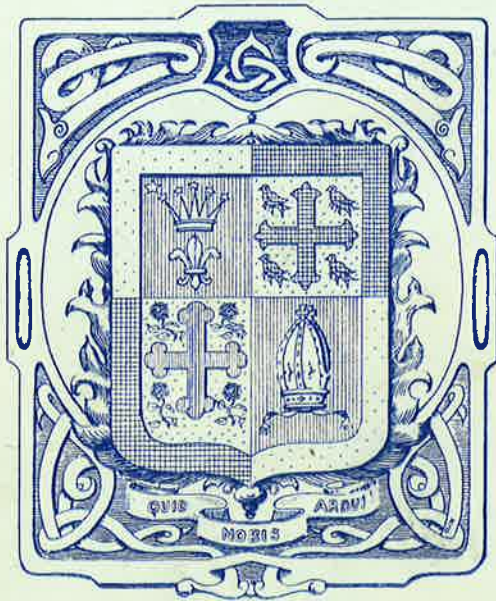


# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY



7<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REPORT  
Year 1959 - 60



ONSLow SQUARE

From a water colour by T. Hosmer Shepherd, 1852

Onslow Square was built about 1850 and named after the Earl of Onslow who owned the land. The square was built on the site of a large house and grounds, which was used as a lunatic asylum. Thackeray wrote "The Virginians" and "The Four Georges" when he lived at number 36.

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

Year 1959 - 60

# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

## *President:*

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

## *Vice-Presidents:*

THE MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY, G.C.V.O.  
THE RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF KENSINGTON  
MRS. MARY STOCKS

## *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., C.B.E.
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
S. J. L. Egerton, Esq.	Miss Irene Scharrer
William F. Grimes, Esq., V.P.S.A.	Lord Spens, K.B.E., Q.C.
	Prof. Arnold Toynbee, D.Litt., D.C.L., F.B.A.
	Orlo Williams, Esq., C.B., M.C., D.C.L.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

### *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.	H. Gandell, Esq.
C. G. Boxall, Esq.	Keon Hughes, Esq.
F. Carter, Esq.	John Paul, Esq.
Mrs. G. Christiansen	[Hugh Shillito, Esq.]
W. G. Corfield, Esq.	Miss P. M. Ward
	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 Kensington Society has had an important and successful year, and the Report strikes a very natural note of triumph. I wrote last year that St. Mary Abbots church, the central feature of our Kensington scene, was in grave danger. Largely as the result of the strong feelings expressed at the Public Meeting held by the Society the building plan was rejected by the London County Council. This was a resounding and popular victory. Our efforts to control the future as well as to preserve the past will be found conspicuous in the Report. The pressure of public opinion has persuaded the Kensington Council to improve the music service in their new public library, and the London County Council has been persuaded to reject the destruction by new building of all the charm and picturesque antiquity of Selwood Place. We face both ways, but always defending amenity and a full civilised life against commercial exploitation and artistic indifference.

It is unfortunate that in many minds the word development has come to stand for progress. It is a false assumption; for in all too many cases we destroy the good in order to develop the bad. In fact our false progress is rapidly making the great city of London an intolerable place to live in, and all we can hope for in this boiling cauldron of noisy discomfort is that the Kensington Society can preserve against powerful forces their small oasis of ancient peace.

(Sgd.) Esher,

*President.*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, on December 15th, 1959, with Mr. H. Gandell, a member of the Executive Committee, in the Chair.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Gandell referred to the loss the Society had sustained in the death of its Vice-President, Sir Harold Kenyon, who had so often presided at former meetings. The meeting stood for a minute as a tribute to his memory.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, which had been 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 1959. In doing so, he referred with regret to the death of Sir Harold Kenyon and of Mr. Ashley Dukes, a valued member of the Council of the Society; both had devoted much time to improving the amenities of the Borough and their loss would be sadly felt.

Dr. Pasmore next mentioned various developments in the Borough in which the Society had interested itself during the past year, including the rebuilding of Notting Hill Gate, the completion of the King George VI Memorial Youth Hostel in Holland Park, Public Meetings held to discuss the redevelopment of sites in Knightsbridge and Kensington High Street and the relighting of the Borough. He ended with grateful thanks to the Secretary for the incredible amount of work she continued to do for the Society as well as for the compilation of the Report.

The adoption of the Report and Accounts was seconded by Mr. Gurney and passed unanimously.

Mr. G. Paley proposed and Mr. Morgan seconded the confirmation of the re-election of the Officers of the Society and the Executive Committee. This was carried unanimously.

Mrs. Christiansen said that she would like to put on record the tremendous help which she received from Mr. Boxall with compiling the Report and in many other ways.

The re-election of Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd as Hon. Auditors was moved by Miss Ward and seconded by Miss Saward and carried unanimously. Proceedings ended with a vote of thanks to the Secretary.

The meeting was followed by a lecture given by Dr. Pasmore entitled "Famous and Infamous Incidents in the History of Kensington."

## VICE-PRESIDENTS

We are pleased to be able to announce that The Marquess of Cholmondeley, G.C.V.O., and Mrs. Mary Stocks have very kindly consented to become Vice-Presidents of the Society.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

Two Public Meetings have been arranged during the last twelve months—

- (1) To discuss the proposed scheme of redevelopment of Nos. 7-74 Kensington High Street and Nos. 2-28 Kensington Church Street.
- (2) To discuss the Music Library Service in the new Library.

## REDEVELOPMENT OF KENSINGTON HIGH STREET AND KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET

Illustrations appeared in the last issue of the Annual Report, showing the proposed scheme, which included a 23-storey block of offices facing St. Mary Abbots Church, flats and shops and a 600-bedroom hotel at the Kensington Gardens end of the site.

The Kensington Society strongly opposed the erection of a tower block of office accommodation at the corner of Kensington High Street and Kensington Church Street and on November 30th, 1959, a meeting was held to discuss the scheme. Between 400 and 500 people attended the meeting and passed a resolution opposing the 272 feet tower block. Only 11 people voted against the resolution. The London County Council, the local planning authority, has now refused planning permission and has recently rejected an alternative plan.

Mr. Richard Edmonds, Chairman of the Town Planning Committee, said that judging by the public protest meeting held by the Kensington Society a skyscraper plan by St. Mary Abbots Church was unacceptable to people in this part of London. He added that the Public Meeting had "enormous value" and the *Kensington Post* reporting the London County Council's decision refers to it as "A Popular Victory" for the Society.

Lady Pepler and Mr. Robert Vigars, Kensington Representatives on the London County Council, informed the Secretary that the representation made by the Society had been most helpful when the plans were being considered and that there was no doubt that great importance had been attached to the fact that at the Public Meeting so large a majority had opposed this scheme.

A revised plan for the hotel building on the site 2-24 Kensington High Street is now being considered by the London County Council. Planning permission is being sought to develop this site separately. The height of the proposed hotel is 175 feet compared with the 125 feet of the former Kensington Palace Hotel.

The full report of the meeting is printed on page 19 of this Report.

## MUSIC LIBRARY SERVICE

There was no accommodation for a Music Room or an adequate Gramophone Record Library in the old library.

In 1949 a Gramophone Record Library was started but owing



to lack of space and records, a lending service was only available to societies or clubs.

In the new £700,000 Public Library many residents hoped that sufficient suitable accommodation would be found for the requisite equipment to provide a Gramophone Record Service available to individual borrowers, and a Music Room which would provide a music library service similar to that being provided in most other London boroughs.

It was disappointing to many Kensington residents to learn that in spite of the fact that a considerable sum had already been spent on furniture and fittings, the Libraries Committee of the Kensington Borough Council thought it unnecessary to provide a Music Room and that they had offered the room formerly designated as a Music Room to the Women's Voluntary Services. It was felt by some residents that the existing service was most inadequate and the provision of a much needed Music Room was a long overdue amenity.

