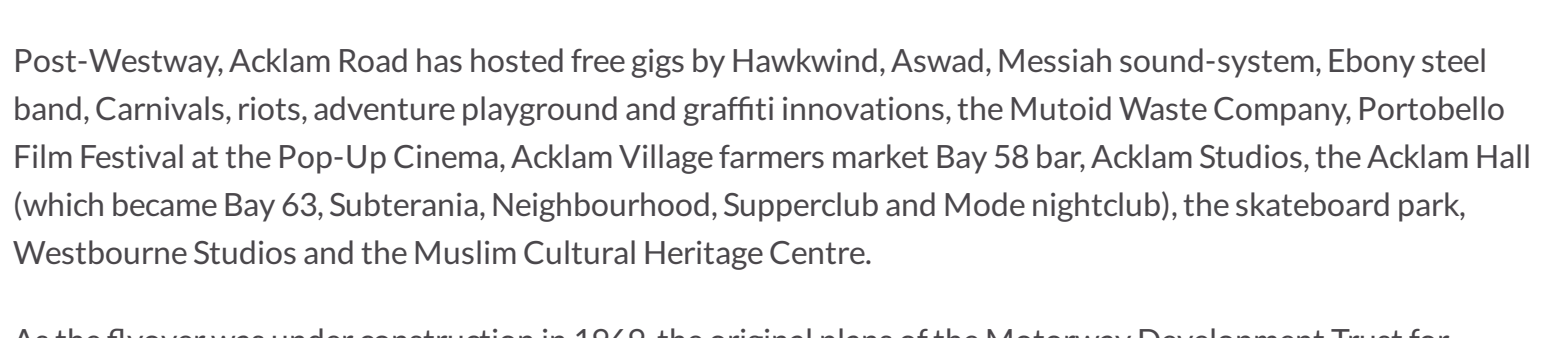


The Underground Map



Acklam Hall, W10

Filed under [North Kensington, W10, W11](#) | [May 20, 2018](#)

Post-Westway, Acklam Road has hosted free gigs by Hawkwind, Aswad, Messiah sound-system, Ebony steel band, Carnivals, riots, adventure playground and graffiti innovations, the Mutoid Waste Company, Portobello Film Festival at the Pop-Up Cinema, Acklam Village farmers market Bay 58 bar, Acklam Studios, the Acklam Hall (which became Bay 63, Subterania, Neighbourhood, Supperclub and Mode nightclub), the skateboard park, Westbourne Studios and the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre.

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

The Acklam Hall community centre was directly constructed in the mid 70s by the North Kensington Amenity Trust, under the administration of the first director 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.

Before the 1976 Carnival riot, Aswad recorded 'Three Babylon' (in which 'Three Babylon tried to make I and I run, they come to have fun with their long truncheons') about a police incident on Acklam Road at Briggs's garage yard. Aswad's guitarist Brinsley Forde recalled in his interview for the Mas & Mayhem oral history project: 'As it grew bigger there were sound-systems, especially down the back of Briggs's yard, which was 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 76 riot John Firth described 'how I was kicked at black disco' in Acklam Hall: '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' at Acklam Hall after the riot was to feature Spartacus R from Osibisa, Sukuya steel band and the Clash, but the latter didn't play - as Joe Strummer said: "It wasn't our riot, though we felt like one."

The following year Ripped & Torn fanzine reviewed a punk gig featuring Sham 69, Chelsea, the Lurkers and the Cortinas, in which Acklam 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 on the venue 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.'

Misty in Roots were pictured in Sounds playing in the hall after this incident under a 'Black & White Unite & Fight' banner. In 1978 Wif Walker's Black Productions' punky reggae party under the flyover at Acklam Hall showcased Misty, Alton Ellis, Sons of Jah, King Sounds and the Israelites, Crass, the Members, Monochrome Set, Passions and prag-VEC. The most eclectic Black Productions bill featured the aristocratic rocker Teresa D'Abreu with the anarcho-punk group Crass and a skateboarding display.

Barry Ford of Merger and the Members' gigs' 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' with the Innocents, the venue received another bad review in Ripped & Torn 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 (handwritten 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 afro with local skinheads was filmed by Dave Robinson and appears in the 1981 short film 'Take it or Leave It' - in which the 'Natty boys bent on a ruck after their first gig at Acklam Hall' and become 'Madness on the run from a skinhead lynch mob'. The Valves had a song entitled 'Ain't No Surf in Portobello', referring to the Scottish Portobello beach near Edinburgh rather than the road.

