

The Cherry Tree

A newsletter for the Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association 2/1999

Trial first for new barrier into PGT

As a result of strong concerns expressed by the residents, the Council's Highways and Traffic Committee has decided to have a six months trial period with temporary constructions before any permanent change is done to the barrier at the top of Palace Gardens Terrace.

The original plan was to make it harder for car drivers to illegally enter PGT and at the same time make it legal for cyclists to go down that way, by building a hump in the road and a cycle path through the



There will be a six month trial period before the PGT barrier is permanently changed.

kerb build-out, followed by a marked cycle lane outside the parking bays through the one-way section of PGT.

One possible solution being discussed is to make all of

PGT two-way. The exit into Kensington Mall would just be made a no-entry for cars coming the other way, just as in Vicarage Gate.

With a path for southbound

cyclists through the barrier, that solution would make it legal for cyclists to go down PGT and no special contra-flow cycle lane would have to be constructed.



The farmer's market in Notting Hill is a welcome alternative to supermarket shopping.



At the market you're likely to bump into neighbours, like our chairman Willoughby Wynne.

Farmer's market is a success

The Notting Hill farmer's market, which is in the parking area behind Waterstones every Saturday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., seems to be a success. It has now been going on for several months and the customers continue to come.

Last Saturday there were more than a dozen stalls. You could buy fruit, vegetables, flowers, fresh herbs, bread, cheese, eggs, chicken, lamb, pork, sausages and even ostrich meat (and ostrich eggs) - most of it organically produced and all of it sold directly to the consumers by the producing farms.

In the last couple of years, these markets have sprung up all around London, providing a welcome alternative to supermarket shopping and an extra source of income for the farmers.



An enormous pistol has been mounted on the wall of the Czech Embassy above Kensington Mall.

Art at gunpoint

We all applaud the work being done to improve Notting Hill, but many question some of the art pieces that have been erected.

The most recent is a very large pistol on the wall of the Czech Embassy. Is it good taste? Very questionable. Is it appropriate? Doubtful, as the country's move from communism, as well as the split from Slovakia, went about rather peacefully.

"Give me a new 99-year lease and we'll both make money. Otherwise I'll build something nasty on the parish glebe"

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the area where we live was very different from now. Kensington was a small but quickly growing town, which at that point stretched north from High Street only up to the bend in Church Street (which was then called Church Lane). The village of Notting Hill reached southward along Silver Street (which was then the name of the upper part on Church Street) only to about where Church Street meets Peel Street today.

The area in between was mainly farmland, dominated on the top of the hill by two mansions on either side of Church Lane. The one on the west side was the imposing Campden House, on the north side of today's Gloucester Walk, and the one on the east side was the more modest Sheffield House, situated opposite today's Sheffield Terrace.

The earliest records regarding Sheffield House is from 1603, when Sir Walter Cope (builder of Holland House) sold a house on that site to Sir George Coppin, who, like Cope, was an influential figure at the Court of James I. Ten years later he sold the house, presumably moving on to the house which was built for him and later enlarged to become Kensington Palace. The buyer was Lady Jane Berkeley, widow of the seventh Baron Berkeley. When she died in 1618, she left the house to her grandson, Sir Roger Townshend, but in 1646 it was owned by Edmund Sheffield, first Earl of Mulgrave.

Demolished and rebuilt

The mansion remained in the Sheffield family until around 1725 and was known in the area as either Sheffield House or Mulgrave House. When the last of the male Sheffields died, the house was, after litigation, turned over to the husband of a granddaughter of the last Sheffield. Twenty years later he sold or leased the house and its grounds to two local builders, who demolished the house and used the grounds as a brickfield.

In 1791 a Thomas Robinson, according to some sources a gardener to George III, bought the estate and re-built Sheffield House as a brick-faced three-storey Georgian mansion. On his death in 1810, Robinson left the house to his nephew

We live in one of the best areas of London, but many of us, especially the newcomers, know very little about its fascinating history. In an attempt to rectify this, The Cherry Tree hopes to be able to run stories about our area's past in every issue. We start with how it all began, 150 years ago.

Alexander Robinson, who already owned the area now occupied by Bedford Gardens, Campden Street, Peel Street and Edge Street. When Alexander died in 1824, he left most of it to his eldest son, another Thomas Robinson.

