

H. L. Gandell 2

# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY



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NOVEMBER, 1955

REPORT No. (2)

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**THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**Year 1954/55**

# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

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THE LORD GORELL, C.B.E., M.C.

## *Vice-Presidents:*

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*Hon. Secretary:* Mrs. G. Christiansen

18, Kensington Square, W.8. Tel.: WESTon 0931.

*Hon. Treasurer:* E. Noman-Butler, Esq.

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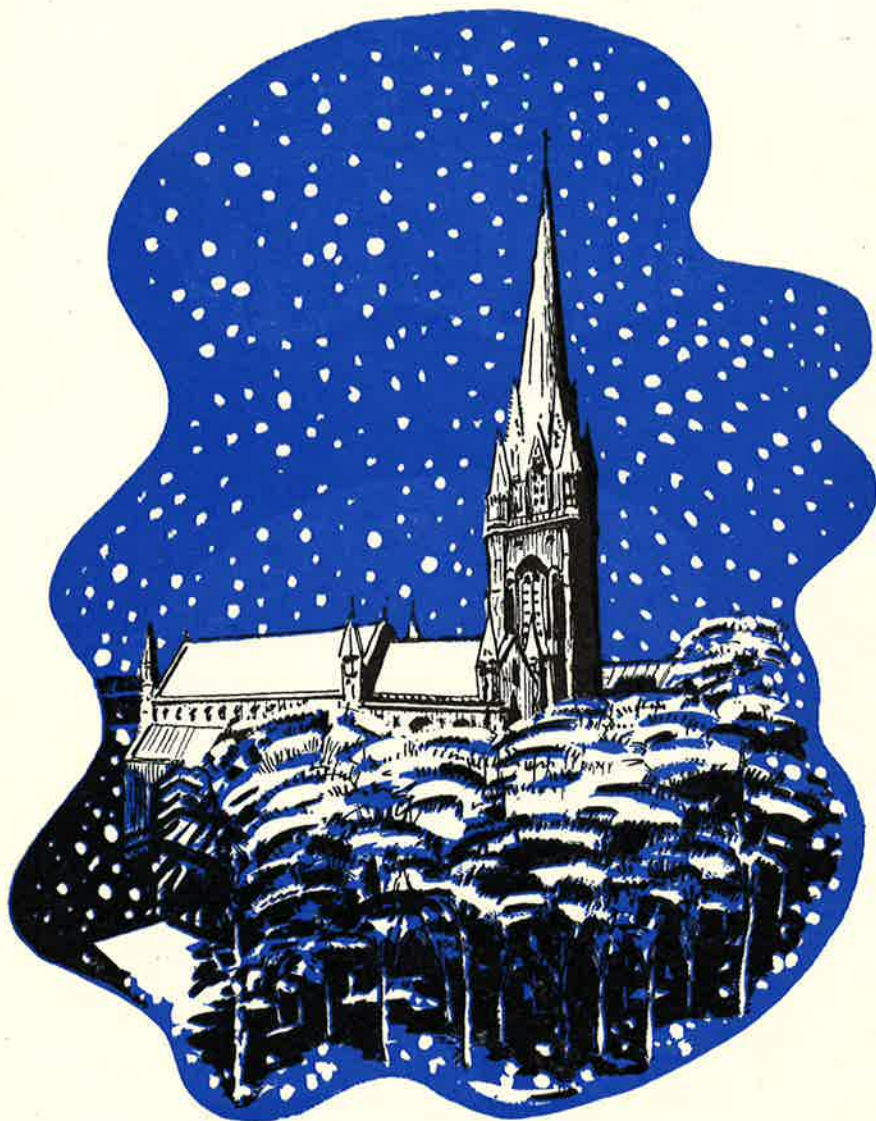
## FOREWORD

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY, now in its third year, can, I think, truly be described as a healthy, vigorous infant. Its activities, as this Report shows, are numerous and they are wholly beneficial. Except, conceivably, to those who prefer destruction to preservation and ugliness to beauty and act as though they had no ancestors, none, at least that they can be proud of, the activities of the Society are uncontroversial.

It desires peace, it aims at preservation, it seeks beauty. It cannot do all it desires until its membership is much greater; but it can, and does, do a good deal even in its earliest years. I most heartily commend this Report, the first that I have been privileged to write, to all members and I trust to all who have the honour of living in the Royal Borough or who are interested in the history and the preservation of the greatness of London: may all these right speedily qualify to receive its successor next year!

GORELL,

*President.*



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

THE Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the Town Hall on October 5th, 1954, with the President, Lord Gorell, in the chair.

The Adoption of the Report and Accounts for the year ending September, 1954, was moved by the Chairman of the Executive Committee. This was seconded by the Hon. Treasurer, and passed unanimously.

The confirmation of the re-election of the officers of the Society and of the Executive Committee was moved by Mr. Stephen Ward, seconded by Mr. C. D. Betteridge, and passed unanimously.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee, Dr. Stephen Pasmore, in a speech in which he summarised the Society's activities during the first year of its existence, said, "What is the position of the Society to-day — a year after the inaugural meeting when this Town Hall was packed out? THEN people were saying, 'what is the Kensington Society?' Now they say, 'What is the Kensington Society going to do about it'?"

Our membership in one year has jumped from 24 to 480, and we are proud of these figures, which prove that the Kensington Society has come to stay.

The Society has established close relations with the London County Council, who are responsible, under the Town and Country Planning Act, for supervising any development in the Borough.

The Society has also established good relations with the London Society, the Georgian Group, and the National Trust."

The meeting was followed by a lecture entitled "Victorian Photography," given by Mr. C. H. Gibbs - Smith.

The Photographic Record Group presented an exhibition of some of its work.

## THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES.

*November 1st.* Mr. John Charlton, Inspector, Ministry of Works, gave a lecture entitled "The Preservation of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings by the Ministry of Works."

*December 6th.* Professor E. R. Vincent gave a lecture entitled "Some Italians at Holland House." (*This is printed in full on pages 17—29.*)

*February 2nd.* Miss Sargeaunt gave a lecture entitled "Walter Crane, Illustrator of Children's Books."

*February 11th.* Mr. Colin Horsley gave a Piano Recital.

*March 3rd.* Miss Helen Lowenthal gave a lecture entitled "The History of the English Garden."

*March 12th.* A Public Lecture was given by Mr. Robert Furneaux Jordan entitled "The History of the English House."

*April 14th.* Mr. Stephen Ward gave a lecture entitled "Thackeray in Kensington."

*May 4th.* Mr. James Pope-Hennessy gave a lecture entitled "The History of Campden Hill."

*May 25th.* Mrs. Messel kindly gave permission for members to visit her house at 18, Stafford Terrace, W.8.

