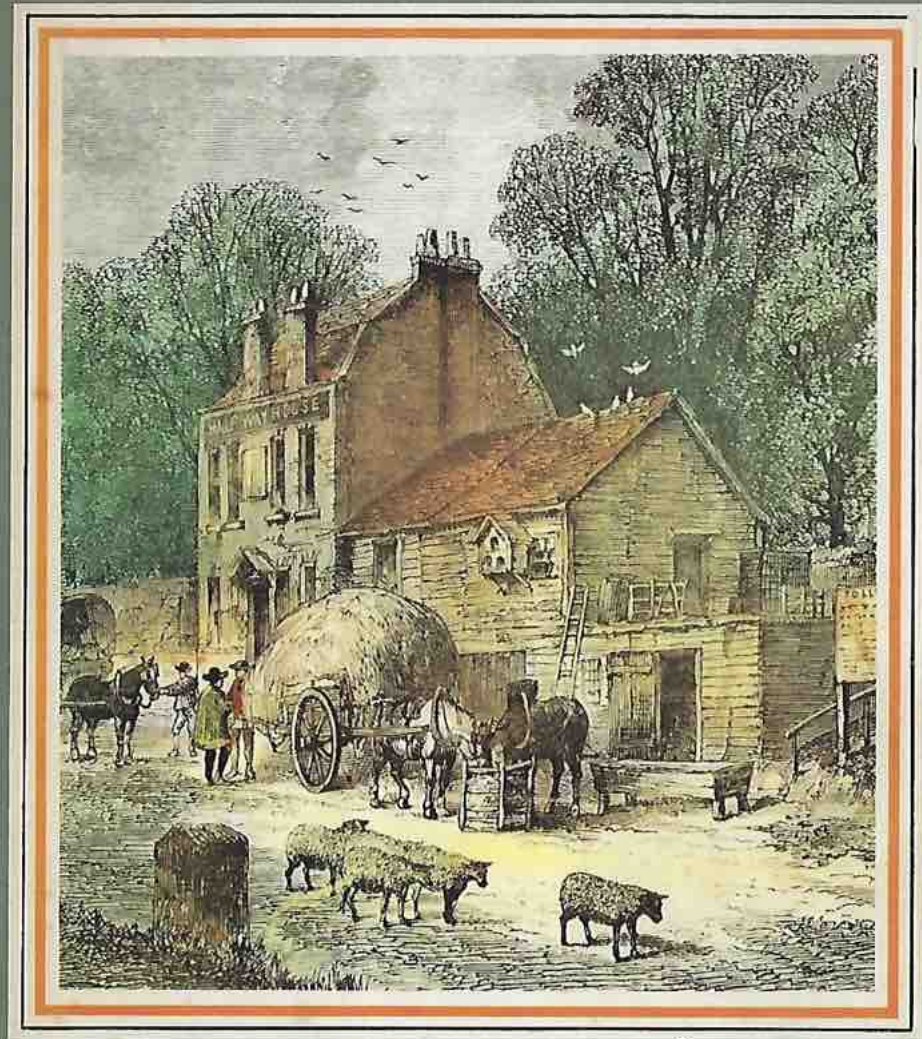


Eons Court in 1918



105

106

Holland Park

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

Kensington Theatre

# Annual Report

1972-1973

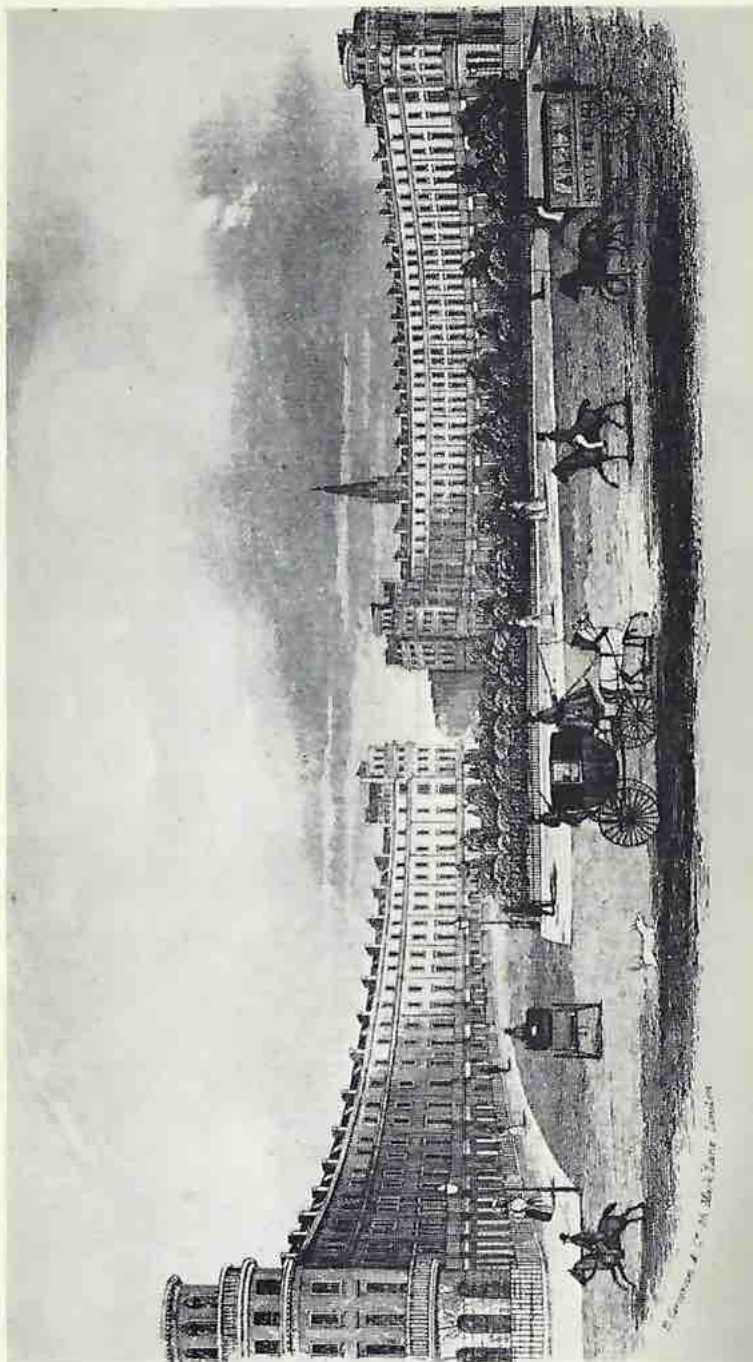
THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

# Annual Report

## 1972-73

FRONT COVER

*Kensington Road, 'Halfway House' Inn*



VIEW OF ROYAL CRESCENT, NORLAND ESTATE, NOTTING HILL

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# The Kensington Society

PATRON

H.R.H. PRINCESS ALICE, COUNTESS OF ATHLONE

PRESIDENT

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

VICE-PRESIDENTS

THE DOWAGER MARCHIONESS OF CHOLMONDELEY

THE RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF KENSINGTON

THE LADY STOCKS

COUNCIL

Mr. Geoffrey Agnew

Mr. Hardy Amies

The Hon. Mr. Justice Barry

Mr. W. W. Begley, F.R.HIST.S., L.R.I.B.A.

Sir Hugh Casson, R.D.I., F.R.I.B.A.

Mr. Alec Clifton-Taylor

Sir Trenchard Cox, C.B.E., F.S.A.

Mr. S. J. L. Egerton

Prof. Arnold Toynbee, D.LITT., D.C.L., F.B.A.

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

Mr. William F. Grimes, V.P.S.A.

Sir John Pope-Hennessy, C.B.E., F.B.A., F.S.A.

The Hon. Mr. Justice Karminski

Mr. Oliver Messel, C.B.E.

Lady Norman, J.P.

Sir Duncan Oppenheim

Lord Spens, K.B.E., Q.C.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN : THE LADY STOCKS

VICE-CHAIRMAN: MR. EDWARD SEELEY

Mr. T. B. H. Brunner

Mrs. G. Christiansen

Mr. P. E. Clarke

Mr. G. F. Dearbergh

Mr. Charles Farrer

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

Mr. Keon Hughes

Mr. de Vere Hunt

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

AUDITORS: Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd

## Foreword

In her ninetyeth year, we are happy to express to H.R.H. Princess Alice our congratulations, and our grateful appreciation of the continued active and practical interest which she is good enough to show in the Society's well-being.

Twelve months ago Professor J. M. Richards asked, What one expects of a High Street—a pertinent question indeed for any resident of Kensington. The Society responded to the Borough Council's admirable policy of informing itself as fully as possible about the views of those likely to be affected by its decisions and expressed our own views in a careful memorandum—repeated in summary form in this report and explained in meetings.

We realise the function of our High Street as an important through route into and from central London and as serving a famous shopping area. But we doubt in particular the need or the justification for so large an allocation to office accommodation not related to the Borough's own essential needs as that proposed and we regret the apparently inadequate emphasis laid in current municipal thinking upon the primary importance of the residential needs of those who live and wish to go on living in the Royal Borough.

We want a High Street through which it is agreeable to pass—a street which is animated and lively, if you like, but not garish, hectic or blaring with mechanical music, a street which meets the modest shopping requirements of genuine residents as well as those who want cosmopolitan shops and the establishments which supply the garments in demand by all the world.

Good buildings, which are not lacking, and foremost among them the old Library, should be respected and retained, and the corner at Earls Court Road especially calls for dignified treatment. The Society feels that an urgent decision to give this site the treatment for which it has so long called could set a standard and a scale which would influence the inevitable developments to follow eastwards.

An examination of the selected planning applications dealt with during the year gives some faint idea of the burden of work imposed on the expert officials of the Council whose duty it is to deal with them, and also upon our Honorary Secretary, Mrs. Christiansen, whose vigilance protects the Society's interests and the amenity of Kensington in so many cases. To her and those members of the Committee able to help her we are greatly indebted.

All parts of the Borough, North as well as South, receive their share of attention and it should not be overlooked that the Society has urged the Council not to neglect the details, including 'stucco enrichments', which add so much to the character and charm of the buildings of older centuries and which can still be seen in many parts of the Royal Borough.

HURCOMB.

## Annual General Meeting

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held in The Orangery, Holland Park, on Wednesday, 17th May, 1972, at 6 p.m.

The President, The Rt. Hon. Lord Hurcomb, GCB, KBE, was in the Chair, supported by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, The Lady Stocks.

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.

Lady Stocks moved the adoption of the Report and the Accounts for the year ended 31st December, 1971, seconded by Mrs. Francis and carried unanimously. Lady Stocks praised the excellence of the Report both in presentation and content, and recorded how gratifying it was for the Kensington Society to be the first gathering in The Orangery after its closure for many months for repair work. The Greater London Council were congratulated on the finished work.

The Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Keon Hughes, presented the Audited Accounts and pointed out that income from subscriptions, advertisements and the Annual Sale of Work had all increased from the previous year. As expenses, chiefly postages and telephone and also printing had all increased the resulting balance was not very large and the position only just satisfactory. It was agreed to consider the suggestion that the Deposit Account of £632 should be placed with a Building Society to attract higher interest.

On the proposal of Miss Balian, seconded by Miss Dunn, the Officers and Executive Committee were elected *en bloc* for a further twelve months.

The Executive Committee agreed also to consider the point of publishing a regular News Letter, by post, to keep members in closer touch with the work of the Society. The President mentioned the very heavy cost of postage and duplicating involved and that the local press regularly reported the work of the Society.

This concluded the meeting which was followed by a talk by Councillor Peter Methuen, Chairman Town Planning Committee, accompanied by Mr. A. C. C. Hudson, Town Planning Officer. Mr. Methuen enlarged on the Council's aim, under three headings:—

To make the northern end of Kensington fit to live in;

To make the middle and south part pleasant to live in;

That rates should be kept at a level enabling people to live in Kensington.

Professor J. M. Richards followed with a short but forthright talk on 'What One Expects of a High Street'.

#### OBITUARY

We report, with deep regret, the death of Lady Helen Esmé Megaw.

Lady Megaw restored No. 25 Kensington Square in the early '30s and had lived there since. She was an ardent collector and an authority on Queen Anne furniture.

She was a founder member of the Kensington Society and over the years she has been very generous to the Society. We shall sadly miss her interest.

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#### SQUARE GARDEN RAILINGS

Members of the Kensington Borough Council continue to talk about the desirability of restoring garden railings. In 1970 the Council agreed with the Society that the private garden squares formed an essential part of the conservation areas and said 'It is our opinion that in order to pursue our policies of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the areas, the power to assist in the restoration of the surroundings is one that should be available to the Council. We have, therefore, made representations to the London Boroughs Association suggesting that a suitable amendment should be made to existing legislation to enable this assistance to be given'.

This power has now been given in the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act. There are many square gardens in Kensington still with war-time netting; some of these squares are in bed-sitting room areas, where residents are transients, and very unlikely to care whether railings or netting, fences the square garden. We have asked the Council to prove their concern about enhancing the character and appearance of the areas by restoring all square garden railings throughout the Borough, whether assisted or not.

We would urge residents to support the Society by writing to the Council.

#### A CONFERENCE ON THE COLVILLE/TAVISTOCK STUDY

was held in September under the Chairmanship of The Lady Stocks. Mr. Frank Clinch, Director of Development, who headed the study team of this area, was the main speaker—other speakers were Mrs. Dennington, formerly Leader of the Opposition GLC, Professor Peter Hall, Professor of Geography at Reading University, Councillor Peter Methuen, Chairman of Town Planning and Mr. Robert Vigers, GLC member for South Kensington. Mr. Clinch's report is printed in full on page 17.

#### KENSINGTON HIGH STREET DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dearbergh, Chairman of the Sub-Committee dealing with this matter, has written a report, see page 25.

We welcome the Study Group set up by the Edwardes Square Scarsdale Association. This group has already done invaluable work and has arranged two public meetings.

#### RETIREMENT FROM THE COMMITTEE

Miss Balian retired from the Committee during the year owing to ill health. Miss Balian joined the Committee in 1965 to help with the secretarial work. Apart from typing letters, she was active in many other ways. Her help has been of inestimable value. We are glad to see her looking so much better. She continues to give any help she can to the Society.

We also regret the resignation of Mr. Charles Farrer. It will be remembered that Mr. Farrer organised a very successful Public Meeting in 1971, bringing to the notice of the Borough Council the residents' great concern about the general deterioration of conditions in Kensington.

#### BRING AND BUY SALE

A sale was again organised by the Honorary Secretary in her house in Kensington Square at the beginning of December. We are grateful for the help given by members. The proceeds of the sale, with donations, was £334.30, less £126.18 for the cost of new merchandise.

#### PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS

A number of photographs have been taken during the year, particularly of buildings scheduled for alteration or demolition. We would welcome any help members can give in keeping a photographic record of the Borough.

