

HIGH STREET, KENSINGTON, 1893.

# The Kensington Society

ANNUAL REPORT 1965-66

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

# Annual Report

## 1965-66



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## Annual General Meeting

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society was held on 5th May, 1966 at 5.30 p.m. in the Orangery, Holland Park.

Lord Hurcomb, G.C.B., K.B.E., Vice-President of the Society was in the Chair.

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

Mr. Gandell, Chairman of the Executive Committee, moved the adoption of the Report. He warmly welcomed Lord Hurcomb as Chairman, at the same time expressing gratitude to Mrs. Christiansen, the Honorary Secretary, for all she had done during the year and was continuing to do for the Society. He also expressed appreciation to Miss Balian for her assistance. He felt that this year's Report was the most interesting and important one since the Society was founded, containing as it did the historical survey of the Borough which had been received by the Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council with appreciation. The adoption of the Report was seconded by Miss Dunn and carried unanimously.

The adoption of the accounts and the change of date of the Financial Year from 1st October—30th September to 1st January—31st December (Rule 4 & 9) was moved by the Honorary Treasurer Mr. Keon Hughes. Mr. Hughes said the Life Subscription had remained the same since the Society was founded and that owing to the increase in costs of printing etc. it was felt that the Life Subscription should be increased to £15 15s. 0d. This was seconded by Mrs. McKean and carried unanimously.

The re-election of Officers and Executive Committee was moved by Miss Balian, seconded by Miss Bright Ashford and carried unanimously.

The Meeting was followed by a talk given by Mr. J. C. Kennedy of the Greater London Council Parks & Gardens Department entitled 'The development of Holland Park since 1954.'

Lord Hurcomb moved a vote of thanks to the Honorary Secretary and to the speaker.

### CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

At the first Executive Committee Meeting after the Annual General Meeting, Mr. H. Gandell was elected Chairman and Dr. Pasmore Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee.

MR. BOXALL

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Mr. Boxall, we are very conscious of the great debt the Society owes him.

Mr. Boxall was instrumental in the foundation of the Society in 1953. From 1950-1953 Mrs. Flory Macky and Mrs. Christiansen made a concerted effort to preserve Felday House and Little House in Young Street, by writing to the Minister of Housing and Local Government, the Georgian Group, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings etc., and as can be seen at the present time, without success. At this time Mr. W. Begley, an architect from the Historical Buildings Department of the L.C.C., and now a member of the Council of the Kensington Society, visited Kensington Square,—the battle for the preservation of the houses in Young Street and of Kensington Square, the latter of which had extended over many years, was discussed. Mr. Begley suggested the formation of a Local Society to enable residents to act jointly instead of individually. Through Mr. Begley, Mr. Boxall's help was enlisted. The latter was most enthusiastic and within hours produced a list of residents in the Borough who might be interested. He knew Dr. Pasmore well and agreed to see him, subsequently we all met, and on 17th March, 1953 a meeting was held at 18 Kensington Square under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pasmore, and the Society was founded.

From that day Mr. Boxall worked untiringly for the Society. Any part of the Borough, however remote or unknown to other members of the Executive Committee, of which he was a member, Mr. Boxall knew intimately. He was most vigilant in his search for historical records of the Borough, and much of the comprehensive collection at the Public Library was collected by Mr. Boxall and his predecessor.

From 1953 until 1962 he helped considerably with the secretarial work and with producing the Annual Report. He never missed any of the activities of the Society, but was, in his quiet way in the background, a tower of strength.

In May 1960 he retired from the Kensington Reference Library after 42 years service and in 1962 owing to the tremendous increase in his rent he was forced to leave his flat, and because he was unable to find anywhere to live in the borough, he moved to Herne Bay; but in spite of this move he still continued to work for the Society.

Although he wrote a number of articles about Kensington and helped others in their research, it is sad to think, partly owing to ill health during the later years of his life, that he was not able to complete his contribution to the history of the borough by writing the book so many people wanted him to write.

The Kensington Society and indeed Kensington, has lost a devoted friend.

LORD HURCOMB, G.C.B., K.B.E. VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY

Lord Hurcomb's lecture on 'Birds in Kensington' should have appeared in our last Annual Report; owing to the inclusion in the Report of the Survey on Areas of Special Character in Kensington, and incorporating the map of Kensington, we did not have the space. We are glad to include the lecture in this Report. Lord Hurcomb is President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. He introduced and was successful in passing through the House of Lords for the second time his Protection of Birds Bill; this is now before the House of Commons, where it has already received a second reading without opposition.

THE LADY STOCKS

We were delighted to offer our congratulations to our Vice-President and member of the Executive Committee on receiving one of the highest awards in the New Year Honours List in becoming a Life Peeress.

Lady Stocks has been a member of the Kensington Society since its foundation and a Vice-President since 1960; she has lived and worked in Kensington most of her life and is keenly interested in every aspect of Kensington Life.

WINDOW BOX AWARD

We have £31 6s. 0d. in our window box award account which was mostly the outcome of the sale of marmalade and tea in the garden of 18 Kensington Square—we shall be glad to receive any donations towards this fund.

Twenty plaques were awarded to residents for window boxes of outstanding merit. These were presented by H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone. The window boxes were judged by the Brighter Kensington judges in June. We are grateful to the Honorary Secretary Mr. W. G. Thom for allowing us to take part in this scheme and for arranging for the window boxes to be judged. We hope to make this award each year.

A similar plaque award scheme is operated in the City of London by the Worshipful Company of Gardeners; these plaques can be seen on the fronts of window boxes of many business premises in the city.

The Society would like to extend this award; the Honorary Secretary will be glad to have her attention drawn to any window box which might be considered for a plaque. The plaques are made of painted aluminium and can easily be fixed to the fronts of window boxes—we hope to see many throughout the borough.

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

For many years the Society has been anxious to form a local History Group, whose main objects would be for members interested in historical research to meet and discuss their work, and possibly make an intensive study of some historical aspects of the Borough. Mr. Brian Curle, who is in charge of the Local History Collection of the Public Reference Library, has agreed to co-ordinate the activities of such a group. It is hoped that the Group will have regular meetings at not too frequent intervals. A preliminary meeting will be held at 18 Kensington Square in the autumn. Would members interested, including those who have written before, please get in touch with the Honorary Secretary who will provide further details.

#### PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

This Group formed some years ago by Mr. Boxall did some very valuable work, many photographs of streets were taken by members, thus helping to make the photographic survey of the borough more complete; some old and rapidly fading photographs in the local collection at the Library were re-photographed. The Group was also responsible for having micro film copies made of the Court Rolls of Kensington.

In view of the rapidly changing scene of Kensington it would be a pity if this useful work should come to an end. The Honorary Secretary would be very glad to hear from any member who would like to resuscitate and take charge of this Group and from any members who would like to form part of the Group.

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#### KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA TOWN PLANNING DEPARTMENT

We would like to record our appreciation to the Town Planning Department of the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council for the co-operation we have had during the past year. We have received frequent lists of planning applications awaiting the determination by the Council. We have been asked for our observations in numbers of cases, and we have been invited to attend meetings on several occasions. The officers in the Town Planning Department have been very helpful in showing plans and explaining the applications. We welcome this co-operation with the Council.

## The Town Planning Exhibition

At the kind invitation of the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council, the Kensington Society mounted an exhibit at the Town Planning Exhibition held at the Chelsea Town Hall from the 28th October to the 5th November 1966.

The exhibit was aimed primarily at showing the work of the Society, and the four screens provided by the Council showed photographs chosen by the Society under three main headings.

The first one, on 'environment', made the point that of all the older inner London suburbs, Kensington was still largely inhabited by the social groups for which it was originally built, and in consequence was still a particularly attractive district in which to live. This environment should therefore be protected against alteration and encroachment from traffic and change of use.

The second section showed individual buildings and groups, and emphasised that Kensington possesses a unique number of domestic buildings of first-class architectural quality, mostly built during the nineteenth century. These are combined into groups of great town planning interest and charm, and the Society urged that much more restraint and consideration should be exercised before these were allowed to be swept away.

The third section, on traffic, dealt with the Society's ever growing concern over the increasing internal and through traffic and its adverse effect on environment.

#### ENVIRONMENT AND MOTOR TRAFFIC IN KENSINGTON

In view of the increasing number of occasions upon which the Society has in recent months had to look at threats to amenity from motor traffic, it was decided to investigate the whole problem as it now exists, and is likely to develop, and suggest lines of action for the responsible authorities to pursue.

A small Subcommittee was set up under the Chairmanship of Mr. Geoffrey Dearbergh. The Report on Environment and Motor Traffic in Kensington is the result of the investigations and the suggestions that this Committee was prompted to put forward. Although much of the material on which the Report is based is to be found elsewhere and many of the suggestions are in no sense original, it is hoped that the collection of material relating to Kensington in one document, and its examination from the particular standpoint of amenity and environment, will be a help in the formulation of policies and the taking of decisions within this sphere in the future.

Copies of the full Report have been sent to the Minister of Transport, The Chief Architect, the Greater London Council, The Chairman of Traffic and Highways Committee and other departments of the Greater London Council, and a number of copies have been sent to the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council. The following letter was received from Mr. Clinch, the Borough Engineer and Surveyor:

Dear Mrs. Christiansen,

#### Environment and Motor Traffic in Kensington

I am grateful to you for your letter of the 20th January with its very interesting enclosures.

I regard the problem of protecting the residential environment from the motor car as among the most urgent facing the Royal Borough, and the subject will certainly dominate the local development plan. Your study is, therefore, very pertinent to the studies now being undertaken in the Department, and I am sure my Chairman and members of the Planning Committee will be most grateful for the initiative you have taken.

I have already forwarded the copies to Councillor Mrs. Paul and Councillor Brew, and the two spare copies which you so thoughtfully enclosed are being concurrently studied in my Traffic Engineering and Development Planning Sections.

I, personally, am studying my copy with deep interest and I will be writing you again.

Yours sincerely,

F. H. CLINCH,  
Borough Surveyor.

The Council has kindly arranged to meet members of the Sub-Committee concerned in the preparation of this Report; this meeting has not yet been held. We hope that the Council will find the Report useful. The full cost of producing it is not yet to hand, but printing and duplicating is expensive. An abridged version appears on page 20. The full Report can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary price 5/- plus 1/- postage.

