

Annual Report

1968



GATEWAY, BY INIGO JONES, LEADING TO HOLLAND PARK

THE
Kensington
Society

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

Annual Report

1968



A WALK IN THE WOODLANDS

(Greater London Council, Parks Department)

The Kensington Society

PRESIDENT

THE RIGHT HON. LORD HURCOMB, G.C.B., K.B.E.

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THE RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF KENSINGTON

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Mr. D. Chesworth

Mrs. G. Christiansen

Mr. P. E. Clarke

Mr. G. F. Dearbergh

Mr. H. Gandell

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

Mr. Ian Grant, F.R.I.B.A.

Mr. Keon Hughes

Dr. Stephen Pasmore

Sir Allan Quartermaine, C.B.E., M.C.

Mr. Edward Seeley

The Lady Stocks

Mr. R. T. D. Wilmot

HON. TREASURER: Mr. Keon Hughes

HON. SECRETARY: Mrs. G. Christiansen

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

HON. AUDITORS: Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd

Foreword

FOLLOWING THE PRACTICE of Lord Esher, our first President, I write a few words of introduction to this Report.

It describes numerous efforts by the Society, under the vigilant direction of our Honorary Secretary, to safeguard individual buildings or groups of buildings from destruction or degradation. In many of these efforts we are able to act with, or in support of the Borough Council. But inevitably there are some individual matters in which its outlook and the dominant interests of the Society conflict. All the more do we welcome the closer co-operation and the more sympathetic relationship which prevails now between the Council and its officials and ourselves, in contrast with the arm's-length attitude too often apparent in the past.

In particular, we welcome and, in general, support the policies of protection and enhancement of the amenities of the Borough which the Council has approved for our conservation areas. We congratulate it upon the initiative and breadth of view which it has shown in formulating these principles.

But it is essential to ensure that these areas are not eroded by individual exceptions made under the pressure of short-sighted, sectional and economic arguments. Insofar as it can, the Society will make it its aim to see that this does not happen. Great burdens will be thrown upon the Council and its expert staff in administering the policies which it has so opportunely and wisely enunciated.

In passing, the Society takes the view that Holland Park might well be left in the care of the GLC. The Park is used and valued by many Londoners who are not resident in the Borough and by naturalists from abroad, and its importance and character distinguish it entirely from the assemblage of lawns and flower beds which make up the ordinary urban park. If the Council is to be supported adequately in enforcing a policy which gives proper emphasis to the conservation of our amenities, it needs the good will of our Society. The Society's influence in turn must depend upon a greater membership and the backing of its efforts by a far higher number of Kensington residents, and indeed by all those who—perhaps subconsciously—enjoy and benefit from the architectural and civilised charm of many of the Borough's attractive areas through which they pass on their daily avocations.

The moment is peculiarly opportune for an appeal for more support and this we now make.

HURCOMB

Annual General Meeting

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held on 27th May, 1968 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.

In the absence of Lady Stocks, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Dr. Pasmore moved the adoption of the Report. He said he felt this was up to the Society's usual standard and, as could be seen from the Report, the Society had had a busy year. This was seconded by Miss Hurcomb and carried unanimously.

The adoption of the Accounts was moved by the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, Mr. Gandell, who read the Report from the Hon. Treasurer, who had asked him to make his very sincere apologies for his absence, owing to a long-standing prior engagement at the Mansion House. He said in his report that Income Tax recovered on covenanted subscriptions exceeded by £11 the equivalent amount for the 15 months covered by the previous accounts, and it was hoped that the number of these subscriptions would continue to increase. A Bring and Buy Sale organised by the Hon. Secretary, had increased the funds considerably.

The adoption of the Accounts was seconded by Miss Balian and carried unanimously.

The re-election of officers and Executive Committee was moved by Sir Allan Quartermaine, seconded by Mrs. Francis and carried unanimously.

The Meeting was followed by a talk by Mrs. Diana Paul, Chairman of the Town Planning Committee. She expressed her appreciation of the Annual Report, on which she congratulated the Secretary. She also thanked the Society for all the support given to her Committee. Their aim, she said, was for one unified Borough where at present there were separate groups throughout. Its predominant feature was the residential area. An amenity society was one of the best ways to help in planning the future Borough and she cordially welcomed the

Kensington Society's co-operation. She spoke of encouraging active public participation in planning and the possibility of widening a sub-committee by the inclusion of a representative each from the Kensington Society and the Chelsea Society.

A period was devoted to questions, after which Lord Hurcomb moved a vote of thanks to the speaker.

He expressed much appreciation to Mrs. Paul for her very interesting and comprehensive address. However, he said he was disturbed about the suggestion that Holland Park in particular should come under the local authority, and pointed out how very well Holland Park had been restored and cared for by, first, the London County Council and latterly by the Greater London Council.

THE MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY

It is with deep regret that we report the death of our late President, Lord Cholmondeley, who became President of the Society on the death of Viscount Esher in 1963.

He took a great interest in our activities and was keenly interested in the amenities of the Borough. He was frequently in touch with the Hon. Secretary and we record our gratitude for his interest during his Presidential years.

It was agreed by the Executive Committee that the Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley should be asked to follow her husband as President. Lady Cholmondeley, in declining, suggested that Lord Hurcomb should be asked to fill this position. She said that she would be pleased to be elected as a Vice-President of the Society. We are very happy to welcome her as a Vice-President of the Society.

THE RT. HON. LORD HURCOMB

Lord Hurcomb has been a member of the Society since its Foundation in 1953. He has been a Vice-President since 1963. He has lectured to the Society and on a number of occasions has spoken in the House of Lords on our behalf, and on matters affecting the amenities of Kensington. We are delighted to welcome him as President of the Kensington Society.

CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

At the first Committee Meeting after the Annual General Meeting, The Lady Stocks was elected Chairman and Mr. Edward Seeley Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee.

During the year, Mr. Donald Chesworth and Sir Allan Quartermaine have been co-opted to the Executive Committee.

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Under the Chairmanship of Dr. Stephen Pasmore, the Group has met on a number of occasions. A Report of the Group will be found on page 8 and Mr. Curle's paper on Victorian Slumland will be found on page 25.

BRING AND BUY SALE

A Sale was organised by the Hon. Secretary and held at 18 Kensington Square at the beginning of December.

Mrs. Christiansen would like to thank members who helped at the sale, in particular Miss Balian, Mrs. Boxall, Mrs. Francis and Miss Hurcomb. She would like to thank those who brought and bought, and our thanks are also due to Mr. Charles Margolis who supplied many articles at less than wholesale prices. This sale and the sale last year have proved a successful way of increasing the revenue of the Society. Mrs. Christiansen hopes to arrange a similar sale later this year, so please save your white elephants.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Society has dealt with various traffic problems throughout the year. Mr. Geoffrey Dearbergh is the Chairman of this sub-committee and a report from him will be found on page 10.

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA TOWN PLANNING DEPARTMENT

We have had a number of meetings with officers of the Town Planning Department of the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council throughout the year. We have been asked for our observations in a number of cases and have received frequent lists of planning applications awaiting determination by the Council. These have been seen and discussed by the Executive Committee and our comments have been sent to the Borough Council. The officers of the Planning Department have been very helpful in showing and discussing the applications. We welcome their co-operation.

PRESERVATION ORDERS

Apart from the Preservation Order on Kensington Square, we are pleased to report that the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council has placed an order on Nos. 20-26 Holland Street, and on Nos. 5-22 on the west side and 23-34 on the east side of Launceston Place. The Minister has confirmed these Orders.