*June 17th.* Major Simon Whitbread kindly gave permission for members to visit Southill Park, Bedfordshire.

*June 30th.* A visit to the Kensington Civil Defence Control Centre. This was followed by a visit to Niddry Lodge, by kind permission of Mr. Pilley.

*July 2nd.* A visit to Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, by kind invitation of Miss Sargeant, the Principal of the College.

*July 22nd.* A visit to Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire, followed by a visit to Professor A. E. Richardson's house, Avenue House, Ampthill, Bedfordshire.

*July 30th.* A visit to the Sir John Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

*September 9th.* Tour of North Kensington, including a visit to the Cecil Residential Club for Old Ladies in Wedlake Street and a visit to the North Kensington Community Centre, Dalgarno Way.

*September 24th.* A visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum, with a lecture by Mr. Warde - Jackson on "Adam and Regency Furniture."

*October 8th.* A visit to County Hall.

*November 9th.* The Historic Churches Preservation Trust presented a film entitled "Beauty in Ancient English Churches," by Mr. Lawrence Jones.

*November 25th.* A lecture by Dr. Stephen Pasmore entitled "The History of Edwardes Square."

*December 2nd.* A lecture by Mr. Adrian Bury, Hon. R.W.S., F.R.S.A., entitled "Sir Alfred Gilbert, Creator of Eros."

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS.

*Monday, December 12th.*

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at the Town Hall, Kensington High Street, W.8, at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman: The President, the Lord Gorell, C.B.E., M.C.  
The meeting will be followed by a lecture on "The Early History of Kensington," by Sir Harold Kenyon, K.B.E., J.P.  
The lecture will be illustrated by lantern slides.

*Friday, January 6th.*

A lecture by Mr. R. Ridgill Trout on "The De Veres at Kensington," at Leighton House, Holland Park Road, W.14, at 8 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. J. W. Scott, B.A.

*Monday, January 16th.*

A Viola Recital by Mr. Bernard Shore, C.B.E., at the Town Hall, Kensington High Street, W.8, at 8 p.m. Tickets 2/6d. from the Hon. Secretary, or at the door.

*Wednesday, February 8th.*

A lecture by Marie Rambert, C.B.E., on "Three Decades of English Ballet," at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Ivor Guest.

*Tuesday, March 6th.*

A lecture by Lord Hurcombe, G.C.B., K.B.E., M.B.O.U., entitled "Birds in Kensington," at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. W. G. Corfield.

*Wednesday, April 11th.*

A lecture by Mr. Alec Clifton-Taylor, M.A., entitled "Looking at Georgian Houses,"\* at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8.30 p.m.

The lecture will be illustrated by slides.

Chairman: The Hon. Mr. Justice Barry.

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\*Please note title of lecture — we regret misprint in programme.

Sat  
Sunday, April 14th.

A visit to the College of Estate Management, St. Albans Grove, W.8, at 11 a.m.

Numbers are limited — tickets required.

Wednesday, May 2nd and 9th.

A visit to Lord Audley's Hand Painted Glassware Studio. Members please meet at 56, George Street, W.1, (near the Wallace Collection), at 2.30 p.m.

Numbers are limited — tickets required.

With the exception of the Viola Recital, lectures and visits are free to Members. Members' friends admitted to lectures on payment of one shilling.

Will Members taking part in the visits please make a point of being on time to avoid keeping the host and party waiting.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our lecturers, our hosts and hostesses for making our lectures and visits so successful.

#### OTHER NEWS.

*Garages behind Earls Terrace.* The Freeholders of Earls Terrace appealed against the L.C.C.'s refusal of permission to erect garages behind Earls Terrace. The Minister of Housing and Local Government ordered a Public Enquiry and this took place on September 13th. The Kensington Society was represented at the Enquiry. The Freeholders lost their appeal.

*Factories in South End Village.* After a meeting of the Members of the Society and the Kensington Square Garden Committee with the Town Planning officers at County Hall, the deputation was assured that it is not the policy of the L.C.C. to encourage industrial development in this area.

*Development of London Squares.* The protection of Kensington Squares is a matter of great concern to the Society. We have written to the Chairman of the L.C.C. Planning Committee, associating the Kensington Society with the approach made by the Georgian Group to ensure that the harmony and character of the houses in the squares should not be destroyed by a different type of building either in material, height or proportion.

26 *Kensington Square.* Members will be pleased to hear that the work has been completed on this house. The Society has been in constant touch with the Crown Commissioners during the two years this house has been empty, urging that it should not be allowed to become derelict.

30, *Kensington Square.* We would now like to see 30, Kensington Square, occupied. At the end of the war the house was occupied by the Kensington Borough Council. Since the Council left in 1954 the house has remained empty, and is in danger of becoming derelict. The L.C.C. have been negotiating with the owners for a twenty-one years lease, to use the house for offices.

A Deed of Covenant with the National Trust exists, requiring the house to be used for residential purposes. The National Trust wrote to the Society on August 24th asking for its views about the house being used for business purposes. Members of the Executive Committee did not favour that the National Trust should waive its covenants.

*The Church of Our Lady of Victories.* Mr. Adrian Scott is the architect for the reconstruction of the Church of our Lady of Victories, the designs for which he is modifying to accord with criticisms by the Royal Fine Arts Commission. We hope Members will soon have an opportunity of seeing the plans for this church and also the plans for the new *Carmelite Church* in Kensington Church Street.

*The Water Tower.* The Historical Section of the L.C.C. consulted the Society about the proposed demolition of the tower. We are glad to know a useful purpose has now been found for this well known landmark.

*Advertisement Control.* The Society has supported the London Society and the Lambeth Society in opposing the erection of large neon light advertisements on the river front sites. Although Kensington has no river frontage, the Society felt the river amenities should be preserved.

*Imperial Institute.* The proposed redevelopment of this area, and the possible demolition of the Imperial Institute, had first received public notice in a review of the Architectural Section of this year's Royal Academy Exhibition. A letter was later sent by the Society to "The Times" in an attempt to make the matter more public. This was followed by an invitation to members of the Executive Committee to meet the Rector and other officers of the Imperial Institute. The Members present pressed for the preservation of the tower and domes. The Rector could give no assurance on this point, as the

whole scheme was in a state of flux. The Society will continue to watch developments.

*Tree Conference.* Members of the Executive Committee attended the Tree Conference arranged by the Council of Civic Societies.

*Point Block Flats.* The Kensington Society are opposed to the building of "Skyscraper" flats at Holland Park. The L.C.C. has been asked for town planning permission to erect three eleven-story flats of the "point block" type, and one "slab" block of ten story flats on a site adjoining the southern portion of Holland Park, between Melbury Court and Kensington High Street. The High Street frontage (after road widening has been carried out), opposite the Odeon Cinema, would include six shops. It is felt that the playing field in Holland Park is unique because of its surrounding trees, and if the southern boundary is used for the development of huge blocks of flats, the High Street will move into the Park and destroy its rural character.

