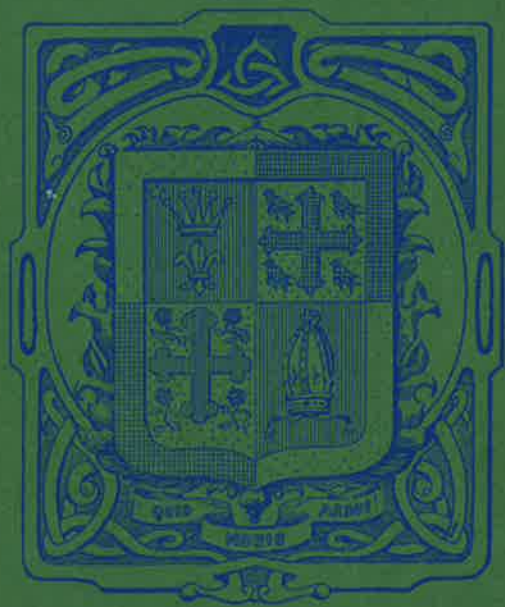


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The Kensington Society

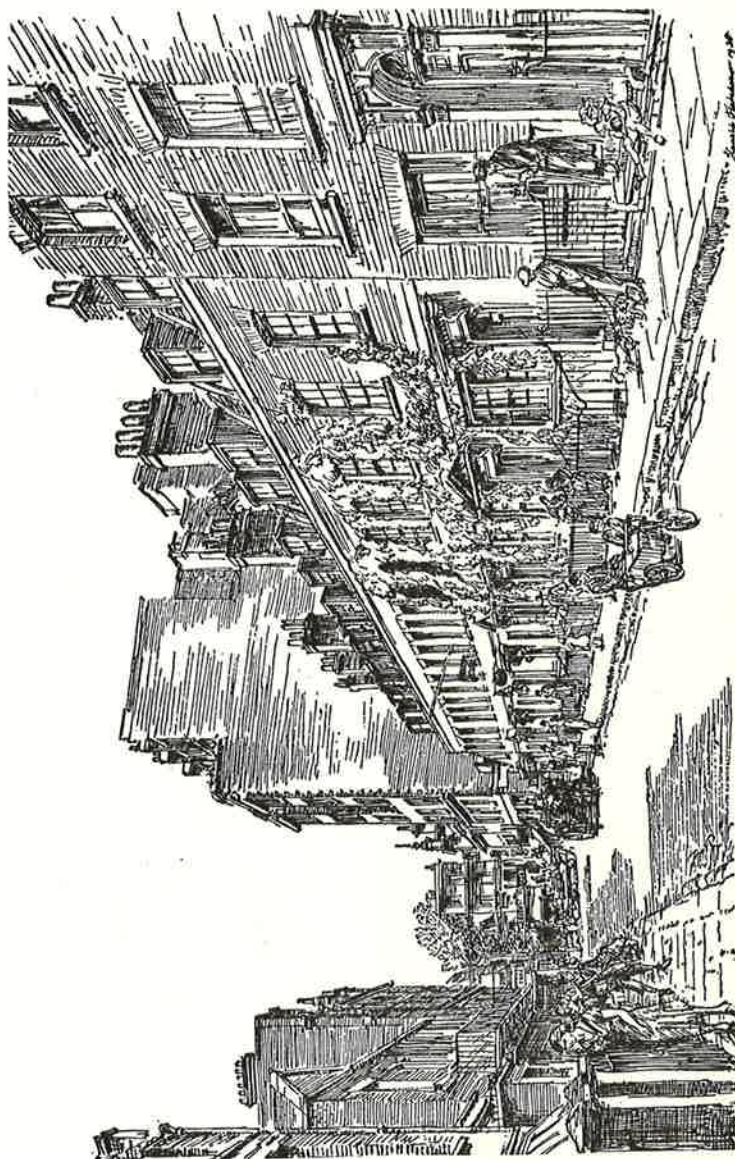


6th ANNUAL REPORT
Year 1958 - 59

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

President:

THE RT. HON. VISCOUNT ESHER, G.B.E.

Vice-Presidents:

THE RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF KENSINGTON
SIR HAROLD KENYON, M.B.E., J.P.

Council:

Miss Jean Alexander	The Lord Harlech, K.G., G.C.M.G.
Miss Rachel Alexander	The Hon. Mr. Justice Karminski
Hardy Amies, Esq.	Oliver Messel, Esq.
The Hon. Mr. Justice Barry	Lady Norman, J.P.
W. W. Begley, Esq., F.R.Hist.S., L.R.I.B.A.	Duncan Oppenheim, Esq.
Sir Hugh Casson, R.D.I., F.R.I.B.A., F.S.I.A.	Dorothea, Lady Ponsonby
The Marquess of Cholmondeley, G.C.V.O.	Miss Irene Scharrer
Ashley Dukes, Esq., F.R.S.L.	H. Clifford Smith, Esq., F.S.A.
S. J. L. Egerton, Esq.	Lord Spens, K.B.E., Q.C.
William F. Grimes, Esq., V.P.S.A.	Prof. Arnold Toynbee, D.Litt., D.C.L., F.B.A.
	Orlo Williams, Esq., C.B., M.C., D.C.L.

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Chairman:

H. Stephen Pasmore, Esq., M.B., B.S.(Lond.)

Vice-Chairman:

C. H. Gibbs-Smith, Esq., F.R.S.A., F.M.A.

Geoffrey Agnew, Esq.	Keon Hughes, Esq.
C. G. Boxall, Esq.	John Paul, Esq.
F. Carter, Esq.	Hugh Shillito, Esq.
W. G. Corfield, Esq.	Miss P. M. Ward
H. Gandell, Esq.	R. T. D. Wilmot, Esq.

Hon. Treasurer: E. Norman-Butler

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. G. Christiansen

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

Hon. Auditors: Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd

FOREWORD

The character of London is changing so fast that very little of its nineteenth century appearance is likely to remain. It is becoming a new town, constructed on similar lines as a thousand cities all over the world from New York to Sydney, square blocks of flats or offices set upon end, with no national character or individuality. It is therefore all the more important that the efforts of the Kensington Society to preserve the Royal Borough as a quiet and dignified oasis in this trackless desert of modernity should be successful.

The list of activities in which the Society has been concerned during the year, sent to me by the Secretary, is a formidable one, and we have every reason to be proud of possessing a full measure of that nuisance value which is the essential quality of an amenity society.

But I observe that it is not only to preserve the past, Kensington Square and Yeomans Row, but also to keep a ceaseless watch upon development, Knightsbridge and Kensington High Street, that has become our two-edged task. And now St. Mary Abbots church, the central feature of our Kensington scene, is in grave danger. It is proposed to build near it a block 25 feet higher than the spire; and I hope that the news of its obliteration by such a deed of vandalism will prompt every intelligent citizen who has not done so to join the Kensington Society, and support the strong arm of our protest.

(Sgd.) Esher,
President.

Sir Harold Kenyon, M.B.E., J.P.

We regret to open this Report with the sad announcement of the great loss suffered by the Society by the recent death of our Vice-President, Sir Harold Kenyon.

Sir Harold Kenyon was Vice-President of the Society from its foundation. To this veteran Kensingtonian the Society owes a deep debt of gratitude for the countless ways in which he so ably and graciously served the Society.

An elder statesman of West London Local Government, his service was divided between Kensington and Paddington, he had been Alderman of both Boroughs and was Mayor of Kensington in 1931-34, of Paddington in 1920-24 and again from 1935-37. He represented South Paddington on the L.C.C. from 1931-46. He was leader of the Municipal Reform Party for several years and was its Chairman 1924-25. He was Chairman of the Paddington bench of Magistrates from 1942-46, of the Central Council for District Nursing in London for many years. He had sat on the Boards of Management of St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington and the Princess Louise Hospital for Children.

He was Founder-President of the Paddington and St. Marylebone Rotary Club and for over 25 years President of the Paddington and Bayswater Chamber of Commerce. He was awarded the M.B.E. in 1931 and Knighted in 1937.

A lesser known aspect of his full and varied life was his tremendous knowledge of the history of West London, he was an authority on the history of Kensington and his lectures to our members were of unforgettable interest. Each year Sir Harold has taken the Chair at the Annual General Meeting. We shall miss him very much.

