Westway Psychogeography Report 3

The Sound of the Westway: Part 3 of the Colville/Golborne ward boundary survey features the area’s two main music venues, Portobello Green and Acklam Hall. The first director of the Westway trust, Anthony Perry recalls the green’s development and the first prog rock gigs in the early 70s. Wilf Walker remembers the atmosphere in 1976 during the riot and founding the first Carnival stage on the green in 79. The Acklam Hall-Bay 63-Subterania-Neighbourhood-Supperclub-Mode timeline includes the reminiscence of DJ Dave Hucker, with archive music press and fanzine reviews.

The Age UK Health Fair at Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street on October 2 features a history of the Westway and Portobello Green slideshow talk by Tom Vague at 2.30pm in the 1st floor committee rooms—to be repeated at North Kensington Library with exhibition/film to be announced shortly. For full extended versions of the Westway reports go to www.colvillecom.com history/streets pages and/or the interactive map website www.theundergroundmap.com photos Local Studies, North Kensington Community Archive, All Saints and Sinners, Old Notting Hill/North Ken Facebook group.
Portobello Green

Portobello Green, to the west of Portobello Road between the railway line and Cambridge Gardens, features a shopping arcade under the Westway along Thorpe Close, an open-air market under the canopy, and community gardens. From the 1860s to the 1960s this area was occupied by 5 houses along Portobello Road from the railway embankment, numbers 277 to 287, and two round the corner on the south side of Cambridge Gardens before the entrance to Thorpe Mews. 281 Portobello Road, now the address of the Portobello Green arcade, was AJ Symons confectioner and tobacconist shop in the 1920s.

Anne McSweeney, who lived across the road in the early 1960s, recalls before the Westway, ‘at the junction with Cambridge Gardens was a baker’s shop, where I would be dispatched to get a Farmhouse or Short Tin loaf, and there was a small newsagent shop in Portobello Road on the Cambridge Gardens side just before the railway bridge. It was called Little’s and I was told that it was run by a boxer called Tommy Little. Keep walking down the lane on the same side opposite where all the stalls are, there was a pie and mash shop where I would take a large pudding basin and they would put the pies and mash in it.’

Post-demolition in the late 60s, the GLC and London Transport plans to use the Westway bays between Portobello Road and Ladbroke Grove as a car park and bus garage were halted by local community opposition. In 1968 the Notting Hill Interzone issue of IT contained a sketch of the proposed Westway open-air children’s theatre on the site of Portobello Green. Other uses of the area suggested in the Motorway Development Trust community survey were market stalls, old people’s club, community services, Inter-Action community art centre, Motorway restaurant, bus lay-by at Ladbroke Grove, a post office on the Cambridge Gardens corner, supermarket and library in Thorpe Close.

After the Westway opened in 1970 the North Kensington Amenity Trust was set up to carry out the development. The first director Anthony Perry describes how he found the area in 1971 and the initial stage: ‘At that time Portobello Green, as I named it, was completely fenced in with a high corrugated iron wall. It had been the site of the lorry ramp leading up to the motorway during its construction. I sold it to a scrap dealer on condition he removed it. I then declared it open to the public. Over the weeks that followed we slowly cleared it up with volunteer labour—not exactly volunteer, I paid them £1 an hour. We tarmaced the part immediately adjacent to Portobello Road and started a charity market, fencing it off from ‘the Green’ with timber posts cut from surplus telegraph poles. The London Brick Company gave us a lorry load of over-baked bricks and a Canadian student laid out an attractive sitting area. I had tree surgeons in to save the bedraggled trees bordering Cambridge Gardens. The thing to do was to get people to use the land and consider it theirs.'
What a great traffic system
Perry's 'A Tale of Two Kensingtons' account of working for the trust features a picture of a rock band (who are thought to be Clover) playing on Portobello Green, with the caption: 'Not everyone loved us or shared the idea of using the green for entertainment. On the north side were the houses of Cambridge Gardens and a small block of council flats. The residents had a particularly hard time while the motorway was being built. What they felt about the future of the green was important and a small group of the residents immediately took against the Saturday rock concerts that had started early on.'