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# Civic Amenities Bill

10 The Society was delighted to welcome Mr. Duncan Sandys's Civic Amenities Bill which has entered its committee stage; it is hoped it will receive Royal Assent by midsummer. The Bill once enacted will come into force with the minimum delay. The following is the Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill.

## PART I

### PRESERVATION OF AREAS AND BUILDINGS OF ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

Whereas the existing law provides procedure for the preservation of buildings or groups of buildings which are of special architectural or historic interest, Clause 1 of this Bill extends special protection to areas surrounding such buildings.

Clauses 2 to 6 tighten up and improve the arrangements for the protection of buildings of architectural or historic interest and increase the penalties for contravening a building preservation order and deal with certain other matters connected therewith.

## PART II

### PRESERVATION AND PLANTING OF TREES

Clauses 7 to 9 place upon local authorities a duty to ensure that, when granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made for the preservation and planting of trees and, when necessary, their replacement. Owners of trees in respect of which a preservation order has been made are, unless otherwise authorised, to be required to replace such trees when necessary.

Clause 10 increases the penalties for felling or wilfully destroying a tree in contravention of a tree preservation order.

## PART III

### DISPOSAL OF VEHICLES AND RUBBISH

Clause 11 makes it an offence to abandon a vehicle or deposit rubbish on a highway or on private land without the consent of the owner.

Clause 12 places upon refuse collection authorities a duty to remove abandoned vehicles on public highways or adjacent land, and empowers them to dispose of them after a reasonable interval and with safeguards for the owners.

Clause 13 somewhat extends the powers of refuse collection authorities to remove rubbish.

Clause 14 requires refuse disposal authorities to appoint suitable places where unwanted vehicles and rubbish may be deposited.

Clause 15 empowers local authorities to act jointly for the purposes of this Part of the Bill.

The following memorandum was sent to the appropriate Committee through the Kensington member of Parliament Mr. William Roots, Q.C.

'The Kensington Society welcomes the Civic Amenities Bill, in particular its provision for strengthening the penalties for the contravention of Building Preservation Orders, always provided that prosecution in serious cases is by way of indictment, so that the penalty of up to 21 months imprisonment or an unlimited fine can be imposed.

We would like to make the following suggestions:—

1. That the designation of *areas* of special architectural or historic interest should be undertaken directly by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government as in the case of individual buildings.
2. Buildings, other than churches, occupied or used for ecclesiastical purposes should not be exempt from Building Preservation Orders.'

# Preservation in Kensington

IAN GRANT

Members may be aware that the lists of buildings of architectural or historic interest for Kensington, prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, leave much to be desired.

They were drawn up some years ago at a time when Victorian buildings were not generally considered suitable for inclusion, and in consequence the nineteenth century estate developments which are one of the major assets of the Borough are scarcely represented.

The Greater London Council, which has shown itself well aware of these deficiencies, approached the Borough Council in May 1965 expressing the view that certain areas of North Kensington including the Ladbroke Estate and much of the Norland neighbourhood are areas of special interest where a planning policy should be evolved to conserve a character which arises primarily from the street plans, garden layouts and architectural forms of the estate developments of the 1840s and 1850s.

Happily the Borough Council showed itself in enthusiastic agreement with the G.L.C. both as to the need for a conservation policy and the necessity to extend the protection of 'listing' to large numbers of houses in these areas.

At this point Mr. F. H. Clinch, the Borough Surveyor, wrote to the Kensington Society to invite comments on a suggested policy for the areas, consisting broadly of the following points:—

1. The extension of the lists of buildings of architectural or historic interest.
2. The preservation of landscape and gardens.
3. The restriction of redevelopment (where allowed at all) by:—
  - (a) Ensuring that development takes place in terms of comprehensive schemes only.
  - (b) Excluding high buildings.
  - (c) Insisting on a high standard of design.
  - (d) The segregation of through traffic from the protected areas.

The Society was invited to comment on a schedule of buildings proposed as additions to the Ministry's lists.

The Society welcomed the policy headings proposed by the Council and accepted gratefully the opportunity to comment on the schedule of buildings which, as presented, showed that a considerable measure of agreement had already been reached between the G.L.C. and the Borough Council.

An exhaustive examination of the buildings in the areas was made on behalf of the Society, as a result of which some marginal reassessments were suggested, but to a very large degree the Society's advisers found themselves in agreement with the two authorities as to what should be included.

The principal matter pursued by the Society was thus not in respect of the contents of the schedule as such, but rather to point out the anomalies generated by the Ministry's so-called 'Supplementary list' of historic buildings. Both the Councils were suggesting that many of the buildings in the Ladbroke and Norland estates should be included in this supplementary list.

The Society's advisers on the other hand, feel strongly that this list which has no statutory implications is of little practical value and should be abandoned.

Consequently the Society has put forward the view that the additional buildings proposed for listing should be included in the statutory list under Section 32 of the Town and Country Planning Act—which would at least ensure that they may not be demolished or altered without written notice being given to the planning authorities and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

It now rests with the Ministry to give effect to the listing proposals and with the Borough Council and the G.L.C. to be ready to apply the suggested planning policy with firmness and to make building preservation orders.

Members will no doubt watch these efforts with close attention and will certainly be grateful to Mr. Clinch for bringing the Society into the picture right at the outset. It is hoped that further parts of Kensington will now be considered in the same way.

## Selection of cases dealt with

### CAR PARKS UNDER SQUARE GARDENS AND KENSINGTON GARDENS

#### QUEENS GATE GARDENS

During the year an application for a car park under Queens Gate Gardens was refused by the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council. The Society opposed this, the second, application.

#### CORNWALL GARDENS

Residents in Cornwall Gardens received a notification from the owner of the Square that he proposed to build an underground car park. There was considerable opposition from residents and the Society's help was enlisted. A Residents' Association has been formed and it is hoped that the necessary conditions can be fulfilled so that the K. & C.B.C. can accept the responsibility for the maintenance of the garden under the provisions of the Kensington Improvement Act 1851. The Society would like to see all square gardens in Kensington under the control and management of the Borough Council.

#### NEVERN SQUARE

An application for outline planning permission for the construction of an underground car park was approved by the Council at the beginning of 1966. The Society did not oppose this application, the garden had been very neglected and it appeared from the application that the development would be an improvement, with maintained ornamental garden and with the trees left on the perimeter.

A new application is before the Planning Dept. covering a larger area, more trees are involved in the new plan. The Society has opposed this plan.

### CAR PARKS UNDER KENSINGTON GARDENS

Following the article in the Sunday Times last September concerning a proposal for a car park under Kensington Gardens, the Borough Engineer and Surveyor said the article 'was both premature and misleading. The proprietor of the Royal Garden Hotel, as a newcomer to the area, has been appalled at the chaos resulting from the over use of the streets for parking and has drawn it once more to the attention of my Chairman. We have had private discussions with him and considered an outline scheme he arranged to prepare. In our view the scheme would disturb the amenities of Kensington Gardens over far too long a period and he has not pressed the matter. The very serious car parking problem remains, however, and the subject is still under examination and discussion. Of one thing I can assure you that my Committee would not put forward any scheme in relation to Kensington Gardens unless it was quite satisfied that the amenities of the gardens, which are a precious local asset, could be fully protected.'

SOCIETY'S POLICY WITH REGARD TO CAR PARKS UNDER SQUARE GARDENS,  
PARTICULARLY KENSINGTON GARDENS

The Society is seriously concerned about the increasing threat to square gardens from developers wishing to build underground car parks. It feels that since all these schemes are being undertaken piecemeal by private developers, that it represents only a short-term operation on a problem which requires a national approach; and that the promoters are the financial beneficiaries at the expense of the community at large. Unless, and this seems very unlikely, immediate and complete restriction is placed on street parking the car parks will merely encourage the entry of more cars to central areas, and, increase the present congestion. The construction of the parks must inevitably entail the removal of fine mature trees, amenity will also be lost by the introduction of approach ramps which are practically impossible to resolve architecturally, and by the extra noise created by cars using them. The Society feels most strongly that there are certain squares in Kensington which, either by reason of their high residential desirability, or their fine planting, should be preserved at all costs. The Society was very disturbed to read in the press that Councillor Richard Brew, Chairman of the Works and Highways Committee was reported to have said 'We are looking into the possibility of a number of car parks under squares and we may have quite a scheme going ahead.' It was possible he said to build underground garages which would not affect the area above them.

The Society was very pleased to know that the Minister of Housing and Local Government had sent a directive letter on this matter to the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council. The Minister stated that it would appear that a number of planning applications to provide car parks under London Squares might be expected in the future, and in view of the many complex issues raised, and the need to consider such applications in the context of inner London as a whole, planning authorities should consult the Minister whenever they felt there might be a case for allowing such a development, so that he can decide to call in the plan for his own decision. A letter has been sent by the Society to the Minister welcoming this decision.

95-107 KNIGHTSBRIDGE, 13-15 WILLIAM STREET, 5-7 SEVILLE STREET AND 67-70 LOWNDES SQUARE.

The application for planning permission to redevelop this island site included a 30-storey hotel building, 320 ft. high, with shops, a public restaurant, banqueting and exhibition halls in a three-storey podium, and car parking and loading facilities on three basement floors. Although not in Kensington the views of the Society had been sought. Letters were sent to the Royal Fine Art Commission and the Greater London Council opposing a high building so near the park. The Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council had consulted the Royal Fine Art Commission who were of the opinion that the building would obtrude in a most undesirable way on views from Hyde Park, particularly from the north of the Serpentine, and would also be completely out of scale with Lowndes Square, and as a result destroy its character.

Planning permission was rejected by the Kensington Borough Council. In refusing the application the Council said they would, in general, not be opposed to a high building comprising a hotel and shops on this site, provided it was less highly developed, aesthetically satisfactory, and complied with other planning standards and with the proposed road pattern for the area.

CHEPSTOW VILLAS/PEMBRIDGE VILLAS

An application was before the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council to build a block of eight-storey flats on this site; the Society felt this would be an overdevelopment of the site and opposed the scheme.