BRIGHTER KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA SCHEME

Mrs. Christiansen donated a silver cup to be presented by the Kensington Society for the most original garden each year; it was won this year by Mr. R. Money, 9 Billing Street, S.W.10. Twenty Kensington Society plaques were again awarded to residents for window boxes of outstanding merit. These were presented by H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone.

The above were judged by the Brighter Kensington and Chelsea Scheme judges in June. We would again like to express our thanks to the Scheme's Honorary Secretary Mr. W. G. Thom for allowing us to take part and for arranging for the judging.

The Society would like to extend this award. The Hon. Secretary will be glad to have her attention drawn to any window box or courtyard which can be seen from the highway, to be considered for a

plaque. The plaques are made of enamelled aluminium and can easily be fixed to the front of the boxes. We would like to see many throughout the Borough.

A plaque was also given to Mrs. Macilwraith-Christie, 27^B Kensington Square, for a delightful display in her basement courtyard.

Our financial year was changed in 1967. Will members paying by Banker's Order please ascertain that their Orders are now payable on January 1st and *not* October 1st.

For the first time our Annual Report is carrying a few well chosen advertisements on the back pages. These will substantially help with the cost of printing. It is hoped that members will patronise these advertisers if possible, and mention that they have done so in response to their advertisement in our Annual Report.

The Local History Group

Stephen Pasmore

THE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP continues to flourish. Last year six papers were read to the Group—

Miss M. J. King on the Hippodrome Race Course.

Mr. B. R. Curle on the Potteries and Jennings's Buildings—Victorian Slums.

Miss R. J. Ensing on the Harrington Estate in South Kensington, which was based on a collection of deeds recently presented to the Library.

Miss E. Ffooks on the Kensington Turnpike Trust.

Miss Brockman on Campden Hill Villas—now part of Bedford Gardens.

Miss Keppel Barrett on Church Street.

Dr. Pasmore read a paper on Leigh Hunt and the history of Edwardes Square to the Hammersmith History Group on the 20th February, 1969.

There is no standard history of Kensington and many aspects of local history are either inadequately covered or not dealt with at all by existing published histories. The aim of the Group is to fill in some of the gaps and to reassess the older work in the light of modern research.

All interested members of the Society are welcome to join the Group, whatever their previous experience in this kind of work may be. Meetings are held at the Central Library, Hornton Street, W.8, and prospective members are advised to get in touch with Mr. B. Curle at the Library for further details. The subscription to the Society covers membership of the Group.

Architectural Details

Ian Grant

ONE OF THE MOST disturbing aspects in the matter of the preservation of buildings is the average owner's lack of interest in the maintenance of external architectural features.

The main reason seems to be ignorance on the part of the general public, concerned only with the financial considerations of revenue, who see cornices, porches, balustrades, string bands or drip moulds merely as useless excrescences which cost a lot to repair and protect.

In a more educated society one might expect that the value of ornament and architectural features, designed as an integral part of the exterior appearance of a building, would be appreciated and their importance for giving quality and balance would be accepted. Such appreciation does not appear any longer to exist.

Builders also must bear a large share of the responsibility for emasculation. Their operatives are no longer trained to correctly restore lost profiles, and the current trend which reduces everything into money values places any art at a low priority.

It is doubly unfortunate that Kensington, which is well in the forefront in the designation of Conservation Areas, should possess so many buildings faced in stucco, a material which is particularly vulnerable to the weather and to economy.

The provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act make no allowance for official policy in this field, and in fact buildings which do not figure on the Ministry of Housing and Local Government lists of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest enjoy virtually no protection, even though they may stand in Conservation Areas.

The Kensington Society does not agree with the opinion apparently held at the Ministry that the buildings themselves in many of the Conservation Areas are of no value, and the effect of the gradual erosion of the edges of the North Kensington areas should easily show the falsity of this.

It is quite evident that the size of new buildings is likely to be larger than that of the old, whilst the scale, dictated by the financial desire of the most for the least, becomes smaller.

Even where there is little danger of demolition however, and full occupation and use is being enjoyed, the observer's heart sinks at the sight of evidence of any external work, since this almost always entails chopping off some part of Kensington's essential stucco.

Modern techniques of fibreglass moulding would allow for the easy restoration of enrichments on a large scale, were the general public in the slightest degree interested in such a possibility, and one can only

hope that the Borough Council might undertake a programme of education.

This could perhaps be coupled with a scheme for help in finance and design, but such a campaign must founder if building owners show no interest.

Whilst civilised people are willing to spend vast sums on personal beautification, plastic surgery and dentistry, and would turn in pity and horror from a face without a nose, they are not moved in Kensington to any degree by the sight of the gradual and deliberate mutilation of their inheritance.

The Motorway Box and Kensington

Geoffrey Dearbergh

DURING THE PAST YEAR there has been increasing public interest in, and criticism of, the GLC proposal to build a 'box' of motorway standard around inner London as part of its road construction proposals for Greater London.

The criticisms upon amenity grounds have centred on damage to established residential districts, encroachment on open spaces and the harmful social consequences of cutting through established local communities or 'villages'; its effects will not be restricted to the particular land on which it is constructed or flow only from the work of construction; noise and 'visual intrusion', dirt and smell will be suffered for some distance on either side of the route when it is in operation.

The GLC's reply to this criticism is that against any such detrimental effects on amenity—the extent of which is disputed anyway—one must set one great benefit to amenity, namely, that the 'box' will take a great weight of traffic out of residential streets so as to restore suitable standards of residential environment where they have been lost and to preserve them where they still exist.

Kensington is, perhaps, fortunate in that the part of the box which affects it most closely—the West Cross Route—will not raise these amenity problems in so acute a form as will the parts forming the Northern and Southern sides of the 'box', which carve their way

through Hampstead, Battersea and Blackheath amongst other places. The West Cross Route, part of which, between the White City and Holland Park Avenue, is already under construction, can be made, through most of its length, to follow the line of the railway which forms the Western boundary of Kensington; there are the problems of the extent to which noise, dirt and so forth will adversely affect property on either side, but the actual physical destruction of houses and splitting of communities will be on a comparatively small scale.

There is, however, good reason to fear that the GLC forecast of quieter residential streets is, at all events as far as Kensington is concerned, nothing more than a wild guess; an expression of a pious hope that may never be fulfilled.

Volume 2 of the London Traffic Survey published in 1966 appeared to establish that the construction of the West Cross Route would bring these benefits to Kensington and when, in the past few years, 'short term' traffic measures have been introduced, injecting vast quantities of heavy traffic into residential roads, it has been said by the traffic authorities that these are only necessary until the construction of the West Cross Route as the 'long term' solution.

There has however, been occasion recently to ask the Chairman of the Planning and Transportation Committee of the GLC to confirm that certain roads the subject of such 'short term' measures—mainly Royal Crescent, Addison Road, Warwick Gardens and Pembroke Road—will in fact revert to residential standards with the building of the West Cross Route. From answers given by the Chairman and his officers it emerges, not only that the GLC does not know whether any of those roads can expect relief, but also that no study has been or is yet being made to determine what, if any, improvements in the standards of residential environment will be made in this or any part of Kensington, and that no forecast can be made before 1971.

There is certainly no suggestion that plans have been, are being, or will be made to ensure that benefits to residential amenity in Kensington will in fact result from the building of this road.

As the debate on the 'box' proceeds this will be one of the many issues that will need to be discussed.