Cabaret 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-Poiesis punk group, appeared at a Rough Theatre benefit for the defence fund of Astrid Proll, the Baader-Meinhof gang getaway driver. 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 Penman 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 in 1979, Acklam Hall became known as the post-punk and 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 monkeys 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 Cienfuegos 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 post-punk Acklam Hall 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, Beggar, 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, assorted 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 Acklam Hall went on to host the World's first Bad Music Festival, featuring the Horrible Nurds, Blues Drongo All-Stars and Danny and the Dressmakers, Bay 66 was the venue of a free gig by Here & Now, 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': '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 the Martian Schoolgirls, Androids of Mu, the Mob, Manufactured Romance, Chelsea, the Fall, Delta 5, Essential Logic, Vincent Units, Brian Brain and Here & Now. 1981 began with UK Decay and Eraserhead, and 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, Teds, 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'; 'Tommy Boy and Language Lab present Whizz Kid, the best scratch DJ in the world/king 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. All down Acklam Road, Jah Love Sound and Shaka reverberated the Westway with roots, amidst stalls bedecked with icons of Marcus G and Selassie I'. Weazel's Messiah Sound blues dances at Ronnie Briggs's garage yard on Acklam Road were attended by the likes of Viv Goldman, Aswad and Bay 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 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 Londres, the Moodists, Frank Chickens, That Petrol Emotion, Microdisney and Rubella Ballet.

As Bay 63 in 1986/7 the hall had its most active period as a live music venue, with gigs by 3 Mustaphas 3, the Gladiators, In the Nursery, the Nightingales, We've Got A Fuzzbox and We're Gonna Use It, the Shop Assistants, Chevalier Brothers, Zodiac Mindwarp and the Love Reaction, All About Eve, Night Doctor, Dread Broadcasting Corporation, 23 Skidoo, Vic Godard, Lairbach, Age of Chance, Blyth Power, Primal Scream, the Godfathers, Happy Mondays, My Bloody Valentine, Bill Drummond and the Shamen.

The Pale Fountains, Weather Prophets and Servants 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 his NME review of the Wedding Present, Close Lobsters and Indie more Sisters: 'Away from the black leather hell of the capital's still breathing punk holes, we find the little and passible folk at Bay 63 - the downwardly mobile in urban lounge wear and this is their temple.'

In the late 80s the Hanif Kureishi and Stephen Frears' film 'Sammy and Rosie Get Laid' featured a hippy travellers' camp by the Westway along Acklam Road on the site of Westbourne Studios. The third Big Audio Dynamite album 'Tighten Up Volume 88' came in a Paul Simonon painted sleeve depicting a sound-system party under the flyover and Trellik Tower. During the Carnival, 'the Cage' bar on Acklam Road by the railway footbridge became renowned for Mastermind v Rap Attack sound-system clashes.

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. The premises' third incarnation as a music venue/club began with gigs by Gaye Bykers on Acid, Spacemen 3, Butthole Surfers, the Men They Couldn't Hang, Bad Brains, African Headcharge, Noah House of Dread, the Shamen with Paul Oakenfold, World Domination Enterprises, Jonathan Richman, BAD and Hank Wangford.

Subterania clubs included Crash, featuring S-Express, 23 Skidoo and Wild Bunch DJs, Sub, Submerge, Subverse, Atlantis, Choice, Living Large, Freedom, Riot in Lagos, Global Sweatbox, Carwash, Something Else, Absolutely Fabulous, Westside, Jungle in the Grove, Rotation, Rodigan's Reggae and We Got Westway, featuring BAD and Lindy Layton, 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.

As the future 'Big Brother' presenter Davina McCall worked on the door at Choice, City Limits advised: '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 Chili 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-V, M-People, Courtney Pine, Courtney Love, Don-e, D-Influence, D-Team, JC001, Killing Joke, Bootsy Collins, Gravediggaz, Afrika Bambaataa, Alabama 3, Moloko, Moby, Snoop Dogg and Eminem.


Despite licensing noise, the venue was beset by controversy throughout Vince Power's Mean Fiddler era over late-licensing success, associated mugging and 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 nightclub, only exclusively available for charitable purposes on Saturdays.

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 Subterania became Neighbourhood under the administration of Ben Watt of Everything but the Girl. The venue's 4th incarnation featured his Love Box 'house-funk-disco-dub block party' with Groove Armada, One Stary Night of 'Latinotronica, deep house, Afro-funk and jazz', Damon Albarn's 'Democracy' solo gig, Stella McCartney's birthday party and Jade Jagger's Jezebel night.


In 2008, the name was There Goes The Neighbourhood was the name as the club advertised as the address 12 Acklam Road. Then, on the 40th anniversary of the Westway opening in 2010, the name changed again to Supperclub. This 6th incarnation, as a burlesque cabaret venue featuring beds, 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 has hosted Gorillaz designer Jamie Hewlett, Banksy, Portobello Film Festival and Don Letts' 'Westway to the World' Clash film launch. Acklam Studios at 10 Acklam Road has housed Knockabout Comics and Kickin' reggae/ragga label. 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. Mike Skinner aka The Streets was photographed by the Acklam skateboard park. The Golborne Youth Centre, on the site of the Pembroke boxing club on the corner of St Ervan's Road, was opened by Chis Eubank.

This article, written by Tom Vague, first appeared on the It's Your Colville website: <http://www.colville.com>



Scott Hatton



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