



Newsletter

December 2008

www.chra.info

Issue 37

Chairman's Message

The Association continues to be active in the community with planning and policing high on our agenda. In previous messages I have sought volunteers for the committee, particularly for the role of Treasurer. It is therefore with great sadness that I have to report that having volunteered to fulfil this role, Peter Grindrod, who lived in Bedford Gardens, sadly passed away before he took up the mantle. I can assure prospective volunteers that there was no connection between the two events! As most of you know, he was a man with an independent mind and very interested in the local community - one of the last communications I had from him concerned the demise of Olympic Electronics. Our thoughts and prayers go to his widow, Mariko and all of his family.

In addition to the vacancy of Treasurer, the committee would welcome additional members, particularly with a background in planning. You do not need to be an architect but experience in this field would be an advantage. Late in 2007 RBKC formed a 'Residents and Amenities Sounding Board'. The purpose of this is to keep local associations informed of major planning issues. Your chairman has attended a number of meetings and has found the forum helpful, particularly in giving us early information on major planning matters and issues.

I would particularly like to thank all members who have supported the campaign against RBKC's plans to demolish and rebuild Holland Park School. The help and support we have received from Robert Freeman, one of our elected Campden Ward Councillors, has been hugely appreciated. I would also like to take this opportunity to particularly thank Sally Davies, who has been tireless in her involvement. Her forensic and legal skills have been invaluable in working through the complex rules and regulations of Government bills and legislation. A campaign update is included in the newsletter.

Once again we held a very successful Summer Party at Campden Hill Square with music from the Portobello Stompers. We were particularly pleased to have students from Holland Park School helping with the catering.

The CHRA AGM will be held on 19th May 2009, 7pm for 7.30pm at St. George's Community Space, Aubrey Walk. Next year's Summer Party is planned to be held at Campden Hill Square and is likely to be on Tuesday 16th June although this will be confirmed in the New Year. Visit our new website for this and other updates on local information and community news: www.chra.info

Finally I would like to wish all members and their families a very happy Christmas and hope that 2009 will bring you good health and happiness.

Best wishes,

David White

The Friends of Holland Park

The CHRA work alongside The Friends of Holland Park on occasion and we would like to remind our members of the good work they do within Holland Park. If you would like further information on what they do, please contact the Secretary: Mrs. Rhoddy Wood of 21 Kenton Court, 356 Kensington High Street, W17 8NN (Tel.020 7602 0304) or look on their website: www.thefriendsofhollandpark.org



Membership

Total membership is 342
New Members 6
Honorary and Life 23

The CHRA relies on membership in order to promote our mutual interests. Please complete the enclosed renewal letter and send to Anne Margaronis at 26 Aubrey Walk, London W8. At the most recent committee meeting it was agreed that subscriptions would be raised to £15 per annum or £60 for five years. If you know of anyone who would like to join CHRA, please drop me a line and I will send you a membership form – pia@bethere.co.uk Alternatively you can download a form from our website www.chra.info

Pia Østby DeCarlucci

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Police matters

This is the second year of Safer Neighbourhood Teams, where we have a permanent team of officers and PCSOs for each ward, who cannot be 'abstracted' or borrowed for other duties. There has been a consolidation of the gains made last year, with crime in almost all categories down further. Areas of particular attention have been: The two large schools in our area, Holland Park School and Cardinal Vaughan. Programmes to combat shoplifting and shop related crime and issues surrounding licensed premises. General quality of life and safety initiatives relating to knife crime, motor vehicle crime, cycle safety and faith group communication.

On a ward by ward basis the activities can be summarised as follows:

Campden Ward: The Safer Routes Home initiative has informed and encouraged the younger children especially, to follow routes which are patrolled by PCSOs at school rush hour times, to reduce the bullying and petty theft problem that can occur. For Kensington High Street, Shoplink has given shop staff a direct radio link to PCSOs to pass information and get a rapid response to problems. This has proved very successful and a strong deterrent. Also on the High Street and elsewhere, more effort is being put into educating cyclists on the danger of jumping lights and cycling on the pavement, brought into focus by a recent serious accident between a cyclist and a bus.

Holland Ward: Good results on shutting down one crack house and executing a large number of drug warrants on dealers. This is a constant problem which needs constant effort. More positively, the second year of running an operation related to crime around the Opera season in Holland Park has led to a further reduction in related crime with good reductions in motor vehicle crime and a good arrest for robbery. A very strong attendance to the Peace in the Park Event in Holland Park which is now in its third year.

