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Summer party in the vicar's garden a new tradition?



The autumn party drew a big crowd as usual.

The CTAA annual summer party was this year held in the vicarage's beautiful and large garden, and it won't be the last time, judging from what the vicar said afterwards; so it seems that we were reasonably well behaved.

The summer party was held on Wednesday 25 June, and although it was attended by more than 100 people it never seemed crowded, as the garden is so big.

Our "new" (he's been with us for a year now) vicar, father Gillean Craig, said afterwards that he would like to see it become a tradition – and who are we to argue with the vicar?

The autumn party was held at the

The Cherry Tree

A newsletter for the Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association

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The Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association

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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.

usual place, Inverness Gardens, on Sunday 14 September, and was, as always, well attended. It was marked by the absence of our chairman, Willoughby Wynne, who was in hospital after a very nasty fall on the cricket field, so the former chairman Huw Thomas hosted the event. Shortly before the AGM in November Willoughby was finally released from the hospital and could resume his chairmanship; a relief to us all.

As usual, for both parties, Winkworth supplied the fantastic finger food free of charge, and the good wine came from Tuggy Meyer at a much discounted price.

The pink elephant - improvement or hazard?

If nothing else, one must give the Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group credit for its bravery when commissioning the art that is intended to beautify Notting Hill Gate, as many people with more conventional tastes probably question if these pieces actually help improve the area. They also don't seem to be of the enduring kind that would last years of wind, rain and pollution. But, considering how many sculptures that have come and gone during the almost ten years that the Improvements Group has existed, perhaps the intention behind the sculptures has never been to provide permanent fixtures, but a continually changing outdoor art exhibition?

The latest addition is the "Carnival Elephant", by the Beirut art professor Nadim Karam. It is positioned in Newcombe Piazza, the mini square between Waterstones and the tube station. The elephant is a big aluminium



The Carnival Elephant has a very sharp and unprotected trunk.

mesh construction, standing in front of the archway that contained a not so successful fountain for a while. Now it serves as a backdrop for the elephant and has been painted pink for no apparent

reason. On the Summer Bank Holiday (25 August), which was also the second day of the Notting Hill Carnival, the elephant was unveiled by the current Mayor, Christopher Buckmaster. It joined

two of Karam's other figures in his "Archaic Procession" project, which had earlier been erected on the roofline of Waterstones.

The sculpture may officially be called "Carnival Elephant", but the pink backdrop, and the pink mini-elephant signs pointing to it, means that it undoubtedly will be known as the "Pink Elephant", which probably is an equally appropriate name, considering that Newcombe Piazza is a hang-out for local drunks. One of them slept on a nearby bench throughout the unveiling ceremony, blissfully ignorant of what was going on.

One concern, expressed already during the unveiling, is that people may bump into the elephant's very sharp trunk and hurt themselves; and officials were seen discussing the possibility of putting up diverting pollards in front of it. However, three months on, no such diversions have been put in place.

The Cherry Tree

A newsletter for the Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association 2/2003

The fight for the nursing home in Vicarage Gate is heating up. Although some residents have been tricked into thinking that the fight is lost, because the new owner has presented building plans, the future of the site is far from settled, and we still have extremely good chances to succeed in keeping it as a nursing home and sheltered accommodation for the elderly.

In one corner there is the seller (the Elizabeth Finn Trust) and the buyer (Northacre plc and their financial backer, the First Islamic Investment Bank, FIIB), who want to turn the site into a block of luxury flats; in the other corner we have the Council and residents' associations all over Kensington, as well as a couple of nursing home providers, who want to retain the site as a care home.

Not even the Elizabeth Finn Trust and Northacre denies that there is a dire need for more nursing home facilities in the Borough, so the crucial argument is whether it's financially possible to run a nursing home on that site or not. The Trust and Northacre say no, but other developers and nursing home experts say yes.

In July, the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee made the unprecedented move to call all parties to a hearing. That investigation has revealed several interesting facts, one of them being that Northacre seems to have been the preferred bidder by the Trust from the onset. At one point the deal fell through, and only

The fight over Vicarage Gate House: All odds are in our favour

after further negotiations did the two parties agree. However, in spite of this, no other parties were ever invited to the negotiating table.

