

Chairman's Report for 2021 for the ECSRA AGM

2021 has seen a mid-year lifting of Covid-19 restrictions which meant ECSRA was able to organise "A Day To Remember" on the 8 September when ECSRA Members were invited to a Champagne and Canapés Reception to celebrate the lives of four notable individuals who lived in our Square. The Soho Square Jazz Duo provided background music and a hundred guests and neighbours mixed and mingled in brilliant sunshine in Earl's Court Square's stunning garden. The specially commissioned green and white ceramic plaques, funded by RBKC's City Living Local Life (CLLL), are erected on four buildings in the Square as a permanent reminder of the local and international achievements of Douglas Eaton, Faud Rouhani, Dame Ninette de Valois and Jennifer Ware. Our grateful thanks to John D Wood & Co, The Sloane Club (who provided the delicious canapés) and the generous benefactors who donated the champagne for kindly sponsoring this prestigious event and to the ECSRA team led by Christine Powell who worked behind the scenes to ensure all went to plan on the day.

Sadly, we had to cancel our summer BBQ/Disco again this year which has had an impact on our finances as we rely on the profits from this event to fund our community activities as our only other revenue is from membership subscriptions/donations. We have re-booked DJ, Jerry Shillingford, again and are hoping it will be third time lucky and the event, which is open to all residents, can go ahead in the Garden on **Saturday 9 July 2022**.

2021 has been an amazing year when the spirit of Christmas flowed around Earl's Court Square for our annual "Lighting of the Christmas Tree" on the 12 December - a joint venture with the Garden Sub-Committee - which is also open to all our residents. The community made a magnificent contribution of £755 to ECSRA towards funding the Santa Brass Band Quintet - who added to the festivities and put the "oompah" into our favourite Christmas carols and songs. Our thanks to Magda Zawisza and Orla Walsh (for their fundraising efforts on Earl's Court Square Neighbours' WhatsApp) and the many generous contributors who made this a memorable community event. Thanks also to Alan Malcolm - for making his legendary mulled wine (from a secret recipe with three gallons of fermented grape juice) Katrina Quinton - for a mountain of delicious homemade mince pies and Mariaclara Vilona for providing the children's cookies and thanks also to the many residents who joined us - making it a joyful event to remember.

The ECSRA Executive Committee continues to have virtual Zoom Committee Meetings and we have been very active behind the scenes on many projects. Besides successfully obtaining a grant from CLLL for our four plaques, we were also successful with our bid for funds from RBKC's Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) and the SE Arm of the Square now sports six bespoke grey planters, which has significantly reduced the number of motorbikes, cycles and mopeds taking shortcuts onto the Earl's Court Road. Besides, environmentally enhancing the area, the planters have improved pedestrian safety, which was becoming a problem for our elderly residents and parents with young children. Sadly, we have had to add edging strips to prevent them being used as seats as this was damaging the plants. The Council delays in getting this project off the ground and the inclement Autumn weather have also impacted on plant growth and Charles Wood will be replacing the six aloes, which are damaged and are very slow-growing, with enhanced planting to give extra height as the Executive Committee are looking for more of a "show stopper" for our residents in this prominent location.

The third project for which ECSRA obtained RBKC funding (NCIL) is for a cycle hangar located in the NE Arm of the Square which should be completed by the end of this Financial Year. ECSRA's support for three bicycle hangars (each housing six cycles) was fully covered in my report to residents at last year's AGM and was necessitated by the number of residents cycling to work due to the pandemic and increased bicycle theft. It has been extremely difficult to identify sites that minimise impact on existing buildings, maintain the architectural integrity of the Square and that do not take away residents' parking bays. We have a CLLL bid pending for funding an additional two bicycle hangars, which we have requested are located together in the NW arm of the Square (making a total of 18 secure spaces for bicycles) which we hope our Ward Councillors will support. Residents should contact cycling@rbkc.gov.uk to go on a Council waiting list as they will be managing and maintaining the bicycle hangars.

Another project of which we are very proud is the provision of a **London Hearts Defibrillator** which is located behind the tills at Krystals - which is open 24/7. There will be a sign on the outside of the shop to say that there is a defibrillator inside and the device has been registered with the London Ambulance Service. This project has been driven by Alex Tullett, who has put in a lot of hard work behind the scenes to get funding approved and get this device placed in Krystals. Alex is now on a roll and planning on several other locations - so our area will have adequate cover.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) has been a continued problem this year which ECSRA has been actively working to resolve behind the scenes. There have been instances of noisy parties and drug dealers/users loitering on doorsteps intimidating residents. Parents double-parking outside St Cuthbert with St Matthias Primary School - which is illegal and a nuisance – and with pollution from idling engines also becoming a problem, I'm pleased to report an air monitoring unit has been ordered to be sited outside the school. We are hoping that arrangements for RBKC Wardens to patrol the area will act as a deterrent - although we feel the school should be more actively involved in controlling the problem.