The Sheffield House estate covered all the land between Church Lane and today's Brunswick Gardens/Vicarage Gate, down from today's Melon Place up to the area opposite Campden Street. The area between Sheffield House and the west end of the Royal Gardens (which was later to become "Millionaires' Row") was the glebe of the parish, which had belonged to successive vicars of Kensington since at least 1260. Most of the glebe was held by Sheffield House on a 99-year lease granted to the elder Thomas Robinson in 1794.

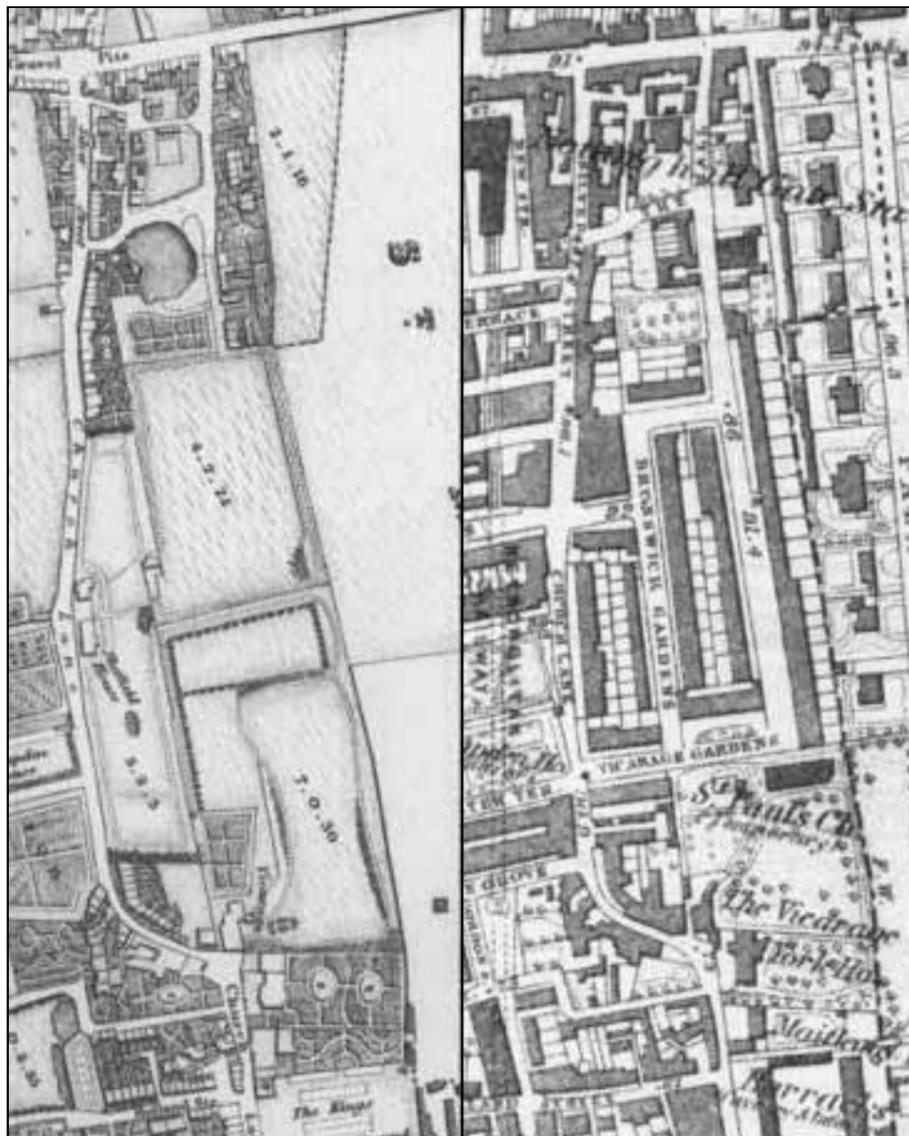
Population explosion

Kensington, as all of London, was growing rapidly. When Queen Victoria was born in 1819, Kensington's population was 12,000. By 1850 it was nearly 50,000 and when she died in 1901 it was 176,000. While part of the population explosion can be credited to better living conditions, higher birth rates and increased life expectancy, most of the increase came from migration. In Kensington's case it was usually people moving "upward and outward", i.e. Londoners with increased income looking for an attractive home away from areas that were being flooded by people from other parts of Britain hoping to improve themselves in the capital.

As a consequence of this, building was a very "hot" industry that Thomas Robinson, owner of the Sheffield House estate and leaseholder of most of the glebe land, was eager to be part of.