In October, Northacre plc published its half-year figures, showing that the company's finances aren't improving. In 2002 it had a loss of £4 million on a turnover of £6.4 million. In 2003 the turnover dropped to half, £3.4 million, but the company still made a loss of £3.2 million, i.e. the loss equalled 94.8% of the turnover. For the first six months of this year the result was even worse: a loss of £1.21 million on a turnover of £1.27 million. If one adds to this the fact that their liabilities (due to be paid within a year) are four times higher than their turnover, it's no wonder that the shareholders are grumbling. Consequently, the two principal managers have hinted since August that they may offer to buy back the shares of the company they floated in 1999.

Judging from some information we have found, it's even possible that the financial backing from FIIB hasn't materialised yet. The original deal seems to have been that the money would only be released once the planning application has been approved.

So, the whole future of Northacre seems to rest on the planning application for Vicarage Gate House being approved quickly. For the Council, the Vicarage

Gate House debacle has become a major issue. The lack of care homes has been highlighted in a draft supplementary planning guide recently issued by the Council. The new rules proposed in the guide can actually be applied on the Vicarage Gate House application if they are implemented before the application is considered. These rules would only allow a change of use if the applicant can prove that there is no need for the service that the building has been providing. Should the applicant claim that the facility is no longer commercially viable, the Council will be allowed to investigate these claims and come up with solutions.

Although the politicians may not tell the Borough's planning department how to handle individual planning applications, it was very obvious at the Council meeting on 27 November that the councillors are acutely aware of what the voters feel in this matter, and hope that the planning department will act accordingly.

The lack of nursing homes is not unique to Kensington. Since 1997 more than 70,000 care home beds have been lost in the UK, due to closures of nursing homes. At the same time there is a growing number of elderly. In 2001 there were some 13,000 residents in the Borough who were over 70 years old. In 2011 that figure is

expected to have increased to 15,000, in 2021 it's expected to be over 20,000, and by 2031 it's expected to be over 30,000.

Some residents in our area may not care if there are sufficient nursing homes in Kensington, as they don't plan to stay here long enough to need them. But perhaps Northacre's building plans will concern them more? In order to meet the parking space requirements for new developments, Northacre will build an underground parking, accessed with a car lift. When constructing this car park, they intend to use sheet piling. This is the most disruptive form of piling, as it needs to be hammered into the ground, shaking buildings in a radius of 500 yards for several months. Also, using the lift will probably be so cumbersome that many of the 50 cars that the parking is designed for will be park in the street instead. Because, as residents in the Borough they will be entitled to resident parking permits, just like everybody else.

We must ensure that the Vicarage Gate House site remains a care home, both for the current needs and the growing needs of the future. The way the population pyramid is slowly turning upside down, every neighbourhood will eventually need its own care home. We already have a site for our home, so let's make sure that we keep it!

Message from the Vicarage Gate Action Group: Fighting fund up and running!

Fortified by the strength of opinions expressed at the Cherry Trees AGM on the 24th of November, the campaign to save the Vicarage Gate House for care of the elderly has gathered considerable momentum.

The Vicarage Gate Action Group, which was set up in October, now represents not only the Cherry Trees area, but also residents' associations across Kensington. It is working under the auspices of the Kensington Society, which functions as an umbrella organisation for Kensington's residents' organisations.

The main aim of the action group is to ensure that the Vicarage Gate House site continues to serve as a care home for the elderly and doesn't become yet another luxury flat development. Northacre's planning application

for a mansion block, consisting of 12 luxury flats, is expected to be considered by the Borough's planning department in the beginning of next year. The application will probably be turned down, in which case the developers are expected to appeal to the Government's Planning Inspectorate. And if our borough's planning department, against all odds, should approve the application, it is we who will have to appeal.