5th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, on 16th December, 1958, with Sir Harold Kenyon, Vice-President, in the Chair.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, previously approved by the Executive Committee, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

Dr. Stephen Pasmore, as Chairman of the Executive Committee, moved the adoption of the Report and Accounts for 1958. In doing so, he referred to various activities of the Society during the past year, in particular the Public Meeting held to discuss the redevelopment of the Notting Hill Gate area, and the re-lighting scheme of the Borough.

Mr. Norman-Butler, as Treasurer, seconded the motion, pointing out that there was a slight increase in the balance of income over

expenditure as compared with 1957. The Report and Accounts were both passed unanimously.

Mr. Gurney moved, and Miss Saward seconded, the confirmation of the re-election of the Officers of the Society and the Executive Committee. This was carried unanimously.

The re-election of Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd as Hon. Auditors was moved by Mr. Gandell and seconded by Miss Ward and carried unanimously.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Secretary, whose untiring efforts contributed so much to the success of the Society, and to the Hon. Auditors, Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd.

The meeting was followed by a lecture given by Dr. Stephen Pasmore, entitled "The Life and Times of Sir Walter Cope of Holland House, 1604-14."

Mr. Ashley Dukes.

The Society has suffered a great loss in the recent death of Mr. Ashley Dukes. He had attended the first meeting at which the Kensington Society was founded and had served on the Council of the Society since that time.

He always took an enthusiastic interest in all the activities of the Society and was ever ready to give the Society the benefit of his great knowledge and experience.

Mr. Ashley Dukes had been active in the theatre for half a century, in the capacity of dramatic critic, playwright, producer and theatrical manager. During this long period Notting Hill Gate was his home.

The most popular of his original plays was *The man with a Load of Mischief*, and it was the success with this and others that enabled him to build his own theatre, "The Mercury" at Notting Hill Gate (home of the Ballet Rambert) from a church hall in Ladbroke Road. Here the public saw for the first time T. S. Elliott's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and many other pioneer productions.

He took a great interest in the Notting Hill Gate redevelopment scheme. His last years were filled with the dream of building a really great theatre at Notting Hill Gate—and concrete moves had already been made towards its creation—this dream, which has outlived him, will be his memorial.

Baron Spens of Blairsanquhar.

It was with great pleasure that the Society learned that Sir Patrick Spens had been created a Baron in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Lord Spens is on the Council of The Kensington Society and takes a keen interest in all its activities. As M.P. for South Kensington he has given the Society much valuable help and advice on many occasions.

Notting Hill Gate Redevelopment Scheme.

The London County Council has decided that a roundabout will not be necessary in the new Notting Hill Gate. The reasons given were that the widening of Notting Hill Gate, the northern end of Kensington Church Street and the southern end of Pembridge Road will provide a great deal of additional road space and by allowing room for right turn vehicles to wait without obstructing through traffic, will greatly facilitate the flow of vehicles. The traffic capacity of this junction, it is estimated, will be seventy per cent greater than before the improvement.

The London County Council Planning Department has informed the Society that approval has been given to a proposal to use cantilever canopies on the frontage between Pembridge Road and Ladbroke Terrace.

STREET LIGHTING

It will be remembered from the last two years' Annual Reports that the Society has been very active and greatly interested in the relighting scheme for the Borough. In 1957 members of the Executive Committee met members of the Royal Fine Art Commission to discuss the Borough Councils' proposal for relighting the Borough.

The Society later met members of the Borough Council, and, accepted the dark grey concrete standard and fluorescent lighting as was proposed for Group A roads *i.e. traffic routes*. The Society did not, however, accept the smaller standard which was proposed for class B roads *i.e. secondary roads and residential streets*, and expressed a hope that the Council would reconsider the use of this badly designed standard.

In 1957 the Kensington Borough Council drew up a list of streets and squares of architectural merit, with the object of retaining the old lantern type of lamp standard, for use in these areas. The Kensington Society and the Royal Fine Art Commission added to this list.

This year Stage I of the relighting scheme has been completed, and Stage II has been approved in principle by the Kensington Borough Council. The work in Stage II consists of erecting concrete columns with fluorescent lanterns in

- (1) All the remaining streets at present with gas lighting.
- (2) Certain streets at present lit by tungsten lighting.

The Society has had considerable correspondence with the Borough Council during the past 12 months on this matter. A list of the streets which are to be included in Stage II of the scheme was requested by the Society, the following list was received.

Northern Section

Acklam Road
Admiral Mews
Aldermaston Street
All Saints Road
Arundel Gardens
Basing Street
Boyne Terrace Mews
Brewster Gardens
Cambridge Gardens
(except between St.
Mark's Road and
Ladbroke Grove)
Chepstow Place
Codrington Mews
Colville Gardens
Convent Gardens
Exmoor Street
Garden Mews
Kensington Park Road
(Elgin Crescent to
Westbourne Park Road)
Kensington Park Mews
Ledbury Road
McGregor Road
Mersey Street
Murchison Road
Pembridge Place
Portobello Road
Portobello Mews
Railway Mews
St. Anns Road
St. Charles Place
St. Ervans Road
Silchester Street
Swinbrook Road
Tavistock Crescent
Tavistock Road
Trevorton Street
Vernons Yard (Portobello
Road)
Walmer Road (Lancaster
Road to Latimer Road)
Wilsham Street
Worlington Road

Central Section

*Dukes Lane
Elsham Road
*Holland Park Road
Ilchester Place
*Kensington Church
Court
*Kensington Church
Walk
Lorne Gardens
Old Court Place
Palace Gardens Mews
Phillimore Walk
Vicarage Gate (cul-
de-sac only)
York House Place

Southern Section

Ashburn Gardens
Bramham Gardens
*Cambridge Place
Cathcart Road
Cornwall Gardens
Cornwall Gardens
Stables
Courtfield Gardens
Earls Court Gardens
*Earls Terrace
*Earls Walk
*Edwardes Square
*Egerton Crescent
Egerton Gardens
Egerton Gardens Mews
Evelyn Gardens
Fawcett Street
Foulis Terrace
Hereford Square
Holly Mews
*Hyde Park Gate (both
parts)
Iverna Gardens
*Kenway Road
Kingsley Mews
Nevern Square
Neville Street
Ovington Square
Pembroke Place
Queen's Gate Gardens
Redcliffe Square
*Selwood Place
*Seymour Walk
Sunningdale Gardens
The Little Boltons
*Thistle Grove
Tregunter Road
Wallgrave Road
Yeomans Row

The Society has repeated its views to the Kensington Borough Council about the use of the Estate Minor Utility lamp standard (as erected in Kensington Court). The Society has been greatly disturbed that the views expressed by the Society and the Royal Fine Art Commission in 1957 have been ignored

* Streets considered to warrant special consideration.

Concern is also felt about the type of lighting likely to be used in mews ways. The Kensington Borough Council has been asked not to use the type of lighting at present used in Adam and Eve Mews in the more picturesque mews ways in the Borough. We have been informed that experiments are still being made to discover suitable lighting for mews ways.

We understand from the Kensington Borough Council's Minutes that a new type of small concrete standard similar in design to the standard in Kensington High Street is being considered.

Aesthetic Needs in Street Lighting.

The aesthetic needs in street lighting was emphasised at the Annual Conference of the Association of Public Lighting Engineers at Aberdeen in September this year.

The newly elected President, Mr. Ronald Parker, suggested that although it was generally acknowledged that the standard of Public Lighting in Britain is the best in the world—from a Scientific and Safety point of view—more attention requires to be paid to the aesthetic appearance. "Public lighting is as much an art as a science and in our constant endeavour to achieve lighting sufficient for safe movement, we have tended to concentrate on the scientific aspect at the expense of the aesthetic. Abroad there appears to have been far more emphasis on the artistic appearance exterior lighting both by night and by day and in that respect we have something to learn from them."

He went on to say a more liberal approach was needed when planning lighting schemes for streets much used by pedestrians or which were of unusual historical or architectural interest. It was particularly important for lighting engineers to remember that the great use of such places was made during daylight and it was too easy to spoil their appearance by day in their zeal to make them safe by night.