Norland Ward: Great strides in involving the many diverse faith groups in this area. There are now monthly briefings with the Synagogue, Mosque, Hindu Temple and three Churches in this area to disseminate and receive useful information. A very positive development that can only improve understanding and co-operation.

Pembridge Ward : Pubwatch now has 25 pubs signed up in this scheme to control typical pub crimes from antisocial

behaviour to bag thefts. It allows licensees to share information between themselves and the Police on trouble makers and problem trends. A specific initiative, rather like using a decoy car to combat car crime, involved using a decoy handbag. This resulted in 7 arrests and the solving of some 35 crimes.

While Norland and Pembridge Wards are north of the Holland Park Avenue, it is difficult to isolate what happens the other side of this road, or indeed in neighbouring boroughs - what will be the effect of Westfield in White City, will all our pickpockets move there from Kensington High Street, or will the intensive security there mean we get more pickpockets on Kensington High Street? Other sector wide initiatives have involved the use of knife arches at tube stations and other 'choke' points at the time of the Carnival, and at other times, and the promotion of a Good Citizen's award to recognise young people who are a positive example to their peers. With the growing success of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and ward panels, it seems that the Sector Working Group has lost momentum and one task for the coming year is to try and revitalise this and find it a role that better suits the changing consultative structure. After spending years trying to explain the structure of the various committees which confuse me and you, someone has finally produced a diagram which sort of makes this clear. Considering that many of these committees and their meetings require the attendance of Police officers, it's a wonder to me that you ever see any officer except at these meetings.

Finally, two quite useful pieces of information: There is finally a Police number which is not 999 for reporting other matters which you feel might be of interest to the Police but don't require an emergency response (Remember if in doubt phone 999!), this non emergency number is 0300 123 1212.

Yes, I agree it should have been something like 777 or 321 but this is a borough specific number so it can't be something simple and universal like 999. For those of you that want to delve in greater detail into local crime statistics and information - the police are frustrated by how much the perception of crime is way beyond the reality - you can find an increasing amount of information on the Kensington and Chelsea Police website: http://cms.met.police.uk/met/boroughs/kensington_chelsea/index

Isidore Margaronis



Police Community Consultative Group

This issue of the Newsletter includes an insert showing the structure of PCCG-linked forums. The article below gives an explanation of the various terms referred to in the diagram:

PCCG: Police Community Consultative Group. A statutory consultative body set up as a result of the government enquiry into the causes of the Brixton Riots, to reduce the causes of tension between the police and local communities.

Management Committee: An informal monthly meeting between the Borough Commander and the PCCG Chair, Sector Chairs and other relevant parties to review monthly statistics and borough wide topical policing issues.

Sectors: A subcommittee of the PCCG covering a sector of the borough. For example our sector is Notting Hill Gate Sector and covers Holland Ward Campden Ward, Norland Ward and Pembridge Ward. This relates to the Police command structure as each Sector is under the supervision of a Sector Inspector.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams: Due to a London wide reorganisation, each ward now has its own dedicated team of police and PCSOs (police community support officers) who cannot be taken away (abstracted in the jargon) for other duties except in case of extreme emergency. They are supposed to liaise with ward panels a local community/ police committee dealing with local ward issues and should take guidance from them on local police priorities

London Wide (LCP2): A London-wide equivalent of the PCCG- LCP=London Community Partnership.

REPKC: Race Equality Partnership (RBKC): Deals with Race and minority community issues and outreach.

Missing from the table: committees dealing with the carnival and its impact on the local community.

Holland Park School

A big 'thank you' to all members who have supported our campaign to stop RBKC's plans to sell off the southern site playing field and demolish and rebuild Holland Park School ('HPS'). As you will know, through CHRA's lobbying efforts the Government Office for London called in RBKC's first planning application for HPS for an independent Public Inquiry - then the Council withdrew its plans and as a consequence the Public Inquiry was cancelled.

Despite receiving nearly 200 letters of opposition from residents, on the 26th June RBKC's Major Planning Committee granted planning permission for the revised plans - the principal change being to move the affordable housing off-site. Despite Mayor Boris Johnson publicly stating he would not allow the sale of school playing fields, he chose not to oppose the sale at Holland Park School. A huge number of you wrote to the Government Office for London, opposing the plans, but alas they chose not to call-in the revised plans for a Public Inquiry.