A selection of cases dealt with

12

KENSINGTON SQUARE

It may be remembered from our Report last year that the Society had asked the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council to consider making a Group Preservation Order on the Square. The Council agreed that such an Order should be made. Objection to the Order was made by the owners of St. James House (13 Kensington Square) and by the College of Estate Management (15 Kensington Square). A Public Inquiry was held on 4th September, which resulted in the Minister confirming the Order. The Society was represented at the Inquiry.

27 KENSINGTON SQUARE

As stated in our last Report, the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council had refused planning permission to use the main part of this house for hostel purposes. An Appeal was made to the Minister. The Minister gave permission, subject to the use ceasing on or before 30th September, 1970.

LULU'S CLUB

A Public Inquiry is pending, following the Council's refusal for permission for an extension of the premises. The Society will be represented at the Inquiry, opposing the appeal.

NOS. 4, 5 AND 6 KENSINGTON SQUARE

An application has been made to the Borough Council for permission to demolish these houses and erect an hotel building. The Society has strongly opposed the application for hotel use, as being inconsistent with the residential environment of the Square. Residents in the Square have been notified by the Society of the proposal.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE HOTEL ON THE WOOLLANDS SITE

An application was made in 1967 for the development of this site, for an hotel building comprising a three-storey podium covering the whole site, surmounted by a tower block in the form of a cross 255 feet high.

The Society supported the Westminster Society in opposing this development, and there was considerable local objection. The plan was called in by the Minister of Housing and Local Government. A Public Inquiry was held in February 1968. In his report the Minister's Inspector said that the proposed building would add notably to

London's architecture and he recommended that planning permission should be given. However, the Minister said 'High buildings, whether isolated or in groups, in such close proximity to the Royal Parks, could be justified only in the most exceptional circumstances'. He refused planning permission.

Planning application has recently been made for a new scheme to erect an hotel 180 feet high. The proposed building would be circular, with 364 bedrooms on 14 floors, a single storey circular podium at ground floor level and a main cylindrical tower rising 15 storeys above it, standing on sculptural piers. The Kensington Borough Council are in favour of granting permission. The Minister has been informed and may call in the plan.

The Kensington Society has again supported the Westminster Society, in opposing the scheme, as still being too high so near the park.

137-139 LADBROKE ROAD

A number of applications for various developments have been made for this site. The present proposal would involve the demolition of the two very dilapidated houses and their replacement by a modern block. Mr. Ian Grant, the architect member of the Executive Committee says 'there is a strong precedent for blocks of flats of this sort of size along the south side of Ladbroke Road. The sad thing is that, although this is supposed to be a conservation area, without in any way breaking the law, the developers can build blocks on the site of existing houses of this sort which will eventually change the character of the area completely. The general height in the district is already gradually rising and, of course, the scale of the multi-cell buildings is different from that of the old houses. The only safeguard which is effective is more statutory listing.'

22A PEMBRIDGE VILLAS

We have opposed several applications for planning permission for the redevelopment of this site during the year. The current application is for a block of eight flats, with eight parking spaces. The proposal only covers the triangular garden, originally covered by conservatories. It leaves the present house standing and appears to be the best scheme so far. We have asked that the external treatment should be softened and that the existing house should be properly reinstated externally.

METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD SITE, CAMPDEN HILL ROAD

An application has been made for a residential development on this site, comprising 77 flats, 6 penthouses, 5 town houses, management suite, parking for 369 cars.

The Society has opposed the number of car parking bays which are to be incorporated in the basement scheme and the destruction of the large mature trees along the Airlie Gardens frontage.

13

CAMPBELL COURT, QUEEN'S GATE GARDENS

Queen's Gate Gardens is one of the most beautiful and well kept Square Gardens in London. It was saved from the threat of an underground car park two years ago. The Society supported the residents, who fought vigorously to save their Square Garden and the Kensington Borough Council refused planning permission. The owners of Campbell Court have again applied for outline planning permission to build a garage under the Square Garden. As soon as we heard, we alerted the residents and they are again strenuously opposing the application. We have written to the Kensington Borough Council and to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

14

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING — JUNCTION OF KENSINGTON HIGH STREET AND KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET

We have received a number of complaints about the dangerous character of this crossing. A letter was sent to Kensington Borough Council, pointing out the danger, which is mainly due to the inordinately long period pedestrians have to wait midway on the island, when the eastbound traffic along Kensington High Street is stopped, the lights then favour traffic coming out of Kensington Church Street, thus giving pedestrians no opportunity to cross until the lights change again. The Borough Surveyor in his reply says, 'The particular point you make regarding the short duration of the phase given to pedestrians wishing to cross the eastbound carriageway of Kensington High Street is most apparent at off-peak periods, when a minimum of 10 seconds is allowed. My staff has taken this up with the Ministry of Transport and has received a promise that if at all possible this will be lengthened.' This letter was written on 12th November and no noticeable change has yet been made.

We have asked the Council if the existing subway, which is owned by Barkers and runs between their basement and the basement of Woolworths, could be made available to the public. The Council said they would take the matter up with Messrs. John Barker and Woolworths.

CROMWELL ROAD/GLOUCESTER ROAD/COURTFIELD ROAD/ASHBURN GARDENS

An application has been made to the Kensington Borough Council for the development of this site by the erection of a 2,070 bedroom hotel, plus a shopping precinct, offices, bars, restaurants and car parking for 766 cars.

The Society has opposed this application; we consider it is a gross overdevelopment of the site. Planning permission has already been given for two hotels in the area, one with 420 bedrooms and the other 500 bedrooms; the five-acre Wright's Lane site is likely to be developed in the foreseeable future. The Traffic sub-committee of the Society has told the Council, 'These plans and proposals will plainly raise a

lot of issues, but one that needs to be dealt with at once is the expected generation and attraction of traffic of such a development. It appears to us that the only result of putting this sort of traffic in Cromwell Road, Earls Court Road and Gloucester Road will be to force more traffic through the surrounding residential areas. The impact of this could be very widespread and end for all time the chance of preserving or restoring an acceptable residential environment.'

As we go to press, we learn that an exhibition entitled 'Prosperity and Environment—Why a High Hotel', has been arranged in connection with this development by the Council and the Developer and will be on show in the Banking Hall at Harrods, Knightsbridge.

Other cases with which the Society has been concerned during the year include car parking in front gardens, development of 11-13 Young Street, 3 Palace Green, use for the old Tea House in Kensington Gardens, change of use of 59 South Edwardes Square, demolition of 38 Holland Villas Road, Preservation Order Palace Gardens Terrace, development of 25 Hyde Park Gate, 14 Pembridge Crescent, 1-19 Earls Court Road and 239-253 Kensington High Street (corner site), 13 Clarendon Road, National Theatre Site, 83 Clarendon Road, control of advertisement 87-95 Cromwell Road, Nevern Square Underground Car Park.

15

Other activities

VISITS HAVE BEEN MADE to the following: Holland Park School, by kind permission of the Headmaster; the Banqueting House, Whitehall; Admiralty House; St. Bartholomew's Hospital; Royal Horticultural Gardens, Wisley; Savill Gardens, Windsor; Clandon Park; Puttenden Manor; Syon House; Firle Place; Lloyds; Old Bailey and The Stock Exchange.

In December a successful Bring and Buy Sale was held at 18 Kensington Square.

Future arrangements

16TH APRIL — 2 p.m.

A visit to the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 2 p.m. Tickets 17/6 including tea.

