



Double summer parties a big success

This year the CTRAA decided to hold two summer parties; one in Inverness Gardens on 24 May and one in the vicarage's garden on 16 June. Both proved to be a big success, with the first attracting 80-90 members and the second a record 150.

As some could make it to one of the parties but not to the other, we estimate that this dual party strategy enabled some 200 members to attend at least one of the summer parties, which is almost twice as many as usual.

Beside the usual guests from the Police and the Council, the party in the vicarage's garden recieved a quick visit from Kensington's new MP, Sir Malcolm Rifkind.

Tuggy Meyer's Huntsworth Wine supplied the wine to both parties at a very favourable discount, and Winkworth's provided the superb food catering for the second party.



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, Kensington Mall, and on the eastern side of Kensington Church Street between Kensington Mall and Vicarage Gate.

We now have our own website

The CTRAA now has its own website! It contains a presentation of the association, contacts, tips for newcomers, useful telephone numbers, access to back issues of the Cherry Tree in pdf format, and a news page.

It's still very much an experiment, and we're grateful for any feedback, as we want to make it as useful for our members as possible.

You can access it at:
<http://homepage.mac.com/cherrytreelondon>

Any memories from our area during the war?

In my series of articles about the Cherry Tree area in the past, I plan to cover the war years as well, but for this I need help from those who lived here then and/or have any pictures from the area taken during that period.

There was a fair amount of bomb damage in our area, and several houses were apparently taken over by various military authorities as offices. All this, and any other local information from that period, is of great interest to us who weren't even born then, so I would be grateful for any help.

I can be reached on 07785 393 330 or 7938 3775, or via email to thomas.blomberg@virgin.net or through letters to Flat 7, 18 Vicarage Gate, London W8 4AA (a former bomb site).

Thomas Blomberg
The Cherry Tree Editor

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A newsletter for the Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association 1/2005



The nursing home from an angle most residents haven't seen...

Starting 12 July in the Town Hall: The big battle for the nursing home

On 12 July the Planning Inspectorate (the Government's "appeal court" in planning matters) starts its public hearing in the Town Hall about the planning application for the Vicarage Gate House nursing home. The hearing, which is expected to last some ten days, is the consequence of the property developer Northacre's appeal against the Council's rejection of their application to replace the nursing home with a block of luxury flats.

The Planning Inspectorate's hearings are usually held at their offices in Bristol, but due to the intense public interest it was decided that this hearing should take place in Kensington, to allow as many as possible from the public to attend. It will be held in the main Council Chamber, starting at 10 am.

All the resident associations in Kensington are strongly opposed to Northacre's plan, as there are several nursing home companies who have expressed an interest in acquiring the site and building a new nursing home on it, which would be of much more value to society.

Although the hearing will mainly consist of a "fight" between the legal representatives of Northacre and the Council, the Vicarage Gate House Action Group, which represents all the resident associations, will hopefully be given a chance to present the view of the local residents.

We urge as many as possible to attend the public hearing. As it is expected to last for some five days, most people probably can't be there every day, but will hopefully find the time to attend once or twice.

The Inspectorate's decision will be final, so if it supports the Council, Northacre and their financial backers will have to find a way to restore the site to its former use. We will try to keep you updated during the hearing days on the new Cherry Tree website (see the last page).

Resident parking will cost at least £310/year if we're included in the congestion charge zone

On 4 July the congestion charge for central London will increase by 60%, from £5 to £8 per day. In February 2003, shortly after the launch of the congestion charge, the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, said, "I can't conceive of any circumstances in the foreseeable future where we would want to change the charge, although perhaps 10 years down the line it may be necessary."

A 15% "discount" will be introduced for those who pay for a whole month or a year, which means that such charges will "only" increase by 36%. This is not due to any kindness, however, but because someone after two years has figured out that the administration costs will go down if people pay more less often.

At the same time, the second public consultation regarding

the plan to include our Borough in the congestion zone is soon coming to an end. If you haven't received the questionnaire, you can order it on 0800 028 5470, or download it (or fill it in on line) on the Transport for London website (<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/cc-ex/leaflet.shtml>). The questionnaire must be in by 15 July.

