

# Garden Square News

ISSN 2633-6324

SERVING CENTRAL LONDON'S COMMUNAL GARDENS VOL 27 ISSUE 1, SPRING 2022

## *No limits for this daring ginger cat*

The ginger cat called “Little Kitty” looked at the world this way: he could go anywhere he wanted any time he wished. The Courtfield, SW5, neighbourhood was his kingdom, and private houses, communal gardens, hotels, and businesses were all fair game – there for him to explore, take a nap, have a meal, or make friends.

The adjacent map, created via the GPS tracking device attached to his collar, shows how thoroughly he covered his turf. This graphic shows just one day of his activity. Not only did he travel over an impressive amount of territory, he even

*continued on page 6*



**Little Kitty, pictured left, covered this South Kensington territory in just a day, his tracker collar showed.**

## Victims of floods hit by insurance price hikes

Flood-affected residents in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBK&C) and the City of Westminster are now facing difficulty arranging property insurance at a reasonable price, or sometimes at any price, in the aftermath of last July's water and sewer flooding incidents.

Complicating the flooding situation further, there is a possibility that some of the water problems might have resulted from basement building in recent times.

Many garden square properties were among those flooded with rainwater or raw sewage, or sometimes both, after sudden intensive rainstorms.

Borough councillors, Thames Water officials, hydrologists, independent investigators and affected residents have been sifting over the evidence since the storms hit central London on July 12 and 25 (*GSN* Autumn 2021) to try to find the causes, and to see what the best solutions might be.

Cllr. David Lindsay (Cons.) of RBK&C said,

*continued on page 14*

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FORSTERS IS A SPECIALIST ADVISER TO THE COMMITTEES AND ORGANISATIONS WHICH OWN OR MANAGE LONDON GARDEN SQUARES.



In 2004 Robert Barham was appointed by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to provide external legal advice to the committees which run many private garden squares in the Borough.

Areas of law covered include:

- Advice on the Acts of Parliament governing squares
- Constitutional arrangements
- Registration of title at the Land registry
- Rights of access and access arrangements
- Drawing up and approving byelaws
- Enforcement of byelaws

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# Anti-Russia protesters focus on Belgrave Sq.

On March 14th Belgrave Square, SW1, saw pro-Ukraine activists appear in the elegant neighbourhood.

Protesters occupied the home of the family of sanctioned Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, saying they



wanted the home to house Ukrainian refugees.

According to *The Times*

newspaper, police said a group of protesters had come down from the balcony after

about seven hours and were arrested.

# Success for one W2 garden in gaining its title

After some 18 years of trying, the residents of Kensington Gardens Square, W2, have finally obtained a possessory title to their communal garden.

Garden Sub-Committee Chairman Simon Glucina said the Sub-Committee had gone through three different firms of lawyers, all of whom failed to crack the problem of obtaining title. “It ended up in the ‘too hard basket’ at the law firms, he said.

It got bogged down with the Land Registry too, he said, because officials kept asking for historical detail that was hard to find.

Finally the Sub-Committee linked up with garden law specialist Robert Barham, and he was able to use something of a “back door” approach to solve the problem. He built a case of “adverse possession” for the land to secure the title for the surrounding residents.

In order to use the adverse possession route, the Garden Committee had to prove three conditions: that the Committee was in con-



**William Whiteley**

trol of the land, that they were excluding other people [in this case, non-garden residents] and that they were doing it without the true owner’s consent.

Mr. Glucina said a man named Gerald James Fitzgerald was selling freehold buildings in the Square in the 1890s and was the last known owner of the gardens.

His dealings included selling three houses on the Square to retailer William Whiteley, of Whiteley’s department store, and the conveyancing documents for that transaction helped to document the formation of a

garden committee.

“There was no evidence that Fitzgerald ever transferred paper title to the gardens, so it was assumed that the land was inherited by his heirs with the trail of ownership lost in time...

“Robert’s approach was to argue that KGS Garden Association (KGSGA), which was formed in 1942, was not the same entity as the Committee envisioned in the original conveyances,

and that KGSGA, as a different entity, therefore possessed the gardens without the paper owner’s consent.”

He said he did not know why the KGSGA, which replaced the earlier Committee, was formed – the available records do not go back that far.

He said in 10 or 12 years the committee could apply for full title to replace the possessory title.

## St James’s Square

For several years now *Garden Square News* has been covering the story about the unclear ownership of St. James’s Square, SW1, one of London’s most prestigious spaces (*GSN* Autumn 2020).

The answer still hasn’t been found – perhaps not surprisingly, given that researchers for the Crown Estate and the St. James’s Square Trust who are working on the puzzle may have to go back through several centuries of records, to the time of King Charles II, to settle it. “We’re working closely with them [the square’s trustees]” to resolve the issue, said Crown Estate spokeswoman Harriet Scott in April.

# In need of a new communal garden website?

More than 54 communal gardens have their websites listed on the “Links” page of the *Garden Square News* website. If yours is one of the communal gardens without a website, don’t fret. Francesca Gregson, (pictured right) the media expert who is the new marketing manager for the Shakespeare in the Squares programme, is available to create communal garden websites for a modest fee.

Ms. Gregson is the founder of Distrikt Communications, a London-based agency that specializes in the promotion of creative and small businesses.

Her services include websites, PR, marketing, social



**Francesca Gregson**

media and graphic design. For further details, please see [distriktlondon.com](http://distriktlondon.com) or get in touch by e-mailing: [francesca@distriktlondon.com](mailto:francesca@distriktlondon.com).

## Pitfall avoidance

**Tip:** give your website editing passwords to more than one person on your garden committee.

*GSN* was recently told of one disgruntled former communal garden square sub-committee member who built the garden’s website but has put the website permanently out of the reach of the rest of the sub-committee by refusing to reveal the password.

According to Francesca Gregson (see adjacent story) it depends on the platform it’s built on, but to gain access someone would usually need to know three things:

- The admin access website link (since you can’t access the admin part of the website by just going to the normal, public website)
- The username
- The password

*com*. She has told *Garden Square News* she is looking forward to being able to help

garden committees either create new websites, or update existing ones.

## Free survey for your property to check sewer flooding resilience

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# Prince's Sq. residents mount legal challenge against profit-seeking directors

In the latest development in the attempted sale of Prince's Square Gardens, W2, residents have threatened the sellers with legal action.

The group called Friends of Prince's Square Gardens Limited (officially Friends of PSG Ltd., also known as the Friends) is seeking to halt the disposal of the one-acre space, a popular members-only oasis, and have hired lawyers Forsters LLP put their case forward.

Forsters has told the sellers they have no right to sell the property because it is held in trust for the surrounding neighbours. The lawyers also told the sellers to transfer the gardens to the Friends. If they fail to do so, Forsters has warned, the Friends will seek an injunction to remove the current directors of Prince's Garden Square Ltd., (PSGL) the entity seeking to sell the gar-

dens.