*Commemorative Plaques.* The six following names — Sir James Barrie, Jean Ingelow, Bonar Law, Sir William Orpen, Thomas Sidney Cooper and Leigh Hunt — were sent during the year to the L.C.C. requesting commemorative plaques being placed on the appropriate houses. These were considered by the Town Planning Architectural and Historical Buildings Subcommittee on September 23rd. The following is an extract from the letter received from the L.C.C. since this meeting:

"After considerable discussion it was resolved that no action should be taken to commemorate Jean Ingelow, Leigh Hunt and Sir William Orpen. It was felt that Miss Ingelow and Cooper were not very widely known, and that opinion of Sir William Orpen's merit as an artist was still fluid. Leigh Hunt is already commemorated at 22, Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea . . . . . It was agreed to commemorate Andrew Bonar Law. The site chosen was 24, Onslow Gardens, and Sir James Barrie at 133, Gloucester Road. The erection of the plaque to Barrie will be deferred until 1957 when, in accordance with a Council ruling, twenty years would have elapsed since Barrie's death."

The Society has replied that it regrets the decision of the Council, especially in not commemorating Leigh Hunt, and that in view of the fact that Leigh Hunt was the author of one of the standard histories of Kensington we would be glad if this matter could be reconsidered. At the same time we requested a plaque to commemorate Walter Pater, who lived at 12, Earls Terrace, 1886 - 1893.

The Society will be pleased to have names from Members of notable residents they consider should be commemorated.

*Trees in South End Village.* The Society has asked the Kensington Borough Council for permission to plant two ornamental trees and one plane tree in South End Village. It is hoped that funds of the Society will permit trees to be planted in different parts of Kensington each year.

*Gifts to the Society.* We gratefully acknowledge from Mr. F. Gordon Roe, the gift of a delightful water colour by his father, Frederick Roe, entitled "Sunlight on Snow," showing Vase in the forecourt at 18, Stanford Road, after the great snowfall on March 9th, 1931.

Copies of photographs of Thorpe Lodge which appeared in "Design," from Lady Norman; a Kensington engraving from Mr. A. E. Lowry; and Old Records of Kensington, including news cuttings of Kensington, dated 1914, from Mrs. Flory Mackey. These have all been passed to the Kensington Public Library for safe keeping. We welcome such gifts.

*Christmas Cards.* Cards are on sale again this year. Five of the eight cards now on sale are reproduced in this Report. Prices:

	EACH	
	s.	d.
The Owners and Holders of the Manor of Notten		
Barns	...	4
Campden House	...	4
Kensington High Street	...	4
Some 18th Century Buildings in Notting Hill		
Gate	...	4
St. Mary Abbots Church	...	6
Holland Street	...	6
Holland Street, Hand Coloured	...	1 3
Kensington Square	...	4

It would be appreciated if letters requiring an answer were accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

At the close of the year the Society had 496 members.

The Society is still anxious to hear from Members interested in the formation of a History Group.

Extra copies of this Report may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, price 2/-.

Please note that subscriptions for 1955-6 were due on October 1st.

The Society continues to be affiliated to the Central Council of Civic Societies and to the London Society.



HOLLAND STREET, 1939.

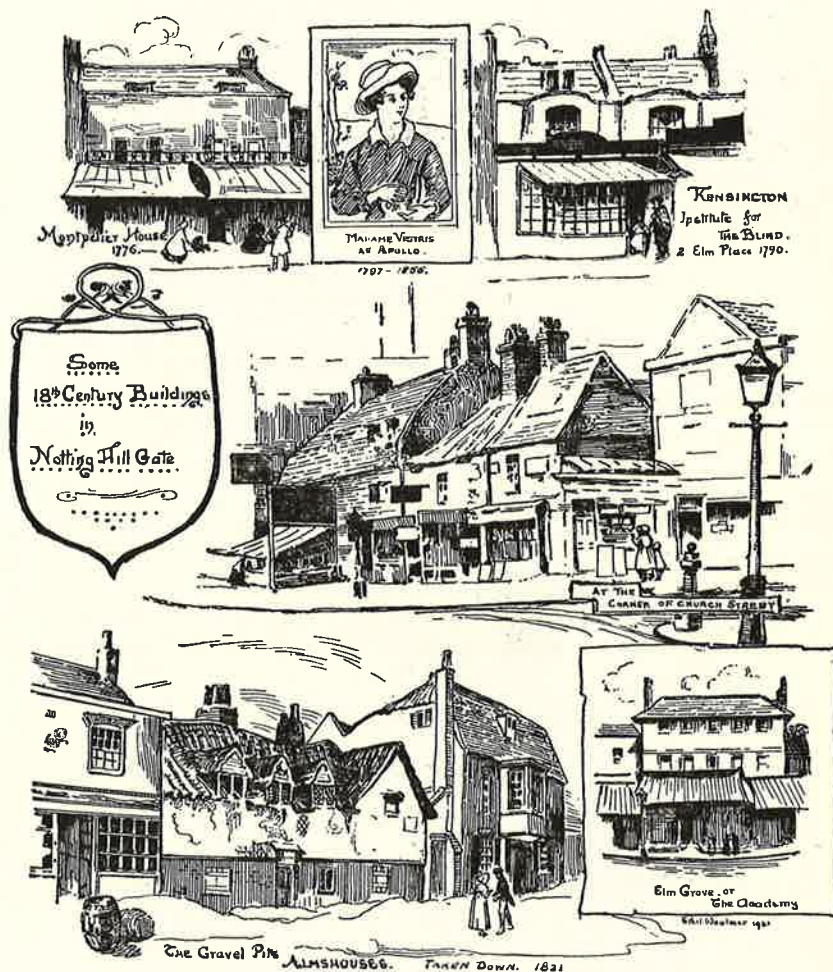
*Published by The Kensington Society from a drawing by Dennis Flanders in the Kensington Public Library.*



CAMPDEN HOUSE, KENSINGTON, drawn by Wenceslaus Hollar in 1647.

This Jacobean mansion was built in 1612 for Sir Baptist Hicks, who was afterwards created Lord Campden. It is from this title that Campden Hill derives its name. The House stood on ground between Sheffield Terrace on the north and Campden Grove on the south, and was destroyed by fire in 1862.

*Printed by The Kensington Society.*



KENSINGTON SQUARE.

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## PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD GROUP.