KENSINGTON SQUARE

Kensington Square continues to be threatened in one way or another. Members may remember that in our last Annual Report we reported that an application had been made to build two houses in the garden of 14 KENSINGTON SQUARE

This house until 1946 was in residential use. The Minister of Town and Country Planning granted permission on appeal in 1947 for the use to be changed from residential to administrative offices use, and meetings for the Society for Cultural Relations between Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the U.S.S.R.

The house was sold to the National Union of Tailors & Garment Workers in 1962. An application was made by the Union to build two houses and garages in the garden. The Society opposed this application and it was later refused by the Borough Council, but on appeal the Union was given permission for two houses in the garden. The Society feels that the gardens of the houses in Kensington Square are an integral part of the Square and very much regret the Minister's decision.

4, 5, AND 6 KENSINGTON SQUARE

Two applications have been before the Town Planning Authority, one for flats and the other for a hotel. The Society opposed the hotel application.

25A KENSINGTON SQUARE, Building at the rear of 25-29 Kensington Square. In 1963 the Kensington Borough Council was granted permission on appeal to use the first, second and third floors of the building for office accommodation subject to the following conditions:

- 'a. The permission hereby granted shall endure solely for the benefit of the Council of the Royal Borough of Kensington and their successors under the London Government Act 1963, and shall not run with the land; and
- b. the said use shall cease on, or before, 31st December, 1968.'

The Society has recently received a letter from the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council, asking for the Society's observations on a proposal by the Council to use the ground floor of the building to provide temporary additional office space, for traffic wardens, to be employed by the Commissioner of Police. The Council stated that access would be from Derry St. and not Kensington Square.

The Society felt there were no grounds for opposition, providing assurance was given that this was a temporary measure, and, that at the end of the Council's tenancy the office use of the building would terminate.

Kensington Square is primarily a residential Square, many of its buildings are included in the list of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest and also in the Supplementary List compiled by the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

In view of these continuing threats to the Square the Society has asked the Borough Council to consider placing a Preservation Order on the whole Square; we feel would-be developers might then look elsewhere for possible hotel sites.

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#### CHAIN LINK FENCING ROUND KENSINGTON GARDENS

The Society has complained several times during the last year to the Ministry of Works about the condition of the chain fencing from the Broad Walk to the Royal Garden Hotel. The Society was told that the Ministry was conscious of the poor condition of the fencing and that sample panels of fencing had been erected near the Broad Walk to compare their respective merits. The Society was appalled at the type of fencing envisaged. The Royal Fine Art Commission and individual Commissioners were approached. We are glad to learn that the Ministry has now decided to use a railing type of fence; we hope that this will be erected in the near future.

#### 11-13 YOUNG STREET, W.8

Application for planning permission for the erection of a multi-storey car park and showroom. The Society opposed this scheme, it has been refused by the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council.

#### 19-27 YOUNG STREET, W.8.

An application has been before the Council for outline planning permission to redevelop the 0.44 acre site by the erection of a multi-storey car park. The building proposed would be six floors in height and would contain on the ground floor a showroom and a squash club. The Society has not objected to the scheme in principle, but requested that the squash club be used only for that purpose and not as any other kind of club, that consideration should be given to the effect of the proposal upon existing traffic congestion in Young Street, and that the building should be no higher than the Greyhound Public House. The Council has given outline planning permission providing the scheme is modified as follows:

(a) the sheer height of the buildings in Young Street reduced to 38 ft. 6 inches with the fifth floor set back a minimum of 8 ft. behind the front face of the building. (b) the rear face of car park at first, second and third floor levels be totally enclosed, that the offices on the sixth floor are used only for such purposes and by such firms as may be approved by the Council, and that the squash club is used only for that purpose or such purposes as may be approved by the Council.

#### KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET/KENSINGTON PLACE/EDGE STREET.

Application for a petrol filling station. This was opposed by the Society and refused by the Borough Council.

#### ST. JAMES' GARDENS

Following a number of applications for redevelopment of the houses in St. James' Gardens the Greater London Council made a Building Preservation Order, the Order was opposed, and on page 37 we include the evidence given by Mr. Ashley Barker, for the Greater London Council, supporting their application for the order.

#### KENSINGTON GOODS YARD, WRIGHTS LANE, AND MESSRS. PONTINGS LTD. HIGH STREET.

A public inquiry will be held on 9th, 10th and 11th May at Kensington Town Hall with regard to this comprehensive redevelopment which includes three blocks 125 feet high and a block on the Pontings site 226 feet high. The Society has met the developers and architect and discussed the plan, they consider the application to be an over-development of the site, likely to increase traffic problems and, in particular, are opposed to the block 226 feet high. The Society will be represented by counsel at the inquiry.

#### LEX GARAGE SITE KENSINGTON PLACE

A number of plans have been submitted for this site; the Society's observations have been made known to the Kensington Borough Council in each case and we understand the plans have been withdrawn.

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## Other activities

Our Annual General Meeting was held on a very wintry May evening at the Orangery, Holland Park. We would like to take this opportunity to record our thanks to the Chief Superintendent of the Parks Dept. of the Greater London Council for arranging for the Society to use the Orangery and to Mr. Kennedy for his talk on the Development of Holland Park since 1954.

Visits have been made to the following:

BURLINGTON HOUSE, THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, by kind permission of Sir Charles Wheeler, President of the Royal Academy.

THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, Chancery Lane; THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S GARDENS AT WISLEY; FLATFORD MILL AND DEDHAM; CHARTWELL, WESTERHAM, KENT; DRAPERS' HALL, THROGMORTON AVENUE; THE HOUSE OF ST. BARNABAS-IN-SOHO; THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE; THE DISTRESSED GENTLEFOLKS AID ASSOCIATIONS NURSING HOME; THOMAS CORAM FOUNDATION, BRUNSWICK SQUARE; GRAY'S INN; GUINNESS PARK ROYAL BREWERY.

## Future arrangements

### 1ST MAY

A visit to Sissinghurst Castle. Tudor building, Tower and Moat. Famous for its spring gardens, the creation of the late V. Sackville-West. Coach leaves Kensington Square punctually at 1.15 p.m. Tickets £1 1s. tea, coach and entrance fee.

### 4TH MAY 6.30 p.m.

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Orangery, Holland Park by kind permission of the Parks Dept. Greater London Council. Chairman: Lord Hurcomb, G.C.B., K.B.E.

The Meeting will be followed by a talk by Mrs. Jane Phillips, lately Chairman of the Traffic and Highways Committee, Greater London Council.

### 1ST JUNE 7 p.m.

The Victorian Society has kindly invited members of the Kensington Society to a soirée at the Goldsmiths' Hall, an exhibition of 19th Century Church Plate and Architecture has been arranged. Mr. John Betjeman will give an illustrated talk about Victorian Churches. Tickets, including buffet supper 30/- may be obtained from Mrs. Jane Fawcett, 12 Magnolia Wharf, Strand-on-the-Green, W.4.

### 23RD JUNE 3-6.30 p.m.

Tea in the garden at 18 Kensington Square. Tickets 5/-, proceeds towards the cost of producing the Traffic Survey Report. Tickets required.

### 23RD JUNE 3-6.30 p.m.

Mrs. Norman-Butler, 7 St. Albans Grove, a few minutes from Kensington Square, is also kindly opening her garden to members. *Membership* cards must be shown and a charge of 1/- will be made. This will also go towards the Traffic Survey Report.

### 27TH JUNE 12.30 p.m.

A visit has been arranged to Audley End, Saffron Walden. Coach leaves Kensington Square punctually at 12.30 p.m. Please bring sandwiches for your lunch. Tickets including coach, entrance fee and tea, 25/-.

### 11TH JULY 1.15 p.m.

A visit to Hatfield House. Coach leaves Kensington Square punctually at 1.15 p.m. Tickets including coach, entrance fee and tea, 21/-

### 17TH JULY 3 p.m.

By kind permission of Mr. and Miss Gandell a visit to 16 Earls Court Square when members can see an example of an Edwardian drawing room. Numbers are limited. Tickets are required.

### 5TH SEPTEMBER 12.30 p.m.

A special visit has been arranged to Goodwood House, Chichester, on a day when not normally opened to the public. Coach leaves Kensington Square punctually at 12.30. Please bring sandwiches for your lunch. Tickets including coach, entrance fee and tea 30/-.

### 20TH OCTOBER 2.30 p.m.

A visit to Fishmongers' Hall, London Bridge, E.C.4 by kind permission of Mr. John Barclay, the Clerk of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. Numbers are limited. Tickets 2/6d.

### 7TH NOVEMBER 6.30 p.m.

Lecture Hall, Kensington Public Library, Phillimore Walk, W.8. A lecture by Mr. Ashley Barker, senior officer, Dept. of Architecture and Civic Design, Greater London Council, entitled '19th Century Estates in South Kensington'. Slides will be shown.

Chairman: Mr. Alec Clifton-Taylor

Tickets are not required and members are invited to bring their friends.

# Environment and Motor Traffic in Kensington

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*(A summary of a report prepared by a sub-committee of the Society)*

## Introduction

### OBJECT OF REPORT

The object of this report is to define the ways in which there is now and is likely to be a conflict between environment and traffic in the Borough of Kensington and to suggest policies and measures for the protection of the environment.

### THE OCCASION OF THE REPORT

The recent publication of Volume 2 of the London Traffic Survey ('The Survey') and of the Kensington Environmental Management Study ('K.E.M.S.') has prompted the preparation of this report at this time when the conflicts between environment and traffic in the Borough is the subject of public concern.

### AREA COVERED BY THE REPORT

Time and resources must necessarily restrict this report primarily to a consideration of the problems of the former Borough of Kensington, but it will have to be concerned also with matters outside these boundaries.

### THE SCHEME OF THE REPORT

The report is divided into three parts which deal with the following topics:—

Part I —Land use and traffic conditions in Kensington now and in the future.

Part II —The ways in which traffic and environment do and are likely to conflict.

Part III—Suggestions for traffic, parking and planning policies.

The 'present'—this context, generally refers to 1961, the basic date of the Survey.