29TH APRIL — 2.30 p.m.

A visit to a new Square development in Kensington; Woodsford Square, Addison Road. The Architect and Developer will meet and talk to members. Tickets are required, 2/6.

14TH MAY — 6.15 p.m.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Leighton House, 12 Holland Park Road, W.14. Lord Hurcomb, President of the Society, will be in the Chair. The meeting will be followed by an illustrated lecture by The Hon. Desmond Guinness, founder of the Irish Georgian Society, entitled 'Irish Houses and Castles of the Eighteenth Century'. Please bring your friends.

5TH JUNE — 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Shrubbs has kindly agreed to follow his last lecture (18th century furniture) with a lecture on English Interiors 1800-1860, at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Meet main entrance. Tickets are required.

26TH JUNE — 2.30 p.m.

A visit to Good Housekeeping Institute. Numbers limited, tickets required.

15TH JULY — 1 p.m.

A visit to Chiddingstone Castle in Edenbridge, Kent. Coach will leave Kensington Square at 1 p.m. Tickets, including entrance, tea and coach, 25/-.

2ND SEPTEMBER — 8.15 p.m.

A visit to St. Paul's Cathedral for a performance of a Son et Lumière, which tells the story of the fifth Cathedral to stand on the site. Written by Robert Gittings, with the voices of Sir Ralph Richardson and John Neville, and with music directed by Christopher Dearnly. The story covers Wren's work, from the demolition of the buildings destroyed by the Great Fire in 1666 to the completion of the present building in 1708. Voices, music, sound effects and lighting, dramatise events from Wren's time to the present day, including the funerals of Nelson and the Duke of Wellington, St. Paul's in the Blitz and the nation's tribute to Sir Winston Churchill. Tickets 14/-.

9TH SEPTEMBER — 1.30 p.m.

A visit to the Royal Horticultural Gardens, Wisley. Our visits to the Gardens have usually taken place in the spring. The herbaceous borders and the roses should still be very well worth seeing in September. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1.30 p.m. Tickets 21/- including coach, entrance and tea.

21ST OCTOBER — 2.30 p.m.

A lecture tour by Mrs. Judith Bumpus at the Victoria and Albert Museum on English Glass. Please meet main entrance, 2.30 p.m. Tickets required.

17TH NOVEMBER — 2 p.m.

A visit to the Bank of England. Numbers are limited and tickets are required.

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Holland Park

THE SOCIETY IS IN FAVOUR of the care of Holland Park remaining with the Greater London Council. Lord Hurcomb, President of the Kensington Society, sent the following letter to *The Times* in February:

The Editor,
Sir,

18

Reference has been made more than once in your columns to the question whether some of the larger parks, now under the control and management of the Greater London County Council, should or should not be transferred to the Boroughs in which they happen to be situated. Strong arguments against such a transfer have been advanced in favour of leaving things as they are on Hampstead Heath.

Much the same considerations apply to Holland Park. Its history, its extent, its natural interest as a remnant of the country still surrounding Inner London even a century or so ago, and its present character as maintained by the late Lord Ilchester, and by the admirable care of the London County Council, all make Holland Park an open space comparable to the Royal Parks themselves.

Like the Royal Parks, it is used constantly by vast numbers of Londoners who do not live in the Borough, and the importance of keeping unimpaired its natural appearance, so different from that familiar in most municipal parks, distinguishes it from the scores of open spaces which may properly be subjects of transfer to local management.

The issue has been concisely stated in a remark attributed to the leader of the Kensington and Chelsea Council. 'What the Council wants to administer,' he is reported to have said, 'is the cutting of grass and tending of flower beds.' If that were all that was involved, there would be little room for argument. But that is precisely what is not involved. Holland Park's numerous and large enclosures, kept in their natural state, with many fine trees and a wealth of bluebells and other wild flowers, require a treatment and a specialised knowledge not normally possessed by those whose job it is to see to the cutting of grass and the planting of tulips. About 50 kinds of wild birds are seen in the Park in the course of the year and over 20 species nest. This again makes the Park in its present state a place of great interest to many Londoners who are not themselves ornithologists. It is a mistake to suggest that the more secluded Northern parts of the Park are insufficiently used or enjoyed. At all seasons of the year and at all times of the day they are frequented by many people, who prefer them to the more definitely recreational areas, which are seen to be crowded.

We do not doubt the desire of the Kensington and Chelsea Council to maintain the natural, as well as the architectural, features of the Royal Borough, but the expert staff of the wider London authority has shown itself to possess understanding and knowledge of the problems of making this exceptional open space serve the needs and tastes of all groups of the London population, in whatever Borough they happen to reside. We, therefore, venture to ask: Why not leave alone what is being excellently well done?

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd.)

President

Holland Park is of more than ordinary interest and possesses some unique features. The property was bought by the London County Council in 1952 for about a quarter of a million pounds. In order to make it available for the enjoyment of a much wider public, a number of changes had to be made and since then there has been further development in keeping with the general character of the grounds. Some of the most attractive features, however, date back to the original estate and were carefully restored by the LCC.

The 54½ acres of the present Park are only a part of the original estate but most of the distinctive features of the grounds have been preserved. One of the most celebrated of these features is the unusual and charming Dutch Garden. Adjoining the house, the garden extends to the former ballroom, now a restaurant. It was laid out in 1812 by Buonaiuti, the 'factotum' and librarian of the Hollands and was originally known as the Portuguese Garden. During the nineteenth century, however, England's relations with Portugal deteriorated, and so the name was changed. The garden consists of a formal and geometrical arrangement of flowerbeds, bordered with box and separated by straight gravel paths. Along its length runs an old brick wall covered with creepers. Possibly the only difference between the present garden and the original lay-out is that the paths have been widened to make room for mothers with prams to pass each other. In one of the alcoves is Rogers' Seat on which an inscription by the third Lord Holland commemorates his friend, Samuel Rogers, the poet and banker.

Adjoining the Dutch Garden and next to the arcades is the Iris Garden with its fountain and goldfish pool. It is in this part that in the early nineteenth century the first dahlias are said to have been planted by Lady Holland who probably introduced the flower into England. Floodlighting has recently been installed in the whole of this garden area and an attractive floodlit walk is open until late every evening.

Leading from the North Lawn to the woodlands is the rose walk, a pathway bordered by pink Caroline Testout roses. These were first planted there around 1894 by Lady Ilchester and some of the original roses still survive. The woodlands, known in the seventeenth century as 'the Wildernesse', stretch over 28 acres of the northern part of the park—the largest area of natural woodland in central London. Fenced paths lead through the woods which contain a great variety of oaks, birches, limes, chestnuts and cedars. Around these each spring bloom crocuses, daffodils, bluebells and rhododendrons; azaleas also abound in this area. Traces of the former Japanese Garden planned and established by Lord Ilchester are still to be found in part of the woodland. Some impressive yuccas remain as well as many fine magnolias, wistarias and other exotic plants.

19

Horticulturally, Holland Park is an extremely interesting place. In 1901, 4,000 separate species and varieties of plants were recorded and many still survived in the neglected grounds in 1952. These have been carefully conserved and increased, and there are now well over 3,000 different plants, including 1,500 varieties of trees and shrubs. A new collection of native British plants was started in 1959 and this now amounts to about 400 plants.

The woodlands are also rich in bird life. Although the nightingale has not been heard here since 1884, 50 different birds were counted in 1958 including owls, woodpeckers and redstarts. Pheasants have been specially introduced to this area and one of the most familiar sights—and sounds—in the proximity of the North Lawn and the yucca garden is the peafowl.