A Public Meeting was called by the Society on February 1st, 1960, to give all interested persons and bodies an opportunity to put forward their views on this important matter. Three music critics and a well known opera singer, all residents of Kensington, made an appeal for an adequate music library service.

Mr. Ivor Bulmer Thomas, who presided, began by commenting on what he called a remarkable renaissance of interest in music in this country during the past quarter of a century. He said it was a significant revival providing a common culture among people, bringing all nations together in a remarkable way. Mr. Frank Howes, music critic and lecturer, also spoke of the tremendous popularity of music in the last decade. He said, "Opera is now given ten months of the year instead of six or seven weeks in the summer, and there are now five major symphony orchestras in Britain compared with two before the war." Mr. Howes went on to say he was appalled at the decision of the Kensington Borough Council to divert the Music Room in the new library to something else.

Miss Sylvia Fisher, the opera singer, felt that the initial cost of such a service would be forgotten long before residents ceased to enjoy it.

Mr. John Minchinton produced figures showing that Kensington's total expenditure on a Music Library Service was the lowest among the Metropolitan boroughs who had a music library. He urged the meeting to insist that as residents they should be treated as intelligent people and encouraged to use the music library facilities. A resolution was unanimously passed at the end of the meeting for the Kensington Society to urge the Council "to make in the new library provision for music worthy of the standing of the Royal Borough and of the present revival in music appreciation."

We are glad to learn from the Council's Minutes for June, 1960, that a new Music Room is to be provided and that for a trial period of one year the Council's gramophone record library will be made available for individual borrowing.

## A SELECTION OF CASES DEALT WITH

### *Kensington Square*

The Convent of the Assumption in Kensington Square applied for planning permission to erect a 9-storey hostel block and a 4-storey block in the grounds at the back of 20 Kensington Square.

The Society strongly opposed the erection of both buildings.

For many years complaints have been received from members about the behaviour of the students at the Convent, and on one occasion students were seen climbing from a third floor window down the outside of the building into a first floor window; residents are frequently disturbed by rowdiness outside the Convent between the hours of 10 and 11 p.m.

The Society feels that Kensington Square is an area of very special character and that this residential character should be preserved. Last year the Society was asked to submit to the Kensington Borough Council a list of groups of buildings of architectural merit, which were felt to be worthy of preservation. Kensington Square was named as an example.

The Scheme was also opposed by residents in the Square and by the Kensington Borough Council.

Permission has now been granted by the Town Planning Committee of the London County Council. It has been learnt with some concern that the casting vote was given by the Chairman.

An appeal was made to the Minister of Housing and Local Government, without success.

### *Cornwall Gardens.*

Planning permission was sought for the erection of a very high block of flats at the western end of Cornwall Gardens. It was felt that such a development should be opposed by the Society on the grounds that this was one of the very few Victorian squares remaining in this area, and that it was desirable to treat the development of existing squares as an entity.

We are pleased to know that the London County Council has refused planning permission for this project.

### *Selwood Place.*

The Society strongly opposed the proposal to erect four houses and garages at the back of Nos. 1 to 8 Selwood Place.

We fully endorse the objections made by the residents in the area. These houses, with their delightful little gardens, form one of the few remaining picturesque spots in Kensington.

The Georgian Group has also opposed this scheme. As we go to press we learn that planning permission has been refused.

#### *Melbury Road and Leighton House.*

Several years ago The Kensington Society asked the London County Council to consider making preservation orders on groups of buildings.

It is, therefore, very gratifying to the Society to learn that the London County Council consider that Nos. 6, 8, 11, 15 and 17 Melbury Road, and Leighton House (12 Holland Park Road) should be preserved both on account of their intrinsic architectural merit and of their importance as a group expressing the taste of well-known artists of the late Victorian period.

The County Council accordingly propose to make a Building Preservation Order in respect of these properties. Under a Building Preservation Order the properties could not be demolished, altered or extended without the consent of the Planning Authority.

The County Council state that Melbury Road and Holland Park Road form the nucleus of an area which was the centre of the artistic world of the years around 1870, and that Melbury Road in particular contains a number of houses designed by outstanding architects for celebrated artists.

In this artistic centre of London lived, among others, Luke Fildes, R.A., H. Thorneycroft, R.A., Marcus Stone, R.A., W. Holman Hunt, O.M., G. F. Watts, R.A., and Lord Leighton, P.P.R.A.

The buildings include two Norman Shaw houses and others built by Shaw's pupil Halsey. Leighton House was designed by Lord Leighton and George Aitchison, R.A., was his architect.

Leighton House was the residence of Lord Leighton from 1866 until his death in 1896. The outside presents nothing that calls for remark, and is no guide to the lavish wealth of the interior. It contains the famous Arab Hall, which was commenced in 1877 and finished in 1879. The Eastern tiles date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and were acquired by Leighton with the help of his friends, Sir Caspar Purdom Clarke and Captain Sir Richard Burton. They came from Rhodes, Damascus, Cairo and elsewhere.

The wall of the approach to the Arab Hall is lined with blue tiles made by William de Morgan. These surround plaques of Damascus tiles of the sixteenth century. On the west wall of the Hall are two star-shaped tiles of the fourteenth century, dark brown in colour, let into the woodwork of the alcove. Above the plaques are texts from the Koran, also in oriental tiles. Round the hall above the inscriptions there is a frieze in brown and gold, designed by Walter Crane, in which, in the section above the alcove, he has introduced the legend of Persia and the rising sun, coming from the fact that the antelope looks over his shoulder at the dawn.

The lattice work in the two windows and in the gallery is old work brought from Damascus.

Mr. Purdom Clarke, who had travelled over a great part of the world for the purpose of inspecting and purchasing rare and beautiful objects for our National Collections, declared this Arab Hall to be "the most beautiful thing that had been done in Europe since the sixteenth century."

When lecturing at Leighton House the late Earl Crawford and Balcarres made the following notable remarks:

"Many *Persian tiles* are sold in Persia. They are made in Birmingham. If you possess *one* genuine old Persian tile, *treasure it*—it is a rarity. In this house you have hundreds of these rare treasures."

The large studio at Leighton House contains casts of a section of the Parthenon Frieze and a sculptured roundel of the Holy Family by Michaelangelo which form part of the applied decoration.

Leighton House is a unique Treasure House. It has been enjoyed and appreciated by many thousands from all parts of the world. It is a public memorial of world-wide interest to one of the great Presidents of the Royal Academy.

Leighton House was acquired by the Kensington Council in 1926 as a centre for the promotion of art, literature and music. Prior to this the house had been maintained by the Leighton House Society, formed in 1896 after the death of Lord Leighton, to preserve it for the nation.

The Kensington Borough Council do not share the view of the London County Council that the character and architectural merit of these houses are such that the making of a Building Preservation Order for them is warranted. They have stated that while not in favour of an Order they consider the trees belonging to the houses should be preserved wherever possible in any future development.

The Society has written to the Kensington Borough Council. A letter was also sent to the London County Council expressing the hope that the Council would adhere to its proposal to make a Preservation Order for these houses. As we go to press we learned that the London County Council has made a Building Preservation Order and is waiting confirmation from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

#### *St. Mary Abbots Hospital Chimney.*

Complaints about smoke from this chimney have been passed on to the Kensington Borough Council.

#### *Philbeach Gardens.*

Application was made for planning permission to make an underground car park beneath these gardens, resulting in felling a group of very fine trees. The Society supported the protests made by the local residents. We consider that proposals for car parks below London squares should be resisted.