The lawyers for the sellers, the firm of Taylor Wessing, are arguing that the garden freehold is not held in trust, and that their clients are the rightful owners and are free to sell the land.

As *Garden Square News* was going to press Taylor Wessing said it will send a formal response to the Friends' demands by May 20.

The garden had been operating without problems for many years until May of last year, when the directors of PSGL, the company that holds the freehold of the garden, announced the memberships would be terminated and the garden would be up for sale (*GSN* Spring 2021). A price tag in excess of £5 million was put on the property, even though the directors had been given their shares years ago for free.

Angry garden users



**It looks peaceful, but Prince's Square Gardens, W2, is now an ownership battleground.**

grouped together to form Friends of PSG Ltd. and were able to forestall a sale by encouraging the City of Westminster to put an "Asset of Community Value" designation on the land (*GSN* Autumn 2021). This allowed interested parties time to raise money to bid on the property before the grace period ended on March 1 this year.

## Rules changed to allow for a profit to be made

The Friends made a bid for the garden but it was rejected by the PSGL directors. The amount of the bid was not disclosed.

According to the spokesman for the Friends, who asked not to be named, during the early part of this year the Friends also sought legal advice and researched the history of the garden.

Garden law expert Robert Barham of Forsters advised the group that the directors of PSGL act as trustees and they should not be benefiting from any sale. This view was put to the three shareholders of PSGL, Wayne Moretto, his husband Kenneth Cassillo, and Jalna

D. Blake, but according to a spokesman for the Friends, it was ignored.

Soon after this, the shareholders changed the articles of association for PSGL so that the articles allowed shareholders to take a profit out of the company.

Estate agent Savills had been marketing the one-acre property but is now no longer acting for the sellers. The firm has not explained why.

The Friends spokesman said, "What we are disputing is based on the original articles of the company, the way the garden was managed for over 40 years within PSGL (or 160 years since it was created) and based on a statement of truth by an ex director [that] the freehold is held and managed by the company and its directors in trust for an association of local residents."

While this part of the dispute continues, some of the property owners adjacent to the garden whose titles state they have the right of access to the garden are registering that fact with the Land Registry to help solidify their claim to using the space.



**Members of the Friends of PSG Limited researched the Square's early history in Westminster's archives.**

# The adventures of LK

*continued from page one*  
crossed the busy Cromwell Road safely.

Along the way he filled a neighbourhood need for a friendly visit. A retired older man living in a basement flat looked forward to seeing his feline companion every day. A family staying in a local hotel was so delighted by his first visit that they rang the owner and asked if the cat could have a “sleepover” (the answer was yes), and he touched so many other lives that his owner created a Little Kitty WhatsApp group so people could share their appreciation for him.

It had 12 members and included international fans.

Unfortunately, the reason Little Kitty’s story can now be told is that he was hit by a 4x4 car on March 15th on one of his daily rounds – the

driver didn’t stop – and the cat died soon after from his injuries. His owners, who previously wanted to keep his exploits unreported because they feared he might be stolen, are now ready to share his history.

The cat had an exotic beginning. In 2011 he was a feral kitten at a farm in Madera County, California, and was brought to the UK by his British-American owner, Grover Wickersham and his wife Teresa. His other main caregiver was Jennifer Mickel, who lives near the Wickershams in South Kensington and works for the family.

Used to roaming free in California, Little Kitty revolted against his early London life. Ms. Mickel said, “We tried to keep him inside but he would just go nuts, so



**Jennifer Mickel with Little Kitty**

we let him live his authentic life.”

Through his GPS device on his collar he could be free yet closely monitored. “I would check on him three or four times a day to see where he was,” said Ms. Mickel. “He had a route he would go on regularly. I would bring him back to base every second day.”

In the neighbourhood he turned up at the Eclipse nightclub on the Old Brompton Road, and was found striding across the gambling tables at the Grosvenor Casino Gloucester Road. He could be seen sprawled across the entrance mat at the Holiday Inn hotel on the Cromwell Road or sometimes inside the hotel’s guest rooms. One day Ms. Mickel got a call from the Gloucester Road underground station staff saying Little Kitty was on the station platform hunting for rats, so she had to collect him from the station master’s office.

He ventured further afield, including the time he was discovered walking up and down Praed Street, W2, near the Paddington

underground station. It’s not known whether Little Kitty took himself there by hopping on the tube. More mystery surrounds the time he went missing for three months, and was eventually found even further afield by people living in Wembley.

Photos by Grover Wickersham



They said they had found him walking beside the canal.

While he was missing his fans had formed search parties to look for him, and had put out a total of 450 “missing cat” posters alerting people to be on the lookout for him.

Twelve people gathered for a “celebration of life” party held for Little Kitty soon after he died. One fan who is mourning his loss created a video from the many photos taken of him, and Ms. Mickel has printed a photo book showcasing pictures of Little Kitty with some of his feline and human friends.

Mr. Wickersham, a photojournalist and writer, said Little Kitty’s life in California had been equally exotic

before he became a London cat. He had faced down rattle snakes, for example, and survived wrangles with other wild animals.

“Had he lived his life on the farm in California, death would have come in the form of a coyote or fox or missteps around a farm tractor, but he would not have made so many friends and had so many, many international adventures and satisfied so many of his own curiosities. So many people are so sad that such a loving soul is gone, but the memories are made bitter-sweet by knowing that LK lived on his own terms for more than 12 years, living in the town he loved the most, constantly in touch with the people and the animals that gave him the most joy.”

Little Kitty, the movie?



## The Tempest storms into Shakespeare in the Squares

A total of 18 garden squares will play host to the Shakespeare in the Squares performance of *The Tempest* this summer.

Sue Fletcher and Martin Neild, founders of the production company, said “After two years of Covid-enforced absence, Shakespeare in the Squares is thrilled to be returning with our joyful production. We are so grateful to the garden squares and parks that have kept the faith, and we look forward to bringing them our best show yet.”

The gardens that will welcome the play stretch from Camden Square, NW1, in the north, Charterhouse Square, EC1, in the east and Wandsworth in the south. The play previews on June 15 and runs until July 8. (See page 10 for the schedule.)

Commenting on *The Tempest*, director Sioned Jones (pictured below) said, “As we begin to emerge, battered and blinking from the storm of the past two years, the play’s themes are more pertinent than ever: We’ve all experienced being marooned – alone or in ‘bubbles’ – for what felt like an age, with all the inherent feelings of confusion, isolation, grief, loss, rage and unfairness.”

Shakespeare in the Squares is a not-for-profit touring theatre company that stages a Shakespeare play in London garden squares for one night in each venue every summer. It aims to provide a showcase for talented young theatre practitioners and to introduce audiences to the stars of the future.