The 1972 Kensington and Chelsea Arts Festival of 'folk, theatre, dance, etc' was announced 'under the motorway at Portobello Road where an experimental open-air stage has been erected.' Michael Moorcock's 'King of the City' novel contains a Saturday afternoon free gig on the green by the pub rock group Brinsley Schwarz, including Nick Lowe, and his Dennis Dover character's Basing Street studios session group. The audience consisted of 'Swedish flower children, American Yippies and French 'ippies.' A picture of Uncle Dog playing under the flyover features Brian Eno standing by the stage.

In the early to mid 70s Portobello Green succeeded Powis Square as the centre of the Carnival, facilitated by the Amenity Trust. After the area featured in the 1972 children's parade organised by Merle Major, the following year the Caribbean Notting Hill Carnival, as we know it today, was established on the green by Leslie Palmer. In an internal wrangle over advertising at the Carnival in 1974, an Island Records banner hung between two lampposts on the green was torn down during the night.

Meanwhile Anthony Perry wrote of the local alcoholics: 'These are the people who fill us with anger. They are driving us mad at the moment in the trust because there is an ever growing army of them, which is alienating local people and driving kids off the green.' In 1975 Portobello Green appeared as a local youth hangout in Horace Ove's film 'Pressure', about life in the black community, the year before the area became the Carnival riot epicentre. Tom Waits was photographed in June 1976 on the corner of Cambridge Gardens, at the same location as the subsequent police charge picture on 'The Clash' album sleeve.

The reggae promoter Wilf Walker says: 'It was incredible in those days to be in a sea of black faces. We described it as a demonstration of solidarity and peace within the black community. I can't imagine what it would have been like for white people. 76 showed the strength of feeling, reggae was raging in those days, young blacks weren't into being happy natives, putting on a silly costume and dancing in the street, in the same street where we were getting done for Sus every day.' In the International Times report on the 1977 Carnival: 'The kids had gathered at the Westway, scene of last year's victorious battle and by 9 O'clock it had become a maelstrom, sucking in curious whites and spitting them out, robbed and battered. Darkness fell and roaming camera lights turned the packed heads into a macabre spot dance competition in the ballroom of violence. Police blocked all but one exit road and lined the motorway and railroad that swung overhead. Wallflowers at the dance of death. By the time the PA system shut down the screaming roar of the riot had made it irrelevant.'
At the end of the 70s the first Notting Hill Carnival stage was founded on the green by Wilf Walker. The NME reported that: ‘in an effort to alleviate the problems that often arise from the Portobello Green area of Notting Hill, usually the Carnival’s flashpoint, the police and local council have agreed to the Festival and Arts Committee organising a two day concert on the green.’ The post-punk reggae bill featured Aswad, Barry Ford of Merger, Sons of Jah, King Sounds and the Israelites, Brimstone, Exodus, the Passions, Nick Turner (of Hawkwind)’s Inner City Unit, Carol Grimes and the Vincent Units.

Wilf recalls: “The very first stage under the flyover in 1979, everyone resisted it, they didn’t believe it could happen. On the morning when we put up the scaffolding, we were just about to swing the multi-cord over the flyover and the policeman on the flyover on a bike said no, you can’t do that, even though we had permission weeks previously, so we weren’t allowed to get electricity. Roger Matland was supposed to be giving us power but he didn’t turn up. Luckily Carol Grimes, who played that year, had a friend who lived across the road and he gave us electricity. I ran up to the police station in Ladbroke Grove and demanded they keep their promise and let us carry on, then we were allowed to use the multi-cord.”

But when the music stopped there was more trouble, poetically described by Viv Goldman in Melody Maker: ‘The cans and bottles glittered like fireworks in the street lights, then shone again as they bounced back off the riot shields. The thud thud thud of the impact rivalled the bass in steadiness, suddenly the street of peaceful dancers was a revolutionary frontline, and the militant style of the dreads was put in its conceptual context.’

From 1979 to 97 the Portobello Green Carnival stage hosted everyone from Aswad to Jay-Z. After Eddy Grant was recorded ‘Live at Notting Hill Carnival’ in 1981, Musical Youth appeared on their way to number 1 with ‘Pass the Dutchie’ in 82, and Rip Rig & Panic (featuring Andrea Oliver and Neneh Cherry) played their last gig on the green in 83. In the early 80s the Portobello/Acklam bays under the Westway were developed into shops and offices by the Amenity Trust with Council funding. The canopy was added to the scheme after protests from displaced market traders. Into the 90s, as Soul II Soul, Aswad, Burning Spear, Arrow, Osibisa, Omar, Courtney Pine, Horace Andy, etc played at the Carnival, the green was also the venue of the Portobello Arts Festival and anti-gentrification protests. After Jay-Z appeared in 1997, with an accompanying crowd crush and shooting incident, the Radio 1 Carnival stage moved to Kensal.