#### ANNUAL REPORT

The Secretary would like to record her appreciation of the help given by Mr. Norman Birch of Messrs. Berryman & Son in preparing this Report.

#### LOCAL SOCIETIES

We welcome the support given by local societies. A number continue to be corporate members of the Kensington Society (subscription £5.25 annually). Reports will be found from these societies on page 44.

#### DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge donations we have received during the year, in particular £100 received from the T. B. H. and H. V. Brunner Charitable Trust. The costs of the Society have greatly increased and the more work we do the more money we require. Printing and postage costs are particularly heavy. A number of our members who pay by Bankers Order are still only paying the original subscription of £1.05. A great number of our members are Life Members who paid £10.50

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in 1953, the year the Society was founded. The minimum subscription is £2.10. The Society is registered as a Charity and

'The objects of The Kensington Society are to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington by stimulating interest in its history and records, by protecting its buildings of beauty and historic interest, by preserving its open spaces from disfigurement and encroachment, and by encouraging good architecture in its future development'.

Please encourage your friends to become members.

#### HEAVY LORRIES

A letter was sent to the Kensington M.P. and to the Minister of Transport Industries and to the G.L.C., supporting the views put forward by the Civic Trust in opposing an increase in the maximum gross weight of lorries from 32 tons to 44 tons. The Society endorses the Trust's view that lorries conforming to the *existing limit* are causing widespread environmental damage. The Society would certainly favour a scheme for the exclusion of heavy lorries from a large area of central London as put forward in the 'Traffic and Environment Discussion Paper' of the G.L.C. We are of the opinion that such an area should include Kensington and Chelsea.

#### OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

In 1969-70 our main concern was about the number of planning applications for hotel development; our concern was well justified as can be seen in South Kensington. Our great concern in 1973 is office development; as in hotel development, it more often than not means the loss of residential area and it almost always changes the visual aspect.

#### TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (AMENDMENT) ACT 1972

This new Act makes two important provisions. It enables the local planning authority to control the demolition of unlisted buildings in 'conservation areas'. Previously, such control only applied to buildings which were listed as having architectural or historic interest. The Act also provides some additional Exchequer assistance for conservation.

#### ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea decided at their meeting on 15th March, 1972, to establish an Environment Advisory Committee with the following terms of reference:—

1. 'To discuss long-term development plans affecting the Borough;
2. To discuss the environmental implications of current Committee decisions with a view to making policy recommendations for their future guidance.'

The Committee formed included members of various borough committees, three members of the Minority Party on the Council, representatives of the Kensington and Chelsea Societies, the London

Architectural Society and the Chamber of Commerce. Two other non-members of the Council, distinguished in the Borough for their environmental knowledge, were also elected. Councillor Sir Malby Crofton was appointed Chairman and Councillor Peter Methuen Vice-Chairman. The two non-members of the Council appointed are Lord Esher and Mr. Simon Jenkins. The Committee has met three times. Mrs. Christiansen has represented the Kensington Society. The Chelsea Society, at the first meeting, asked if a policy could be formulated with regard to the erection of additional storeys. This is a matter which has been of great concern to the Kensington Society. In October we welcomed the following report by the Council:—

The Council will view all proposals for the erection of additional storeys in the context of the height of neighbouring buildings. If a proposed storey would rise above the general roof line, and particularly if it would rise above a hitherto unbroken parapet or ridge line, and thereby obtrude upon an existing skyline, there is a presumption against planning permission being given. As a general rule, however, additional storeys may be permitted in principle if there are already such additions existing as a precedent in the immediate vicinity or terrace. Thus all proposals will be judged in relation to—

- (i) their effect upon the character of the street or terrace;
- (ii) the design relationship to the building itself; and
- (iii) their effect upon the skyline as seen from neighbouring houses and streets.

Particular emphasis is given to these factors in designated conservation areas, and in these areas we intend to prepare a statement of policy in the near future.

The Council will expect to see that any additional storey is designed to safeguard daylight and sunlight to neighbouring land and buildings.

Generally, any additional storeys should be set back from the front and rear elevations of a building in order to allow a reasonable amount of daylight to reach properties opposite. It is considered that this lighting is safeguarded if such additional storeys are set back to rise from behind a parapet gutter within a line drawn at an angle of 45° from the top of the existing parapet wall. A set-back in this form also minimises the visual impact of the new storey as seen from the street or from other houses nearby.

(In certain circumstances sunlight criteria referred to in 'Daylight and Sunlight' issued by the Department of the Environment will require a greater set-back.)

This consideration, i.e., the set-back, also applies to brick fins which are often built on the party walls on either side of an additional storey. These must be kept to the minimum size compatible with fire regulations.

In certain circumstances dormer windows will be allowed to intrude outside this 45° line but such windows should not have a width of more than half of the total frontage width.

The style, size and positioning of windows on the elevations of the additional storey should, where practicable, match or be in architectural sympathy with the windows on the lower storeys of the building.

More detailed consideration is being given to this question in conservation areas and it is anticipated that a further policy note will be published on this subject.

## European Architectural Year 1975

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Lady Dartmouth, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the U.K. Council, introduced the subject of the European Architectural Heritage Year at the November Environment Advisory Committee.

She outlined the principles 'to awaken the interest of the European peoples in their common architectural heritage; to protect and enhance buildings and areas of architectural or historic interest; to conserve the character of old towns and villages; and to assure for ancient buildings a living role in contemporary society'. Lady Dartmouth said, in Britain the primary aims of the Year are:

- A. Schemes of improvement in the 2,000 Conservation Areas so far designated under the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Removal of through traffic and of street car parking, the creation of pedestrian precincts, the upgrading of historic squares, new uses for old buildings, removal of overhead wires and street clutter, tree planting and landscaping, more appropriate street lighting.
- B. The formation of local Historic Buildings Trusts possibly operating on the "revolving fund" principle, whereby properties are acquired, restored and then sold to enable the proceeds to be ploughed back into further restoration; also to bring into being a national revolving fund upon which local Trusts can draw.
- C. Education in, and publicity for, architectural conservation. Special competitions are planned.

A brochure is to be produced in 1975 to advise the other European countries of our programme. Schemes must be submitted by the end of 1974 for the official brochure. Residents and Amenity Organisations were invited by the Kensington Borough Council to submit suggestions for the scheme by the middle of January.

At the Council's meeting in February, the Kensington Society put forward two schemes for improvement:

### 1. *Royal Crescent—St. Ann's Villas*

Square garden railings should replace the wire netting. Cornices and pediments to houses restored, encouragement to owners to have a uniform colour scheme, i.e. Pelham Crescent, Onslow Square, etc. Large traffic notices to be removed and a traffic management scheme eliminating extraneous traffic from Royal Crescent and St. Ann's Villas.

A photographic survey of Royal Crescent was presented to the

meeting. Valuable help in the collection of photographs was received from Mrs. Tarrant-Willis and Mr. MacInnes.

### 2. *Kensington Square*

A complete photographic survey of Kensington Square houses was presented. A request that the correct pediments should be replaced on No. 20 Kensington Square and that the ornamental concrete walling should be replaced between 38 and 39 by appropriate railings. The photographic survey included pictures by Mr. Clark of traffic blocks in the Square, including large vans and lorries. A request was made for the closure of Derry Street. Valuable help in the collection of photographs was received from Mr. Clark, Mrs. Keegan and Mr. John Maclay.

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## A selection of cases dealt with

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### PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The number of applications referred to the Society by the Planning Department of the Borough Council are too numerous to list. They have been examined by Mr. Ian Grant, architectural adviser to the Society, and by Mrs. Christiansen. It is of particular satisfaction that in a large number of cases our views have coincided with the Council. Our main concern has been to ensure as far as possible such development is not detrimental to amenity and is in keeping with the surrounding neighbourhood.

We have been pleased to support the Council's views at a number of public inquiries.

Apart from the Environment Advisory Committee, the Honorary Secretary has attended and put forward the Society's views at the Town Planning Sub-Committee, which deals with planning in conservation areas.

*The Odeon Site 233/253 Kensington High Street, 1/25 Earls Court Road.*—We have lost count of the number of applications seen for this site. The hotel and office development bridging Earls Court Road was considered by the Society to be too bulky and dominating, with gross office overdevelopment. Although there has been considerable reduction in the content of the current scheme, the Society is of the opinion that there is still considerable office overdevelopment. We have opposed the scheme and we hope the Council will require further modifications. The development of this site very surely sets the pattern and tone for the whole of the south side of the High Street as far as Ponting's old shop.

*De Vere Mews and Canning Place Mews.*—An application for planning permission to develop this site was before the Planning Department of the Council. It included underground car parking for 100 cars, a swimming pool, restaurant, squash court, an office block, some residential development and stables in the basement. The Society in opposing the scheme as an overdevelopment of the site said they welcomed the proposal to renovate and restore De Vere Mews.

*Development Corner of Gloucester Road and Cromwell Road.*—The proposal for development consisted of:

1. 215,000 square feet residential development in one-, two- and three-bedroom flats.
2. 17,000 square feet of small shops in an arcade over the railway cutting.
3. 198,500 square feet of office development in a 14-storey building 205 feet high.

For comparison, the Penta Hotel is said to be 290 feet high.

4. Two floors of car parking with parking space for 350 cars.
5.  $1\frac{3}{4}$  acres of open space, one half to be dedicated for public use.

The Society opposed this application as an overdevelopment, particularly the office content.

*Development Earls Court Road/Cromwell Road.*—An exhibition of the proposed plan was held on the site. It consisted of 8,000 square feet of office development, some residential, with car parking and petrol filling station. Plot ratio 3.75 to 1. This application was opposed by the Society as being an overdevelopment, with a too high building, which would overshadow the small residential streets in the area.

*Coronet Theatre (Gaumont).*—An application received by the Council from the Rank organisation to demolish and rebuild with a large office content. Efforts have been made to have the theatre listed; this has been turned down by the Minister. A very well-attended meeting was held by the Council to ascertain the public's view. 'Save the Gaumont Theatre' report appears on page 48.

*Commonwealth Institute Frontage.*—Proposal to set back Holland Park entrance gates to allow for a large paved area which would enable two public lavatories to be built either side of the entrance gate. The President of the Society, and Executive Committee met the Director of the Commonwealth Institute to discuss the proposal. The Society was opposed to the scheme.

*1 Bedford Gardens.*—Application for planning permission to redevelop this site by the erection of a six-storey building to contain shops on ground floor and lower ground floor 1,100 square feet; offices on the first and second floors 2,350 square feet, and two self-contained flats on third and fourth floors. The Society thought the scheme was deplorable in terms of proportions and scale with the Georgian houses in Bedford Gardens. There was considerable local opposition and the Council refused planning permission in July 1972. A further plan was refused in September 1972. In February 1973 an application was made to the Council for permission to erect a rear extension and convert the building into one shop and three dwelling units. Various objections to the scheme have been overcome by the amended plan, shop entrance is in Kensington Church Street. Extension has been reduced in size to meet this objection. Loss of garden forecourt on Bedford Gardens

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frontage is to be re-instated and improved; planning permission has been given.

*Additional Storeys.*—A large number of applications have been made to the Borough Council for additional storeys, a number of these have been refused planning permission by the Council, and we have supported their views.

*Building in Gardens.*—The Society has opposed a number of applications which have been before the Council for building development in existing gardens. We are glad to say the Council have supported our views.

*Kensington Church Walk.*—Following an advertisement for the sale of premises for a 'potential development' the Society wrote to the Council saying although it was aware that the premises in Church Walk were not of sufficient quality to allow for listing, it was thought that redevelopment of the area would be a great loss to Kensington. The Council agreed that the Walk was of extreme importance and that it should be preserved under the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972, which gives the Council power to control the demolition of buildings in conservation areas.

*Lulu's Night Club, 9 Young Street.*—Public Inquiry was held in December 1972; the Society was represented at the Inquiry by Counsel. Lord Hurcomb, the Honorary Secretary, and a number of residents of Kensington Square, gave evidence supporting the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's refusal for the continuance of the discotheque.

A petition signed by ninety residents was also put forward at the Inquiry. We are still awaiting the result of the Inquiry.

*66 Campden Street, 48/50 Bedford Gardens.*—Application to build on the garden of 48 Bedford Gardens opposed by the Society.

*18/25 Wallgrave Road.*—Opposed application to build on open space at the rear of above buildings. Council refused planning permission; owner has appealed and public inquiry is pending.

*Holland Park Tennis Courts.*—It came to the notice of the Society that the Recreation and Parks Dept. of the G.L.C. intended erecting four hard tennis courts across the south end of the playing field. Lord Hurcomb and the Honorary Secretary met the Chairman and Officers of the Parks and Planning Departments on the site and requested that the courts should be reduced to two and resited. We await the Council's decision.

*36 Victoria Road.*—Application to redevelop site with three houses and two flats. Opposed by Society.

*197/200 Queens Gate, 23/25 Kensington Gore.*—Application by Royal College of Art to demolish these listed buildings and for erection of building for use of College of Art. Opposed by the Society.

*Channel Tunnel Land Passenger Terminal.*—Recommendation by the

Town Planning Officer and Borough Engineer for this to be sited at White City. Strongly opposed by the Society—Surrey Docks, the G.L.C.'s first choice thought to be more suitable; this was also agreed by the Kensington and Chelsea Development Plan Committee.

#### STUCCO ENRICHMENTS

The following letter was sent to the Council:

'The Committee of the Kensington Society is still disturbed by the continuing emasculation or removal of stucco enrichments from buildings throughout the Borough, without which the architectural value of many buildings is substantially reduced. The Committee wishes to urge the Council therefore to make a greater use of its available powers in these matters, and would suggest that a standard condition of consent to any relevant Planning Application should refer to the repair or restoration of external detail or enrichment, *to the Council's satisfaction*. It is unfortunately evident that mere requirement by the Council is not enough unless backed by the Council's supervision (as exemplified at 20 Kensington Square, where pediments over the first floor windows were replaced, after enforcement action, but to incorrect profiles).

It would seem desirable therefore that the Council should appoint to the Planning Staff an officer who is trained in the detailed knowledge of classical architecture, or that the Council should make provision for obtaining expert advice.'

## Other activities and future arrangements

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Visits have been made to the following: The Royal Society, Carlton House Terrace, S.W.1; The Saville Gardens, Windsor Great Park; tea in the garden of 18 Kensington Square; Mapledurham House, Oxfordshire; Osterley Park; Conference in the Town Hall on The Colville/Tavistock Study; The Royal Commonwealth Society, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2.

#### FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

30th APRIL, 6-8 p.m. Private Reception at the London Museum, Kensington Palace, by courtesy of the Trustees and Director, to view Exhibition 'London in the Thirties' and to meet members of the National Heritage. Our Patron H.R.H. Princess Alice has graciously consented to be present. Tickets required, 25p.