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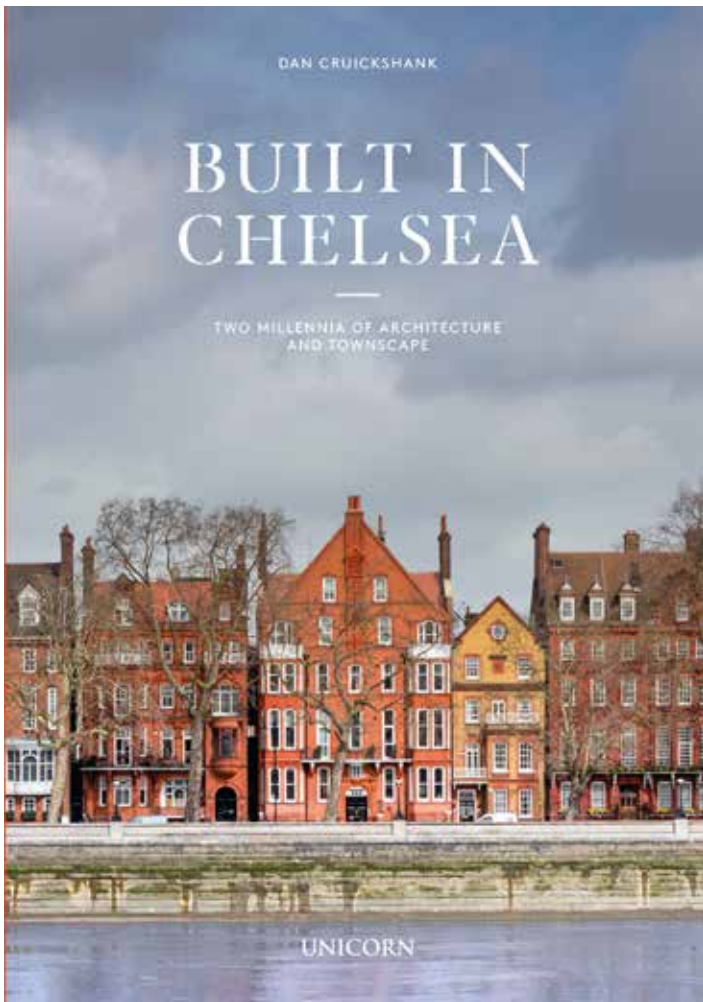
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## *Capturing Chelsea's growth over the past centuries*

The southern section of Cadogan Place (SW1), we are told in a new book, was a botanical garden in the late 1700s which became “a promenade for Chelsea’s ‘exquisites’, dandies and other people of fashion.”

Contrast such elegance with the lesser folk living nearby in the area between Chelsea Square (SW3) and Markham Square (SW3), which was developed around the same time as Cadogan Place at the beginning of the 19th century. What are now £3 million homes were then designed for “the more hum-drum residents of London – City clerks perhaps, scribes, petty shopkeepers, minor merchants, craftsmen and tradesmen.”

Such insights regularly jump out from *Built in Chelsea: Two Millennia of Architecture and Townscape* by Dan Cruickshank (pp331, £30, published by Unicorn with encouragement from the Cadogan Estate). Did you know that Carlyle Square (SW3) was once called Oakley Square? Or have you forgotten that Gerald Wellesley, brother of the Duke of Wellington, was Rector of Chelsea and married

the sister of the 3rd Earl Cadogan?

This is a highly detailed volume, at times moving almost house-by-house and century-by-century through Chelsea. (But not Kensington: no-one cared tuppence about that place until William III bought what is now Kensington Palace in 1689.)

Yet it is also a highly readable and well-illustrated book; many years of making BBC programmes and producing books have given Mr. Cruickshank command of his material, so he narrates with admirable confidence and flair.

– Neil Osborn

See [gardensquarenews.com](http://gardensquarenews.com) for:

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Photo by Dieter Wellmann

## Promoting book sharing in Kensington Gardens Square

**By Simon Glucina**

Kensington Gardens Square [W2] installed a 'little free library' in its large garden in March 2022. With the library, you can 'take-a-book-and-share-a-book', allowing people to share their favourite reads, in a sustainable way, with other residents, while enjoying our communal gardens.

The library is getting good use. The idea is promoted by [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org), a book-sharing community with over 125,000 little free libraries where more than 42 million books are shared annually.

The majority of libraries are self-built, preferably from recycled material, as is ours. We were delighted that Jan Kremer, one of our residents, chose to contribute it to the garden and built it himself, showing the community engagement we so value as well as wonderful skills.

*Mr. Glucina is the Chairman of the Kensington Gardens Square Garden Sub-Committee*

**A new free library grows in Kensington Gardens Square.**

**BETWEEN TWO WORLDS**  
Introducing Jeffery C. Becton

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Low Water, 2014, Jeffery C. Becton 42 x 63 in (106.7 x 160 cm)

# In Brief

## Dig for Victory again?

With the war in the Ukraine bringing warnings of upcoming food shortages, one scientist said in a recent report “I suspect there are ways that we can produce more food for ourselves without relying on one industry. Most people have ornamental gardens. Why aren't we growing our food in our gardens?”

The suggestion came, as reported in *The Times* newspaper, from Dr. Paul Sinnadurai of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. His comments were part of a report titled “Protected Areas and Nature Recovery” produced earlier this year by the British Ecological Society.

## Gas Lamps

The Knightsbridge Association wrote in its spring newsletter that since the replacement parts for the type of old style gas street lamps that line Montpelier Walk, SW7, and Rutland Gate, SW7, are becoming hard to find, the residents' association is hoping to find a way their effect can be preserved.

They said: “We are keen to keep their heritage character so are exploring whether we could apply for some of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy or other funding to be used to replace them as close as possible like for like with

gas-effect LED lanterns of suitable brightness and tone.”

## Playground problems

The war in the Ukraine has also had an impact on the construction of playgrounds. Charlie Mitchell, whose company Treesaurus built the Barkston Gardens playground featured in the spring 2021 issue of *Garden Square News*, said that birch plywood used in tree houses came from Russia, so that material is now hard to find.

Also Polish drivers who delivered Polish play equipment have gone off to fight the Russians, so the industry is now facing delivery times of 10 weeks.



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<b>ST JAMES'S GARDENS, W11</b> Thurs 16th June - 7pm	<b>CHARTERHOUSE SQUARE, EC1</b> Weds 29th June - 7pm
<b>NORLAND SQUARE, W11</b> Fri 17th June - 7pm	<b>LADBROKE SQUARE GARDEN, W11</b> Thurs 30th June - 7pm
<b>QUEEN'S PARK NW6</b> Sat 18th June - Mat. 2pm, Eve 7pm	<b>FORMOSA GARDEN, W9</b> Fri 1st July - 7pm
<b>ARUNDEL &amp; LADBROKE GARDENS, W11</b> Tues 21st June - 7pm	<b>ST PETER'S SQUARE, W6</b> Sat 2nd July - 7pm
<b>ALBERT SQUARE, SW8</b> Thurs 23rd June - 7pm	<b>ST ANNE'S CHURCH, WANDSWORTH, SW18</b> Mon 4th July & Tues 5th July - 7pm
<b>ARUNDEL &amp; ELGIN GARDENS, W11</b> Fri 24th June - 7pm	<b>ST JAMES'S SQUARE, SW1</b> Weds 6th July - 7pm
<b>CAMDEN SQUARE, NW1</b> Sat 25th June - 5pm	<b>CLEVELAND SQUARE, W2</b> Thurs 7th July & Fri 8th July - 7pm
<b>LITTLE WORMWOOD SCRUBS, W10</b> Sun 26th June - 5pm	

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# The garden gates swing open on June 11 and 12

It's an event that draws people from across the capital and around the world.

