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# Annual Report

## 1977-78



THE  
**Kensington**  
Society

THE  
Kensington  
Society

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.

Annual Report  
1977-78

FRONT COVER

*Clock Tower, Kensington Palace, c. 1860*

*By kind permission of Kensington Public Library*



*H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, planting a jubilee oak,  
December 7th, 1977*

# The Kensington Society

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HON. SECRETARY: Mrs. G. Christiansen, 18 Kensington Square, W.8

AUDITORS: Messrs. Croft, May and Co.

## Foreword

Our Society celebrates a very special year. Every reader of the Kensington Society Journal must be deeply impressed by the history of a quarter of a century and the tremendous achievements during this time in the constant battle for preservation of that which is worth while in the fields of architecture and amenity in our Royal Borough. Mrs. Christiansen, to whom the Society owes a debt that can never be repaid, shows how fearlessly the Society has striven against an undergrowth of ignorance, prejudice, vested interest and at times our own local officialdom. It is good to know that today the position of the Society is recognised by local authorities as representative of those citizens who want future development to be carried out in accordance with the standards and aims of our Society.

But there are still major battles to be fought; before us in the very near future is the resistance to the wholly unacceptable plan for development by the Russian Embassy of the Barracks site.

On behalf of all members we would wish to thank the Mayor and Mayoress, Alderman Methuen and Mrs. Methuen, for the honour they did in recognition of the Society's work, by inviting the Council and Executive Committee to a reception in the Mayor's Parlour on 2nd March. This was more than a formal occasion. It was a happy gathering to support the Mayor's public recognition of Mrs. Christiansen's ceaseless work for our Society and to applaud the presentation to her by his Worship.

Finally, but far from least important, once again may we thank our Patron H.R.H. Princess Alice for her continued and active interest in our work. Not every lady of considerable age would, as did the Princess, turn out on a mid-winter afternoon of pouring rain to fulfil a promise to plant formally a jubilee tree, presented by the Society, at the corner of Kensington Palace Gate entrance and the High Street. We render to Her Royal Highness our unstinted admiration for this and for much else in her long life of devoted public service.

BALFOUR OF INCHRYE.

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Leighton House on 24th May at 7 p.m. Mr. Geoffrey Dearbergh, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, was in the chair. The President, the Rt. Hon. Lord Balfour of Inchrye, was unable to be present owing to parliamentary duties; a letter of apology was read. Mr. Dearbergh was supported by Mr. Ian Grant, Chairman of the Executive Committee, and Mr. Keon Hughes, Treasurer.

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

Mr. Ian Grant, in moving the adoption of the Report, referred to the proposed Russian Embassy proposals. He reported that the Society had been unable to obtain any further information about these, but assured the meeting that the Society would take urgent steps as soon as the plans were available.

Mr. Grant outlined other planning matters where the Society had taken action and informed the meeting that approximately 60 plans were examined and many commented on each month. He mentioned specifically the case of the Sion Convent in Chepstow Villas, where the Society had opposed proposals to convert the existing convent and school buildings into a Science Conference Centre. In support of both the Pembridge and Ladbroke Associations, the Society felt that such a change would introduce an unacceptable alien use into a primarily residential area. The Society's representatives had regularly attended and contributed to the Planning Forums which had recently been held throughout the Borough to discuss the context papers which will eventually be incorporated into the Borough Development Plan; the Society had also submitted written comments on each paper to the Borough.

Mr. Grant also mentioned that he himself had represented the Society as a witness before the House of Lords Select Committee when the proposed Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Bill was discussed. The Society supported the provisions of the Bill, which seeks greater powers to enable the Council to control (amongst other matters) repairs to dilapidated buildings, emergency stop notices, change of use of shops, illegal parking and dumping of rubbish.

The Society had agreed to plant 25 trees in North Kensington for the North Kensington Amenity Trust, and had hoped to plant 32 in

Kensington Church Street. This had just been refused by the Council, but the Society hoped to find another site for tree planting. The adoption of the Report was seconded by Miss Balian, who said that our thanks were due to the Hon. Secretary for the high standard and quality of our Annual Reports which had been so consistently maintained year by year. Referring to the hope expressed by Lord Balfour in his foreword to this year's Report that every member should endeavour to enrol two new members, the members were reminded that this increased membership which we all desired would entail more work, and she appealed to those who felt able to give occasional help to let Mrs. Christiansen know.

Mr. Keon Hughes presented the audited Accounts for the year ended 31st December, 1976. He said that although costs had considerably increased during the past year the accounts were in a fairly healthy state. He urged members to pay their subscriptions on 1st January when they became due. Three reminders had been sent out by the Hon. Secretary, which as well as increasing our costs also added to the work.

Mrs. Christie seconded the adoption of the Accounts.

One nomination, Mr. Tony Dunn, had been received for the Executive Committee to fill the vacancy occurred by the resignation of Sir Allan Quartermaine. As no further nominations had been received Mrs. Marlow proposed and Miss Houlton seconded the election en bloc of the officers and Executive Committee for a further 12 months.

Under any other business, Mrs. Christiansen asked if members would let her know when they were unable to come on any visits for which they had bought tickets.

It was emphasised that it had now become necessary for the Society to acquire an office where the work could be carried out and the files could be kept, which up till now had occupied considerable space in Mrs. Christiansen's house. A search would be made for suitable premises.

Mr. Ian Grant then gave a short talk on the history of Leighton House.

#### TREE PLANTING

On 7th December H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, initiated the Society's Jubilee Tree Planting Scheme for Kensington High Street by planting a tree at the bottom of Kensington Palace road, at the corner of the Royal Garden Hotel. Her Royal Highness was greeted by the President, Lord Balfour of Inchrye, the Mayor and Mayoress of the Royal Borough, Alderman and Mrs. Peter Methuen, members of the Executive Committee and officers of the Council. After the ceremony the party was entertained at 18 Kensington Square. A plaque is being fixed to the Kensington Palace road wall. Ten plane trees have been given to the Council for planting in the High Street.

Twenty-one trees were ordered for the North Kensington Amenity Trust, but owing to delay in the preparation of their tree planting area the trees were not accepted. These have been offered to the Kensington

Borough Council and accepted. The lime trees will be planted in North Kensington Memorial Park and eight cherry trees in Kelso Place. Our thanks are specially due to Mr. Ashley Stephenson, Royal Parks Superintendent, for procuring the plane trees and the specimen oak tree planted by H.R.H. Princess Alice.

#### CHRISTMAS SALE

The Society was greatly honoured by the attendance of H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, Patron of the Society, at the Christmas Sale in November. Miss Joan Lascelles was in attendance. We are grateful to members for their gifts, to those who came and bought and to those who sent donations because they were unable to come. Special thanks to those who helped at the sale. Proceeds of the sale, with donations, and after expenses had been paid, were £446.09.

#### DONATIONS

We are grateful to members and to others who have made donations to the Society, thereby showing confidence in our work.

#### OBITUARY

We report with deep regret the death of Miss Irene Bolton. Miss Bolton had been a member since the foundation of the Society. Her sister, Miss Bolton of Lodsworth, Sussex, has sent £50 to the Society in memory of Miss Bolton.

We also report with regret the death of Mrs. Sedgwick Rough. She was a founder member of the society and always remembered, most generously, the annual Sale.

#### KENSINGTON SQUARE

The Society was founded from a meeting held in Kensington Square in 1953. In commemorating 25 years of the work of the Society, it seems appropriate to reprint an article by Miss Margaret Jourdain which appeared in *Country Life* in December 1946. Miss Jourdain was a member of the Society. The Editor of *Country Life* has kindly given permission for the article and photographs to be reproduced.

Much legislation has taken place since 1946. The Civic Amenities Act 1967, the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974, resulting in safeguards for buildings of historic or architectural merit and the concept of conservation areas. This has had considerable effect on public opinion and not less on the Royal Borough Council of Kensington and Chelsea and on the Greater London Council.

The change of attitude can be seen by the Council's present opinion of the Square, produced at the request of the Society and reprinted on page 26, following Miss Jourdain's article. The Group Preservation Order, the last of such Orders to be made, which was made on the Square in 1968, was the result of persistent appeals by the Society to the statutory bodies over a number of years for such an Order.



#### PREMISES FOR THE SOCIETY

The Society is in urgent need of premises. Considerable records, photographs, etc., have been collected over the years. The Executive Committee would like premises which perhaps could be used as a charity shop, thereby removing the need for the Annual Sale at 18 Kensington Square, and which could serve as a meeting place where members could call and discuss planning proposals. We would welcome help in this matter.

#### ADVERTISING

The advertising in this Report has again been collected and dealt with by Mr. John Maclay, a member of the Executive Committee. Proceeds of the advertising will cover a third of the cost of producing this Report.

#### MEMBERSHIP AND COVENANTS

May I remind members that the annual subscription is now £3 and was due on 1st January. We have gratefully received a number of Covenants since our request last year. A membership and Covenant form appear at the back of the Report. Please ask your friends to join the Society. For the Society to continue to work effectively, we need to recruit new members. May I take this opportunity to thank Life Members who send donations from time to time.

#### PS.

This Report is about to be returned to the printer after proof reading. We have just heard the sad news of the death of Miss Katharine Blackie. She has been a most active and staunch supporter of the Kensington Society since its foundation, joining in all our activities. She was known to more members than any other member. Some years ago a member resigned from the Society; five days later I had another letter from that member: 'Please find enclosed cheque. I have just met Miss Blackie in the High Street. She was so furious that I had resigned from the Society I dare not meet her again, until I have rejoined.' I am glad to say that we still have that member. Miss Blackie came on all the visits to Swanton Mill and always at the end she gathered the members together and made a speech, and in it she included, 'dear Nellie and Nellie's sister Mary'. This was a typical gesture.

For 25 years she lovingly tended the garden at Brompton Holy Trinity Church, winning prizes in the Brighter Kensington Scheme for the best church garden, and for 20 years she was organiser and lecturer for the N.S.P.C.C. where she did valuable work.

Yes, Kensington Society members will miss you, Katharine Blackie.

I would like to record our appreciation of the care taken by the Campfield Press in the printing of this Report.

## A selection of cases dealt with

The Council reports that 823 applications were before the Planning Department of the Borough Council for determination from January to July 1977. The list of applications is sent to the Society each week. These are examined by the Chairman, Mr. Ian Grant, by Mr. Dennis Marlow and Mrs. Christiansen. The sites are visited and comments are sent to the Council each week. The Society continues to be represented on the Borough Council's Planning Committee and at the Local Planning Forums.

The planning matters which have been of greatest concern to the Society during the year were the development of the National Theatre site, the proposed Russian development, the future of the old Town Hall, and the Society has also been concerned that the Milestone Hotel, a listed building, should have been partly refaced, without planning permission. The Society alerted the Council, also the Greater London Council.

#### *National Theatre site*

The four schemes which had been short-listed by the Greater London Council were mentioned in our last Report. Before the schemes could be considered by the G.L.C. they were required to obtain planning permission from the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council. The G.L.C. has recently given permission for the Aga Khan scheme. The Society has been in close touch with the Thurloe and Egerton Association, which has been very active in arranging meetings and circulating proposals and comments to residents in the area. The Onslow Neighbourhood Association has also been active in this matter.

#### *The Russian proposals*

Edwards Square and Scarsdale Association organised a meeting in January. This was attended by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, M.P. for Kensington, who made a full statement on the proposed Russian development of the Barracks site in Kensington Church Street. He said the Russians had been offered the site at the top of Kensington Palace Gardens, also the present car park facing Bayswater Road (the site covers 2.7 acres) as an alternative to the Barracks site, but they now want both sites. He saw no hope of being able to persuade them to give up the Barracks site.

The proposals for the Barracks site includes a tower block with accommodation for 60 flats, a school, gymnasium, swimming pool, sauna, theatre, dressing-rooms, car park, garden area and tennis court. A retaining wall around the site would be very high (approximately 60 feet). On the Palace Gardens site an early 20th-century prestige building about the height of the Royal Garden Hotel is planned. It is proposed to demolish the listed Wyatt buildings No. 6 and 7 Kensington Palace Gardens and other buildings on the site.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams has tried to put forward an alternative suggestion that the proposed wall on the Barracks site should be put back 60 feet to allow for a line of shops and mixed development in front of the wall.

