



BOROUGH OF CHELSEA
KING'S ROAD
 S.W. 3



SW3 LITTLE BLACK BOOK

The Chelsea Fishmonger

It's not only the fish that's a draw here: 'The queue has always been full of interesting people,' says John D. Wood's Andy Buchanan (10, Cale Street)

Keo

Luxurious manicures and pedicures are the star attraction at this nail salon (47, Sloane Avenue)

National Army Museum

Great collections meet one of London's best indoor playgrounds—soft-play assault course, anyone? (Royal Hospital Road)

Kiki McDonough

Timeless jewellery featuring striking gemstones (12, Symons Street)

Jago's of Chelsea

This butcher's is renowned for its English sausages and seasonal game, says buying agent Alex Woodleigh-Smith of AWS Prime Property (9, Elystan Street)

Still in fashion

As the Royal Hospital Chelsea gears up to host the delayed flower show, **Carla Passino** takes a look at the area's long and stylish history, **Mary Quant** included

LATER this month, the Royal Hospital Chelsea will become a beehive of gardening activity, as landscape designers descend armed with field maples, sedges and late-flowering perennials to create gardens that promise to nurture, restore and give the entire area new hope after the past difficult 18 months.

This is the first time in the Chelsea Flower Show's 108-year history that it takes place

in September—it started life as the Great Spring Show and has never moved seasons since—but the pensioners and staff at the Royal Hospital Chelsea are looking forward to it with the usual enthusiasm. 'The Royal Hospital has hosted the show since 1913 and we are very proud to continue to do so,' says heritage manager Tina Kilnan, who explains that many Chelsea pensioners are themselves keen gardeners: 'We have allotments



here where they can grow flowers and vegetables and one resident even has a very successful grapevine.'

In its 329 years of history, Sir Christopher Wren's magnificent building has remained true to its purpose as a place to care for soldiers 'broken by age or war'—a remarkable feat, considering how much the world has changed around it—as well as becoming a treasure trove of British history (the heritage manager's favourites are the eagles taken as spoils in the Napoleonic wars). Over time, it has also witnessed whiffs of scandal that one wouldn't associate with such a venerable institution. 'Drunken episodes at local taverns and illegitimate children of pensioners were not unknown.' But for every pensioner that might have misbehaved in the past, there have always been dozens more who endeared themselves to residents of Chelsea and beyond, whether during the Second World

War, when many joined the defence efforts, forming two Home Guard units, or today, when the hospital works closely with the local community and schools.

Of course, the shenanigans of the pensioners paled by comparison with the scandals of the gentlemen about town and Society ladies who met at the Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens in the grounds south of the hospital (the ladies 'swimming by you like swans', according to a Leigh Hunt story in *The Gentleman's Magazine*). But Ranelagh was as ephemeral as it was glorious: no trace of it remained by 1817 when, in *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, Sir Richard Phillips stared in disbelief at the dismal 'scene of desolation' and pondered: 'Is such... the end of human splendour?'

Much more sedate, but also much more long-lived is another local institution: the four-acre Chelsea Physic Garden. Founded

in 1673, 'it came to be because the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London leased land for 61 years in order to grow plants to help their students recognise those that could kill and those that could cure,' explains director Sue Medway. Continuously tended for the past 348 years, the garden, like the hospital, is still fulfilling its original mission to demonstrate 'the value of plants in people's lives', although, these days, it may mean highlighting their role in fighting the climate emergency, as much as providing the basis for remedies. The upcoming restoration of the Victorian glasshouses, with their tender-plant collection, in time for the 350th anniversary promises to make the space even more appealing.

Greenery of a different kind occupied swathes of Upper Chelsea, north of the King's Road. Today's mix of elegant red-brick buildings in the streets behind Sloane Street ➤

and the pastel sequence of small, but perfectly formed houses in Bywater Street, Godfrey Street, Burnsall Street, Smith Terrace and Markham Street were once nurseries, market gardens and grazing. A watercress seller and a pig merchant still lived locally in the mid 19th century, but, by then, much of the open land had been built over. This was thanks in part to John Bull, a gardener who must have discovered that properties were more profitable than plants, because 'by 1836, he had built 22 small houses in a curving terrace,' according to *A History of the County of Middlesex*.