## PART I LAND USE AND TRAFFIC CONDITIONS IN KENSINGTON NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

### A. Land Use

The land use of the borough is predominantly residential calling for areas free from the noise, nuisance and danger of through traffic but with a road system providing access to residents' homes and with provision for the garaging or parking for their cars, and for visiting vehicles such as delivery vans and callers' cars.

Distinctions are to be drawn within the residential classification and there are other uses to which land in the borough is put (such as shops) which have a vital effect on environment in the borough.

(1) **Residential.** The residential pattern is not consistent throughout the borough.

(a) **POPULATION AND DENSITY.** The Survey shows a net residential density for the central part of Kensington and the south-west part of Chelsea which represents something in the nature of a low density island.

In east Chelsea, where the net residential density is high no change is expected. There is expected to be an increase in central Kensington of between 5% and 10%, reducing as one goes farther north. In the extreme north of the borough and in west Chelsea a fall in population is expected.

(b) **HOUSEHOLD INCOMES AND CAR OWNERSHIP.** In central and east Kensington and in east Chelsea mean household incomes are high; in the north of Kensington and west Chelsea they are lower. Car ownership is highest in central and east Kensington and in east Chelsea.

A general rise in household incomes is expected throughout the borough coupled with an increase in car ownership; in central Kensington and east Chelsea this rise will be of the order of under 70% but elsewhere it could be higher than this.

Residents' own traffic needs already substantially reduce the quality of residential environment in e.g. east Kensington and east Chelsea. Some parts of the borough have less far to go to traffic saturation than others.

For the future the demands of borough residents, which are already high, can be expected to increase substantially.

(2) **Hotels, etc.** There are a large number of hotels in the borough (e.g. Cromwell Road and Kensington Road/Kensington High Street areas) and other establishments where residence is transient. They tend to be grouped on or near main traffic routes. They impinge on neighbouring residential environment with the traffic they attract and generate.

(3) **Industry.** Apart from service industries, such as garages, there is little or no industry within the borough.

(4) **Shopping and Business.** This constitutes an important part of the make-up of the borough and comprises not only shops and business serving local needs in both large and small shopping centres but also, in Kensington High Street, a 'major business and retail centre' serving more than merely local needs.

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(5) **Various Special Uses.**

- (a) SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS.
- (b) MUSEUMS, EXHIBITION HALLS, etc., e.g. the Earls Court Exhibition which is a great attraction to traffic needing easy access and a place for visiting vehicles to park.
- (6) **Parks and Open Spaces.** Holland Park, Kensington Gardens and the large number of garden squares which are a feature of the central and southern part of the borough. The parks create their own environment and enhance rather than impinge upon the environment of neighbouring residential areas.

(7) **Areas of Special Character.** These areas cut across the various different land uses mentioned above but extend principally to residential areas and open spaces. Their special character arises for architectural, planning or historical reasons. See the Kensington Society Annual Report 1964-65.

**B. The Present Traffic Conditions Existing within Kensington**

**I Road System.** The borough stretches along the western boundary of the central area of London and is crossed by all the main traffic routes leading to and from the west which share the common obstacle of having to cross busy north-south routes, although only one of these—the one-way system between Holland Park Avenue and the Thames—is in any sense a continuous route.

In between these routes the road system is designed almost entirely to serve the needs of the various types of residences that front upon them.

**II Traffic Flow.** The 1962 traffic flow pattern over the area of the Survey is one of a spread of traffic over a large number of different routes with some preponderance on the main routes and in the very centre; e.g. Cromwell Road has an average daily flow of 42,000 vehicles, Kensington High Street 36,000, Holland Park Road 45,000 and the north-south one-way route 40,000.

**III Sources of Traffic.** These are partly internal and partly external.

(1) **Through Traffic.** The daily amount of car, cycle and taxi traffic wishing to move from the centre to the west, which would affect Kensington, can be quantified as follows (1962):—

(a) To an area adjoining the centre	...	70,000
(b) To the western part of the Survey area	...	40,000
(c) Beyond the Survey area	...	10,000
Total		120,000

The figure of 70,000 includes traffic coming to Kensington.

The demands of traffic which is not concerned with the centre but which might cross the borough would be high.

(2) **Internal Traffic.**

(a) **Attraction.** Taking all modes of transport, the number of attractions for persons measured in terms of attractions per square mile, is between 40,000 and 100,000 (except in the extreme north and west), this rate is as high as anywhere outside the centre of London. A very high proportion of this is for non-work trips.

(3) **Comparison of Internal and Through Traffic.** Whilst through traffic is substantial the borough is itself a great attraction to and generator of traffic.

The survey, Vol. 2. nevertheless appears to show that inadequacy of through routes is a major cause of the general spread of traffic in the district and that it is the amount of the through traffic which is responsible for present conditions.

**IV Parking.** The K.E.M.S. describes the conditions existing in the area there under consideration as saturated so as to constitute a threat to safety at many points and a severe restriction on movement and access to property.

The street parking is there made up as to 79% of residents of whom 13% leave during the day, leaving 66%. The remaining 34% is made up of 23% commuters and 11% shoppers. The cars parked amounted to 3,690 whereas the desirable number of cars to be parked at the kerbside from considerations of safety, movement and access was 1,531. The excess was over 2,000.

The number of off-street parking spaces and garages amounted to 1,928.

Similar conditions, probably worse in places, would exist in east Chelsea and in the central part of the borough.

Conditions differ in the day and in the night time, some residents leaving by day only to be replaced by shoppers and commuters.

There are occasions which result in congestion at particular times and places, such as Christmas time and the sales in Kensington High Street shops.

**C. Probable Future Changes in Traffic Conditions in Kensington**

**I The Demands of Traffic.** The forecasting of future traffic demands is a difficult task.

The sort of estimate most frequently quoted is that the car population in Great Britain will, as against 1961 figures, double by 1970 and treble by 1980. However, this would not be a realistic rate of growth to apply to the London traffic survey area and even within the area, different rates may be applicable.

(1) **Internal Traffic.**

(a) **Attractions to Traffic.** Taking all modes of transport, it is estimated that attractions in Kensington will increase by between 40% and 60%.

The attractions in respect of work trips will increase in the borough by up to 40%. The increase in non-work attractions will be between 40% and 80%.

(b) **Generation of Traffic.** The total of internal trip generations in the borough will rise by between 20% and 40%. This is somewhat higher than the rise to be expected in central London, where there may even be a decrease; generations are likely to increase as one moves away from the centre.

It is expected that there will be a decrease in work trip generations throughout the borough, but the reverse will be the case in respect of non-work trip generations.

## (2) Through Traffic.

Central area traffic moving to or from the areas fairly close to the central area (including Kensington) will increase by about three-fifths of its present level.

Such traffic moving beyond these areas, likely to cross Kensington, will increase by more than 100%.

Trips that do not begin or end in the central area and which may cross or begin, or end in Kensington, are expected to increase by over 100%.

The greatest increase in demand will be in relation to non-work trips which will out-number work trips.

(3) **Overall Demand.** The busy east-west demand towards the south of the borough is expected to increase by nearly 200%. The east-west demand towards the north of the borough by about 100%; the north-south demand by over 200%.

## (4) Comparison of Internal and Through Traffic.

The future demands of through traffic are likely to be far greater than the demands of traffic internal to the borough, despite the expected material increases in car ownership, attraction and generation.

## II The Road System.

The Survey sets out the expected 1971 network which is now in an advanced stage of planning and construction, the road network that might be expected to exist in 1981 if road construction proceeded at its present pace (network 1981B), and a suggested road network designed to meet the forecast traffic demands on the assumption that the necessary capital expenditure in the 1970s would be forthcoming (network 1981A).

The changes shown in the 1971 network so far as material for this report, are the completion of the Western Avenue Extension and the completion of the first stage of the West Cross route from the White City to Holland Park Avenue.

The network 1981B forecasts the extension of the West Cross route to the south as far as the Kings Road, along the western boundaries of the boroughs. Nothing in the nature of a connected network emerges from this figure, but only piecemeal improvements.

The network 1981A shows a dramatic change with the establishment of a complex network comprising not only the proposed motorway box but also a greatly improved North Circular and South Circular Road.

For present purposes one must assume that at least ten years will pass before any material progress can be made and that even then progress will be uncertain.

## III Traffic Flow.

The Survey made the following, among other, assignments:—

- (a) Of the 1971 traffic to the 1971 network.
- (b) Of the 1981 traffic to the 1981A network
- (c) Of the 1981 traffic to the 1981B network

Of these, only assignment B has been published in diagram form. This shows an increased flow of central area traffic along the Western Avenue Extension, the Cromwell Road and the Embankment and down the West Cross route, with thinning out in between these main routes. Taking central and non-central traffic the most significant development

is the assignment of a daily flow of 339,000 vehicles to the West Cross route; a flow nearly double the size of that recorded on the notorious Los Angeles Harbour Freeway.

Neither the 1971 network nor the 1981B network would give rise to such great flows of traffic; they could not do so.

## IV Parking.

The calls of safety, movement of local (as well as through) traffic, access to property and in some cases visual and other amenity require that parking control be introduced elsewhere in the borough in the not too distant future. The pressure of increased car ownership and more attraction and generation of traffic in the borough will intensify this problem and spread it.

## PART II

### THE WAYS IN WHICH TRAFFIC AND ENVIRONMENT DO AND ARE LIKELY TO CONFLICT

(1) **Moving Traffic.** The direct consequence of having an appreciable volume of traffic moving along a street are noise, dirt, fumes and vibrations; consequences which are destructive of both residential and shopping environment and which render gardens and garden squares unpleasant.

For pedestrians there must be added the positive danger to life and limb and the difficulty of simply crossing the road.

One should mention also the harmful visual effect of heavy volumes of traffic on the surroundings through which it passes.

Heavy flows of traffic pass down various streets from a number of different causes. The street in question may be a natural or main traffic artery, such as the Cromwell Road; it may have been artificially turned into a main traffic route by traffic management measures as in the case of Addison Road and Warwick Gardens and Royal Crescent; it may have become a route for infiltrating traffic, such as Victoria Grove; it may be situate on the route to some particular traffic attraction or generator (e.g. Earls Court Exhibition at the time of the Motor Show).