*Queen Victoria Memorial, Warwick Gardens.*

The Kensington Society drew the attention of the Kensington Borough Council to the condition of the commemorative metal plaque on the obelisk memorial to Queen Victoria in Warwick Gardens.

The Council inspected the plaque and arrangements were made for it to be cleaned, but after cleaning it was found that the inscription was illegible in many places. The plaque has now been renewed.

*Sir Walter Cope.*

The suggestion that Cope's name should be commemorated in one of the terraces on the Ilchester Estate has been put forward to the building owners.

*Rabbit Row.*

Rabbit Row is a Mews off Notting Hill Gate which has gone up in the world with the big new buildings rising around it. Consequently some of its occupants consider that the quaint old name is out dated and applied to the London County Council to have the name changed to West Mall. The origin of the name Rabbit Row is doubtful. It is thought that rabbit breeders lived there, in proximity to the pig breeders of the Dale to the North, but whatever its derivation it has an old rural flavour which is as much a breath of air in subtopia as the old city names—Poultry, Jewry, Cheapside, Pudding Lane and scores more.

Topographical characteristics of Kensington still live in familiar names of streets and when one examines the origin and meaning of some of these names we are brought face to face with that old local life about which every scrap of information is of value to the topographer of to-day and which will be treasured by posterity.

The Kensington Society sent a letter of protest to the London County Council and the Kensington Borough Council against the proposal to change the name of Rabbit Row.

We are pleased to know the London County Council have now informed the freeholders in Rabbit Row that their application has been carefully considered but it has decided not to make any change in the street name.

*Holland House.*

The Society is anxious that some plaque or inscription, perhaps on the East Wing, should commemorate the many famous inhabitants of Holland House. The matter has been brought to the attention of the London County Council.

*201-227 Holland Park Avenue and 204-214 Holland Road Redevelopment Scheme.*

It was feared by a number of our members that a high block of buildings in this scheme would overshadow adjacent residential properties.

Planning permission was being asked to redevelop the site by rearranging the existing petrol filling station and building a 15-storey block of motor showrooms, workshop and offices.

The 15-storey block would be on site centre facing Holland Road, with a 3-storey wing on each side fronting Holland Park Avenue, a 1-storey rear building, and basement car park for 66 cars. The ground floor would incorporate the Bank and Public House to replace those to be demolished. Access to filling station from Holland Road and through archway under 3-storey wing from Holland Park Avenue, egress to Holland Road and Lorne Gardens. Height of the 15-storey block, 140 feet.

Some members of the Society's Executive Committee examined the plans and were of opinion that the 15-storey block was orientated so as not to overshadow adjacent properties. The plans appeared good, and the Committee agreed there was no need for further action in this case.

*Street Lighting.*

The Society has continued to press the Kensington Borough Council for information concerning the lighting of streets of architectural merit. We understand that a decision has not yet been made by the Committee dealing with this matter, but we congratulate the Council on their decision to retain the old lamp standards in Brompton Churchyard and to electrify them by means of circular fluorescent tubes.

*St. Alban's Grove.*

The College of Estate Management applied for planning permission to erect an extension which would stand on stilts over the present car park. It was felt that this would be unsightly and mean the loss of a very fine plane tree. The London County Council has rejected this plan, but new plans are being put forward.

*Aubrey Walk.*

The London County Council has granted planning permission for the Metropolitan Water Board to build a 4-storey block of workmen's flats on their ground in Aubrey Walk. Objections to the scheme were made by the Society and many local residents.

*Hereford Square and Rosary Gardens.*

Complaints have been sent to the Society about the proposal to build on a piece of land located between Hereford Square and Rosary Gardens.

Planning permission for the erection of one bungalow was granted in 1957. Application has since been made to build two bungalows on the site, but this has been refused. The one bungalow, for which planning permission has already been given, will, however, be built on the site.

We understand that this has the support of the Minister and therefore there is nothing the Society can do in the matter.



Nos. 380-386 Kensington High Street.

This site, at the corner of Russell Road and Kensington High Street, is now used as a car mart. The Society has 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. Planning permission has now been given for an hotel.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

### *Visits to Places of Interest.*

During the past year visits have been made to "House of St. Barnabas in Soho" (repeat visit); Trinity House (repeat visit); St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill; Waddesdon Manor, Bucks.; Claydon House, Bucks.; Knole, Sevenoaks; Dover House; The Stock Exchange; and Merchant Taylors' Company.

### *Lectures.*

The series of lectures given during the winter included: "Uses of Art," by Mr. C. H. Gibbs-Smith; "Dr. Johnson's England," by Prof. Sir Albert Richardson; "Trees in Towns," by Mr. Peter Sheppard; "English Country Houses open to the Public," by Mr. Alec Clifton Taylor; "Portraits of Reynolds and Gainsborough," by Mr. Charles Johnson.

Some descriptive coloured travel films were shown at the Kensington Town Hall in March by Mr. Matthew Nathan.

In June Mrs. G. Christiansen invited members for sherry and to see the house and garden at 18 Kensington Square.

## TREES

A number of reports reached the Society of impending schemes involving the destruction of trees; these have all been investigated by Alderman F. Carter, Secretary of the Society's Tree Group.

A donation of £10 has been made by the Society to the Kensington Borough Council towards the cost of planting trees in the borough.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD GROUP

I regret to report that the work of the Group is virtually at a standstill. All our most active members have left Kensington and others for various reasons have not been able to do very much. Unfortunately no new members have joined during the past year.

We had hoped 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.

Much very useful work has been done by the Group. There were many gaps in the collection of photographs at the Public Library and the Group has helped to remedy this. Hundreds of photographs of streets and houses have been taken by our members, thus helping to make complete the photographic survey of the borough in the Public Library. It was thought that the Public Library was the most suitable institution in which the photographs of the Group could be safely stored and used to the best advantage.

Some old and rapidly fading photographs in the local collection of the library have been re-photographed.

Prints have been made of old and damaged negatives. One of these negatives proved to be of the beautiful tiled studio in Upper Phillimore Gardens, the home of Frank Dillon in the early part of this century.

The Group has also been responsible for having microfilm copies made of the Court Rolls of Kensington.

It would be a pity if this useful work were to come to an end.

(Sgd.) C. G. Boxall.

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

### *Monday, December 5th.*

Annual General Meeting, Town Hall, Kensington High Street, W.8, at 6 p.m. The Annual General Meeting will be followed by a Lecture by Mr. Richard Edmonds, Chairman of the London County Council Town Planning Committee, entitled "London Skyline," at 6.30 p.m.

### *Saturday, December 10th.*

A visit to the Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly, W.1. Members will be met by Sir Albert Richardson, P.P.R.A., who has very kindly consented to conduct the party over parts of the Academy not open to the general public. Meet at Burlington House at 3 p.m. Tickets required—numbers limited.

### *Saturday, January 21st.*

A visit to St. John's Lutheran Church by kind permission of Dr. J. Taul, Chairman of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain. The Pastor, the Rev. William E. Wegener, will graciously receive members and tell the story of refugees who were invited by the Government to begin a new life in this country. They brought their churches with them and are now being integrated into British life. St. John's, with a membership including fifteen nationalities, is an example of the work the Lutheran Council is doing throughout the United Kingdom to serve these people in their own faith. Meet at No. 8 Collingham Gardens, S.W.5, at 3 p.m. Tickets required—numbers limited.

*Saturday, February 11th.*

A visit to the Armenian Church by kind permission of the Vicar, the Rev. Bessak Toumayan, who will graciously receive members and give a talk about the work of the church and show some of the vestments. Meet at the Armenian Church, Iverna Gardens, W.8, at 2.30 p.m.

*Saturday, March 25th.*

A visit to the Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.2. Meet at the main entrance at 2.30 p.m.