The first part of the property to be opened to the public in October 1952 was the woodland. In due course the remainder of the park was made available for public use and gradually more and more new features were introduced. Two new entrances were constructed—in Abbotsbury Road and in the road called Holland Park. The first of these is a vehicle entrance leading directly into the car park. The other, for pedestrians only, opens into a 'sun-trap' area with seats and flowers. from where a path leads through the woods. Another wrought iron gateway forms an imposing entrance from Kensington High Street.

Holland Park, however, fulfils more than a purely decorative function for it provides many facilities for sport and recreation. The Park possesses a football pitch and a cricket pitch, three cricket nets, two hard tennis courts, two golf nets, and a squash court. Children have long had their own free play area in the park and in 1965 a play park was introduced here. The premises are used by a local play group in the mornings and a One O'Clock Club for children under five and their mothers is shortly to be opened. For older people the Orangery, heated in the winter, provides a pleasant shelter and reading room and affords a charming view over the park.

Holland Park has a wide variety of attractions. Of great interest historically and horticulturally, its amenities have been extended to meet the needs of the mid-twentieth century. Yet an air of leisured seclusion still survives from an earlier age and the pleasures of the park, once confined to the few, can now be enjoyed by all.*

*Extracts from the Greater London Council Publication 'Enjoy Your Parks' series, No. 6, by permission of the Acting Chief Officer of the Greater London Council Parks Department.

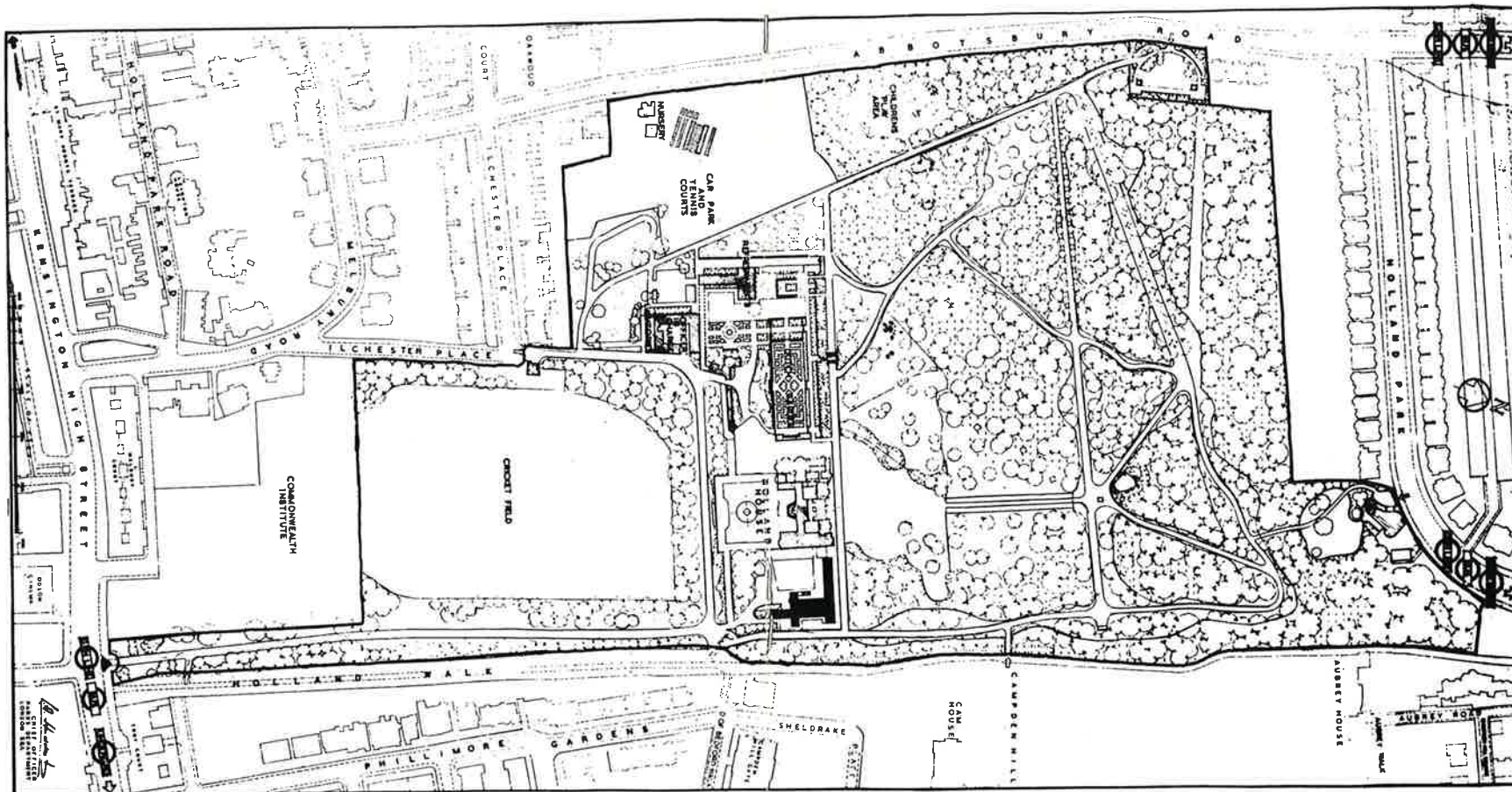


HOLLAND PARK, IRIS GARDEN AND LILY POND

Greater London Council, Parks Department



HOLLAND PARK, NEW ENTRANCE



HOLLAND PARK



MARKET COURT: a photograph taken c. 1875. Situated to the west of Jennings's Buildings, on the site of Barkers's, it was an enclosed court of the same kind that would be found in the Buildings.



TUCKER'S COTTAGE: the oldest house in Kensington Potteries and a good example of the type of dwelling common there.

London Development Plan

CONSERVATION AREAS AND BOROUGH COUNCILS' POLICIES ON CONSERVATION AREAS

Town Planning Act 1968

This Act, which received the Royal Assent on 25th October, is perhaps the most important planning legislation since the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

It recognises the value of public participation in the formulative stages of Town Planning and aims to speed up the planning process. It provides amenity societies with a new opportunity to mobilise public opinion to effective ends, and strengthens the machinery for the enforcement of planning control. New powers of control are given over the demolition or alteration of buildings of special architectural and historic interest. Building preservation orders will no longer be made, but in future any building which is statutorily listed under section 32 of the 1962 Town and Country Planning Act will be subject to control.

Local planning authorities will be required to inform local amenity societies in their area, of applications received by them to demolish listed buildings; a further safeguard is that national societies, e.g. The Ancient Monument Society, Council for British Archaeology, the Georgian Group, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Victorian Society will also be notified.

There is a wider discretion for local authorities in making grants for conversion or improvement to listed buildings.

The Civic Amenities Act 1967 requires local borough councils in the Greater London Area, in consultation with the Greater London Council, to decide which parts of the borough shall be designated as areas of special architectural and historic interest, and which they consider desirable to preserve and enhance.

Under Section 56 of the 1968 Act, the Ministers are empowered to issue direction to local planning authorities to establish conservation area advisory committees. The Minister advises that representatives be sought from national bodies, e.g. Royal Institute of British Architects and from *civic and amenity societies* to serve on these committees.

In July 1967 the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council appointed a Development Plan Sub-Committee to assist in preparing the local development plan. The Kensington Society and the Chelsea Society were each invited to appoint a representative to serve as a co-opted member of this Committee.

The Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council has, we believe, taken a lead in London in operation of the Act.

Eight areas have been considered and designated as conservation areas.

They are—

1. Thurloe Estate & Smith Charity Estate
2. Kensington Square
3. Ladbroke Estate
4. Norland Estate
5. Pembridge Estate
6. Royal Hospital Estate (Chelsea)
7. Cheyne (Chelsea)
8. Queen's Gate

There are still other areas being, or to be, considered.

Designation is one thing, the problem of how to make conservation effective another. However, we are delighted to give publicity to the policies which have been approved by the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council for conservation areas. The following is taken from the Council's memorandum.

Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council policies

6. Policies

XL. In order, therefore, to ensure that the aims of Conservation can be adequately and readily achieved, the Council has adopted the following series of policies. Many of these are, of course, an extension or continuation of planning standards which have been pursued for a considerable time in areas of high amenity and elsewhere in the Borough. They are set out under two main headings of Protection and Enhancement.

XLI. (i) Protection

- (a) The Council will not as a normal practice permit the material alteration or demolition of listed buildings.
- (b) Further Building Preservation action will be taken where appropriate, on fine buildings thought to be vulnerable, especially where they form a particularly important group.
- (c) New buildings on vacant sites, or buildings proposed as replacements will not only be judged as separate entities, but will be required, in terms of scale, character and materials to respect the design characteristics of the other buildings comprising the whole visual group. 'Infill' development in existing streets will be required to respect existing buildings, but in some cases residential development of particular individual sites contrasting form of greater height or bulk may be considered suitable particularly where the density and the resulting overall scene is considered by the Council to be appropriate.
- (d) The Council will maintain and make further tree preservation orders to prevent the loss of trees in the Conservation Area.

It will require any schemes for new development or site alterations to include appropriate tree planting and landscaping leading to the restoration of the street picture.

- (e) The Council will interpret very firmly the definition of development contained in Section 12(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1962. It will also use to the maximum extent the phrasing of Section 33 of the same Act, which provides control over any work on a listed building which is proposed to be carried out 'in any

manner which would seriously affect its character'. Similar care will be taken in the exercise of powers under Sections 40-46 of the 1968 Act. The following operations would, for example, be considered to seriously affect the character of a listed building:—

The replacement of Georgian glazing bars by sheet glass, or renewal of the bars by those of inferior quality or cruder section; the blocking up of window openings; the repair or replacement of stonework other than to the original detail and design; the permanent removal of projecting mouldings, balustrades or other architectural details which may from the safety point of view require repair or replacement; the permanent fixing of any form of equipment, apparatus, structure or machinery to the facade, being of a nature which does not require Town Planning permission or express consent.

- (f) Section 7 of the Civic Amenities Act, 1967, and Section 50 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1968, give the Council extended powers to purchase compulsorily (subject to confirmation by the Minister) any listed building, if reasonable steps are not being taken to preserve it.

These powers are available to the Council.

- (g) The Council will not normally consider applications for new buildings or extensions in 'outline' form, but will require (as they are empowered to do under Article 5(2) of the General Development Order, 1963) detailed plans and drawings including elevations showing the buildings in their setting.
- (h) Advertisements will be judged with respect to any positive contribution they make to the visual character of the street scene or area in which they are to be situated, and they should be designed with this in mind.

In general, internally illuminated perspex or similar box signs, especially projecting ones will not be appropriate.

In normal circumstances, certain advertisements may be displayed without express consent. The Council may well seek the Minister's authority to define the conservation area as an 'area of special control', eliminating these classes of exemption.

- (i) Section 12 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1962, sets out that planning permission is required for 'development'. The General Development Order, 1963, however, gives permission for certain classes of development, and there is normally no need for a developer undertaking work in these classes to make an application for planning permission. Under Article 4 of the General Development Order, the Minister or Local Planning Authority may make a direction specifying any development which they wish to remove from the permitted development classes. The Minister has indicated that he would be sympathetic to Article 4 directions in Conservation Areas and the Council will consider making such directions where appropriate. As part of this policy the Council may wish to secure the right to control the use of colour on building facades. This would apply to those street scenes where the use of different colours on individual buildings disrupts the architectural unity of the group.

- (j) Policies with regard to uses of premises will be directed to the furtherance of conservation aims without unduly restricting the normal life of the community. Industrial uses will not be appropriate, and proposals for office and commercial uses will be considered on their merits in relation to the type of operation, the proposed location, and the anticipated effect on traffic, parking and storage of vehicles.

(ii) *Enhancement*

The concept of a Conservation Area represents an attitude of creative planning and an application of the art of physical design. It necessarily involves some measure of preservation and is clearly different from an application of negative planning controls.

Although the Council will raise the policies (a) to (j) where necessary, the main emphasis will be directed towards positive measures for raising environmental quality initiated by the residents themselves and the three policy statements (k), (l) and (m) outlined hereunder are intended to enable such enhancement to be achieved. In fact Designation should be regarded as a statement of interest by the Council in encouraging co-operative action to secure common purposes.

- (k) To operate a scheme within Conservation Areas whereby grants may be made under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1968, and the Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act, 1962, such that together with any similar grant made by the Greater London Council from its Historic Buildings Fund, the joint sum will make a worth while contribution to the cost of the restoration and improvement of the suitable listed buildings.

It is expected that a programme over a period of years would result in all the listed buildings being, as far as is practicable, restored to original standards of design in terms of quality and appearance.

- (l) The formation of street or district associations to carry out co-ordinated improvement schemes for their area would receive the full support of the Council. Advice would be given when desired upon the setting up of such associations and on the design and implementation of schemes.

- (m) To seek, in consultation with owners and occupiers, the co-operation of local societies and organisations, such as the Chelsea and the Kensington Societies, and the Civic Trust.

The operation of the policies as a whole depends in great measure upon co-operation, from individuals, the Council, associations and societies. It is hoped that the policies of the Council of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea will give owners and occupiers confidence to carry out the improvement of their own properties.*

*Statement from the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council.

These Acts provide amenity societies with a new opportunity to mobilise public opinion to practical ends. To reach full potential for effective participation we must have the support of a wider cross-section of the community and thereby increase our membership. This at present stands at a little over 500—it ought to be 5,000 in a Borough as large as Kensington. So please encourage your friends to become members of the Society.

Beyond the Great Exhibition - a study of Victorian slum-land

B. R. Curle, A.L.A.

1851 WAS A HIGH-WATER MARK of the Victorian age. More than half of the population of 17,927,609 persons enumerated in the census of that year lived in towns, a situation unimaginable fifty years before. Railways were providing a speedy means of communication across the country, facilitating the flow of goods and breaking down the isolation of remote rural communities. For the increasing number of persons enjoying a rising standard of living, seaside holidays were becoming possible. The Great Exhibition proclaimed that England was the workshop of the world and, a triumph for the new railways, drew over 6,000,000 visitors to London during the 140 days that it was open.

The 'Crystal Palace' epitomized one aspect of Victoria's reign, the drive and initiative of her people, riding the crest of an industrial revolution and not yet aware of the breakers ahead. But of the many visitors to the exhibition who inspected Prince Albert's Model Lodging House for the working classes, few perhaps gave a thought, or were aware, of the terrible conditions in which many of the poorer classes still lived. They had not far to look, for little more than a mile from the exhibition site lay two areas of squalid slum, both situated in the Parish of Kensington. These, the Potteries and Jennings's Buildings, form the subject of this study.