These effects are principally the effects of an inadequate main road network and are likely to endure until the deficiency has been made good—a long-term measure.

(2) **Stationary Vehicles.** Insofar as a good environment may include the ability of residents to park outside their homes, for shoppers to park near the shops, for homes to be accessible to delivery vans and so forth, the pressure of stationary vehicles along both sides of almost every road is harmful to environment. Such conditions do not exist throughout the borough as yet but over a sufficient part of it to merit serious consideration.

In addition to difficulty of access to property and to shortage of parking space for those who need to be in the borough, the stationary vehicles inhibit movement within the borough, are a source of danger and are an eye-sore ruining the appearance of streets and squares of special character or architectural importance.

The call for off-street parking will threaten amenity and environment in various ways: open spaces such as garden squares and private gardens

will be increasingly threatened with conversion into parking places and garages; the same will also be true of parts of Kensington Gardens. The provision of multi-storey car parks to meet the demand at appropriate places in the borough will give rise to problems of siting and design to ensure that neither the traffic using them nor their outward appearance, conflict with the surroundings.

### PART III SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAFFIC PARKING AND PLANNING POLICIES

**A. Major Road Network.** The planning and building of this network must figure as the first priority on any list of this sort. Such a network would both prevent the spread of traffic where it should not be and by extracting and attracting such traffic, restore the environment where it has already suffered inroads.

One such instance is the West Cross route south of Holland Park Road, an important part of the G.L.C. Motorway box. The Survey establishes beyond doubt the importance of this road, not merely to Kensington and Chelsea but to London as a whole as a major route for both central London traffic and cross London traffic.

**B. Environmental Management.** The result of the K.E.M.S., was to highlight some of the problems involved in applying this technique rather than to produce a scheme that could immediately be put into operation. The proposals put forward, whilst valuable as a study, are open to various criticisms as practicable propositions.

The study requires that a similar exercise be carried out now over at least as large an area as the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in a belt round central London, and that the road network plan be prepared in the light of the results of such a study.

Where conditions permit the scheme could be implemented at once. It could be expanded as conditions permitted.

An additional advantage to be gained from immediately planning the environmental areas, would be that they could be safeguarded rather as the motorway boxes now are safeguarded from planning (and traffic) decisions that would conflict with their establishment in due course.

#### C. General Planning.

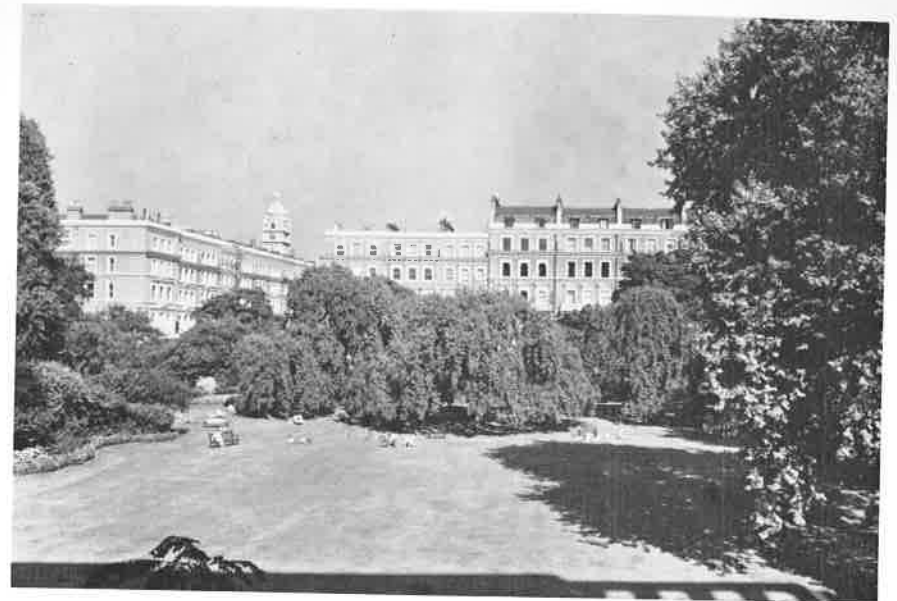
I **Positive.** Areas where redevelopment is now taking place or will be likely to take place in the not too distant future, must be planned comprehensively with the need to fit traffic harmoniously into the environment in mind.

II **Negative.** The pressure of traffic upon environment is such that new development or re-development of property must be restricted so that

(a) any intensification of land use which will create additional attraction to or generation of traffic is limited by reference to the capacity of the road network existing at the time, with such improvements as it is known will be made within one or two years.

(b) It contains adequate provisions for its own off-street parking needs,

(c) It does not conflict with the setting-up of environmental management scheme intended for the area or any plans for comprehensive development or re-development made with the preservation of environment in mind.



Square gardens like this . . .  
(QUEENS GATE GARDENS)



. . . are threatened with treatment like this.  
(CADOGAN PLACE CAR PARK)



Traffic routes destroy residential amenity . . . .



. . . . and cause sign cluttered streets.

**D. Traffic Management.** In so far as such schemes are designed to direct traffic along routes it would not normally follow, they must be restricted to roads which in a planned traffic network have the status of district distributors. In no case should such traffic be diverted into environmental areas.

## **E. Parking.**

### **(1) On Street**

- (i) *General.* The need for some form of on street parking control in the borough is generally accepted. The maximum amount of road space should be made available having regard to the demand for it.
- (ii) *Extent of Control.* The 'points' in the borough in need of such control cover large areas around tube stations, shopping centres and blocks of flats.
- (iii) *Allocation of Parking Space.* The insufficiency of on street parking space, under control, to meet the expected demand will involve rationing the space amongst
  - (a) short-term parkers: a class of parker that includes persons parking for work and non-work purposes for up to, say, two hours.
  - (b) Long-term parkers who comprise chiefly residents and commuters.

No case can be made for providing on street parking for commuters but in a predominantly residential area the resident must be given at least equal treatment with short-term parkers.

- (iv) *Parking for Residents.* Two methods suggest themselves. One involves setting aside space for residents only. The other method would be for no distinction to be made between residents' parking space and short-term parking space but residents would be allowed to park for long periods.
- (v) *Finance.* That parkers, including residents, should contribute to the cost of such a scheme is not unreasonable but since parking control is introduced for the benefit of persons other than the parkers (e.g. the drivers of through traffic, pedestrians, the general body of residents) a case exists for charging some of the expense on local or public funds.
- (vi) *Siting.* In the siting of the parking spaces the necessary signs and the meters and/or ticket machines visual amenity must be considered, particularly in areas of special character and architectural merit.
- (vii) *Ticket Machines or Meters.* Visual amenity is one of the arguments for preferring the use of ticket machines to meters; there would be fewer of them and they could be less conspicuously sited.

The ticket machines have another substantial advantage in that they do not obstruct pedestrian movement on pavements.

(2) **Off Street**

- (i) *General.* The need for the provision of more off street parks will be brought home with the control of on street parking. The questions are: by whom should they be built, where should they be sited and by whom and for whose use would they be administered.
- (ii) *By Whom On Street Parking to be Provided.* Both public and private building are called for and as in the case of on street parking there is a case for some element of subsidy in the provision of public parks.

The provision of off street parking space is also a separate commercial, speculative enterprise. Whilst such enterprises may have a part to play in providing for the general need there are dangers in the concept of parking for profit which are referred to below.

- (iii) *Siting.* The provision of a few large centrally placed parks is likely to result in their being heavier attractions for and generators of traffic than is desirable in any particular place. A pattern of a rather larger number of smaller parking places is likely to prove the best. In siting and design great care will have to be taken to harmonise with surroundings and preserve amenity and environment.

In particular, garden squares and open spaces must be preserved as such. Permission has been sought and in some instances given for the building of underground car parks on the sites of garden squares. The speculator and commercial constructor is very busy in this field. That any garden should be used in this way is to be deplored; a survey of the quality of the garden squares in Kensington leads to the inevitable conclusion that not a single one of them that will be large enough should be touched for this purpose. The same comment applies with equal force to Kensington Gardens and Holland Park.

- (iv) *Administration and Management.* These parks must be used to relieve the shortage of parking space for residents and any short-term parkers for whom the on street parking system does not provide. It is quite possible that commuters who may not come up every day would be prepared to pay a higher parking fee than the residents who need to park more often and for longer periods. If this be so, and the commercial operator aims for the best profit the parks operated commercially will be full of commuters and the problem of resident and possibly short-term parking would be as acute as ever.

To ensure that parks are available for the use of those by whom they are principally needed, some form of control or operation by the local authority is likely to be necessary whether as owner, lessee, licensee or in some other effective form.

## Birds of Kensington

LECTURE BY LORD HURCOMB

Some years ago I was staying with a friend and fishing a stretch of the River Kennet in the mayfly season when the natural life of the valley was at its height—flowers, birds, insects, to say nothing of the fish. On the Sunday morning I was walking through one of the farms when I met my hostess. She stopped dead in her tracks, pulled up her dogs and fired at me point-blank the question—What is the good of a woodpecker?

A green woodpecker had just flown across the path.

I might have suggested that it probably destroyed a few grubs which infested some of her trees and that it certainly devoured a large number of ants which did some—but no serious—damage to her lawns. But I was not in a mood for argument. She had been to church and I—I may as well confess it—had not. So I said: 'I do not admit that the woodpecker or any other creature is called upon to justify its existence to you or to me on any ground of utility. God made it and that should be sufficient answer to you.' That got me out of my immediate difficulty, though of course I do not regard my reply as complete. There are many considerations to be taken into account in determining what ought to be man's attitude to nature. Most of us, I suppose, are evolutionists and realise that in the course of creation, as we know it, vast numbers of living forms have become extinct through geological and climatic changes. Man, the culmination of an immensely long process of development of living forms, remains nevertheless himself part of nature, and inseparable from his environment. True, he has long been capable of modifying that environment and has now attained power to destroy it, but (contrary to what has sometimes been claimed) man's dominance over other creatures and power over his environment give him no uncontrolled and uninhibited right to exploit to his own advantages (judged always on a short-term view) any part of the rest of creation, even to the point of irretrievable destruction. I do not think that on

religious or ethical grounds any such right can be sustained but that, on the contrary, on such grounds, it can be better argued that man has a duty and an obligation to conserve and respect the natural surroundings and wild life of which he is part, to which he has succeeded, for which in some sense he is trustee for the future.