However, most expect that the extension will come no matter what the result of the consultation will be. The result of the limited consultation regarding the 4 July increase, shows that Mr Livingstone consults only because the law requires him to do so, but whatever the result he carries on with his plans. Transport for London's own figures show that there was a massive resistance (75-89%) against the forthcoming price hike from all the different interest groups consulted.

The western extension plan, which now also includes North Kensington, can be implemented in January 2007. Provided that Mr Livingstone doesn't increase the charge again in the meantime, or changes the 90% discount for residents within the zone, and disregarding any increases of the resident parking charge between now and then, this will mean that the annual cost for residents in our area to have the car parked in the street will treble, from £108 to £310, even if the car is never used. In addition, every year - and in addition every time one changes one's car - one will have to fill in application forms and pay two different authorities: the Council's Parking Shop as well as Transport for London.

But it may not be all doom and gloom. We may, hopefully, see some reduction of traffic on Church Street and Kensington

High Street between 07.00 and 18.00 (the new proposed end time), as some of the traffic not heading for the current or the extended congestion charge zone will probably divert to the new zone border streets A3220 and Earls Court Road.

If the scheme is enforced, it should be possible to convince the Council that it should offer a package deal, where the congestion charge is included in the resident parking charge, as one will not be able to use a resident parking permit without also paying for the congestion charge.

However, right now the most important thing is that as many residents as possible say what they feel about the proposed extension. It may not make much difference whilst Mr Livingstone is in office, but in 2008 there will be another mayoral election...

Max Beerbohm:

Wit, elegance and caricature

“On the 24th instant, at 57 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, the wife of J. E. Beerbohm, Esq., of a son.” This little notice, published in the Times on 26 August 1872, heralded that Julius Beerbohm and his second wife had finally succeeded in having a son, but it was also the announcement to the world (although nobody knew it yet) that “the incomparable Max” (George Bernard Shaw’s words 26 years later) had arrived.

Most people under 70 who pass 57 Palace Gardens Terrace and notice the blue plaque stating that Sir Max Beerbohm was born there, have either never heard of him or vaguely recognise the name but can’t place it. For those he can most easily be explained as “a witty dandy who bridged the period between Oscar Wilde and Noël Coward”.

Max Beerbohm didn’t write plays, didn’t act and didn’t sing; but he wrote many essays, a few novels, was famous for his caricatures, became a popular radio talker – and he was a friend and admirer of both Wilde and Coward.

Youngest in the family

Max Beerbohm was the runt of the Beerbohm litter. His father, a successful grain merchant from the East Prussian town of Memel (today the Lithuanian seaport Klaipėda) who was attached to today’s Baltic Exchange, was 62 when Henry Maximilian was born, and his oldest half-brother, Ernst (when Julius’ first wife died he married her sister), was 22 and had emigrated to the Cape Colony, never to return.

Max grew up in a matriarchy, surrounded by his mother and three sisters. His elderly father spent much of his time in the City, and by the time Max was six years

old his three half-brothers had all moved out: the second oldest, Herbert, had started calling himself Herbert Beerbohm Tree and had embarked upon a theatrical career that by the late 1890’s would make him the undisputed king of English theatre, and the third, the dreamer Julius junior, was pursuing a life as explorer in Patagonia in southern Argentina.

Orme Square School

The family had moved to Palace Gardens Terrace in the early 1860’s, following Julius marriage to Eliza Draper, his first wife’s sister, but by the time Max started school the family had moved on to Clanricarde Gardens (on the other side of Notting Hill Gate, opposite Kensington Palace Gardens). The school was Orme Square School, a small establishment with only 20 pupils.

When Max was 13, he was sent to Charterhouse, the famous boarding school that had moved down to Surrey in 1872. There he spent five years among 400 other middle-class boys, subjected to a Spartan regime of discomfort, athleticism and classical learning. This was not little Max’s idea of an agreeable existence. He later wrote that when from Oxford he had looked back at the



Max’s first home was 57 Palace Gardens Terrace.

school he had just left, “my delight at having been at Charterhouse was far greater than had been my delight in being there.”

A young dandy

Charterhouse, however, gave him his first chance to become the dandy he had dreamt of being since he was a child. Whenever possible, he was immaculately dressed in dazzlingly white Eton collars, a well-brushed short jacket, smoothly pressed trousers, top hat, and a flower in the buttonhole. It was also at Charterhouse that he started drawing his famous caricatures and had them published in the school magazine. The very popular caricatures of pupils and teachers, and the fact that Max was witty and quick to joke about his own idiosyncrasies, was probably why this dandified, detached and unathletic very short boy wasn’t mobbed by the others, but rather liked and respected.