*Friday, April 28th.*

A visit to the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens, Wisley. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1.30 p.m. Tickets 12s. 6d., including coach, tea and entrance fee. Numbers limited.

*Friday, May 12th.*

Coach trip to Ken Wood via Hampstead Garden Suburb and Lutyens Civic Centre. Tickets 7s. 6d., including coach and tea. Numbers limited.

#### KENSINGTON SOCIETY NOTES

Please note that subscriptions for the year 1960-61 were due on October 1st.

Extra copies of the Annual Report, 1959-60, 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, but tickets may be passed on to a non-member. 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.

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

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.

#### *Plaques.*

The London County Council has put up plaques commemorating the residence of Sir Leslie Stephens and Viscount Allenby as well as one on Aubrey House, noting it was the site of Kensington Wells and the residence of Lady Mary Coke and others.

A proposal to put a plaque on the house in Earls Terrace where Walter Pater lived was not proceeded with because the landlords would not grant permission.

There are now about 40 plaques in the Borough of Kensington.

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

#### *Christmas Cards.*

A number of cards of Kensington Palace are left from last year; these are for sale—price 4d. each.

The new card, see frontispiece, price 6d. each.

#### *Holland Park School Prize.*

This year the prize has been won by Thomas Megas with an essay entitled "The Earl of Holland."

The essay is printed in full on pages 36-37 of this Report. The Society offers its congratulations to the winner.

#### OBITUARY

Mr. H. Clifford Smith, formerly Keeper of the Department of Woodwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum, died in February, 1960, at the age of 83.

He was a founder member of the Society and served on the Council from its foundation. Many of our members will long remember the lecture he gave to the Society on "Buckingham Palace." Mr. Clifford Smith reported to the Society the condition of the unique monument by Sir John Soane in St. Mary Abbots churchyard. Time and exposure had worn away the base, the sides had fallen apart, and the monument was in such a bad state of repair that it was liable to collapse at any time. The matter was discussed by the Committee and it was decided that the Society should be responsible for its repair, which was completed in October, 1953.

Mr. Clifford Smith was a specialist in the study of old English furniture, but he was also a writer of wide historical and antiquarian knowledge on the decorative arts in general, with a special turn for the human side of the subject as reflected in manners and customs.

Outside of his museum work he was on the governing bodies of several places of historical interest, including Sulgrave Manor, and Dr. Johnson's House in Gough Square. He was a member of the Committee of the National Art-Collection Fund and for some time a member of the executive committee of the Georgian Group.



An attractive shyness and hesitation in his speech was likely to leave strangers in ignorance of his vast stores of widely assorted knowledge. He always took an enthusiastic interest in the history of Kensington and was ever ready to give the Society the benefit of his great knowledge and experience.

Report of the Proceedings at a

**PUBLIC MEETING**

*to discuss the proposed scheme of redevelopment of  
Kensington Church Street and Kensington High Street*  
held at

**Kensington Town Hall**

on Monday, November 30th, 1959

**THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT ESHER, G.B.E.,**  
*President*

In the Chair

THE CHAIRMAN: For some years now I have been the President of the Kensington Society, and for a much greater number of years I have been the President of the London Society, and therefore I am much experienced in the depressing world of amenity. I have been driven to the conclusion that the essential character of the town is being rapidly destroyed. That character survived the miseries of the war but is not surviving the prosperity of peace.

Unlike Paris, London never had a centralised design, but it had bits and pieces of infinite charm—the squares of London with their ancient plane trees and air of intimate residential life; squares like Bedford Square still remain but they are gradually being spoiled. Very little of the beauty of Berkeley Square or St. James's is left; and the long rearguard action that has been fought for the preservation of Kensington Square may easily, even at this late date, be lost.

Only yesterday I heard that the Convent in Kensington Square is applying to erect a 9-storey hostel in the garden behind No. 20—so out of scale to the rest of the Square that the residential amenity of those who live there will be lost.

There is no doubt that if you want to keep anything of value standing in this city—even things of such conspicuous merit as Carlton House Terrace or the splendid layout of Regent's Park—you have to fight every inch of the way against the commercial money-makers backed by their political supporters.

I remember when I was young the beautiful curve of Regent Street, arcaded, as it was then, like the Rue de Rivoli; and I remember, also, the great houses—Devonshire House, Dorchester House, Chesterfield House—which have all been pulled down and are gone forever. Every day London grows to look like any one of the 100 forgotten towns of the United States.



Surely it is our duty to stop the insidious process of this degradation. We know that what made London unique were the little urban centres, each one different in its appeal, quiet pools of residential life, elegant without being grand, gay with the intimate life of quite unimportant people. I know a man who once said he never wanted to move more than a quarter of a mile from the Bayswater Road; but that was before those noble Victorian squares had been pulled down and destroyed by the Ecclesiastical Commission.

Those places were well known to you all, fascinating little towns, each having a life of their own within this enormous city; and it is places like Bloomsbury, Mayfair, Chelsea and, above all, Kensington, which we are here this afternoon to try to preserve. A great deal of Old Kensington remains. There is no doubt that the attack on its identity is continuous. Only this week the Victorian Society were informed that the charming houses in Melbury Road and Holland Park Road were to be demolished.

The useful word "development" covers the process of making every block of flats and every office building look like every other one, with the generalised look of a new town in Minnesota. Now they propose to dwarf the spire of St. Mary Abbots, the central feature of Kensington life. Lip-service, of course, is paid to higher standards. The Minister of Housing spoke at Kew Bridge last week. He said he wanted offices to be built now in the suburbs, not in the centre of London. The Borough Council of Kensington asserted last March that it had been their consistent policy to oppose the intrusion of office development into the Borough; but it is not what officials say, but what they do, that matters.

In spite of these noble sentiments they are going to erect an office building of 23 storeys that will be 25 feet higher than the spire of St. Mary Abbots. Clearly, the architect has given no consideration whatever to scale. Perhaps he was so interested in his own plan (as architects are apt to be) that he forgot that St. Mary Abbots was there, a landmark for many a mile over London and held in great affection by citizens of this Borough.

We are here to oppose (I hope) and to protest (I hope) against this barbarous proposal and we have here speakers who will make clear to you the strength and importance of our case.

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF KENSINGTON: After we have seen those pictures I do not think many words are necessary. I speak as a resident of the Borough, like many others, but especially for the Church, which concerns all of us very much. It has been there for centuries as the focus of Kensington, as it still is. It is a noble building and really needs more open space around it.

The effect of the proposed office block would be to constrict the landscape quite fantastically. I would draw your attention specifically to the painting on show of the view from Kensington Gardens shown with a piece of paper the size (to scale) of the office

block, completely obscuring the spire of St. Mary Abbots. It seems to me that that will destroy one of the characteristic beauties of Kensington, and one which marks it in our minds.

I wish to endorse the Chairman's remarks about the building of offices. He mentioned what had been said by the Minister of Housing. These were his actual words:

"We do not want to see all the new office buildings erected in Central London. We want them to spring up more and more on the outskirts of London, or way out beyond the Green Belt and elsewhere."

This proposal is a flat contradiction of such an aspiration and in the increase of traffic and all that is entailed by an enormous office block there will be an additional enemy to the present amenities of Kensington.