The London Square Open Gardens Weekend, scheduled for June 11 and 12, will offer participants views of more than 100 green spaces not normally open to the public.

Among the more unusual places are the Ismaili Centre Roof Garden, Nomura International Plc's roof garden, and the The Growing Kitchen in Hoxton.

The event was originated in 1998 by garden square resident Caroline Aldiss and is run by the London Gardens Trust.

Ms. Aldiss told *Garden Square News*: "As founder of the event it's wonderful to see how it's given so much pleasure over decades – with many visitors coming from abroad too. I hope this year's return event will be as glorious as ever."

To book tickets visit [londongardenstrust.org](http://londongardenstrust.org).



Photo by Diana Jarvis



Sylvan Mason Photographs

The idea invented by Caroline Aldiss, pictured left, opened communal gardens – like Ennismore Gardens, SW7, pictured above – to the general public for a day or a weekend once a year.

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# Ways youngsters can explore urban nature

*London's Natural History Museum and The Prince's Trust have developed an "Urban Nature Youth Worker Toolkit" that provides dozens of activities for helping youngsters engage with the outdoors.*

*Most can easily be carried out in a garden square.*

*The guide can be found at [nhm.ac.uk/take-part/youth-worker-toolkit](http://nhm.ac.uk/take-part/youth-worker-toolkit)*

*What follows are samples of the activities available.*

## **Walking blindfolded**

### HOW IT WORKS

- Before you start, ask the young people, 'What natural things can you sense, that might help you walk a straight course if you couldn't see?'
- The youth worker walks a long distance away, to the other end of the field, but in view still.
- One young person, the walker, closes their eyes or has a blind fold and must try and walk in a straight line to the youth worker.
- The rest of the group safely guides the walker, but does not influence their direction or speed, unless there is a danger. They must also remain silent. When the walker

comes level with the youth worker the youth worker says, 'Stop'.

- Every one has a go. You can see who gets the closest, the quickest.
- Ask them, 'What non-visual stimuli have you used to try and navigate?'

The game brings: Increased ability to use nature to be mindful.

## **Identification**

### iNATURALIST

iNaturalist is a free species identification platform. Sometimes it's nice to know you can pull something out of your back pocket (literally, if you have it on your phone!) to help you identify something.

It is also a social network for naturalists and scientists (and youth workers!) to share their findings and learn what nature is nearby.

### HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Record your observations.
- 02 Share with fellow naturalists.
- 03 Discuss your findings.

### GIVE IT A GO

Download the free app or log on at [uk.inaturalist.org](http://uk.inaturalist.org) and have a play.  
Warning: it gets addictive!

## **Clouds**

### RESOURCES

One of those blue sky days with clouds that swirl and move around making different shapes. Mats if you want something to lie

on.

### TIME

10 minutes.

### HOW IT WORKS

- Find a nice patch of grass, and lie down.
- As a group, watch the clouds and tell the young people to point out what shapes they see.

Simple.

- Alternatively, young people can call out the object they see in the clouds and then see who else can spot it and point it out.

□ Seeing familiar objects or patterns in otherwise random or unrelated objects is called pareidolia.

## **Scavenger Hunt**

### HOW IT WORKS

- In advance, head to the park and find as many different natural objects and collect one of each.

These will be the same objects the young people have to find. Examples include: different shapes/species of fallen leaves, twigs, feathers, seeds, nuts, pieces of bark, a sound recording of a bird, a photo or video of a squirrel. The more you have, the longer the activity will be.

- Divide your young people into teams. Show them the list of things they need to go and find. Let them loose!

□ First team to collect all items or take all images, wins.



**Youth workers can open doors to the natural world.**



**Teaching how to know your tree**

**Which way is North?**

**HOW IT WORKS**

This is a fun way to figure out north, south, east and west.

- Find a long, straight stick, about 50 centimetres in length, and push it into

the ground so that it stays upright.

- Mark the end of the stick's shadow with a stone or something similar that won't blow away. Because the Sun moves across the sky from east

to west, it's casting a shadow on the opposite side. So, this first stone will be your westernmost point.

- Wait roughly 20 minutes, and mark the new location of the end of the shadow. Since the Sun is moving west across the sky, the shadow's new location will be further east. Connecting these two rocks creates an east-west line.

- Put your left foot on the first rock 'W', and your right foot on the second, 'E'. When you're in this position, your front will be facing north and your back will be facing south.

**Know your tree**

**HOW IT WORKS**

- Get young people in pairs and ask them to number themselves one and two within



**Try iNaturalist**

each pair.

- Young person one closes their eyes or is blindfolded.
- Young person one is then safely guided by young person two, among the trees, to a particular tree of two's choice.
- Young person one spends five minutes getting to know the tree as well as they can using their senses of touch, smell and hearing.
- After five minutes, young person two guides young person one back to where they started, before the blindfold can come off.
- Young person one then has to try and find their tree with their eyes open.
- Five slow disorientating spins could be added before young person one takes off the blindfold to make it a bit harder.
- Switch up the roles, so everyone gets a go.

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f t i p o

# Experts map the flood damage and plan ways to protect residents from future flooding

*continued from page one*

“There is a major issue relating to insurance. For some, premiums have risen sharply, for others sky-rocketed – but some have not been able to obtain flood insurance. This is a real problem, and I have discussed it with senior politicians, but it will require government action – maybe some form of sinking fund, or everyone paying slightly more, to cover the risks of catastrophe.”

He added, “I personally would like to see a review of the impact of subterranean basements built within the

past 10 or 20 years. Some think they are entirely benign. Others think that they are the key reason for flooding in certain areas. They cannot both be right – and we need to ascertain what the evidence says, and act accordingly.”

The Labour Party – newly in control of Westminster Council – sounded the alarm about insurance in a statement released back in February. The statement said: “Westminster Labour is calling for urgent Government action to ensure that all residents can obtain insurance against flooding. Following the devastating local floods of 12th July 2021, many residents are finding insurers

refusing to cover their properties against flood damage or only doing so with prohibitive increase in premiums. More than 300 properties in Westminster were badly damaged by the floods, the vast majority of them being the basement apartments in houses converted into multiple flats.”