Threatening and tempting

So, in 1853 he approached archdeacon John Sinclair, the vicar of St. Mary Abbots, with a proposition: Thomas Robinson would surrender his lease, which had 40 years outstanding, in return for a building



This is what our area looked like in 1822....and the enormous changes by 1878.

agreement enabling him to develop both his freehold and leasehold simultaneously. The vicar would grant Robinson new leases for 99 years and Robinson would grant sub-leases to the various builders. If the vicar didn't agree, Robinson threatened to erect "objectionable" buildings on the glebe.

The vicar quickly agreed. Robinson had offered to pay him a ground rent of £540 per annum for about nine acres of land. This was substantially more than the current ground rent and also much more than normal ground rents paid for developments in neighbouring areas like the Pitt and

Phillimore estates. The extra money would be quite welcome for the vicarage.

So, in April 1854 the vicar signed the agreement with Robinson, allowing him to build houses on the glebe and giving him leases for 99 years from March 1854. The houses were to be approved by the architect of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the leases were to contain covenants requiring the occupiers to keep their houses in good repair and decoration. No "hazardous, noisy, noisome or offensive" trade or business would be allowed, including those of bagnio-keeper (brothel keeper) and sheriff's officer. It was later found out

that the vicar had signed the agreement without the consent of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners or the Bishop of London, so a more formal agreement was signed in 1860.

With the agreement signed, Robinson started the work immediately. Architect David Brandon was probably the author of the layout plan. He submitted applications to the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers in 1854 for permission to lay over 3,000 feet of sewers in the new streets about to be constructed. There is, however, no evidence that Brandon did any of the house designs.

Five builders

Five different builders shared the development of the area: the local builders Jeremiah Little and Thomas Huggett, William Lloyd Edwards of Paddington, Thomas Finlay of Paddington and - in the final phase - Joseph Mears of Hammersmith.

While he sub-let the glebe land to the builders, Robinson chose to sell most of the Sheffield House estate to them, only keeping the freehold of 1-19 (odd) Brunswick Gardens. The main buyer was Jeremiah Little, who also bought the southern tip of the estate, called Melon Ground, from Robinson's sister and brother, Lucy and Robert Robinson. This was the only piece of Sheffield House estate that their father Alexander had left to them instead of Thomas.

Building operations began on the site of Sheffield House already in 1854 and started on the glebe the following year. By 1870 Robinson's development was finished.

Handsome profit

While the vicar was happy for the £540 per year that the new leases gave the vicarage, Thomas Robinson was probably even happier. He secured a handsome profit in improved ground rents through the sub-leases to the builders. For instance, he was granted one lease of the sites of 45-53 (odd) Palace Gardens Terrace and 48-56 (even) Brunswick Gardens at an annual ground rent of £5, but he sub-let the individual houses to William Lloyd Edwards at a total in improved ground rents of £110 per year. If he had this profit margin on all of the glebe land, he made almost £12,000 per year while the vicar made £540. This in addition to the money he made when selling the Sheffield House freeholds.

One part of the glebe wasn't part of the deal between Robinson and the vicar, namely the Vicarage Gate area. The vicarage had for several hundred years been situated where Vicarage Gate now meets Church Street. For many years there had been a campaign for a straighter road between Notting Hill and High Street, but the vicarage was literally in the way. Finally, in 1877, it was decided that a new vicarage should be built where Hamilton House now stands. The bend in Church Street remained however, and fortunately Vicarage Gate and Brunswick Gardens never became the thoroughway some had intended.

Moving the vicarage meant building the cul-de-sac of Vicarage Gate, and the opportunity was taken to develop the area inside the "horse shoe" of Vicarage Gate. Tenders were invited for the highest ground rent offered for building not more than 14 houses under 99-year leases, and at least £30,000 was to be spent on the construction of the houses.

Seventhfold increase in 23 years

Joseph Mears of Hammersmith came with the highest offer: £425 per year for the less than one acre involved. This demonstrates the sharp increase in property value in Kensington during the 23 years since Robinson struck his very generous £60 per acre deal with the vicar.

Mears built 1-14 (consec.) Vicarage Gate under an agreement made in October 1877 and he sold most of the houses as leaseholds shortly after completion at prices between £4,000 and £4,500.

While he was at it, Mears also bought a builder's yard in the Melon Place cul-de-sac from Jeremiah Little, who had constructed it in the beginning of the 1854 development to have building material within easy reach. On this site Mears build three further houses facing Vicarage Gate during 1880-81: 16-18 Vicarage Gate.