The family moved from Clanricarde Gardens to Hyde Park Place in 1887, and in 1890, at the age of 18, Max left Charterhouse for Merton College at Oxford.

Oxford was for Max everything that Charterhouse was not, and his time there was to form the rest of his life. He called it “the little city of learning and laughter”.

Friend with Oscar and Aubrey

Having Herbert as a brother and Alfred Douglas as a fellow student at Oxford, made it natural that Max during this time would befriend his idol Oscar Wilde, almost 20 years his senior. Herbert produced Wilde’s play “A Woman of No Importance” in 1893 at his Haymarket Theatre, and Alfred Douglas was of course Wilde’s lover, the famous Bosie. Max revelled in the circles of Wilde and Douglas. Although not homosexual himself (if anything, Max Beerbohm was probably asexual), his dandyism and attitude to life made it inevitable that many of his friends were.

Another friend from this time was



Max Beerbohm was always the well-dressed dandy: in 1885, at the age of 13 at Charterhouse; in 1910, at the age of 38, when he married; and in 1954, at the age of 82.

Aubrey Beardsley. When the literary periodical “The Yellow Book” was launched in April 1894, the outrage over the first issue brought both Beardsley and Max Beerbohm instant fame: Beardsley for the “depraved” illustrations and Max for his ironic essay “A Defence of Cosmetics”, which the critics misunderstood as an encouragement for men to wear makeup, when in fact it ridiculed the use of cosmetics even among women.

Toured with his brother

In 1894 Max left Oxford and settled down to a leisurely life as freelance writer and caricaturist. He published drawings in various magazines and wrote several pieces for “The Yellow Book” (each essay attacked by “Punch” and thus increasing his fame), before his brother Herbert in 1895 asked him to come along as private secretary when his theatre company embarked on a tour of America.

While Max was in America, the Oscar Wilde scandal broke in London, with Bosie’s father, the Marquis of Queensberry, accusing Oscar of being a sodomite, and Oscar in turn (egged on by Bosie) suing him for libel, which became Oscar’s downfall.

Stood by Wilde

Many close friends quickly distanced themselves from Wilde, but Max, who had not been that close, immediately rallied to his support when he came back from America. He attended the trials every day to give Oscar moral support, took part in a deputation to Scotland Yard to alleviate his stay in prison, and when Oscar was released two years later he tried to help him out of the country. All this without any consideration to his own reputation, and although he was strongly critical of Wilde’s way of life.

In 1897 the family moved from Hyde Park Place to 48 Upper Berkley Street (east of Edgware Road). Here he continued his unhurried



daily life of writing and drawing for a few hours, followed by coffee at Café Royal and dining out or dinner parties in the evening.

During this period he published his two first written books (books with his caricatures had been published earlier): a collection of essays entitled “The Works of Max Beerbohm” and the novel “The Happy Hypocrite”. These confirmed and established his literary reputation.

Replaced Shaw

In 1898 Britain’s leading literary magazine, the “Saturday Review”, asked if he would like to succeed George Bernard Shaw as their dramatic critic, which was an enormous honour for a young man of 26. It was Shaw himself who had suggested it. The idea of a steady job didn’t appeal to Max, but he realised that the income would be welcome for his mother and sisters (his father had died in 1892), so he reluctantly accepted.

In his farewell article Shaw wrote: “The younger generation is knocking on the door, and as I open it there steps sprightly in the incomparable Max.”

Max remained dramatic critic of the “Saturday Review” for 12 years. He was a funny but very moral critic, clamping down on humbug, clichés, hyperbole and inconsistencies. He disliked much about the new Edwardian England. It was an unsettling time, and Max liked things orderly and unchanging. Most of all he detested Edwardian vulgarity: Kipling’s militarism, Wells’s hostility to ancient culture, and the commercialism that was defacing the country with advertisements and tearing down beautiful buildings.