8th MAY. Sissinghurst Castle. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1 o'clock. Coach, entrance fee and tea, tickets £2.00.

16th MAY. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held in the Lecture Hall, Kensington Central Library, W.8, at 6 p.m.—this will be followed at 6.30 p.m. by a talk illustrated by slides by Mr. R. W. Robson-Smith, Chief Architect Greater London Council, on 'The Pedestrianisation of Areas'.  
Chairman: Lord Hurcomb.

8th JUNE. A visit to the House of Lords. Lord Hurcomb has arranged for members to see the Library, where the Librarian, Mr. C. S. A. Dobson, is kindly arranging a display of some special books. Tea has been arranged in the Cholmondeley Room; we hope Lady Cholmondeley will be present. Meet in the Lobby of the House of Lords 2.45 p.m. Tickets required, 50p.

14th JUNE. The garden will be opened to members at 6 p.m. Wine and biscuits will be available. A Gourmet Auction will take place at 6.45 p.m. Gourmet dishes prepared in two- and four-portions suitable for freezing or a weekend entertaining. Sub-Committee arranging auction: Mrs. Christie, Mrs. Foss, Mrs. Frances and Mr. Michael Johnson—all gourmet cooks. Please apply for tickets to give organisers some idea of amount of food to prepare!

3rd JULY. A visit to Squerryes Court, Westerham, Kent. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1 o'clock. Coach, entrance fee and tea, £2.00.

4th SEPTEMBER. At 2.50 p.m. **punctually**—a visit to the new Stock Exchange Building. Conducted tour will include short film and a visit to the gallery where guides will explain the scene on the Trading Floor. Tickets required, 25p. Please meet Reception Entrance, corner of Threadneedle Street and Old Broad Street.

11th SEPTEMBER. A visit to The Vyne, Basingstoke. Special opening on day not otherwise open to the public. Coach, tea and entrance fee, £2.25. Coach leaves Kensington Square 1 p.m.

## Kensington Society Conference

21ST SEPTEMBER 1972

opened with a paper by F. H. Clinch, Director of Development, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Madam Chairman, I am personally indebted to your Society for organising this conference on the Colville/Tavistock Study upon which I am engaged.

When the Society first suggested organising a conference I considered that it might follow publication of the Report and form a most valuable link in the chain of public consultation. The Society thought otherwise: it has timed the conference for the period when the field survey is complete and when my colleagues and I are about to draw conclusions from it and to formulate proposals stemming from it. The Society believes that an expression of opinions by thoughtful people who share concern for the future of the area would assist me greatly in my task. For this I thank you and your Society very much, madam Chairman.

At this stage it would be premature to try to anticipate the findings of the study, but I can tell you that my current thinking is to limit redevelopment to every extent that I can conscientiously justify. The area given to me to study is characterised by terraces which were well and graciously designed; it is true that many of them are badly maintained and their accommodation abused by over-occupation with grossly inadequate facilities. But these are matters that can be rectified: the Notting Hill Housing Trust and others have demonstrated that the terraces are capable of modernisation and conversion into very good and well-equipped self-contained flats. They have a character and a quality which gives them great attraction. The Social Survey has shown that 54 per cent. have stated a preference for continuing to live in this type of building although, of these, 85 per cent. would wish to see them modernised. These figures compare with 1.5 per cent. who would wish to live in new high-rise flats and 22 per cent. who would prefer new low-rise flats.

### (a) *Brief History of the Area*

It is an impressive experience to examine the maps of North Kensington prepared on various dates in the 19th century. The map of 1848 shows a beginning of the development of the Ladbroke Estate to the south and west of the study area, but Colville/Tavistock itself

retains in full its rural character with green fields crossed by the lane leading to Portobello Farm. The 1863 map shows steady progress with development, whereas that of 1879 is scarcely different from the current Ordnance Survey. The entire development was completed over a span of no more than thirty years and all the houses have already filled a life span of between 100 and 120 years. In this development, the Portobello Road followed the line of the original Portobello Lane which, up to the middle of the 19th century, was a pleasant country lane leading north from the Bayswater Road to the Portobello Farm which later became the site of St. Joseph's Convent and thence on to Kensal Green. Portobello Road appears to have acquired its market character even whilst the development was taking place around it.

It would seem that the demand for large single-family accommodation with servants' quarters in the basement diminished very quickly after the development was finished and the change to multi-family occupation had become well defined by the end of the 19th century. The pattern of multi-family occupation is now virtually total. As a measure of inadequacy of facilities, the initial analysis of one-half of the social survey related to such equipment as w.c.s, bathrooms and kitchens shows that 7.8 per cent. of households share one facility with others, 20.8 per cent. share two facilities and no less than 13.6 per cent. share three or more essential facilities. Only 57.8 per cent. of families enjoy the exclusive use of all essential facilities.

This is very important indeed. Our present definitions of dwellings representable as slums rests largely on the structural condition of the building. Should it not rather rest upon the quality of life which it sustains. In my view a structurally unsound and leaking building self-contained behind its own front door should properly be dealt with as a slum, but is capable of supporting a higher quality of family life than accommodation within a structurally sound building but with shared facilities, without self containment or privacy and with the constant passage of strangers by the doors of individual rooms. We shall give careful thought to the problem of definition of slums by the quality of urban life they can sustain. Should such multi-family buildings become subject to public acquisitions, not for demolition, but for conversion and improvement?

Another characteristic of the area is the availability of rented accommodation. Of the survey analysed thus far 62 per cent. of households occupy rented unfurnished accommodation and 31 per cent. occupy furnished lettings. It is the availability of accommodation to let, by private landlords, that attracts so many new families both from Britain and abroad. Rented homes in the public sector is rather different as this involves a long waiting period and frequently a residential qualification for entry on the waiting list. It has become quite clear that the occupation of furnished accommodation is dictated by its availability: it is a matter of landlords' rather than tenants' choice.

## (b) *Objects of the Survey*

In December 1968 the Council of the Royal Borough resolved to treat two areas as potential 'Action Area' for definition at the appropriate time in a local development plan prepared under the powers of the Town and Country Planning Act 1968. Action had already been taken under the 1962 Act to secure redevelopment of the Kensal New Town Area, regarded as the most squalid housing area in the Borough, and under the Housing Acts to secure redevelopment of the Lancaster Road West Area. These two schemes involved the provision of new homes by the Royal Borough and by the G.L.C. It was now thought appropriate to use 'Action Area' procedure for (a) the Golborne Area and (b) the Colville/Tavistock Area.

The approval by the Minister of a Greater London Development Plan is a necessary preliminary to the operation of 'Action Area' procedure and we all know of the long and wearisome business this is proving to be. Shall we ever see the end of it? In the meantime, the problems of Golborne and Colville/Tavistock could not be allowed to drift and increase.

You all know of the activities in Golborne. It has been divided into three sectors: two are to be redeveloped by Housing Trusts and one by the G.L.C.

Colville/Tavistock was somewhat different. Here it was the quality of life which had deteriorated rather than the buildings. At the suggestion of the Notting Hill Housing Trust a joint working party was set up and from this the current study has emerged. The study team has started with the advantage of pioneer preliminary work undertaken by Charles Hudson, the Borough Planning Officer and his staff, when part of my old Department as Director of Technical Services.

The terms of reference laid down by the Council are: 'The Director of Redevelopment is to organise a social and building survey and to incorporate its findings in a report including recommendations designed to improve housing conditions and the quality of urban life in the Colville/Tavistock area. A programme is to be presented which would lead to the achievement of the major objectives with the minimum disturbance of family and community life'.

For me, personally, this has been a challenging and very worth while assignment to fill my last year before retiring, following a life-time spent in the public services. A Steering Committee, representative of the Borough Council and the Notting Hill Housing Trust has been set up to support the team in their task. The officers of the Council and the Trust have been very helpful indeed.

The objectives kept before the team are:—

- (a) To improve physical and social conditions;
- (b) To provide an adequate standard of housing for as many of the existing residents as possible where they wish to remain in the area;

- (c) To encourage the creation of a mixed community as regards age, income and social structure, retaining families with children;
- (d) To increase provisions for amenities, open spaces and services, particularly for children, mothers, old people, the disabled and the handicapped;
- (e) To provide a good housing mix of sizes and types giving due weight to the costs existing families could be expected to meet;
- (f) To examine employment opportunities, particularly in relation to a proper balance between employment for men and women and openings for school leavers;
- (g) To control the use of residential streets by through traffic and to promote pedestrian safety in shopping and residential locations;
- (h) To encourage the provision of health, social and educational services and other facilities to meet the needs of the area.

The Report of the team will be issued as a consultation document. It should be published early in the coming year and will be illustrated in a public exhibition. Only after it has been subjected to public discussion, criticism and counter suggestion will the Council reach its policy decisions concerning the future of the area.

The Council is by no means bound to adopt any report—something very much better might well emerge from the period of public consultation. But the intention of the Council to take action is not in any doubt: Councillor Methuen, Chairman of the Town Planning Committee, has publicly stated that the Council has both the will and the means to implement the results of the Study and this statement has been publicly endorsed by His Worship the Mayor.

#### *The Survey*

The Survey has been divided into two sections, the Social Survey and the Building Survey. Both have been applied to a random sample of 25 per cent., the same premises being included in both surveys. The Social Survey was finished in July: computer printouts of the first half of the Survey came to hand in August and the second half is now expected. Figures I am quoting are from the first half, which by itself cannot be regarded as a mathematically random sample. The Building Survey was completed in the field a week ago.

Both surveys have involved entering family homes and the Social Survey meant completing a very long and intimate questionnaire. Confidentiality has, of course, been promised and I am determined that it shall be preserved. It has been possible to complete the building study 100 per cent. although it has not always been possible to gain entry to every flat in every house. The success rate for the Social Survey was 65 per cent. This was very satisfactory in view of a vigorous campaign undertaken by one local group urging non-co-operation with the study.

To say that there is an atmosphere of hostility to the Council in Colville/Tavistock is a very considerable under-statement. On the

basis of the physical fabric of the housing stock, the Council has been right in giving priority to Kensal New Town, Lancaster Road West, West Chelsea and Golborne, but nevertheless the frustration of those living in an area which is undoubtedly socially deprived can be understood. I am full of admiration for my young surveyors who have persisted in the face of hostility and I am grateful to the 65 per cent. of selected households who received them into their homes. We wish to provide for those needs of which the people themselves are conscious rather than for those of the professional planners, of which I am one, consider should have priority. The householders have been encouraged to express their views during the home interviews. To the same end, a Community Forum has been arranged but, I fear, without great success.

The age distribution is not markedly different from that for the Borough as a whole. Sixty-seven per cent. of the heads of households were born in the United Kingdom, and 8 per cent. in the Commonwealth. Of those born in foreign countries 10 per cent. of the total population are from Eire and 15 per cent. from other lands. The area has been a mecca for those with very low incomes: 14 per cent. of householders enjoyed (if this is a proper term) incomes of less than £10 per week and 50 per cent. less than £20 per week; only 4 per cent. claimed incomes of more than £40 per week. Household incomes were higher as many households included more than one wage-earner.

Inclusive rents were under £4 per week for 28 per cent. and under £7 per week for 62 per cent. Ten per cent. of households paid rent in excess of £12 per week and 33 per cent. over £9 per week.

The significant figure is the ratio of rent to total household income. In no less than 12 per cent. of households over 40 per cent. of income was spent in paying rent, 26 per cent. paid more than 30 per cent., 52 per cent. more than 20 per cent. and 72 per cent. spent more than 10 per cent. of household income in meeting rents.

The very high proportion of income taken by rent should be considered in relation to the generally poor standard of facilities to which I have already referred. In view of this I am quite amazed to find that 61 per cent. of households expressed themselves as satisfied with their accommodation. Only 46 per cent., however, were prepared to record satisfaction with the neighbourhood.

It is now interesting to look at migration. Seventy per cent. of the population have lived in the area (Kensington or adjoining boroughs) for over five years, 18 per cent. between one and five years and 12 per cent. for under twelve months. Twenty-eight per cent. were anxious to leave the area; it is hardly surprising to find that the desire to leave is lower among those who have been here longest—they have been voting by their presence in any event.

There is a considerable problem of age and disablement in Colville/Tavistock. Of those over the age of 65, 50 per cent. are living alone and

of those over 75 the percentage is even higher as 74 per cent. live alone, more than half of them with neither friends nor relatives living nearby. Similarly, 37 per cent. of the physically handicapped live alone, and of these two-thirds are without relatives or friends close at hand.

The Building Survey has confirmed the structural soundness of the south-west corner of the Study Area. Elgin Crescent, Arundel Gardens and Ladbroke Gardens form part of the Ladbroke Estate whose splendid layout is certainly without peer in the Borough; and possibly in London. This is part of our architectural heritage which must be preserved—it is already part of a Conservation Area. If a line is drawn diagonally across the area it is approximately true to say that the quality of the buildings steadily deteriorates as we progress in a north-easterly direction.

The Building Survey has yet to be analysed by the computer. It will be done largely in a block by block basis (a block enclosed by surrounding roads) including cost estimates for rehabilitation, repair and conversion.

#### *Redevelopment Against Rehabilitation*

We might now spend a few minutes in considering the balance of advantages and disadvantages as between redevelopment and rehabilitation.

Redevelopment has been the easy solution for dealing with socially deprived areas in the past. Legislation seems to have been framed with this in mind and the administrative processes are well tried and clearly defined. Local Planning Authorities and Housing Authorities are now beginning to examine themselves and to ask whether it is the right way. Examples of the finished product abound in Greater London and the Royal Borough can offer its contribution.

The bulldozers have not only made a good job of clearing the buildings but have also made a terribly efficient job of uprooting and scattering a local community. It is true that alternative accommodation has been found in near and distant locations for individual families, but it has not been possible to preserve and re-establish a community. This is most important, as any neighbourhood is built of human bricks rather than those of clay. After redevelopment a new collection of families are introduced, but who can say how long it will take for the families to form a living and vital community. The process of redevelopment is a bonanza for the architects and planners, but is the end product always an improvement on the old and mellow development it has replaced? In many cases it may, indeed, be a great improvement, but there is plenty of room for reflection when contemplating the urbanity of the terraces in Colville/Tavistock. It must also be remembered that in the Social Survey the residents have made their affection for the existing terraces very clear.

It is my duty to examine the financial comparison between redevelopment and rehabilitation, but I would not be prepared to say that the

financial balance sheet, which is very important, should be the absolute determinant of policy. Whilst it would be quite wrong of me to pre-judge what will be the final outcome of the Study, I have already indicated that whilst accepting the need for limited redevelopment, my current thinking is very much towards rehabilitation.

One of the most important tasks laid upon me is to produce a programme designed to avoid the dispersal of the existing community. It will be far easier to achieve this within a framework of rehabilitation.