Sir Brandon felt that when the plans were complete it would be too late to fight the development. Residents, he said, must 'try now to stop this huge edifice, with its wailing wall on the outside and its castle-like structure dominating the centre of Kensington'. The Society is not entirely in agreement with Sir Brandon about compromising by putting shops in front of the Russians' building; the Society is unanimous in wishing to see the Barracks site developed for Kensington residents. We are, of course, most grateful to him for keeping us informed and for all the trouble he has taken in trying to preserve the Barracks site.

#### *Russian Embassy*

This Report is about to be returned to the printer after proof reading. The Public Meeting has been held and the Society would like to thank members for their support, for attending the meeting and bringing their friends. Special thanks too to members who distributed leaflets. Well over 1,000 residents attended the meeting. The following resolution was passed and today we have heard that Sir Brandon Rhys Williams is meeting Dr. Owen next week.

#### *Resolution*

'This meeting of more than 1,000 residents is utterly opposed to the building of a Russian Embassy on the Kensington Church Street Barracks site and requests the Member of Parliament for Kensington, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, once again to raise the matter of the proposed extensions of the Russian Embassy premises in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; to enlist all possible support in persuading the Crown Commissioners to make the Kensington Church Street Barracks site available to the Royal Borough for development in the interests of its residents, and that Nos. 6 and 7 Kensington Palace Gardens should be preserved and Nos. 4 and 5 incorporated in any development on that site.'

Proposed by Mrs. G. Christiansen; seconded by Mr. Dennis Marlow.

This was sent to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, Mr. Steel, Dr. Owen and Mr. Peter Shore.

## Other activities and future arrangements

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Arrangements were made for members to visit the following: Chelsea Physic Garden, Central Royal Parks Nurseries, Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens, Wisley, Eynham Manor, Swanton Mill, Claremont, Greys Court, Henley-on-Thames, Trinity House, Bank of England, Victoria and Albert Museum conducted tour of '19th-Century English Furniture', by Mr. Simon Jervis, Royal Academy of Arts, St. James's, Piccadilly, Charterhouse, Charterhouse Square.

### FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

18th April, 7.30 p.m. Public Meeting at the Town Hall, Kensington. Russian proposals for Kensington.

25th April. A visit to Michleham Priory, near Hailsham. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 12.30. Tickets, including coach, entrance fee and tea, £4.50.

7th June, 6.30 p.m. Annual General Meeting in the Orangery, Holland Park, followed by a short talk by Mr. Alick Janaway, Holland Park Manager. Tickets are not required.

21st June. Swanton Mill, Mersham, Kent. Working water mill and garden. Tea will be provided by Mrs. Christiansen. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 12.30 p.m. Coach tickets £3.

25th July, 3 p.m. A visit to Marlborough House and the Queen's Chapel, Pall Mall. Tickets are required.

5th September. A visit to the Royal Horticultural Gardens, Wisley. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1.30 p.m. Tickets £3.50, including coach, entrance and tea.

# The Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Act, 1977

For several years the Councillors and Officers of the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have felt increasing concern about their lack of powers to control certain matters which they consider to be environmentally undesirable, and in 1977 the Council promoted a Bill (called the Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Bill) in an effort to have various changes made in the law, which would help to mitigate some of the shortcomings of existing legislation.

The Bill contained 19 clauses, of which the most important were related to extra powers of control over the repair of dilapidated buildings, the abolition of compensation under the 10 per cent Permitted Development regulations, the serving of Emergency Stop Notices in the case of unauthorised development, undesirable changes of use of shops, removal of refuse, dogs on roads, serving of instant parking penalties and certain other related matters.

The two major local amenity societies (the Kensington Society and the Chelsea Society) were asked by the Council if they would each delegate a member to act as witness in support of the Bill before the Lords Select Committee. As Chairman of the Kensington Society I agreed to attend, together with Mrs. Leslie Lewis, Joint Honorary Secretary of the Chelsea Society.

After several meetings with the Borough Solicitor, matters began in earnest at the offices of the Parliamentary Agents, who are the solicitors who specialise in parliamentary business, and Mr. George Dobry, Q.C. (who had been retained by the Borough Council to present their case), discussed the evidence that would be likely to be required from the various witnesses.

The principal witnesses, most of whom were Borough Council officers and included Mr. Alan Sanders, the Borough Planning Control Officer, were also required to draft a Proof of Evidence, which is a document that sets out the aspects of the case in which the witness is most knowledgeable, and on which counsel will largely base his examination.

The hearing began on 3rd May in a splendid Pugin room in the House of Lords overlooking the river, and in conditions of some pomp. The Select Committee consisted of Earl Alexander of Tunis, the Earl of Ilchester, Lord Jacques and Lord Reigate, with Baroness Wootton of Abinger in the chair.

Counsel for the petitioners (the official name for those objecting to the Bill) was Mr. Peter Boydell, Q.C., and it turned out that most of the

objections came from commercial interests, who wished to protest against added restrictions (as they saw them) on their rights to use their properties freely, and the possibility of their being forced to carry out building works which might be against company policies.

Examination of Borough Council witnesses took up the first days of the hearing, and the amenity society witnesses were (fortunately) not required to sit in on all of this, although some knowledge of the way that the examination was proceeding was of undoubted benefit to all subsequent witnesses.

Mrs. Lewis of the Chelsea Society was finally called on 9th and 10th May and I followed her.

The proceedings differ from a Court of Law in that witnesses are only questioned on matters of which they have personal knowledge, and which are largely related to their previously submitted Proof of Evidence. The examination is, none the less, a rather daunting process, since it is the aim of the petitioners' counsel to disturb the witness's opinions and question his knowledge, and it is vital for the witness to keep his wits about him in trying to anticipate how counsel's mind is working, and the way that the questioning is likely to develop—rather like a game of chess!

In the end, and very regrettably, only a small part of the Bill became law, since it was felt that much of it would give the Borough powers which were not available in other parts of the country. It does seem, however, that even the airing of many matters of public concern has been of benefit and may well ease the path of future legislation.

For the voluntary amenity society witnesses the episode (without any financial reward or compensation) was extremely time-consuming. On the other hand, both agreed that the experience had been fascinating (Mrs. Lewis described herself 'treading the soft carpets of the corridors of power'!). We both considered that we were very glad to have taken part.

IAN GRANT.

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## Twenty-five Years of the Kensington Society

On 17th March, 1953, the following residents met at 18 Kensington Square to discuss proposals to form a Kensington Society: Sir Geoffrey Agnew, Mr. Nicholas Bentley, Mr. Boxall, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Norman-Butler, Mr. W. Begley, Sir Hugh Casson, Mrs. Christiansen, Mr. Clifford-Smith, Mr. Corfield, Mr. Ashley Dukes, Mr. Charles Gibbs-Smith, Lord Gorell, Mr. Martin Holmes, Mr. Molesworth, Lady Norman, Lady Ponsonby, Dr. and Mrs. Pasmore, Mr. Gordon Roe and Mr. Shillito.

On October of the same year the inaugural meeting was held in the Town Hall. Dr. Pasmore gave a lecture on Kensington history. From the beginning the activities of the Society were varied. During the first year Mr. Corfield, a member of the Executive Committee, discovered a number of parish records in the basement of the church school, also a number of Court Rolls of the Manor of Earls Court, held by the College of Arms. These were handed over to the Council and were microfilmed by the Society for the Council.

On 18th December, 1953, an emergency meeting was held to discuss the future of *Holland House*. Demolition had already begun and was to be completed by 8th May, 1954. It was decided that every effort should be made to save at least the east wing of the house; this was the least badly damaged and the roof was still intact.

A deputation to the London County Council included Sir Hugh Casson, Mrs. Christiansen, Mr. Norman-Butler and Dr. Pasmore.

A letter from Lord Ilchester appeared in *The Times* on 18th January, 1954:

Sir,

So many letters have appeared in your columns in the last few weeks regarding the demolition of Holland House . . . the discussion between the L.C.C. and the Kensington Society raises a new point which I feel should receive careful consideration. It has been suggested that the east wing should not be demolished, in hope that a use can be found for it. Apparently, however, this proposal is one which the Council do not feel that they can implement. I feel that there is much to be said about this notwithstanding as it could well be used for part of a new London Museum.

Mr. I. Hayward, Leader of the London County Council, replied to Lord Ilchester's letter:

... The L.C.C. is not prepared to place excessive burdens on present and future citizens of London in order to restore a building which has been classified as a 'total loss'. If there exists a worthy use of the east wing which will not involve undue expenditure, the Council would be glad to hear of it, but the suggestion of a museum, like many other suggestions, has already been considered and rejected.

A Public Meeting was held by the Society and many inquiries were made to find a suitable use acceptable to the L.C.C. Messrs Edgingtons, an old-established firm of tent manufacturers, approached the Society: they were prepared to restore what was left of the house and use for receptions. This use was not received with favour by the L.C.C. In February a representative of the Youth Hostels Association met representatives of the Society, and as is well known to residents, this use found favour with the L.C.C.

During the first year, lectures included 'The Great Exhibition' by Charles Gibbs-Smith, 'New Buildings in Old Places' by Sir Hugh Casson, 'Theatres of Kensington' by Ashley Dukes, 'The Charm of Kensington' by Sir Albert Richardson, and Miss Irene Scharrer delighted members with a piano recital at Leighton House.

And so the Kensington Society completed its first year with 406 members and the knowledge that it had been instrumental in saving the east wing of Holland House.

The Society as early as 1954 was planting trees in the Borough. The first trees to be planted were two cherry trees in South End W8; a mulberry was replaced in the St. Mary Abbots Hospital avenue of mulberry trees. Nine trees were planted in Ladbroke Road at this time. The Society donated trees for Scarsdale Villas. Donations have been made annually to the Council for tree planting.

On 12th March, 1956, the Society held its second Public Meeting to discuss the preservation of the *Imperial Institute*.

Lord Methuen took the chair. In his opening remarks he said: 'There are several factors to remember in this controversy. The first is that the building was erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It was paid for by subscriptions sent from all parts of the Empire. It was designed by Thomas Colcut and completed in 1893 and opened by the Queen in 1897. To demolish a building born in such circumstances will strike us all, I think, as highly improper. We have a formidable list of distinguished speakers who are here to give you the history of the building and to say things which we hope will penetrate to those primarily responsible for this unenlightened decision to demolish the whole building.' Lord Methuen introduced the following speakers: John Betjeman, Sir Hugh Casson, Lord Mottisone, Mr. Stanley Hamp (a partner of the architect Thomas Colcut), Mr. Hitchcock from America and Mr. A. S. S. Butler, F.R.I.B.A.

At the end of the meeting the Chairman called on Mr. Austen Hall to move a resolution: 'That this meeting protests in the strongest terms at the proposal to demolish the Imperial Institute, on the grounds of its artistic and historic importance, and in view of the opinion expressed at this meeting and by many notable authorities, urges the Government to retain the building under all and every circumstance.'

Members will know that we were not successful in saving the main building, but on 7th August, 1964, a national press notice appeared: 'Kensington Society are jubilant this week with the news that the Colcut campanile, one of Kensington's landmarks, is to be incorporated in the new scheme.' And so, as Stanley Hamp, Colcut's partner and then well over 80, said, 'half a loaf is better than no bread'.

The Society's next Public Meeting was to give local residents a chance to discuss the *Development of Notting Hill Gate*. Sir Hugh Casson was in the chair and the speakers were L.C.C. planning officers, Mr. Kenneth Brown of the *Architects' Review*, Mr. R. E. Enthoven, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Ian Nairn. The following resolutions were proposed at the end of the meeting: 'That this meeting is profoundly dissatisfied with the scheme as it stands and suggests that further action be taken to improve the scheme.' This was received amidst cheers by the audience and the motion was carried by a large majority. Mrs. Mary Stocks (later Baroness Stocks) proposed a further motion: 'This meeting is profoundly disturbed by what it has heard about the Notting Hill Gate Scheme, in that it fails to give prior consideration to the problems of traffic congestion, and that the shopping centre in any Notting Hill Gate Scheme should be of a local and not universal nature.'