Mr. Parker said many situations arose when lamp columns sited to give maximum lighting effect were eyesores in daylight. Where this was likely to occur lighting engineers should examine all the possibilities and be prepared to sacrifice some efficiency of lighting for the sake of good appearance.

Commonwealth Institute.

The Society took an early opportunity to examine the plans for the new Institute. It was thought to be an exciting building and expressive of the young and vigorous outlook of the Commonwealth peoples.

The Society was of opinion however, that the car and coach parking space proposed in the scheme was inadequate, and informed the London County Council that it considered that it was imperative that they should ensure adequate parking space in order to avoid the

slightest aggravation of street-parking in this already congested area.

The car parking and coach parking areas are to be redesigned to provide accommodation for a minimum of 10 coaches and 40 cars.

The new premises, which will replace the present accommodation in the Collcutt building in South Kensington, will be erected on a 3½-acre site at the southern end of Holland Park, fronting Kensington High Street.

The architects of the new building are Messrs. Robert Matthew and Johnson-Marshall.

The new Institute will consist of a main exhibition block with a wing on the western side. In the wing will be housed offices, a restaurant, a reception centre and dining space for visiting school parties. A large reception room for the Commonwealth Students' Club and for conferences and social occasions, a reference library and reading-room, a cinema to seat between 450 and 500, and a gallery specially designed for temporary art and other exhibitions are also included in the plan.

The roof, which the architects describe as made up of five "Hyperbolic paraboloids" will look rather like a double-peaked tent, falling away in slow curves to the eaves. The copper sheathing for the roof of the main block is being given by the Northern Rhodesia Chamber of Mines.

The Commonwealth Institute is the major centre in the United Kingdom for information about the Commonwealth nations. Founded, as the Imperial Institute, in 1887, it has occupied its present accommodation in the Collcutt building since 1893. The name was changed from "Imperial" to "Commonwealth," Institute by the Act of 1958.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The scheme includes a 350 feet 20-storey tower block, central terrace garden, "gallery" pavements and shops, with roof top and underground car park. It is, of course, difficult to describe a redevelopment of this magnitude without reference to the plans and model. These can be seen at County Hall by appointment.

On June 24th, 1959, The Kensington Society and the Westminster Society arranged a joint meeting, to give members and interested local residents an opportunity to hear the views of the London County Council and the views of the Local Authorities of Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster. The meeting was held at the recently built Bowater House, Knightsbridge, by the courtesy of Sir Eric Bowater, who placed the hall at our disposal.

Mr. Richard Edmonds, Chairman of the London County Council Planning Committee was invited to outline the scheme and his Committee's views on it, and to show the plans and model.

Representatives from the Town Planning Committees of Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster were also invited to voice their views.

Mr. W. L. Roots very kindly took the Chair in place of Sir Hugh Casson who was prevented from attending.

We understand that the London County Council have reconsidered the scheme and made some slight modifications.

Owing to the proposal by the London County Council to make a compulsory purchase order for the acquisition of certain interests, there will be a Public Inquiry in connection with the scheme. The Kensington Borough Council are briefing Counsel for the hearing.

A full report of the meeting held at Bowater House appears on page 22.

Nos. 2-74 KENSINGTON HIGH STREET AND Nos. 2-28 KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME

What has been termed in the Press as a £5 million scheme for redeveloping the north side of Kensington High Street, Nos. 2-74, and Kensington Church Street, Nos. 2-28, is under planning consideration by the London County Council.

The scheme includes a 23-storey tower block of offices facing St. Mary Abbot's Church, flats, shops and a 600 bedroomed hotel at the Kensington Gardens end of the site. The developers are Mr. Felix Fenstone's Eron Investments and the Architects are R. Seifert & Partners.

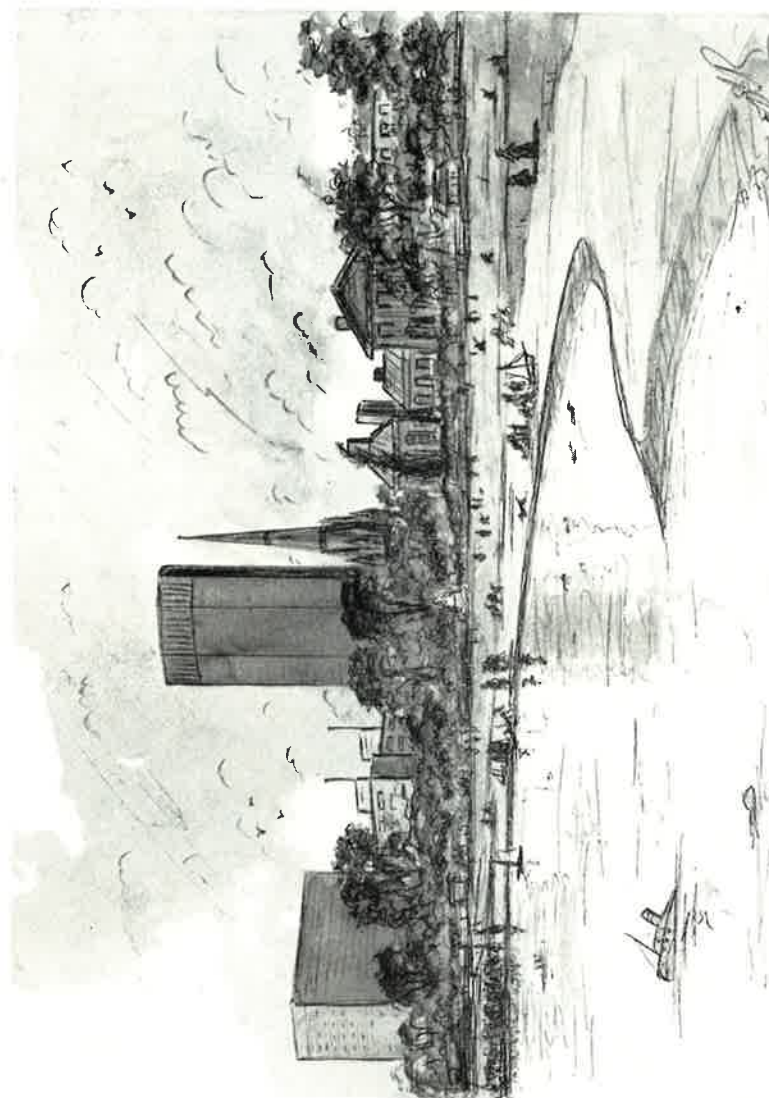
Members of the Committee saw the plans at County Hall and later the Secretary made arrangements for the model and the plans to be on view in the Town Hall from August 6th to 11th. We should like to record our thanks to the Kensington Borough Council for giving us facilities to have these plans on view.

The Scheme is in two parts.

Site A. Includes a new fire station having a frontage of 90 feet to Kensington Church Street immediately south of the barracks. Beyond 23-storey block of offices would be a 2-storey frontage of shops extending almost to Kensington Palace Gardens, on which, and extending back along the line of Old Court Place there would be an L shaped 8-storey block of flats and a large restaurant.

Site B. The second part of the development between Kensington Palace Gardens and Palace Avenue, would contain the 14-storey hotel with more shops underneath.

The Kensington Society has strongly opposed the erection of a tower block of office accommodation at the corner of Kensington Church Street and Kensington High Street.



A drawing by A. E. Le Riche
An artist's impression of the church looking west from the N.E. of the Round Pond, Kensington Gardens



The proposed development for Kensington High Street

The following letter has been sent to the Kensington Borough Council, a similar letter to the London County Council, with copies to other Societies and personalities to enlist their help to oppose the erection of this new block building, e.g. The Royal Fine Art Commission, The Victorian Society, The London Society, The Ancient Monument Society, Central Council for the Care of Churches, The Bishop of Kensington, Sir Albert Richardson, Mr. John Betjeman and other personalities.

September 9th, 1959.

Dear Sir,

The Kensington Society strongly opposes the proposal to erect a tower block building on the site adjoining St. Mary Abbots Church. Members of the Executive Committee have seen the plans and model of the Scheme and feel the tower block will be sufficiently close to the church to dominate and overpower the scale of the building.