So, whatever the Planning Department decides, we have to prepare for a costly battle at a higher level. For this reason we need a fighting fund, which will enable us to launch an effective campaign and engage healthcare

and other consultants who can demonstrate that a nursing home on that site is a financially viable proposition, contrary to what the developer claims. There are at least two institutions that have expressed serious and continued interest in restoring the site for elderly care.

Those wishing to contribute immediately to the fighting fund should make their cheques payable to "Vicarage Gate Care Home", and send them to Mr Richard Hills, Hon. Treasurer, Vicarage Gate Action Group, 135 Holland Park Avenue, London W11 4UT. Alternatively, you can send Richard Hills a pledge, promising to contribute the

pledged amount when this is asked for. Obviously, the use of the money will be properly audited, and any unused funds will be distributed back to the contributors.

Those who would like to assist in the Vicarage Gate Action Group's planned activities, should contact Ms Evelyn Ellison at 53 Campden Street, London W8 7ET. Telephone 020-7229 4108.

If you have not already signed the petition to the Council, please do so when it comes your way, and /or write your views to the Executive Director of Planning, RBKC, Town Hall, Horton Street, London W8 7NX.

When Palace Gardens Terrace was Victoria's Silicon Valley

In the 1860's, two of the world's leading physicists lived in Palace Gardens Terrace, just a few doors apart. One of them made his most important discoveries in his home laboratory, and in both homes some of the most brilliant minds in the country met and discussed radical new ideas, making Palace Gardens Terrace something of a Victorian Silicon Valley.

In the summer of 1860, a Scottish couple in their late twenties, James Clerk Maxwell and his wife Katherine, moved into the newly built 16 Palace Gardens Terrace. They had just left Aberdeen, where he had been a very young Professor of Natural Philosophy (Physics) at Marischal College. But when the college was fused with its rival King's College, to form the University of Aberdeen, he had been made redundant. He had now landed the Professorship of Physics and Astronomy at King's College in London instead.

The area that they moved into was very much a building site, as the development had started in 1854 and wouldn't be finished until 1880. The lower end of Palace Gardens Terrace, where their house stood, had just been finished, but the rest of the street consisted only of half-built houses or open meadows. Due to all the carriages transporting material to the building sites, the street was dusty in dry weather, and very muddy when it rained. During the week there was constant hammering, shouting and noise from carriages going back and forth.

There were no cherry trees (these wouldn't be planted for another 50 years), and at the bottom of the street, where the nursing home now stands, a temporary church had recently been built, made of corrugated galvanised iron. It looked more like a big shed or a railway station, and the locals had given it the nickname "the Tin Tabernacle". The rest of what today is Vicarage Gate consisted of gardens, belonging to the vicarage.

The mad scientist

Many neighbours probably regarded the Scotsman as "the mad scientist", as they frequently saw him standing by the window, staring for hours into a coffin. At other times, even during hot summer days, they would see large clouds of steam coming out of the windows. They also saw the iceman deliver big quantities of ice, much more than a normal household would need. What they probably didn't know was that the strange Scot was a very famous person in scientific circles.

In the mid 1800's, two scientists dominated British physics research: Michael Faraday and James Joule. Faraday is regarded as the father of modern electricity, and Joule as the

father of thermodynamics. Not surprisingly, young British physics students had become fascinated by both subjects and the research these two men did.

While a student at Cambridge, the mathematical genius Maxwell from Edinburgh had turned Faraday's theories of electricity and magnetic lines of force into mathematical formulas and concluded that electricity and electromagnetism moved as waves. His equations became known as Maxwell's equations and are still used today.

The rings of Saturn

In 1856, at the age of 25, Maxwell was appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy at Marischal College in Aberdeen. There he wrote a paper on Saturn's rings, in which he concluded, through mathematical calculations, that the rings must consist of numerous small solid particles. This was highly debated at the time, and it took almost 150 years before he was definitely proved to be right, by the Voyager space probe.

In Cambridge he had also begun to study colours as well as the viscosity of gases (inspired by Joule), two subjects he continued to work on in Palace Gardens Terrace. The coffin he saw his specially constructed "colour box"; an eight feet long, black wooden box, containing sets of mirrors and prisms. This he used for his studies of the light spectrum and colour blindness.

