

Annual Report

1984-85



THE
Kensington
Society

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Kensington Society

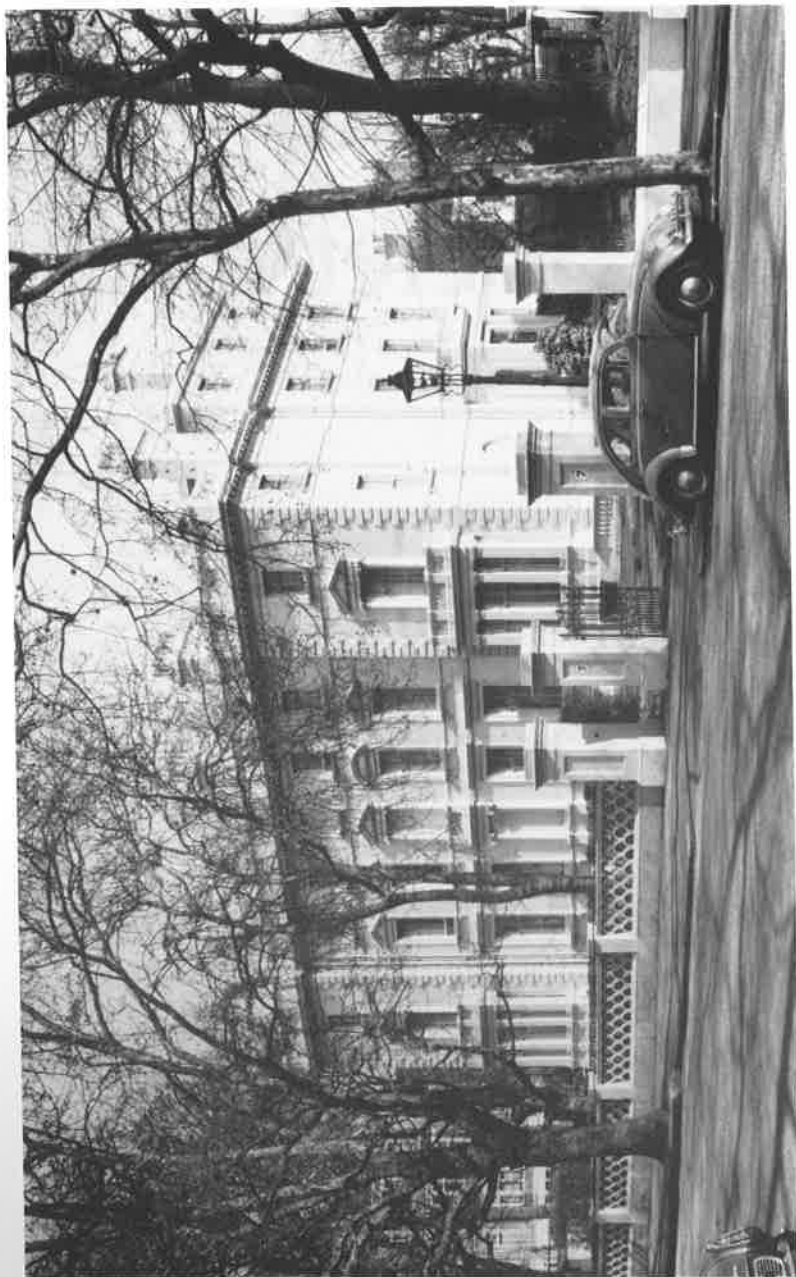
The objects of The Kensington Society are to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington by stimulating interest in its history and records, by protecting its buildings of beauty and historic interest, by preserving its open spaces from disfigurement and encroachment, and by encouraging good architecture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

Annual Report 1984-85

FRONT COVER

Clock Tower, Kensington Palace, c. 1860

By kind permission of Kensington Public Library



6. 7 KENSINGTON PALACE GARDENS, 1963
By kind permission of Photographic Library, G. L. C.

The Kensington Society

PATRON

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, G.C., V.O.

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	R. T. D. Wilmot, Esq.

HON. TREASURER: Keon Hughes, Esq.

HON. SECRETARY AND EDITOR OF REPORT: Mrs. G. Christiansen, 18 Kensington Square, W.8

AUDITORS: Messrs. Croft, May and Co.

Foreword

I am not concerned in this Foreword with individuals but with groups, and, criminals apart, if you were to ask me which group of people in our society I most actively dislike, and indeed revile, my answer would be, without any hesitation, property developers.

These people are motivated by one impulse only, which is personal gain. They are not concerned with the feelings of their fellow-citizens, nor with social factors, nor, needless to say, with questions of amenity. Activated by nothing but selfishness and greed, they are perfectly prepared to ignore all those considerations which ordinary, decent people will not fail to take into account.

Their activities have already done a great deal of harm here in Kensington, but what is specially frustrating is that, through an anomaly in the existing planning laws, they can actually profit from their misdeeds. As the law stands at present, a developer or unscrupulous houseowner can, when planning permission for some categories of building extension or alteration has been refused, claim compensation: a concession known as the 10 per cent tolerance.

In our Borough this has for some time been causing serious concern, particularly as there is now evidence that certain people do not scruple to apply for permission to make alterations or additions to properties of which they are the owners that they have not the slightest intention of carrying out. Under the present cock-eyed law the Council, if permission is refused (as they bank on it being), is bound to pay them 10 per cent of the building estimate in notional 'compensation'.

It will be evident that this deplorable state of affairs, which was certainly not envisaged by those who drafted the Act of 1947, can no longer be tolerated. Our Member of Parliament, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, is aware of the situation and first took up the matter with the Department of the Environment over a year ago. Unless the Minister is disposed to take early action to amend this ill-conceived legislation, Sir Brandon is now prepared to sponsor a private member's Bill, if possible before the end of the present session.

Even among genuine proposals, the Council reports that, of 22 cases of planning applications for extensions or alterations to properties, some even in Conservation Areas, 14 were considered as quite unacceptable, yet 11 of these were granted on the ground that, had they not been, many thousands of pounds in so-called compensation fees would have to be shelled out.

Mr. Sanders, the Borough Planning Officer, informed the Secretary in January that the Council has also been continuing at frequent intervals to press upon the Government the need for urgent action, and that a statement is now expected 'fairly soon'. Whether it will have been forthcoming before these words are printed remains to be seen. What must be beyond controversy is that this ill-conceived law needs to be rescinded with all possible speed: indeed, preferably tomorrow.

ALEC CLIFTON-TAYLOR.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Leighton House, W14, on May 1st, 1984. Mr. Alec Clifton-Taylor, President of the Society, was in the Chair.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, previously approved by the Executive Committee, and circulated in the Annual Report, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

Mr. Clifton-Taylor in opening the meeting said the Society had been very concerned about the future of the Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council, if the proposals to abolish the G.L.C. and other Metropolitan Councils are carried through. He understood that the Royal Fine Art Commission had set up a Joint Committee to explore ways of saving the Historic Buildings Division. 'It appears', continued Mr. Clifton-Taylor, 'that a formula has been devised for the Division to continue its work under the Department of the Environment.'

The President called on Mr. Wilmot, Chairman of the Executive Committee, to move the adoption of the Report.

Mr. Wilmot said 'the excellent Annual Report, prepared by the Honorary Secretary, contains a succinct summary of the year's work of the Society, so I shall be brief and merely comment on one or two highlights.'

First, the triumphant story of the Princess Alice Memorial Garden. This was Gay Christiansen's idea and what a success it has been in spite of its remarkably difficult site.

Next, the tragic story of the old Town Hall. The Committee's views were divided on the merits of the old building, but are united in their dislike of the plan accepted by the Borough Council, which they consider to be unworthy of the site.

Lady Beresford-Clark seconded the adoption of the Report.