An even greater transformation—in atmosphere if not architecture—took place about a century later, when, in 1955, Mary Quant and Alexander Plunkett-Greene opened a shop, Bazaar, on the corner of the King's Road and Markham Square. Quant, her miniskirts and her bob haircut would go on to revolutionise fashion across the world, outraging some people, enthralling many more and turning Chelsea into the glamorous hub of the late 1950s and the Swinging Sixties.

Following in her footsteps, other legendary shops opened across the road that had once been used by Charles II to reach Hampton Court Palace: Joseph Ettedgui's hair salon, which later evolved into the iconic clothes

store; the Chelsea Drugstore's bars, boutiques and record shops, which offered a delivery service carried out by a group of girls dressed in purple catsuits, riding motorcycles; the Pheasantry nightclub, where Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice first met Yvonne Elliman, the original Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar*; and Kiki Byrne, whose eponymous owner designed the gold bikini worn by Margaret Nolan in *Goldfinger*. Even more fabled than the shops were the parties of the Chelsea set—a group of unconventional models, actors, aristocrats, musicians and designers, many of whom delighted in shocking the more priggish segments of British society, not least by holding Champagne-fuelled revels on the Circle Line.

'Even more fabled than the shops were the parties of the Chelsea set'

Chelsea may have become much tamer since then, but it still keeps its creative edge. One of the area's latest acquisitions is the Saatchi Gallery, which moved to the former Duke of York's Headquarters—a redevelopment of the site that had once been the Royal

THE UPS AND DOWNS

Residents love the dazzling choice of restaurants, including Stanley's in Sydney Street (a favourite with Toto Lambert of Knight Frank), Claude Bosi's Oyster Bar (suggested by Alex Woodleigh-Smith of AWS Prime Property), and Le Colombier off Chelsea Square (recommended by John D. Wood's Andy Buchanan)

Residents like the many cultural institutions on their doorstep, from the Cadogan Hall to the Royal Court Theatre and the Saatchi Gallery

Residents could do with a better way for pedestrians to cross Sloane Square

Military Asylum—in 2008. Now a charity, the gallery has a symbiotic relationship with the area, drawing from its 'vibrant backdrop', according to spokeswoman Georgina Green-slade, as well as providing learning opportunities for schools, colleges and community groups. With a packed programme of shows—including, this month, 'JR: Chronicles', the largest solo museum exhibition of French artist JR—the Saatchi Gallery 'is proud to lead the next chapter in Chelsea's artistic legacy'. *Chelsea Part I* was published on May 5

At home in Chelsea



Burnsall Street, £4.5 million

Once home to actress and singer Diana Dors, this bright, airy townhouse is beautifully decorated in contemporary style. The 2,123sq ft interior spans five floors, with a large bedroom in the basement, an open-plan kitchen and reception area on the lower ground floor, a principal reception room on the raised ground floor and three bedrooms upstairs. *Lurot Brand (020-7590 9955)*



Flood Street, £4.25 million

Contemporary interiors meet rare outdoor space at this brick townhouse south of King's Road. The 2,051sq ft of living space includes a large family room, a striking kitchen that opens onto a terrace, an elegant reception room, a study and three bedrooms, with the master suite taking up the entire first floor. There's also a panoramic roof terrace. *Knight Frank (020-7861 1790)*



Bywater Street, £3.95 million

This delightful, pastel-coloured house has 2,249sq ft of accommodation, with the living areas on the lower floors (cinema room in the basement, kitchen and dining area on the lower ground floor and the reception room on the ground floor) and three bedrooms upstairs, including the master suite, which occupies the entire top floor. *Savills (020-7730 0822)*