The statement continued, “There is a national scheme called Flood Re that was set up to make sure that flood insurance was available throughout the UK, even in locations that had previously suffered serious flooding. However, this scheme expressly excludes houses di-

vided into more than three flats, meaning that many basement flats in Westminster cannot benefit from Flood Re. Worse, whole houses converted into multiple flats are finding insurance unobtainable because of flood damage to one flat in the basement. This is quickly leading to problems with mortgage providers.

“We are calling on Rebecca Pow MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment, to extend the Flood Re scheme to include all leasehold flats, no matter the size of the building in which they are situated. This will ensure every household can be properly insured against future flooding.”

Thames Water has begun surveying vulnerable properties with a view to installing preventive measures such as FLIP mechanisms or non-return valves in individual properties, or, where appropriate, a more strategic-level trunk-sewer flap to protect multiple homes.

Thames Water has begun surveying vulnerable properties with a view to installing preventive measures such as FLIP mechanisms or non-return valves in individual properties, or, where appropriate, a more strategic-level trunk-sewer flap to protect multiple homes.

A spokesman for Thames Water said, “Customers who live in self-contained basement flats and have a limiting health condition will be our top priority.” The utility aims to reach all such customers by July 1.

On a private website that Thames Water directs flood victims to, it says the utility will “aim to have surveys completed by Christmas 2022 and installed devices in most properties by 2023.”

While Thames Water conducts its research, an independent analysis of the central London flooding problems commissioned by Thames Water is being carried out, and the second of four reports has just been released.

It states that one of eight pumps at the Hammersmith Pumping Station broke down during the flooding event, and this caused a “minor increase in water levels” in RBK&C and Westminster. Also, at the Lots Road Pumping Station, where the pumps are manually switched on when sewage levels are high, the experts, using the records from the pumping station, replicated what happened on July 12 to see if the timing of the manual switch-on affected the areas. They determined there was a “minor increase in water levels” in RBK&C due to the time that elapsed before the pumps were turned on.

*See maps opposite and on page 16*



**Thames Water CEO  
Sarah Bentley**

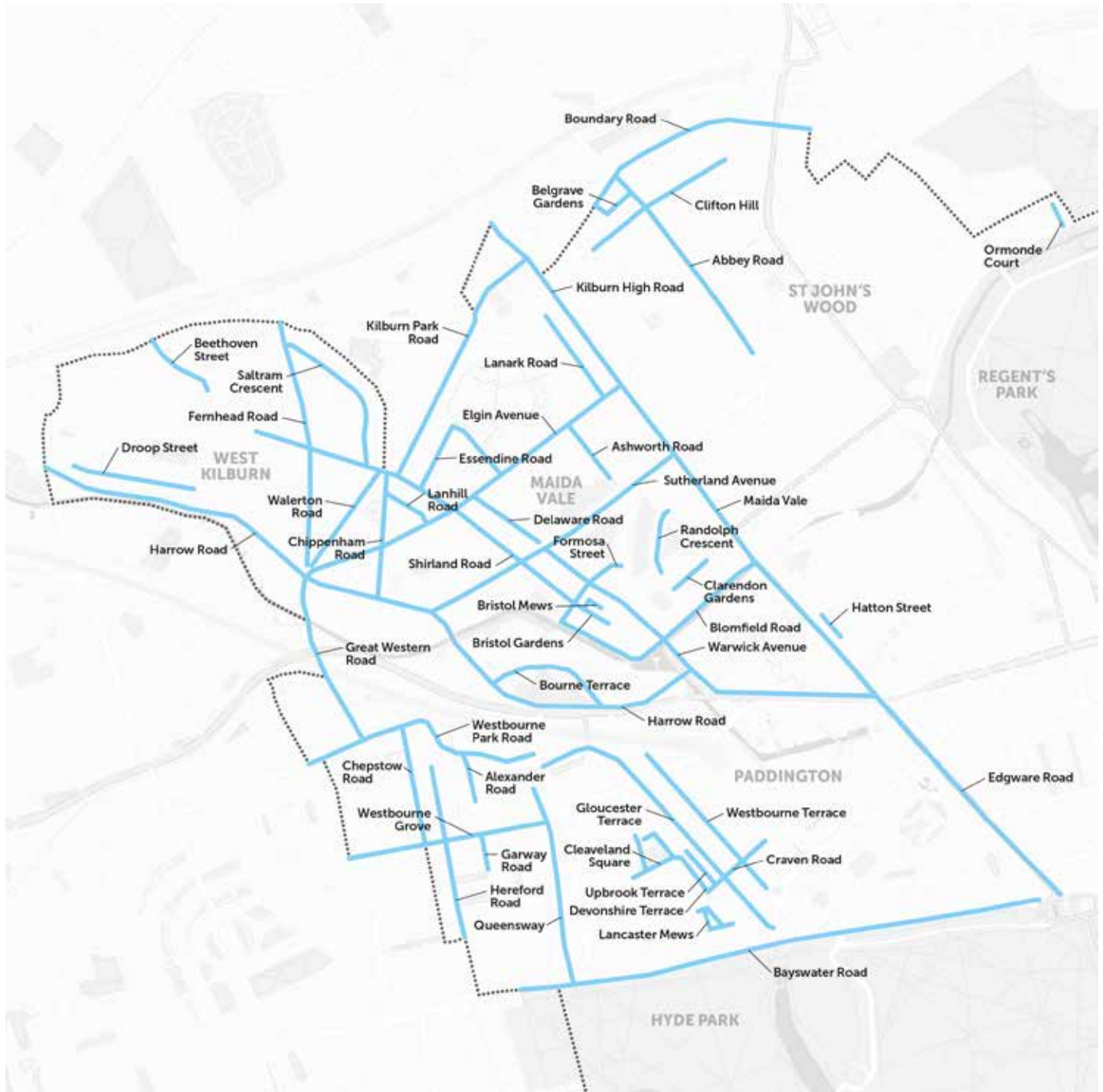
**The parent company of Thames Water Utilities Limited, which supplies the water and sewer services to RBK&C and Westminster, is Kemble Water Holdings Limited.**

**More than 300  
Westminster properties  
were badly damaged**

refusing to cover their properties against flood damage or only doing so with prohibitive increase in premiums. More than 300 properties in Westminster were badly damaged by the floods, the vast majority of them being the basement apartments in houses converted into multiple flats.”