It is very clear to me that adequate and meaningful rehabilitation cannot be achieved by doing no more than showing an area so designated on a map. This would possibly encourage some owners to improve their properties and convert them into good self-contained units but, in the current climate it would be more likely to attract investors to acquire and convert properties and, in the process, effectively disperse the present community.

We must look for an improvement in the whole environment. Traffic measures should preserve residential streets from invasion by unnecessary traffic—some streets might well become pedestrian precincts—we should introduce a programme for providing more street trees and even gardens in the streets. Most certainly we must plan for more open space and provision for leisure and community activities for old and young alike.

An improvement in layout must be accompanied by high standards of cleanliness in the streets. I am not now sniping at my old department although there was plenty of room for improvement when I left it. The people of Colville/Tavistock can make a bigger contribution than the Cleansing Department to the achievement of clean and tidy streets. But what of the cars at the kerbside. Kerb space is 75-100 per cent. occupied by night and day and this is most damaging to residential amenity. It is highly significant that the survey shows that 72 per cent. of households owned no car. The quality of life for the whole community is being seriously depressed for the private benefit of 28 per cent.

But what of the terraces themselves. By the accident that whole estates of leasehold property fell into the hands of the L.C.C. some years ago, we have now some excellent examples of the rehabilitation and conversion of terraces as a whole in the Walerton Road Estate in Westminster and the Brandon Estate in Southwark. These form examples of what could and should be done in this area. I repeat that rehabilitation cannot be achieved by the sweep of a colour brush on a plan. Some practical policies to achieve rehabilitation on a terrace by terrace basis must be sought.

The survey has been unfortunately timed for me. The inflationary spiral of increased property values is a national problem which is acute in London, but I suspect that it is nowhere more acute than in Colville/Tavistock. There is evidence that the rate of increase here is far greater than in most locations, even in London. Two properties which have recently been sold at auction have been examined. On the basis of the

conversion of each into three self-contained flats with the benefit of Discretionary Improvement Grant it is found that a private landlord would need to charge exclusive rents of £19 and £14.80 per week to cover his outgoings. This cannot be related in any way to the surveyed income of existing residents. The same operation by a Housing Trust or Housing Authority might be able to reduce economic rents to £13 and £10 respectively.

But we have already noted that a large proportion of the population express a desire to become owner/occupiers. Is this a pious hope which is incapable of attainment? The Borough Treasurer has helped me to examine the mortgage payments if the same properties were to be acquired, converted and sold by a Housing Trust or Authority. Taking into account tax benefits the weekly mortgage payments over a 30 years period would be only £9.12 and £7 respectively. It must not be forgotten, of course, that in these cases the maintenance burden would be with the owner and might involve a further £1.50 to £2 per week. I report the figures without drawing conclusions.

The rents I have been quoting are 'cost rents' and I have not attempted to introduce the complications of the Housing Finance Act 1972. I should comment that I would expect 'fair rent' to be assessed at a level very much below these 'cost rents' and, of course, 'rebated rent' can be very much lower still.

#### *Conclusion*

This brings me to the end of my talk. I recognise, Madam Chairman, that I have been in danger of boring the conference with reported facts and figures, whilst I have been unable to put forward exciting policies for your criticism.

This will come later, after the Consultation Report has been finished.

If, Madam Chairman, I have already allowed myself to express views or opinions, let it be known that they are mine alone and are not necessarily shared by the Council I have the honour to serve.

## Kensington High Street Development

At the Society's Annual General Meeting on 17th May, 1972, Mr. Methuen, the Chairman of the Borough Council's Town Planning Committee, informed those present that there had been a meeting between representatives of the Council and a large number of developers and property owners interested in the locality of Kensington High Street to discuss plans for the future of the High Street; the Council, he said, were actively preparing a document to be published on 31st July, putting forward outline policies and proposals for the locality, a course which had the support of all those interested.

This was welcome news since, in the previous months, there had been a considerable amount of rumour and speculation, in the press and elsewhere, to the effect that the High Street area would shortly undergo extensive piecemeal redevelopment, the nature of which might well give rise to an unsatisfactory high street in planning and architectural terms and create problems for the amenity of the adjoining conservation and other residential areas. Plans were already under consideration for substantial redevelopments on the site of the Odeon cinema and Pontings and it was clear that redevelopment of the existing Town Hall site would soon become possible.

So that the Society might be concerned at an early stage Mr. Methuen invited representatives of its executive committee to discuss the document, then only in draft form, with Mr. Perret, the Director of Technical Services. From this useful discussion the precise scope and purpose of the document was learnt; briefly, it was not to be a definitive brief for prospective developers; it was to be a document to promote discussion and to form the basis of consultation between the Council on the one hand and traders, property owners, residents, amenity societies, potential developers and the general public on the other.

On 31st July, the document was duly published; it contained over 70 pages and was illustrated with numerous maps, diagrams and tables, and it ranged over a wide number of topics in relation to a 'study area' stretching, roughly, from Kensington Gardens to Holland Park and from Abingdon Villas, in the south, to Vicarage Gate in the north. By way of foreword Mr. Methuen put forward a principle which the Society fully supports, namely 'that the future development of Kensington High Street must be carried out in a coherent and

imaginative manner which welds together in mutual sympathy the various factors of architecture, shopping, traffic and adjoining residential amenity'. The document contains a great deal of detailed material, such as the sections on conservative policy and the general type of layout for redevelopment, which has the full support of the Society.

The document was considered in detail by a sub-committee of the Society and, after discussion by the Executive Committee, a Memorandum of the Society's comments on the document was prepared for submission to the Council. It dealt both with the document's analysis of 'the Existing Conditions' and with its suggestions for the future.

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In the meantime, in October, the Council announced that it was staging an exhibition at Pontings covering the issues raised by the document and members were encouraged to visit this and express their views by a notice which contained these observations:—

'The principal proposal in the document is for a large injection of new office development—500,000 square feet—into the High Street area, with as much as 75 per cent. of large new developments being given over to offices. The main purpose of this is to attract more people to the retail trading centre in the High Street.

The Executive Committee, and a sub-committee of the Society, have considered the document in some detail and a full report is being sent to the Borough Council of the views formed.

Briefly, it is intended to express to the Borough Council the view that such a large amount of additional commercial development in the High Street area would, by reason of its character, its bulk and the additional pressures on traffic and transport resources, have an adverse effect on the environment of the area as a whole and would itself make it harder to achieve many of the very desirable results which the authors of the document, and the Society, would hope to see flow from the redevelopment of the area.'

This notice had to be prepared before the exhibition had opened so members who visited it may have been surprised to find no references in the exhibition to the office proposals about which the Executive Committee was concerned. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the Council's aim, at that stage, was, principally, to present the Existing Situation and obtain visitors' own views on the future rather than their views on the Council's suggestions for the future.

The Society's Memorandum on the document was duly sent to the Council and a brief summary of it, printed below, was sent to all members of the Society:—

#### Memorandum

#### THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT "KENSINGTON HIGH STREET"

The Society has recently sent to the Borough Council its detailed comments on the Council's High Street Consultation Document. The following is a summary of the Society's principal comments.

#### THE EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Society made some suggestions for changes in this section of the document. It seemed to the Society that the document attributed to parts

of the Study Area, rather more commercial activity and uses than in fact exist there, and that the importance of the Open Spaces of Holland Park and Kensington Gardens were not sufficiently emphasised.

#### THE FUTURE

(a) *OFFICES.* The Society expressed reservations about the suggested additional 500,000 sq. ft. of office space in the area. This addition would correspond to the combined office content of Bowater House and Centre Point. The document does not set out the studies and arguments justifying this figure but the Society's expectation is that this is probably more than the area can absorb without some damage to the general environment; factors to be borne in mind are the height and bulk of new developments, the additional traffic generation, likely changes in the shopping facilities, additional pressure on public transport facilities, and the long-term effects of such a change in the character of the area.

(b) *RESIDENTIAL.* The Society wished that more had been said in the document to encourage residential development. The document contemplates as little as 25% of new developments being residential.

(c) *MODE OF DEVELOPMENT.* The Society favoured diversity of architectural treatment and the adoption of a human scale for re-developments. The Society is not attracted by the idea of first-floor 'walkways' and pedestrian bridges with the steps and ramps they require.

(d) *TRAFFIC.* The Society was critical of any approach which added to the traffic flows in the High Street itself and the surrounding area or created additional parking problems.

(e) *THE CENTRE OF THE BOROUGH.* The Society would wish to see opportunities taken to improve the centre of the Borough where Church Street meets the High Street. Suggestions included the improvement of pedestrian facilities at this point; the creation of a square to provide a worthy setting for the Church and the preservation and enhancement of the quiet area behind the existing Town Hall.'

In sending its Memorandum to the Council the Society asked if, after an interval, representatives of the Council and of the Society might meet to discuss the points made in the Society's Memorandum. Such a meeting was held at Chelsea Town Hall on 22nd January, 1973.

On behalf of the Society the principal points in its Memorandum were further stressed. In regard to the office proposals it was accepted by the Council's representatives that these were not supported as yet by detailed studies; they were more in the nature of proposals put forward to promote discussion; studies and more detailed consideration would follow before anything in the nature of a policy or guidelines were formulated.

Generally speaking the Council had completed its first round of discussions on proposals for the High Street and the document, having served its purpose, would be put on one side.

Other amenity societies in the area have been active in putting forward views on the document to the Council and the Society has joined them in this. In particular the West London Architectural Society has held a number of meetings of representatives of various societies which have resulted in a useful exchange of views and information and have shown that amongst amenity societies there is a considerable measure of agreement upon what they would like to see happen in the High Street.

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The Edwardes Square and Scarsdale Association has also held a very useful meeting at which developers and property owners frankly explained and discussed their plans and hopes for the High Street and that Association is currently promoting a study into the likely effects of development on the High Street.

The Society will view with great interest the next statement of policy or guidelines to be put forward by the Council which will be able to draw on the results of the recent discussion, of further studies and of a number of very pertinent observations in the recently published report of the Layfield Panel of Inquiry on the G.L.D.P.

In the meantime individual applications for planning permission in the study area will require to be considered and determined without the benefit of a comprehensive policy but with the benefit of a much greater knowledge of public opinion than existed a year ago.

GEOFFREY DEARBURGH, *Chairman*,  
Kensington High Street Development Sub-Committee.

## Earls Court 70 Years Ago

By HEYWOOD L. GANDELL

It is just 70 years since my twin sister and I came to live with our family in Earls Court Square, and we two still occupy part of the same house, and have seen many changes in the neighbourhood.

In those days the large houses in the Square were occupied by one family only, and in most cases at least four servants were kept. In the winter there were coal fires every day in the dining room, the drawing room, my father's study and my parents' bedroom, and the hot water was heated in a large kitchen range in the basement. So quite a lot of coal was used every day and much of it had to be carried up several flights of stairs. But the maids did not seem averse to hard work, and I well remember hearing the parlourmaid remind my mother that it was several weeks since the last dinner party, and it was time there was another! As the six courses or so had to be carried up and down the stone stairs from and to the basement, it was obvious that the extra work was enjoyed by the domestic staff.

There were no taxis; if a cab were required the parlourmaid would go to the corner of the Square and whistle—once for a four-wheeler or twice for a hansom, which vehicle would be waiting on a cab rank close to Earls Court Road. When we were going to parties we used to urge her to whistle twice, as a hansom was a much more exciting way of travelling than a four-wheeler!

There used to be a crossing sweeper at the junction of Earls Court Square and Road. This was a self-appointed job, usually an elderly and often crippled man who depended for a living on the few coppers he received from pedestrians whose boots he saved from getting muddy. The clothes of the newspaper boys were ragged and thin and they often looked cold and hungry. I remember very clearly the ravenous look on the face of the boy to whom my father would occasionally pass a hunk of bread and jam through the dining room window.

At that time the Square Garden was owned by Lord Iveagh and the lawns and flowerbeds were beautifully kept. But what is hard to believe now is that this garden—and one or two others in the neighbourhood—was patrolled by a fine looking keeper, I should think probably an ex-guardsman. He wore a green frock coat and a top hat with a cockade, and carried a large blackthorn stick. Woe betide any children found playing a ball game in the Garden! He had a sort of glorified sentry-box with a door, from which he would emerge at intervals.

Earls Court Exhibition was an open-air affair, and a favourite outing for us children. The greatest thrill was the Water Chute, in which one rushed down a steep slope in a flat-bottomed boat on to the lake, whence the boat leaped into the air and again descended with a mighty splash. There was a sort of gondolier in charge, who then propelled us to the landing stage, and if we had enough pocket money we used to repeat this thrill.