We have ourselves benefited by the widening of the road opposite St. Mary Abbots, through the generosity of Messrs. John Barker and others; and it seems to me that if this scheme goes through it will destroy what we have gained and will add another, most lamentable, feature to the High Street. Therefore, I share your hope that this meeting will not only protest but make its voice heard. In the Church when we wish to make any alteration to a church or churchyard we have to place a citation on the door of the church, stating our intention, so that people, if they wish, can object to our proposals. We have not that facility here but we can make our voice heard in no uncertain way and thus affect the development which we all, I am sure, deplore. (*Applause.*)

LADY PEPLER (London County Council): There is not a great deal that I can say after you have seen those pictures and heard what Lord Esher and the Bishop of Kensington have so admirably and vividly put to you. I should like to become full of imagination and unpractical irresponsibility and say that as far as I am concerned it would be lovely if we could have no building at all on that site, if we could throw it open to the corner of Church Street on either side by pulling down the frontage as far as the Gardens on one side and the Town Hall on the other, so that we had the red church of St. Mary Abbots on the left and, on the right, the lovely houses in their garden setting of Kensington Palace Gardens; and beyond the Gardens, the old Palace, which otherwise we can never see from a distance. I feel that it is an opportunity lost, but then we always lose our opportunities and I have no doubt whatever that we shall lose this one.

To become a little more practicable, it seems that there are about four points of view which, no doubt, speakers coming after me will elaborate. There is first the question raised by the Bishop, the question of Tower versus Spire. Everywhere one goes—and this was a favourite concern of my late husband, a great town planner—one sees Mammon triumphing over the spire which was intended to be, and is, a tribute to God.

Before the Shell Building appeared on the South Bank one could see, from the river, between the Festival Hall and County Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral. I once saw a man pointing out to someone from abroad that view of the great Cathedral of St. Paul's. It seems to me that within a few years' time someone similarly may say to a visitor from abroad: "That is the building of the great god Shell who moves the world."

Now that is to happen in Kensington. Commerce, the god of Gain on the commercial side, is towering obtrusively above the spire.

Next, there is the question of congestion. I cannot think why, instead of seizing opportunities to clear out the congestion where there is heavy traffic, and everyone is crowded on the streets, they proceed, as in Knightsbridge and now in Kensington, to make even worse congestion. I know perfectly well that we are told there is not much more office accommodation on the site than there was before, but nevertheless that is the impression that is given; and we want to have not more but less.

Thirdly, there is the question of traffic. If my own idealistic scheme could be adopted what clear roads we could have at this junction which forms the centre of Kensington. Finally, there are aesthetics and appearance. May I say that apart from anything else it does not seem to me that these huge 23-storey blocks are typical of our national make-up. I have no basic objection to a high tower here and there but we are getting too many.

Lord Esher used the word "insidious." It is insidious because the standard of height immediately becomes higher. At one time we thought that the height of the Park Lane buildings was huge compared with that of the old houses; but now that is a low standard. That is to be the basic form of the Knightsbridge development.

We are not a big country like the United States. We do not have huge trees and fields. We have small houses. We do not talk big or show off; yet here, in these towering blocks, we are showing off, we are talking big. It is braggadocio, bravado development—and it is not suited to us. We shall not like to live with it. I feel sure that those buildings will very soon become an eyesore even to those who may like them to begin with.

It is wonderful to see so many people here to-night. I am and have always been convinced of the force of public opinion. I am sure that every good thing that gets done, or every bad thing that is prevented, comes about through strong public opinion; and I am glad to see that that is still so in this country, as it has always been in my lifetime. I hope that it will continue to be so; and therefore it is encouraging to feel that there are so many here to-night who feel strongly on this subject. (*Applause.*)

MR. BRANDON JONES: As an architect I always feel happier sketching, with a pencil in my hand, than when I am making a speech or arguing. That is because my profession is concerned largely with visual things as well as financial things. But I am

afraid that in London nowadays the financial side has got the upper hand and the aesthetic results are going to be disastrous if the situation is not brought under control.

This particular development is merely one of money and the really worrying thing is that all these development projects are taken on gaily, one at a time, and decisions are made on them. Papers are looked at by various technical officers of the different public bodies and go to the Fine Art Commission and so on; and modifications may be made here and there.

I believe that this particular scheme started with the highest part of the block at the Kensington Gardens end of the site but those who look after the Gardens pushed it back and then, of course, someone felt that it was getting a little too near to the church. So it gets pushed back and fourth and ends up in the middle, and that involves the demolition of a very fine house by Philip Webb in which I take a personal interest.

This is not the kind of thing we ought to be doing in London. If this kind of thing has to be done at all then it should be dealt with as part of a considered scheme. This particular scheme has not yet been approved by the London County Council, and may not be; but we are worried, because you will have seen the peculiar scheme for Piccadilly Circus which was approved by the same people; and one cannot help studying form and wondering whether they have learned anything in the last two or three weeks, having heard what people think of their Piccadilly scheme.

These schemes are taken one at a time and the developers buy land here and there so bringing the total density of the area to some legal figure which is acceptable to the authority. Then a clerk at the Ministry or the L.C.C. checks that and finds that it is legally acceptable and the scheme is then recommended for approval—and so one more such scheme goes through. It is said that such a scheme cannot be fought because it is legal but I know of one case in London recently where in planning building on one area of land a second piece of land was taken into account to achieve the legal density figure.

Here I should like to quote something written by someone from outside London—Professor Rasmussen of Copenhagen:

"The monumental city of antiquity, Peking, is ruined by the intrusion of houses of European type which destroy all the harmony of its plan; and now London, the capital of English civilisation, has caught the infection of continental experiment which is at variance with the whole character of the city. Thus the foolishness of other countries is imported everywhere and at the end of a few years all cities will be equally ugly and equally devoid of individuality."

(*Applause.*) I suggest that the skyscraper form of building is now really *passé*. The first of them were very interesting and exciting, particularly to young architects; but few people go on with them,



In the first place, because there is a great deal of confusion on this, and there was a particular reference to the question of monied interests, political support and so on, I would say that, after all, the London County Council is, at the moment, controlled by a Socialist or Labour Party; and although we may all have our own views about that I do not want to obtrude politics into this matter but we should bear in mind, when considering reference to politicians supporting monied interests, that there is not likely to be much support of that kind forthcoming from the Socialist majority at County Hall.

I would also like to make it plain that although we, as Conservatives, are in a minority at County Hall, and that I speak purely as a Back Bench Member of the Council, I am very glad to say that in fact there is very little Party political division on the Town Planning Committee at County Hall. I would make that point very strongly, as I have made it over and over again. It is one of those Committees on which I am delighted to think the Whips have little effect on either side. We think, speak, and vote, as individuals giving effect, as best we may, to our own views having regard to what we believe to be the views (as far as we can ascertain them) of those whom we represent. That is why a meeting like this is so helpful as it enables us, who represent you, to gauge, to some extent, the feelings of Kensington on the matter. I say "to some extent" because one must be careful not to be led astray by one sector of feeling; and when the application for this development comes before us we shall have to consider very carefully not only the views of organisations such as this but the views of Kensington Borough Council who, after all, you have elected to represent you on such matters as this and who, no doubt, have very good reasons for the views which they will represent to the County Council.

I am not quite sure whether we shall hear any Borough Council viewpoint in the course of the meeting. I see some Borough Council representatives here. I am sorry that they are not on the platform, although doubtless there is a good reason for the fact that they are not. I would like to feel that we were jointly on the platform. I wanted to go into that brief political (though not Party political) background so that you might have some idea of my position and be quite clear that this matter will not be considered at County Hall in any Party spirit. I am quite sure that that will not happen.

I would also like to make clear that this has not yet been considered by the Town Planning Committee. I go further and say my information is that this scheme, as such, will never come before us because of the opposition to it which has already become only too apparent. (*Applause.*) I think this Society can already congratulate itself upon that; but that is not to say that this meeting is unnecessary. Far from it, because undoubtedly other schemes will come forward; and indeed they are being prepared at this

moment. So what this meeting has to do is to make clear its attitude to any development on this site.