THE Kensington Borough Council recently received from the College of Arms the Court Rolls of the Manor of Earls Court. It was felt that these very important historical records ought to be photographically reproduced in the form of microfilms, which could be more easily stored. Accordingly, one of the Rolls was micro-filmed by Dr. Norman C. Wright. To do all of them, however, was found to be too ambitious an undertaking, as none of the members had sufficient of the necessary equipment for carrying out the work. It was, therefore, decided by The Kensington Society to have the remainder microfilmed by the Recordak Division of Kodak, and the cost met by the Society. The work has now been completed and the microfilms handed over to the Kensington Public Library for safe keeping.

Mr. C. D. Betteridge, the Chairman of the Group, has photographed some of the old property in Kensington, which may soon be demolished, and Miss R. J. Ensing has taken photographs of the demolition work being carried out by Messrs. John Barker, together with other items of local interest.

Many of the photographs in the "Kensington Scrapbook" Exhibition, held at Leighton House by the Borough Council from August 29th to October 15th, were taken by members of the Group, and a forthcoming booklet about Leighton House is being illustrated by photographs, which are the work of another member. In addition, some old and rapidly fading photographs in the Local Collection at the Public Library have been re-photographed.

The Kensington Borough Council have acknowledged, with grateful thanks, the work done by the Kensington Society's Photographic Group, whose object is to make a photographic record of the Borough, its history, antiquity, natural features, architecture, industries, current activities, and in fact everything that presents, or interprets, the life of the community.

More members are urgently needed if we are to fulfil our ambition of making a complete photographic survey of the Borough.

The annual subscription to The Kensington Society covers membership of the Photographic Record Group, and the Hon. Secretary, Mr. C. G. Boxall, Central Library, Kensington High Street, W.8, would gladly welcome members who would like to participate in the activities of the Group.

## SOME ITALIANS AT HOLLAND HOUSE.

BY

PROFESSOR E. R. VINCENT, C.B.E., LITT.D., D.PHIL.

I AM TO SPEAK this evening on the somewhat artificial subject of *Italians at Holland House*.\* It is artificial because fragmentary, for the society at Holland House was essentially cosmopolitan and people of all nationalities were constantly coming and going there. It is, however, possible to recognise the Italians amongst them and that is perhaps a matter of special importance because of the Italianate taste prevailing in England at the time when Holland House as a social centre was at its hey-day; that it to say in the years immediately following the Napoleonic wars.

In restricting attention to Italy and Italians we must, however, be careful not to forget the ubiquitous influence of French culture and of the French language and, in regard to the Hollands, of the extremely important connexion with Spain and the Spaniards. Art being long and life short, and lectures such as this being very properly restricted in length, I have the task of considering only a part, although an important part, of the cosmopolitan life of Holland House.

Speaking in Kensington to lovers of Kensington and of its history there is no need for me to emphasise the social importance of the great Whig mansion in your midst, now so sadly reduced. Many have described it and, from his unique sources of information, Lord Ilchester, with charming family piety, has fully illustrated its history. However, perhaps you will allow me to quote the words of Macaulay despite the fact that they will be very familiar to most of you:

"The time is coming when, perhaps, a few old men, the last survivors of our generation, will in vain seek, amidst new streets, and squares, and railway stations, for the site of that dwelling which was in their youth the favourite resort of wits and beauties, of painters and poets, of scholars,

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\*This paper was written to be delivered as a lecture and the style has not been altered since. — E. R. V.

philosophers, and statesmen. They will then remember, with strange tenderness, many objects once familiar to them, the avenue and the terrace, the busts and the paintings, the carvings, the grotesque gilding, and the enigmatical mottoes. With peculiar fondness they will recall that venerable chamber, in which all the antique gravity of a college library was so singularly blended with all that female grace and wit could devise to embellish a drawing-room.

"They will recollect, not unmoved, those shelves loaded with varied learning of many lands and many ages, and those portraits in which were preserved the features of the best and wisest Englishmen of two generations. They will recollect how many men who have guided the politics of Europe, who have moved great assemblies by reason and eloquence, who have put life into bronze and canvas, or who have left posterity things so written as it shall not willingly let them die, were there mixed with all that was loveliest and gayest in the society of the most splendid of capitals.

"They will remember the peculiar character which belonged to that circle, in which every talent and accomplishment, every art and science, had its place. They will remember how the last debate was discussed in one corner, and the last comedy of Scribe in another; while Wilkie gazed with modest admiration on Sir Joshua's Barette; while Mackintosh turned over Thomas Aquinas to verify a quotation; while Talleyrand related his conversations with Barras at the Luxembourg, or his ride with Lannes over the field of Austerlitz. They will remember, above all, the grace, and the kindness, far more admirable than grace, with which the princely hospitality of that ancient mansion was dispensed."

In that society so movingly recollected by Macaulay and despite the fact that in that particular passage only one Italian name from an earlier epoch is mentioned (that of Giuseppe Barette the friend of Dr. Johnston) Italian cultural influence was of great importance. Let us first consider the matter in general.

The interest in Italy, Italian art, learning and letters that was so notable a feature of 16th century England gradually subsided until in the earlier part of the 18th century it became very faint

indeed, despite the influence of Palladio on architecture and of Italian Opera on music. Joseph Addison (the one time resident in Holland House (1716-1719) whose owner, the widow of the Third Earl of Warwick and Holland, he had married) could travel through Italy and find there merely the vestiges of Classical Rome without showing the faintest interest in the Italians or their superb productions.

Little by little this strangely limited view of Italy broadened and one of those who actively helped in the process was Giuseppe Barette, whose portrait had a place of honour in Holland House itself, as Macaulay has just reminded us. By the end of the 18th century a newly awakened interest in Italy is apparent. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (published 1776-1788) carried the story into the Italian Middle Ages. William Roscoe in his widely read and frequently reprinted biographies of Lorenzo de' Medici (1795) and Leo X (1805) helped to re-awaken interest in the Italian renaissance. The *Divine Comedy* was for the first time translated into English. By 1796 an Italian Magazine published in England (*Italian Tracts*) could write as follows: "The taste for Italian Literature and esteem for the natives of that country are not at all diminished at present in England. The study of that most delightful and elegant language forms one branch of the education of the youth of both sexes. Music-masters and teachers of the arts of design, are generally selected from amongst the Italians.