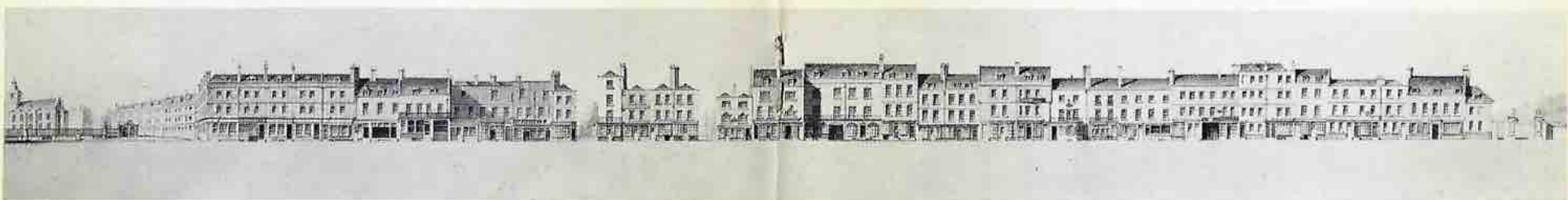
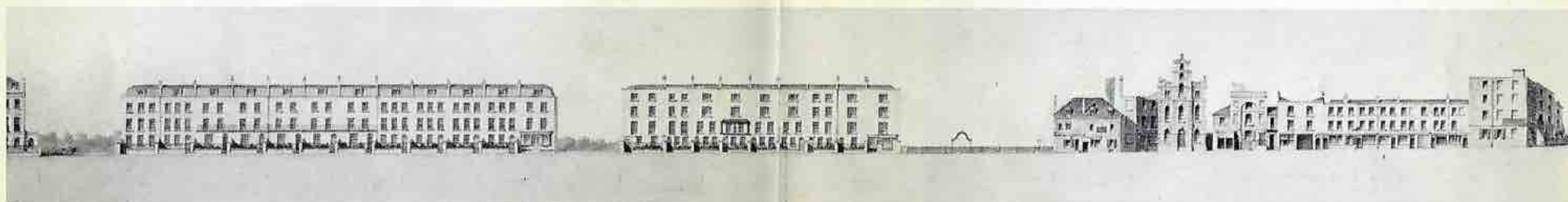
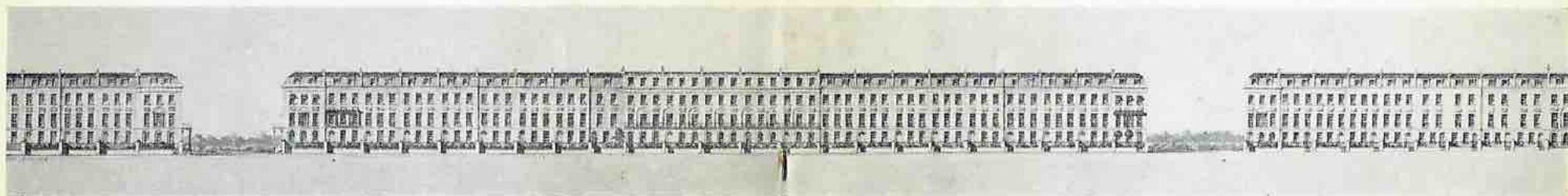
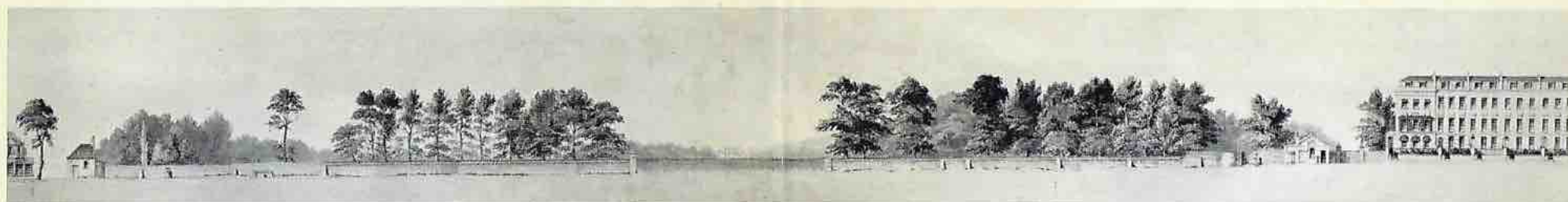
But perhaps the greatest thrill of all, and it cost nothing—was to see the Fire Engine with its horses galloping down Earls Court Road, with one of the firemen clanging a bell. There was very little traffic in those days and the pace of the fire engine was quite breathtaking. There was a fire alarm in Earls Court Square by which the fire engine was summoned. It looked rather like a parking meter painted red. One broke the little glass window and pulled the brass handle inside, but I never had a chance to do this!

These are a few of the bygone memories which the present generation can never experience.



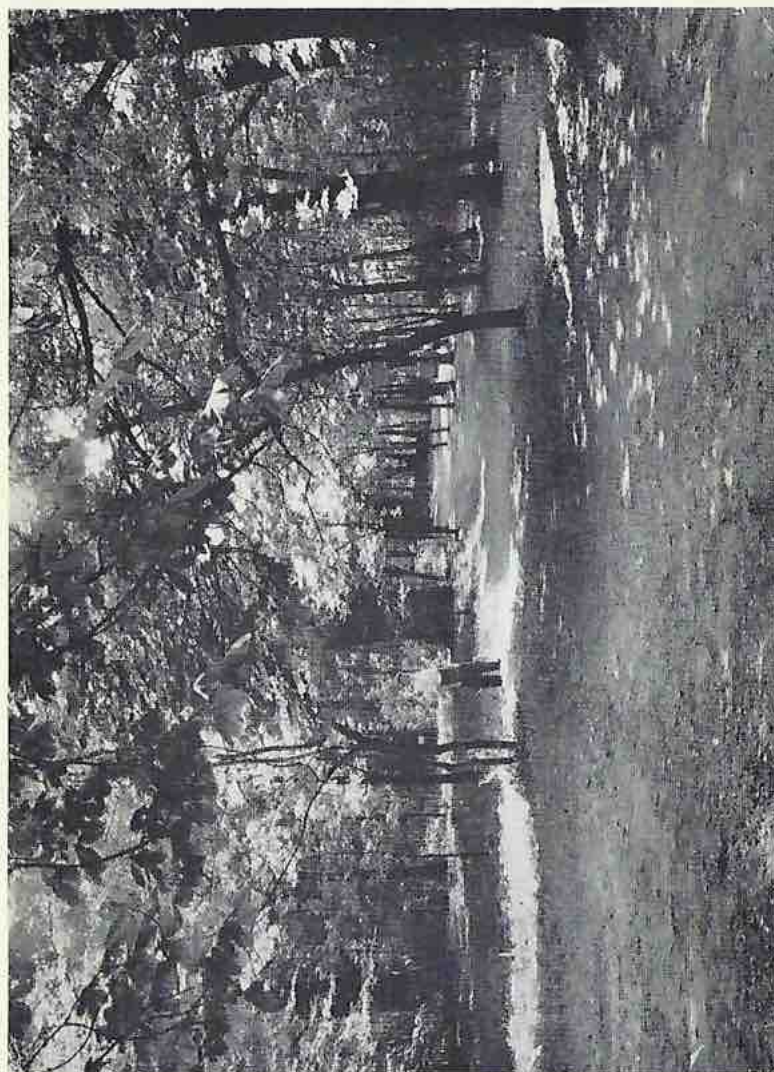
CORONET THEATRE 1898

*By kind permission of the Chief Librarian, Kensington and Chelsea Public Libraries*



KENSINGTON HIGH STREET north side in 1811 (*reading from west to east*). All except two houses now demolished.

*Reproduced by kind permission of the British Museum*



HOLLAND PARK

Reproduced by kind permission of the Chief Officer, Parks Department, GLC

#### HOLLAND PARK

*I am delighted that we are able to print Miss Evelyn Brown's Presidential Address to the London Natural History Society in this Annual Report.*

*Holland House and Park have been of considerable interest to the Kensington Society. The Society was instrumental in saving the East Wing of Holland House in 1953. In 1971 there was a threat to the use of The Orangery—Messrs. J. Lyons & Co. wished to use it as an addition to the Belvedere Restaurant.*

*A question was asked in the House of Lords about the future of The Orangery. Lord Hurcomb, President of the Society, Lady Stocks, Chairman of the Executive Committee, and Lord Balfour of Inchrye*

*took part in the debate. The Chairman of the G.L.C. Arts and Recreation Committee received a deputation from the Society and subsequently The Orangery was again open to the general public. At the present time the Society is objecting to the erection of four hard tennis courts across the south end of the playing fields. We hope that a more suitable position for the courts will be accepted by the G.L.C. Arts and Recreation Committee.*

*In 1964 Lord Hurcomb gave a lecture to the Society on Bird Life in Kensington; it is very appropriate that we should reprint Miss E. Brown's lecture and we are grateful to her and to the London Natural History Society for giving permission.*

## Studying Wild Life in Holland Park

by EVELYN P. BROWN

### *History of the House and Grounds*

As this is a Presidential Address I am going, as far as I am able, to deal with all aspects of Holland Park, Kensington, and first I would like to give a short history of the house and grounds.

The house, then known as Cope Castle, was built by Sir Walter Cope about 1605; it is known to have been inhabited in 1606. Sir Walter Cope was a favourite of James I and held several appointments. The actual architect of this building seems to be uncertain though there is a book of drawings by John Thorpe at the Sir John Soane Museum which show that Thorpe had a connection with the building. Inigo Jones and Nicholas Stone are also said to have planned alterations and additions but the only evidence of their having had anything to do with it are the two gate-piers of stone now fronting all that remains of the house, which were made by Stone, whose Notebook contains the following: 'Kensington, 23 March, 1629, Nic Stone,

undertake for the Earl of Holland 2 Peeres of good Portland stone to hang a pair of great wooden gates on for £100'. An engraving of the gates by W. Proud in the British Museum attributes them to Inigo Jones.

Alterations and additions were soon made to the house, there being accounts for 1637 to 1640 relating to additions, and further adjustments came many times during its long life. The fleur-de-lis was the chief emblem in the arms of the Copes, and it can still be seen in the decoration of the remains of the house, but it does not follow that these remains are of the original house, since they are the arms of Sir Walter Cope's daughter, who married Sir Henry Rich, who became Earl of Holland in 1624. Lord Holland's mother was the 'Stella' of Sir Philip Sydney. Lord Holland vacillated between the Cavaliers and Roundheads and was executed by the Roundheads in 1649. The house is thought then to have been used by Fairfax for his headquarters for a short time and Cromwell is said to have met Ireton on what may now be the playing field to discuss the affairs of the nation. Ireton was deaf and it was thought by meeting on the field their conversation would be less likely to be heard by eavesdroppers. Lady Holland was, however, permitted to return fairly soon and perhaps rather surprisingly gave encouragement to plays and players, so the open-air performances which now take place in the summer have a traditional background. The house and grounds stayed with the Earls of Holland till 1721 when they passed to William Edwards, subsequently Lord Kensington, but in 1746 Henry Fox, a younger brother of Lord Ilchester, took a lease and subsequently bought them. They remained with the Fox family until 1952, when, following the partial destruction of the house during the Second World War, they were bought by the London County Council, now the Greater London Council.

Lord Ilchester obtained certain restrictions on the use of the grounds since the London County Council (Holland House) Act 1952 stated that certain parts of the property, as marked on a plan, shall not be used for certain purposes including a swimming pool, amusement fair, dancing or band music and so on. The G.L.C. also have an obligation to maintain the statue of Lord Holland '... in as good order and condition as the same shall be at the date of completion of the sale and purchase (but so that the Purchasers shall not be responsible for its deterioration through natural causes)'.

Many famous people have been associated with the house: William III nearly bought it instead of Kensington Palace; Addison married the then Countess of Holland and wrote two charming letters about birds, of Fulham not Holland House alas, to his profligate stepson; Horace Walpole, Charles James Fox, Napoleon III, Samuel Rogers, George Watts, are just a few with associations. With its acquisition by the Fox family, the house became a centre for the Whigs as well as for many cultural activities.

On 14th April, 1808, Lady Holland wrote of a stay at Holland House: 'We have enjoyed ourselves mightily here: the fresh air, verdure, and singing birds are delicious at all times, but more especially after the dense vapours, gas lights and din of Pall Mall. As yet the melody of the nightingale has only been heard by Lauderdale. He protests to having heard one singing; I know not how far one may depend upon the accuracy of his organs. These rustic pleasures have occupied and kept me out of the way of hearing much news'. 'The singing birds are still delicious, especially if you are lucky enough to hear a dawn chorus, but the nightingale, alas, has not been heard since 1884.

With this brief summary of the history of the house which has been fully written up in two volumes by the late Earl of Ilchester (1937; 1937a) and since then in a more popular style by Hudson (1967). I now pass to the grounds.

The grounds are on the southern slopes of a hill on which in the past springs used to arise. Indeed between 1802 and 1805 the house was thought to be threatened by the water from these springs affecting the foundations. This water was at some time collected on the North Lawn in a big drain and diverted away from the house and I understand that this drain still exists. However, in the last ten years, probably due to the drainage when the new comprehensive school was built, these springs have ceased and the small natural pond on the summit of the hill now has to be replenished by a piped water supply, but the three curious stone tanks which formed part of what was at one time a 'Japanese garden' still remain full of water with, I am told by the Park staff, no apparent supply.

The grounds, although retaining much of their historic layout are nevertheless and inevitably very different. The Earl of Ilchester (1937a) writes 'The drive by which the House is approached from the lodges rises steadily for about a quarter of a mile. Trees and bushes skirt the ascent on both sides, and beneath them in spring a profusion of bluebells carpet the ground'. He writes of the elms 'which once formed a noble avenue' having gone, but now this drive, the entrance from Kensington High Street, through a fine iron gateway is a broad asphalt path, flanked by trees, admittedly many of them poplars and planes, but with no bushes or bluebells, just grass so trodden as to be barely recognisable. Immediately to the left of this drive is the playing-field. At the top of the drive are the remains of the house.

The retaining wall of the south terrace built in 1848 still remains, and a flight of steps goes up through it, flanked by the Nicholas Stone gate piers to which I have already referred. The east wing of the house has been rebuilt and extended to the east by a modern building built round a grassy courtyard with a small stretch of water in it, the buildings of which comprise the international youth hostel opened in 1959. The ground floor facade of the south front of the house, includ-

ing the west wing, remain facing a lawn with box hedges and this forms the backcloth, stage and auditorium for the open air entertainments held there in the summer.

Immediately to the west of the house is the 'Dutch Garden' laid out in 1812 by Bonaiuti, factotum and librarian to the Hollands. This remains much as it has always been but the fountains have evidently been altered. The ancient brick wall covered with creepers still remains, though part of it had to be rebuilt recently. To the south of the garden runs the remains of a terrace and arcade which linked the house with the garden ballroom and The Orangery, all built in the mid-nineteenth century. These two have been much in the news recently: first The Orangery, which has been used as a place for people to sit in and for meetings and concerts, was the subject of questions in Parliament; then the garden ballroom, which had been used as a restaurant, and The Orangery were damaged by fire. The garden ballroom was originally the granary of the stables and was converted about 1849. The arches alongside it are the remains of the old stables, probably built about 1637-40 and removed when the new garden was laid out in the early nineteenth century. Near these is a seat in the garden wall formed by a Tudor fireplace and known as Rogers' seat, where Samuel Rogers used to sit, and where Lord Holland's couplet, composed in 1812 as a tribute to the poet is engraved on the wall:

Here Rogers Sat, and here for ever dwell  
With me those Pleasures that he sings so well.

Vandals destroyed this engraving in 1971 but I am delighted to say the G.L.C. has replaced it in its original place. Lady Holland introduced species of *Dahlia* to England in 1804 and the gravel terraces on the west side of the arches mark the place where the seeds were first sown. Near here too are yew trees hiding a pedestal which formerly bore a bust of Napoleon. The Ilchesters of that period were admirers of Napoleon but escaped the fate of the Stuart Lord Holland. In front of it now is a modern Eric Gill statue. The Park staff offices are housed in what were the stables south of the Dutch garden. South of the garden too now lies a new rose garden, tennis courts and a children's sand-pit.

The Park formerly stretched far beyond here and included a lake but this was all sold off and built over during the past century or so. West of the garden now is a car park and the nursery. North of the house and garden are two lawns, one open and one enclosed and in the latter are two beech trees, the remains of a clump of beeches. Here too is one of the two remaining cedars. Cedars were included in the extensive planting which took place in the eighteenth century, but while the two remaining may be direct descendants, it is unlikely they are those actual trees. From the north lawn, directly north of

the house, is the Rose Walk, formerly flanked by Caroline Testout roses. These are, however, now being phased out and replaced much of the way by plants of *Azalea* and *Erica*. At the end of the Rose Walk is the statue of Lord Holland by Watts and Boehm. Beyond this is the woodland formerly known as The Wilderness. Here there is a wide variety of trees, including ash, birch, elm, oak, plane, sycamore, some fruit trees and two avenues, one narrow one of limes planted by Lady Holland in 1876 and the other of chestnuts, whose chief glory is the carpet of pink petals in the spring.