The church marks the centre and soul of Kensington, and its spire is the dominant feature in this part of the Borough; it is also a landmark over a large part of Kensington and beyond. If this feature is allowed to be diminished by the erection, so close to it, of a tower block some 25 feet higher, we consider it surely to show a callous disregard for elementary principles of town planning.

We are, at the same time, very concerned about the structural aspect of the matter. This development is taking place in a district of gravel pits and springs, and we have received information that there may be a grave risk of damage by deep piling in the vicinity of such a building as St. Mary Abbots. The history of the church shows that previous church buildings on this site have shown a continuous history of structural troubles, e.g. in 1704, 1797, 1811 and 1838 in each case leading to major rebuilding. The effect of the heavy traffic vibration on two sides of the church already provides a threat without further strain being imposed.

The Society regrets that the Kensington Borough Council have recommended the L.C.C. to approve the outline application and we would refer the Borough Council to the sentiments expressed in the report of the Housing and Town Planning Committee of March 10th, 1959, which read as follows:

"It has been the Borough Council's consistent policy to oppose the intrusion of office development into the Borough and we do not doubt that the Council will wish this policy to remain unchanged. Kensington is primarily residential in character, and we wish to emphasise our very strong conviction that every effort should be made to preserve this character. . . . It cannot be denied that the suggested plan of development will bring to the neighbourhood many more office employees at a point where congestion on the roads and public transport is already extremely heavy, and it is our view that a major object of the proposals should be the reduction of this congestion."

Approving the erection of the tower block of offices at the corner of Kensington Church Street, appears to us to be a complete contradiction of this policy, expressed so few months ago when discussing the Knightsbridge Scheme.

I should be glad if you would place our views before the appropriate Committee.

The Society is endeavouring to arrange a Public Meeting in the near future to give residents an opportunity to put forward their views in the matter.

Preservation of Buildings.

Several years ago The Kensington Society asked the L.C.C. to consider making preservation orders on groups of buildings.

In April this year the Kensington Borough Council informed the Society that the L.C.C. was considering making preservation orders on selected groups of buildings. The L.C.C. as an example had named 5 groups and had asked the Kensington Borough Council to add to this list, stating the principle to be followed in the selection of groups should be that the group should have some claim to being considered an architectural entity rather than as an adventitious collection of buildings; it should also be taken into consideration the practical problem related to the ownership, occupation and use of the buildings and their structural condition. The groups included in the L.C.C. list are:

Alexander Square and Alexander Place
Earls Terrace
Edwardes Square
Kensington Square
Pelham Crescent
Pembroke Square.

The Kensington Borough Council asked the Kensington Society to make a list of groups which they felt should be included.

The Society suggested that Thurloe Square should be included with Alexander Place and that Edwardes Place should be included with Edwardes Square.

The following areas were also suggested as worthy of consideration:

Brompton Square
Campden Hill Square
Launceston Place
Pelham Place
Egerton Terrace and Crescent
Bedford Gardens
Royal Crescent
The Boltons
Palace Green
Kensington Gate

Onslow Gardens
Addison Road
Queen's Gate, 47-63.

We have since been informed by the Kensington Borough Council that the suggestions made by the Society together with suggestions made by the Georgian Society and the Victorian Society, have been forwarded to the L.C.C.

King George VI Memorial Youth Hostel, Holland Park.

The inauguration of the King George VI Memorial Youth Hostel was attended by Her Majesty the Queen accompanied by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh and took place on May 25th, 1959.

The Hostel is of special interest to The Kensington Society. Soon after the Society was founded in 1953, the London County Council was preparing to demolish Holland House, which was by then a tottering ruin.

The Kensington Society succeeded in halting the complete demolition of this historic mansion and were therefore instrumental in saving the East Wing.

In January, 1954, the Youth Hostel Association, having received a promise of a grant from the King George VI Memorial Fund, came forward with a proposal for preserving the East Wing as part of a Youth Hostel building to adjoin Holland House.

The new building was designed by Sir Hugh Casson and Mr. Neville Conder.

Yeomans Row.

This year the Society has a Christmas card of the charming houses in Yeomans Row; the eighteenth century cul-de-sac off Brompton Road. Mr. John Betjeman has called this view "the last glimpse of the village of Brompton."

The nine Georgian houses shown in the drawing are being demolished. The London County Council has granted permission for their demolition. The plan is to replace them with new houses of neo-Georgian elevation.

The Society has protested at the demolition of these houses. Unfortunately this terrace was only classified as Grade III in the list of buildings of architectural merit, the Society joined with others in trying to get it upgraded in the hope of saving it.

Holland Park Avenue.

An application was made last year for permission to pull down Nos. 62, 64 and 66 Holland Park Avenue and Nos. 6 and 8 Boyne Terrace Mews, and replace the houses by a block of 4-storey flats.

The London County Council had refused planning permission, not on aesthetic grounds, but because inadequate provision had been made for garages. The developers appealed to the Minister of Town and Country Planning and a Public Inquiry was held.

The Society, after having received expert advice, did not feel justified at being represented at the Public Inquiry.

The Minister has now granted planning permission.

North Kensington—Racial Problem.

The London County Council Member for North Kensington asked the Society for a donation towards a party arranged by the West Indian community for 300 children from the North Kensington schools. It was thought that an exception could be made in this instance as it would help those dealing with the racial problem which affected the amenities of North Kensington. It was agreed to give a donation of £3 3s.

Victoria Grove—Traffic.

A request from members had been made that heavy traffic should be restricted in this area. The Society was informed by Scotland Yard that they had no powers to restrict any particular class of vehicle from using this road. The Society suggested that residents should approach the local police asking if Victoria Grove could be made a one-way street. This was recently done in the case of Edwardes Square with success.

Clubs in Kensington.

The Society has been asked to support an L.C.C. Member's motion to stop the growth of undesirable clubs in Kensington and this had been done.

Presentation of drawings by Mr. William Gaunt.

The original drawings made by Mr. Gaunt to illustrate his book *Kensington* were presented by him to The Kensington Society. The Society has presented them to the Kensington Public Library for inclusion in their Local Collection.

Barclays Bank, Notting Hill Gate.

This branch has written to ask the advice of the Society about a suitable subject for a mural which it was proposed should represent a subject connected with the history of the Borough. Several suitable subjects have been supplied.

Royal College of Art.

A modern Art College block is to be built next to the Albert Hall. The Society expressed the hope that this building would not be higher than the Albert Hall. We understand that the height of the new building has been limited to 117 feet, which is 32 feet lower than the top of the Albert Hall dome. The site has a frontage of 400 feet between the Albert Hall and Queen's Gate and will accommodate 300 to 400 students.

No. 16 Kensington Square.

At a Public Inquiry the Society opposed the application for forecourt parking outside this house. The Minister has now refused planning permission.

Plaques.

Following a recommendation from the Society, the London County Council has now placed a plaque on No. 1 Marloes Road, to commemorate Andrew Lang's residence there.

The Society would be pleased to receive from members names of notable residents worthy of commemorative plaques.

Nos. 380–386 Kensington High Street.

The Minister of Housing and Local Government has ruled against a building with a 16-storey tower being built at the corner of Russell Road and Kensington High Street.

Permission was sought to build a part 3-storey, part 16-storey building comprising 36 flats, offices and shops and including 27 garages at basement level with access from Russell Road.

The Society had informed the London County Council that it was most anxious that the area, zoned in the County of London Plan as residential, should remain so, and that we set great store by this site making an effective impression as an entrance to the Borough.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD GROUP

The activities of the Photographic Group have been very disappointing this year. Several of our most active members have left Kensington, and regrettably there have been no new members to take their place.

It would be a pity if this useful work were to come to an end through lack of support.

New members would be gladly welcomed.

(Sgd.) C. G. Boxall.

TREES

The Kensington Borough Council propose to plant trees on the north side of the redeveloped Notting Hill Gate, as well as, on the south side running east. Some planting was also planned for Kensington High Street. In all some 400 trees were being planted in various parts of the Borough. The Kensington Society has complimented the Council on this excellent work.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

The Society has four new Christmas cards this year.