Reporting the meeting in the *Sunday Times*, Geoffrey Goer said: 'At a time when six houses out of 10 have television, it is nice to know that people care about other things. The 700 I am talking about went to Kensington Town Hall to discuss the Notting Hill Gate Scheme. Was this because of the bad television, the good publicity of the Kensington Society, or that dear old-fashioned thing, a community spirit? Whatever got people away from their electronic theatre, they certainly had a rewarding time. It was clear from this meeting that if public opinion had been consulted it would have been worth having.'

*Lighting.* From 1957 to 1959 the Borough Council considered a comprehensive scheme to bring street lighting up to standard. Members of the Executive Committee met members of the Royal Fine Art Commission to discuss the Borough Council's proposals.

Following a lecture arranged by the Society on 'Design of Street Furniture', a Public Meeting was held to discuss lighting and standards available. Sir Gordon Russell, Director of the Council of Industrial Design, took the chair; the speakers were Basil Spence, Norman Boydell, Richard Stevens, Eric Lyons and W. G. Bor.

The Society accepted the dark-grey concrete standards and fluorescent lighting proposed for Group A roads, i.e. traffic roads, but not the smaller standards proposed for Group B roads, i.e. secondary roads and residential streets.

The Society had many meetings with the Council about the old lantern-type of lamp standard. It was agreed that some of these should be preserved and a list was drawn up by the Society.

In 1959 to 1960 two proposed developments exercised the concern of the Society: 2-74 Kensington High Street/2-28 Kensington Church Street, and, a Knightsbridge re-development scheme. The L.C.C. was the Planning Authority at the time.

The Kensington Society strongly opposed the *Kensington High Street/Kensington Church Street Scheme*, which included a 23-storey tower block of offices on the corner of Kensington High Street/Church Street, facing St. Mary Abbots Church. The architects were R. Seifert and Partners.

From the photograph of the model reproduced from our 1959 Report, members will agree that this was one of our most successful fights, and a fight it was, because the Kensington Borough Council recommended the L.C.C. to approve the outline application.

*Knightsbridge Redevelopment Scheme* included a 350-foot 20-storey tower block, central terrace garden, gallery pavements and shops, with rooftop and underground car park. The Society held a Public Meeting at Bowater House, Knightsbridge. Mr. Richard Edmonds, Chairman of the L.C.C. Planning Committee, was on the platform. This time the Kensington Borough Council was on the Society's side. Mr. W. L. Roots took the chair. Councillor Piper of the Chelsea Borough Council strongly opposed the scheme. He ended his talk by saying: 'I congratulate Mr. Edmonds on his courage in coming here. The scheme will not find a single supporter except the developers.' Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Alderman Dickenson were also on the platform opposing the scheme. The scheme, it appears, died a natural death.

*Melbury Road area.* In the late 1950s the Society had requested the L.C.C. to consider making a preservation order on groups of buildings, and in 1960 the London County Council wished to make a Building Preservation Order on Nos. 6, 8, 9, 12, 15 and 17 Melbury Road and on Leighton House, 12 Holland Park Road. The Kensington Borough Council and the Holland and Parways Estate opposed the order and as a result of these objections a Public Inquiry was held at Kensington Town Hall on 19th and 20th April. Mr. Harold Marnham represented the London County Council and Mr. Ashley Barker gave evidence for the London County Council with strong support from the Kensington Society. The Society was represented by counsel, Mr. Ernle Money, who represented the Society without fee. Sir Albert Richardson and Mr. Timothy Phillips were called by counsel to give evidence. Mr. Ashley Barker outlined the history of the houses and finished his evidence by saying: 'It will be seen from the foregoing that these houses, covered by the proposed Preservation Order, are of quite outstanding architectural interest and rich in historical association.' Sir Albert Richardson for the Society said: 'It would be a disaster and a comment on the general decline if any of the houses were demolished. Already

the public dislike the rubbish that is being erected and when intelligence reigns once more people will realise the importance of these Victorian houses, they are part of our national heritage.'

Mr. Timothy Phillips, an artist and pupil of Annigoni and Salvador Dali, said the houses had great atmosphere which stimulated work and that there was a great need for artist studios in the Borough. Mr. Maxwell Fry, the architect appearing for the other side, referred to Leighton House as 'architecturally extremely disjointed with painful and unpleasant marks of the owner and of the times'. Mrs. Diana Paul, a member of the Kensington Borough Council, said the Preservation Order was completely unjustified. The Kensington Borough Council's opinion has changed somewhat since 1961!

*Plans to develop 239-253 Kensington High Street and 19 Earls Court Road and the Gloucester Road Station site* were both before the planning department of the Kensington Borough Council as long ago as 1962. The Society has examined and commented on a number of plans for these two areas and still they remain largely undeveloped and eyesores.

In 1964 the Society was represented at a Public Inquiry about the warehouse building at the back of Derry and Toms and at the back of the west side of Kensington Square. The Kensington Borough Council wanted to take a sub-lease from John Barker & Co. Ltd. for a limited period of five years to convert into office buildings for the Public Health, Children's and Welfare Departments. The Society opposed the application. Messrs John Barker supported the Borough Council's application. The Society was represented by Mr. Edward Seeley, barrister and member of the Society's Executive Committee, who urged that the historical and architectural interest of the Square should not be sacrificed as lightly as the Council appeared willing to do.

*Mr. Edward Norman-Butler.* The sudden and untimely death of Mr. Norman-Butler in 1962 came as a great shock to the Society. He was a founder member and acted as Honorary Treasurer from 1953 to 1962.

*Campden Hill Road.* An application was made in 1962 to demolish Campden Hill Court and to build two 23-storey tower blocks, containing 168 flats. This was successfully opposed by the Society. A few months later a revised scheme appeared to erect a 12-storey slab block 150 feet high with basement garages for 187 cars. Again this was opposed by the Society and subsequently refused planning permission.

*13 Melbury Road.* The London County Council rejected an application to demolish this house and to erect on the site a seven-storey block of 20 flats with 14 garages. The Society supported the London County Council in making a Building Preservation Order; this was opposed by the Kensington Borough Council.

*Rambert Theatre.* In 1962 an elaborate scheme for a new theatre in Ladbroke Road opposite the Mercury Theatre was presented to the London County Council. The building was octagonal in design with seating for 1,100 people. The Society approved the design and regretted that the London County Council refused planning permission, which

was due to insufficient parking space. The scheme was abandoned.

*Lexham Gardens.* In 1962 an application was made for planning permission to build 80 lock-up garages and a tea room with a first floor in the gardens. The Society strongly opposed the scheme and the London County Council subsequently refused planning permission. The developer lodged an appeal and the inquiry was to have been heard on 21st February, 1962. The Society briefed Mr. Ernle Money to represent the Society and several well-known authorities agreed to give evidence to support the Society's case. Two days before the inquiry was to be heard the developer withdrew his appeal.

Still in 1962—the Society was becoming increasingly disturbed at the Minister of Transport's one-way traffic schemes, which were operating in Warwick Road and Earls Court Road, with heavy traffic thundering down Pembroke Road, once a quiet residential street. The Society thought that the Minister, Mr. Ernest Marples, was showing a complete disregard for the amenity value of residential areas. It was apparent that other amenity societies in the London area felt much the same. It was decided to sponsor a conference in the form of a Public Meeting at Kensington Town Hall. Mr. James Wentworth-Day was the Chairman. The speakers were Lord Mottistone, Chairman of the London Society, Mr. Richard Edmonds, Chairman of the Roads Committee, L.C.C., Mr. Doubleday, Town Planning Officer of Hertford, Mr. Vigars, L.C.C. member for Kensington, and Mr. Foley of the Pedestrian Association. Eleven amenity societies presented papers: The Hampstead Preservation Society, Mill Hill Society, Chelsea Society, Blackheath Society, Highgate Preservation Society, New Hampstead Society, Islington Society, London Society, Bond Street Association, Richmond Society and Kensington Society. The following resolution was passed:

Resolved: That the Government be asked to examine the problem of linking the national motorway system with the Greater London area, bearing in mind the vital need to preserve London's central area and residential areas by providing urban motorways which will not disrupt communities and that the Government should establish a closer co-operation between the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

*Sir Albert Richardson.* In 1964 a great friend of the Society, Sir Albert Richardson, K.C.V.O., P.P.R.A., F.R.I.B.A., F.S.A., passed away; he was known to most members as Professor, a title he liked. He was most generous to the Society from its earliest days with his time and knowledge, and visits to St. James's Palace and the Royal Academy and many other special visits were arranged by him.

*Tower House, Melbury Road.* Much effort was made between 1960 and 1964 for a Preservation Order to be made on this house. The Victorian Society strongly supported the Kensington Society in its efforts to save this unique house. The Order was eventually made in 1964 and confirmed by the Minister in 1965.

*Development of Kensington High Street Goods Depot, with access from*

*Scarsdale Place, Kelso Place and Kensington High Street.* An application was made for planning permission to develop this site with the erection of two residential buildings 22 storeys high, a multi-storey car park for 1,075 cars, 38 shops, a supermarket, public house, restaurant and 20 two-storey houses. The Society opposed the scheme and alerted residents in the area. Letters were sent to the Minister of Housing and Local Government, to the L.C.C., to *The Times* and to the *Daily Telegraph*. The Society was appalled that the Kensington Borough Council was of the opinion that planning permission should be given. We were supported by the newly-formed Kensington (Victoria Road Precinct) Defence Committee and by the London Society. Lord Connesford, President of the London Society, raised a question in the House of Lords.

*Car parks under Square Gardens.* 1964 heralded the threat to Square Gardens and Kensington Gardens. Queen's Gate Gardens, Kensington Square Gardens, Lexham Gardens, Cornwall Gardens, Southwell Gardens and Nevern Square were the main victims of threat. Campbell Court applied for planning permission to construct an underground car park for 83 cars under Queen's Gate Gardens. The Kensington Borough Council agreed in principle to the plan. The Society appealed to the Minister of Housing and Local Government and to the L.C.C. We were well supported by the residents of Queen's Gate Gardens, and planning permission was refused by the L.C.C. Thanks to the protection laws of London Square Gardens, they have been kept inviolate. Those who were sufficiently far-seeing to make these laws could never have envisaged that succeeding generations would consider building under the Garden Squares.

The Royal Garden Hotel prepared an outline scheme for a car park under Kensington Gardens. This was given considerable publicity in the national press and received much opposition both from the Society and the general public.

In 1966 the Society, deploring the rusted condition of the chain-link fencing round *Kensington Gardens*, wrote to the Minister of Public Buildings and Works. The Ministry declared they were very conscious of the poor state of the fencing and that they would erect sample panels to compare their respective merits. The Society was appalled at the type of fencing envisaged. Letters were sent to the Royal Fine Art Commission and individual Commissioners were approached and a letter was sent to *The Times*. It was a worth-while fight and the chain-link fencing was eventually replaced with traditional railings. The Society also spent considerable time in trying to improve Square garden railings.

*Knightsbridge hotel on the Woollands site.* An application was made for planning permission for an hotel building comprising a three-storey podium covering the whole site, surmounted by a tower block in the form of a cross 255 feet high. The Society supported the Westminster Society in opposing the development. The plan was called in by the Minister of Housing and Local Government and a Public Inquiry was held in 1968. The Society gave evidence. The Minister's Inspector in

his report said the proposed building would add notably to London architecture and recommended that planning permission should be given. However, the Minister said: 'High buildings, whether isolated or in groups, in such close proximity to the Royal Parks, could be justified only in the most exceptional cases.' He refused planning permission.

*Hotels in Kensington.* The years 1969 and 1970 began the hotel boom. Applications were made for the erection of many hotels including a 2,070 bedroom hotel with shops, offices, restaurants and car parking for 766 cars on Gloucester Road Station site, a 600-bed hotel on the Courtfield Road/Ashburn Place site, a 255-foot hotel tower for the Earls Court and Kensington High Street site, 515-bed hotel on South Kensington Station site, 131-161 Holland Park Avenue a hotel building, 121-127 Kensington High Street 1,250-bedroom hotel, 100/107 Queen's Gate 11-storey tower block hotel building, Gollys Garage site 125-foot high block, Emperors' Gate 750-bedroom hotel, to mention only a few.