Mr. Keon Hughes, Honorary Treasurer of the Society, then presented the audited accounts for the year ending December 31st, 1983. In moving their adoption he said that there had been a welcome increase in subscription income, the revenue from advertising, once again, paid for nearly half the cost of the Annual Report. The Society was much indebted to generous friends of the Society for donations to the general fund and to the Memorial Garden Fund.

The increase in the income was matched by increase in expenditure, accounted for by the inevitable rise in the cost of postage, printing and stationery.

Almost the entire cost of establishing the Garden had been raised by the efforts of the Honorary Secretary from sources outside the Society covering many interests at home and abroad, acquainted with H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, late Patron of the Society.

In future we must rely on the Society itself, for the cost of the maintenance of the Garden.

Mr. Hughes said he had two further points to make. The first concerned life membership. We still have 116 Life Members, some of whom paid £10 when the Society was founded in 1953. The Life subscriptions were most valuable then, but costs since 1953 have risen so much that even the present Life subscription of £50 is too cheap. There is a further difficulty of keeping in touch with Life subscribers, in quite a few cases it is impossible to know whether they are alive or dead. The Executive Committee has therefore decided, that while existing Life subscribers should continue to enjoy the present privileges, Life subscription in the future will be discontinued. Mr. Hughes said his second point was his annual plea, that annual subscribers should pay their subscription of £5 on January 1st, 97 reminders had to be sent out again in April at considerable cost of postage etc., this also greatly increases unnecessary work for the Honorary Secretary.

Miss Thorman seconded the adoption of the accounts.

The Chairman, President of the Society, closed the meeting, thanking members for attending.

The meeting was followed by an enchanting illustrated lecture by Mr. Clifton-Taylor entitled the Smaller Georgian House.

Mr. Clifton-Taylor's unrivalled knowledge of materials, his perceptive description, understanding and insight, makes his lectures always a celebration. His forthright criticism of ill-judged alterations to houses, and lovely brickwork covered with creeper, results I am sure in residents rushing home to put the thing right.

The Memorial Garden

The drainage and irrigation of the Garden has given cause for some concern during the past 12 months. It is, as members will know, a difficult site, indeed the Garden could be likened to a huge window box.

A considerable outlay is contemplated to overcome our difficulties.

Two sales have been organised this last Autumn, one at 18 Kensington Square, and one by the kindness of the Prudence Leigh School of Cookery, at 21 St. Albans Grove, W8.

The sales and donations resulted in £2,073. A number of plants in the Garden which had grown too large, were sold at the sales; the rosebeds which gave good colour during the summer have been extended. Three-dozen new roses have been planted.

The Borough Council gave the Garden an Environmental Award last May and 'Brighter Kensington and Chelsea' gave a similar award later in the summer. Two plaques have been erected on the pillars above the Garden. The Garden has been voluntarily maintained by Miss J. Seabrook, Mr. John Bickel and Mrs. Christiansen.

We would like to record our appreciation of the help we have received from Mr. Ashly Stephenson, Bailiff of the Royal Parks, Mrs. Adams, Superintendent of Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, and Mr. Brown, Manager of the Nurseries, Hyde Park.

Obituary

Sadly we report the death of several long-standing members.

Miss Eileen Dunn died in February, she joined the Society in 1954, and for many years she was an active member of the Society.

Miss F. Yetts, who for many years lived at 77 Victoria Road and was a founder member with her friend Miss Fry, died early in 1984. Miss Yetts was a generous giver and we miss her very much.

Mrs. Joan Milbourne died in July. She joined the Society in 1956. She was a very active member of the Society, helping always at the sales and attending all the activities of the Society.

Miss N. A. Everill has also died during the year. She gave generous support at the time of the Society's fight to prevent the Russian Embassy developing the Barrack site, Kensington Church Street.

Mrs. Naomi Price died just before Christmas. Mrs. Naomi Price joined the Society in 1957.

These are all members who cared about Kensington and they are greatly missed.

Membership Subscriptions

The Annual subscription remains £5 for individual membership and £10 for corporate membership. Subscriptions were due on January 1st.

The work of the Society has greatly increased over the years; sending out repeated reminders not only increases our expenditure, but entails unnecessary work, so please will you help by being a punctual subscriber?

Annual Report

We are grateful for the support given by our advertisers. Our thanks again are particularly due to Mr. John de Vere Hunt, who continues to pay for the charity advertisement for R.U.K.B.A.

Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council

The Society was extremely anxious that the Historic Buildings Division of the G.L.C. should not be disbanded. Letters were sent to the Minister and to the Royal Fine Arts Commission. We are glad to

learn that the Government has decided to keep the Division intact. It will become part of the new Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission; how this will work in practice is unclear.

Statutory Building List

Department of the Environment have recently completed their survey of buildings in Kensington and Chelsea and have added some thousand properties to the Statutory Historic Buildings List. There are now nine Grade 1 buildings in the Borough (previously 6), 227 buildings of Grade 11* (previously 43) and approximately 3,536 of Grade 11 (previously 1,648). The Council's 'yellow book' showing listed buildings is being re-issued in a second edition.

The Ownership and Development of 15 Acres at Kensington Gravel Pits

The above article is reproduced on page 27 by kind permission of the London Topographical Society.

The history of the 15 acres falls into three periods, first pre-conquest to 1599, the second from 1599 to 1848 and the third 1845-1864.

This article, written by Miss Irene Scouloudi, M.Sc. (Econ.), F.S.A. (a member of the Kensington Society since its foundation in 1953), and A. P. Hands, M.A. (Oxon and Melbourne), appeared in the *London Topographical Record* Vol. XXII, pp. 77-125 (1965).

Owing to restricted space, only the first and second periods appear in this Report, we hope to include the third period 1848-1864 in our next Report.

For the full references to the sources upon which this article is based, please see the annotated copy from the above *London Topographical Record*, in the Reference Library, Kensington Main Public Library, Hornton Street, W8.

A selection of cases dealt with

Kensington Exhibition Centre, 99 Kensington High Street

A deputation from the Society was received by the Borough Council in June, 1984. Councillor Mrs. Hanhan, Chairman of the Planning Committee, received members, Mr. George Pole, Mr. Jabez Smith and Mrs. Christiansen representing the Society and Mr. Patrick Cavendish representing Kensington Square.

The reason for the deputation was the intolerable conditions caused by the Centre—particularly to residents of Kensington Square. The deputation pressed that the No. 4 condition of the planning consent, i.e. 'that loading and unloading should take place within the curtilage of the building', should be enforced without delay.

Councillor Mrs. Hanhan said she was sympathetic to the residents' difficulties, but in view of a letter received from the Managing Director of the Centre stating that improvements were to be made, the Council had postponed taking action for three months. The Society wrote to the Council again in October stating that the improvement was marginal.

The following copy of a letter from the Council to the Centre was received in November:

November 23rd, 1984

Dear Mr. Thompson,
**Kensington Exhibition Centre,
99 Kensington High Street, W8**

The Chairman of the Town Planning Committee has asked me to thank you for attending the meeting of the Town Planning Committee last week when they considered again whether the Council should serve enforcement notices in respect of the alleged breach of Condition 4 of the 1976 permission relating to these premises.

The Committee noted the steps you have taken to organise the arrival and departure of the larger delivery vehicles and the improvements you have made to the premises to facilitate their easier loading and unloading which have gone some considerable way to easing the problem of congestion which existed. However, the Committee are very concerned that despite these improvements the residents in Kensington Square continue to have very justifiable and easily supported reasons to object about the loading and unloading as well as the illegal parking which takes place from time to time in Kensington Square as well as in Derry Street. The Committee noted in particular that it is exhibitors who have small and easily portable items for exhibitions, who use small vans and private cars to transport them to the exhibition centre, who appear not to be aware of your loading and unloading arrangements or if they are to ignore them. It is these exhibitors and their vehicles who are now the major cause of nuisance in Kensington Square both in terms of inconsiderate and illegal parking of vehicles and the loading and unloading of these vehicles and the moving of goods to and from the exhibition centre.