The steam they saw came from his studies of how gases behaved at different pressures and temperatures. For several days he had a large fire going in his laboratory, with Katherine acting as stoker. Kettles were kept on the fire, and large quantities of steam filled the room. The room was then cooled down for other experiments, with the help of the ice from the iceman.

The first colour photograph

His experiments with colour also led to the world's first colour photograph, which he showed the Royal Society in 1861. He had asked a photographer to take a picture of a tartan ribbon three times, with red, blue and green filters over the lens. The three images were then projected onto a screen with three different projectors, each equipped with the corresponding colour filter. When aligned, the three images created a colour picture.



James Clerk Maxwell (far left) lived in number 16, and William Thomson (far right) lived in number 6 (behind the scaffolding). Two of their visitors were, in all probability, the father of electricity, Michael Faraday (without a beard), and the father of thermodynamics, James Prescott Joule.

His most significant contribution to science came in the autumn of 1861, when his experiments with electromagnetism revealed that it travelled with a speed almost identical to the speed of light. His conclusion was that light was a form of electromagnetism, and that there must be many other electromagnetic waves, with the same speed as light but with different frequency and wavelength. It took more than two decades before Heinrich Hertz was able to detect these other waves, which lead to the birth of radio, radar, TV, microwaves, laser, mobile phones...

Einstein's idol

"The special theory of relativity owes its origins to Maxwell's equations of the electromagnetic field", Albert Einstein said many years later. Einstein regarded Maxwell as the most important physicist since Newton.

Since his first work on Faraday's theories, Maxwell had been corresponding regularly with Michael Faraday, who was in his seventies but still going strong. As Faraday was a Londoner, and as we know

that James and Katherine often had fellow scientists visiting, we can assume that Faraday used to be one of those guests.

In 1864 Maxwell must have been delighted to learn that the man he regarded as his personal mentor was moving into 6 Palace Gardens Terrace. They had been corresponding for at least ten years, and now they would become neighbours!

Maxwell's opposite

That man was William Thomson, a fellow Scottish physicist and former Cambridge student, who had been the first person to turn Faraday's electrical experiments into mathematical formulas. Seven years his senior, Thomson was in many ways Maxwell's opposite. Where Maxwell was shy and timid, Thomson was outgoing and dominant. And while Maxwell was very much the indoor type, Thomson was a keen sportsman. And, most importantly, while Maxwell found it difficult to address large audiences and explain complex scientific matters in a simple way to laymen, Thomson loved doing it.

William Thomson grew up in Glasgow, where his father was professor in mathematics at the university. Already at 16 he had written very advanced papers on the subject of applying abstract mathematics to the studies of heat flow, and was the first to advocate that the Frenchman Fourier's controversial formulas for calculating heat flow could probably be used for calculating any kind of flow of energy, even electricity.

Professor at 22

At Cambridge he was one of the top students, and when the chair of natural philosophy at the University of Glasgow became vacant in 1846 his father managed to convince everybody that his 22-year-old son should have the chair. He proved to be an inspiring teacher and a leader in research. He created a laboratory of physics, the first of its kind in Britain, where he did pioneering research together with a group of enthusiastic students. He didn't resign his chair until 1899, when he was 75.

In 1847 Thomson had heard Joule present his theory about the relationship between heat and motion,

which became the basis for the science of thermodynamics. Many scientists rejected Joule's theory, but Thomson started a discussion with him that led to an intensive collaboration for many years, where the resources of the laboratory in Glasgow were put to much use. The results coming out of the laboratory supported Joule's theories and took them much further.

Absolute point of zero

Thomson always strived for the absolute and exact. Although Celsius' temperature scale is part of the metric system, which Thomson favoured, it is relative (i.e. it goes in both directions from zero, instead of starting from zero). So Thomson set about to construct an absolute scale, based on the relationship between motion and heat. Through his calculations he concluded that all motion stops at -273°C , so nothing can be colder than that. In 1848 he presented a new scale, using that point as absolute zero.