"The Italian Theatre in the Metropolis rivals in beauty and magnificence the most superb national theatres, and is encouraged by the attendance of all the elegance and fashion of the Kingdom. The country-seats of the Peers of the realm and the rich land-owners are for the most part decorated with Italian pictures, statues and antiquities. There is scarcely a lady of distinction or gentleman of fortune, who does not ardently desire to make once at least in their lives, the tour of Italy."\*

Once the Napoleonic wars were over, the interest in Italy received new impetus as unrestricted travel once more became possible for all who could afford it. Not least with a view to travel, our ancestors applied themselves enthusiastically to the study of the Italian language. A proof of this is to be found in the

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\*I am indebted to Dr. C. P. Brand for this quotation.

remarkable fact that between 1815 and 1830 no less than 78 Italian grammar books and dictionaries were published in this country, that is to say more than five a year for fifteen years. Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso and many of the minor authors were published, bought and read in England either in the original language or in translation. There was great enthusiasm for Italian music; the Italian Opera in the Haymarket was always crowded and visiting composers and performers — Rossini, Catalani, Pasta, Velluti, etc., made a great deal of harmonious noise and a great deal of money. As for sculpture and painting, the words Italy and art became synonymous.

We need not therefore be surprised to find that the intelligent society that frequented Holland House at the turn of the century was very Italianate in its taste. This Italianism was most pronounced in the Host and Hostess themselves. Henry Richard Vassall Fox, third Lord Holland, had spent the best part of two years in Italy as a young man (1794-1796) and there had met the young wife of Sir Godfrey Webster. They had fallen in love, a love that was as ardent then as later it was to prove constant. Italy was the background to their happiness; the blue bay of Naples, the great buildings of Rome, the Lung'Arno of Florence, the sylvan charm of the Bagni di Lucca, the cypresses and hill-top towns that slowly passed before the windows of their rumbling carriage.

Both could talk Italian well and both formed an extensive acquaintance with other Italianate English people and, of course, with Italians themselves. A divorce from Webster finally permitted the lovers to be legally united and it was as Lord and Lady Holland that they took up residence at their Kensington Mansion in September 1797. Before long they were entertaining lavishly, sometimes as many as 50 visitors a day. To serve these throngs of guests there were innumerable servants, of whom many were Italians. Thomas Moore recorded in his diary that, as he left the house after a dinner party, he was highly astonished at hearing the butler singing an Italian air very well to the accompaniment of a guitar.

Holland House was a country house and the owners always returned to it with relief after staying in one or other of the residence they occupied in town. For several years they had a house in Pall Mall, that "old vile stinking hole" as Miss Fox, Lord Holland's sister, described it. Lady Holland wrote in 1808

in a letter to Gray in regard to Kensington, "The fresh air, verdure and singing birds are delicious at all times, but more especially after the dense vapours, gas lights and din of Pall Mall."

When the Hollands were absent, and they were frequently in London, at their seat at Ampthill or travelling abroad, Holland House was, to a large extent, in the charge of an Italian factotum called Serafino Buonaiuti, some of whose unpublished letters I have been able to find. He had apparently started his London life at the end of the 18th century, as an opera librettist, but he earned his living where and how he could, by translating and publishing Italian books to meet the contemporary demand. In 1796 he collaborated in producing a five volume anthology of Italian Literature with the support of a surprising number of distinguished people. In the early years of the new century he entered the service of Lord Holland and soon made himself invaluable. He helped the children, Henry and Mary, with their Italian, kept a watch on the dahlias that Lady Holland introduced into England from Spain in 1804, designed the formal garden in 1812, supervised structural repairs and assisted John Allen in the library. In one of his letters to Ugo Foscolo he wrote as follows: "As the official and unofficial Proteus of Holland House, I have taken up the office — or rather have been thrust into the office of Minister for Foreign Affairs. Twice a week I write to Lord and Lady Holland and send on letters and papers as I usually do when they are away."

He appears to have been a general favourite. At the family theatricals during the Christmas season of 1816 he impersonated the female character of Miss Godfrey in a play called the *Lyar*. "When he raised his veil and displayed his black *muséau*," wrote Lady Holland, "it was a *coup de theatre* to the amazement and diversion of the audience." The old retainer died at his house in Kensington Terrace in 1823.

Another more or less permanent Italian inmate of Holland House was Giuseppe Binda, a native of Lucca, who first came as a guest in 1815, but remained as a protégé and often performed quasi-secretarial duties. He too used to take part in the family theatricals and was a frequent opponent at billiards of the young Charles Fox. He had, however, an unfortunate habit of borrowing money from guests staying in the house. He was not entirely trusted by his employers, but the next generation of Hollands constantly visited him in Italy. He died in or near Leghorn in

about the year 1860. An interesting account of him was given by John Wishaw in a letter of November 8th, 1815:

"Among those whom I met at Holland House, I must not forget a young Italian of the name of Binda, who has been an intimate there for a considerable time. His history is somewhat interesting. He was connected with the late Roman and Neapolitan Governments, and has been thrown out of a brilliant career of fortune, by the late revolution in Italy.

"During his prosperity he collected a good library and some curious manuscripts and autographs. These latter he has brought to England with the intention of disposing of them to the museum where there seems to be a disposition to purchase them. I have been of some little use to him in this negotiation, and his gratitude and acknowledgments are unbounded. He became connected at Rome last winter with the Hollands and Bedfords, both of whom invited him to England; he is very kind and amiable and has a great deal of information."

It was Binda who introduced to the Hollands in September, 1816, probably their most distinguished Italian guest, the poet Ugo Foscolo. Foscolo is certainly the greatest Italian poet and author of the Napoleonic era (Leopardi wrote later). He was a man of genius and passion and looked it. Like Alfieri, and possibly Petrarch, he had red hair. He came to England in 1816 with a high literary reputation and was rated by the English Whigs as a patriot for his attitude towards Napoleon to whom he had always refused to pay lip-service. The fact that he left Milan in order not to accept the newly imposed Austrian rule was also known.

Foscolo visited Holland House for the first time on 21st September, 1816. He made a very good impression, "His learning and vivacity are wonderful," wrote Lord Holland, "and he seems to have great elevation of mind, and to be totally exempt from affection, though not perhaps equally so from enthusiasm, violence, and resentment." Encouraged by his more than friendly reception Foscolo returned next day and stayed a week. There were numerous fellow guests — the Russian Ambassador and his remarkable wife, Prince and Princess Lieven, peers, poets, diplomats, doctors, all of whose names have been recorded in the Holland House dinner books. I owe an acknowledgment to Lord Ilchester for kindly giving me the necessary information

from these unpublished documents that so admirably mirror the social activities of Holland House.

The poet had been gone only a few days when he received the following letter from Binda, "Lord Holland desires you to return as soon as you possibly can, and Milady would prescribe a term to your absence. She says she positively expects you here not later than Monday or Tuesday; she invites, urges and begs you not to postpone your departure. . . . you have many friends here who are sincerely attached to you and complain at being deprived of your company just when they have learnt to appreciate it."