The statement continued, “There is a national scheme called Flood Re that was set up to make sure that flood insurance was available throughout the UK, even in locations that had previously suffered serious flooding. However, this scheme expressly excludes houses di-

# *Streets in Westminster where at least one property was hit by flood water last year*

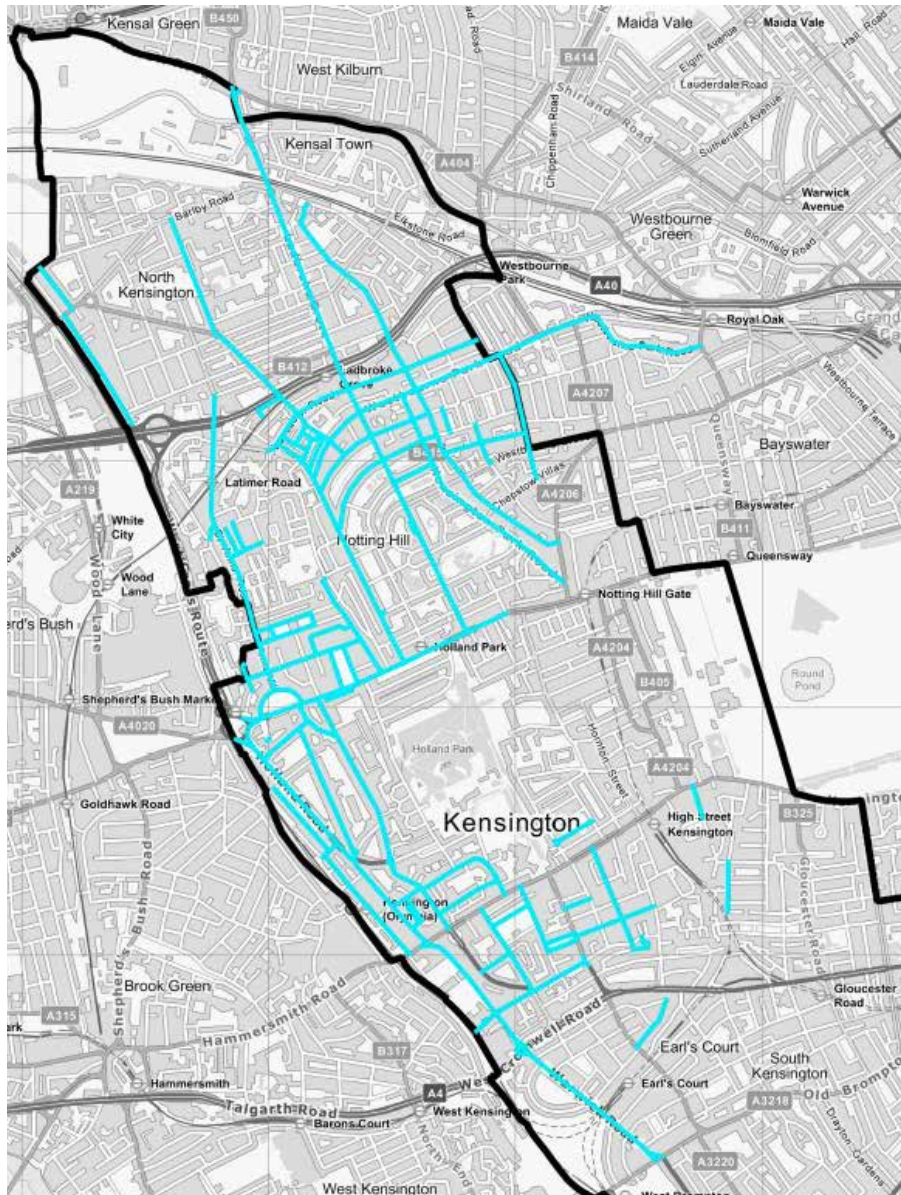


The map above shows the northern Westminster streets where one or more properties were affected by flooding on July 12 of last year. Not shown here are streets impacted by flooding in the southern part of Westminster: Portman Square, Bayswater

Road, Green Street, Duke Street, Oxford Street, Princes Street, Cliveden Place, Caroline Terrace, Eaton Terrace, Bourne Street, Pimlico Road, Upper Tachybrook Street, Longmore Street, and Whitehall. Source: Westminster City Council

# Streets impacted in Kensington & Chelsea

continued from page 15



Information about London's flooding can be difficult to find on the official Thames Water website.

The press officer for the utility advises this method of navigating to the information: go to the website:

[thameswater.co.uk](http://thameswater.co.uk)

and then type: *sewer flooding prevention*

into the search bar at the top of the home page.

Subject List of flooded streets during the 12 July 2021 event

## 1 Flooded streets

69 streets:

Addison Road	Holland Road	Princes Place
Allen Street	Holland Villas Road	Queensdale Road
Ansleigh Place	Kensington Park Road	Radley Mews
Arundel Gardens	Kenway Road	Rosmead Road
Beckford Close	Ladbroke Grove	Royal Crescent
Blenheim Crescent	Lancaster Road	Russell Gardens
Bramley Road	Latimer Road	Russell Road
Brewster Gardens	Ledbury Road	Scarsdale Villas
Camelford Court	Lonsdale Road	Sloane Square
Camelford Walk	Lorne Gardens	St Anns Road
Clarendon Road	Lower Clarendon Walk	St Anns Villas
Colville Road	Melbury Road	St James's Gardens
Colville Square	Napier Place	St Marks Close
Cope Place	Napier Road	St Marks Road
Cornwall Crescent	Norland Road	Stafford Terrace
Darnley Terrace	Norland Square	Stanford Road
Edwardes Square	Notting Hill Gate	Stoneleigh Place
Elgin Crescent	Pembroke Gardens	Stoneleigh Street
Ellis Street	Pembroke Road	Upper Addison Gardens
Elsham Road	Pembroke Square	Warwick Road
Holland Park Avenue	Pimlico Road	Westbourne Park Road
Holland Park Gardens	Portobello Road	West Eaton Place
Holland Park Road	Princedale Road	Young Street

The map above shows streets in RBK&C where flooding was reported from the July 12 storm of last year. Not pictured: Ellis Street and Royal Hospital Road in the southeastern part of the Royal Borough. The map was supplied by RBK&C and consultants JBA Group.



# Statement from Thames Water

Sewer flooding of your home or business is a horrible thing to experience and once it has happened it's understandable people worry about it happening again. We're developing a £10 million programme to make homes at higher risk of sewer flooding more resilient to the impact from extreme rainfall. Properties that reported sewer flooding

from the storm on 12 July 2021 will be surveyed individually to assess their future flood risk and determine the best course of action to better protect them. This could mean fitting individual property-level measures like valves to stop sewage backing up through sewer pipes on their property or, where appropriate, flaps in some of our bigger sewers to protect multiple homes from sewer flooding.

We will shortly be carrying out a trial in an area of Hammersmith and Fulham to establish the most effective way of rolling out the programme and will be contacting customers in the trial area to arrange their surveys. Once the trial is underway

we'll contact customers outside that area, who have told us they have experienced sewer flooding, so we can assess their properties. While our programme is designed specifically to address sewer flooding and won't protect homes from surface water flooding, we hope the findings of the independent flooding review we've commissioned will help us, and partners responsible for surface water management, make improvements where needed to reduce risks into the future.

For information:

Sewer flooding is when sewage water backs up into a property through drains, plugholes and toilets. Flood-

ing caused by rainwater from roads and overflowing drains/gullies entering a property through doors, windows, up through floors etc is classified as surface water flooding.