In the 21st century the green has hosted the Portobello Film Festival, Jazz on the Green, Moroccan festivals and 70s Carnival anniversary community events. The Thorpe Close offices at Portobello Green housed the dance music labels Wall of Sound, Millennium and Leftfield’s Hard Hands. The 60s military jacket tradition is still maintained by the market stall on Portobello Road under the flyover by the Spanish Civil War mural.
Acklam Hall—Subterania

As the Westway was under construction in 1969, the original plans of the Motorway Development Trust for Acklam Road were a laundry, café, health centre, nursery school, pre-school playgroup, sport area and adventure playground. In the early 70s a community hall was proposed to replace All Saints hall on Powis Gardens. A poster under the flyover advertising a meeting about plans for the area in 1972 announced: ‘All Saints church hall is being pulled down. Perhaps a public hall should be built under the flyover?’

The Acklam Hall community centre was constructed in the mid 70s by the North Kensington Amenity Trust, under the administration of Anthony Perry. Jan O’Malley reported in ‘The Politics of Community Action’ that ‘building work had started on a community Hall in Acklam Road paid for by an Urban Aid grant obtained by the GLC.’ Acklam Hall opened in 1975, at 12 Acklam Road in Westway Bay 63, with a benefit gig for the North Kensington Law Centre on Golborne Road, headlined by Joe Strummer’s pre-Clash group, the 101’ers. The hall also hosted Emily Young’s ‘Public Pictures Benefit to finance the painting of Westway’, and the debut or an early appearance of the local reggae group Aswad.

The Aswad guitarist Brinsley Forde recalled Briggs’s yard sound-system scene on Acklam Road as “like Jamaica. It was a fantastic atmosphere there, everybody went there to dance; we felt it was ours, the people who lived in the Grove.” The Sun ‘man on the spot’ in the 1976 riot John Firth described ‘how I was kicked at black disco’: ‘I was confronted with an ugly situation at the start of the Notting Hill clashes last night. As I tried to find the Caribbean festival headquarters, I had inadvertently walked into a street disco under the flyover to the M40.’ The ‘Black Defence Committee Notting Hill branch benefit in aid of Carnival defendants’, after the riot, was to feature Spartacus R from Osibisa, Sukuya steel band and Clash, but the latter didn’t play—as Joe Strummer said: “It wasn’t our riot, though we felt like one.”

Ripped & Torn fanzine reviewed a punk gig featuring Sham 69, Chelsea, the Lurkers and the Cortinas, in which the hall was described as ‘functional and dull, and slightly oppressive in its size and stark design, with only a ‘1977’ in cut-out red paper stuck up behind the stage to show that this was a punk concert and not some youth club meeting.’ After a suspected National Front arson attack in 1978, NME reported that: ‘Acklam Hall is almost a natural focal point for any local racial tension. Just underneath the Westway, it stands adjacent to the flashpoint area of the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival riots. The hall is leased from the GLC by Black Productions, who often promote white bands, and has also been used by Rock Against Racism to put on gigs featuring both black and white groups. Theoretically, the hall’s insurance should be covered by the GLC Amenity Trust.’
CARNIVAL '78
SUBTERRANIA – NEIGHBOURHOOD
ACKLAM ROAD REVISITED

BLACK PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
AT ACKLAM HALL
UNDER THE FLYOVER,
PORTOBELLO ROAD
SONS OF JAH
MAT STAGGER PRAG VEC

FINAL SOLUTION PRESENT
KLEENEX
CABARET VOLTAIRE
THE RAINCOATS
THURSDAY, MAY 10TH AT 8 PM
ACKLAM HALL,
PORTOBELLO RD (UNDER THE FLYOVER)
TICKETS £1.50 ON THE DOOR OR £1.25 IN ADVANCE FROM
SMALL WONDER, ROUGHTRADE AND HONKY TONK RECORD SHOPS