But I am not going to pursue these arguments this afternoon, nor shall I be long in coming to that small slice of surviving creation which is represented by our local birds.

Nevertheless you will perhaps allow me to make one or two further general observations upon the reasons for seeing some good in a woodpecker.

First, human life is enhanced by understanding fully all that we can discover about the world around us and seeing it, so far as possible, for ourselves. Apart from that, it would be sheer folly to destroy or allow to perish any part of the vast complex of living forms from the study of which scientific investigation can still extract knowledge of direct advantage to man's health and wealth.

Then in some cases, as in the case of our red deer and the large African ungulates, or a stock of game birds, maintenance of a wild stock of animals, may be the most economical use of certain areas of land. In many other cases the continued existence of wild creatures may contribute to the control of pests, though I do not myself argue the claims of most birds strongly on that ground. It is, however, beyond dispute that we run grave risks if we unduly disturb the 'balance of nature.' On broader grounds, is it not becoming more apparent every day that our huge urban masses need to retain some contact with the countryside and the wild plants and creatures to which it is the background? They need to have some appreciation of the significance of these things in relation to human life. Without it they are deprived of a chief source of that refreshment and recreation of body and spirit which is essential to man's health, happiness and sanity.

For our purposes this afternoon, I am going to assume, without pursuing these wider questions, that you, like myself, see a sufficient reason for respecting and protecting wild life in the pleasure which is added to our daily lives by observing the birds of our own locality. The 'charm of birds', to use Sir Edward Grey's famous phrase, appeals to most of us. I realise, of course, that the same things do not appeal to everybody, and they never did. Writing at the end of the seventeenth century, John Ray, one of the earliest and greatest of our field naturalists, spoke of 'People indifferent to the sight of the flowers and meadows in spring, and, if not indifferent, then preoccupied elsewhere. They devote themselves to ball-games, to drinking, to gambling, money-making. For them our subject is meaningless.' I feel that Ray would have agreed with me that Bird-watching is better than Bingo.

Ray was ordained but ranged widely in his travels and studies, unlike Gilbert White who confined himself to his parish of Selborne which he made famous in English literature and throughout the world. He is the best loved of all our naturalists and it was he who taught us to observe closely the birds around us. When I think of him, I forget that some of the most ruthless collectors of birds' eggs have been parsons in the Church of England.

I come now to my subject. As I pointed out when I had the honour of addressing the Society some ten years ago, the birds of London and

Inner London have gathered round themselves a substantial literature. I need go no further back than W. H. Hudson's 'Birds of London', published 70 years ago. Since then important additions have been Richard Fitter's 'London Birds' (1949), and some chapters in E. M. Nicholson's 'Birds and Men' (1951). There have also been detailed studies and reviews by well-known ornithologists, notably by Holte Macpherson—long a resident in Campden Hill Square—and by Dr. Carmichael Low another Kensington resident, W. M. Teagle, by Stanley Cramp and, for Holland Park, by Miss Evelyn Brown, who in recent years has maintained exhaustive records for that rewarding area.

Two other series of records are of special interest by reason of their continuity and completeness. First, the Bird Reports of the London Natural History Society, and next those upon Birds in the Royal Parks, published by the Stationery Office, which by the courtesy of the London County Council, have included notes upon Holland Park and Osterley Park. These last are published biennially by the Minister of Public Buildings and Works and are made by a committee first appointed in 1922 and re-established after the war since when I have been chairman. Here I ought perhaps to remind you that we are fortunate to live in a chain of open spaces, beginning with St. James's Park and its lake in the east and extending to the west through Ravenscourt and Gunnersbury Parks to Osterley in the west, which (as the crow flies, or even as the railway runs), is only seven miles away and holds many birds in spite of M4 cutting along the edge of it. Further round to the south-west and south are Kew Gardens, Barnes Common, the Barn Elms Reservoirs and Richmond Park. To a bird in flight, the West of London does not yet look wholly built up and our newest architectural adornments may appear to be merely cliffs or stony mountain sides not too remotely unlike their natural habitats. The lights of lofty buildings may serve for some of them as attractions or guides on their migrations.

Now you may ask what, ornithologically speaking, London, or Inner London, or even Kensington, means. Birds do not trouble themselves about administrative boundaries and neither welcome nor deplore such things as amalgamations of boroughs. For human beings, they are necessary questions. Hudson asked them and pointed out that, if you wanted to enlarge your list of species seen, you had only to extend the area of your excursions. But that is not playing the game. For recording changes in distribution and status I agree with the societies concerned that it is essential, if comparisons are to have any meaning or validity, to adhere to old delimitations, however arbitrarily they may have been fixed originally and however obsolete, for other purposes, they may now have become.

By 'London', the London Natural History Society means the area within a radius of 20 miles of St. Paul's. 'Inner London' was defined by Holte Macpherson as an area  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles N. and S. and 4 miles E. and W. of Charing Cross, thus including Holland Park (to which he had access). I regard as included in Kensington for my purpose Holland Park, Palace Green, the Gardens and Hyde Park as far as the end of the Serpentine, the squares to the north of the Bayswater Road, and to the south of the High Street down to the Boltons. You may like to have some idea of the number of different kinds of birds which a keen ob-

server may hope to see, if he or she gets up early in the morning, in Kensington. In 1954 I said that just under 100 species were seen in Inner London and that about two thirds of this number were seen in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, taken together. Over a few years the average has been 67 (with a maximum of 75 in 1948 and a minimum of 60 in the Coronation year when the parks were invaded by human beings). In 1954, there nested 22 species and the numbers are now much the same. Excluding introduced wild-fowl, 56 wild species were observed in 1961 and 68 species in 1962, of which 23 nested if you include the Canada Goose. The total for Holland Park is somewhat lower as it lacks the aquatic birds. Yet 50 species were noted in each year, of which 22 nested. The total fell to 44 in 1963 but this was due no doubt to the lack of daily observations by one of the keepers who was transferred to duty elsewhere. It will be understood that none of these figures taken singly has great meaning but over a period they have a real significance as a summation of careful and established observations as distinct from casual records and mere impressions.

In such an area as ours we are well off for garden birds and in Holland Park and to a less extent in Kensington Gardens for woodland birds, while the Round Pond and the Long Water add a valuable habitat for water-loving species. The large open spaces in the Parks are now so occupied all day long by people and their dogs that the wilder ground-feeding birds like skylarks are never left undisturbed and are rarely seen.

I would like to warmly applaud the general management of Holland Park by the L.C.C. which I hope will continue under the G.L.C. In spite of some sacrifice of ground for car parks etc., the policy of keeping so many enclosures free from dogs and the practice of keeping so much of the long grasses and undergrowth in their natural state are essential if so many birds are to stay with us. Particularly useful is the fact that the natural litter in these enclosures—leaves, twigs and boughs—is left to lie and decay as it falls. If Nature abhors a vacuum, she hates the emptiness which can result from the tidiness so dear to a park gardener or superintendent. It is the decomposition of this litter by invertebrates which provides food for insectivorous birds and, I think, largely accounts for the survival of such good numbers of robins, hedge sparrows, wrens and the thrushes through the hard winter of three years ago.

Now I hope that in these general observations and statistical summaries I have not seemed to stray too wide of my proper subject.

From the slides which I am about to show you I shall exclude for various reasons some of the birds which have shown themselves in the Royal Borough in recent years. First a few of the commonest birds familiar to you all and then a few varieties which turn up only once in a blue moon. I shall exclude also three or four species which only pass over. There are the heron, now seen much less frequently than a few years ago (probably as a result of the loss of the Heronry in Richmond Park) though it still occasionally flies in to fish in the Serpentine or St. James's Park. And the swift which hawks for flies on most summer evenings over Campden Hill and the Gardens, and nests in small numbers in the north of the Borough. Lapwings also pass over in some number, especially at the outset of hard weather. Lastly, skylarks of which there are sometimes considerable movements, and which seem more apt to alight on the Round Pond when it is frozen than on the

lawns. It is easy to miss these casual passages overhead, but no one can fail to notice two spectacular mass movements in the London sky, both striking examples of the way in which birds have adapted themselves to live with conurbations of men and to take advantage of the facilities which we offer them. I refer to the inward convergence of starlings in the late afternoon upon their roosts on buildings round Trafalgar Square and the outward flight of the gulls to their roosts at the West London reservoirs which begins about an hour before sunset and is lovely to watch as the birds drift over Kensington in parties of varying size.

Now for individual species:

(The lecturer then showed slides of over forty different kinds of birds and commented upon them.)

All five British grebes have been seen in recent years, but only the Great Crested and Little Grebes are more than occasional.

As to the duck, mallard abound, with an excess of drakes; tufted duck are numerous and pochard usual in small numbers, though none seems to have appeared yet on the Round Pond this winter. Other duck occur singly from time to time, including smew, of which a small party winters at Barn Elms. The introduced Canada geese prosper and are free-flying. Moorhen and coot are both common and some nest. Hudson lamented the absence of the latter in his day and suggested its introduction.

The kestrel, often seen in West London, appears to have made some recovery from the effects of toxic chemicals. It has nested on the tower of Imperial College and may do so again—a good reason for not pulling it down.

Badly off for waders (except a few common sandpipers on migration), since we have no exposures of mud, we are well off for gulls. During the year the Round Pond alone can usually show all five common species, the three larger ones in small numbers and at intervals, but the other two (blackheaded and common) always to be found in winter.

The stock dove, which used to nest in Kensington Gardens and in Holland Park, has recently been lost as a breeding species, even if it occurs at all. But the wood pigeon swarms: it was only beginning to increase in Inner London in Hudson's day. It has become obese, oblivious to traffic and street lighting and quite fearless of man. This tameness is characteristic of many species in urban surroundings which are wary of approach in their natural environment, and is true not only of the wood pigeons, the moorhen, the blackbird and the tits, but more surprisingly of the nuthatch, the jay and the carrion crow. To some extent, birds can change their diet as our tawny owls have done. Short of mice, rats and beetles, our owls live largely upon sparrows and pigeons, which have multiplied enormously in the parks; they are overfed by people and I regard them as rather a nuisance. The tawny owl is resident in Holland Park where it nests successfully, probably also in Kensington Gardens and some of the squares.