The Society, in opposing the increasing hotel demand, told the Council 'that the impact could be very widespread and end for all time the chance of preserving or restoring an acceptable residential environment'.

A Traffic Management Sub-Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mr. Geoffrey Dearbergh in 1968. A report of the Motorway Box and Kensington by Mr. Dearbergh appeared in the Society's 1968 Annual Report (available in the Reference Library).

*Orangery, Holland Park.* In 1970 Kensington residents nearly lost the use of the Orangery, Holland Park. In a somewhat surreptitious manner the Orangery was about to be handed over to J. Lyons & Co. Ltd. Mr. Sebag-Montefiore replied to the Society's letter of inquiry: 'My Committee at their meeting yesterday unanimously welcomed the proposal that J. Lyons & Co. should be allowed to take over the Orangery as an extension of the existing Restaurant Belvedere.'

The Society strongly opposed this take over and arranged a deputation to County Hall consisting of the Lord Hurcomb, the Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley, the Lady Stocks, Mr. Edward Seeley and Mrs. Christiansen. Mr. Robert Vigours was present, but said he would reserve his judgement. On 12th March, Lord Balfour of Inchrye raised the matter in the House of Lords and a considerable debate took place, Lord Hurcomb and Lady Stocks taking a very forceful part. They were supported by Lord Mowbray and Stourton, Lord Strabolgi and Lord Connesford. Lord Errol of Hale stated that his house backed on to the Orangery and that in his view, far from having any architectural merit, it looked like a rather cheap edition of a Lancashire cotton mill. The full Hansard Report appeared in the 1969-70 Annual Report and can be seen in the Reference Library (Public Library).

As members will know we won the day and on second thoughts the G.L.C. decided not to deprive the London public from the use of the Orangery.

### *London Development Plan*

The London Development Plan was published in 1969. Objection to the Plan had to be lodged with the Minister by December of that year. A sub-committee was formed by the Society under the chairmanship of Mr. Geoffrey Dearbergh, and formal objections were made to some aspects of the Plan. The Public Inquiry was held in 1970. Mr. Dearbergh gave evidence at the Inquiry on behalf of the Society. A report by Mr. Dearbergh appears in the 1970-71 Annual Report.

### *Conference Colville and Tavistock Study*

In 1972 the Society held a one-day conference under the chairmanship of the Lady Stocks, Vice-President of the Society. Mr. F. Clinch was the main speaker. Other speakers were Dame Evelyn Dennington, Professor Peter Hall, Councillor Peter Methuen and Mr. R. Vigars. A full report appears in the 1972 Annual Report.

### *Office development*

As in 1969-70 the Society's main concern had been about excessive hotel development; by 1972-73 our attention was turned to office development, for as in hotel development it more often than not means loss of residential area, and almost always changes the visual aspect. New applications appeared almost weekly and most were opposed strongly by the Society. The Odeon site with a gross office development appeared. Developers applied for planning permission for an office block with some residential development on the De Vere Garden/Canning Place site.

Planning permission was also applied for a development on the corner of Gloucester Road and Cromwell Road including 198,500 square feet of office development in a 14-storey building 205 feet high. The development for Earls Court Road/Cromwell Road included 8,000 square feet of office development, in a building which would have overshadowed the small residential streets in the area.

The Rank Organisation wished to demolish the Coronet Theatre for an office development; here the Society supported the very active 'Save the Gaumont Committee'.

### *Kensington High Street document*

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society in 1972 Mr. Peter Methuen, Chairman at that time of the Town Planning Committee of the Borough Council, was asked to speak at the meeting on future development policies of the Council. He said meetings had been held between the Council and owners and would-be developers of Kensington High Street. The Council were preparing a document of outline policy and proposals and he invited the Society's representatives to see and discuss the document. The document was considered in detail by a sub-committee of the Society and a memorandum of the Society's comments was prepared and submitted to the Council. A full report appeared in the 1972-73 Annual Report.

### *Queen's Gate*

The Royal College of Art applied for permission to demolish 25 Kensington Gore and 197-200 Queen's Gate. The Executive Committee was invited by Sir Hugh Casson and Mr. Cadbury Brown to see the plans and drawings; these were seen and discussions took place, but the Society was opposed to the scheme. Meetings then took place with the Westminster Society and the Westminster City Council.

Westminster City Council subsequently refused planning permission. An appeal was made to the Secretary of State for the Environment who later dismissed the appeal.

### *Emperor's Gate site*

On 20th May, 1975, a Public Inquiry was held following the refusal of the Council to permit development for offices and residential use on the site. Reasons for refusal were excessive plot ratio, non-accordance with the Initial Development Plan for Greater London, and height and massing of buildings too great for the area. The Society supported the Borough Council and Mr. Dennis Marlow represented the Society at the Inquiry.

At the Inquiry the appellants withdrew the scheme and put forward an alternative, which contained an 80-foot office block on the Cromwell Road frontage of 97,000 square feet and a 60-foot high residential block on the Emperor's Gate frontage. This scheme was approved by the Council and by the Society. In January 1976 the Minister allowed the appeal.

### *Thorney Court*

One of the most unwarranted demolitions in the Borough was Thorney Court. Several unsuitable applications for development have been made, including a hotel, and in 1976 outline planning proposals were before the Council to develop the site for a new Libyan Embassy. These applications were strongly opposed by the Society.

During the last year two major proposed developments have been of considerable concern to the Society.

### *National Theatre site*

The freeholders of this site, the Greater London Council, offered a 99-year building lease for development. Offers were required to be submitted by October 1976. Ultimately the G.L.C. short-listed four schemes:

- (1) Religious centre for the Aga Khan's Moslem Sect.
- (2) Schools and departments for the College of Art.
- (3) Thirty-six large flats.
- (4) Eighty-four small flats.

Before the proposals could be considered by the G.L.C. they were required to obtain planning permission from the Royal Borough of



Kensington and Chelsea. The Aga Khan's scheme, a low distinguished building, well in scale with the Thurloe Square buildings, received permission first, and as a building was approved by the Society. The first design by the Royal College of Art was considered by the Society to be out of scale and an overdevelopment; a revised design was then submitted, which the Society favoured, both for its quality and suitability of use. The Society was opposed to a residential development on this site, which was considered to be of national importance, requiring a building of high architectural merit with a use related to the traditional educational and cultural character of the area. Meetings have been arranged by the Council and by the active Thurloe and Egerton Association and these have been attended by representatives of the Society. The G.L.C. have recently given permission for the development of the Aga Khan's scheme.

The other major concern has been the proposed Russian invasion of Kensington. Details of the scheme will be found in this Report, and by the time members receive this Report a Public Meeting will have been held.

Space has only allowed the mention of the main issues which have been of concern to the Society during its 25 years. It will be seen that Public Meetings were rather the order of the day during the early years of the Society. It was a time when it was very difficult to ascertain what applications were before the Council, and we were indeed considered to be a general nuisance in the Borough. Perhaps one of the most significant changes over the years has been the Council's acceptance and acknowledgment of the usefulness of the Society. The Honorary Secretary was co-opted on to Sir Malby Crofton's Environmental Advisory Committee and on to the Town Planning Sub-Committee for Conservation Areas. The Society was asked by the Council to draw up a list of proposed conservation areas; the map prepared by Mr. Ian Grant was attached and sent out to members in the 1969 Annual Report.

Each week a list of planning applications is received by the Society with a request for comments, and we are pleased to report that in a great number of cases our views coincide with those of the Council, but at the same time the Society maintains its identity.

Other activities of the Society over the years have included the history group under the chairmanship of Dr. Pasmore, and a photographic section. For some years window-box plaques were given for special window-box efforts in the Borough. A silver cup was given for the Brighter Kensington Scheme and is still offered each year as the Kensington Society's Cup, awarded for special effort made under difficulty.

Visits to houses and gardens, some not normally open to the public, have been arranged annually. Lectures too have been a regular activity.

The Society has been greatly honoured by the very active interest of H.R.H. The Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, Patron of the

Society. She has attended various functions and on 7th December she planted a Jubilee tree.

Lord Gorell was the Society's first President; he was followed by Viscount Esher in 1956 who contributed stimulating Forewords to our Annual Report until his death in 1963. In 1964 the Marquess of Cholmondeley was elected President and served in that capacity until 1968, taking a great interest in the activities of the Society. Lord Hurcomb succeeded Lord Cholmondeley in 1968 and worked unceasingly for the Society until his death in 1975.

In 1975 we also lost our Vice-President and Chairman of the Executive Committee, Baroness Stocks. Both Lady Stocks and Lord Hurcomb on a number of occasions debated the welfare of Kensington in the House of Lords. Lord Balfour of Inchrye, our present President, is by no means a newcomer to the Society. He has been a member for many years and he opened the Orangery, Holland Park, debate in the House of Lords in 1970. The Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley has been a Vice-President of the Society since the death of her husband in 1968. She has attended Annual General Meetings, deputations, and has been a very active and helpful Vice-President.

We hope that you will consider that we have justified our existence over these 25 years.

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# Kensington Square

MARGARET JOURDAIN

(Article and photographs reprinted from *Country Life*, 27th December, 1946. By kind permission of the Editor.)

The Royal Borough of Kensington centres on what Defoe describes as 'a noble square full of good houses'. This enclosure, Kensington Square, which has survived from the 'old court suburb', has a history of two-and-a-half centuries, and as late as the mid-Victorian period it still 'lay back, undisturbed by the world, with nothing but gardens between it and the narrow High Street'. Kensington itself was regarded in the reign of Queen Anne as a handsome, populous place . . . resorted to by persons of quality, especially in the summer-time, when it was 'extreamly filled with lodgings for the pleasure of the Air, and walks and gardens round it'.

A fine map (1822) and the almost contemporary history of Kensington by Faulkner depict a Kensington of modest size. In the map the importance of the two main roads intersecting it stands out clearly. The 'town' of Kensington is astride the Kensington Road, and below the latter are the detached villages of Brompton and Earls Court, with 'little Chelsea' on the southern border. There were only three squares at this date, Kensington Square, Edwardes Square and two sides of Brompton Square. The intersecting Kensington Road was, even in the early 19th century, a busy thoroughfare. 'The town, being in the direct road for the western parts of England, is in a constant bustle, and resembles the most populous streets in London', wrote Faulkner in 1820. The project of a continuous street from London to Kensington was still unrealised in the Regency, when it was guesswork to foretell that perhaps 'in some few years, reckoning on the enterprise of our builders, there will be nearly a continuous street from Hyde Park turnpike to Turnham green'.

The Square with its pleasant garden has still something of the small town quality and scale and is the core and desirable centre of the Borough. Its architectural history falls into four periods, its 'early and humble origin', its rise into a fashionable quarter when 'King William was pleased to ennoble it with his court and royal presence', its fall from fashion after the death of George II in 1760, and a period of refacing and reconstruction in the early 19th century.

In the earliest records the name is given as 'The Square', but later it became known as King's Square. One Thomas Young, 'citizen and joiner' (after whom Young Street is named), bought a plot of land in 1687 'neere King's Square in ye parish of Kensington', and a title deed (dated 27th March, 1687) describes him in possession (with two other persons) of one of the houses in the Square. Upon a stone formerly

standing on the north-east corner of the Square was cut the date 1685.

The 'golden age' of the Square begins when William III purchased in 1690 the 'very sweet villa', Nottingham House, from the Earl of Nottingham, and Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to enlarge it for a royal palace. The vogue of the Square, which lasted for four reigns, depended on its close proximity to the new palace. During this period, 'most of the houses were inhabited', in the words of Faulkner, 'by persons of quality, ambassadors, gentry and clergy, and at one time upwards of 40 carriages were kept in and about the neighbourhood!' The demand for lodgings was so keen that in George II's reign an ambassador, a bishop and a physician occupied apartments in one house. The map of John Rocque (1741-43) shows a complete square with private gardens to all the houses. The large-scale map (1766), surveyed by Joshua Rhodes and engraved by George Bickham, shows its garden surrounded by a row of trees. (Page 29.)