This situation is totally unacceptable to the Council. I have therefore been asked to inform you that the Committee decided that you must provide the Council in writing with details of the steps which you now intend to take to ensure that cars and small vans attending the exhibition centre are not illegally parked in Kensington Square, and loaded and/or unloaded from there. These details are to be sent to the Council before the end of December at the latest, and you then have until the end of February, 1985, to show that these measures overcome the present problems. However, if loading or unloading in breach of Condition 4 continues to take place after the end of February, 1985, giving rise to problems of illegal parking and traffic congestion, you are advised that enforcement action will be taken. A copy of this letter has, on the Committee's instructions, been sent to the Kensington Society.

Yours sincerely,
E. Sanders,
Borough Planning Officer.

1-7 Kensington Palace Gardens

A meeting with the British architects for the proposed Russian development of this site, was arranged in December.

A summary of 'Guidance Notes in Planning' had been prepared by the architects and they were expecting to meet their Russian counterparts, early in 1985.

This is a large site, including the car park, the main frontage is on the Bayswater Road, two sides of the site abuts Kensington Gardens. The secondary frontage is in Kensington Palace Gardens, the Guidance Notes quotes this frontage as being 'peculiarly sensitive to the impact of development . . . acceptable heights for the new building will vary over the site, but no new building should be visible over Nos. 6 and 7.' Nos. 6 and 7 Kensington Palace Gardens are listed by the Department of the Environment as being of architectural or historic interest; and these should not be demolished.

The Guidance Notes are excellent. However, the demands of the Russians remain to be seen; the Society will watch developments and will report to members in due course.

Holland Park

The Society is very much concerned about the future of Holland Park. A copy of the letter sent by the Society to the Department of the Environment was enclosed with the Society's letter to members in December. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nicholas Freeman, has stated that he is pleased to take the maintenance of the Park over from the G.L.C. and that 'it may be possible to maintain and even improve the standard and at the same time slightly reduce the cost.' Judging by the way Kensington parks and garden spaces are maintained under the Council, the Society is very fearful of the result. We still hope that an alternative plan for this unique Park can be found. See opposite page 21.

Litter in the Borough

As stated in the letter to members in December, the Society is very concerned about the litter problem in the Borough. The Society initiated the formation of a group 'The Cleaner Royal Borough Group'. The Chairman Mr. George Pole's report of the Group will be found on page 17.

21 St. Albans Grove

The planning application before the Council to demolish the building, and redevelop to provide a four-storey building, was opposed by the Society and subsequently was refused planning permission.

An application was submitted by the Prudence Leith School of Cookery for the refurbishment of the building, this was acceptable to the Society, and subsequently received planning consent.

John Barkers, Kensington High Street

The planning application included an underground car park and for sub-division of basement to second floor, to form separate retail areas, e.g. a department store and a mall of unit shops, and an increase of office usage. The car park entrance and exit from Derry Street was opposed by the Society, this has now been changed to Young Street. The Society said an enforceable condition that a certain standard of shops and window dressing should be required, to prevent another Kensington Market type of development.

9, 11 and 13 Melbury Road

Increasing dilapidation of these houses, in particular No. 13, have given the Society, residents in the area, and the Abbotsbury Residents' Association much concern, and considerable correspondence has taken place. The Society has asked that a Compulsory Purchase Order should be made.

The following letter was received from the Borough Planning Officer in October.

Dear Mrs. Christiansen,
9, 11 and 13 Melbury Road, London W14

Thank you for your letter of the 27th September, regarding the state of the above properties.

As a result of your comments, my Assistant has been in touch with the Agents for the Ilchester Estate, to discover what, if any, plans there are for the future of these properties. I shall as a result be submitting a report on this subject to the November meeting of the Development Plan Sub-Committee, for information and discussion.

Thank you for drawing this matter to my attention.
Yours sincerely,
Borough Planning Officer.

In December we received a copy of the Council's letter to the Agents.

Dear Sirs,
re: 9, 11 and 13 Melbury Road

You will recall that we discussed on the telephone last month the current state of the above properties and your intentions with respect to their future.

Following on from that the attached report was submitted to the Council's Advisory Development Plans Sub-Committee, which considers *inter alia* amenity matters affecting conservation areas. The report is along the lines discussed with yourselves, and was (as agreed) on the public part of the agenda.

I have to inform you that the Sub-Committee expressed grave concern regarding these properties, and were not convinced regarding the comments made in the third paragraph of the report. They requested that the report be considered by the main Town Planning Committee, but felt that in the meanwhile it would be helpful if the managing agents were able to provide more details as to why the properties are in their current state of disrepair and as to what, if anything, is proposed by way of remedying this. In particular, they were keen that any repairing covenants in the leases of Nos. 9 and 11 should be vigorously enforced.

I hope to report this matter to the Town Planning Committee in January, and I should therefore be grateful if you could favour me with a full reply at your earliest convenience, preferably before the end of this month.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,
Borough Planning Officer.

We understand as we go to Press that the Council is still waiting for a reply to this letter.

Garage Site, Neville Street, Neville Terrace

A planning application was submitted to the Council by the Brompton Hospital in 1983 for the development of this site. (Once occupied by a large Baptist Church and demolished 20 years ago.)

The Society welcomed the development of this site, but supported the Onslow Neighbourhood Association in opposing the plan. The plan was considered to be of mediocre design and an overdevelopment of the site.

We understand that the plan is being given further consideration by the Hospital Authority.

'10 per cent Tolerance'—Town and Country Planning Act 1947

An anomaly in the above act enables property speculators to obtain planning permission against the interest of the environment and in direct opposition to the District Plan. The 1947 Act was passed to facilitate home improvements after the war, and allows for an increase on a building of 10 per cent. This 'right' has, particularly

since the Peak-Top Properties case (Camden) in 1983, been of considerable concern to the Society and throughout the Borough. Letters have been sent to the Borough Council, the Member of Parliament and to the Department of the Environment. Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, M.P., has given an undertaking that he will at the first opportunity in the new session introduce a private member's bill. A reply from the Department of the Environment states: 'I note and understand the concern of your Society. This matter has been under careful consideration and I hope that we shall be able to make an announcement before long.'

As we go to press we understand that a bill is before Parliament.

Coach Terminal, Ashburn Mews, Gloucester Road

Conditional Planning permission was given in May, 1983, for the continued use of site adjacent to Ashburn Mews as a coach park. There were two conditions:

1. That the coach park use should cease on November 30th, 1983.
2. That the site should not be used as a coach terminal and that there should be no passenger facilities.

The latter condition was not observed and an enforcement notice was served by the Council. The lessors of the site appealed to the Department of the Environment. Mr George Pole, member of the Executive Committee, gave evidence at the Inquiry, supporting the Council.

As we go to press we are glad to report that we have just received the Inspector's (for the Secretary of State for the Environment) decision. The Inspector upheld the Borough Council's Enforcement Notice, but that the period for compliance be varied from one month to 12 months. The Inspector has drawn attention to the desirability of the Authorities (Council and G.L.C.) to investigate a traffic management scheme to enable the coaches to reach the appeal site, without having to pass through Grenville Place and Southwell Gardens.

V.A.T. Refurbishment of Buildings

The Society supported the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings in their effort to persuade the Chancellor to abandon his proposals for V.A.T. charges on the repairs of existing buildings.

A letter was sent in May to the Chancellor, asking that the V.A.T. proposals on the refurbishment of buildings would not be adopted on June 1st.

The V.A.T. proposals, as members will know, were accepted on June 1st. We consider that they have created absurd and illogical anomalies between refurbishment and new building projects. We are strongly in favour of the economic and environmental advantages of the re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings. The repair of listed buildings and those in Conservation Areas, should at least, have remained as with new buildings, 'zero rated'.