Anyone who has already told us about sewer flooding by filling out a sewer flooding questionnaire does not need to contact us about getting their property assessed as we will contact them, but we encourage anyone who was flooded by the July storms and hasn't completed a questionnaire to do so on our website [www.thameswater.co.uk/flooding](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/flooding).



## Belgravia Forest School is open!

Grosvenor is now welcoming local schools and community groups to its outdoor learning centre in Belgrave Square.

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# The top hats vanished, then the servants too

Garden Square News has been given access to a memoir by the Reverend Arthur Donal Browne, one-time rector of St Mary Church, Bryanston Square (W1) and later of St Jude's Church, set inside Courtfield Gardens East (SW5).

His words, written in 1975, give special insights into the dramatic social changes in London in the years following his ordination in 1935. A modest man, Rev. Browne mentions his World War II service as a senior army chaplain – but omits the fact he was decorated for bravery, having tended the wounded under enemy fire during a battle in Galmanche, France, in 1944.



**The Reverend Arthur Donal Browne, M.C., M.A.**

Below are extracts from the memoir:

## FORTY YEARS ON

On Saturday December 21st 1935 I arrived at St. Paul's Cathedral wearing a brand new dog collar, and accompanied by my father, for my ordination as Deacon. The ceremony, which was deeply impressive, culminated in the Bishop laying his hand on my head, when, I was quite certain, the Holy Spirit came upon me in a new way.

I was licensed as a Curate to the parish of St. Mary, Bryanston Square. The Rector, Nicholas Simms, was a learned and delightfully humorous Irishman, and we had taken to one another. He had found me a room in a boarding house for 30/- a week (bed and breakfast), and my salary was £250 a

year. It was a fashionable London church and the big houses in Bryanston and Montagu Squares were all in private occupation, owned mostly by gentry who also had country estates. As Curate, I had to visit working class population in the back streets, and the army of domestic servants 'downstairs' in the big houses. In these streets behind the church, families normally lived in the two rooms on one floor.

*Why is it that all the old ladies lived on the top floor?*

There was no bathroom, and the only loo, shared by the whole house, was outside in the yard at the back of the house. You had to know how many knocks to give on the door – three or four for the top floor. And why is it that all the old ladies lived on the very top floor?



**St. Mary, Bryanston Square, in Marylebone**

We had our own church school, where the Curate taught scripture in the first period every morning. We catered for children up to leaving age at fourteen, and were very modern in having a nursery school. The children were taught to as high an academic standard as they could reach, with arts and handicraft for the less intellectual. They were all taught good manners, as well as the Christian religion as accepted by the Church of England.

Church services, although the national decline in church-going had already started, were well-attended by present standards. At Matins we still had a few top hats. We had an early communion at 6:30 a.m. for the convenience of the servants, who also tended to come in the evenings. Sunday schools numbered over two hundred, which I had to try and cope with; while the Rector held a Children's service in the morning for the gentry. All the usual parish organisations flourished... Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies, Girls Friendly Society (for servant girls), Women's Fellowship. I had to run a Boy's Club, as well as take an active part in the Men's Institute (which had flourishing membership of over 150). There were plenty of people with leisured time to undertake the manning of these activities.

The outbreak of the war in 1939 demolished the whole of this structure, almost overnight. Servants disappeared and were never replaced. The big houses were commandeered for

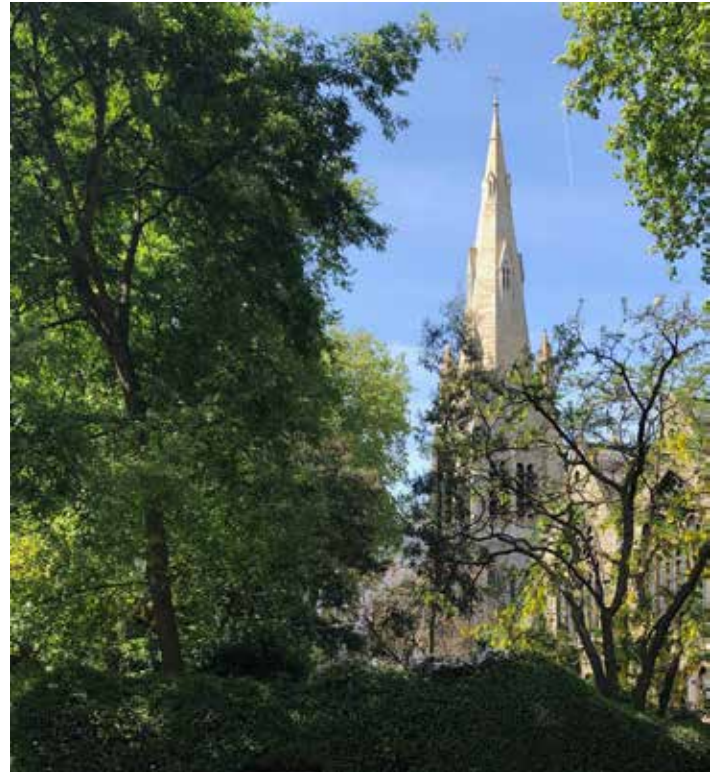
military purposes. The children were evacuated. The Curate joined the army as padre, leaving the Rector, already over seventy, to carry on the services and the life of the parish with a handful of the faithful.

My first posting was to the Royal Fusiliers Depot in Hounslow. This enabled me to carry on a courtship of the most beautiful of my parishioners. We married on a lovely sunny afternoon in St. Mary's. It was a fine wedding, but it was also the first day of the blitz on London at the beginning of the Battle of Britain. After a quiet war in Northern Ireland, and a not so quiet one on the Kent coast, I eventually went over to Europe via Normandy, Holland and Germany, and finished my army career as senior Chaplain to the British Troops in Berlin. As this point Mr. Simms resigned from St. Mary's and I was asked to return as Rector, which I gladly did.

*Portman Estate had to sell up most of the parish, and the developers moved in.*

The task of rebuilding church life was a formidable one; especially since I had known what it had been like before the war. Everything had changed. Imagine the shock when I called on one of the few houses in Montagu Square in private occupation, and instead of the footman opening the door came a shout from a second-story window! People began coming back to London and church life began building up.

There was a real sense



**St. Jude's Church in Courfield Gardens East, Earl's Court. It is now primarily a theological college.**

of thankfulness for what seemed to most people a wonderful deliverance from the terrors of war. There was also the residue of the sense of togetherness that the war had engendered. But we were all very tired, and it did not seem possible to ask any great effort from anyone.

Spiritually there was a resurgence in the 50s and graphs of church attendance etc., were on the upward grade. But life as it was pre-war had gone for ever. The big houses were converted into flats. The Portman Estate had to sell up most of the parish, and the developers moved in. The picturesque shambles of the working class streets became desirable bijou residences. The 'village' shops gave place to smart antiques shops. The many bombed sites were built up into modern blocks of flats whose rents

only foreigners, apparently, could afford. One wondered what had happened to the Londoners. Slum areas were cleared; and although people got 'mod.cons' they lost the Coronation Street togetherness which had meant so much. The social patterns of generations changed in twenty years.