By October 14th he was again a guest at Kensington. The Dinner Books record 28 days on which Foscolo slept or dined at Holland House in 1816, six in 1817, four in 1818, one in 1819, and two in 1820. He found the attractions of Holland House so great and, not least, the library so useful, that in September, 1817, he moved from Soho Square to Kensington where he settled at No. 19 Edwardes Square. (I cannot help thinking that Foscolo's fame is sufficiently well established, and Edwardes Square still so unchanged, that his residence there should be commemorated by an L.C.C. plaque, and I should like to commend this idea to the Kensington Society). He lived at Edwardes Square for at least six months, and probably for twelve, until he moved further into the country at Moulsey. His Kensington period coincided with a good deal of fashionable expenditure — on credit, for his resources were practically non-existent. He had a horse and chaise and employed a man-servant in blue livery. He bought a set of sterling silver cutlery for £64 from a silversmith at 6 High Street, Kensington, and in many ways over-spent himself.

The tragedy of Foscolo's life in England was fundamentally a very usual one, that of persistently living beyond his means. Certainly the lavish ways of Holland House were a bad example for a proud penniless poet. Lady Holland told him that the cost of their table was £9,000 a year. His frequent visits, however, as we have seen gradually diminished. "I love even the dogs of Holland House," he wrote, "but I become peevish in other people's houses." The truth is that his difficult ego centric temperament found the necessary social restraints of the Holland House circle irksome. There he had to defer to the somewhat dictatorial manners of his Hostess, and there he met many who were not only socially above him, but his intellectual equals or even superiors. Foscolo was not really happy in a society where he could not always be the centre of attention.

But for a time, even in this brilliant coterie, his fascinating

character and undoubted abilities held the stage. He made friends with Miss Caroline Fox, the spinster sister of Lord Holland, and gave her inscribed copies of his works. He became particularly attached to the fourteen-year-old son and heir Henry to whom he dedicated a translation of the parliamentary tributes on the death of Francis Horner. "It is possible for you to emulate him," he wrote to the boy, "for you live in a free country and you see public virtues venerated in the memory of your uncle and respected in your father. Nature has endowed you with a noble spirit that forbids you to be happy unless benefiting others and winning fame for yourself. Remember your friend snatched away in the vigour of his years and make haste."

When Foscolo was planning to leave England for Greece in the summer of 1817, he wrote a despondant letter to inform Lord Holland of the fact. It appeared then to the poet that his visit to this country had been a failure. To give him new heart Lord Holland wrote him a really splendid letter from Brussels which contains these words: "The publick and posterity have a claim to some portion of those advantages which those who have had the fortune to know you personally have enjoyed from their intercourse and conversation with you. If you do not engage in and complete some great work, it is your own fault. You have the materials, and in spite of what you say, you have ardour and spirit enough to carry you through it. . . . ."

"Let not the publick or private afflictions, to which you are subject, deter you from exertions which so far from being incompatible with them, are really the best cure for such calamities. Had Milton so argued he would never have obtained the immortality which he so silently, so steadfastly, and so successfully, persued — for what misfortunes had *he* not to surmount — what afflictions to break his spirit and interrupt his designs? Poverty, blindness, proscription and, above all, the utter ruin of that cause to which he had devoted all his time, attached his fortunes and wedded all his notion of duty and virtue.

"Lady Holland sends every kind souvenir and sincere good wishes. Henry is quite unhappy at the prospect of finding you gone from England, and envies his brother the pleasure of seeing you in the Mediterranean, and Allen begs me to add his assurances of friendship and anxiety for your comfort and happiness wherever you go. In all these good wishes and in the sentiments of sincere affection and respect I beg to join and assure you that I am, Dear Foscolo, ever and unalterably your friend. Vassall Holland."

It would not be difficult for me to speak more at length on Ugo Foscolo, but I must not go further in that direction than his connexion with Holland House warrants. Although events took him away from Kensington and from their society, he never

broke with the Hollands, and Lord Holland sent him a gift of wine when he lay on his death-bed in 1827, then known by an assumed name, in an obscure house in Turnham Green.

Throughout the rooms and on the walls of Holland House there were innumerable physical reminders of Italy. You knocked on a door and your hand closed on a Florentine door-knocker. Many of the rooms were lit by candles placed in beautiful Venetian chandeliers. There were groups of figures in terra-cotta mosaics surmounted by the papal arms, hangings of old Genoese silk and velvet brocade, albums of Italian prints on the tables and many Italian pictures on the walls — large views of Florence by Patch, portraits of Galileo and Machiavelli and decorative scenes of many kinds.

The library at Holland House, so great an attraction to Foscolo, was extraordinarily rich in Italian works, a great many of them collected in Italy by the Third Lord Holland himself. Three presumed autograph letters of Petrarch were reproduced by Foscolo when he came to publish his *Essays on Petrarch* in 1821. The library also contained nine autograph letters of Sannazaro, and an autograph manuscript of Savonarola, besides numerous copies of early printed Italian books. Many of these books came on the market after the war, amongst them the *Trial of Queen Caroline*, a collection made by the Third Lord Holland, now in the possession of the Cambridge University Library.

My reason for mentioning the trial of Queen Caroline is that many of the witnesses were Italian. It will be remembered that on his succession to the throne on the death of his father in 1820, George IV induced the Government to bring in a Bill with the object of depriving his wife of her royal rights. The couple had been parted for many years and for a long time Caroline had lived in Italy. The main change, in what virtually amounted to the public trial of the Queen for adultery by the Lords, was that she had taken the courier Pergami (or Bergami as he was often wrongly called) as a lover. Numerous Italian witnesses were called, chiefly for the prosecution, and Holland House, as most other London or Kensington houses, buzzed with the scandal. Lord Holland himself, with the help of his librarians, assiduously collected all they could in the way of documents on the subject, printed papers, manuscripts, cartoons and squibs. It is this collection of very great social and historic interest that is now in Cambridge. It includes twenty-one autograph epigrams by Lord Holland, two of them written in the Italian language. In mentioning Lord Holland as an author, we must not forget that in 1815 he wrote a pamphlet on choosing a constitution for Naples (published in 1818) entitled, "A Letter to a Neapolitan from an Englishman."

To resume our main topic of Italians who visited Holland House we should make special mention of a man considered by

his contemporaries as the greatest sculptor of his time, and perhaps of earlier times too, Antonio Canova. His portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence perpetuated the memory of his visit. The Hollands had made the sculptor's acquaintance when they were in Rome in the winter of 1814. Canova came to Paris in 1815 to negotiate for the return of the works of art removed from Italy by Napoleon. It was a difficult moment. Rogers wrote from Paris with regard to the bronze horses taken from the façade of St. Mark's of Venice. "They went along under my window, each like a dead horse in a cart, all the people standing at their doors to see them. The pictures go on the heads of the Hungarian Soldiers. Canova was in a great agony for some days."