The Square has passed through many changes in architectural fashion; some houses have been wholly rebuilt and others refaced, but it would be difficult to find, in Greater London, 'any group of private houses which has withstood demolition over such a long period'. Owing to the alignment of the houses in the early 19th century, and the building out of some house fronts, a great deal of the work of the William III period is masked, and the only exterior which shows any characteristic features of this date is Nos. 11 and 12 on the south side (originally one house, Fig. 3). The door head of No. 11 (Fig. 4) carried on consoles and centring on a cartouche, is original, but its companion is a recent addition. In the interior, the chief rooms are wainscoted in pine (Fig. 10), and such additions as have been made—the shelved niche and the chimney-piece in the first-floor sitting-room—are in keeping with the period. There are two staircases of approximately the same size.

In several houses there are angle chimney-pieces. No. 15, also on the south side (which was refaced in brick about 1880), contains an interesting ceiling on the ground floor, which centres on a wreath of fruit and flowers with cartouches in the spandrels and wainscot, which was found after the wallpaper had been stripped away. No. 17, one of the larger houses (seen in the middle of Fig. 2), in the words of its owner, Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, 'tells something of its story in spite of alterations and careful reconstruction'. Among the long list of occupants, the earliest recorded is George Pitt, who was in possession before 1693. The main staircase is the largest in the Square, and immediately behind it is a secondary staircase of almost equal quality. The south or garden side shows a brick façade, with projecting bays—a feature of several of the houses. Certain features in the basement, and traces of old windows, support the conjecture that this house was in existence before Young set to work on the Square.

The east side of the Square has suffered most from rebuilding, and No. 7 is the sole remaining house in private hands. The decoration of its doors and staircase show the influence of Regency style, a date when the paving and lighting of the square attracted new residents. On the

west side (Figs. 1, 6) the houses form a pleasant uniform frontage, although some have additional storeys, and in some the fenestration has been altered.

No. 29 (Fig. 11) has been well restored and preserved. Its earliest recorded owner or tenant was Sir Edward Wiseman, before 1705. The door frame (Fig. 7) was added in the late 18th century. Its neighbour (No. 30) is of Regency date, both in its exterior and interior. On the north side of the Square, No. 36 always formed part of the row, and though the front has been rebuilt, it possesses features of the late 17th century. No. 41 exhibits the Regency taste in reconstruction both on the exterior and interior. No. 42 has a good wrought-iron gateway, and probably Nos. 43 and 44 (Fig. 5) were originally one house. The corner house (No. 45) has been reconstructed and enlarged and its entrance is now in Young Street, a short street linking the Square with the High Street.

On the west side of Young Street is a house (No. 16) in which Thackeray lived between 1846 and 1853. The house was refronted in the early 19th century, but retains much of its original interior. It is related that Thackeray, when he first saw the house, turning into Young Street, and 'suddenly catching sight of the two bulging half-towers which flank the central doorway', thought the house had the 'air of a feudal castle, and exclaimed, "I'll have a flagstaff put over the coping of the wall and hoist a standard when I'm at home"'.

The garden, the centre of the Square, is planted with trees and shrubs, and in olden days objections were raised to smoking, playing games, bringing dogs into the garden and exercising horses 'to show off their paces to purchasers'. Today the excrescences covering the air-raid shelters are levelled, and the garden, though without its iron railing, has returned to its former aspect.

This record of the history of the Square owes much to Lord Ponsonby's researches into its early history. His chief interest was in its tenants, and though he has established a distinguished group of tenants (Richard Steele, John Stuart Mill and Anthony Pasquin), he was obliged to dismiss the more colourful shade of the Duchess of Mazarin, for he found 'complete and consecutive evidence of her residence elsewhere'.

The great danger to the Square is obviously the neighbouring High Street and the possibility of the single freeholds being bought up and the whole area converted to commercial purposes. In 1923 the remaining householders entered into a mutual covenant binding themselves not to assign their houses to any person or firm other than for private residence. Subsequently, however, the London County Council zoned the Square as a 'special business' area and permitted its use for car-parking, to the grave detriment of its character and amenity. This year the Town Planning Committee of the Kensington Borough Council adopted a report by a well-known Conservative which made the astonishing statement that 'there is no substantial claim for the preservation of the buildings on architectural or historical grounds', and

## THE INHABITANTS

OF

**KENSINGTON SQUARE, YOUNG STREET, AND  
JAMES STREET, KENSINGTON,**

ARE RESPECTFULLY INFORMED AND

## CAUTIONED,

**That by the Act of Parliament for Paving, Repairing,  
Lighting, &c. the said Square and Streets,**

### **It is Enacted,**

"That the Occupier or Tenant of every House or Tenement in the said Square  
and Streets shall, once in every day (if necessary), before the Hour of Ten of the  
Clock in the Forenoon (Sundays excepted) Sweep and Cleanse the Footway before  
their respective Houses or Tenements, and, in DEFAULT THEREOF, shall, for  
every such Offence, FORFEIT and pay the sum of TWO SHILLINGS and  
SIXPENCE."

**By Order of the Commissioners,**

**B. P. HALL,**

*Kensington Square, 4th Aug. 1842.*

*Clerk to the Commissioners.*

*Peers, Printer, Selwood Terrace, Brompton.*

recommended that no alteration be made in the L.C.C. zoning scheme.

Last month the Kensington Borough Council, encouraged by organised public opinion, refused to accept its sub-committee's view, and by a majority of 42 to 19 requested the L.C.C. to rezone the Square for residential use only. There, for the moment, the matter rests. But, in view of the Kensington Council's emphatic view and the recognition given in recent L.C.C. planning policy to the value of the 'precinct' as a residential plan-form (in addition to the historic and architectural value of Kensington Square), the issue can scarcely be in doubt. If that be so, the long-drawn-out contest—with commercial interests for the future of this Square that has had such a notable past—will end in as notable a success for enlightened opinion.

MARGARET JOURDAIN.

#### THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

The Borough Council took early advantage of the Civic Amenities Act and on 31st October 1967 stated their intention to designate a number of conservation areas. The first of these (the Smith's Charity and Thurloe Estates) was agreed by the Council on 12th December, 1967. The Kensington Square Conservation Area was the second to be designated (in 1968) and there are throughout the whole Borough now 29 conservation areas. The extension to the Kensington Square Conservation Area to include Kensington Court Place and parts of Kelso Place was agreed at the request of the Kensington Society in 1974.

In considering applications for planning permission, the Council has since 1964 had a very careful regard to the need to preserve the architectural quality of the Square and its quality as a residential area. In 1964 planning permission was refused for the use of part of the rear garden of No. 34 as an extension to Derry and Toms service yard (a decision which was upheld on appeal). In 1969 permission was refused for the use of part of the rear garden of No. 41 as an extension to John Barkers loading bay and in 1977 the Council rejected proposals for the use of No. 44 as overnight short-stay accommodation. Attempts by the Council to limit the use of nearby restaurant premises late at night so as to prevent unnecessary noise and car-parking problems in the Square, unfortunately met with less success upon appeal.



*West Side, Kensington Square*



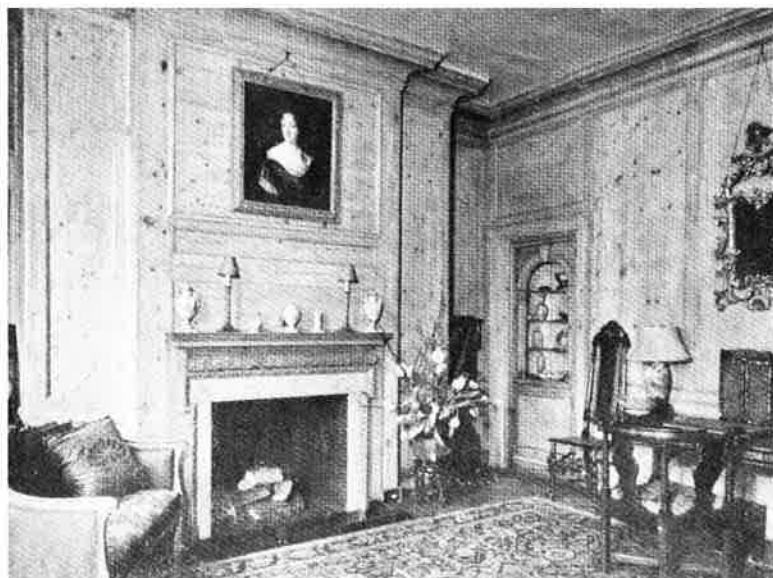
*South Side, Kensington Square*



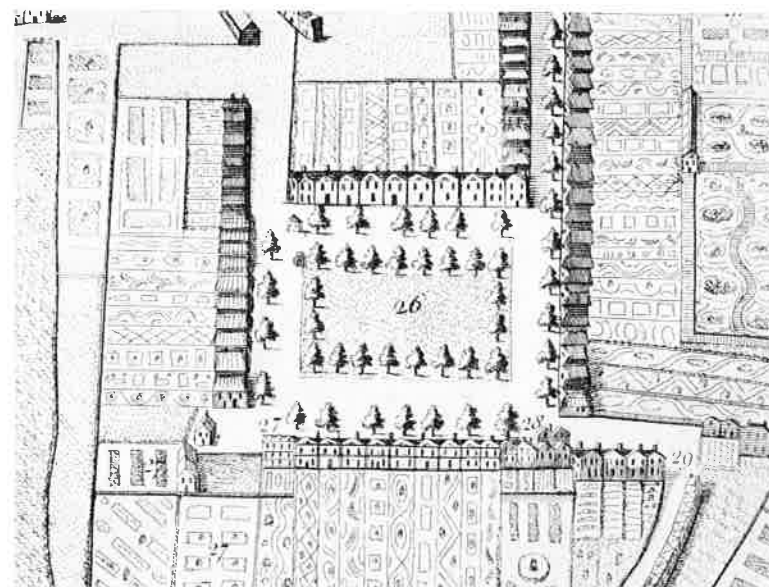
No 33



No 42



No 12



Joshua Rhode 1766 map

- 26 Kensington Square
- 27 Bishop of Ely's house and garden
- 28 The Gardnos's Academy
- 29 Hale Corner
- 31 New Cavern





*The Greyhound (1870)*

*The Greyhound (1969)*



Concurrently with the introduction of the Civic Amenities Act, the Kensington Society asked the Council to make a Building Preservation Order on all of the houses in Kensington Square. This the Council agreed to do in December 1967. The Order was confirmed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government in 1968 after a public inquiry. The following extract is from evidence given by the Borough Council at the inquiry:

Kensington Square retains an original air of domesticity in its general appearance in spite of the intrusion of some shops and offices. It forms a very pleasant amenity area of quietude, sited but 100 yards from the busy High Street, one of the main traffic arteries of the Metropolis.

Continuous rebuilding in the Square has assembled numerous architectural features originating from various periods. It can, however, still be considered as a complete architectural unit, unlike many surrounding streets whose character has been destroyed by rebuilding. The majority of 18th-century and 19th-century rebuilding was of a scale which allowed Kensington Square to retain both its residential form and its individuality.

It is because of this character of the Square as a whole, partly dependent upon its historical associations and architectural interest, that the Square is considered of particular amenity value and worthy of preservation in the Borough.

This statement then made still reflects the Borough's policy of seeking to preserve and enhance the quality of the Square.

E. A. SANDERS,  
Borough Planning Control Officer.

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## THE PASSING OF PETTITS

One of the smaller but equally famous stores in Kensington High Street has closed its doors for the last time. Pettits were drapers, and like many such firms they gave loyal service to their many loyal customers.

Founded in 1886 the business was bought by Thomas Hiscock, the last Mr. Pettit's floor-walker, in 1902, a year after Queen Victoria died. It had remained in the family ever since.

The company, which had watched rivals such as Gamages and Pontings fall to the developers, sent out a vast number of catalogues every year until increased postal charges curtailed this form of advertising. The somewhat old-fashioned shop in the High Street was the core of the operation but mail order provided two-thirds of the turnover. Old-age and other pensioners made up more than half their customers.