188 Brompton Road

Application before the Borough Council for erection of an office and residential building at basement, first-, second- and third-floor levels. Planning permission was refused. Society supported the refusal and objection to the design of the development made by the Thurloe and Egerton Association, particularly the barrel vault and the proposed materials, red marble, red brick, bronze anodised glazing bars and tinted glass. These were considered to be aggressively intrusive. We await the Department of the Environment's decision.

8 Addison Road

Application for the erection of a college annexe and rear extension strongly opposed by the Society. This house is considered by the Society to be a masterpiece of the architect Halsey Ricardo; it was built in 1906 for Sir Ernest Debenham. The house has been little altered and still retains a spacious garden.

The *present* and proposed use as an educational institution, departs extensively from the original use of the building, and is a departure from the Borough's Statutory Plan. The Society is opposed in principle to the building over any garden. Objections were also made to the application by the Victoria Society, the Abbotsbury Residents' Association and by many residents.

We are very glad that planning permission has been refused.

Other Cases

St. Stephen's Gardens, adjacent to Southwell Gardens, 207 Sloane Street, 42 Kensington High Street, 3 Cheniston Gardens, 48 Victoria Road, 23 Pembridge Square, Leonard Court, concrete left on pavement by builders in Clareville Grove, 20 Pembridge Villas, 47 Kensington Court, 1/23 and 2/24 Redcliffe Mews, Emperor's Gate site, 5 Cambridge Place, 10 Albert Place, 3 Hogarth Place, 34 Sumner Place, 37/39 Roland Gardens, 43 Ladbroke Square, 4 Douro Place, The Swallow Hotel, SW7, 1a Palace Gate, 3 Hogarth Place, 30 Aubrey Walk, 3 Kynance Mews, Staff Hostel, Old Court Place, 18 Victoria Grove.

Comments made by Mr. Ian Grant, F.R.I.B.A.

member of the Executive Committee of the Society, to the Council about applications in the North Kensington area

13 Linden Gardens, 5 Chepstow Crescent and 15 Stanley Gardens

These schemes are generally very poor and unsympathetic. No roof addition should be allowed where none already exist on adjacent properties.

7/9 Ladbroke Grove, W11

Design very poor and the detail is a travesty of Georgian building.

14 Stanley Crescent, W11

A roof extension is most undesirable.

64 Ladbroke Grove, W11

Scheme is most unsympathetic to the existing house.

9 Norland Square

Details are quite unsympathetic, much more care should be taken to match windows and joinery to that which exists.

89 Blenheim Crescent

Roof extension should not be allowed.

12/26 Royal Crescent Mews

The proposed design is too small and fussy, being neither properly traditional or decently contemporary.

2, 3 and 4 Lansdowne Walk, W11

A great deal more care and sympathy is required in this scheme if this important group of houses is not to sink even further into institutionalised emasculation. The rear alteration to windows and doors at basement and ground floor level are highly undesirable.

Land adjacent to Bulmer Mews, W11

Provision of no less than seven houses into this small and constricted site would appear to constitute over-development. The sole access through Bulmer Mews, Ladbroke Road/Kensington Park Road corner must inevitably increase the already serious congestion.

15 Stanley Gardens, W11

Proposed treatment of roof at the front is not acceptable.

7 Stanley Gardens

The new roof must be traditionally covered in slates at both back and front.

The Mitre Public House

Great care should be taken to ensure that the new details conform closely to those already existing.

6 Lansdowne Road, W11

The original character of this listed house will be totally lost in the proposed new alterations.

Russian Orthodox Church, Emperor's Gate

The demolition of the church in a district where the contrast of Gothic churches with classical houses is such an important element of townscape that it would be an aesthetic loss. The proposed new block is of very unsympathetic design, and appears to constitute a gross over-development and will cause serious loss of amenity in Cornwall Mews South.

6a Queensdale Place, W11

This is a gross over-development, and will result in woefully low space standards. The elevational treatment is extremely poor.

12 Kensington Palace Gardens

The alterations to the roof will make the appearance more acceptable, but the lift tower will still obtrude unacceptably. Furthermore, the proposed cornice round the lift tower is of completely incorrect profile.

Other Cases

17 Royal Crescent, 15 Kensington Palace Gardens, 16 Lansdowne Crescent, 8 Ladbroke Grove, 20 Pembridge Villas, 11 Holland Park, 20 Stafford Terrace, 90 Kensington Park Road, W11, 34 Elgin Crescent, 12 Stanley Gardens, 1 Drayton Gardens, 42 Blenheim Crescent, 11 Pembridge Villas, 11 Arundel Gardens, 86 Elgin Crescent, 125 Blenheim Crescent, 97 Lansdowne Road, 53 Pembridge Road, 21 Holland Villas Road, 75 Ledbury Road, 50 Holland Park, 86 Elgin Crescent, 68 Elgin Crescent, 2/4 Chepstow Crescent, Silchester Baths, Princes House, Buckingham Court, Matlock Court.

The Cleaner Royal Borough Group

Campaigning for a cleaner Royal Borough

The standard of street cleaning and its supervision declined dramatically over the past year and led to widespread complaints being received by the Society and the Chamber of Commerce. Whilst it is accepted that pedestrian traffic increased significantly contributing greatly to the litter problem, it is not unreasonable to expect the Council itself in the interest of good administration to respond to the situation by increasing street cleaning arrangements. There is also the aspect of new working practices which have a bearing on standards of service. As ratepayers we welcome changes leading to greater efficiency leading to lower costs, but if management is inadequate any such 'savings' will be cynically regarded in the public mind and become equated with cuts and lower standards.

Responding to the spontaneous pressures for action the Society and the Chamber took the initiative in setting-up the Cleaner Royal Borough Group with representatives drawn Borough-wide from the business community and amenity organisation. The Group met several times, studying the position and collecting photographs and other evidence.

In January, 1985, a constructive meeting with the Leader of the Council took place, the outcome being the formation of a Committee consisting of Councillors and representatives of the business community and amenity societies. The role of the Committee will be to regularly monitor standards and to discuss means to bring about a cleaner Royal Borough. Leading members of the business community have already demonstrated their support by offering to sponsor approved schemes designed to encourage greater awareness of the problem on the part of the general public.

The Society will welcome members' reports of poor street cleaning so that in turn it can play an effective part on the Committee.

GEORGE POLE,
Chairman of the Group.

Other Activities and Future Arrangements

Other Activities 1984

Visits were made to Swanton Mill; Bayham Abbey; Wilton House; Sutton Place; Michelham Priory; Brompton Oratory; Baltic Exchange; Royal Society of Arts.

Future Arrangements

April 30th, 6.45 p.m. The *Annual General Meeting* will be held in the Small Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8. The Society is very honoured that H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, Patron of the Society, will be present and will give a talk after the Meeting.

May 14th, a visit to *Savill Gardens, Windsor Great Park*. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1.30 p.m. Coach and entrance fee £6.50.

June 14th, a visit to *Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Chichester*. Museum consists of a selection of rescued historic buildings: houses, barns, rural craft workshops, including medieval farmhouse, market hall, 16th century treadwheel. Working water mill, etc. Teas available. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 12.30 p.m. Cost of coach and entrance £8.

June 25th, a visit to *Dorney Court, near Windsor*. A manor house which has been in the family for 350 years. Fine collection furniture and pictures. Home-made cream teas available. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 1.30 p.m. Coach and entrance fee £6.50.