The cost of the school (currently £72.6 million), plus affordable housing, continues to increase and could easily reach £100 million - almost three times the cost of the new Academies. However, selling off the southern site playing fields for luxury housing at a price that will cover the cost of this project becomes more problematic every day as the word's financial turmoil continues to take its toll. Potential purchasers of 'modest' £10 million-plus town houses, particularly 'bonus fat cats', are almost becoming an endangered species. There is also concern that RBK&C may have left itself open to legal challenge as a consequence of not having complied with all the Government's conditions that must be satisfied if playing field is to be sold. So is the Council drawing back from this project, as they should, and considering other options?

In addition to the new Chelsea Academy, the Council are now considering a new secondary school in the north of the borough which should cost less than £50 million. It is ironic that the Council is now choosing to actively engage with Government's Building Schools for Future program as a means of funding the new school, having categorically ruled out its application in the context of Holland Park School.

So what would an objective and knowledgeable educational observer conclude - It's the head teacher, his team and the teaching staff that are the keys to successful education - not a shiny, very expensive 'trophy' building which the Council's own Architectural Appraisal Panel considers badly designed! Added to which, English Heritage considered that the new building would damage the two local conservation areas.

Furthermore, rebuilding Holland Park School will not significantly increase secondary student capacity. RBKC is one of the richest boroughs with a desperate shortage of non-denominational state schools - 25 state primary schools, currently 4 secondary schools, 3 of which are Roman Catholic. Currently Holland Park School is the only open-access secondary school in the borough.

The school had an excellent OFSTED - no mention made of the school falling down - and has achieved many awards including Specialist School Status, 'Artsmark' and 'Sportsmark' and is rated as one of the most improved secondary schools. Selling off a huge sports facility also makes little sense particularly when there is such an emphasis from the Government on the need to increase sporting activities and facilities to combat obesity and build on the 'Olympic effect'.

As you know CHRA has been advocating throughout that the Council should adopt its 'Alternative Vision' but, putting this to one side for a moment, what has RBKC achieved to date in pursuit of its own vision? The answer must be very little; had they taken more care over their botched and rushed original plan, the new school could now have been up and running at a considerably lower cost than £72.6 million. The southern site playing field could have been sold with more than sufficient funds realised to underwrite the costs of the scheme. What has happened instead, is that the Council has spent £7 million of your money (to date) and have nothing to show for it. In the current financial circumstances, 'The Alternative Vision' to rebuild/refurbish the school makes even more sense, particularly when there is Government funding available under the Building Schools for the Future program. There is now a window of opportunity for the Council to carry out a comprehensive review of the options of refurbishment and partial refurbishment/rebuild of the school, financed by Government, as unanimously recommended by the OSC on Family & Children's Services at their meeting in June 2007.

David White

The Parabola (formerly The Commonwealth Institute)

There are new moves around plans for the Parabola, as the developers, Chelsfield, now call the building we knew as the Commonwealth Institute. Talks are under way with the Design Museum which envisage removal from their current SE1 site to inhabit the Parabola. This would bring a new cultural entity to our area, and, given the visual impact of the old building, an entirely appropriate use for it.

However, Southwark Council, the local authority in which the Design Museums existing Shad Thames home sits, has admitted it does not want the 'Cultural Icon' to leave, and is understood to have suggested 'larger' plots elsewhere in their Borough.

It is understood that Chelsfield will 'give' the Parabola to RBKC who will be responsible for putting it into good order and maintaining it - even though the Design Museum will occupy it. This could be a major financial burden for Council Tax payers though RBKC is demanding an endowment fund from Chelsfield to maintain the Parabola.

The developers would like to see a greater integration of the Parabola and Holland Park, in line with the original concept of a 'Pavilion in the Park'. Currently under discussion with interested parties is the possibility of opening up access from Kensington High Street through into Holland Park around the Parabola building. The Friends of Holland Park and many other residents are very much opposed to anything more than limited visual permeability between the Parabola and the Park. The Design Museum's plans might also include a first-class restaurant, as it does in its present site at Shad Thames.

All these plans need to be underwritten by residential development. The intention is to build three blocks and not provide affordable housing. The justification for this is that Chelsfield are providing a social amenity in the form of the Design Museum. We deplore the building of yet more houses and flats ringing Holland Park, which are likely to be intrusive to the vistas of the park. Chelsfield have invited OMA (The Office for Metropolitan Architecture) an international architectural partnership, to work on the design.

RBKC are anxious that the landscaped area around the building, the covered walkway, the grassed areas, the water channel and the flagpole area, be

renovated to the highest aesthetic standards. Chelsfield have invited the aptly named practice West 8 to put forward a proposal. West 8 stress that their designs refer to the local context, the history, the landscape and the surrounding ecology. Chelsfield, OMA, and West 8 are working on a range of images for a public exhibition planned for the end of November to be held in the Parabola building.