#### *Natural History*

Geologically the Park is on a gravel ridge with London clay below and there is a sandy top soil, particularly good for the London area. The gravel varies in depth from a few inches to many feet and this accounts for the tendency for the water to break through in places, which I have already referred to.

In my earlier paper (Brown 1963) I divided the Park into four habitat zones. Now there are only three. The fourth zone which comprised waste land has been tidied up and cultivated. This was to be expected and no one would wish otherwise. It may lessen the number of wild plants and wild birds but the derelict area round the ruins of the house was no beauty spot. This area can now, therefore, be regarded as part of zone 2, the cultivated zone.

There has been little change in zone 1, the wooded area on the northern side. A few trees have fallen or been cut down, mostly the older ones. The leaf heap in the woods seems to have grown bigger. The dominant plant of the herb layer remains cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and there is still plenty of bramble and holly. Some care should be taken in studying the flora since an attempt was made some years ago to grow many species of wild flowers along the north side of Chestnut Avenue. Some, of course, have thriven to the extinction of others, but it was always on the shady side for many plants. However, there is a clearing at the end of Chestnut Avenue where dusky cranesbill (*Geranium phaeum*) and globe flower (*Trollius europaeus*) are to be found. There are signs, too, that the Clean Air Act is taking effect in the increase in mosses. Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) has appeared on a chestnut tree on the edge of the wood. Some natural regeneration takes place since there are many yew seedlings to be found in the woods—there is a big yew tree in one of the gardens nearby and the thrushes in particular like the berries. It seems more likely that the regeneration takes place from this yew than from those in the Holland Park garden itself. Oak seedlings can also be found but there are always far too many sycamore seedlings and the Park staff have to keep these under control. A house has been built in the north-east corner for the Park staff and one of the best owl trees was removed to accommodate it, but a cedar is still there, and one old elm used by owls for over 15 years remains. This is the area least

crowded by the public but there is an increasing tendency for dogs to run unleashed and boys and hippy-like characters to invade the enclosures. There is, however, a children's adventure playground on the edge of the wood in the south-west corner where children can unleash their energy without doing damage. This is still the best area for birds and the dawn chorus can rival and even beat many a country dawn chorus. Its power defeats any attempt at individual identification and needs to be experienced to be believed so close to the centre of London.

Zone 2 is the cultivated area in the southern part of the grounds; apart from the alterations to the café and restaurant arrangements and the addition of the area round the house, it has also altered little. In this zone there has been one marked change in the habits of the birds. This is the increasing tendency for the black-headed gulls to come down and feed actually on the playing-field, probably because fewer trees and more buildings now surround it, or maybe there are more tame gulls. Early in the morning and when the playing-field is closed for rehabilitation, as it usually is at the beginning of the year, this playing-field cannot be ignored by anyone watching the birds. Here come the redwings if it is cold after Christmas, and here too come some unexpected migrants, such as a wheatear twice in April 1970. Mistle thrushes, song thrushes, many blackbirds, and two or three crows can usually be found here but the flocks of starlings are smaller than they were. The gardens are now floodlit up to midnight but this has in fact probably affected zone 3 more than zone 2.

Zone 3, the intermediate zone in the central part of the grounds, has not altered much as far as vegetation is concerned, although some of the conifers planted since the G.L.C. took over have grown considerably, and people seem to get into the enclosures more than they did. The willow warbler no longer even attempts to breed; the black-caps and chaffinch territories are based more in the woodland, the woodpigeon roost has gone, probably because of the floodlighting, but the birches and the conifers still attract birds, for instance tits, redpolls and goldcrests.

From the entomology point of view there are obviously many small animals. One gets bitten in the woods in the summer! There are no longer any dragonflies, and except for the odd cabbage white one rarely sees any butterflies. I saw a member of the public pick up a black moth, probably a melanic pepper moth, one day. There are wasps and a solitary bee which can be watched emerging from holes in the ground in the spring but I think an expert study might be interesting.

The mammal situation has worsened in that grey squirrels appeared in 1969 and have now increased in numbers to some five or six. The public like them but they may be affecting the owls and further depredations will undoubtedly follow. There no longer appear to be

any hedgehogs but occasionally a mouse, presumably a house mouse, is seen, and a bat was recorded in 1970.

The wood pond is obviously a traditional frog spawning place and they still appear in some numbers towards the end of March but the depredations of the schoolboys may have an adverse effect.

Such curious animals can be let loose in the Park by the public—three domestic rabbits appeared on one occasion—that mammal records must always be regarded with some suspicion.

### Bird Population

The bird population appears to have stabilised and the annual figures since 1964 remain remarkably similar. This date has been taken as the base date since earlier years were covered in my two previous papers (Brown, 1963, 1964). The number of proved breeding species (Table 1) in four out of the eight years is 18, excluding feral pigeons, and the total number of species observed (Table 2) and breeding varies from 41 to 46. The breeding species figure can be raised to an average of 20 with the inclusion of species for which no firm breeding evidence has been obtained but which have been present and singing

TABLE 1. The breeding birds of Holland Park, 1964–1971.

B—bred; b—probably bred; O—observed.

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
Mallard ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Woodpigeon ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Tawny owl ...	...	B	B	O	O	O	B	O
Great spotted woodpecker	O	B	b	b	O	O	b	O
Carion crow ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	O
Jay ...	...	B	B	b	B	B	B	B
Great tit ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Blue tit ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Coal tit ...	...	B	O	B	b	b	B	B
Long-tailed tit ...	...	O	—	—	—	—	O	B
Nuthatch ...	...	b	O	O	O	O	b	B
Wren ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Mistle thrush ...	...	O	b	B	b	B	O	O
Song thrush ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Blackbird ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Robin ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Blackcap ...	...	B	B	B	B	b	B	b
Chiffchaff ...	...	O	O	O	O	O	b	b
Goldcrest ...	...	O	O	O	O	O	O	B
Spotted flycatcher ...	B	B	B	O	B	B	B	B
Dunnoek ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Starling ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Greenfinch ...	...	B	b	b	B	B	b	b
Bullfinch ...	...	O	O	O	B	O	B	B
Chaffinch ...	...	B	B	b	B	B	b	B
House sparrow ...	...	B	B	B	B	B	B	B

TABLE 2. The non-breeding birds of Holland Park, 1964-1971.

Gulls flying over are not included. O—observed.

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
Cormorant ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	O
Heron ...	—	—	—	O	O	O	O	—
Geese spp. incl. Canada	—	O	O	—	—	—	O	—
Mute swan ...	O	—	—	—	O	O	—	O
Kestrel ...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Moorhen...	—	—	—	—	O	O	—	—
Lapwing...	—	—	O	—	—	—	O	—
Common gull ...	—	—	O	—	—	—	O	O
Black-headed gull	—	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Collared dove ...	—	—	—	O	—	—	—	—
Cuckoo ...	O	—	O	—	O	—	—	—
Swift ...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Skylark ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	O	—
Swallow ...	O	O	—	O	O	—	O	—
House martin ...	O	—	O	O	—	O	—	—
Jackdaw ...	O	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Magpie ...	—	O	—	O	—	—	O	O
Treecreeper ...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Fieldfare...	—	O	—	O	—	O	O	O
Redwing...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wheatear ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	O	—
Redstart ...	O	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sedge warbler ...	—	—	—	—	—	O	—	—
Garden warbler...	O	O	O	O	—	O	O	O
Whitethroat ...	O	O	O	O	O	—	—	—
Lesser whitethroat	O	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Willow warbler...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wood warbler ...	—	—	O	—	O	O	—	—
Pied flycatcher ...	—	O	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pipit spp. ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	O	—
Pied Wagtail ...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Grey wagtail ...	—	—	O	—	—	O	—	O
Hawfinch ...	—	—	—	—	O	—	—	—
Goldfinch ...	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Redpoll ...	O	O	—	—	—	—	O	O
Brambling ...	—	O	—	—	—	—	—	—

throughout the breeding season, while the total list of species observed could probably be raised to 50 or more by daily early-morning visits, though the absence of any substantial piece of water inevitably limits this. These figures show a slight drop on the peak years of 1960-63 but a slight increase over the 1950s period. It is worth noting that the years 1966-67 were the lowest and 1970 the highest. The number of species observed but not breeding also remains remarkably consistent, ranging from 21 to 24 with 22 being the figure for five out of the eight years, even though the species recorded varies.

The problems of studying the bird life of Holland Park include the necessity of not looking for nests since, with one or two exceptions

such as crows, to find a nest will mean that it will almost inevitably be found by some predator, human or otherwise; carrying nesting material or food and in most cases the presence of young birds are the best breeding evidence, though even the latter may be misleading at times. The dense canopy in the late spring and early summer, while of great benefit to the birds, also inhibits easy observation. Another problem is that the density of the bird population fills census maps with symbols to a much greater degree than Bookham Common maps for instance, although many of the birds recorded as seen may be birds that have come into the Park to feed or be fed. However, I have known as many as six robins together sparring in one place in April. Also the birds get to know those who feed them and may well follow people long distances in the Park with the obvious danger that they may be recorded more than once, though it is often possible to recognise individual birds by some behaviour or even some defect—there has been a one-legged robin, a blue tit with an elongated twisted beak, and an almost albino blue tit. Another difficulty is not drawing the attention of the public to what one is watching. Breeding success is low, with the greatest success late in the season when the foliage is thick; late breeding can occur because of abortive earlier attempts.

#### Breeding Species

In order to provide comparison with earlier years I am following the lines of my previous papers and come now to the breeding species. There have been no marked gains or losses during the period 1963-71. There are, however, some trends on which to comment. Although tawny owls have been seen during 1971 and pellets were found in July, during the latter part of the year they have not appeared at their usual roosts. This is not unusual with tawny owls but nevertheless it seems possible the grey squirrels may be adversely affecting them. Two squirrels were playing on one of the usual owl trees recently. I have seen only two dreys, and those recently, and it seems possible the squirrels may have been using the owl holes. Owl pellets found during the summer still show a predominance of bird prey.

The great spotted woodpecker may be in danger. There is no evidence of successful breeding since 1965, although there has been hole-making in subsequent years. In 1971 no female was recorded. The Park staff reported a dead male in April but a male was subsequently seen and although it may have bred elsewhere, there may have been a sexual imbalance. There are still plenty of old trees in the Park so the only apparent habitat change is the building up of the surrounding areas. However, this species seems to read my thoughts! I was expressing my unease about it to a Park keeper in June when suddenly one called and a few minutes later I saw a male. There were no further records until in September I was again expressing my doubts, this time to Mr. Maurice Ogle, an elderly gentleman who is very interested and has given me much help. Suddenly the woodpecker called and again I saw a male. I saw it twice shortly

afterwards but it has been silent since 9th October. Had I better try and call it up again!

The absence of the crow from the breeding list will not even counter-balance the grey squirrel since crows are still around and frequently breed in Ladbroke Square. The mistle thrush is more disappointing but this species often feeds on the playing-field and may well breed in some of the large trees in the nearby enclosed gardens. The willow warbler I have already mentioned—disturbance rather than habitat change seems the explanation here.

Turning now to more hopeful prospects—the nuthatch, absent as a confirmed breeding species between 1965 and 1970 and appearing to be represented by only a single bird, trebled its representation in 1971 and three birds were very active in the spring with much chasing, which eventuated in successful breeding. There are still two birds in the Park and I hope this species is on the upgrade again. They are popular birds and come readily for food. The coal tit is also on the increase with at least two and probably three pairs the last two years. I have watched one of this species take nuts from my hand and hide them under grass tufts. The chiffchaff too has made a comeback, being present singing till the end of June in 1970 and 1971, probably breeding in 1970 and likely breeding in 1971. It is colonising the woodland zone 1, not zone 3.

There were, however, two gains this year in the first recorded breeding of long-tailed tit and goldcrest. I am not optimistic enough to think they will become regular breeding species as both seem to have had several good breeding years and to have increased throughout the country, probably helped by recent mild winters. What appears to be a permanent gain, however, is the bullfinch which has now bred in three consecutive years, 1969, 1970 and 1971. Holland Park is big enough to absorb one pair of these attractive but destructive birds.

Turning now to the regular breeding species, the mallard has shown a marked increase but this is probably because a duck count is carried out monthly on the new stretch of water outside the Commonwealth Institute rather than because of any actual increase in the Park itself. The count has led to the species being recorded in the Park throughout the year, while up to 1964 it had tended to be absent in the autumn and winter. Indeed the appearance of a pair of mallard on the wood pond could before 1965 be regarded as an indication that spring was on the way. This species is frequently seen in trees in the spring, which leads to the supposition that some of them may be breeding in the trees. An obvious sign of over-population was the killing of two well-grown ducklings by a female on the wood pond on 7th May, 1971.

The woodpigeon has decreased quite considerably in numbers, with as always low figures for October and November but also lower figures for May, although since they tend to breed later in the year this may not have too much significance. There is no longer a winter

roost. Feral pigeons are no longer being counted. This species collects in large numbers at spots where it is usual for the public to feed them, for instance the High Street, Kensington Gate, where there are usually upwards of 80 waiting to be fed. They are no longer breeding on the buildings in the Park but they are much more frequently to be found in the woodland and, having a tendency to sit in the trees in the spring, delude one into the hope that there may be a breeding stock dove.

The jay seems to have reduced slightly in number. As even Holt Macpherson found, breeding evidence for this species is difficult to obtain but there appear to be two pairs holding territory in the woods and the spring assemblies have not got into double figures as they have done in the past. Jays feed from the litter baskets and apparent untidiness by the public may be because the jays have thrown paper put into the baskets on to the ground round about.

The great and blue tits show little variation in breeding numbers nor has there been any big winter influx though the figures show a considerable increase in January 1970. The wren shows no change although it is worth noting that although nests were known in 1971 no young birds were seen, and families of young wrens have in the past had no difficulty in making themselves known.

The song thrush shows little breeding variation, but in September 1968 ten were counted feeding on *Cotoneaster* berries and although that number has not been seen again there does seem to be a tendency for small numbers to appear at the appropriate time in the autumn when *Cotoneaster* or yew berries are ripe.

Apart from the house sparrow and the feral pigeon, the blackbird remains the most common bird of the Park. The number of singing males during the breeding season is not high which indicates that many of those seen in the Park are probably there to feed, but this adaptable species has been recorded breeding unusually high in trees and with unusual nesting material such as cellophane. It is perhaps worth noting that an almost white blackbird has again appeared in November 1970 and is still there in the north-west corner of the Park at the bottom of Chestnut Avenue, the same territory occupied by a similar bird for about seven years up to March 1965. The Earl of Ilchester (1937a) records an almost white blackbird in this same area in the 1930s. In the winter many of these birds roost in the hollies in many parts of the Park.