The green woodpecker, never frequent, has not been noted recently but the great spotted woodpecker, which used to nest in Kensington Gardens, still does so in Holland Park where I saw a young bird with one of its parents last July. The Lesser Spotted, the least of our three woodpeckers, is seen not infrequently but where it comes from is a bit of a mystery.

The carrion crow, which Hudson thought 'the grandest bird left to us in the Metropolis is perhaps too common west of Charing Cross. Several pairs breed in the parks and squares. The rook disappeared with the felling of the wood in Kensington Gardens in 1880, so bitterly described in a chapter of Hudson's book. The jackdaw unfortunately has also almost disappeared quite recently. In Hudson's day they numbered about two dozen and seem never to have increased, but gradually decreased. The small colony in the Gardens was dispersed by the felling of so many old elms, and nesting boxes have failed to retain them. Birds are seen occasionally and a pair may have bred this year, but I am afraid that we must count this lively and attractive bird among our losses. Even the spire of St. Mary Abbot's has not anchored them, in spite of their liking for ecclesiastical company. In fact, during my long residence in Kensington I have not seen them round the spire more than three or four times.

The jay, however, is well established and breeds freely. New since Hudson's day, it is a magnificent addition to our avifauna. It did not nest in Holland Park till 1929 or in Kensington Gardens till 1942. The tits—great and blue—are familiar to you and can be seen almost anywhere, but I wonder whether you all know the coal tit, which has recently been resident and has nested successfully in Holland Park, where I saw one this morning.

The nuthatch is another great gain and shows how we may still hope to be colonised by new species. Apart from a few isolated occurrences, it was first recorded in Holland Park during the irruption of tits in 1957, and a pair stayed to breed in 1958, as did another pair in Kensington Gardens where they continued to do so at least till 1962. In Holland Park they did so until this year when they failed, though two or three birds were (and are) present. Probably the sex distribution was wrong. They are most attractive birds, noisy with a variety of calls. And unlike the woodpeckers they can and do run down as well as up a tree. One of our birds would even catch nuts thrown to it in the air.

The tree creeper used to nest in Kensington Gardens since the war but not recently. It turns up in Holland Park and there is one there now. So does our smallest bird, the goldcrests which have been seen this autumn.

Wrens are few and far between except in Holland Park where a strong population stood the hard weather well.

I come now to the thrushes. Blackbirds abound—their song could not be heard better or more frequently anywhere in the country than on Campden Hill in April and May. We have a good number of song thrushes and some missel thrushes, nesting in all the parks and often to be seen on the lawns. In addition the two migratory thrushes, the fieldfare and the redwing from northern Europe can be counted upon, the fieldfare spasmodic in small numbers but the redwing regular in small parties or even in flocks. If you look at it carefully, it is readily distinguished from the song thrush by its eye—stripe and red flank. The most likely places to see it are the playing fields in Holland Park, Palace Green or, in hard weather, the large squares.

It is noticeable how fond blackbirds in towns have become of chimney pots and gables as singing stances and how early in the year they sing—interesting adaptations to town life.

An occasional wheatear is seen on passage somewhere in our area and, rarely, a common redstart. We may hope that some day the black redstart, which once nested in Brompton Cemetery and since the war was to be seen on the Natural History Museum and (possibly the same bird) on the warehouse which one sees from the platforms of High Street Station, may return.

The robin—our national bird—is common enough. Several warblers pass through on both spring and autumn migrations, chiff-chaffs and willow warblers always, whitethroats and garden warblers usually. But only the bluethroat stays to nest occasionally, as it did this year in Holland Park. Its lovely song is sometimes heard at night and probably accounts for reports of nightingales, which have not been authenticated for many years.

The pied flycatcher is pretty regularly seen in August on migration, either one of our own birds from the west and north-west or possibly part of the heavy movement from Europe. But the sober-plumaged spotted flycatcher nests in Kensington Gardens and in Holland Park where one of two pairs this year was apparently double brooded. The young could often be seen waiting to be fed on the palings at the bottom of the Chestnut Avenue.

I must not omit the hedge sparrow—a modest but beautifully marked bird which is not of course a sparrow. There is a strong population in Holland Park and the squares and gardens anywhere west of Kensington Church.

The pied wagtail is often seen at the Round Pond or on the shore of the Serpentine and one always hopes that it will nest. The exquisitely beautiful grey wagtail, which was constantly seen at the static watertanks during and after the war, visits us less frequently than a few years ago. It was hard hit by the severe winter, but it has recently been seen at the Rima pool. I will say nothing more of the starling or the house sparrow and I am left with the finches.

The greenfinch is common and resident. The chaffinch is also resident but not numerous, though several males could be heard singing this spring. In winter we get occasionally one or two of its northern cousin—the brambling.

Bullfinches are seen not infrequently—a handsome bird worth a few fruit-buds. There has been so much clearance of patches of rough and waste ground and so much tidying up of seedling plants in autumn that the finches are hard put to it for natural food. This has affected the goldfinches of which I used to see a good many in various places. I have left this bird to the last because something surprising was discovered about them in Kensington a year ago. Early in January Mr. W. Rutledge found a roost of goldfinches in some plane trees in the Cromwell Road opposite the Natural History Museum. The numbers rose from about 40 to over 100 at the end of the month—astonishing figures. The birds roosted in groups high over the pavement, about 30 feet up, illuminated from below by a fluorescent lamp standard and within 15 to 20 feet of the tops of passing buses. They finally settled upon two planes on the east side of Exhibition Road. They flew in from the south-west but it is not known where they went to feed and spend the day. Their numbers fell again to 30 or 40 at the end of February until a final count on April the 6th showed only a dozen.

Now there is no previous report of a communal roost of goldfinches in urban conditions. I cannot believe that, like visiting film-stars or other celebrities, they were determined to be identified and therefore put themselves almost under the noses of the expert taxonomists who inhabit the Museum.

I have dealt with this new and interesting observation because it shows how much we can still learn about the compatibility of relationship between men and birds, even here in the heart of South Kensington.

A study of birds in towns and in the special conditions of inner London is, as you will have gathered, only part of the wider study of the impact of the growth of human populations upon wild life and upon birds. In particular, it is fortunate that the intensification of this impact has been accompanied in this and some other countries by a great growth in the interest taken in birds. Changes have therefore been noted and are being noted with care and precision, and attention is being given to the means by which we can preserve and encourage bird life.

It is difficult to summarise the net effect of the spread of urban and industrial conditions. Not all of them are adverse—the water reservoirs in West London e.g. are indeed favourable. I would agree generally with Nicholson that 'in the short run there has often been some impoverishment in the number of species, but it would be rash to conclude that built up areas with enough mature gardens cannot compare favourably in character and variety of bird-life with many of the habitats from which the land was taken over'. We can do much to encourage surviving bird populations and new colonizations by careful management, by growing suitable native trees and shrubs and by not dosing our gardens with poisons called herbicides and pesticides. In this last matter the Minister of Works has set a good example. My colleagues on his Advisory Committee on Forestry in the Royal Parks are also sympathetic to planting our natural forest trees in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, though now and then I have to implore them to refrain from planting the ten millionth London plane, so suitable for our streets, in places where an elm, oak, ash or poplar would be much better.

Nicholson concludes his book by saying that, taking the country as a whole, 'the close and growing similarity between the interests of birds and people in the shaping of the landscape encourages a hope that, with intelligent and imaginative study, Britain can be much improved as a habitat for both.' That should not give architects much difficulty. As for the birds, though that opinion was expressed fifteen years ago before the upsurge in population and the growth in road traffic had shown themselves so alarmingly, and before the mechanization and chemicalization of agriculture had gone so far, it may still hold good in the Royal Borough.

## St. James's Gardens

In May 1965 an application was made by the Harrison Homes as owners of Nos. 42 to 46 St. James's Gardens to erect a new building on the site. Later in that year the L.C.C. made a Building Preservation Order for the protection of the square as a whole and the Harrison Homes revised their proposals producing a very satisfactory scheme for the preservation and conversion of the existing buildings. The G.L.C. nevertheless still asked for the confirmation of the order made by its predecessor to secure the future of the square. At a public inquiry held in December 1966, Mr. Ashley Barker† as principal witness for the G.L.C. gave the following historical and architectural evidence as part of the Council's case.

St. James's Gardens, Kensington, known until 1939 as St James's Square was laid out on the Norlands Estate during the 1840s. In January 1839 Norlands Farm and Norlands House standing to the north of the Uxbridge Road had been sold with just over 50 acres of land to be redeveloped. At that time those parts of Kensington to the north of the Uxbridge Road including Notting Hill were still for the most part open farm land, although on James Ladbroke's Estate which included the crown of the hill to the east of Norlands Farm there were already houses lining the main road and The Hippodrome Racecourse, which had just been renamed Victoria Park in honour of the new Queen was enjoying its short lived popularity.

The sale of the Norlands property was between Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy, the famous clock maker as vendor, and Charles Richardson, a solicitor. The registration of the sale gives insufficient details for us to be certain as to its significance but references to certain trusts attached rather suggest that Vulliamy may not have been giving up his interest in the estate so much as adopting a legal device to make its development easier with Charles Richardson acting as his agent.

In 1843 a private Act of Parliament entitled 'an Act for the improvement of the Norlands Estate in the parish of St. Mary Abbots, Kensington in the County of Middlesex' provided for the appointment of commissioners with powers to levy a rate for the better paving and lighting of the estate. The preamble declared that Norland Square, Royal Crescent, Norland Terrace, Princes Road, Queen's Road and other streets had been wholly or partially built, the list also including Addison Road North which we now know as Addison Avenue on the southern axis of St. James's Gardens. The preamble continued 'it is in con-

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templation to build other squares, crescents, streets or rows of houses, some of which have been already planned and laid out on the said estate.' St. James's Square was one of these.