A revised supplementary planning brief is now published for consultation. Visit: www.rbkc.gov.uk/Planning/UnitaryDevelopmentPlan/draftCommonwealthInstSPD_Oct%2008.pdf

David White



Holland Park

We hear a lot nowadays about alien invaders, be they plants or insects. Oxalis, known as a world-wide weed, has been in the UK for quite a while, but it has yet to gain popularity. In fact it has caused havoc in the Park by claiming squatter's rights on the iris bed and showing scant sympathy for the irises. Drastic remedies have been sought and, in order to eradicate the oxalis, the top twelve inches of soil have been taken away and fresh soil introduced. As a final preventative measure, just in case a stray oxalis should be waiting on the boundary intent on reclaiming possession, the edges of the bed are being sterilised with a flame-thrower. Personally, my money is on the oxalis!

There are, however, other alien invaders who have achieved popularity. Members may well have noticed the growing flock of parakeets that have brought added colour and clamour to the area. They are also fast proving that the term 'bird brain' should be seen as a compliment, not a form of disparagement.

This year, to help the smaller birds compete for food, the Friends of Holland Park introduced new bird feeders. The small birds were delighted - so were the pigeons and parakeets! To thwart the larger birds, a far more ingenious bird

feeder, was brought in. This new bird feeder had a clever device, once one of the heavier birds alighted on the feeder, the aperture exposing the nuts and seeds was immediately shut. In theory, the deprived pigeon or parakeet then flew off in a sulk, leaving the feeder free for the small birds to take their fill. The pigeons were duly flummoxed by the new feeder . . . not so the parakeets! Learning that it was their weight that operated the mechanism, they decided to hover. Hovering parakeets can now be seen happily gorging on nuts and seeds, whilst pigeons on the ground await the falling bounty. As for the smaller birds? They have philosophically returned to enjoying the copious supply of nuts and berries growing in the park!

Finally, members will be interested to know that the Park has acquired a new Head of Ecology, Saskie Lovell. Her plans for the future include replacing the bird boxes this year, and the bat boxes next year. Just in case you are surprised to learn of the bat boxes, I gather that a recent survey revealed that both soprano and pipistrelle bats have been heard in the park quite recently. Saskie is also overseeing the renovation of the Wildlife Pond - which will include trapping and rehoming the elusive terrapin!

Parakeets . . . soprano and pipistrelle bats . . . rampant oxalis . . . elusive terrapins . . . Holland Park has far more to offer than the casual visitor would ever imagine!

Mary Spain

Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group

The Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group support and encourage independent, small, family run shops to enrich our shopping environment and create amenity, diversity, character and personal service. They have been instrumental in introducing Persephone Books and Anne Higgins – Art to Wear to Kensington Church Street and more recently the Chegworth Farm Shop. With members from all the local associations they have also brought seven Innes Ferguson and Philip Pigott designed benches to the area, planted over 150 varied trees and were actively involved in Peter Logan's 'Climber' wind sculpture, Nadim Karam's 'Elephant' sculpture and introduced The Farmer's Market. If you would like to support, help or join them please visit their website, www.nhig.so.uk or call John Scott on 020 7221 7722.

The Kensington Society

If you are not already a member, I would urge you to become one. The Kensington Society plays an important role, aiming to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington. They are particularly active in the area of planning within the borough: the weight of their voice is enhanced by the size of their membership. Annual membership is now £15. Please contact the Membership Secretary Angela Darwin at 2 Campden Hill Court, Observatory Gardens, London W8 7HX or visit www.kensingtonsociety.org.uk where you can download a membership form and read their Autumn Newsletter.



Christmas Church Services

St Georges

14th December:

6pm - Community Candlelit Carol Service with Nativity Pageant

Christmas Eve:

4pm - Carols around the crib 11.30pm - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day:

8am - Holy Communion
10am - Sung Eucharist with Carols

Church of our Lady Mount Carmel

Christmas Eve:

6pm - Mass
12am - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day:

8.30am, 10am, 11am and 12.15 Mass

St Mary Abbots

14th December:

6:30pm - Handel's Messiah

21st December:

9:30am - Children's Nativity Play

22nd December:

7pm - Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve:

4pm - Children's Crib Service
12am - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day:

9:30am - Family Eucharist
11:15am - Solemn Matins
4pm - By the Crib: Carols & Prayers