In 1854, Thomson's career took a sudden turn. He was asked to provide an explanation for the delay

found in an electric current passing through a long cable. This was a matter of concern for the Atlantic Telegraph Company, which planned to lay the first transatlantic cable between Ireland and Newfoundland.

Thomson managed to give them not only an exact figure, but also the reason for the delay, enabling them to construct a better cable. As a result, he was offered a job as chief consultant.

Famous for the cable

Thomson had always felt that science should have practical ends, and here was his chance to achieve this. He took leave of his position at the university and threw himself heart and soul into the company's project. He calculated the best ways of laying the cable, he constructed a special telegraph receiver for submarine cables, and he participated in the hazardous cable laying. After several failed attempts the cable was finally in place in 1858, and in the process Thomson had become a famous man. The laying of the transatlantic cable stirred the public's mind just as much as the first trip to the Moon a hundred years later, so the newspapers had followed the project closely.

So, when Thomson moved into 6 Palace Gardens Terrace in 1864, he was well known not only to Maxwell, but to the other neighbours as well. By then he was a partner in two consulting firms that played a major role in planning and constructing submarine cables across the world.

However, he still retained a keen interest in physics, and engaged in discussions with Maxwell regarding various theories and experiments. This can be seen in archived correspondence from that time. That they wrote letters instead of just visiting each other was probably due to the fact that Thomson was seldom at home, due to his travels.

When he was in London, however, we can assume that they often met in each others homes. It's also very probable that he invited his long-time collaborator Joule into his home, whenever both of them were in London (Joule lived in Manchester).

Knighted

In 1866 Thomson was knighted by Queen Victoria for his role in the transatlantic cable project. The same year Maxwell published the result of all that work with steam and ice, showing that temperatures and heat involved only molecular movement.

Later the same year, Maxwell bid farewell to London, Palace Gardens Terrace and King's College, and returned to the family estate Glenlair in Scotland, where he continued his research and published several important papers.

In 1871 he accepted an offer from

Cambridge to be the first Cavendish Professor of Physics. He designed the Cavendish laboratory and helped set it up. During the spring of 1879 his health started to deteriorate, and 5 November 1879 Maxwell died of abdominal cancer, only 48 years old.

William Thomson left 6 Palace Gardens Terrace in 1868, when his quickly growing wealth allowed him to move into a much grander mansion at 15 Eaton Place in Belgravia. But, just as with 6 Palace Gardens Terrace, he was seldom there, spending much of his time on cable-laying expeditions. In 1875 he built a mansion in the Scottish baronial style at Netherhall, near Largs. In his later life, this became his main home.

Became Baron Kelvin

Between cable-laying expeditions Thomson lectured, debated and invented. He toured Europe and the US, holding lectures for scientists as well the general public. He wrote papers about tides, the shape of the Earth and its rotation. He invented sounding equipment, a new and better compass, and a form of analogue computer for measuring tides. In all, he took out 56 patents and wrote 600 papers.

He was president of the Royal Society 1890-1894, and in 1892 he was the first scientist to be raised to the peerage. He chose the name Baron Kelvin of Largs. When he died in 1907, 83 years old, he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Today Maxwell is greater

In their time, Kelvin was the famous scientist, while Maxwell was largely unknown outside the small world of physicists. Today, scientists acknowledge that Kelvin made very important contributions to science, but they regard Maxwell an equal of Galileo, Newton and Einstein.

In recognition of this, the unit measuring magnetic flux has been named the maxwell (Mx), a mountain range on Venus has been named the Maxwell Montes, and the largest radio telescope in the world has been named the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope. Kelvin had his temperature scale named after him, but not very much else.

On the other hand, Maxwell is still largely unknown outside the scientific world, while people all over the world connect Kelvin's name with that temperature scale they learned about in school.

So, both of them are probably fairly pleased, when looking down from the electromagnetic fields of Heaven: Maxwell for being recognised by his peers, and Kelvin for being known outside the confined world of science.