- (1) *Clock Court Gateway, Kensington Palace.*
From an original drawing by William Gaunt. Price 6d. each.
- (2) *Palace Green, Kensington.*
From a drawing by Hanslip Fletcher. Price 6d. each.
- (3) *Gardener's Lodge, known as the Temple, Edwardes Square.*
From an original drawing by William Gaunt. Price 3d. each.
- (4) *Yeomans Row.*
From a drawing by Hanslip Fletcher. Price 3d. each.

The Secretary would welcome volunteers for selling Christmas cards.

Holland Park School Prize.

When the Campden Hill Preservation Society came to an end in 1953, the Chairman, Mr. W. G. Corfield, had in hand a sum of £20, which he handed over to the Kensington Society, with the suggestion that the money should be used for a prize for the best essay about Kensington from a scholar at the new Holland Park School. The Kensington Society has set aside a further sum of money in order to give an annual prize of a book token to the value of £3 3s. to the scholar who submits the best essay.

This year the prize has been won by Julian Aston with an essay entitled "Campden House and Sir Baptist Hicks (1551-1629). A close runner up was an essay of merit by Leonard Hobbs entitled "Medieval Kensington." We have decided to award a book token of £1 1s. for this essay. Julian Aston's essay is printed on page 30.

The Society offers its congratulations to the winner.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

During the past year visits have been made to Lloyds, Westminster Abbey, Denham Place, West Wycombe Park, Albany, Youth Hostel Holland Park, Holland Park School, Middlesex Guildhall, "House of St. Barnabas in Soho," Kensington's new Police Station, Trinity House, and the House of Lords.

On February 2nd Mr. C. H. Gibbs-Smith gave a very enjoyable lecture entitled "What is the use of Art?"

By the courtesy of Messrs. Agnew, Bond Street, members were able to have a Preview of the Houghton pictures.

Mrs. Christiansen again opened her house and gave tea in the garden, at 18 Kensington Square, to members.

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

January 9th, at 2.30 p.m.

Visit to "The House of St. Barnabas in Soho." No. 1 Greek Street, W.1.

Tickets required, numbers limited.

January 19th, at 6.15 p.m.

A lecture by Mr. Charles Gibbs-Smith entitled "Uses of Art." The lecture will be given at the Victoria and Albert Museum, entrance in Exhibition Road.

Chairman: Mr. Trenchard Cox, C.B.E., F.S.A.

February 2nd, at 6.15 p.m.

Prof. Sir Albert Richardson, P.P.R.A., will give a lecture entitled "Dr. Johnsons' England." The lecture will be given at the Victoria and Albert Museum, entrance in Exhibition Road.

Chairman: Mr. Beverley Nichols.

February 16th, at 6.15 p.m.

A lecture by Mr. Peter Shephard entitled "Trees in Towns." The lecture will be given at the Victoria and Albert Museum, entrance in Exhibition Road.

Chairman: Mr. W. R. Hornby Steer, D.L.

March 1st, at 6.15 p.m.

A lecture by Mr. Alec Clifton Taylor entitled "English Country Houses open to the Public." The lecture will be given at the Victoria and Albert Museum, entrance in Exhibition Road.

Chairman: Mr. Trenchard Cox, C.B.E., F.S.A.

March 22nd, at 8 p.m.

Some descriptive coloured travel films will be shown by Mr. Matthew Nathan at the Town Hall, Kensington High Street, W.8.

Chairman: Mr. H. Gandell.

April 5th, at 6.15 p.m.

A lecture by Mr. Charles Johnson, the Official Lecturer at the National Gallery, entitled "Portraits of Reynolds and Gainsborough." The lecture will be given at the Victoria and Albert Museum, entrance in Exhibition Road.

Chairman: Mr. Geoffrey Agnew.

April 30th, at 2.30 p.m.

A visit to Trinity House, Tower Hill. This is a repeat visit of the one made on December 5th.

Tickets required, numbers limited.

KENSINGTON SOCIETY NOTES

Please note that subscriptions for the year 1959-60 were due on October 1st.

Extra copies of the Annual Report, 1958-59, can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, price 2s.

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

Visits involving payment must be paid for at the time of booking. No payments can be refunded. Members wishing to cancel any visit previously booked, where tickets are issued and the numbers limited, should advise the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible, as other members may be on the waiting list.

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

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

We would like to congratulate the Thurloe Estates Ltd. on the publication of their excellent book "The Thurloe Estate: an account of its origin and development" by Dorothy Stroud, and would like to thank them for presenting a copy to the Society. Members wishing to purchase a copy can do so from the publisher, Country Life, price 10s. 6d.

The Society is affiliated to the London Society, the Metropolitan Parks and Gardens Association, and the Central Council of Civic Societies.

The Society received a letter from the Civic Trust in which they set out proposals for taking over the Central Council of Civic Societies. The matter was discussed by the Executive Committee and it was agreed that the Kensington Society were not in favour of the administration of the Central Council of Civic Societies being taken over by the Civic Trust at this stage.

The Society has suggested to the Kensington Borough Council that it would be appropriate if in the new Public Library a room was set aside to exhibit documents, prints, etc. of the Borough.

Application has been received from the Kensington Architects Group asking to become a Group of the Kensington Society. The Executive Committee of the Society feel that this Group should be an independent organisation with complete liberty of action and therefore decided against affiliation.

The Society has asked the London County Council if the old weathervane belonging to the tower of the east wing of Holland House could be replaced. We have been informed that the architects had considered the weathervane too small in scale for the tower, and it was proposed to erect it on the Belvedere Tower near the reconstructed ballroom.

Members are reminded of the aims of the Society and are urged to inform the Secretary, as soon as possible, if they hear of any plans or proposals which conflict with the objects of the Society.

In this connection we might usefully quote Lord Esher again. In the Foreword of the Society's last Annual Report he wrote:

"Avert your eyes for a moment and someone will cut down a tree that has taken a century to grow, pull down a house that creates the character of a street, put up a light standard of monumental vulgarity or use the convenient phrase of 'planning' to exploit and spoil some area of ancient beauty."

May we remind members that if they have any matter which they would like to bring to the notice of the Kensington Borough Council they should write to the Councillors who represent them in their particular Ward. The names of the Councillors for your Ward can be obtained from the Town Hall or Public Library.

MEETING

held at

BOWATER HOUSE, KNIGHTSBRIDGE

on June 24th, 1959, to discuss

DEVELOPMENT OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Chairman: Mr. W. L. ROOTS.

On the Platform: MR. RICHARD EDMONDS, Chairman of the L.C.C. Town Planning Committee.

COUNCILLOR PIPER of the Chelsea Borough Council.

COUNCILLOR C. MULLER of the Kensington Borough Council.

COUNCILLOR MRS. BALL WILSON of the Westminster City Council.

THE RT. HON. LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH, D.L., J.P.

ALDERMAN HENRY DICKENS, O.B.E.

THE CHAIRMAN: I will ask Mr. Edmonds to explain the Knightsbridge Scheme and then I will ask other members on the platform to make comments and then I will ask for your comments. Be as short as you can with the questions. Be as pungent as you can rather than lengthy. Without more ado I shall ask Mr. Edmonds to speak.

MR. EDMONDS: Mr. Chairman, Sir, Citizens of Chelsea, Kensington and Westminster. I would like to say first of all that this is an informal meeting and in advance of a Public Enquiry and I must ask the Press, whom I see present, not to quote me direct. Apart from that I wish to talk quite frankly about the Knightsbridge Scheme. I should like to congratulate the organisers of this meeting and as far as I am concerned the more of them the better. I have in mind that we held a similar conference on the Notting Hill Gate Scheme. I should like to dwell first on the historical aspect. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Knightsbridge was an extremely unpleasant spot. There were highwaymen and shady innkeepers in the Great Western Road. The dangers in Knightsbridge were enormous. The Westbourne River is now imprisoned in a pipe. The Knightsbridge of to-day is quite different. In the westward drift of London, Knightsbridge has become a place of offices and shops. Some of you may say it is becoming a place of acute congestion. Why are we developing the road system at Knightsbridge? There is £2 million a year to spend. A network of schemes