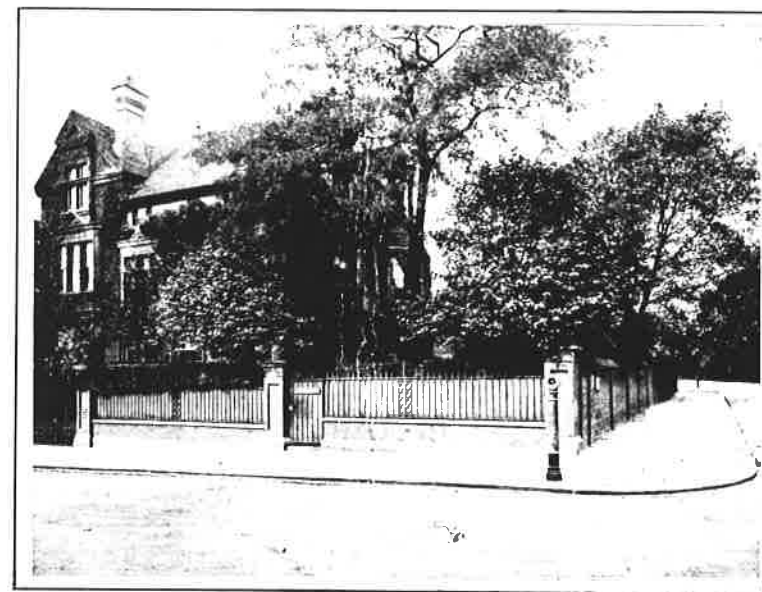
July 9th, a visit to *Broadlands, Romsey*. Formerly home of Lord and Lady Mountbatten. Coach leaves Kensington Square at 12.30 p.m. Coach and entrance fee £9.

August 28th, at 2.15 p.m., a visit to *Lambeth Palace*. The tour lasts 80 minutes, members will see the Great Hall, Guard Room, Chapel, Picture Galleries, Post Room and State Rooms. This visit will be followed by a visit to the *Tradescant Garden Museum*, next door to the Palace. Numbers are limited. Tickets £1 to allow for a donation to the Lambeth Chapel Fund and Tradescant Trust. Buses from Victoria Station. Nos. 10, 149 and 507.

September 16th, at 6 p.m. Children's Library Entrance, Public Library, Campden Hill Road, W8. *Historic Treasures of the Library*. A talk and display of the Kensington local collection by Mr. Brian Curl.

Coach tickets may be passed on to non-members—money cannot be refunded. Tickets are not required for the Annual General Meeting. Friends are welcome.

No. 13, MELBURY ROAD IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON W.



The south-east front

Hall's problem with any particular proposal to build totally over a 'garden area' at the back of a house, against which there is no strong objection; but as one case follows another, it is sad to see the build-up of obliterated garden spaces, which cannot be right in this Conservation Area.

Part of the street is lined with the 'backlands' of the larger houses in neighbouring Bedford Gardens, and there still are some picturesque cottages and artists' studios. One by one they are replaced by a 'town house', but we manage to get plans considerably ameliorated for the appearance of the street.

Chairman: Lt.-Col P. Ronaldson.

Secretary: Mrs. C. Gurney.

THE EARLS COURT SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Association and the Garden Committee celebrated their 10th Anniversaries in 1984. Two outstanding achievements in the decade had been the adoption of the Garden by the Council, for rating purposes, in 1974 and the designation of the Square as a Conservation Area in 1975. From this foundation the subsequent improvements stemmed and with the completion of the conversion schemes on the west side this year the Square has at last been transformed into one harmonious whole.

It is intended to write a history of the Square's past 100 years and if any member of the Society should have any recollections which would assist in this, the Chairman of the Association would be pleased to receive them.

During the year a Children's Theatre event and a Summer Barbecue were held in the Garden and a Buffet Dinner to celebrate the Anniversary at Miss Pamela Case's house, No. 16.

In conjunction with other Associations we opposed the trunking of the Earls Court Road and are glad this local artery will revert to Borough control.

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Poetry Society on 15th January, 1985. There will be no increase in subscriptions.

The Garden Committee had a successful year. We congratulate them on the state of the Garden and we thank them for letting us use it for events. Their own Anniversary was commemorated in a tree-planting ceremony by the Mayor of the Royal Borough, Councillor Adrian Fitzgerald.

Chairman: Mrs. Marianne Dawoodbhai.

EARLS COURT GARDENS AND MORTON MEWS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Our Chairman, Dr. Kaye, has resigned as he has retired to the country and I am acting as Chairman for the moment.

Herewith our report of last year's happenings in our Association which I hope is not too late for inclusion in your annual Report.

During 1984 our Association has opposed appeals against refusals of planning permission for use as amusement arcades of two properties in Earls Court—one with success, the other as yet unknown.

We have kept an eye on the situation of the Post Office in Earls Court Gardens and are still anxious about the possible development of the sorting office site.

Our secretary Mrs. Hunter appeared on television and was heard on radio about the increasing prostitution in our area.

We have endeavoured (unsuccessfully) to enforce planning permission for use as single dwelling houses of properties now used for flats or rooms.

We have joined the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

We have continued pressure on the unacceptable timing of the pelican crossing in the Earls Court Road, with those responsible.

Acting Chairman: Lady Farnham, 11 Earls Court Gardens, SW5.

EDWARDES SQUARE, SCARSDALE AND ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

The Association has been mainly concerned with small additions to existing houses this year. However, there have been various other important events.

After 16 years and nearly 20 planning proposals it seems likely that the NCP site at the top of Earls Court Road opposite Holland Park is to be started. A mixed development is planned of shops, offices and flats.

The Association and local residents fought two Appeals, one against the extension of a meeting room in the Coptic Church, Scarsdale Villas, which was upheld by the Inspector. The other against the totally inappropriate design for the façade of the Abingdon Arms, Abingdon Road, the result of which is awaited. In each case it appeared that the Council took notice of the views of residents who were being threatened by intensification of use.

There is still pressure for small offices in the mews areas. The latest to be considered by the Council is for a further application for office use in a large section of Pembroke Mews, considered by the Council and the Association as a light industrial use area. There appears to be increasing pressure for office uses in the mews off the Kensington High Street. The Association is alarmed at this trend and vigilance is necessary to see that it does not happen.

Hon. Chairman: Mr. T. H. Sinclair, 107 Abingdon Road, W8.

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Bain, 6 Phillimore Terrace, Allen Street, W8.

KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

With the whole of Kensington Court now included in the Conservation Area, it is excellent to see so many of the Mansion Blocks refurbished and redecorated. Hopefully this coming year will see all the scaffolding gone from the Court.

The K.C.R.A. has been very much involved with the De Vere and Kensington Court Conservation Areas Proposals Statement and once the Kensington Court Passage Electric Sub-Station project is completed, hopefully the Council will be able to carry out its plans to make this Passage more attractive.

The Association has strongly opposed the closing of the Young Street Post Office and the redevelopment of the Dial Contracts building in Ansdell Street to a Private School.

Regrettably, through many business commitments, our Chairman, Mr. Harold Lee, has resigned from the Executive Committee. Our new Chairman is Mrs. Anne Sieve of 7 Hamston House. We are also looking for a new Secretary to take over on or before our A.G.M. at the end of March. Nominations would be much appreciated.

THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

Like most amenity societies, the Ladbroke Association monitors change in its area; trying to prevent change for the worse and to encourage change for the better. This is done mainly by examining all Planning Applications concerning buildings in the area and making appropriate comments on them to the Borough Planning Officer. Most Planning Applications concern relatively minor changes, although these are not necessarily less important, but during the past year there have been some large and important proposals. One of these was a proposal to build penthouse flats on the roofs of the blocks of flats in Kensington Park Road. The influence of the so-called 10 per cent rule was seen in the Council's approval of this proposal in order to avoid liability for compensation. The Association is seeking all means to bring about a change in this particular legislation, in order to avoid its damaging effects, especially in Conservation Areas.

The revision and increase in the schedule of 'listed' buildings has been welcomed, but it is hoped that the Planning Authorities will pursue a more rigorous policy in dealing with proposals to alter such buildings.