A happy atmosphere existed in the shop and long service among the assistants extended up to 60 years. Mr. Paul Hiscock, the manager, wrote in reply to a letter deploring the event: 'It was a terrible moment, for me personally, when I had to make the decision to close—it was forced on me by circumstances but was not of my choosing.'

DENNIS MARLOW.

## PARTICIPATION IN THE BOROUGH PLAN

### *Local Planning Forums*

The Council is now in the final stages of preparing the Borough Plan. The draft plan will be available for public consultation in July and residents will have an opportunity to comment on it before a final version is formally submitted.

Apart from this opportunity for the public to make its view known, there have been several other opportunities, including ward meetings in 1974-75, a series of context papers covering all the main subjects, and regular meetings of six local planning forums from the end of 1975 and still continuing. Past issues of the Annual Report have covered the Society's activities, particularly the response to the context papers. This report covers the local planning forums.

The forums were set up for six areas covering the whole Borough, each consisting of a group of wards. Four of these cover Kensington. From the attendance of ward meetings and the list of residents' associations people were invited to a meeting to set up each forum. Volunteers, who undertook to attend meetings regularly, were selected. The Society was represented by the Chairman, Ian Grant, on the Avondale/Colville/Norland/Pembridge forum and by Dennis Marlow and Michael Bach on the Abingdon/Campden/Holland/Queen's Gate forum.

Each forum consists of about 30 members and held 10 to 15 meetings

to thoroughly discuss all the main subjects to be covered in the plan. Several forums set up working parties to cover subjects in greater depth. The main result of these meetings has been the production of a report for each forum, identifying the main problems, ways that these might be tackled and indicating where opportunities should be taken up.

The reports set out the main things which the forums expect to see in the plan, namely: clear, strict and unambiguous planning policies (firmly applied); control over demolition by extending conservation areas; exclusion of heavy through traffic and an overall reduction in traffic in shopping streets and residential areas by the introduction of more environmental management schemes; ensuring no further loss of housing, local shops and other community facilities, and calling a halt to major commercial redevelopment, especially for hotels, offices, etc. Finding temporary uses, such as gardens, for vacant sites was also considered important, as was trying to find more public open space and sports facilities. The general theme of the reports is in favour of conservation and improvement and against redevelopment and change.

These reports have all been presented to the Town Planning Committee, and where appropriate to other committees, for comment. The chairman of the Town Planning Committee has met each forum to discuss its report and explore any differences in opinion.

It is hoped that these reports will give the Council a clearer understanding of the problems and opportunities and that they will inform the choice of policies and proposals that are adopted in the plan. The forums will be considering the draft to check this.

(Should any member wish to have a copy of the report for their area, they should contact Mr. G. Foster of the Planning Department.)

MICHAEL BACH.

# JANE SEABROOK

## Landscape Gardener

20 CRANLEY MEWS, S.W.7

01-373 6760



# Reports from Local Societies

## ABBOTSBURY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Speed control humps were installed in Abbotsbury Road in December 1976 by the Road Research Laboratory (Department of the Environment) as an 'experiment' under the provisions of Section 17 of the Road Traffic Act 1974. The humps proved extremely useful in reducing the speed of through traffic, and the volume of traffic and the level of traffic noise also fell substantially. Polls conducted by the Association and independently by the Road Research Laboratory showed that opinion among residents in Abbotsbury Road and Abbotsbury Close was overwhelmingly in favour of the scheme. More surprisingly, perhaps, a majority of drivers using the road said that the humps served a useful purpose. Nevertheless, in spite of representations to the Department of the Environment and the Borough Council the humps were removed in December 1977 as required by current legislation. The Borough Council is to seek a change in the law to allow highway authorities to provide speed control humps in roads under their control.

As a result of representations, plans to develop a vacant site in Abbotsbury Road/Oakwood Court were revised, and the houses and flats to be built there should now be less discordant with the environment than was originally feared by residents. The Greater London Council and the site owner have agreed to take steps to discourage through traffic from using the private lanes that service the site.

A draft management scheme in respect of enfranchised leaseholds in parts of the Abbotsbury Estate was issued by the freeholder's solicitors in May, and comments on the scheme by a solicitor retained by the Association were circulated to members for guidance. At the Annual General Meeting in October it was decided that a management scheme was necessary and desirable but that there were features of the draft scheme that required substantial amendment. A re-draft of the scheme to take account of members' views has been sent to the freeholder's solicitors and will be among the representations that will soon be considered by the High Court which has to approve management schemes proposed under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

A Silver Jubilee Party was held in the Orangery, Holland House, on 3rd May, when an exhibition of photographs and other material relating to the history of the Abbotsbury Estate attracted much interest among the over 100 members and guests who attended.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Leighton House in October.

*Chairman:* Professor R. J. L. Allen, O.B.E., 63 Abbotsbury Close, London, W.14.

*Hon. Secretary:* Mrs. F. L. Morrison-Jones, 37 Abbotsbury Road, London, W.14.

## THE BOLTONS' ASSOCIATION

We have considered and commented on more than 60 planning applications. An important proposal is the extension of the telephone exchange at the northern end of the Boltons, which includes the removal of some large and important trees. We have objected strongly and are awaiting revised proposals.

Nos. 3 and 5 Gilston Road are still in a dilapidated condition. The Council has obtained a direction from the Secretary of State giving them the right to carry out works of repair at the expense of the applicant, should he fail to do so voluntarily. A housing association is interested in acquiring and developing the properties, but only at a reasonable purchase price. We are urging the Council to take some action, and to help to rehabilitate these houses.

Enforcement continues to be a major cause for concern. Quick action by the Council is essential. We have been heartened recently by the dismissal of a planning appeal to retain a small but obtrusive extension which had been built without planning permission.

A considerable part of the Conservation Area is subjected to Article 4 Direction, including colour control in some instances. The Association is preparing a policy for the painting of these houses for agreement with the Council.

Progress on the Boltons Policy Documents by the Council has been very slow. We are pressing for work on this to be continued, since we consider it a vital instrument in achieving the Associations' objectives.

*Chairman:* Mr. P. English, 14 Milbourne Grove, S.W.10.

*Hon. Secretary:* Mr. J. Griffith-Jones, 17 The Little Boltons, S.W.10.

## THE CAMPDEN STREET PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Although 1977 was not marked by any major events, the Society continues to enjoy the support of the residents of the street. The Annual General Meeting was well attended and several new members were recruited. During the course of the year a number of minor issues were handled by the Committee, which meets regularly. Some concern was felt about the possible impact of the changes which were proposed in the developments permitted under the Town and Country General Development Order, and the news of the withdrawal of the Order at the last minute was received with some relief. The Society will continue to oppose further proposals to relax the control on development.

*Hon. Secretary:* Peter Lewis, 31 Campden Street, W.8.

## THE EDWARDES SQUARE AND SCARSDALE ASSOCIATION

The Association has maintained its close contact with the Prudential Assurance Company on the Pembroke Gardens site. A proposed design for the replacement housing was shown to the Committee in September, 1977, which was not acceptable. Possible alternatives were looked at in detail and in early January a final design was produced. It was submitted to the Council with a planning application and a letter from the Committee was sent to the Borough Planning Control Officer expressing its unanimous approval.

In mid-January the Association's High Street Study Group organised a meeting at which Sir Brandon Rhys Williams made a full statement on the proposed Russian development of the Barracks site in Kensington Church Street. At the same meeting Councillor Nicholas Freeman, Leader of the Council, outlined the Council's policy regarding the old Town Hall. Both these statements are fully covered in the Chairman's annual report.

There has been little progress on the Rank site at the top of Earls Court Road, but a new planning brief has been prepared which it is hoped will lead to a further planning application.

In contrast, progress on the Pontings site has been most heartening. The station arcade is almost complete and a chandelier has been installed at the intersection at the booking office end. Suspended baskets of ornamental greenery over each pillar will give the finishing touch. The High Street façade has been successfully restored and only awaits the refinishing of the station name canopy by London Transport Executive. Phase 2 will follow on schedule.

In July the Borough Planning Control Officer wrote a report on Kensington High Street shop fronts and signs. The Association sent in a number of comments and suggestions, all of which have now been included in a revised issue.

*Chairman:* Dennis Marlow, 6 Stratford Studios, W8 6RG.

*Hon. Secretary:* Mrs. Mary Bain, 6 Phillimore Terrace, W8 6BJ.

## EARLS COURT VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The destruction of the mews houses and flats in Redfield Lane, the enforced dispersal of the people who lived there, and the subsequent threat of unbridled high-rise development brought the residents together in 1970. The Association was then formed and has the support of most of the people living in Kenway Road, Wallgrave Road and Wallgrave Terrace, Childs Street and Childs Walk and Childs Place.

The area now enjoys conservation status, which should help to preserve its distinct village character. Although it is relatively small in size, it needs our attention all the time to keep predators in the shape of commercial developers at bay. Traffic and parking are other problems because of the difficult and restricted access through one-way streets.

However, the Association's biggest problem has been and still is the

redevelopment of the corner site bordered by Cromwell Road in the north, Earls Court Road in the west, straddling Redfield Lane and ending in a point at the junction with Wallgrave Road. The Royal Borough and the present site owners differ over plans; it is partly a question of residential versus hotel development. Without going into details, the Association wants to point out that residents would prefer a controlled hotel construction to having a permanent rubbish dump on its northern border. The Association also found the last plan, which was the subject of an appeal in January, 1977, was the best that had been submitted.

This big headache apart, the Association continues to exercise watchfulness, vets all proposals for change, but hopes to be broadminded enough to contribute constructive criticism and helpful advice to problems brought to its attention to safeguard the interests of all residents.

## KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

During the past year the Kensington Court Residents' Association has worked even harder to maintain the standards and environment of Kensington Court. The membership has increased to well over 100, and the interests of the local residents has been reflected in the activities and actions concerning local issues, together with those on a borough scale.

June provided an opportunity for a very successful Jubilee Street Party in the Court and the involvement of the residents was matched only by their enjoyment on the day. It was very encouraging to see so many residents attending the party.

In keeping with our policy to improve the area, we have proposed a scheme for improving the passage at the north-west corner of the Court. The response from the traders, the Council and the Kensington Society is favourable, and as soon as the decision for the proposed shops in the old electric light station is made, we will proceed with improving the pavement and installing shrubs, plants and seating.

The building and renovation work on the Milestone Hotel was brought to the notice of the Council by the K.C.R.A., and since this is a listed building the Council's intervention was sought in order to return the hotel to its original brick façade. The K.C.R.A. firmly backs the Council's tough line on this issue of enforcement.

Thanks to the diligence of one of our members the mulberry tree has been saved and is now showing signs of surviving the ordeal of building restoration work.

Parking and rubbish are still large problems in the Court, but the K.C.R.A. continues to pursue the improvement of these and many other issues, and has I believe improved life in Kensington Court.

MICHAEL DRIVER,  
Chairman.

### THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

During the past year the Committee has met at monthly intervals and discussed many matters of interest to the Ladbroke area. There have been three meetings for members: Mr. Ian Grant gave a most entertaining and thought-provoking talk entitled 'A full frontal look at Notting Hill Stucco' and Dame Sylvia Crowe gave a fascinating talk on 'The Landscape of Ladbroke'. The Annual General Meeting was followed by a wine and cheese party and members adjourned to the adjoining gardens.

In order to celebrate the Silver Jubilee the Association has donated a tree to each of the 16 communal gardens in the area.

A long-term project has been started. A photographic record is being made of architectural features in the area, with the help of the Photographic Department of the G.L.C. Eventually it is hoped to gather together a collection of moulds of architectural details which can be used in restoration work, and it is hoped that this project may attract a grant under 'Town Schemes'.

*Hon. Secretary:* Miss Cosh, 20 Kensington Park Gardens, W.11.

### ONSLow NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

It is of particular interest and value to read the reports of the different local Associations and Societies as published in this Report, and to compare problems and activities. We already encourage co-operation with our immediate neighbours, and indeed during the past year have actively supported the Thurloe and Egerton Association in their battle to ensure that a worthy building at last occupies the long neglected 'Victoria and Albert Triangle' site. Perhaps this co-operation may spread between Associations throughout the Borough.