I will give you, briefly, my own views on the situation as I see it at the moment, though they are, of course professional views and will be coloured by what I hear from this meeting and those views which will be represented by many other bodies whose views the Planning Committee will take into account—and certainly not least the views of your own Borough Council; indeed, those will be foremost in our mind.

My general views in regard to considering such a scheme as this are that while we must certainly not fossilise Kensington one can go a little too far in that direction, and I suggest that we do not want to see Kensington fossilised but must preserve that which is absolutely priceless. That is my general attitude. Applying that to this particular site I would not go all the way with those who would not like to see a modern form of development; but I would say that what is priceless is the dominating position of the spire to which other speakers have referred, and that absolutely superb view of which we had a slide, showing St. Mary Abbots Church from the Round Pond. I believe that that is one of the really priceless features of London—to see a sunset on a summer's evening from the eastern side of the Round Pond, looking across the Pond to Kensington Palace; and behind, on the left, that gracious spire of St. Mary Abbots Church—that, I feel, is something very splendid which we must preserve at all costs.

Beyond that I would not like to go, because I shall have to consider such scheme as may be submitted in due course. I shall take into account all the views expressed. My concern will be to see that the view to which I have referred is preserved and that we preserve that feeling of the spire of St. Mary Abbots as the centre of Kensington.

MR. IVOR BULMER-THOMAS: There is one special aspect of this matter about which I should like to speak, but as I am the last speaker from the platform I have the opportunity of picking up a few points which have not so far been made in all the excellent speeches we have heard and which, I feel, should be mentioned.

I should like to sandwich what I say between two others. First there is a very important matter to which Miss Scott, Secretary of the Central Council for the Care of Churches (who is in the audience) has drawn attention—the possibility here, by digging deeper foundations, of interfering with the water table around here and possibly bringing about the collapse of St. Mary Abbots. That is no figment of the imagination. There has been a history of trouble with previous churches and we must be thankful that at the moment everything appears stable.

Last week I was in York, where there has been a dispute between the Dean and the City Engineer about whether the disintegration of pinnacles and so on on that Minister has been caused by vibration



—as the Dean alleges—or the force of the wind—as the City Engineer alleges. I was told from a quarter that cannot be ignored that it is more likely that the damage is caused by the sinking of the water table, and that possibly the south side is slowly moving away from the roof. If that is so it would be an immeasurable disaster but it might be something over which we have no control.

Here, however, we do control the situation. Let us see that we do not, by public policy, create a similar situation around this noble church of St. Mary Abbot. It has been said that Kensington was a village; but this part of Kensington still is a village. Our menfolk borrow each other's mowers to trim their lawns, our womenfolk gossip over garden walls. We have our village green in Kensington Gardens. We have our "big house"—Kensington Palace. We have our village "pub"—but do not ask me to name it because already there are far too many people coming to it and leaving their cars outside my door! We have the village blacksmith, who made the excellent railings that you will see in Edwardes Square. We have all the features of village life. We know each other's business around here. Kensington certainly is still a village and we want to preserve that character.

Like all English villages, Kensington is centred around the village church—the parish church. It is the same in almost every village in the land; and the parish church of Kensington is St. Mary Abbot. It has always been, and still is, the natural centre, an architectural centre even to those who have never been inside it. It is the church from which they stay away. Kensington Church is known to all the bus drivers. It is the natural centre of our village.

What will happen if these proposals go through? It means that that centre is destroyed. This proposed 23-storey tower is an aggressive challenge to the spire of the Church of St. Mary Abbot. At the moment we get lovely views. That from the Round Pond is most important. A few days ago I watched a lovely blood-red sunset from there. It is a view which has been painted many times.

Under these proposals the spire, from some viewpoints, will be masked by this great building; and from other viewpoints there will be a challenge by this great tower rising above it. There are many other glorious views of the spire from around here, from Horden Street, Gordon Place and other places. It is reminiscent of the spire of St. Mary Radcliffe, in Bristol and, through that, of St. Mary the Virgin, at Oxford—which I happened to be seeing this afternoon. And do not think that St. Mary Abbot is not magnificent because it was built only in the last century, for it is one of the best in the country. (*Applause.*)

That, then, is the challenge. First, it is architectural bad manners to propose such a challenge so near to this spire. It is the worst type of manners and I cannot understand how anybody

could do it. The place to build a lighthouse is not here in Kensington but on the sea-coast. I would be quite willing to approve it in its natural setting. That is the objection to this proposal that I feel most strongly.

It would destroy the natural architectural centre of our life—which brings me to the last part of my "sandwich." I do not understand what our borough councillors have been doing in this matter. (*Cries of "Hear, Hear!"*) This is not the first occasion of this kind, for time and time again we have had to fight proposals which have been approved by Kensington Borough Council. One of the most recent examples was the proposal to build 40 garages—later reduced to 24—in Edwardes Square which, so far, we have kept unspoiled though it is a very hard fight. Kensington Square has almost gone and if we are not careful Edwardes Square will go as well.

We have been given a form of street lighting which has been seen from John o' Groats to Land's End. I hope to keep it from Edwardes Square, just as it was kept out of St. James's, but it is a hard fight. When one thinks of the excellent lighting in the City of London—which might have been copied—I do not see why we should have the standard form of lighting here in Kensington. It may be our fault. We have not impressed our views upon our councillors; but I hope that this meeting, which I believe is representative of our village, will show Kensington Borough Council that we feel very strongly about these matters; and if we do not achieve satisfaction then some may feel we shall have to make an issue when the next election comes round.

I am a little more optimistic than earlier speakers. I believe that Mr. Vigars is right, and that the present proposals will be killed. I feel certain that the proposal for a 23-storey building will not go through. I have found the L.C.C. pretty good. Their Antiquaries Department is very good and ranks, with Surrey, among the best in the country. Their Town Planning Department is not so good but it is amenable to reason.

I believe that this proposal, when it comes before them, is bound to be killed, but the real danger is when counter-proposals are put forward. Then we have to be vigilant. That is when this Society may be getting tired, perhaps when we are away on holiday or when other bodies are getting weary. That is the real danger point. It is not sufficient just to pass a resolution enthusiastically to-night. We must keep careful watch on any modifications or further proposals put forward.

Let us go out for what Lady Pepler asked. What we need is an open space in that corner. (*Applause.*) This great and wealthy Royal Borough of Kensington can certainly afford it. The loss of rates on the existing buildings would be negligible in comparison with the resulting benefit. Let us go all out to have something really worthy of this ancient Borough of Kensington in this important area. It will be a great improvement to our amenities



and will also be very good from the point of view of traffic, for this is one of the most congested places in London.

Do not let us be content with a negative victory on this. Let us seek a positive gain for Kensington as a result of this struggle. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: Before the discussion starts I will ask Mr. Muller—who will probably be very cautious—to put forward the view of the Kensington Borough Council.

COUNCILLOR C. A. MULLER: I might explain that the reason why I am not sitting on the platform is that I was not invited; but at my own request (which was readily granted by Mrs. Christiansen) I am glad to give you the point of view which I believe has the unanimous support of both Parties on Kensington Borough Council. As I only had the invitation a few days ago, and had already accepted another invitation for eight o'clock to-night, to attend another meeting, may I apologise for the fact that I shall be unable to stay to hear all that is said to-night; but I shall hear of that in due course.

I do not come here in a contrite spirit but firmly in favour of this scheme. Whether it goes forward or not is not really the point we are discussing. The scheme which you have seen is one which has been put forward and has been discussed with the architects. I am not an architect. I am neither a frustrated architect nor a town planner. I look at this as a layman, as your representative, and try to interpret your views.