Each year the Association makes recommendations to the Council in connection with the schemes for Environmental Awards and Grants. This year a proposal for Grant-aid is progressing with the enthusiastic support of local residents.

The Association continues to publish its Newsletter and to arrange meetings for its members. A particularly enjoyable meeting took the form of a summer walk through some of the communal gardens, when our guide was the distinguished landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe, who is a local resident. These gardens give the Ladbroke area its distinctive character and its unique blend of buildings and soft landscape.

NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The G.L.C. Transport Committee approved the M41 Motorway Spur proposed Link Road, for purposes of consultation, in November, 1984. The R.B.K. & C. Transport Committee will be considering the matter early in the New Year. The impending abolition of the G.L.C. and transfer of responsibility to Department of Transport coupled with the need for Government approval for major expenditure will cause further delay. There is a long row to hoe before we ever get it.

Planning consent has been refused on grounds of over-development and height for Mews Houses at 12/26 Royal Crescent Mews. It is hoped the latest application for 20 such houses will be more acceptable. The existing eyesore badly needs to be cleaned up.

Plans for the rebuilding of St. Clements and St. James School on the site of St. James' Norlands School in Penzance Place have been passed. Red tape over funding has held up the start of building works but it is due to begin in mid-January, 1985, and to be completed in 1986.

Mrs. Couchman, the Chief Gardener of Westminster Abbey Gardens, gave a well-attended and absorbing talk to us in March on her work and showed slides of Flower Festivals within the Abbey itself. This was followed by a delightful lecture in November by Christopher Wood, Secretary of The Friends of Holland Park, on Holland Park when he showed us some quite superb photographs he had painstakingly taken.

We have given £200 for the planting of some bulbs on the Shepherds Bush Roundabout, which have now been planted by Fulham and Hammersmith Borough Council. Only a small area has been planted but it is a start! It remains to be seen whether they prosper.

Hon. Treasurer: P. L. G. Gurney, 1 St. Ann's Villas, W11.

ONslow NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

The year just passed has proved a quiet one for the Association. There has been no further definite news concerning our two 'problem' sites, those of St. Paul's Church and the Neville Street-Neville Terrace garages. However, we understand that the machinery for the repossession of the former by the Parish of Holy Trinity Brompton is slowly ticking over. It is nearly a year since we objected to the proposed development for the garage site, on the grounds that it was too mean and lacking in scale for such a splendid site. We hope that this new scheme, when it appears, will be more worthy.

Our two main problems, often related, have been the worsening state of pavements and nuisance from the numerous refurbishment sites, whose contractors often blatantly ignore the Council Byelaws and Guidelines concerning working hours, the use of pavements and parking spaces for storage and even as workspaces and the lighting of skips. In addition, there has been a large-scale replacement of ageing gas and water mains and while the Statutory Undertakings have to make good both the roads and pavements which they have disturbed, there have been long delays before this work has been put in hand. We are pleased to report that in recent weeks, following representation from the Association and local residents, the Council Works Department have initiated large-scale and localised pavement relaying in parts of Onslow Square and around Selwood Terrace.

We are starting a drive to increase our membership, and we invite all readers of the Annual Report, who live in our area and who are not members, to join us.

Chairman: Hugh Brady, 16 Selwood Terrace, London SW7 3QG.

PEMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Seven meetings of the Executive Committee were held during the year under the chairmanship of Councillor David Campion. The Chairman's three-year term of office came to an end at the A.G.M. in December, 1984, and a vote of thanks was passed in appreciation of the tremendous contribution he had made over the years to the Association. He is succeeded by Mr. John Croft.

Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed by the Committee with the attitude towards enforcement that appeared to be held by the Planning Office at the Town Hall. Specific examples cited were Thornbury Court, Pencombe Mews and the continual erosion of front garden walls. Six cases were reported of charming, original bottle baluster walls being destroyed. The Borough Planning Officer had notified the Association that the Council did not, in fact, have powers over some of the matters which concerned the Committee.

Owners of single family dwellings, for example, are at liberty to demolish their front garden walls if these are less than three feet high.

Since the inclusion of the southern portion of Westbourne Grove from Denbigh Road to Pembridge Villas in the Pembridge Conservation Area, the Committee and local residents have made considerable efforts to ensure the visual quality of this area is improved by carefully monitoring all planning applications. The terrace of antique shops, etc., from 227-245 Westbourne Grove currently being renewed should enhance this street.

In memory of the late Hon. Secretary, Dr. John Hayward, a Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo Biloba*) was planted in the flower bed at the junction of Chepstow Villas and Pembridge Villas on October 25th at a small ceremony which was attended by Mrs. Helena Hayward.

Chairman: Mr. John Croft, C.B.E., Flat 2, 35 Chepstow Villas, W11.

Secretary: Mr. David Hales, 3a Dawson Place, London W2.

VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

This has been a good year in that progress has been made on a number of fronts. At last a Conservation Area Policy Statement is in preparation. Residents' expectations of this document are high—we want clear and unambiguous policies to control development. We are confident that when negotiations on the content of the Statement are concluded, we should have a good set of policies for the area. Our main concern will be to see it implemented. We welcome the Council's commitment, we await the results.

A number of projects, however, could not wait for the Statement. We are pleased that the Council has agreed to the reinstatement of Victorian-style street lights in Canning Place, Launceston Place and Victoria Grove. The success of the project was due to the substantial financial contribution made by our members in those streets.

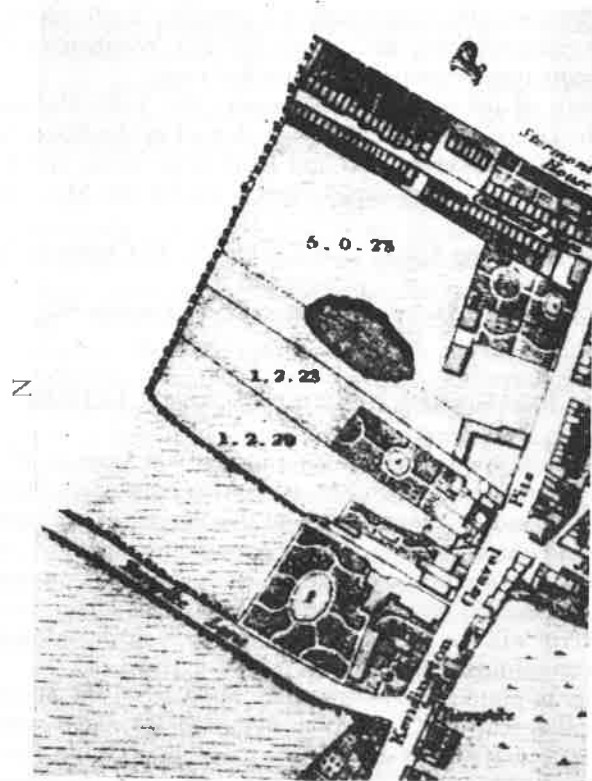
Representations about the abuse of the one-way section of Victoria Grove has resulted in some minor alterations, which are an improvement. However, the growth in traffic in Launceston Place and Victoria Grove have caused increasing concern. A study is to be carried out by the Council and hopefully some changes made, including the possibility of redesigning the junction of Victoria Grove and Launceston Place.

Despite these positive events, we are still concerned about the quality of development control decisions. This year still produced a small crop of 'bad' decisions, which we find inexplicable. However, we hope that the Conservation Area Policy Statement will solve all that!

Chairman: Oliver Lebus, 25 Victoria Road, W8.

Secretary: Anne Woodward-Fisher, 14 Albert Place, W8.

Fig. 7



Thomas Starling's *Plan of the parish of Kensington, 1822* (extract), in Kensington Public Library, reproduced by the London Topographical Society, publication 67, 1934. The house, large formal garden and meadow on the corner of Turnpike Lane (now Pembridge Road) were at this date occupied by Frederick Crace. Silver Street] is the northern end of the present Kensington Church Street. The crowd of tenements on the P[addington] boundary were built on the Campden Charity lands. Campden Place was the forerunner of Clarnicarde Gardens.