We are very concerned to hear that Earl's Court is no longer an *"enhanced ward"* and we have lost Police as a result. This summer the Chairs of The Earl's Court Safer Neighbourhood Team Ward Panel and the Residents' Associations of Earl's Court Square and Nevern Square Conservation Area (the two largest RAs in Earl's Court) launched an online anti-ASB Petition (backed up with two days of street stalls outside M&S in Earl's Court Road to collect hand-written signatures) with a total of 1000+ local residents signing our Petition. A report compiled by Professor Mike Hough (previously senior researcher in the Home Office where he and a colleague designed the British Crime Survey) was presented to Felicity Buchan MP on 3 February. We discussed residents' concerns and asked for Earl's Court to be ring-fenced and treated as a special case with traditional policing. We also expressed our concerns that the Police and the Council were not taking our ASB problems seriously as they were relying on questionable statistics. We stated that we felt the RBKC Wardens were ineffective and needed to be properly trained by the Police. Also, we needed more visible policing with regular patrols (not just the odd raid from time to time) and the Police needed to be community minded. Felicity is going to discuss our concerns with the Met Borough Commander and revert.

On **Sunday 5th June 2022** ECSRA will be joining forces with the Garden Sub-Committee to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a "Bring a Plate" Afternoon Tea in the Garden. Arrangements have yet to be finalised but *"communities are being encouraged to get to know each other a little bit better, coming together in a spirit of fun and friendship"*. Please put the date in your diaries. We anticipate everyone bringing a plate of food to share with the two Committees providing tea/coffee and drinks for the children. The Garden Sub-Committee will be organising and funding the musical entertainment. We hope this will be a Traditional English Tea Event which brings the Jubilee celebrations into the heart of Earl's Court Square.

Our next event is the **Earl's Court Square History Walks** on Sunday 6 March at 10:00 and 12:00 with refreshments at 11:00 in the Garden. This event evolved as Christine Powell and Sue Lupton had done a lot of research on the Square for our Plaques Event last year but sadly, there were few takers for tours as everyone was enjoying the sunshine and the complimentary champagne and canapés. Rather than waste the research, Christine and Sue offered to run two consecutive tours in the Spring. As spaces will be limited, please would you either speak with us tonight or contact me on ecsrachair@btinternet.com if you would like to join a Tour on Sunday 6 March and learn a bit more about The History of Earl's Court Square. If you can't make the walk, please do read Christine's article for The History Walks on our website.

We are also planning an **Oktoberfest** for our Members and their guests on Tuesday 18th October from 7pm – 9pm and details will be emailed to Members when finalised. And we have fixed Sunday 11 December for our "Annual Lighting of the Christmas Tree" - which we now share with the Garden Sub-Committee. Do please also look at our website www.ecsra.co.uk for details of all our events as it is regularly updated.

Finally, I would like to thank all my colleagues on the ECSRA Executive Committee for their help and advice during 2021 – and especially to Alex Tullett, our Hon Treasurer who is eternally vigilant on ECSRA’s behalf and represents us on the Earl’s Court Society. Besides looking after ECSRA’s finances, Alex looks at all Planning/Licencing/Traffic and Parking applications and is closely monitoring the proposed development of the exhibition site. Heidi Bradner’s project is Rubbish and Recycling and she has built up a close relationship with RBKC to attempt to find solutions to our remaining “hotspots”. Sue Lupton, our magazine editor, sources ads which fund the magazine and has again persuaded our generous sponsor, John D Wood, to print it free of charge. Christine Powell, our Membership Secretary deserves our thanks - and mine particularly - as she has supported some of my crazy schemes (such as the issue of our new Membership Certificates) even though they generate additional administration. I hope you like them as I thought it would give all our Members a sense of belonging to ECSRA! Christine also represents ECSRA on environmental matters. The Executive Committee are a very tight knit team of nine volunteers, of whom we should be proud. They turn up willingly to set up and assist at all our events, take turns with leading projects, and all actively contribute to the efficient running of ECSRA. They live in the Earl’s Court Square Conservation Area and work together *“to protect and enhance Earl’s Court Square and the lives of the people who live and work here”*.

We’re also grateful to our Ward Councillors, Hamish Adourian, Malcolm Spalding and Linda Wade for their continued support and hope they will support our latest CLLL bid - for the remaining two bicycle hangars in the NW Arm which was submitted in November.

My final thank you is to Katrina Quinton, Chair of the Garden Sub-Committee for her continued support with our many projects during 2021-2022. We always enjoy working with Katrina and the Garden Sub-Committee and appreciate her positive attitude and continued commitment to the community of Earl’s Court Square.