The two final developments of church land came in 1934, when Vicarage Court was built on the vicarage garden, and in 1966-68, when the new vicarage and parish hall was built and Hamilton House was erected on the site of the 1877 vicarage.

In 1954 the Church Commissioners took over the glebe land and started selling the freeholds to the leaseholders.

Sources: Survey of London Vol XXXVII Northern Kensington (1973), Notting Hill and Holland Park Past (Barbara Denny 1993), Kensington Past (Barbara Denny & Carolyn Starren 1998).



Annual General Meeting

CTRAA's annual general meeting is in the Essex Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, on Monday 22 November at 8 p.m. New and old members are very welcome. As usual, there will be representatives from the Police as well as the Council present, ready to answer any questions or concerns we may have. There will be drinks afterwards.

New members welcome

The aim of CTRAA (The Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association) is to preserve and enhance our local environment. We are open to all residents in the area and rely on having an enthusiastic membership. Currently we have around 400 members and new members are always welcome. The annual subscription is only £3 per person (£8 for 3 years).



Leaning trees on either side of Palace Gardens Terrace...



...in Vicarage Gate, and at the top end of Brunswick Gardens.

Useful Numbers

The Police

Notting Hill Police Station: 0171-221 1212
 Crime Prevention: 0181-246 0169
 Police Traffic Support Unit: 0181-246 0186
 Drugs Advice and Information: 0181-960 5599

The Council

Dangerous Structures

Office hours: 0171-341 5765
 Out of hours: 0171-373 6099

Dog Warden

Office hours: 0171-341 5181
 Out of hours: 0171-361 6099

Environmental Health

Office hours: 0171-341 5282
 Out of hours: 0171-361 3484
 Noise and Nuisance Service:
 24 hours: 0171-361 3484

Parking

All enquiries: 0171-937 7755
 Resident permits:
 0171-361 3955
 Parking suspension:
 0171-361 3959
 Information about removed
 vehicles: 0171-747 4747

Pest Control Information

0171-341 3228

Refuse Collection

Commercial: 0171-341 0300
 Domestic: 0171-341 5284
 Refuse bags: 0171-341 5144

Roads and Pavements

Office hours: 0171-341 5250
 Out of hours: 0171-373 6099

Scaffolding

Permits: 0171-341 3390/3391
 Complaints: 0171-341 5284

Skips

To hire: 0171-341 5144
 Permits: 0171-361 3390

Social Services

Office hours: 0171-361 2563
 Out of hours: 0171-373 2227

Street Cleaning

0171-341 5184

Street Lighting

0171-341 5258

Trees

Office hours: 0171-361 3524
 Out of hours: 0171-373 6099

Please note

If you have access to the Internet, you can reach officials and departments 24 hours a day through the Council's own web site (www.rbkc.gov.uk).

Leaning trees

Some of our beloved trees are not reaching for the sky anymore. They seem more interested in reaching the other side of the street. However, they don't realise that sooner or later their roots won't be able to hold them up anymore.

Many residents have expressed concern for the trees as well as public safety. The Council has been informed about it and has promised that their tree

experts will assess the situation shortly and recommend a course of action. The worst "leaners" will probably have to be taken down and new trees will be planted in their place.

Trees are also protected

Everybody may not know that you are not allowed to cut down a tree in a conservation area without permission.

But RBK&C resident Fergus Kinmonth knows that now. He was fined £250 for felling an ornamental apple tree in his front garden without informing the Council. He was also ordered to pay £150 in costs.

Notice must be given six weeks before changes are made to a tree in a conservation area. The Council then decides if the tree qualifies for a Tree Preservation Order.

The Cherry Tree

A newsletter for the Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association

Editor: Thomas Blomberg

Daytime: 0181-237 7907

Evenings: 0171-938 3775

Material for future issues can be sent to:
 Flat 7, 18 Vicarage Gate, London W8 4AA

The Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association

Chairman: Willoughby Wynne

39 Brunswick Gardens

London W8 4AW

Tel: 0171-727 9786

The aim of The Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association is to improve our neighbourhood and to function as our representative towards the Council and other authorities in matters concerning the area. Membership is open to all residents living in Palace Gardens Terrace, Strathmore Gardens, Berkeley Gardens, Brunswick Gardens, Inverness Gardens, Vicarage Gardens, Vicarage Gate, on the southern side of Kensington Mall, and on the eastern side of Kensington Church Street between Vicarage Gate and Kensington Mall.