The ownership and development of fifteen acres at Kensington Gravel Pits

By IRENE SCOULUDI, M.Sc.(Econ.), F.S.A.
and A. P. HANDS, M.A.(Oxon. and Melbourne)

By kind permission of the London Topographical Society

This paper concerns a fifteen-acre property situated in the part of Notting Hill Gate known until about a hundred years ago as Kensington Gravel Pits.

The inquiry, which seeks to trace the ownership of this property from an entry in Domesday Book to its development in the mid-nineteenth century, was begun by chance rather than design. In 1910, Frank Scouloudi bought no. 29 Pembridge Gardens, an early mid-Victorian house which looked exactly like its neighbours, nos. 17-27 on the same side and nos. 18-32 opposite. When this house was being sold in 1954, one of his daughters learned with surprise from an old file of title-deeds that the premises occupied a dual site: the ground at the rear (just capable of providing a family tennis-court) had been held by copyhold of the manor of Abbot's Kensington until 1872, whereas the house itself stood on ground, 44 ft. 6 in. x 65 ft. 6 in., formerly part of a freehold estate of 15 acres. The title-deeds carried the story back to 1739, to the will of a Henry Marsh of Fulham. In the will and in documents up to and including an indenture of release of June 1806, the freehold estate was described consistently as the Talbot and the 13 acres adjoining; but three weeks later the selfsame property appeared in the deed of recovery as 'one messuage and fifteen acres of land'. These two challenging discoveries led to a closer study of the twenty-seven items in the file, and by degrees to the wider search here summarized.

The 15 acres, otherwise the Talbot and the 13 acres adjoining, stretched north from the London-Acton highway (the present main thoroughfare of Notting Hill Gate) and are today covered by the east side of Pembridge Road, the whole of Pembridge Gardens, nearly the whole of Pembridge Square and Dawson Place, and a small portion of the south end of Chepstow Place. Their precise location and definition were made possible by the fortunate circumstance that they proved to be represented by plots 53, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 62 on the map issued by the Tithe Redemption Commissioners in 1844. From before 1618 to the 1850's the Talbot, and its successor, stood near the highroad on a site corresponding to the southern half of plot 62; the remaining acres of arable and pasture land fanned out behind, to the north and north-east. The property seems not to have

changed in character from early in the seventeenth century until its development in the mid-nineteenth century. The main building pattern as then carried out was contained within the 15 acres, except at the north-west corner where a few houses in Dawson Place and Pembridge Square encroached upon plot 52.

The history of the 15 acres falls into three periods: the first, when the area formed an unspecified part of the manor of Kensington, and later of Abbot's Kensington; the second, when it first became recognizable under the name of North-Crofts, and then appeared as a property consisting of the Talbot and 13 acres adjoining; and the third, the Victorian development, when it ceased to be mainly agrarian, was cut up into streets and building sites, and was built over.

1. Pre-conquest to 1599

The 15 acres while an indistinguishable part of a larger area

The first period, spanning more than five centuries, opens with the record in Domesday Book that the manor of Kensington, *Chenesitun*, assessed for ten hides and once held by Edwin, a thane of King Edward, was held by Aubrey de Vere under the bishop of Coutances (Constance), chief justiciary of England. Early in the reign of Henry I, this Aubrey at the urgent wish of his dying son Godfrey granted to Abbot Faritus and the monastery of Abingdon the church of Kensington and its lands, comprising two hides and a virgate. The gift was confirmed by the king. In this way a portion of the manor of Kensington became monastic property, and a separate manor, later known as Abbot's Kensington. Our 15 acres, lying within this new manor, belonged to the monks of Abingdon until all their possessions were surrendered to Henry VIII in 1538.

The Crown retained the ownership for just over sixty years, during which the manor and rectory of Abbot's Kensington were leased and released in a complexity of tenures which do not affect us until, at the close of the sixteenth century, the manor was sold into private hands and the 15 acres began to stand out from their background.

2. 1599-1848

(a) The 15 acres emerge as North-Crofts

The second period opens with an indenture of 1599, wherein two closes called North-Crofts, which later deeds enable us to recognize as the 15 acres, were singled out from their surroundings. The preliminaries go back to 1596, when Elizabeth I granted to Robert Horseman, gentleman, the reversion of a 31-year lease granted by Letters Patent of 25 July 1570 to the queen's maid-servant Elizabeth Snow, widow. Horseman was to have the site of the manor and the rectory of [Abbot's] Kensington, all buildings, demesnes, pastures, glebe lands and certain tithes and hereditaments, late of the monastery of Abingdon, for 21 years at a rent of £19 6s. 8d.

Three years later, on 13 September 1599, the queen sold to Robert and John Chamberlain and Humphrey Wymes of London, gentlemen, for £833 6s. 8d., the manor of [Abbot's] Kensington, with courts, law days and other manorial rights, the site of the manor and the rectory, all lately belonging to the monastery of Abingdon, except all advowsons.

The three purchasers had acted, not for themselves, but for Walter Cope, Esquire, who ten days afterwards in a hearing at the Court at Nonsuch was stated to have 'lately purchased from her Majesty the manor and parsonage of [Abbot's] Kensington'. This inquiry by five Privy Councillors on Sunday, 23 September 1599, probably took place because Horseman, the resident leaseholder, had 'endeavoured by many means to make a stay' of Cope's purchase. To 'settle a perfect agreement between them', it was ordered that Mr Horseman 'have the fee-simple of his house and of all his grounds, glebe lands, or demesnes now in his possession, containing some 200 acres . . . and of all the tithes (saving of the copyhold lands and of certain acres adjoining to Mr Cope's house and being an orchard) to be speedily made over unto him, to be holden directly of her Majesty, as the said Mr Cope or his feoffees in trust shall hold the manor . . .'. Robert Horseman, for his part, was to surrender to Walter Cope or his assigns all his present title and interest in the orchard plot and in the residue of the manor and parsonage during the term of his leases.

The order made at Nonsuch was carried out in less than ten weeks. On 27 November 1599, for £665 6s. 8d., the Chamberlains and Wymes, again acting for Cope, sold to Robert Horseman the mansion, manor- or parsonage-house wherein he dwelled, with its appurtenances, as well as numerous tithes, glebe lands, closes and parcels of land named, all within the parish of Kensington.

Of the various items of manorial property thus alienated to Horseman, and within five months inherited by his young son, two only were situated north of the London-Acton highway, and one of the two was at Kensington Gravel Pits. The deed of sale named and located both. Northlands, the larger holding, stretched from the western fringe of Notting Wood (which separated it from the Gravel Pits) westwards down the highroad to the common sewer. The other, much smaller, holding east of Notting Wood was defined as 'two closes or fields of arable and pasture land called North-Crofts, lying and being on the north side of the said highway leading from London to Acton and lying near the Gravel Pits of Kensington (excepting one way or passage which . . . Walter Cope had there through the same two closes unto a close which one Like of Paddington then held and occupied)'.

North-Crofts was the only piece of Gravel Pits property belonging to Horseman on the north side of the highroad. The acreage is not stated either in the deed of sale or in Horseman's deathbed will of 31 March 1600, by which his entire Kensington acquisition was left in trust for his only son, the boy Robert. None the less, North-Crofts

remains identifiable and its area in 1599 can be deduced with some certainty from the records of 1618, 1674 and 1806.