Thanks to the researches of Carlo Segrè we know a good deal about the Holland - Canova connexion. The sculptor arrived in England in November, 1815, and stayed a month. He was given a banquet by the Royal Academy; he was received by the Prince Regent, who presented him with a diamond-studded snuff box containing a draft for £500; he pronounced on the genuineness of the Elgin marbles. Directly Lady Holland heard of his arrival in Paris she wrote warmly to invite him to come to London and stay at Kensington. "Our house," she wrote, "is only a mile and three-quarters outside the gates of London and this ancient pile will feel honoured in receiving as guest the great Canova as once during a London visit it received the great Vanduyck." The Hollands, as many other English people, had an enormous admiration for the art of Canova and had already bought from him a bust of Napoleon for their Kensington home. The sculptor did not accept the invitation to stay, but dined in the house on several occasions. On 4th November and 7th November, 1815, he was there and a number of guests were invited to meet him, including Westmacott, the sculptor, and David Wilkie the painter. John Wishaw wrote an interesting account in the following letter:

November 8, 1815.

"It is time to say something of my late visit to Holland House, which was a curious moving scene of all nations and languages. Our parties consisted of Bessborough and Lord Erskine (without his star), Spaniards of various parties (all of them banished or proscribed), a very intelligent deputy from Buenos Ayres, Rogers and the Romillys just arrived from the Continent, and latterly the great sculptor Canova, and his brother, an Italian Abbate and *savant*. I must not omit Miss Fox and Miss Vernon who were generally of our parties and great additions to them. By far the most interesting in the group was Canova. To a very striking physiognomy he adds great simplicity of manner, an easy and natural flow of conversation, with occasional traits of gentle unobtrusive humour, great enthusiasm for the arts, and a disposition

apparently the most amiable. He gave us the characters of the late and present Popes, and related with great spirit some of his numerous conversations with Buonaparte, who condescended to talk with him in his native Venetian dialect, and treated him with the greatest kindness, though he pleaded the cause of the Pope, then in captivity, and spoke of war and conquest as the enemies of the Arts with great disrespect.

"The Abbate Canova is a very pleasing man, but without any marks of the sculptor's genius. He is entirely devoted to his brother, with whom he constantly lives; and he generally reads to the artist when the latter is engaged at his work. I inquired what were their usual books, and understood that they were generally Italian poets or some of the classic authors, whom the Abbate translated as he read with occasional comments and observations. This seems to me very natural and pleasing, and Lord Holland says it is extremely illustrative of the Venetian character, which is remarkably gentle and amiable.

"Canova is extremely pleased with the Elgin marbles, which he says are alone worth a journey to England. He gives no praise to Westminster Abbey but says, 'Il y a quelques beaux idees.'

"Of our artists, Flaxman is most his favourite. I have not yet heard what he says of our architecture."

Another Italian, whose name is very well known in England, visited Holland House and dined on 2nd May, 1824. This was Gabriele Rossetti, the father of a famous family of poets and painters and himself the author of numerous poems and many elaborate and, in my opinion, misguided works of esoteric Dante criticism. He had barely escaped with his life from Naples after supporting the revolution of 1820 there, thanks to the wife of Admiral Moore, who smuggled him aboard her husband's flagship disguised as a naval officer. On such a hazard did the future pre-raffaelite movement depend. "Full of kindness was the welcome Lord Holland gave me," he wrote to his benefactress Lady Moore. He does not seem to have had any further association with the Hollands, though no doubt the fact that he was known to them was useful in establishing the teaching connexion by which he earned his living.

An Italian of considerable importance in English history came to this country as a penniless exile in 1823: Antonio Panizzi of Modena. According to his biographer, Louis Fagan, he was welcomed at Holland House soon after his arrival, but in 1824 he was established at Liverpool where he remained until 1828 when he was appointed Professor of Italian in the newly founded University of London, then consisting only of the present University College in Gower Street. In 1831 he was appointed to the office of assistant librarian at the British Museum, and before

very long rose to be Keeper of the Printed Books and Principal Librarian. He it was who was chiefly responsible for the compilation of the General Catalogue, for the enforcement of the Copyright Act and for the design of the circular reading room.

As Sir Anthony Panizzi, a naturalised Englishman, he played a not unimportant part in shaping British policy towards Risorgimento Italy. We know nothing of his early association with the Hollands, but in 1831, soon after his return to London, he was frequently at Holland House. He became a close friend of one of the regular habitués, Sydney Smith. We may perhaps be permitted to quote one of the latter's notes to his Italian friend:—

My Dear Panizzi,

I wrote to you two or three times inviting you to dinner for the 26th. Receiving no answer I concluded you were dead and invited your executors. News, however, came that you were out of town. I should have as soon thought of St. Paul's or the Monument being out of town, but as it was positively asserted, I have filled up your place. I hope to be more fortunate on another occasion.

Yours, etc., etc., SYDNEY SMITH.

In 1840, the 3rd Lord Holland died and was survived by his wife for only five years. With the passing of that generation the Italianate sympathies of Holland House were not at all diminished. Henry Edward, the fourth Baron, the boy to whom Foscolo dedicated his translations referring to Francis Horner, was to have closer ties with Italy than even his parents.

In 1823, at the age of 21, he spent two years abroad, most of the time in Italy. After a short return to England he was again in Italy in 1826. His warm interest in the one-time mistress of Byron, the Countess Guiccioli, was of a very intimate nature. Having joined the Diplomatic Service he was attaché at Turin in 1832. In 1833 he married Lady Mary Augusta Coventry who herself was living in Rome with her mother. The wedding took place in Florence in the house of the British Minister, George Hamilton Seymour. In 1839 he was appointed British Minister to the Tuscan Court and resided in Florence. In the next year, on the death of his father, he became the fourth Lord Holland. In 1826 he retired from diplomacy and was thereafter able to reside for as long as he liked at Holland House, although he often spent nearly half the year in Italy, usually at Naples. His whole life had been divided between Kensington and Italy. He died at Naples in 1859 and was buried there.

On considering the fourth Lord Holland's close Italian ties, it is not surprising that when he was in residence at Kensington Italian guests were numerous. Panizzi was a very frequent visitor.

An undated letter of his to a friend amusingly tells the story of how his well-known portrait by George Frederick Watts came to be painted.

"I dined at Holland House on Saturday last and Watts (the painter) came after dinner. There is in Holland House a famous portrait of Baretta by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Lord and Lady Holland and some of the guests having prepared all this without my knowledge beforehand, surrounded me after dinner, made me look at Baretta's portrait, and then said there should be a *pendant* to it, and that my portrait, taken by Watts, should be the thing. It was no use saying more than I did, which was not a little, to decline the honour. The thing was a foregone conclusion; and so before Watts goes to Italy, which he is going to do almost immediately, he is going to paint me."

