square News* the Acts might have to be revamped by Parliament in order to make voting rules clear.

He said, "Strictly speaking the statute does say that it is the people in the room who have a vote and there is no provision for absentee votes. But in lockdown the council approved Teams meetings as it was the only way to hold an AGM in order to approve budgets. I am not certain of the statutory basis for that arrangement.

"One consequence of that was that committees often got much better participation at meetings than they had been used to and were keen to preserve that. In my view better participation means more democ-

racy, and that must be a good thing in principle.

"The rules we have were set in 1851 and 1863 at a time when a small group of men sat around a table and made decisions on behalf of all residents. That model doesn't really work in this day and age. If only those who actually attend a meeting can vote you are in danger of disenfranchising people who cannot make it to the meeting because of work commitments, travel, age, infirmity, disability, concern about covid etc."

Mr. Barham pointed out that the way garden committees operate have some similarities to companies, and under company law it is generally possible to use proxy (but not postal) votes.

He added, "In my view, we need to find a way of updating the 1851 and 1863 Act rules. The problem is that because they were set by statute, they can only be revised by a new statute.

"It seems unlikely that Parliament will find the time to look at the problem. Possibly, however, a single clause could be inserted into a bill going through Parliament which would allow regulations for the management of committees to be made at some future date by the relevant minister under secondary legislation."





Saturday morning scenes on Stanley Crescent



These flowering cherry trees at Stanley Crescent, W11, above left, attract numerous photographers when in bloom. Shown here (above left) on a Saturday morning in April is a model posing for her camerawoman.

Pictured above is a makeshift darkroom viewing space created by a fashion shoot crew who huddled together to check the quality of their work.



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The iguana ate my flowers

Garden Square News readers are scattered far and wide, and one US subscriber in Bay Harbour Islands, Florida, sent in a photo illustrating one of the challenges facing the people who tend the garden around her Montego Club condo complex.

“The iguanas have been busy eating the flowers,” said Deirdre Conley.

Ms. Conley provided a picture, above, of the main culprit, an iguana who has been named “Monty” by the residents in the complex. He’s shown here sunning himself on a nearby dock. His smaller companion, called “Buddy”, is pictured right.

Florida’s iguanas were in the news recently because a cold snap last winter was so intense that igua-



nas were falling out of the trees they live in. Monty survived however, and still visits what Ms. Conley describes as “my little ‘square’”.

Jacket thief tracked down via earbud signals

A quick-thinking burglary victim recently used technology to track the thief and retrieve his property. South Kensington resident Luke Creek had left his jacket, containing his phone and wallet, in the communal hallway of his friend’s house. When he came back a few minutes

later, the jacket and its contents were gone.

What the thief didn’t realize was that the jacket owner had Apple AirPods music earpieces in the jacket pocket, and they carried a tracking device allowing them to be traced.

Mr. Creek and his girlfriend Jennifer Mickel got

into his car and drove to Fulham, where the signal led them to a flat in an apartment block. When the occupant opened the door, the victim demanded his jacket back, including all its contents, and the thief complied. Mr. Creek said the perpetrator was a fast food driver who had

gained access to the communal hallway while making a delivery.