Robins are still plentiful with a slight increase in numbers. Although they are to be found in the other zones, it is the woodland zone 1 that is their stronghold. Some of them will come on the hand. The blackcap has had an average of two pairs and usually breeds successfully. The combination of oak trees with an undergrowth of bramble and holly is conducive to this species. The spotted fly-catcher increased to three pairs in 1971 and also usually breeds successfully.

The dunnoek again is a common bird, more common because of its unobtrusiveness than the figures show, but even so there has been a

considerable increase in its numbers. This bird, though it can be seen in all three zones, is principally to be found in zone 3. Starlings, on the other hand, if anything have decreased. They still occupy the same trees but there are no longer such big flocks on the playing-field and the Park is not a gathering ground for the roosts in the winter.

Greenfinch numbers vary but there is a small breeding population, and the chaffinch remains at two or three pairs, usually to be found in zone 2, the cultivated zone, although they may feed in the woods. The house sparrow is everywhere. Counts are no longer being taken. Winter roosts include the big patch of bamboos, the palm trees which are also occupied all the year round, and until the fire, the windows and arches of the Belvedere Restaurant and neighbourhood.

#### *Non-Breeding Species*

Of the non-breeding species, the kestrel, swift, treecreeper, redwing, willow warbler, pied wagtail and goldfinch have been recorded every year (Table 2). The goldfinch has, of course, bred in the past but is unlikely to do so again with the disappearance of zone 4 and its seeds. Unexpected records were a sedge warbler in 1969 and a wheatear in 1970. A moorhen stayed by the wood pond for several months in the winter of 1968-69 and redpolls have appeared during several winters. Whitethroats were recorded every year to 1969 but have not been observed since—significant in view of their general reduction in numbers. Garden warblers are recorded most years but they are in competition with the blackcaps and indeed one is thought to have been driven out of the wood near the hostel by a blackcap in 1970. A hawfinch appeared in 1968, a brambling in 1965, and magpies and cuckoos are recorded occasionally.

#### *Conclusion*

It is difficult to assess the significance of the changes in the wild life of Holland Park over these eight years. Some features, such as the black-headed gulls coming down on to the playing-field, the increasing numbers of feral pigeons in the woods, the decrease in the great spotted woodpeckers and the failure of the willow warblers to breed seem to indicate greater urban pressure and the adverse effect of more people in the Park.

On the other hand the breeding of the long-tailed tit and goldcrest and the probable breeding of chiffchaff may point to the able management of the woodland and the growth of planted trees and shrubs to a point at which they provide a suitable habitat for these species. Birds such as the coal tit and bullfinch may have become more adaptable.

It is to be hoped that the increasing tendency for people to invade the enclosures, run their dogs unleashed and so on will be kept sufficiently in check to enable the more unusual species to continue to breed, and that there will continue to be people interested in feeding the smaller birds, such as the tits and robins rather than letting the feral pigeons overrun the Park.

Anyone who has studied the bird life of an average south of England or even a Midland deciduous wood will know that they would see as many wild birds on a morning walk in Holland Park as they would in a similar country walk and at much closer range and with a much better chance of identifying them.

The use of the *Reports by the Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks* is acknowledged in the compilation of the Tables.

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## Reports from Local Societies

### THE CAMPDEN STREET PRESERVATION SOCIETY

44 It has been a year of considerable activity and the Committee has held a record number of meetings. A striking feature, however, has been evidence of increased interest and participation throughout the membership: topics have been suggested for discussion by the Committee, questions have been asked about the progress of different projects and bits of local information on possible areas of 'development' passed on, indicating an all-round vigilance and anxiety to conserve.

We have lent our support to local groups with kindred aims in matters which were outside our territorial limits but which still affected the lives of our members. In return we have received welcome support in our opposition to applications in Campden Street which we regard as out of character. We thus secured the withdrawal of a plan to build houses over the Railway Cutting to the south of the Street.

We are currently opposing an application—and we regard this as a matter of great importance—to build over a garden area to the rear of 48 Bedford Gardens (which extends through to the Campden Street frontage). The gardens of these larger houses are a prime feature in the Campden Conservation Area, contributing light, air-space and greenery. There are still, happily, many cognate plots throughout the Borough and they make, in sum, a powerful contribution to the character of Kensington which could be irretrievably impaired if building upon them were allowed. We hold therefore that the application in question has a significance beyond the confines of Campden Street.

Annual subscription, 50p per household. *Hon. Secretary:* John D. Williams, 51 Campden Street, W8 7ET. Telephone: 727 5220.

### EDWARDES SQUARE AND SCARSDALE ASSOCIATION

The second year of the Association's existence has not been uneventful. All other activities have been overshadowed by the work done on the setting up of the Kensington High Street Study Group and the subsequent reports put in by this Group to the Chairman of the Town Planning Committee of Kensington and Chelsea Council. With the active co-operation of various other local associations two successful meetings have been held at which both the Council and some of the commercial interests involved have been well represented. Mr. Richard Newcombe is Chairman of the Study Group.

With all this going on other matters have not been neglected and we have been able to make our views known to the Council on various planning applications and traffic management schemes affecting the conservation area. We have also asked to have the area increased to include streets, or parts of streets, which we consider worthy of preservation. *Hon. Secretary:* Mrs. J. Brown, 3 Alma Terrace, W.8.

### THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

The Association has just completed its second year of operation and our membership stands at nearly 200 representing 150 households, and the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council have just approved our application for the extension of the Conservation Area.

The Committee have commented on nearly 40 planning applications during the year. A very serious threat to the area was the proposed redevelopment of the Boltons Studios. A planning application made last July was refused by the Council after very strong local views, including those of our Association, were expressed. A revised planning application has just been submitted which does little to overcome the criticisms against the previous application and Sir Charles Wheeler has written to *The Times* in support of these studios being retained for the artistic profession. We entirely support his views.

The Association is extremely concerned about the extent of 'permitted development' under General Development Order 1963 which is being carried out within the area. This means that it is within the power of the Council to make 'Article 4 Directions'. The effect of this is that the right which owners now have to do certain 'permitted' building work is removed from them. The Association feels that unless such a 'Direction' is made by the Council, the character of the area may change considerably.

During the year we also carried out a very detailed Tree Survey of all front and back gardens and had a very successful meeting, when the Borough Engineer confirmed the Council's willingness to co-operate with the Association on the maintenance and planting of trees.

The Annual General Meeting, held on 14 February, 1973, was very well attended and Frank Layfield, QC, spoke to the Association on the Practical Application of Planning Law. *Chairman:* Mrs. I. L. E. Austin-Smith. *Hon. Treasurer:* Lord Cardross. *Hon. Secretary:* Mrs. J. Wheeler.

### NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

45 As the more pressing major threats to Norland temporarily recede, so our attention has been turned to a whole series of lesser, but nonetheless cumulatively important, changes.

On the threats side, rapidly rising property values have encouraged a rash of planning applications—for sub-divisions, extra floors and extensions into rear gardens. We have considered and commented on over 60 applications in the past year. The Council's Planning Com-

mittee have been noticeably sympathetic to our views, which encourages us to feel that, with our support, genuine conservation policies are being applied to new applications, and that this will be enormously beneficial to our aims in preventing the gradual erosion of the townscape.

On the positive side, we have sponsored a joint railing replacement scheme in Addison Avenue, and continued to promote joint restoration and redecoration schemes in Norland Square and Royal Crescent. We have welcomed the Council's proposals for a Traffic Management Scheme in the Clarendon Road Area, which should further help to cut off the use of Norland as a rat-run at peak periods in Holland Park Avenue. We look forward to the introduction of parking controls in May. We encouraged the Environmental Plans Group of the Council to produce guide-line plans and design criteria for possible applications to build garages in gardens backing on to Queensdale Walk and Princes Place.

This year's major threat was, and still is, the building of the West Cross Route. Without a northward link to the M1, it is hard to see how traffic which will use the West Cross Route to get north, will find its way to the M1, except—at least partly—by coming off at Shepherd's Bush and filtering north through North Kensington, using, amongst other routes, Royal Crescent and St. Ann's Villas. We therefore gave written evidence to the Planning Enquiry, our main plea being that a northward link to the M1 should be built at the same time as Stage 1. This saga is far from over.

Finally, we are making plans for 1975—for European Architectural Heritage Year.

#### ONSLow NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Association was formed last summer to help protect the amenities of the western section of the Royal Boroughs Conservation Area No. 1, the area bounded by Drayton Gardens to the west, Old Brompton Road, South Kensington Station and Pelham Street to the north and east, and Fulham Road to the south. Since then most of our efforts have been directed towards building up membership, which now stands at approximately 250. We are anxious to increase this figure and heartily welcome any new members from our area or its borders.

An Executive Committee has been set up to deal with day to day business. Since formation we have received notification from the Planning Department of all applications relating to the area and have been invited to comment on them. The two most important being a proposal to obtain change of use to offices for part of the new hotel under construction over the Underground and for the erection of a Polish War Memorial on the triangular garden opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Association, in conjunction with the Thurloe and Egerton Association, opposed both these applications and they were subsequently turned down. We have also contact with our other neighbours, the Boltons Association.

Our future programme starts with an inaugural Annual General Meeting to be held in June at the Church Hall, St. Pauls Church, Onslow Square. We hope to include talks about the past and future of the area with guest speakers from the Brompton Hospital and Messrs. Cluttons representing the Smiths Charities Estate, the two largest landlords in the area.

The subjects for future meetings include Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, How Owners are Affected, The Planning Pattern for West London and Trees in the City.

We also hope to set up a photographic record of buildings in the area.

For these and other projects we require helpers. Please contact the *Hon. Secretary*: H. Brady, Esq., 16 Silwood Terrace, S.W.7.

#### ROYAL CRESCENT GARDEN COMMITTEE

The past year has been characterised as a year of change for the Royal Crescent Garden Committee. Jean Pownall, the Committee Secretary of many years, retired. Through her devotion and hard work over the 13 years she held the office, Royal Crescent became one of the loveliest private gardens in London.

Now the old buildings are being purchased and some converted into flats. One by one their facades are being renovated and painted and they begin to look down on the old garden with something of their former dignity.

A number of the new residents have become members of the Garden Committee, bringing new views and new ideas to add to those of long-time members.

Many of the old residents feared drastic change spoiling the garden's serenity. But the aim of the Garden Committee, with the aid of a qualified landscape architect with respect for the past, is to continue and extend Jean Pownall's work.

The year has also been characterised as one of tentative planning, of sorting ideas, a year for laying groundwork for this and other projects which, hopefully, will start to become reality in the not too distant future. *Hon. Secretary*: Mrs. C. A. Veal, 28 Royal Crescent, W.11.

#### THURLOE AND EGERTON ASSOCIATION

This Association was formed in September 1972 with the following aims:—

1. To arouse interest in conserving and improving the area;
2. To establish contact with the local planning authority and with other amenity groups;
3. To maintain a constant watch on any proposed development or changes within or bordering upon the area affecting buildings, trees, traffic, street furniture and lighting, pavements and rubbish, etc.

Membership at £1 per annum is open to everyone living or working within the northern half of the Conservation Area No. 1 (Thurloe Estate and Smith Charity Estate North). Those interested in joining should write to the *Hon. Secretary*: Mrs. Susan Anstruther at 13 Thurloe Square, S.W.7.

The first General Meeting of the Association will be held on Wednesday, 9 May, at 6.30 p.m., at Baden-Powell House, Queens Gate. Everyone eligible is invited to be there, whether they are already members or not, and to put forward suggestions and air grievances. It is hoped that the speakers will include Mrs. Innette Austin Smith, FRIBA, FSIA, Chairman of the neighbouring Boltons Association, Mr. Ashley Barker, Surveyor to the Historic Buildings Department of the G.L.C., and Councillor Peter Methuen, Chairman of the Town Planning Committee of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Questions will be answered from the floor, but to help the Committee to make the evening a constructive one, written questions and suggestions are invited and should reach the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible before the meeting.

#### 'SAVE THE GAUMONT' COMMITTEE

With the aim of offering constructive and positive action towards the rebirth of the historic Coronet Theatre, a group of residents have formed a 'Save the Gaumont' action committee. The members, who include an architect, a banker, a journalist, a librarian, designer Shirley Russell and theatrical director Ronald Eyre, decided to launch a restoration fund in advance of any final decision on how the building can be saved. Members and helpers have set up stalls at Notting Hill Gate and the Portobello Road to sell 'Save the Coronet' badges, as well as prints and a series of postcards depicting various aspects of the theatre's history. The Committee is also producing carrier bags with a design by Shirley Russell (who created the costumes for all her husband's films). In three weeks the group collected over £250 and is confident that a substantial sum of money could be raised if the Council were to take steps toward the restoration of the building. As a result of the publicity obtained by the campaign, Mr. Michael Codron, one of the West End's leading theatrical managements (currently staging Allan Bennett's new play, *Habeas Corpus*, starring Sir Alec Guinness) wrote to the Borough Council offering to take a lease on the theatre if it were made workable. Sir Alec Guinness sent a donation to the campaign, as did opera singer Eva Turner.

The Coronet was built for Edward George Saunders and designed by the well-known theatre architect W. G. R. Sprague, who also designed numerous West End theatres, including Ambassadors, St. Martins, Queen's, Wyndham, the New and the Globe, as well as the King Edward VII Theatre in Paris. The Coronet is Sprague's earliest surviving theatre. Designed to hold 1,143 persons, the building cost £25,000. It is among the earliest London theatres constructed

on the cantilever system. The exterior is of Italian Renaissance style, with an elegant dome rising 80 feet from the ground. The dome was originally surmounted by a figure of Mercury.

The interior of the building is of Louis XVI design, and still comprises a perfectly proportioned auditorium, complete with stalls, dress circle and balcony encrusted with late Victorian stucco ornamentation. The noted firm of Waring and Gillow were responsible for furnishings and decoration, and the interior colour scheme was described as 'a harmony of cream, chrome and gold'. On the ceiling was a mural by Arthur J. Black, representing the Four Seasons. Spring was depicted in green, scattering purple and yellow flowers; Summer in a crimson and green robe, surrounded by roses; Autumn wreathed with corn; and Winter clothed in white and grey.

On the tympanum over the proscenium was a painting of Mirth, Bacchanals wreathed with flowers dancing to the piping of Euterpe. Equally ornate was the act drop, an adaptation in oils of a Ferrarese tapestry, entitled 'La Barque de Vénus'. Here the artist portrayed the goddess seated beneath a bower and surrounded by cupids fishing; her ship an ancient Roman galley. The ceilings of the refreshment saloons were also decorated by Mr. Black, and the walls were hung with panels of French tapestry illustrating scenes from Don Quixote.