FINAL SOLUTION PRESENT MUSIC FROM THE FACTORY
JOY DIVISION
JOHN DOWIE
A CERTAIN RATIO
ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK
THURSDAY, MAY 17TH AT 8 PM
ACKLAM HALL, PORTOBELLO RD (UNDER THE FLYOVER)
TICKETS £1.50 ON THE DOOR OR £1.25 IN ADVANCE FROM
SMALL WONDER, ROUGHTRADE AND HONKY TONK RECORD SHOPS
Misty in Roots were pictured in Sounds playing in the hall after this incident under a ‘Black & White Unite & Fight’ banner. In 1978 Wilf Walker’s Black Productions’ punky reggae party ‘under the flyover’ at Acklam Hall showcased Alton Ellis, Misty, Sons of Jah, King Sounds and the Israelites, Crass, the Members, the Monochrome Set, the Passions and pog-VEC. The most eclectic Black Productions bill featured the aristocratic rocker Teresa D’Abreau with the anarcho-punk group Crass and a skateboarding display.

Barry Ford of Merger and the Members’ gig ‘under the yellow lights of the Westway’ was reviewed by NME’s Adrian Thrills, who praised Black Productions for letting the two cultures clash at the Acklam Hall with their regular punk and reggae gigs every Friday night through the summer without much credit. The community centre–cum-youth club hall is rapidly becoming one of the best medium-sized venues in town.” As ‘the Slits have fun and experience at Acklam Hall’, the venue received another bad review in Ripped & Tom fanzine: ‘The only time I went here I got attacked by a gang of black guys on the way home, that was last year though and things have supposedly improved (hand-written note: Saw the Slits there last night and it hasn’t). Due to a series of good billings it’s picked up a good reputation and I suppose it’s worth going to if there’s a good band on. It’s a large hall type place which lacks atmosphere.’

The most renowned Black Productions night under the flyover turned out to be Tribesman, the Valves and the Invaders on November 10 1978—as the latter changed their name for the gig to Madness. The first Madness gig, and some aggro with local skinheads, was filmed by Dave Robinson and appears in the 1981 film ‘Take It or Leave It—in which the ‘Nutty boys get in a ruck after their first gig at Acklam Hall’ and become ‘Madness on the run from a skinhead lynching mob.’ The Valves had a song entitled ‘Ain’t No Surf in Portobello’, referring to the yellow lights of the Westway to perhaps a couple of hundred.’

Cabinet Voltaire struck a classic post-punk industrial pose by a Westway pillar adorned with a poster advertising their gig with Red Crayola, prag-VEC and Scritti Politti. The Passions and the Nips, Shane MacGowan’s pre-Pogues group, appeared at a Rough Theatre benefit for the defence fund of Astrid Proll of the Baader-Meinhof gang. On New Year’s Eve 78/79 the Raincoats, Bank of Dresden and the Vincent Units played to an audience of Clash, Slits and prag-VEC members, Rough Trade staff and music journalists, including NME’s Ian Penn who wrote: ‘This was a good place to start 79, an evening of comedy, parody, high anti-fashion calm, fun, radical rockers and pop feminism-a-go-go.’

As a succession of Rough Trade/Rock Against Racism indie label package tours appeared under the flyover, Acklam Hall became known as the post-punk reggae venue. The Passions, Raincoats and Distributors gig received another good review in Sounds by Nick Tester: ‘Tucked squarely beneath the Westway, the clinical confines of Acklam Hall provided an exciting evening of unimpeded expansive music—although the gig ended in semi-chaos when a flock of skins bent on skull-bashing half-attacked the Passions’ lead guitarist.’

The second appearance of Crass, with the Poison Girls and the Wall, was reviewed by Jon Savage as: ‘a sparsely attended benefit for the anarchist Black Cross Cienfugos Press—both the cause and its supporting groups safely out of the clutches of local London fashion.’ Record Mirror’s Chris Westwood wrote of a Rema Rema and Manicured Noise gig: ‘The Acklam Hall stinks. Like some scummy old school hall, it lacks atmosphere, facilities, everything. Ironically, it remains one of the solitary few places in the big city where crowds of little known quality bands can assemble and present their ideas to open minded punters.’

The hippest Acklam Hall post-punk gig to have been at was Final Solution present Music from the Factory under the flyover on May 17 1979, featuring the Manchester Factory label’s Joy Division, John Dowie, A Certain Ratio and Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark. One to have avoided was the North Kensington Rock Against Racism Club Night with Crisis, Beggars, Samaritans and Vapours on June 29. During this infamous gig the leftwing ‘red skin’ group Crisis were besieged by the Ladbroke Grove skinheads, recounted by Stewart Home in ‘Cranked Up Really High’: ‘Crisis finished their set and a reggae band was playing when the skins returned mob handed. The Crisis crew threw a barricade of tables and chairs against the door. Having secured the hall, members of Crisis and their hardcore following stormed out into the street to lay into the mob besieging the venue...’