A plan presented to the Westminster Sewers Commissioners in December 1843 contained the essence of the present layout, although it showed two streets running into the square at each of the angles and an additional street to the north on the north south axis (that is to say continuing the line of the present Addison Avenue). St. James's Church was shown in the centre of the gardens and the square was to have been surrounded by some 86 houses—presumably of narrower frontages than the unusually generous disposition of the houses subsequently built.

The church was the first part of the plan to be completed. It was consecrated in July 1845 although at that time the steeple had not been built. There was a notice in *The Builder* for 26th July 1845. The designer was Lewis Vulliamy, the architect son of Benjamin.

The church is a focal point of the estate just as St. John's Notting Hill, consecrated the same year, is the focus of Ladbroke's Estate. St. James's occupies a central position terminating the vista along Addison Road north from the Uxbridge Road. Its relationship to the earlier parts of the estate explains its presence in St. James's Square before the construction of the houses was commenced; moreover the existence of a new church was recognised as a useful social attraction inducing people to buy property or to invest in an estate. Lewis Vulliamy was an architect of eminence with a very extensive practice. He built a number of churches in London although his most celebrated work here was Dorchester House in Park Lane, one of the most distinguished buildings of its day. Bearing in mind Lewis Vulliamy's family connexion with the estate and his authorship of the church, it is difficult to ignore the possibility that he was involved in some way with the estate layout, but I can show no direct evidence of any such involvement. Charles Richardson is referred to in the 1843 Improvement Act as having made the contracts with the gas and water companies and he also signed the sewer plan of the same year, together with Joseph Dunning, a surveyor whose name does not seem to appear in any other connexion with the estate.

The District Surveyor's returns show that works in connexion with the erection of eight houses in St. James's Square were first notified on 18th September 1847. These were the present numbers 1-8 on the southern side. A stone tablet built into the front wall of Nos. 1 and 2 records—

ST JAMES'S SQUARE  
THE FIRST STONE  
OF THIS SQUARE  
WAS LAID 1st NOVr 1847.

The next houses to be notified were Nos. 9-13 at the western end on 18th March 1848 and then Nos. 14-24 on 13th November of the following year. In December 1850 came the notification of Nos. 47-54 and in February 1851 the eastern range Nos. 42-46. At this point, with one terrace of the six projected still not commenced, development on the original lines ceased. Reference to a current Ordnance map shows how the line of what is now Sirdar Road should have continued into the square between No. 24 and the projected north-eastern terrace which was never built.

The development of St. James's Square seems to have presented financial difficulties which were scarcely surprising in view of the competition from other estate developments then under way in Bayswater and Kensington, coupled with the extreme western situation of the Norland properties which must have made them comparatively inaccessible from Central London and so reduced their value. It is probably to this fact that we owe the remarkable compensation of the broad frontages and a generosity of development which was not possible for the same class of house on the more valuable lands nearer Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens.

Robert Adkin, whose name appears in the District Surveyor's returns as the builder of Nos. 1-8, went bankrupt in 1848 having just started on Nos. 9-13.

Many names appear in complex series of leases of Norlands properties between 1848 and 1853, but they seem to be mainly names of mortgagors. The empty site in the north-east part of the square remained undeveloped for many years. The more inaccessible parts of the Ladbroke Estate were hanging fire in the same way. Competition between developers was very severe and bankruptcies were common everywhere at this time. When construction started again the old scheme had been abandoned and the later houses are not therefore included in the order now under consideration. As a matter of interest, it may be recorded that Nos. 25-36 were built in 1866-8, Nos. 55 and 56 in 1869-70 and Nos. 37-41 as surprisingly late as 1878-9 when the present numbering of the square was adopted.

The present Building Preservation Order thus relates to 37 houses in five terraces, all of the houses following a coherent architectural scheme, the essence of which is an arrangement of houses into linked pairs, the link taking the form of recessed bays containing the entrances. The grouping of houses as pairs was a characteristic 19th century device adding interest to the plain terrace form without the hampering of rigidity of the ambitious 'palace facade' more appropriate to grander schemes such as those of Nash in Regent's Park and Basevi in Belgrave Square. The articulation into pairs may be traced back into the late 18th century when it appears in a pronounced form at The Paragon in Blackheath built in about 1790 with long colonnaded links between the pavilions making a total frontage which could only be contemplated on more or less rural sites. A closer parallel to St. James's Gardens is presented by the ingenious houses on the Lloyd Baker Estate in Islington built around 1830 although this time on a far more modest scale. Here, as in St. James's Gardens, the porches are closely linked and the scheme is very close knit. On the other hand later on in the century in The Boltons in South Kensington, we find a paired treatment in which the wings between the blocks are completely severed as the disintegration of the terrace proceeds in the last phases of the classical tradition.

Whilst St. James's Gardens scarcely equals the prodigal use of land at The Paragon or in The Boltons the house frontages are nevertheless extremely generous by general urban standards, each house being some 24 ft. wide. This breadth is further emphasised by the architectural treatment with horizontal members more numerous and more pronounced than is usual.

The characteristic St. James's Gardens house is a three-storey above a basement and is built of yellow brick with extensive stucco

dressings. The main part of the facade of each house is two windows wide whilst the recessed link containing the front door is of one bay per house only so that the uniting of facades give four-window wide pavilions separated by paired doorways set well back. This organisation can be seen in its most straightforward form in the two southern ranges of St. James's Gardens, Nos. 1-8 and 47-54 which each comprise four pairs of the standard house.

The basement excavation is comparatively shallow so that the doorway is approached by some half dozen steps. The ground storey is stuccoed without channelling and the stucco is terminated by a boldly projecting subsidiary cornice at first floor level. Within the ground storey windows and front door alike have semi-circular heads with moulded archivolt which spring from a moulded impost extending the full width of the building thus causing the ground storey to read as arcading. The two main windows of each house at this level extend downwards to floor level and are guarded by low iron trellises set on a deeply projecting sill which runs the width of the pair for each house. The trellises are of a simple X pattern, the X being broadened so as once again to emphasize the horizontal dimension. The height of the stuccoed portion of the houses—that is to say the ground floor raised upon its basement pedestal emphasizes the importance of the ground floor rooms as against those on the first floor, the tall round-headed windows being appropriate to the principal rooms which from their pleasantly elevated position enjoy a fine view of the central gardens.

Above the subsidiary cornice the first floor windows rise immediately. They are still tall but they do not dominate the windows of the ground floor. They are furnished with moulded architraves, a plain frieze and cornice. The effect is dignified and restrained eschewing for example the use of the console bracket to support the cornice which was by this time becoming almost universal in that position. Above the heads of the first floor windows the wall face is again divided horizontally by a minor but deeply projecting moulded string in painted stucco which serves also as a sill to the second floor windows. These windows have a moulded architrave which at the head engages the frieze of the crowning entablature and in this way the whole wall surface of the house is organised with more than usual precision. The crowning cornice itself, which is of substantial projection, is of a bracketed Italianate form surmounted by a blocking course. The cornice has been removed from some of the houses and this is the principal misfortune which has befallen the architecture of St. James's Gardens.

The end elevations of the shorter east and west ranges occupy an important position in the scheme and they are nicely treated as three-window wide returns of the main facades. The blind window panels are given the same dressings as those on the front and it is possible to follow here with particular clarity the closely knit architectural organisation. The basement is treated as a pedestal course upon which the arcaded ground floor is raised terminating in its own entablature. The crowning cornice is proportionate to the two upper floors as if a giant order coupled them in the palladian manner, but instead of this it is the separateness of the two storeys which is in fact emphasized by the second floor string. In this elevation the wall face between pavement and main cornice has no fewer than five sub-divisions and the windows are closely related to these. Also of major architectural importance are the chimney

stacks to these return facades which appear as an extension of the piers between the blind windows continued above the blocking course and linked by an open arch on the centre line of the elevation.

The consideration of these east and west blocks brings us to an ingenious departure from the straightforward pairing of houses which we have seen in the two southern ranges. In each of the two end blocks which are composed of five houses, a symmetrical composition is formed by placing an orthodox three-bay house in the middle of two pairs of characteristic St. James's Gardens houses, the outer pairs being linked by their doorways. The central three bay house is placed about 18 ins. forward of its neighbours, the effect being to produce a 'palace facade' with a centre pavilion of seven bays, the three centre bays being additionally emphasized, linked by recessed wings to two-window wide outer pavilions. This variation on the original basic theme is one of the most interesting points of the layout. In the single long range on the north side the same expedient is used by inserting a three-bay house at No. 19 so that a symmetrical block of three houses is flanked by two of the standard pairs on each side. The unexecuted terrace would no doubt have been treated in the same way so as to produce a complex of subsidiary symmetries each symmetrical about the major axis and each related to the central architectural theme of the paired house.

The regular patterns of the groupings I have described are only disturbed by some variations in the upper parts of the links above the front doors.

St. James's Gardens must in my opinion be regarded as an integral part of a major estate development—one of the two estates which give this part of Kensington to the north of Holland Park Avenue its special character. In May 1965 the Greater London Council wrote to the Royal Borough of Kensington expressing its view as to the importance of the Norland and Ladbroke Estates stating 'the Council considers that this area merits special consideration since it constitutes a spectacular piece of landscape and town planning'. The houses covered by the order under consideration are not at present included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural interest under Section 32 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1962; nevertheless I consider that both intrinsically and as seen in context they do possess a special architectural interest to a degree which amply warrants their preservation.

In conclusion I offer the following brief summary of points in support of the order:—

The terraces comprising St. James's Gardens are of special architectural interest and one of the last expressions of the indigenous classical tradition of house building in London having been built at a time when the more eclectic stucco Italianate forms were in the ascendancy. The facades to the square are well composed and their clever articulation imparts variety without loss of formality or order. They relate closely to St. James's Church by Lewis Vulliamy which is one of the focal points of the Norland Estate houses, church and gardens forming together an architectural entity. The houses are eminently suitable for single family occupation and are for the most part well inhabited and maintained. The interiors are pleasant for present day occupation but the order does not provide for control over internal works. Although some of the stucco cornices have been removed the external detail is generally well preserved and it is within my experience that



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