The views which have been expressed represent the views of some 500 people here, but there are many thousands who are not here and whose views may well differ considerably. I will quote what we have said, because we are permanently on record. We have said that we have given particular attention, in our discussions with the architects, to the fact that the height of the proposed tower block, at the western end of Site A, is to be 272 feet and that the building will face St. Mary Abbot's Church spire, which is 264 feet in height.

The photographs do not show the entire spire because in the model the tip of the spire got knocked off. As the two buildings will be of almost the same height the tower block will not overshadow the church building, and we are of the opinion—(*Cries of dissent*)—well, this is a matter of opinion entirely, and I warn you that I have a fairly powerful voice and can make myself heard—but as the two buildings will be of almost the same height the tower block will not overshadow the church building, and we are of the opinion that a reduction in the height of the tower block will adversely affect the development of the site as a whole.

We go on to say that the proposal will provide considerably more residential accommodation. Our policy is clear. We do not want any more office space than is necessary under the law. We have to comply with the law. We should frown on further

office accommodation. There will be a large hotel fronting the Park and it seems to be an excellent development plan.

This Town Hall itself is scheduled for development so one must take the overall picture; and the question of whether the Church of St. Mary Abbot will be surrounded on one side or the other if there is less development is one which will all "come out in the wash." But this is the start of a scheme which will come right across this area.

With regard to what was said by Mr. Bulmer-Thomas, perhaps many of you have not heard of the district surveyor, a government employee. Any development proposal which could affect foundations would have to go through him, and he would give an opinion; so I do not really think that point is relevant. It will be dealt with when the plan is considered in detail.

Why do we favour this block being where it is proposed to put it?—because it is the furthest distance we can get it from the Park. When the question of having a tall block in Kensington arose we said that we did not want to have the Park dominated by a tall block.

It is no good referring back to the past, as the Chairman did. We must look to the future, and we look for constructive ideas on how to develop this area. This land is fabulously valuable. I support the private enterprise developers 100 per cent. It means more road space, wider spaces generally, and perhaps bringing in even a part of the barracks.

I thank you for your kind hearing. All views are welcome. We in the Borough Council are amateurs on this and I hope you will at least respect me, if though you are unable to accept what I say.

MISS GANDELL: Some people are pleased with the development proposal except for the block of offices. Many will be horrified that the Council should have given assent to this, as an indication of the greed and power of Mammon against the beautiful and spiritual.

MR. G. MITCHELL (Kensington Architectural Group): Speaking on behalf of the Kensington Architectural Group, which includes mainly architects, with a good number of planners and twelve laymen, may I say we feel that there are a great many points which we could make with regard to the redevelopment of this site. These points would be in conformity with much that has come from the platform, and may be said by others, with regard to the affection felt locally for the church, its scale and the historic houses around it, the siting of high blocks in relation to the tower and the park, Philip Webb's house, the question of office building in Kensington and the transportation of employees, and so on.

I have no doubt that individual members of the Group, and others, will raise these points but I want, on behalf of the Group, to limit myself to the points which we consider more important than any others, and to say that we welcome redevelopment of this



site providing it really contributes towards the segregation of pedestrians and vehicles, and also towards the solution of the traffic problem. We see, in redevelopment, the only chance—but a splendid chance—to do something about these two problems.

The separation of pedestrians from vehicles is made necessary by siting shops on both sides of the High Street which, owing to traffic requirements, is to be widened and therefore made more difficult for people to cross. We therefore urge that the footways and new shop fronts in any redevelopment should be raised to first floor level, so freeing the ground level for traffic, parking, loading and stores. Owing to the rising ground of Church Street, this pedestrian level could be extended to the Barracks where the first floor level hits natural ground level. It could extend all the way along the 750 feet frontage of the north side of the High Street, and foot bridges across the High Street could link it with the Barkers first floor.

The extension of the pedestrian way past Barkers and Derry & Toms to link up with the escalators in Kensington High Street would be the logical development of such a pedestrian system. The chances of developing and extending this pedestrian system are, of course, very real. The south side of the High Street opposite the site is due for widening to continue the Barker set-back line, and with the completion of the new library the development of the town hall site cannot be far away.

The traffic problem exists on account of the T-Junction of two heavily-trafficked routes. Both are lined with shops and carry a considerable amount of through traffic, much of which turns right across the flow of traffic on the second route.

The problem might be eased, certainly only temporarily, by general widening but this would not improve the lot of the pedestrians; nor would it overcome the confusion caused by traffic turning right. There may, of course, be long-term proposals to take the traffic out of the area altogether; however, we do not know of these and we feel that we must plan for an ever-increasing amount of traffic in these two streets, and that a much more far-reaching solution must be found. It is at this particular moment of redevelopment that such a solution could be found.

One of the ways in which we think this could be done is by providing an under-pass, or sunken road, to give an uninterrupted flow for cars, taxis and light commercial vans travelling in an east-west direction. Buses and heavy lorries would continue to use the through-route on existing ground level.

Right turning traffic from, or going up, Church Street would then turn across a bridge which would cross at the centre of this under-pass. This suggests the realignment of the bottom of Church Street, the road being taken through the middle of the redeveloped site and the new buildings being built over it on upper floor levels. Such a realignment would overcome the present objection to Church Street cutting the site off from the main shopping centre west of

Church Street; and it would then be possible to provide the old centre of Kensington associated with St. Mary Abbot's Church and Holland Street with a more sympathetic setting.

If this opportunity is taken now there will be a prospect of achieving safe and pleasant shopping on the upper level with traffic circulating at ground level and free from pedestrian hazards. This is immediately possible and would make a vital contribution to a solution at this dangerous junction. But, more important, the principle is capable of being extended in the future to link up with the redevelopment on the south side as well as on the present Town Hall site. In this way we see the whole High Street being spanned by first floor foot bridges, some of which could be widened into large platforms and the whole pedestrian world of Kensington High Street would move upstairs. In short, we aim for the creation of a first floor pedestrian precinct.

We cannot afford to miss the opportunity to get the climate right for such a development to grow and prosper. If we miss it now, the opportunity will not arise again in our lifetime. But within a few years traffic may be expected to double and the High Street as a whole will cease to be tolerable as a shopping centre; trade will decline and Kensington will have a dead centre.

This is why our Group are so concerned, and we strongly urge that any development should provide for separate pedestrian circulation to the High Street shops, and should provide for a far-sighted solution to the traffic problem at the T-junction.

COUNCILLOR MRS. PAUL: Perhaps as Councillor Muller has left I may just say that the Borough Council asked the architects, when they interviewed them, if they would set the tower block back from the corner of St. Mary Abbot's Church as far as they reasonably could. It does not really make a great deal of difference as far as the discussion is concerned, and he has already given you the other point of view.

The other point is that we asked the architects if they could make some effort to include the Barracks in the scheme. Obviously that will be a big question, as it is Crown land. The answer we were given was neither aye nor no; but that they would try to do so.

MRS. ARTHUR GIBBS: I think many people will be in favour of the proposal which we have just heard; and perhaps we can have a garage and get cars away from outside our doors. That is something which spoils our lovely squares wherever we turn.

COUNCILLOR JOHN A. JOWETT: I am one of your Borough Councillors. I am passionately opposed to the scheme, and I have been on the Council and in Committee at every possible opportunity. I have received support from only one other Councillor—Councillor Morkill.

I strongly urge everyone who feels strongly about this proposal to get after your Councillors, who are elected by you and represent you. If they fail to represent you then you must tell them that you



will vote against them unless they oppose this proposal. It is a beastly, horrible scheme.

Councillor Muller is talking about building for the future. If this is it then I say "God help the future!" (*Applause.*)

MR. H. GANDELL: I now formally move this resolution:

"This meeting, whilst being critical of this Scheme in many points, such as the increased office accommodation, view with consternation the siting and height of the Tower Block in relation to the Church and its immediate surroundings and recommends that the plans should be redesigned accordingly.