North Kensington Amenity Trust subsequently advertised the post of Acklam Hall manager in NME: ‘Wanted for music venue and community hall in North Kensington. Must be able to get on well with wide range of groups and have experience in bar management and stock control and maintenance of premises.’ As the hall went on to host the World’s First Bad Music Festival, featuring the Horrible Nurdos, Blues Drongo All-Stars and Danny and the Dressmakers, Bay 66 was the venue of a free gig by Here & Now, the Good Missionaries, Carol Grimes, and Vermilion and the Aces.

At Christmas 1979 the Clash played Acklam Hall, previewing their third album ‘London Calling’. Viv Goldman wrote in her Melody Maker review of ‘the Clash Christmas dinner dance’ (their only local gigs): ‘A cheery gent looks out of the tiny school–gym–like Acklam Hall and calls out: “Anyone wanna see the Clash? 50 pence.” Invitation is strictly word of mouth because it’s like a block party, the kind they have in New York, where the whole neighbourhood piles into the street and has fun together.’ After the 70s ended with the Clash, the 80s began with U2 playing ‘in a bare concrete shack beneath the Westway, to perhaps a couple of hundred.’
As the hall was described in the Face as ‘that moody and modish venue under the Westway’, the boards were also trod by such less famous names as the Martian Schoolgirls, the Kitchens, the Blanks, Ski Patrol, Shag Nasty, Joe Public, White Bird on Rice, Androids of Mu, the Mob, the Entire Cosmos, Vince Pie and the Crumbs, Blue Midnight, Manufactured Romance, Orange Cardigan, Chelsea, the Dark, the Fall, Delta 5, Essential Logic, Vincent Units, Brian Brain, 012 and Here & Now.

1981 began with UK Decay and Eraserhead, then there was a gig by skinhead Oi bands from east London that resulted in another riot. In Nick Knight’s ‘Skinheads’ photo book a picture of a skin’s bloodied head at Acklam Hall is captioned: ‘The locals knew they would be there and a massive group of soul boys, skinheads, Tedes, Rastas, whatever, from the area had gathered outside the hall. At about 9.30 they came steaming in. The skinheads inside threw anything that could be lifted, including the band’s gear, at the door they were coming in through. After a short time the doorway was blocked by a huge pile of debris. The police didn’t show up for 25 minutes though, by which time the locals were breaking through the roof.’

Later in the year the Kensington News announced that ‘the hall has been closed since March after a rock concert ended in a riot and rival gangs of skinheads left a trail of destruction.’ As the Amenity Trust’s plan for the premises to be managed by the landlord of the Bevington Arms was opposed by community groups, it was reported that ‘the trust has had difficulties running the hall ever since it opened. There have been problems with staff, finance and access—the adjacent Swinbrook development is surrounded by corrugated iron.’

As Acklam Hall remained largely unused in the early 80s there were occasional gigs including the Lancaster Music Project young bands showcase; Ranking Trevor, Jah Thomas and Captain Sinbad; Urban Shakedown and Benjamin Zephaniah; Whirl-y-Gig proto-raves; Einsturzende Neubauten, filmed for ‘The Tube’; the first rap gig, ‘Tommy Boy and Language Lab present Whizz Kid, the best scratch DJ in the world/kings of hip-hop beneath the Westway’; and the Redskins and Billy Bragg GLC London Against Racism benefit.

At the 1983 Carnival Viv Goldman compared Acklam Road and Ladbroke Grove with ‘Brooklyn and the Bronx, home of rap, Intergalactic Sound under the Westway by the footbridge over the railway track felt like New York’s Paradise Garage.’ Simultaneously, ‘all down Acklam Road, Jah Love Sound and Shaka reverberated the Westway with roots, amidst stalls bedecked with icons of Marcus Garvey and Selassie I.’ Weazel’s Messianic Sound blues dances at Ronnie Briggs’s garage yard on Acklam Road were attended by the likes of Viv Goldman, Aswad and Boy George—resulting in Papa Weazel appearing on the dub b-side of Culture Club’s first number 1 single ‘Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?’
Acklam Hall was re-launched on its 10th anniversary in 1985 as Bay 63, and became the mid to late 80s indie music scene Mecca. The first gigs of the second incarnation were Somo Somo with DJ Dave Hucker, Sonic Youth's London debut, the GLC Race Equality Unit Black Music Roadshow Afro-Asian night, with Hi-life International and Weazel's Messiah Sound, Sonido des Lndres, the Moodists, Frank Chickens, That Petrol Emotion, Microdisney, Orchestra Jazira, Rubella Ballet and the Holloway All Stars.