The Victoria and Albert apart we have had an active year. A lively Annual General Meeting was attended by Councillors Gerald Gordon and Nicholas Freeman, who bravely and expertly answered members' questions and criticisms. Also we welcomed the Reverend Raymond Turvey, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Brompton, and St. Paul's Church, Onslow Square, who outlined the immediate plans for St. Paul's. This latter is our most pressing problem, for its complete closure is imminent, leaving the prospect of its possible demolition in due course. We need to find another use for the fabric, or at least some form of redevelopment whereby the fine spire and tower, so important in the local townscape, be retained for posterity.

Our other most pressing problems are the future of the Brompton Hospital Estate, now happily showing signs of a solution to the satisfaction of the Association, and 'creeping' hotels. We are an area particularly prone to this latter abuse, and we are urging the Council to do everything in its power to keep it at least in check.

Our recent newsletter gives a more complete account of our activities and copies are available from the Hon. Secretary upon request.

*Hon. Secretary:* Hugh Brady, 16 Selwood Terrace, SW7 3QG.

### PEMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

The Pembridge Estate Conservation Area has been extended to take in the block north of Chepstow Villas bounded by Denbigh Road, Denbigh Terrace and Portobello Road.

The Association was very disappointed with the Secretary of State's decision, following a Public Inquiry on 27th April, 1977, to allow the change of use of Sion Convent in Chepstow Villas from a school to a science centre.

There continues to be a steady stream of planning applications relating to the area and constant vigilance is necessary to avoid the encroachment of offices and hotels in a designated residential area. Lately there has also been an application for use of a house as an Embassy.

The Pembridge Conservation Estate would be overlooked in the case of the proposed demolition and rebuilding of the Russian Embassy at the north end of Kensington Palace Gardens and the Association is keeping a watchful eye on developments.

Spring and autumn newsletters were issued for the information of members.

Dr. Stephen Pasmore's lecture on 'Life on 18th-Century Campden Hill', given in St. Peter's Church Hall in October, was well attended and much enjoyed.

A garden party was held to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee on a very cold Saturday afternoon in June in Pembridge Square Garden. It was, in spite of the weather, such a success that another party to enable members to meet each other was arranged following the Annual General Meeting in December.

*Chairman:* The Rev. Douglas Richardson, 48 Ladbroke Road, W.11.

*Hon. Secretary:* Mr. John Hayward, 28 Chepstow Villas, W.11.

### ROYAL CRESCENT ASSOCIATION

In the past year the Association has continued to co-ordinate activities aimed at furthering the restoration of Royal Crescent under the European Architectural Heritage Year project.

Progress has been gradual owing to the complexities of freehold and leasehold ownership and variations in tenancy—not to mention financial problems of residents. However, some evidence of progress may be seen in the number of houses redecorated in the new standard colour scheme, and others are in hand for restoration during this year.

The Association has also continued to make its presence felt in community affairs and keep in touch with local authorities, etc. One achievement has been the reduction and slowing-down of traffic passing through the Crescent, to the benefit of residents and of the environment in general.

In addition, the social side of the Association has continued to flourish and membership has increased.

*Chairman:* Colin D. MacInnes, 35 Royal Crescent, W.11.

#### ROYAL CRESCENT GARDEN COMMITTEE

It was quite a year for the Royal Crescent Garden. In the spring we discovered that someone had released a pair of domestic rabbits in the garden and they were wreaking havoc—who needs mown crocuses and hollyhocks? The great rabbit hunt took place in April and we caught six!

Then there was our decision to install permanent under-tree lighting in the garden both to celebrate the Jubilee and for the future pleasure of everyone. The Committee decided that no charge against the garden rates should be made for the lighting. Residents rallied marvellously, and we had a jumble sale, a raffle with prizes donated by local businessmen and a super evening party in the garden, with the result that the lights and installation are all paid for and there is a reserve fund for maintenance. None of this would have been possible without the concerted efforts of residents and immense assistance from the Royal Borough's Jubilee Steering Group and Council officials, also from the Kensington Hilton Hotel.

Some overdue tree surgery was attended to and then a bad storm tore a large branch from a horse-chestnut, fortunately with no damage to people, cars or fences, but it necessitated further work from the tree surgeons.

So 1977 was a full year, but as a result the garden is looking much better and we are now planning long-term replacement tree planting—and another party in 1978.

*Hon. Secretary:* Raymond Stoupe, 33 Royal Crescent.

#### THURLOE AND EGERTON ASSOCIATION

Our biggest single concern this year has undoubtedly been over the disposal by the G.L.C. of the former National Theatre site, opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum. In June last year, members of the Association and of other interested amenity societies, including the Kensington Society, were invited by the Council to attend a discussion meeting on its development, and had the opportunity of seeing drawings and models of the four schemes under consideration and of talking with their architects. Throughout our discussions with the Borough Council and with the G.L.C. we have been grateful for the co-operation and support of the Kensington Society, the Onslow Neighbourhood Association and other amenity groups, who were united in opposition to the two schemes for large blocks of flats. Now that the G.L.C. has decided in favour of the Aga Khan Foundation, we welcome the design of the building they propose and feel sure that it will make a very positive contribution to the visual amenity of this part of London.

More routine planning applications have continued: in Beauchamp Place there has been particular pressure for change—for the conversion of small shops and restaurants into larger ones and residential upper floors into offices. We strongly support the Council's policy to resist these pressures and to conserve the special character of the street.

Traffic and parking problems have persisted: traffic in Beauchamp Place, particularly coaches in summer; rat-running traffic in Thurloe Square; the continually increasing pressure on residents' parking bays in our area from people coming in from other parts of the Borough to visit the museums or the Knightsbridge shops.

During the year we have continued to take part in the public consultations about the Borough Development Plan and have been represented on the local Planning Forum. We are disappointed by the failure of the planning clauses in the Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Bill and hope that efforts will continue in this respect.

In February this year we launched a drive to recruit new members: we would particularly welcome anyone who is already a member of the Kensington Society if they live within our area, which covers the whole of the northern half of Conservation Area No. 1.

*Hon. Secretary:* Susan Walker, 95 Walton Street, London, S.W.3.

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# Kensington Palace

C. H. L. PURVER

On the west side of Kensington Gardens stands Kensington Palace, a rambling block of brick buildings and the home of Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon; Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester; and the Society's Patron, Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone. Its heyday as a royal palace was from 1689 to 1760, spanning the reigns of William III who had it constructed, Anne who loved it, George I who made some extensive alterations, and George II who was the last monarch to live there. In 1819 Queen Victoria was born and lived there as a child and young woman up to the time of her accession. Queen Mary, wife of George V, was also born at the Palace.

On the site of the Palace stood Nottingham House, a Jacobean mansion built in 1605 for Sir George Coppins which passed into the ownership of the Finch family about 1620 and in 1689 was held by Daniel Finch, second Earl of Nottingham. William III and Mary II had settled in London after the bloodless revolution of 1688, but with William's chronic asthma it soon became evident they could not live in the smoke and fog-laden atmosphere of Whitehall Palace or St. James's Palace. They moved out to Hampton Court but it was too far away from Westminster, and William looked around for a residence nearer to his capital and was attracted to that delightful village to the west of London called Kensington, which was said to be 'of good air'. He had a look at Holland House but finally settled on the home of one of his Secretaries of State, the Earl of Nottingham, and purchased it from him for 18,000 guineas. At that time the Surveyor of the King's Works was Sir Christopher Wren and William immediately commissioned him to enlarge Nottingham House and make it 'a fit place for Royalty'. There was nothing grand about Wren's work and no attempt at classical ornamentation—William and Mary wanted a domestic home, nothing pretentious or ostentatious, and they wanted it in a hurry. (William never spoke of it as Kensington Palace, always Kensington House.) The work went ahead very quickly, maybe too quickly, for in November 1689 one of the new buildings 'suddenly fell flat to the ground, killing seven or eight workmen'. Whilst William was away on his campaign in Ireland (fighting his father-in-law, James II) Mary wrote to him to report progress of the work: 'The outside of the house is fiddling work, which takes up more time than can be imagined; and while the schafolds are up, the windows must be boarded up, but as soon as that is done your own apartment may be furnished' (*sic*). On another occasion she wrote: 'I have been this day to Kensington which looks really very well, at least to a poor body like me, who have been so long condemned to this place (Whitehall) and see nothing but water and wall' (*sic*).

John Evelyn the diarist went there in the spring of 1690 and wrote: 'I went to Kensington which King William has bought of Lord Notting-

ham and altered, but was yet a patched building, but with the garden however it is a very sweete villa, having to it a park and a straight new way through this park' (*sic*). This 'straight new way' was the 'Route du Roi' (Rotten Row) and was described as 'perfectly straight and so wide that 3 or 4 coaches can drive abreast—and has posts put up at even distances, on the tops of which lanterns are hung which are lighted every evening the Court is at Kensington'. This road provided a safer route to London than the hitherto dark and muddy paths roamed by footpads and highwaymen.

Wren left Nottingham House as the nucleus of his palace and added three-storeyed brick wings at the angles. To the west he built a two-storeyed courtyard entered by a gate tower surmounted by a clock and cupola—still known today as Clock Court. (Looking at the Clock Tower from the State Rooms one can see the weather vane with its William and Mary monogram and the arms of King William proudly displayed.) On the north side of this courtyard were the kitchens and on the south a long corridor known as the Stone Gallery, which was entered from a portico and was the ceremonial entrance to the Palace via the King's Staircase in the south-west pavilion. In 1691 a fire at night burnt down part of the southern range of Clock Court, which resulted in a complete remodelling of the approach to the Royal apartments, with the steps of the King's Staircase rebuilt in marble. More than £100,000 was spent in turning Nottingham House into Kensington Palace and a further £11,000 was spent between 1689 and 1696 on the Palace gardens, which then covered about 26 acres.

Queen Mary II took a great interest in the new Palace and its gardens, but her stay was shortlived and in 1694 she died there of smallpox. After her death William gave up his project for the complete rebuilding of Hampton Court Palace and made Kensington his principal residence.

In 1698 Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, visited William at Kensington Palace and was particularly impressed by the wind dial over the fireplace in the King's Gallery—this device, a pointer connected by a series of rods to a wind vane on the chimney, showed the direction of the wind over a map of north-western Europe, and can still be seen today in working order. One can imagine how intently William must have studied this wind dial in those days of sailing ships when wind direction was so important to plot fleet movements and estimate arrivals of messengers from the Continent. Whilst Peter the Great was in London his portrait was painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller and now hangs in the Queen's Gallery.

On 8th March, 1702, King William died at the Palace. He was convalescing from a broken collar-bone, sustained in a fall from his horse, and he was sitting in his Gallery by an open window where he caught a chill which developed into pneumonia. He was succeeded by Queen Anne (Mary's younger sister) and she loved Kensington as much, if not more so, than William and Mary.

Kensington Palace afforded the seclusion Anne desired and the



country air was so much better for her asthmatic husband, Prince George of Denmark, that she much preferred it to St. James's Palace. Besides, she could exercise her great love of gardening and set about enlarging the Palace gardens and making extensive alterations to them. William's symmetrical Dutch gardens were replaced by a layout much more 'English'. It was during Anne's reign that the Orangery was built. This, known as the 'Green House', was built to the north of the Palace, probably to designs by Hawksmoor somewhat modified by Vanbrugh. It has been described as 'one of the most beautiful examples of the art of Renaissance in London, if not in England', and there Anne would give tea and supper parties. The Orangery is open to the public today and contains some 17th-century statues by Francavilla and given to the nation by Her Majesty the Queen in 1977.