The Potteries lay to the north of Holland Park Avenue in the area around Avondale Park. Pottery Lane roughly marks the eastern boundary and this name, together with a solitary kiln in Walmer Road, are the sole modern reminders of the Potteries. In the early nineteenth century the locality was still rural with a scattering of houses and a farm along the Uxbridge Road; Notting Barns Farm lay further to the north. It is said that one Lake, a chimney sweep and scavenger, driven from his London haunts by more fastidious neighbours, settled in the area, leased some land and invited other practitioners of noxious trades to join him in his sylvan retreat. On this low-lying and ill-drained tract of land a colony of pig-keepers and brickmakers was soon established. The main outline of this account is probably correct enough for the rate-books of 1814 confirm the existence of a Samuel Lake renting property in close proximity to a brickfield.

Whatever the settlement's origins, by 1838 there were sanitary problems, for an investigator for the Poor Law Commissioners

reported that 'there are some cottages at Nottingdale, inhabited by Irish families, and called the Potteries [which] are, as I was informed at the Kensington Board of Guardians, built over stagnant pools of water, which may be seen through the interstices of the floors. In some instances the floors have given way, and rest at one end of the room in the stagnant pool, while the other end, being still dry, contains the bed or straw mattress on which the family sleep.' Such conditions were a fertile breeding ground for disease and the cholera epidemic of 1849 struck the district heavily, 21 people dying out of a population of 1,056 and many others being incapacitated by the disease.

The Board of Guardians, at that date the sanitary authority for the parish, made some efforts to abate the pig nuisance. In September of that year magistrates orders were obtained against some owners for the removal of their pigs. The inhabitants replied with a petition to the Board asking for leniency as their livelihood was threatened and 188 families with 582 children would be affected. The Board decided to suspend proceedings at its meeting held on 11th October and was then presented with an illuminating document signed by the Board's medical officers giving their reasons why the summonses should be enforced.

According to this document sickness and mortality was very great and deaths from infectious diseases totalled nearly one half of all cases. Children in particular suffered heavily and over a three-year period no fewer than 80 per cent had died before reaching the age of fifteen years, while of these over ninety per cent were under five years of age. Furthermore, over the same period the *average* age of death in the Potteries was under twelve years compared with twenty-four in other poor parts of Notting Hill and with the national average of forty-five. The cholera had hit the district severely and the medical officers concluded that pig-keeping and bad drainage were the twin causes of much of the district's appalling record.

The minutes of the Board do not record any positive reaction to this report and in the following year no less a person than Charles Dickens took up the cudgels in 'Household Words'. After castigating local government and its seeming indifference to sanitary matters when any expense was involved or the interests of vestry members were concerned he continued 'In a neighbourhood studded thickly with elegant villas and mansions—namely, Bayswater and Notting Hill, in the parish of Kensington—is a plague spot scarcely equalled for its insalubrity by any other in London: it is called the Potteries. It comprises some seven or eight acres, with about two hundred and sixty houses (if the term can be applied to such hovels), and a population of nine hundred or one thousand. The occupation of the inhabitants is principally pig-fattening; many hundreds of pigs, ducks and fowls are kept in an incredible state of filth. Dogs abound for the purpose of guarding the swine. The atmosphere is still further polluted by the process of fat-boiling. In these hovels discontent, dirt, filth, and

misery, are unsurpassed by anything known even in Ireland. Water is supplied to only a small proportion of the houses. There are foul ditches, open sewers, and defective drains, smelling most offensively, and generating large quantities of poisonous gases; stagnant water is found at every turn, not a drop of *clean* water can be obtained—all is charged to saturation with putrescent matter . . . Nearly all the inhabitants look unhealthy, the women especially complain of sickness, and want of appetite; their eyes are shrunken, and their skin shrivelled.'

After some more comments Dickens continued 'Is there then no possibility of cleansing this more than Augean stable? None: the single but insurmountable difficulty being that some of the worst parts of the district are the property of one of the guardians!' Investigation, however, has modified this last statement. One Guardian, Richard Roy, owned a little property but was not on the Board after April, 1850. He attended few meetings during his term of office. As to the conditions, Dickens's phrases were not empty rhetoric for sober official reports bear them out. Even publicity of this kind seems to have had no effect, for six years later we find the newly appointed Medical Officer of Health complaining about the same nuisances and even quoting the same figures from the earlier reports to reinforce his arguments for action of some kind. All to no avail for it was not until his successor, Dr. Orme Dudfield, a more forceful personality, took over that at last the vestry began to stir.

What were the Potteries like in 1851? Apart from the accounts quoted above there is other evidence available to the modern researcher, some of which was not available to contemporaries. Firstly there are reports drawn up by the surveyor of the Metropolitan Sewers Commission, and the large-scale plans that went with them. One can eavesdrop on confidential reports made to the Board of Guardians and to the Sanitary Committee of the Vestry. The sexton's burial books are available and these not only list the addresses from which people were buried but their ages as well, and occasionally the cause of death. Last, but by no means least, there are the original enumerator's returns of the 1851 census which gives information on each household with a reasonable degree of accuracy. From these sources a picture of the area can be built up based on a solid foundation of fact.

From the large-scale plan of 1849 the crowded aspect of the Potteries is apparent with its many unpaved yards and serried rows of pig-styes. Pottery sheds and brickfields surround the area which is interspersed with stagnant pools of water, one of which, 'The Ocean', was calculated to occupy a space of some 50-60,000 square feet. The Medical Officer described this as being 'covered with filthy slime, and bubbling with poisonous gases', while the surveyor to the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers reported that the St. James National Schools adjacent had to keep all the windows on that side closed and that the health of the scholars was sometimes affected. In addition, open drains lay everywhere and 'The streets are unpaved and full of ruts, the surface is strewn with refuse of almost every conceivable description;

they are at times wholly unpassable. At *all* seasons they are in a most offensive and disgusting condition, emitting effluvia of the most nauseous character.' After this lyrical description the Medical Officer's comment that 'the people in general look sallow and aged, the children pale and flabby' comes as no surprise.

*Of the houses the surveyor reported that 'The majority . . . are of a most wretched class, many being mere hovels in a ruinous condition, and are generally densely populated'. The plan suggests quite small houses, possibly no more than one or two rooms in some cases. On the night of 30th March, 1851, 1,077 people inhabited the Potteries, the size of households ranging from 1 to 22 persons. As many as five families shared one house, though one family was normal. As might be expected, labourers formed the largest class with a nucleus of brick-makers and pig-dealers. There were 20 laundresses, most of whom employed several assistants, in the main members of their own family, and lower down the scale three washerwomen. There was a fair sprinkling of skilled tradesmen and shopkeepers, three lawyers, and odd representatives of such trades as chair bottomer, coach lace weaver and artificial flower maker, altogether an intriguing mixture of the skilled and unskilled. Although a few members of this community came from such distant places as Berwick-upon-Tweed and Plymouth, the majority came from much closer at hand. Fifty-five persons had been born in the Potteries, while two hundred and seventy-five had been born in other parts of Kensington. Other parts of London and the Home Counties were strongly represented while the Irish, despite the earlier reference to them, numbered no more than twenty-six. An analysis of the age groups shows a marked drop through the older age groups, from 286 males between 0-15 years to 12 at 65 or over. The women show a similar decrease. This is comparable with the high child mortality quoted above and further analysis of the first age group confirms this. Despite this or because of it a fair proportion of families had several children and a sample of the first 100 families shows between 4 and 7 children of all ages living at home.