Panizzi, despite various misunderstandings with the fourth Lady Holland, largely due to his own irascible temper, was a devoted friend and found much consolation in her sympathy when he grew old. He had a hand in the publication of the third Lord Holland's *Reminiscences*.

Time is too short to enlarge further on the XIXth century Italian associations of Holland House, but a long list of Italian visitors could be compiled. I mention a few of those who visited Kensington:

Baron Sigismondo Trechi, Count Leopoldo Cicognara, General Guglielmo Pepe, Count Giuseppe Pecchio, Don Gerardo Carafa, the beautiful Countess Castiglione; etc., etc.

We have, I hope, said enough to demonstrate the importance of Italy in the life of this great Kensington House. When we think of its rich library of Italian books presided over by the bust of Ariosto, of the many Italian pictures and engravings that were scattered throughout the house, of the Italian servants, of the Italian guests, of the Italianate taste of successive owners of the mansion, we feel that for many years the presiding genius of the place must have been an Italian angel such as is so familiar to us in typical Italian art. Now, alas, the angel seems to have flown away.

# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS. YEAR 1954/55.

1953/54	INCOME	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	1953/54	EXPENDITURE	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
—	Balance at 1st September, 1954	226	0	5	Coach Visits— Net Cost of Hire — Meals, etc. ... ..	6	8
179	Subscriptions— Life Subscriptions ...	31	5	45	London Meetings— Net Cost of Halls, Chairs, etc. ... ..	47	17
295	Annual Subscriptions ...	279	0	—	Advertising ... ..	17	0
—	Other Income— Profit on Sale of Christ- mas Cards ... ..	27	19	176	Printing, Typing and Stationery ... ..	77	18
17	Interest on Bank Deposit Account ... ..	1	2	51	Postages and Telephone Calls Subscriptions ... ..	61	4
1	Interest on Post Office Savings Bank Account	4	15	2	Bank Charges ... ..	3	0
—	Sundries ... ..	—	—	3	Repairs and Renovations of Monuments ... ..	14	13
24	—	344	2	5	Sundry Expenses ... ..	—	—
—	—	—	—	3	Photographic Record Group Expenses ... ..	8	15
—	—	—	—	—	Balance at 30th September, 1955 Martin's Bank Ltd.: Current Account ... ..	236	17
£516	—	£570	2	—	Deposit Account ... ..	54	1
£516	—	£570	2	—	Post Office Savings Bank ... ..	52	3
—	—	—	—	—	Cash in Hands of Secretary ... ..	204	5
—	—	—	—	—	Stock of Christmas Cards— At Cost ... ..	1	6
—	—	—	—	226	—	21	7
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	333	4
—	—	—	—	—	—	£570	2
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—

We have prepared the above Account from the Books and Vouchers kept by Martin's Bank Ltd., Kensington Branch, and certify it to be in accordance therewith.

NORFOLK HOUSE, LAURENCE POUNTNEY HILL,

LONDON. E.C. 4.

19th October, 1955.

WRIGHT, STEVENS & LLOYD,

Chartered Accountants.

## RULES OF THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY.

- The name of the Society shall be The Kensington Society.
- The objects of the Society shall be to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington by stimulating interest in its history and records, by protecting its buildings of beauty and historic interest, by preserving its open spaces from disfigurement and encroachment, and by encouraging good architecture in its future development.
- Members.* Members shall be Life or Ordinary.
- Subscriptions.* Life members shall pay a minimum subscription of £10 10s. Ordinary members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of 10/6d., payable on the 1st October each year.
- The Council.* The Council shall consist of not more than thirty members. They shall be elected by the Executive Committee.
- The Officers.* The Officers of the Society shall be the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer.
- The Executive Committee.* The Executive Committee shall consist of not more than twelve members and the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer.
- The Executive Committee shall be the governing body of the Society. It shall have power to (i), Make bye-laws; (ii), Co-opt members and fill vacancies on the Executive Committee that may arise for the current year; (iii), Take any steps they may consider desirable to further the interests and objects of the Society.

A Quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of not less than five members.

Not less than three Executive Committee Meetings shall be convened in any one year.

9. *Annual General Meeting.* An Annual General Meeting, of which 28 days notice shall be given to members, shall be held, when the Executive Committee shall submit a Report and an audited Statement of Accounts to the previous September 30th.
10. *Election of Officers and Members of the Executive Committee.* All members of the Society shall be eligible for election as Officers of the Society or Members of the Executive Committee. Nominations must be sent to the Hon. Secretary, duly signed by a proposer and seconder, within fourteen days of the date of the Annual General Meeting. If more nominations are received than there are vacancies, voting shall be by ballot at the Annual General Meeting.
11. *Alterations of Rules.* No rule shall be altered or revoked except at a General Meeting of the Society. No motion shall be deemed carried unless it has been agreed to by no less than two-thirds of those present and voting.
12. The Society shall not be dissolved unless a majority of two-thirds of the subscribing members signify their approval of such course by means of a postal ballot taken after receipt by the said members of a statement by the Executive Committee setting forth fairly and impartially a summary of the arguments for and against such course and the views of the Executive Committee thereon.

THE HON. TREASURER, THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY,

c/o Martins Bank Ltd., 208 Kensington High Street, W.8.

I wish to become a member of The Kensington Society. I enclose herewith the sum of £ : s. d. for my annual subscription, or, I enclose herewith the sum of £ : s. d. for Life Subscription.

Signature .....

Address .....

#### BANKER'S ORDER

To ..... Bank.

.....19.....

Please pay Martins Bank Ltd., of 208 Kensington High Street, W.8, to the credit of the account of The Kensington Society, my subscription of £ : s. d., and continue the same on the 1st of October annually until further notice.

Signature .....

Address .....

(Mr. or Mrs.) (Title) .....

Annual subscribers will simplify the collection of their subscriptions if they will fill in the Banker's Order. Cheques should be made payable to The Kensington Society.

**COVENANT.**

TO THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY.

I, .....  
(name in full)

of .....  
(address)

HEREBY COVENANT with the KENSINGTON SOCIETY that for a period of seven years from the ..... day of ....., 19 ....., or during my life, whichever period shall be shorter, I will pay annually to the said Society such a sum as will after deduction of Income Tax leave in the hands of the Society a net sum of £..... (.....), such sum to be paid from my general fund of taxed income so that I shall receive no personal or private benefit in either of the said periods from the said sum or any part thereof.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this ..... day. Signed, Sealed and Delivered by the said

(Signature of Subscriber) .....

In the presence of

Signature .....

Address .....

Occupation .....

SEAL