As Bay 63 in 1986/7 the hall had its most active period as a live music venue, hosting gigs by 3 Mustaphas 3, the Gladiators, Leather Nun, In the Nursery, Easterhouse, Miaw, the Nightingales, Ted Chippington, We've Got A Fuzzbox and We're Gonna Use It, the Shop Assistants, Bogshed, the Bodines, Alternative TV, the Membranes, the Shrubs, the Chevalier Brothers, Potato 5 and DJ Gaz Mayall, Zodiac Mindwarp and the Love Reaction, All About Eve, Dread Broadcasting Corporation, Night Doctor, Red Crayola, TV Personalities, 23 Skidoo, Vic Godard, Laibach, Soup Dragons, Scientists, Age of Chance, Blyth Power, Stump, Primal Scream, the Godfathers, Bambi Slam, Happy Mondays, Nikki Sudden, My Bloody Valentine, Gaye Bikers on Acid, Bill Drummond and the Shamen.

The Pale Fountains, Weather Prophets and Servants' Bay 63 gig was reviewed by Sounds' Roger Holland as: 'a brief visit to a side of London that the tourists seldom see. But out here, in a part of the capital whose one claim to fame is that it lies beneath an intricate selection of flyovers, someone has been compiling some rather enticing bills.' Steven Wells wrote in NME of the Wedding Present, Close Lobsters and Passmore Sisters' Amnesty International benefit: 'Away from the black leather hell of the capital's still breathing punk holes, we find the little indie folk at Bay 63—the downwardly mobile in urban lounge wear and this is their temple.'

Dave Hucker, the DJ at Sol Y Sombra in Charlotte Street, was asked to work at Bay 63 when it opened by the promoters Steve Dlks of Bush Fire and Honest Jon's daughter Rachel Clare: 'I jumped at the chance to do a local session,' he recalls. 'I played my mix of soul, funk, go-go, blues, r’n’b, Latin, Caribbean and African music, and some of the bands that played the Sol, like the Chevalier Brothers, were booked. Not much had changed since the name change from Acklam Hall. It still had white painted walls with that rough and ready community hall vibe. I knew all the doormen from the shebeen round the corner. It was a very friendly local event with reasonable prices at the door and the bar, and nobody bothered you if you smoked a spliff. The managers Eamon Mackie, his wife Mary and Adrian Orchard were by and large good people to work with—except Adrian stiffed me over an idea to redecorate the place with a New York style cityscape of towers. Roger Matland accused me of stealing his manager's ideas and trying to undermine them when it was my idea.'

In Acklam Hall's second re-launch at the end of the 80s, the indie venue Bay 63 was transformed into the 'minimalist state-of-the-art style' nightclub Subterania, by the promoter Vince Power from the Mean Fiddler in Harlesden, who leased the premises from the Amenity Trust. After a £600,000 revamp, the third incarnation as a music venue/nightclub began with gigs by Gaye Bykers on Acid, Spacemen 3, Buthole Surfers, the Men They Couldn't Hang, Nitzer Ebb, Bad Brains, African Headcharge, Noah House of Dread, the Shamen with Paul Oakenfold, World Domination Enterprises, Jonathan Richman, Shellyann Orphan, Big Audio Dynamite and Hank Wangford.