Queen Anne's great friend and constant companion since childhood, Sarah Churchill, First Duchess of Marlborough, was in attendance as Groom of the Stole, First Lady of the Bedchamber and Keeper of the Privy Purse. Many stories have been written of the great and tempestuous friendship between the Queen (Mrs. Morley) and the Duchess (Mrs. Freeman), and it was in one of the Queen's private closets at Kensington that the final bitter quarrel ensued between them. The rift in their relationship was brought about largely by Whig and Tory intrigues, particularly after Anne had become Queen, and this final quarrel led to Lady Sarah being dismissed from the Queen's service and her place taken by Lady Masham. Although both Anne and Sarah regretted the quarrel the two friends never met again.

Anne died at Kensington on 1st August, 1714, and was buried beside her husband (who had predeceased her by six years) in Westminster Abbey. She died childless, in spite of her seventeen pregnancies, and thus closed the Stuart dynasty—leaving Parliament to send for George Lewis, the Elector of Hanover, great grandson of James I. The Act of Settlement passed by William's government in 1701 had assured the succession of the House of Hanover in the event of William and Anne dying childless.

George I was a dull unpleasant man but he adored Kensington Palace because it reminded him of his beloved country home of Herrenhausen in Hanover. He was not, however, content with the simple domestic home of William and Mary and Anne—he had a far greater sense of his own importance as a monarch and ordered his apartments at Kensington to be made much more ornate. Sir Christopher Wren was dismissed from his post as Surveyor and his place taken by William Benson, in whose hands structural alterations to the King's rooms were made. William Kent was engaged to decorate the rooms and he painted all the ceilings, adopting a theme of ancient Rome which reached its climax in the main State Room, the Cupola Room. William Kent's masterpiece, however, was the decoration of the King's Grand Staircase, where he painted on to the walls and ceiling recognisable persons of the day (including himself) looking out to welcome King George and his visitors to the Palace.

Most of his time in England (and he spent a great deal in Hanover) George I lived at Kensington, but he died at Hanover in 1727 and was buried there where his heart had always been.

His son, George II, and his intelligent, lively wife, Caroline of Anspach, were the last two monarchs to live in the Palace. There was little or no building work during their reign, but Queen Caroline had a passion for landscape gardening and it is to her that we owe the layout of Kensington Gardens as they are today. The 'Basin', or Round Pond as it is now called, was finished and filled with water and a ribbon of marshy ponds on the east side of the Gardens developed into the Long Water. For the first time the gardens were opened to the public, but on Saturdays only, and no one could go into the gardens except in 'full dress'. Queen Caroline died at the Palace in 1737 and George II reigned on alone until October 1760.

After his death the State Rooms were locked up—George III refused to live there. He preferred Windsor Castle and he bought Buckingham House as a town house for his Queen. Various Royal relatives were granted apartments in Kensington Palace—perhaps one of the most colourful was Caroline of Brunswick, who settled there after her separation from the Prince of Wales (later George IV), where she enjoyed a wildly exciting social life. It was said at the time, 'Her dinner parties are the gayest in town.'

Perhaps the most significant occupants in later years were the Duke and Duchess of Kent and their child Victoria, who was born there on 24th May, 1819. She was sleeping in her mother's bedroom when the news of the death of her uncle, William IV, was brought to her and later that day she held her Accession Council in the Red Saloon. Shortly after her accession she moved out to Buckingham Palace and recorded in her diary: 'Got up at 8. At ½p.9 we breakfasted. It was the *last time* that I slept in this poor old Palace, as I go into Buckingham Palace today. Though I rejoice to go into B.P. for many reasons, it is not without feelings of regret that I shall bid adieu *for ever* (that is to say *for ever* as a DWELLING) to this my birthplace, where I have been born and bred, and to which I am really attached. . . . I have gone through painful and disagreeable scenes here 'tis true, but still I am fond of the poor old Palace, the poor rooms look so sad and deserted, everything being taken away' (*sic*).

Queen Victoria never forgot her childhood home and it was at her request on her 80th birthday in 1899 that the State Apartments were opened to the public.

In April 1867 Prince Franz of Teck and his wife (Princess Mary Adelaide of Cambridge) moved into the apartments that had been occupied by Victoria and her parents. Like the Duke and Duchess of Kent before them they moved in to prepare for their first-born child, and on 26th May, 1867, Princess Victoria Mary was born. She was to be known as 'Princess May' until her marriage to Prince George (George V) in 1893. The Tecks lived at the Palace until 1870 and were popular Kensington residents. Princess Mary Adelaide was an extremely



large lady, known affectionately as 'Fat Mary'—she was attractive and lively; her husband, the Prince of Teck, was good looking and as dark as she was fair.

The year 1873 saw one of Queen Victoria's daughters in residence at the Palace. Princess Louise, after her marriage to the Marquess of Lorne, moved in and remained there until her death in 1939. Princess Louise had considerable talent as an artist and sculptress and spent many hours in her studio which was set up in the walled garden. It was there that she worked on the impressive statue of her mother which stands on the Broad Walk and was unveiled by the Queen on 28th June, 1893. Queen Victoria wrote in her journal: 'We drove up the Broad Walk to the spot opposite the front of Kensington Palace where stood the statue which was to be unveiled, the statue of me in my Coronation robes, done by Louise, and erected by the inhabitants of Kensington in memory of my Jubilee. . . . Sir A. Borthwick, M.P. for Kensington, read a very nice address, to which I answered the following: "I thank you sincerely for this loyal address and for the kind wish to commemorate my Jubilee by the erection of a statue of myself on the spot where I was born and lived till my accession. It is a great pleasure to me to be here on this occasion in my dear old home and to witness the unveiling of this fine statue so admirably designed and executed by my beloved daughter." Mr. Glyn, the Vicar, read an address from the parishioners of Westminster. Bertie (Prince of Wales) performed the unveiling ceremony after which Lorne presented a number of gentlemen to me. The statue stands beautifully with its back to the garden of the Palace and facing the Round Pond' (*sic*).

Princess Beatrice, Queen Victoria's youngest daughter, came to live in apartments at the Palace in 1901. In 1952 Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, took up residence there and in 1960 came Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, has had apartments there since 1923.

The Palace will long be remembered as the home of the London Museum. The idea of a museum for London was first considered during the reign of Edward VII and in 1911 the first London Museum was established by the second Viscount Esher and the first Viscount Harcourt. Most of the display was in the State Apartments, but in 1913 more space was required and the collection was transferred to Lancaster House where it remained until 1945. In 1950 King George VI granted the temporary use of Kensington Palace again and the Museum reopened in the rooms below the State Apartments. In 1975 the London Museum amalgamated with the Guildhall Museum to form a new Museum of London to be housed in new premises in London Wall.

Visitors are welcomed to the State Apartments at Kensington Palace (there is a small charge for admission), where they can see the simple domestic rooms of William and Mary and Anne, the grander rooms of George I and George II, and the rooms used by the young Princess Victoria and her mother in which are assembled furniture and objects associated with Queen Victoria or characteristic of her reign.

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**THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY—INCOME**  
for the year ended

1976	Income	£	£
728	<b>Membership Subscriptions</b> .. ..		1,090.08
	<b>Other Receipts:</b>		
	Receipts from Sales .. ..	655.70	
343	<b>Less: Expenses of Sales</b> .. ..	253.27	
			402.43
113	Bank Deposit Interest .. ..		66.31
43	Income Tax Recoverable .. ..		47.70
474	Receipts for Visits .. ..		400.05
300	Advertising in Annual Report .. ..		300.00
400	Donations .. ..		414.00
2,401			2,720.57
	<b>Excess of Expenditure over Income</b>		
148	Transferred from Accumulated Fund ..		2.03
<u>£2,549</u>		<u>£2,722.60</u>	

**BALANCE SHEET as**

	<b>Accumulated Fund</b>		
1,963	Balance at 1st January, 1977 .. ..	1,814.97	
	<b>Less: Excess of Expenditure over Income</b>		
148	for the year to date .. ..	2.03	
			1,812.94
1,815			
	<b>Liabilities</b>		
73	Subscriptions paid in advance .. ..	34.49	
162	Creditors for Expenses .. ..	111.95	
			146.44
<u>£2,050</u>		<u>£1,959.38</u>	

In accordance with instructions given to us, we have prepared the foregoing accounts from the accounting records of the Kensington Society and from information and explanations supplied to us.

**AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**  
31st DECEMBER, 1977

1976	Expenditure	£	£
432	Printing, Typing, Stationery and Equipment .. ..		430.60
493	Postage and Telephone .. ..		500.59
741	Producing Annual Report and Society Leaflet .. ..		981.66
24	Bank Charges .. ..		0.37
162	Professional Charges .. ..		64.80
75	Sundry Expenses .. ..		29.81
104	Hire of Hall, Lectures, etc. .. ..		66.17
395	Coach Visits, etc. .. ..		348.65
7	Subscriptions and Donations .. ..		27.15
93	Tree Planting and Flower Baskets .. ..		263.93
23	Photographic Records .. ..		8.87
			2,722.60
<u>£2,549</u>		<u>£2,722.60</u>	

at 31st DECEMBER, 1977

	<b>Assets</b>		
22	Stock of Sale Articles .. ..		8.40
117	Stock of Christmas Cards .. ..		116.55
42	Income Tax Recoverable .. ..		49.23
	<b>Balance at Bank:</b>		
1,441	Deposit Account .. ..	1,019.43	
428	Current Account .. ..	765.77	
			1,785.20
<u>£2,050</u>		<u>£1,959.38</u>	

KEON HUGHES, *Hon. Treasurer*  
G. CHRISTIANSEN, *Hon. Secretary*

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Rank  Hotels

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of .....  
(Address)

HEREBY COVENANT with THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY, c/o 18 Kensington Square, W.8, that for a period of seven years from the 1st day of ....., 19 ....., or during the residue of my life, whichever shall be shorter, I will pay annually to the said Society from my general fund of taxed income such a sum as after the deduction of income tax at the rate for the time being in force will amount to the net sum of £3 or any part thereof.

IN WITNESS whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this ..... day of ..... 19.....

Signed, sealed and delivered by the above-named COVENANTOR in the presence of

WITNESS.....

ADDRESS.....

OCCUPATION.....

SIGNATURE

### PLEASE NOTE

- 1 The date to be inserted as the beginning of the seven years period should not be earlier than the date on which the covenant is executed.
- 2 Unless your first subscription under the covenant is paid on or after the date when the above period begins, the Society will not be able to reclaim the Income Tax on such payment.
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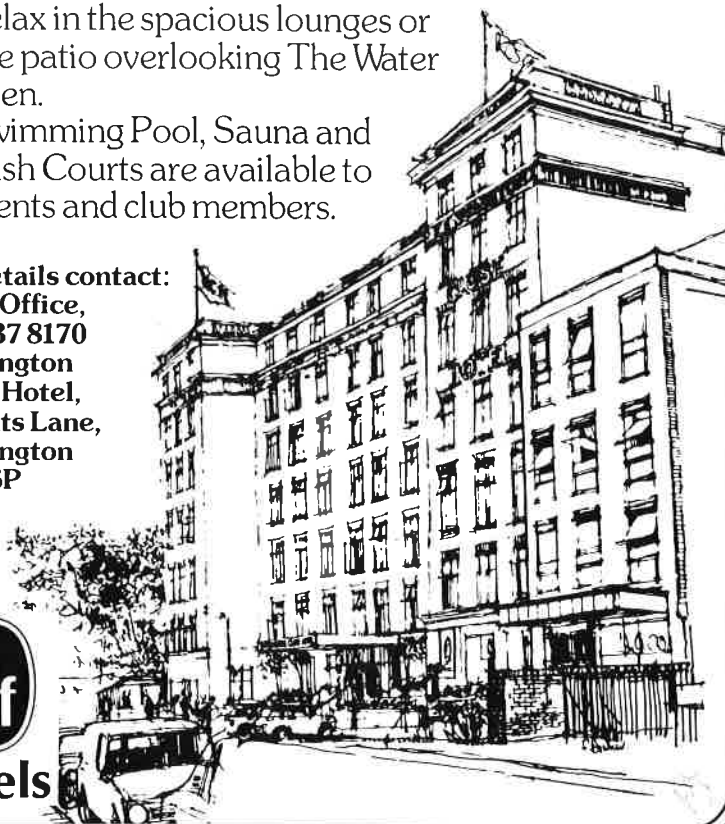
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