was devised. Cromwell Road, Brompton Road, Notting Hill Gate, Hyde Park Corner and the Marble Arch Scheme, the Channelisation Scheme at Knightsbridge. A whole pattern of road schemes was approved. The Knightsbridge Road Scheme was programmed for the years 1965-68 at a cost of £3½ million to the ratepayers. Then we heard that an improvement was planned by a local landowner. A Mr. Marler wished to develop Knightsbridge in an acceptable pattern. We saw it would be possible to put the scheme under way at a cost to us of a million pounds and bring it forward five years whilst dovetailing it with the two underpasses. It is a good scheme. The L.C.C. will go for a compulsory purchase order this year. We have received the views of Westminster, Chelsea and Kensington. Here is the plan. A great new square at Knightsbridge is to be created. Facing it will be a 320 feet high block. The square will not be heavily occupied. First of all may I deal with the question of offices. There are strong feelings about the spate of offices in West London. The Barbican Scheme in Central London is going to have many residents. 12,000 people may one day be living there. We are permitting no more offices than is allowed as scheduled. We are not adding to the offices here. There is a private point. I understand there is a movement to get more offices on the site where Knightsbridge Barracks stands. My Committee would resist that. (The speaker then asked the Press not to quote this.) I would like to point out that these schemes are modified as we go along. The roundabout is geared to the capacity of the underpasses. I hope that we can get sufficient depth for the traffic to weave. With regard to high building policy—(here the speaker pointed out of the window to the park) if one looks across the park at the buildings you will see that they come along the fringe of the park. The aspect of the 320 feet high block is right. There will be a minimum of shadowing and the maximum of good lighting will be possible the way it is built. An important point is that we should have good street furniture and good street lighting. Another most important aspect is the quality of the material in the building (central block) we believe in a good finish to a building. The Boroughs can have a say in the actual materials used. An important point to bear in mind is the journey to work. By having offices here the people who work in the area will have staggered hours going home.

There is one great difficulty. The link with Victoria is bad. There are always queues for buses in Sloane Street. I do hope that something can be done here. The siting of pedestrian subways will have to be considered, you've got to be an acrobat to-day (to get over the roads). There is no question of the scheme not being done as scheduled in the Development plan. We are working hand in hand with the Boroughs. There is no reason why the hamlet of Knightsbridge should not become a delightful place. From a road traffic point of view I am sorry about the inconveniences caused by these schemes going through. I myself have moved from Chelsea to

Notting Hill to feel what redevelopment is like! Thank you for listening to me—I am very grateful for your invitation to be here.

COUNCILLOR PIPER: I should like to thank Mr. Edmonds for coming here and talking to us this evening. I have only to say *against* the Scheme. I think the whole position we find ourselves in there is one fact we should face. An arrangement has been made by which the L.C.C. say "If we get our roundabout without having to pay compensation you can go ahead." We all agree that the scheme must be done. We are all agreed on Town Planning. But we must not let the financial side blind us. We are going to have to live with it. The major aspect of this scheme is road development. I am doubtful as to the wisdom of the scheme. I don't think the L.C.C. has sufficient facts—they are doing this on a hunch. I would ask Mr. Edmonds about the traffic census he's taken. Has he consulted the Metropolitan Police? What do they think? I am not a traffic study expert but as a layman I have the strongest doubts as to the advisability of the scheme. They (L.C.C.) do not deal in facts. There is no evidence that any serious investigations have been undertaken. No figures have been supplied either.

I am concerned at the proposed treatment of Basil Street. The scheme will stop up Basil Street. Anyone who knows Pavilion Road knows that it just cannot be used as a highway. This is the fallacy of planning from a map instead of from the ground. Mr. Edmonds has referred to the spread westwards. What is Town Planning if it should control this spread? It is absolutely fatal for dense office development to enter this part of London. (*Cries of "Hear, hear."*) I am far from satisfied that this scheme will be satisfactory from a traffic point of view.

If we may look for a moment or two at the central office block of the scheme. In this way it is appropriate that we should be here at this moment (on the tenth storey of the Bowater Building). The block will be three times our height now.

I will attack dense office development in this area. Every commercial area must have some offices but I do think it is wrong that office accommodation should be dense. It should be spread out. Office blocks are fatal and will destroy the character of the area. It will be fatal to start destroying character of Kensington and Chelsea.

We love our neighbours in Westminster but we are thankful that we are different from them. We wish to retain our own individuality. Will this generation be that which thought more of money than of town planning? Central London is saturated say the L.C.C. They are right. But they are moving it here, half a mile down the road. This is nonsense. (*Cries of "Hear, hear."*) Are we Chelsea or "Community 04." We are not just an outline on a map. We want to be kept as a community not an area. We (Chelsea Council) regard the provision for car parking doubtful as to sufficiency. Bearing in mind what a busy road this is going to be we are doubtful

about it. We notice that there might be sculpture on the buildings, Chelsea hope to be consulted here. (*Laughter.*) Advertising must be kept within close bounds before it is finally approved. At this stage it is not possible to know about the landscape. We hope subways will be ramped for perambulators, etc.

The whole central area (of road and office development) is treated with a crass lack of imagination. One is horrified at the prospect. What will be the attraction of a sitting out area shrouded in petrol fumes? We hope very much that skyscrapers will not be built. I hope something can be done about the shadow casting. It is no use town planners comforting themselves that private developers have been good—we must not assume that they always will be.

I congratulate Mr. Edmonds in his courage for coming here. The scheme will not find a single supporter except the developers. I would also like to thank the Kensington Society. I can assure the Kensington Society that as far as critics are concerned they will have the whole support of Chelsea. (*Applause.*)

COUNCILLOR MULLER: I should like to associate myself with Councillor Piper. Kensington gave great consideration to the Scheme. Whilst looking at the plans and models recently we noticed that a cinema appeared for the first time. The fact that this was provisional does not seem to matter. Kensington Council had full discussion on this matter. They are in complete agreement with Councillor Piper in fact so much so that it would seem that we had got together. Actually the two Boroughs are very different. Kensington Council are very concerned at increasing encroachment of offices. They felt they should not approve the scheme. What facilities will there be for underground station access? We do express grave concern at these proposals.

The Tower Block will be opposite to and twice the height of the tower of this building. This will give the feeling of oppression even from the ground. Car parking has not received the attention it might. The first floor pavement shops are viewed with anxiety. A point about the traffic filter system. How are you going to stop foolish people crossing the road who won't use the subways? This is a matter of grave concern to Kensington. Such office blocks could not be welcomed by Kensington—the character would be lost. Kensington is one of the highest rented areas in London. May I add my regret that this scheme has come forward in this way.

Mr. Roots then introduced Mrs. Ball Wilson.

MRS. BALL WILSON: I would first like to thank the Westminster and Kensington Societies for organising this meeting. The Westminster City Council have appreciated the need for road improvement in this area. Whilst we welcome the improvement that is to come with this scheme we do regret the loss of residential accommodation. But this is not a loss compared with the L.C.C. plan. At

this stage my Council raise no objection to the L.C.C. proposals. Matters of detail will be taken up later. These are (a) the linking of the street subway entrance to the Knightsbridge Underground Station; (b) there should be alternative access to subways—also here the question of ramps might be considered; and (c) whether it would be practicable to provide recessed entrances for bus stops. My council feels that perhaps the shadow from the skyscraper building might be got rid of during the day. Westminster Council are in fact in basic agreement with the scheme.

MR. ROOTS: Alderman Dickens has had a lot to do with this matter and he would like to say a few words.

ALDERMAN DICKENS: I am forced upon my feet. You gather that Kensington views with disfavour the L.C.C. proposals and Westminster doesn't mind. Has Westminster ever minded? Westminster is ruined by commercialism. Their Council must share responsibilities. I beg of you to try and imagine a building more than twice as high as this one. It is nothing more than a fantastic bit of megalomania on the part of County Hall. All Kensington say is don't make it worse than it is. Dedvelop it! (*Long burst of clapping here.*)

MR. ROOTS (addressing audience): Now it is your turn.

COUNCILLOR PONSONBY: As you know I support this scheme. You do get advantage of a large square in the area. One can only get this advantage to traffic by building up. You might say that you would prefer that all buildings should be at a uniform height. But there would be nothing to crown the development. It is essential that in its treatment it should be pleasing to the eye. I have some slight reservations as to the traffic system when this scheme exists. The flow from west to east will be quicker but the flow east to west will be a holding up. Wouldn't it be possible to construct an underpass from the centre to the west?