In the conditions outlined infectious diseases were rife and a graph of deaths from these during the nineteenth century gives prominence to this area. Although there is no intention of carrying this account on to a later period in this paper it can be said that the Potteries posed a problem, both to the local authorities and to the charitable and religious organisations that descended upon the area throughout the nineteenth century. The library possesses an attractive set of four hand-coloured lithographs of the Hippodrome Racecourse. In the background of one can be seen a smoking kiln with distant views of pleasant rolling countryside beyond but to balance this idyllic picture it would be well to bear in mind the complaints of later neighbouring residents about the smells when the fat-boilers engaged in their nefarious and illegal trade during the night hours.

One of the Concise Oxford Dictionary's definitions of a 'rookery' is a 'crowded cluster of mean houses or tenements' and this describes Jennings's Buildings perfectly. Other London 'rookeries' might receive more attention in the press and in books dealing with low life but conditions in Jennings's Buildings were bad enough as this quotation from the first annual report of the Medical Officer of Health in 1856 reveals. 'Here', he wrote, 'a separate family inhabits each room; there is no privy accommodation; there is no water in, nor drain from the houses; there is no convenience within the buildings, all must be sought for without.' Some of these houses were let as common lodging houses at 3d. a night. There was no through ventilation, no back yards, no drainage, no water supply. Some of the rooms were so crowded that only 112 cubic feet of air sufficed for each inhabitant (the normal level was considered to be 500-1,000 cubic feet). One dark room contained a family of nine, the father being ill with pleurisy. Despite the provision of new water closets human excreta lay everywhere and iron water taps recently installed had been hammered down. As if this was not enough, even the dead plagued the living, for when a death took place 'the body remains decomposing and unburied for perhaps a week, sometimes longer, amidst remaining members of the family who take their daily meals, and sleep around the dead body'. The Medical Officer summed it all up by saying that the inhabitants were 'mostly the lower Irish, whose habits are very filthy'. It is not surprising to find that the average mortality was 36 per 1,000 and that 61.3 per cent of all deaths were of infants under five years of age.

In an epidemic such an area would be heavily hit, and in the cholera outbreak of 1849 Jennings's Buildings and the Potteries between them contributed 51 deaths out of a total of 128 for the whole parish. As, in 1851, the combined population of these two areas came to 1,909 out of a total population of 44,053 the proportion of deaths can be put in its true perspective. By contrast, in the succeeding decade the mortality rate for Brompton was below that of Cheltenham, then considered to be the healthiest town in England (1871—14.7/1,000 against 17.4/1,000). In the parish registers of 1849 (sexton's copy) 103 burials out of a total of 950 for the Kensington Town area of the parish are recorded for these two areas, or nearly one ninth of all deaths. 1851 was a more normal year with 41 burials, but the average age for these was 18 years 8 months for the Potteries and about 15 years for Jennings's Buildings. The latter area was much more compact and was limited along its boundaries by a high brick wall. The 1,000-odd inhabitants of the Potteries were spread over some nine acres but the 836 occupants of Jennings's Buildings were packed into little more than an acre with results that the Medical Officer had drawn attention to in his first report. In 1849 the Board of Guardians listed the following examples of overcrowding in the parish in a letter to the General Board of Health. They stated that 'It has been ascertained that one room 14 ft. by 14 ft., is occupied by four married couples.

'In a room 16 ft. by 12 ft. accommodation is provided for ten adults. In winter it is always filled, but at present it is comparatively empty, as there are only two married couples and three children.

'A back room, 15 ft. by 19 ft., is now occupied by three married couples, and three single women; while the front room, through which they pass, contains one married couple and a single man.' Other cases are quoted but it is obvious that living conditions like these would make Osborne's 'Live like Pigs' seem like a children's charade.

*A photograph of Market Court, an adjacent slum, taken about 1865, gives some idea of the type of accommodation in Jenning's Buildings. Here the trouble appears to have been, to quote the Medical Officer of Health, 'the lowest Irish'. The 1851 census reveals that 510 out of the 836 inhabitants had been born in Ireland and that a fair proportion of the 237 inhabitants born in Kensington were younger children of these families. Natives of London and the Home Counties formed a small minority of the total—53 in all. Most of the Irish came from County Cork and probably entered England by way of Fishguard and Bristol. 'Birds of a feather flock together' and Kensington, on the Great West Road and with an established colony, would attract its quota of newly arrived immigrants to the Buildings just off the south side of the High Street, at the east end.

The occupations are typical: 210 labourers of whom 62 worked in the neighbouring market gardens together with 58 garden women; 27 laundresses and 28 washerwomen plied their trade though one doubts whether their customers were satisfied with the results. There were 17 charwomen and 15 skilled tradesmen while one 'British lace maker' was represented. Three Chelsea pensioners found sanctuary in the Buildings which also formed a base for 44 street traders whose way of life can be found in the pages of Mayhew. The general tone was lower than that of the Potteries which is no compliment to the latter.

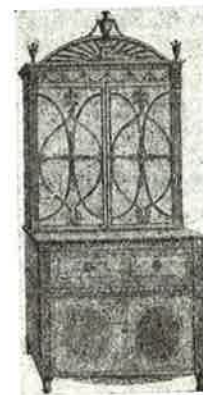
Although both these areas were surveyed with a view to improving the drainage and water supply, one of the prime causes of the squalid and disease-prone conditions, the expense of such schemes always proved stumbling blocks, coupled, no doubt, with the reluctance of the local authority to spend money on such property together with the legal difficulties of getting owners to consent to such changes which might involve them in expense.

This paper is but a short and incomplete study. More, for example, could be learnt about the residents and the movement of families by comparative study of the census returns of 1851 and 1861 and it should be possible, using the surviving records of the Board of Guardians, to gain some idea of the proportion of workhouse inmates who came from these areas. One would also like to know something about the owners of these properties, what status they held in the parish,

*See plate facing page 21

and the amount of income they derived from them. One would like to know more details of the houses themselves and the incidences of infectious and other diseases in them. All these questions could be answered to some degree of fullness using surviving material and they do not exhaust the possibilities. I hope at any rate to have shewn that it is possible to learn something of the lives and living conditions of the humbler members of Victorian society as well as those of their more illustrious and better documented social superiors.

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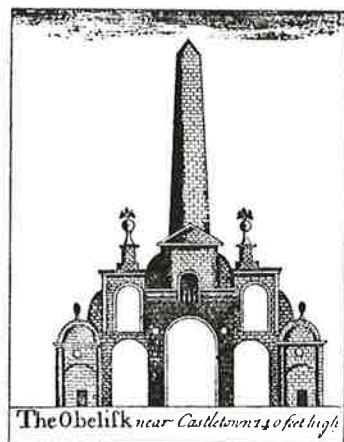
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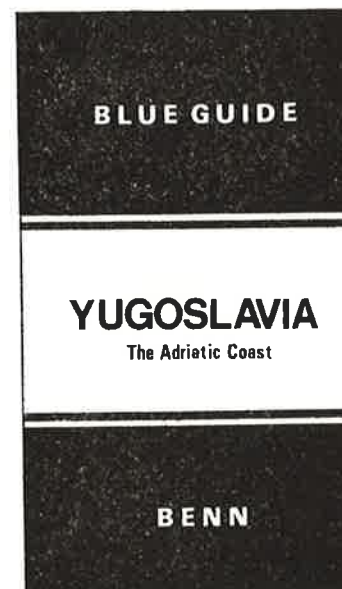
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