Florence Kahn

In 1910 Max’s life changed drastically. In 1904 he had met an American actress, Florence Kahn, and through the years the friendship had turned into deep affection. Florence was a very intelligent but also extremely shy person,

described by a friend as “half an artist, with an artist’s high-strung self-dramatising temperament, and half an old-fashioned American lady, scrupulous, tender-hearted, frightened of the animal side of human nature and with very little sense of humour.”

They were probably well suited to each other. Not only did they enjoy each other’s company, but Max’s disinterest in physical love and Florence’s fear of it meant that neither needed to feel any pressure from the other in such matters.

Best to live abroad

Max realised that Florence would never enjoy his very social life in London, and as he also had begun to tire of it, he came to the conclusion that a life with Florence abroad could be the best solution.

He visited Portofino, near Genoa, in 1907 and thoroughly enjoyed himself, so in 1908 he proposed to her and suggested that they should settle down there. As Florence’s attempts to find acting work had become increasingly more difficult, she hesitantly agreed.

In April 1910 Max wrote his farewell article in the “Saturday Review”, and on 4 May they married at the Paddington Registry Office. After 38 years Max was no longer a bachelor.

Settled in Rapallo

They arrived in Italy in July 1910 and found a house to let in Rapallo, near Portofino. Max had planned for a life of semi-retirement there, but found instead that he was actually more productive than he had been in London for many years. It was here he completed his most famous novel, “Zuleika Dobson”.

When World War I broke out, he felt a need to be in England, so in 1915 they left their beloved house, Villino Chiaro, for four years, first staying in a cottage in Gloucestershire and later in Bloomsbury. But at the end of 1919 they were back in Italy again and wouldn’t return to Britain



Max’s last home was Villino Chiaro in Rapallo.

(except for a few shorter visits) until 1935.

During their visit in 1935 Mussolini attacked Abyssinia, and this put such a strain on the diplomatic relationship between Italy and Britain that they extended their stay for a whole year. It was during this stay that Max was invited by the BBC to talk on the wireless. The programme was a big success and was followed by two more before he and Florence returned to Villino Chiaro in 1936.

The Second World War

But dark clouds were amassing on the political horizon once again, and by 1938 it was obvious to Max that a new war was imminent, so in the autumn he and Florence once again packed their suitcases and came back to England. As Max said to a friend: “When England is in danger, I like to be there.” They first stayed at 62 Inverness Terrace in Bayswater, but after a few months Max felt that the hectic social life (“everybody” wanted to meet him) was too much for both of them, so when friends offered to lend them a little cottage near Dorking, they accepted. It was to be their home for several years.

This period saw a revival of Max’s popularity, culminating with a knighthood in July 1939, something he



Max was married to Florence Kahn for 40 years, and when she died...

was immensely happy about. During the war years the now Sir Max gave several very popular radio talks and did whatever he could to help in the war effort, but in 1947 it was time for him and Florence to move back to Villino Chiaro – and they were never to return to England again. Max was now 75 and Florence 71, and they were both becoming frail.

Elisabeth Jungmann

In 1951 Florence died. A devastated Max called Elisabeth Jungmann in London a couple of days before, and she dropped everything and took the first train to Italy. Elisabeth was 25 years younger, a German lady of Jewish origin who had been close to both of them since 1927. At the outbreak of the war she had fled to Britain, often visiting them in Dorking, and after the war she had come to Villino Chiaro every summer.

Having sorted out the funeral, Elisabeth moved in and took care of Max and his visitors. During the war years Max had become something of a national figure, so in the early 1950’s there was a steady stream of English-speaking visitors to Villino Chiaro, ranging from people like Somerset Maugham, John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier and Truman Capote, to relatives and students.

Max continued his radio broadcasts for a few years, but they were becoming more and more of a strain for him.

Buried in St Paul’s Cathedral

In 1956 Max had a serious asthma attack and had to be moved to a clinic in Rapallo. It was obvious that he wouldn’t recover, so Max asked Elisabeth to marry him, to ensure that she would inherit his estate instead of his relatives and be able to stay in the house. They married in the clinic on 20 April, and on 19 May Max Beerbohm died, three months before his 84th birthday.

A month later his ashes were buried in St Paul’s Cathedral, something he probably would have been bemused but also very honoured by. Except for the two war periods he had lived in Italy for more than 40 years, but he had always been a true British patriot – so much so that he never bothered to try to learn Italian...



...their mutual friend, Elisabeth Jungmann took care of him.