The theatre was opened 28th November, 1898, in the presence of a large and enthusiastic audience. The opening piece was the Japanese opera, *The Geisha* with Morell and Mouillot's company. At the end of the performance Mr. Saunders introduced the architect, who was received with tremendous applause. Until 1923, when it was licensed as a cinema, the Coronet was used as a repertory theatre, music hall, palace of varieties and opera house; for pantomimes, plays, musical comedies, the D'Oyly Carte Opera and the Frank Benson Shakespearean Company. It differed from the rest of the suburban theatres in that it produced several original pieces. The Japanese actors who afterwards were seen at the Criterion, made their first appearance at the Coronet in 1900. Madame Rejane acted here for many seasons, as did Ellen Terry, Sarah Bernhardt, Dame Sybil Thorndike and Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Symon Hicks' musical comedy 'The Merry-Go-Round' was staged at the Coronet in 1899 and proved a great success. In 1905 Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Sarah Bernhardt performed together in *Pelleas and Melisande*. Winifred Hare, Lillie Elsie, Hettie Dean and Phyllis Dare were regularly seen in the renowned Coronet pantomimes, and Gordon Craig, one of the world's leading theatrical designers, created sets here. The Coronet must surely have had one of the most varied histories of any theatre in London.

In 1898 The Era announced the Coronet's opening with effusive praise: 'Of a truth the new Coronet well becomes Kensington, the suburb of all others in which art is really fostered . . . a theatre of which the whole county of London may well be proud'. In 1930 Ronald Mayes spoke of the Coronet as 'widely known and well loved'.

In 1973 the spacious stage, intimate auditorium, charming bars, historic dressing rooms, quaint corridors and handsome facade remain intact, but desperately in need of careful restoration.

SUSAN CAVANAUGH and MALCOLM RICHARDS  
'Save the Gaumont' Committee.

## Kensington Theatres

Two of the historic houses of Kensington—Holland House and Campden House—were associated with the private theatre.

During the Civil War theatres were closed. By an Ordinance issued in 1647 actors were to be proceeded against as common rogues. Notwithstanding this persecution, during the early spring of 1649, certain players banded together and attempted to revive their performances privately in London. To quote 'Historica Histrionica', a tract published in 1699, 'they used to act privately, three or four miles out of town, now here now there, sometimes in noblemen's houses, in particular Holland House at Kensington, where the nobility and gentry who met (but in no great numbers) used to make a sum for them, each giving a broadpiece or the like. And Alexander Goffe, the woman actor at Blackfriars (who had made himself known to persons of quality) used to be the jackall, and gave notice of time and place'. Lord Ilchester in 'The Home of the Hollands, 1605-1820', states that 'there is no record of the names of the plays which were presented in Holland House, nor of the actors who took part in the performances. It is hardly likely that any list was kept, when secrecy and concealment was so urgent. But it is clear that it played an important part in enabling the dramatic profession to carry on their tradition in the best way possible during that period of stress which preceded the Restoration'.

In the mid-19th century, those whom Blanchard called the 'Amateurs of Rank and Fashion', assembled to show off their dramatic talent in various places, one of which was Campden House, Kensington. Mrs. Byrne, in her 'Gossip of the Century', published in 1892, gives the following description of Campden House: 'Campden House was admirably adapted for such entertainments; it was not only a model palace of Queen Anne's day, and extremely picturesque within and without, but the grounds were very tastefully laid out in the style of the period; it contained a most perfect little theatre with all its appointments and properties and it was on this stage that the performers exhibited. The matinées given here, which generally occupied a long afternoon, were arranged in three parts, the intervals serving for a stroll in the grounds, where the visitors met; and tea was also served in one of the quaint old rooms opening into the garden.' Every year there was a performance at this little theatre for the benefit of the Royal Benevolent Society. It was here that Charles Dickens acted in

a play called 'The Lighthouse'. The house with the theatre was destroyed by fire in 1862.

One of the most interesting theatres in Kensington was 'The Royal Kent'. This theatre was situated off Kensington High Street (near where the present fire station stands). It was opened on Easter Monday, 1834, under the patronage of the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria. There was a separate entrance down a mews for Royalty. It had a short but popular existence and many well-known contemporary actors appeared on its stage. Brown, a well-known light comedian; Wynne, an actor of some repute; the brother of Augustus Sala, frequently mentioned in the memoirs of the latter; and Denvil, the original representative of Manfred, were, at one time, among the company. Indeed, it was from here that Bunn engaged Denvil for Drury Lane, to play the part of Byron's melancholy hero. The theatre was finally closed in 1840.

The Century Theatre in Westbourne Grove, first known as the Bijou and then the Victoria Hall, was built towards the end of the 18th century and was contemporaneous with Sadlers Wells. Although originally one of the five patent theatres, it was once closed for a period of 20 years, and thus the patent lapsed. This little theatre has an interesting past, many famous actors and actresses have appeared within its walls, including Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander, Henry Irving, Marie Lloyd, etc. More recently, the Lena Ashwell Players made this theatre their headquarters and it became a recognised centre for the production of the best kind of plays. It was then that it became known as the Century Theatre. It rivalled the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, in the production of new and interesting plays.

One hundred years ago Batty's Hippodrome was attracting large crowds. It was situated on ground lying between the present Palace Gate and De Vere Gardens. 'The Lady's Newspaper' of Saturday, 31st May, 1851, gives the following description of the performance:

'We can safely say that the Hippodrome at Kensington is a complete novelty to the English, and, withal, one of the most attractive that it is possible to imagine. The displays of horsemanship and chariot-racing—all partaking of the vivid character of the course—are about the most exciting subjects for contemplation in or near the metropolis. These are, in fact, real racing encounters, accompanied by all the peril and breathless uncertainty of Doncaster, Epsom or Ascot; and the more fanciful additions of the processions of the Roman unbacked coursers, the chariots, etc., offer a most agreeable relief to what would otherwise be monotonous. Our fair subscribers will take some interest in two young Arabs, whose horses are ostriches! These birds have really a marvellous speed, and are admirably trained. The female French equestrians are probably the best horsewomen in the world; and those engaged in the chariot-racing perform feats which, in

description, would appear simply incredible. They must be seen. On Monday, Mr. Hampton ascends in his magnificent balloon, the Erin-go-bragh.' The Hippodrome was closed in 1852.

The next theatre of any importance and of a later date was the Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill Gate. This theatre was built in 1898 to the plans of W. G. R. Sprague, and was part of a scheme for making a chain of theatres in various suburbs around London. The following great names graced the playbills of the Coronet—Sarah Bernhardt, Henry Irving, Martin Harvey, Frank Benson and many others. The coming of the theatre to Notting Hill meant new business for the shops and excitement for the children. For these theatrical companies recruited their juvenile crowd players from the surrounding streets. For one shilling a night and a glass of milk they paraded as pixies, fairies, urchins, pageboys or any form which the show demanded. In the 'Sins of Society' they built a ship on the stage and surrounded it with a green carpet and boys had to crawl about under the carpet to make 'waves'. Marie Lloyd appeared in several pantomimes at this theatre. Since 1916 the Coronet has been a cinema.

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## Constitution of the Kensington Society

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1. The name of the Society shall be The Kensington Society.
2. The objects of the Society shall be to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington by stimulating interest in its history and records, by protecting its buildings of beauty and historic interest, by preserving its open spaces from disfigurement and encroachment and by encouraging good architecture in its future development.
3. MEMBERS. Members shall be Life, Corporate or Ordinary.
4. SUBSCRIPTIONS. Life members shall pay a minimum subscription of £25.00. Corporate members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of £5.25. Ordinary members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of £2.10. Subscriptions are payable on 1st January each year.
5. THE COUNCIL. The Council shall consist of not more than thirty members. They shall be elected by the Executive Committee.
6. THE OFFICERS. The Officers of the Society shall be the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer.
7. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. The Executive Committee shall consist of not more than twelve members and the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually by the members of the Executive Committee at their first meeting after the Annual General Meeting.
8. The Executive Committee shall be the governing body of the Society. It shall have power to (i) Make bye-laws; (ii) Co-opt members and fill vacancies on the Executive Committee that may arise for the current year; (iii) Take any steps they may consider desirable to further the interests and objects of the Society.  
A Quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of not less than five members.  
Not less than three Executive Committee Meetings shall be convened in any one year.
9. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. An Annual General Meeting of which 28 days' notice shall be given to members, shall be held when the Executive Committee shall submit a Report and an audited Statement of Accounts to the previous 31st December.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. All members of the Society shall be eligible for elections as Officers of the Society or Members of the Executive Committee. Nominations must be sent to the Hon. Secretary, duly signed by a proposer and seconder, within 14 days of the date of the Annual General Meeting.
11. ALTERATIONS OF RULES. No rule shall be altered or revoked except at a General Meeting of the Society. No motion shall be deemed carried unless it has been agreed to by not less than two-thirds of those present and voting.
12. The Society shall not be dissolved unless a majority of two-thirds of the subscribing members signify their approval of such a course by means of a postal ballot taken after receipt by the said members of a statement by the Executive Committee setting forth fairly and impartially a summary of the arguments for and against such course and the views of the Executive Committee thereon.

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# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY—STATEMENT OF

31.12.71	Income	£	£
681	Balances at 1st January, 1972 ... ..		844·97
	<b>Membership Subscriptions:</b>		
79	Life ... ..	142·00	
735	Annual ... ..	705·86	
			847·86
	<b>Other Receipts:</b>		
	Receipts from Sale of Work and Christmas Cards ... ..	334·30	
	Deduct: Expenses of Sale, less Stock on Hand ... ..	126·18	
221		208·12	
23	Bank Deposit Interest ... ..	28·06	
	Income Tax recovered on Covenanted Subscriptions ... ..	51·14	
190	Receipts for Visits ... ..	203·90	
84	Advertising in Annual Report ... ..	65·70	
40	Donations ... ..	225·50	
9	Local History Group—Cash returned ... ..	—	
			782·42

KEON HUGHES, *Hon. Treasurer.*

£2,115

£2,475·25

We have prepared the above Accounts from the books and vouchers of the Society submitted to us and certify that it is correctly drawn up in accordance therewith. We have obtained verification of the balances at Bank at 31st December, 1972.

# ACCOUNTS For the Year ended 31st DECEMBER, 1972

31.12.71	Expenses	£	£
229	Printing, Typing and Stationery ... ..	124·86	
267	Postage and Telephone ... ..	231·05	
322	Producing Annual Report and Leaflet ... ..	474·90	
31	Bank Charges ... ..	11·07	
72	Professional Charges ... ..	72·25	
45	Sundry Expenses ... ..	33·48	
23	Lectures, Hire of Halls, etc. ... ..	—	
3	Local History Group ... ..	—	
221	Coach Visits, etc. ... ..	178·25	
3	Subscriptions to other Societies ... ..	8·15	
—	Donations ... ..	5·50	
4	Photographic Records ... ..	17·33	
1	Borough Council Minutes ... ..	—	
49	Greater London Development Plan ... ..	—	
—	Professional Fees for Public Enquiry ... ..	81·70	
—	Colville and Tavistock Area Conference... ..	143·05	
—	Kensington High Street Development ... ..	63·19	
1,270			1,444·78

## Balances at 31st December, 1972:

### At Bank—

Current Account ... ..	289·16
Deposit Account ... ..	776·31

1,065·47

Less: 1973 Subscriptions paid in advance ... ..	49·21
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1,016·26

Stock of Sale Articles ... ..	14·21
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845

1,030·47

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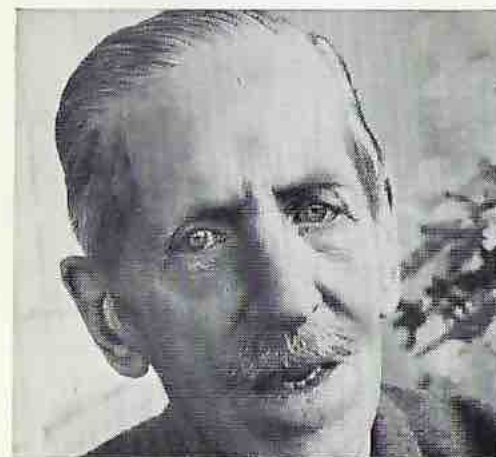
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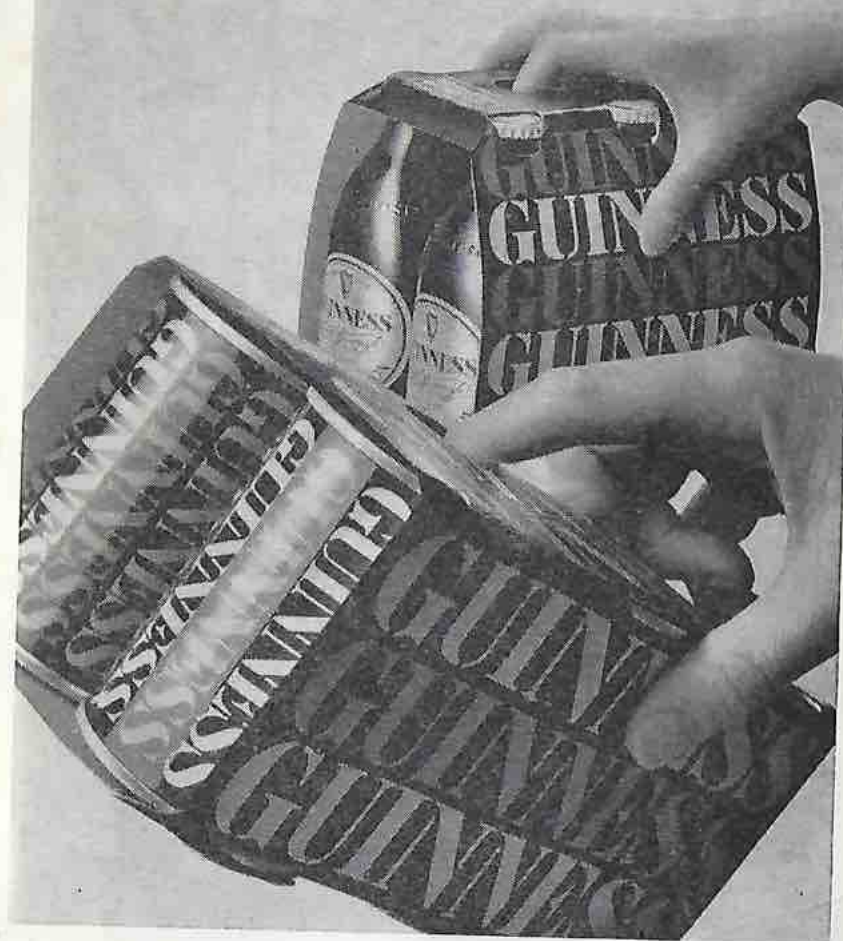
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