MR. YOUNG (Troughton and Young): I am an interested party. I am one of the biggest ratepayers in Knightsbridge. Mr. Edmonds is going to save a lot of money. I have been a ratepayer in Knightsbridge for over 50 years. I am only imagining that by compulsory acquiring (the land) the tenants will have to put up with it. The tenants have been left on one side. I have the greatest admiration for Mr. Marler who is a good business man. I had planned and made many arrangements and now we are told we are going to be taken over very firmly. I do hope that the L.C.C. will think of the tenants. My name is Young of Troughton and Young. The bottleneck is the park side of Knightsbridge. I am not an expert in these matters but sufficient research has not been made. Think of the tenants who have been inconvenienced. (*Applause.*)

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Mr. Edmonds said that the third schedule dealt with the bulk of the building. In the Barbican Scheme I don't think there was any suggestion that this area should

be used for offices. It was to be entirely residential. As to the traffic problem one of the main ones will be separating the vehicles from the pedestrians. Are the subways going to be sufficient? Should not consideration be given to the widely spread pedestrian. They will dash across in front of the cars. It pains me to see this.

COUNCILLOR MORKILL: It is all very well to describe this as a crown resembling a top hat (the central block). All Londoners have a priceless asset. They have not got buildings like in Central Park, New York. If you stand in Hyde Park you have a beautiful view. To put skyscrapers along the park is an absolute crime for we should be destroying the skyline. May I remind you of a saying "Why should we do anything for posterity—what has posterity done for us?"

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I would like to make a point about the traffic flow. The whole scheme is bad in its conception. The common remedy for traffic is a roundabout—it keeps traffic moving. Here you have an oblong whose corners are going to slow things up. Cannot some modification be made? Has the scheme been built around the square? Would it not be better to have a circle? (*Claps.*)

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I am an architect. I have not seen the model, but before any technical judgement is made it is obviously a question of height. The building (central block) is overwhelmingly high. The centre of the square is occupied by buildings. This strikes it out immediately as a quiet square. Mr. Edmonds is very optimistic about street furniture. Street furniture is very bad. (*Hear, hear.*)

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: We have not heard whether the residential blocks are to come down.

MR. EDMONDS: The residential is being replaced.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Thank you.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: No resident is looking forward to the erection of a 320 feet high building here. It would completely overwhelm this side of the Park. It would spoil the surroundings of the Park. The roads under this scheme will be a hive of activity with everyone wanting to come and go. That is not the way to solve the traffic problem, it will make conditions impossible.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: These blocks, like the central one in this scheme are usually sited north to south. But this building is never going to get sunshine. In Knightsbridge rents are always high—will there be a reduction?

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Has anyone thought about a fire in the skyscraper? It could be serious. Is Westminster not objecting because so few of them live there? (*Clapping.*)

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: A word in favour of Mr. Edmonds. I am looking at it from the park aspect. Eighteenth-century designers went to enormous lengths to put towers in their landscapes.

This one will be seen above the trees. The tree skyline is at present dull. (*Shouts of "No, no."*) The tower will give variation. Towers add enormously to the skyline—I give it my warmest approbation.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: May I remind the last speaker that the obelisks of the eighteenth century were usually beautiful.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I want to register an emphatic protest against this scheme. Mr. Edmonds said this scheme will go through. We are not subject to dictatorship, we are not slaves, we are Britons. The essence of good living is good design. These proposals will create an eyesore, an offence. It is something to which we cannot possibly subscribe.

LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH: I want to support the Kensington Borough Council. I would *reduce* the density not increase it. I have had 40 years interest in housing. In my younger days I didn't care about Town and Country Planning and thought them only to be a damned nuisance. How wrong I was. I must remind the L.C.C. how little of London they control. Only 3½ million people of its 9 million. London is a connerbation. We ought to have listened to a new towns policy years ago. What the County Council are doing is moving the congestion from Central London and moving it here to Knightsbridge. We ought to keep this congestion down not increase it! (*Clapping.*)

COUNCILLOR PIPER: What would I do? Speaking personally I would dedevelop. The 1955 Plan is wrong, we should not allow this to be perpetuated. Half of the flats in the block will be in shadow. On the question of finance I would remind the L.C.C. that bad planning costs money.

MR. EDMONDS: I would like to speak very briefly. Firstly I must answer in the most emphatic terms about the scheme going through. No one can ever say that the scheme will go through. The Road Scheme is programmed but it is subject to a Public Enquiry, THIS IS A PRIVATE MEETING. The L.C.C. believe that clusters of high buildings will give great interest to the new London. Thank heavens for our regulations on fire. We are hard on developers on this issue. On the question of overshadowing surely this slab block will get both the morning and afternoon sun. The relevant committees should see the materials that are being used—it is the quality of the materials that makes a building. On the 3rd Schedule we would give about 10 per cent. more area to the mass of building than was there before. Mr. Ponsonby made a valuable point—a high building does free the area to some extent. You do not increase the mass in the area except by the 10 per cent. I am grateful for these small crumbs. Mrs. Ball Wilson made a particularly important point when she referred to the bus recesses. Councillor Muller made a series of valuable points. In the past we have ringed spaces with railings. I believe that the high buildings are in the right places. On the matter of sculpture I understand that an

Epstein is to go up outside the Bowater building so it is possible that something similar may be planned for the central block. Advertising? well this is up to Mr. Piper. On the subject of car parking we are increasing the standards of capacity. I was enraged about the "remote" attitudes to areas. We in the L.C.C. are as fond of London as anyone in the Boroughs and my Committee very seldom makes decisions without seeing them—the Boroughs. The road scheme is geared to exits giving a 50 per cent. improvement on the present. I think the science of traffic must be geared to the science of planning. In closing I would like to thank everyone for their contribution. I have learnt a great deal here this evening and I do hope that you don't think the L.C.C. are as remote as all that. (*Clapping.*)

MR. ROOTS: I would like to extend great thanks to Mr. Edmonds and also to the Kensington Society and Westminster Society for arranging this evening—it is in fact a joint meeting.

ESSAY BY JULIAN ASTON, PUPIL OF HOLLAND PARK
SCHOOL, WINNER OF THE £3 3s. BOOK TOKEN PRIZE

CAMPDEN HOUSE
and
SIR BAPTIST HICKS (1551-1629)

Although during early seventeenth century Campden Hill was still part of the common or waste land of the Manor of Kensington, and despite the prohibition of building within 10 miles of London, the area became popular for the mansions of the new Baronets. By 1612, Nottingham, Holland and Campden House had all been erected. The last two of this group vied with each other for grandeur and beauty, and although built within a few years, only Holland House still remains.

Campden House was erected in 1612 by one Sir Baptist Hicks and was "finished with all the art, the architects of that time were masters of."* Originally the house was approached through an avenue of elms, that extended nearly to the high road. Faulkner paints its picture in rather gloomy colours, the drawing in his book of 1820† appears to be very much like Holland House, being built with the same red bricks and red quoins. Even though the front displayed many of the period's idiosyncrasies—such as turrets and stacks of chimneys—the interior possessed fine and lavish decorations.

The entrance hall was wainscotted with veined oak and the chimney was deliberately built on the east so as to leave space for an arch leading to the main staircase. The Great Dining Room—later patronized by Charles II—was richly but nevertheless tastefully ornamented; the ceiling was stuccoed and divided into compartments, the centres containing the arms of the Campden family. However, the finest ornament was a tabernacle mantlepiece of six Corinthian columns supporting a pediment and two fine carved caryatid figures supporting the whole piece which, up to the burning of the house in early nineteenth century, was in an excellent state of preservation and represented one of the finest specimens of early Stuart sculpture.‡ Upstairs the State Apartments consisted of three large rooms, decorated in a similar ornate manner as the dining room.

Sir Baptist Hicks, the builder and first owner of this house, is an interesting example of the new class which was rising to power

* J. Bowark, *Antiquities of Middlesex*, 1705.

† T. Faulkner, *Histories and Antiquities of Kensington*, 1820.