(*Applause.*)

THE CHAIRMAN: Will somebody second that?

PREBENDARY ELY (Rector of St. Mary Abbot's Church): I shall be very pleased to second that resolution.

COUNCILLOR THOMAS PONSONBY: I should like to oppose this resolution. I, for one, do not view this proposal with any consternation. I am another member of the Borough Council. We are going to have development on this site and the question is what kind of development will be best from all points of view.

Obviously, if we did away completely with the entire block we raise the general level of the buildings over the whole of the site, because, as we have heard, developers are entitled to some proportion of office space on a site; and if that cannot be done the compensation can run into many hundreds of thousands of pounds. We cannot stop the developers having their entitlement of office accommodation according to the existing office accommodation on the site plus one-tenth.

Re-design of the scheme would have the effect of removing the tower block and generally raising the level of the buildings so that, in effect, we should have a much more monolithic building block on the site. At present we have a proposal for a design which has a certain amount of interest, with the tower block at one end and the hotel at the other; and that tower block, in fact, becomes a fourth tower, with the spire of St. Mary Abbot's and the other two towering buildings which no-one has yet mentioned—the great stores opposite.

Therefore I would oppose the resolution which has been moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: The last speaker has been doing the very thing against which Mr. Bulmer-Thomas warned us. He is criticising the next scheme which is coming up. Though he does not approve of this one he thinks the next one will be just as bad.

I think we have covered the ground fairly fully. I know that many people will wish to speak on this resolution but it is now five minutes to eight and therefore I will put this resolution to the meeting. Will those in favour please signify in the usual manner?

Those to the contrary? There are many votes in favour and only eleven to the contrary; so the resolution is carried by an enormous majority.

I hope that it will have effect, if not on Mr. Muller, at any rate on the Borough Council and on the L.C.C.; and if a second scheme is put up which is just as bad as this one I hope I shall be asked to take the Chair at another protest meeting. Thank you.

**ESSAY BY THOMAS MEGAS, PUPIL OF HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL, WINNER OF THE £3 3s. BOOK TOKEN PRIZE**

**THE EARL OF HOLLAND**

Henry Rich, later Earl of Holland, Baron of Kensington, was the second son to the first Earl of Warwick. He was a handsome, well-built man, and was known more for his ability to attract the attentions of the opposite sex than for his diplomatic exploits, though the former did not hinder his advancement up the political ladder, for his looks were a great asset, especially with a King like James I on the throne.

This young man frequently attended court where his charm stood him in good stead. There he met the Duke of Buckingham whose great friend he became. The Duke was one of the most influential men in the country, being chief adviser to James I. The Queen took a liking to him and he became one of her favourites, this attachment being most profitable, for he was able to secure valuable posts in the government.

Rich was elected Member of Parliament for Leicester in 1610 and 1614, after which, with the aid of Buckingham, he entered the diplomatic service. He was very prominent in court life and his ability to make friends made him very popular. About this time he was appointed Captain to the Yeomen of the Guard.

His first connection with Kensington began when he was made Baron Kensington, this title being conferred on him on his marriage to Isabel Cope in 1623. Isabel was Sir Walter Cope's daughter, and it was he who built the house that was to bear his son-in-law's name.

The Baron's first diplomatic mission abroad occurred when he was sent by James I to France with Buckingham to woo Henrietta-Maria, the daughter of the French King, in order to secure a wife for Prince Charles. In this field the Baron excelled himself, but when the political agreement to the marriage needed settling he proved himself inefficient and incapable of obtaining an agreeable settlement. When all the factors to the marriage agreement were finally settled, the Baron returned to find the marriage unpopular in Protestant England.

Nevertheless, the Baron was rewarded for his efforts in France, and, more important, for complying with the Duke of Buckingham's wishes, he was made the Earl of Holland, an Earldom it should be noted without any land attached to the title. It was from this source that Holland House received its name.

Holland was not only an ardent diplomat, courtier and lover, but was also distinguished for his appetite for duelling. Those who quarrelled with him invariably received some hurt in trying

to settle disputes with him; this gained for him a glossy reputation which was soon dimmed by his feeble actions in the Civil War.

Besides such trifles, the Earl vehemently participated in the bitter deadlock that existed between King and Parliament. The cause of this political crisis was the impeachment of Strafford, who was the backbone of Charles' power and policy. Parliament wanted to remove Strafford from the political scene. The Earl saw this as an opportunity for getting rid of an old rival and heartily condemned Strafford even though he had sympathy for the King's cause. Holland thought that he would be elevated to a greater government position than before, but he was quickly disillusioned, when the Civil War broke out. Holland found himself in a precarious position, for he was not certain which cause to support. He tried to find the answer in his strife-torn conscience and eventually decided in favour of Parliament. The loyalty he gave it was short-lived for he went over to the King's side after Edgehill. Holland did not play an important part in the Royalist campaigns, for he was soon trapped by Parliament's forces and after some feeble resistance was captured by them.

Parliament ordered that Holland be put on trial for treason, and was brought to London for this purpose. The Earl defended himself extremely well at his trial but not well enough to avoid the block, his last plea being rejected by a narrow majority. As a result of being sentenced to death, the Earl had all his lands and Holland House confiscated by Parliament, his wife and her numerous children being thrown out of their home.

The Earl met his death as if life was only an interlude on an eternal journey. Before dying in 1648 he alluded to the King, who had been executed on the same spot some weeks before.

Holland House meanwhile opened its doors to his executioners. Fairfax and his family resided there, and even Cromwell himself visited the house. Eventually Holland's wife came back from exile and moved back into Holland House, where she relived the memories of her life with the Earl who was now buried in Kensington Church. The Earl died but his name lived on in a house that was to become a gem in our heritage.



## 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 October 1st 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 1959-60

1958 to 59		INCOME		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	1958 to 59		EXPENDITURE		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
£		Balance at 1st October, 1959,				£		London Meetings—			
398		brought forward .. .. .			370 19 4	74		Hire of Halls, for Annual General Meetings,			
								Lectures and Public Meetings .. .. .		51 1 8	
		Subscriptions—						Cost of Public Meetings .. .. .		80 13 9	
21		Life Subscriptions .. .. .		31 10 0				Printing, Typing and Stationery other than			
329		Annual Subscriptions .. .. .		357 13 6	389 3 6	309		Public Meetings .. .. .		183 4 4	
								Postages and Telephone Calls other than			
		Other Income—						Public Meetings .. .. .		38 7 5	
19		Profit on Sale of Christmas Cards .. .. .		18 15 5		3		Bank Charges and Cheque Books .. .. .		4 3 0	
9		Interest on Bank Deposit Account .. .. .		1 10 5				Planting Trees .. .. .		10 0 0	
—		Interest on Post Office Savings Bank Account		3 16 2		11		Donations .. .. .		3 3 0	
9		Coach Visits—Excess of Income over Expen-		— — —		7		Office Equipment .. .. .		— — —	
		diture .. .. .		— — —		10		Sundry Expenses .. .. .		5 4 0	
					24 2 0					375 17 2	
								Coach Visits—			
								Net Cost of Hire, Meals, etc... .. .		21 19 0	
								Balances at 30th September, 1960			
								carried forward—			
						16		Martins Bank, Limited .. .. .		6 8 8	
								Post Office Savings Bank			
								Accounts—			
						304		Life Subscriptions .. .. .		£328 12 6	
						51		Prize Fund.. .. .		51 7 6	
										380 0 0	
										386 8 8	
£785					£784 4 10	£785				£784 4 10	

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

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

7th October, 1960.

WRIGHT, STEVENS & LLOYD,

Chartered Accountants.

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.

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