It was a good moment for me to move. In 1961 I was approached by my Arch-deacon, Mr. Matthews, who had been Vicar of St. Jude's with the suggestion that I might take over this parish from Mr. Beck who had just resigned the living. I was most fortunate to be offered a second West End parish, and we moved here in 1962. Here I found that the wind of change that was blowing so strongly in Marylebone, was only a fresh breeze.

*continued on next page*

*continued from previous page*

There were still flourishing congregations at morning services, mostly of the older type of Kensington resident.

Traditionally this was an area where men who had served the Empire abroad came to retire. Large numbers had settled here when, for instance, India became independent in 1947. But inevitably it was an ageing community, and as the ground leases of the Gunter and Campbell estates fell in, the rents became too great for the older residents; and they began to move away.

There was always a large 'bed-sitter' population, mostly of young single people. Now the flats were let furnished to groups of young

people sharing. The average age of the population fell dramatically.

Fortunately, the Lord has His ways of dealing with things. The 60s were a disastrous period for the churches. It saw the 'bomb' generation come of age, with all its anti-establishment, permissive sub-culture. Earl's Court became a sort of Hippy Mecca.

It was in face of these challenges that the faithful few in the church began thinking and praying for our Centenary in 1970. We decided that we must not be looking back to the glories of the past, but face the challenges of the future.

If there is one lesson that my forty years in the ministry has taught me, it is the necessity to be flexible in

the face of changing circumstances. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit'.

*The past five years have, perhaps, been the most exciting and rewarding*

The past five years have, perhaps, been the most exciting and rewarding of my whole ministry. Out of our praying together came an awareness that there must be much, much more that the Holy Spirit could do in and through us as a church if only we would let Him.

We had known the power of Pentecost in theory, but assumed that it was only for the Christians of the first age. We mouthed the words of faith, and even agonised in our prayers about them; but rarely stepped out in trust that Jesus is the same today as He was yesterday. But the feast of Pentecost 1972 was indeed an experience of being filled by the Holy Spirit for us as a church. House Groups began to blossom, there was a new intensity in worship and praise. Our evening services began to grow as young people, deeply committed to Christ, joined in loving fel-

lowship with one another as well as with the Lord.

We were given the One Way Inn in the Earl's Court Road, and the people to man it [for use as a Christian coffee bar and advice centre]. With this influx of young new spiritual life, it has been so good to see the way in which the older members of the church have opened their arms and welcomed it. It is, of course, only a beginning, but it is full of hope for the future, not just for our own parish, but for the church as a whole.

Looking back over forty years in the ministry, I certainly have never regretted my ordination. There are regrets... of the many people that I might have helped and didn't. I deeply regret that too much of my teaching has been on a purely cerebral level. I could wish that I had known about and claimed the gifts of the Spirit which have been available for us always, but never appropriated.

*A. Donal Browne  
21st December, 1975.*



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**Good night Forum hotel interior**

After abandoning the battle to replace the Kensington Forum Holiday Inn hotel with a much larger complex, (G&N Autumn 2021 and prior) the owners of the hotel, Queensgate Investments, have now sold the complex to Singapore-based GP Hotel International.

out the high-rise building with a view to refurbishing it and making it a four-star operation, according to a company spokesman. The pillows pictured above were some of the first objects to go.

The buyers have shut down the hotel operation and are currently stripping

The spokesman said it is not yet clear what access the public will have to the public garden space around the building during the work.

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2 <sup>nd</sup> Egerton Crescent	<b>LARGE PUBLIC SQUARE</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> St. James's Square

**Brighter Kensington and Chelsea 2021**  
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## *Nevern Square sports a stylish new fountain for summer refreshment*

**By Aaron Landeryou**

In 2019 the Sub-Committee of Nevern Square, SW5, decided to install a drinking fountain for residents to use on hot summer days. The Sub-Committee considered a number of different fountains and decided on the Murdock Fountain supplied by Acord Thorn in the US as it had a Victorian style which would fit in well in the garden.

In order to install a fountain for communal use, we needed to first check the quality of the water in the garden and ensure the fountain met Water Regulations Advisory Scheme requirements. Thames Water carried out the water condition test and confirmed the water quality was of drinking standard. Thames Water also reviewed the individual parts of the fountain to ensure they were of the highest standard.

The fountain was ordered in 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic it took longer to arrive than expected and then could not be put into use until later in the year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The fountain cost £2,671, including delivery. The fountain and installation costs were covered by donations from the late Barbara Dissem, a resident of Nevern Square, and Silvia and Alastair Calderwood in loving memory of their daughter Tamara who had played in the garden as a child.

The fountain has seen plenty of use since it was installed.

*Aaron Landeryou is Garden Manager of Westbourne Management, a firm that manages Nevern Square and many other communal squares in central London.*



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*Garden Square News* is an independent publication designed to provide garden committees and garden square residents with information about communal gardens and their surrounding areas. All articles, except where noted, are written by Holly Smith, Editor and Publisher.

Letters, subscriptions, and advertising queries should be sent to:

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London SW5 0LJ

Subscriptions for garden committees are £55 per year. Individual subscriptions are £25 per year. Back issues are £3 each, with special prices for large orders.

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# Mystery gate cut into Courtfield Gardens West

Watergate, partygate, and now gategate.

Courtfield Gardens West Garden Sub-Committee members were shocked to discover that someone had neatly and professionally cut the SW5 garden's perimeter railings and created an illegal gate.

A keypad lock (pictured right) was welded to the gate



**Railings specialists were hired to seal the opening.**

edge.

The railings cutting had happened some time around April 3 or 4, according to a Sub-Committee spokesperson who asked to remain unnamed.

Sub-Committee members quickly arranged for a railings firm (pictured below left) to come and repair the breach.

“Any unauthorised access would have serious security implications for all of the Collingham Road residents whose properties enjoy direct access to the garden,” the spokesperson said. The gate was cut near No.15 Collingham Road, a corner property.

The spokesperson added, “To date, no-one has claimed responsibility for the damage and it is now in the hands of RBKC’s legal advisor for the Borough’s



**An open and shut case. The new gate created in Courtfield Gardens West’s railings was quickly undone.**

Communal Gardens, Robert Barham. Reimbursement for the £800 cost of the remedial

work will be sought from the persons/persons responsible for the damage.”



## Letter from the Editor

*Dear Garden Square News readers,*

*I’m offering this flower image as a small antidote to the bad news we see these days on TV and read in our papers (including this one).*

*The rhododendron blossom pictured here was one of the delights waiting for me yesterday when I took a walk in our communal garden, so I snapped a photo of it while the May morning sunshine spilled over it.*

*Enjoy your garden, and the solace it provides, and don’t forget to visit some of the nearby gardens on June 11 and 12 during the London Square Open Gardens Weekend.*

*Holly Smith  
Editor and Publisher  
Garden Square News*