Subterania clubs included Crash—described in City Limits as: 'Busy as hell and twice as kickin' is this lil' ole raveerie in west London, so make sure you get there early, lest all you clubbing millions disturb the local residents. Once there, you'll find a heaving plethora of live and sampled music from jockeyin' hosts Jo Hagan and guests. Tonight ex-members of the Wild Bunch Dommy Tee and Grantley spin live.' Then there was Submission Records' Sub club, Submerge—'funky soul, hip-hop, house and reggae at this sleek-chic west London dance-club', Subverse, Atlantis, Choice, Living Large, Freedom, Riot in Lagos, Global Sweatbox, Carwash, Something Else, Absolutely Fabulous—'a packed, dressed-up crowd of Ladbroke Groovers and Westside party people'; Westside, Jungle in the Grove, Rotation, Rodigan's Reggae and We Got Westway, featuring BAD and Lindy Layton of Beats International. Femi Fem of the Young Disciples, who ran Rotation, recalls appearances by Snoop Dogg, A Tribe Called Quest, the Fugees, Bjork, Goldie, Prince and Spike Lee. When the All Saints group formed in the early 90s their ambition was to get a gig at Subterania.

As the future 'Big Brother' presenter Davina McCall worked on the door at the celebrated Choice club, City Limits advised punters to: 'be prepared to get there early even if you are on the guest list. The queues are as famous as the night.' Time Out reviewed Choice as: 'Graham Bell, Patrick Lilley and Davina’s outrageously popular, fashion-conscious dancers’ party where DJ stars Jeremy Healy and Norman Jay spin housey boogie and tuff soul sounds at this sleek-chic west London niterie. As a result of the club’s popularity, prospective punters should note that the door policy understandably favours members and regulars.'
Through the 90s into the 21st century, Subterania continued to host irregular showcase gigs by such as Ice-T, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Alanis Morissette, Lush, Bhundu Boys, the Farm, EMF, Ocean Colour Scene, Cabaret Voltaire, Orbital, Jah Wobble, Jah Shaka, Beats International, Primal Scream, Inspiral Carpets, Run DMC, Sub-Sub, M-People, Courtney Pine, Courtney Love, Don-e, D-Influence, D-Ream, JCO01, Killing Joke, Bootsy Collins, Gravediggaz, Afrika Bambaataa, Alabama 3, Moloko, Moby, Snoop Dogg and Eminem. Despite Subterania’s success, the venue was still beset by controversy throughout Vince Power’s Mean Fiddler era, over late-licensing, noise, associated disorder, accusations of racism and opposition to the pre-Subterania Bay 37 bar. Following a series of shooting incidents outside in 1999 there were calls for Subterania to be closed. The club subsequently lost its charitable rate discount as it was deemed to be primarily a night-club, only exclusively available for charitable purposes on Sundays. Macy Gray told the Standard in 2003: “I like the night life here, especially Subterania in Ladbroke Grove because it’s funky and the boys are cute.” This turned out to be the club’s epitaph as shortly after the name changed to Neighbourhood, under the administration of Ben Watt of Everything but the Girl. The venue’s 4th incarnation featured Watt’s Love Box ‘house-funk-disco-dub block party’ with Groove Armada, One Starry Night of ‘Latinotronica, deep house, Afro-funk and jazz’, Damon Albarn’s ‘Democrazy’ solo gig, Stella McCartney’s birthday party and Jade Jagger’s Jezebel night. But in 2008 there goes the Neighbourhood name as the club was advertised as the address 12 Acklam Road. Then on the 40th anniversary of the Westway opening, in 2010 the name changed once again to Supperclub. This 6th incarnation, as a new burlesque cabaret venue, hosted Madonna’s dancers’ end of tour party, Trevor Horn’s Buggles’ reunion gig, and Prince Harry’s girlfriends Chelsy Davy and Cressida Bonas. In the latest re-launch in 2014 Supperclub became Mode, described in Time Out as ‘Berlin-style clubbing in Notting Hill’, with a Spitfire model over the dance floor.

Westbourne Studios, around the Westway curve, has hosted Gorillaz designer Jamie Hewlett, Banksy, the Portobello Film Festival and the launch of Don Letts’ ‘Westway to the World’ Clash film. Acklam Studios at 10 Acklam Road has housed Knockabout Comics and Kickin’ reggae/ragga label. Mike Skinner aka The Streets was photographed by the Acklam skateboard park. The Golborne Youth Centre, on the site of the old Pembroke boxing club on the corner of St Ervan’s Road, was opened by Chris Eubank. The footbridge over the tube line between Acklam and Tavistock Crescent appears on the cover of Steve Miller and Lol Coxhill’s 1973 ‘Miller/Coxhill’ album, and in the films ‘Duffer’ and ‘Hell W10’, featuring members of the Clash and Sigue Sigue Sputnik. Next issue: Portobello Road by numbers—Lancaster Road to Cambridge Gardens.