‡ Detailed drawings can be seen at Kensington Public Library.

before the Civil War. His grave in Campden Church, Gloucestershire, bears this rather eccentric epitaph:

"Reader know
Who'er thou be,
Here lies Faith, Hope
And Charity.
Faith true
Hope firm
Charity free
Baptist Lord
Campden
Was these three.
Faith in God,
Charity for his brother
Hope for himself
What ought he other.
Faith is no more
Charity is crowned
'Tis only Hope
That is underground."

It is the epitaph of a very self-determined man who represented at least in his successful career, the money-made baronets who rose under James I's patronage.

Little is known of his early years and education, except that he and his two brothers, Francis and Michael, lost their father in 1557, and that young Baptist entered the mercer's trade and quickly prospered. The first official record of him is in 1580, when at 29 years of age, he received the freedom of his company and it appears that in 1597 his trade was flourishing, in so much that he was already supplying the Elizabethan Court with his wares.

With the accession of James, his fortunes rose rapidly and he was knighted by the King on June 24th, 1603, one day before His Majesty's coronation. Hicks' good looks and manly bearing, which characterised his family, probably held him in good stead and he speedily became one of the King's favourites. However, not all rested on his "face"; he was undoubtedly aided and promoted by his brothers' interests with Sir Robert Cecil. Hicks' rise to fame and fortune is aptly described by a contemporary writer: "This Baptist, upon King James coming in, was sworn his servant and soon knighted. He supplied the court with silks and rich mercery wares, when King James and his bare Scotch nobility and gentry came in, by which means he got himself a large estate."

An examination of the State Papers (Domestic Series) from 1604 to 1609 also reveals his growing wealth in the form of "warrants of payment" which range in amount from £2,000 to £12,000. His shop in Cheapside seems to have become a rather fashionable resort, as a letter in April of 1618 shows "the Archbishop of Spalato preached at Mercer's Chapel . . . The Chancellor (Bacon) was there

in as great pomp as he went awhile to Sir Baptist Hicks' and Barnes' shops to buy silks and velvets," and he continued serving the court throughout James' reign. But these transactions did not finish with the death of James, for in 1626 there were several warrants of the unpaid debts of the late King and one of £10,000 that had been lent to his "now Majesty." With such prosperous deals as these it is no wonder that he obtained "a great estate."

Because of his connections at court, Hicks had an advantage over other merchants in that he knew when and how to apply pressure for payment of his debts. For instance, by 1605 James owed him £16,000, which he said he needed because he was shortly to marry his daughters, and again in 1611 he tried to extract money "by reason of my late purchase of landes"—most probably at Campden, Gloucestershire.

After taking the oath of knighthood, it was not usual for a noble to carry on trading, and a good deal of ill-feeling resulted in Hicks' defiance of this rule. However he successfully defended himself by saying that it was his servants and not he himself who carried out the trading business. The influence of the King over Hicks' career is unmistakable; he was excused many functions which did not suit his purpose, and in 1614 James intervened on his behalf to stay his prosecution which was being proposed by Sir Thomas Hayes Alderman, who accused Hicks "of violence offered in a trial between them." Due to the Royal intervention, his hearing was to be tried elsewhere, but no more is recorded of this incident.

Because Sir Baptist was essentially a business man and amassed his fortune with amazing rapidity, it does not mean that he had the characteristic avarice of the merchant class, for he spent, in fact, "like a prince" and the lavish interior decorations of Campden House illustrated this.

How Hicks came to obtain this land in Kensington is somewhat of a mystery. The popular legend is that he won the ground from Sir Walter Cope who, like himself, had found the King's favour profitable and who subsequently had come to own most of the parish. On these few acres Hicks built a mansion which he named Campden House, after his country manor of Chipping Campden. As Leigh Hunt* suggests, this story of winning the land is hardly probable, as two such prudent persons as Sir Walter and Sir Baptist were not likely to have bowled away parts of their hard earned fortunes at a "game of skittles." Most likely the story was invented by some of the parishioners who, after having seen the two old boys at skittles together, could not understand how the "silk mercer" could possibly have dared set up a rival establishment in such close proximity to the Lord of the Manor without a piece of good luck (such as could be obtained at skittles). What is far more credible is that Sir Baptist bought the land for hard cash, but it is no more provable as there do not exist any official records of the transaction.

* L. Hunt, *The Old Court Suburb*, 1855.

When he died at the age of seventy-eight in 1629 he had been Viscount Hicks for one year. Campden House was not all he left for future generations; he had built a magnificent manor in Chipping Campden which cost £29,000 and in the same year as he built Campden House in Kensington he had erected, at his own expense, a house near Smithfield in which the quarterly sessions could be held. Of these three, Campden House remained the longest and between 1629 and 1862, when it was ruined by fire, the house had a varied and interesting history, being used for sequestrian meetings during the Protectorate and later it was rented to Princess Anne (afterwards Queen Anne). From 1776 to 1848 the house became a boarding school for girls and in its final years it was let to Mr. L. T. Wooley, who spent large sums of money on re-embellishments.

The end of Campden House was almost as mysterious as its beginning, for Mr. Wooley took out large insurance policies, and by 1862 they amounted to £29,000. On the morning of March 23rd, 1862, the house was gutted by fire, and the occurrence became the subject of a "cause celebre" in the Law Courts.

Although a second house was built in 1866, it was demolished in 1900 and the land which once housed a mansion as beautiful as Holland House, now contains Campden House Court and has become just one more street. And consequently another aspect of Kensington's fascinating history is lost to all but the occasional passer-by who has a little more historical inquisitiveness than most, and who delves into the archives of Kensington's history.

JULIAN ASTON.
1959

CONSTITUTION OF THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

1. The name of the Society shall be The Kensington Society.
2. 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.
3. *Members.* Members shall be Life or Ordinary.
4. *Subscriptions.* Life members shall pay a minimum subscription of £10 10s. Ordinary members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of one guinea, payable on 1st October each year.
5. *The Council.* The Council shall consist of not more than thirty members. They shall be elected by the Executive Committee.
6. *The Officers.* The Officers of the Society shall be the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer.
7. *The Executive Committee.* The Executive Committee shall consist of not more than twelve members and the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer. The Chairman of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually by the members of the Executive Committee at their first meeting after the Annual General Meeting.
8. 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 14 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 not 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 a 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 KENSINGTON SOCIETY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 1958-59

1957-58 INCOME				1957-58 EXPENDITURE			
£		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
379	Balance at October 1st, 1958			113	London Meetings—		
	brought forward		397 10 5		Net Cost of Halls, Chairs, etc. ..	74 3 1	
31	Subscriptions—			2	Advertising	1 15 0	
	Life Subscriptions	21 0 0		183	Printing, Typing and Stationery ..	208 2 7	
356	Annual Subscriptions	329 4 0		87	Postages, and Telephone Calls ..	98 6 8	
9	Income Tax Recovered	— — —		4	Bank Charges and Cheque Books ..	3 0 0	
			350 4 0	10	Planting Trees	— — —	
	Other Income—			5	Donations	11 6 0	
36	Profit on Sale of Christmas Cards ..	19 0 6		8	Office Equipment—File	6 15 8	
11	Interest on Bank Deposits Accounts ..	9 0 7		9	Sundry Expenses	10 0 8	
6	Interest on Post Office Savings Bank Account	— — —				413 9 8	
—	Coach Visits—Excess of Income over Expenditure	8 13 6		9	Coach Visits—		
			36 14 7		Net cost of Hire, Meals, etc. ..	— — —	
					Balances at September 30th, 1959,		
					carried forward—		
					Martins Bank, Limited—		
					Deposit Accounts:		
				70	General	41 19 4	
				277	Life Subscriptions	— — —	
				50	Prize Fund	— — —	
						41 19 4	
					Current Account (over-		
				1	drawn)	25 13 10	
						16 5 6	
					Post Office Savings		
					Bank Accounts—		
					Life Subscriptions	303 16 9	
					Prize Fund	50 17 1	
						354 13 10	
						370 19 4	
£828		£784 9 0		£828		£784 9 0	

We have prepared the above Account from the Books and Vouchers kept by Martins Bank Limited, Kensington High Street, W.8 Branch, and certify it to be in accordance therewith.

NORFOLK HOUSE, LAURENCE POUNTNEY HILL,
LONDON, E.C.4.

16th October, 1959.

WRIGHT, STEVENS & LLOYD,
Chartered Accountants

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