When in 1618 young Robert Horseman sold some of his Kensington patrimony, the item north of the highroad at the Gravel Pits was described, not as North-Crofts, but as the Talbot and the 13 acres adjoining. After 1599, in fact, the name North-Crofts has been found only once, when it was used in 1674 to highlight the identity and ownership of 13 acres freehold at Kensington Gravel Pits belonging to the Marsh family. By working backwards from 1674, we see that the 13 acres (and the Talbot) had been entailed in that family since 1631; and were before that date in the ownership of Robert Gynne who had bought them, together with the Talbot, from Robert Horseman, only son and heir of the Robert Horseman to whom the feoffees of Walter Cope in 1599 had sold the two closes called North-Crofts at Kensington Gravel Pits.

On this showing, 13 acres of the property young Robert Horseman inherited in the northern part of the Gravel Pits, and sold in 1618, were the same tract of land as the Marsh family's '13 acres called North-Crofts' in 1674. All that follows after 1674 similarly confirms that this land is a 13-acre component of our 15 acres, and thus fixes the site of North-Crofts, not definitely identified hitherto.

It now remains to account for the remaining 2-acre component of the 15 acres.

(b) The 15 acres (the Talbot and the 13 acres adjoining) as a mainly agrarian entity, 1618-1848

On 10 April 1618, Robert Horseman of Kensington, Esquire, sold to Robert Gynne of Stevenage, Hertford, gentleman, for £990 all his moiety of all the tithes of corn and grain within the town, fields and parish of Kensington in the tenure of William Davies, with certain named exceptions; also 'All that capital messuage with the barns, stables, outhouses, gardens, orchard and yard thereto belonging with their appurtenances, called or known by the sign of the Talbot and two closes of arable and pasture land containing together by estimation 13 acres, more or less, to the said messuage next adjoining, situate . . . in the parish of Kensington . . . which said messuage and closes are now in the tenure of Richard Reeve and Grace his wife . . . '.

Here, for the first time, our property appears firmly in the round and with the label attached by which it was going to be known for the next 188 years, until 1806, when the name 'the Talbot' was replaced by 'messuage' and the Talbot's site was added to the 13 acres, making 15 in all.

In view of these facts, and the further fact that neither of the Horsemans had any other land in that part of Kensington, the area of the North-Crofts bought in 1599 must have been 15 acres, 2 acres of which were in due course appropriated to the Talbot.

References to the property from 1618 to 1806 invariably put the Talbot first, with the 13 acres as an adjunct. 'The Talbot' seems to have been accepted as a convenient descriptive landmark soon after the capital messuage was built, presumably between 1599 and 1617, when it was leased to the Reeves. In all known deeds 'the Talbot' for over 180 years included both house and grounds and evidently did not need any additional particular such as the area of the site. The 2 acres were so much part of the Talbot that they gradually became dissociated in people's minds from the rest of the 15 acres constituting the original North-Crofts. Concurrently the phrase, the Talbot and the 13 acres adjoining, expressive of the new dual nature of the property, superseded the older designation. Consequently, by the time the dying name of North-Crofts was momentarily revived in 1674, it could quite understandably and in good faith have come to be regarded as denoting no more than the 13 acres of arable and pasture land adjacent to the Talbot and its grounds.

Reverting to the main theme, we find Robert Gynne in 1622 leasing the property to a Mary Short for fifty years at a peppercorn rent, and by mid-1630 engaged, with his wife Elizabeth, in selling it to Sir William Blake of Hale-house, Brompton, knight. Before the legal formalities had been concluded, however, the purchaser died. Sir William Blake, 'a religious, charitable, good friend to . . . [the] parish', was buried at Kensington on 2 November 1630; and on 29 November power of administration was granted to William Blake, of Hale-house, esquire, on behalf of his mother, the widowed Lady (Mary) Blake.

Even while the legal routine of his late father's purchase was still incomplete, the administrator combined with Gynne to sell the property. Jointly, in February 1631, for 'a competent sum' to Blake and £130 to Gynne, they conveyed to John Marsh of Fulham, yeoman, and his heirs in perpetuity the moiety of the tithes Gynne had bought from Horseman in 1618, together with the Talbot and the two closes of arable and pasture land of 13 acres adjoining, now or late in the tenure of Richard Reeve and his wife Grace, with reversions and all deeds in good condition, the vendors having good title.

For eleven decades, to the end of 1741, the property descended in the Marsh family. Little has come to light about these Marshes of Fulham. One of them, Henry, was after his death entered in the records of Court Baron of 4 May 1671 as 'gentleman, holder of 13 acres' in the parish of Kensington, his heir being another Henry, a boy of six years in the guardianship of his mother Susanna. In the homage presented at the Court Baron of April 1672, 'Mrs Marsh' was listed as freeholder of 13 acres, but in the homage of April 1674 she was entered much more fully: 'Mrs Susanna Marsh, as guardian to her children, freeholder of thirteen acres of land more or less, called North-Crofts.' A year later Henry Marsh, then aged ten, was named as freeholder of the 13 acres. It is not certain whether this

Henry had a long life or whether a successor was the Henry Marsh of Hammersmith, in the parish of Fulham, who wrote his lengthy will with his own hand, signed and sealed it in the presence of four witnesses on 3 May 1739, and in 1741 died a widower, leaving two married daughters but no son.

This detailed and strongly individual will, proved 22 December 1741, was drawn up in two parts. The first part set out properties in Fulham and Hendon to be held in trust and the income paid to Marsh's elder daughter, Henrietta Maria Lund, 'for her life, for her sole and separate use and in her own power and that her husband shall not take or intermeddle therein . . .'. Failing an heir to this branch of the family, the life interest was to be enjoyed by Marsh's younger daughter Sarah, wife of Mr Thomas Greening, junior, and the capital was to go to Sarah's lawful heirs. The second part of the will set out numerous items covering more than 40 acres of land in Fulham and Kensington and half-a-dozen or so houses, among them Marsh's own mansion in Frog-lane, Hammersmith. The income therefrom was to be paid to Sarah and her husband. After their decease, all the premises were to pass to their son, Henry Thomas Greening, and the heirs of his body.

In the whole will, one item alone is strictly relevant here; namely, the bequest to the testator's grandson, Henry Thomas Greening (later Sir Henry Thomas Gott, knight), of 'all that capital freehold messuage with all buildings and outhouses thereto belonging anciently called the Talbot together with three closes of arable and pasture and meadow land containing together thirteen acres to the said messuage adjoining situate at the Gravel Pits in the parish and manor of Abbots Kensington now in the tenure of John Brettridge'.

The reappearance of the Talbot as an integral part of the Marsh property is a pleasant surprise, and the word 'anciently' is enlightening. Save for the tenancy of Richard and Grace Reeve in its early years, our knowledge of the people who inhabited or carried on business at the Talbot during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is restricted to a few casual, sometimes disputable, references. Take, for example, Peter Sammon's trade tokens in the 1660's. Faulkner notes one such token issued by 'P. Salmon, at the Dogs, Kensington Gravel Pits, 1661'. And Boyne describes one which shows, on the obverse, 'a talbot passant' with the words, 'PETER . SAMMON . AT . YE . ' above, and the date, '1667', below; and on the reverse, 'IN . KINSINGTON . GRAVEL . PITS . HIS HALFE PENNY . P.S.S.'. There were a Peter and Susance Sammon at the Gravel Pits in 1660, whose child Elizabeth died of the plague in 1666. Peter himself died there in 1678. Did this Peter live at the Talbot, and was it an inn? Or is Boyne's accuracy misleading, and does the talbot on the 1667 trade token merely represent a dog in general? Faulkner's description of the earlier token suggests that it does, although his is so far the only known reference to a business or inn called the Dogs, or the Dog, at the Gravel Pits prior to 1730. Whether the Sammons

lived and traded there or not, the Talbot was an inn some years later. The name of a John Loughton occurs as a licensed victualler in 1716 in the earliest extant Kensington register of licences. In the next available register, that of 1722, and from then to 1732, Loughton is entered regularly as licensee of the Talbot, or Talbot Gravelpits. After that there is a break in the records until 1751. Henry Marsh's will, however, shows the Talbot to have been out of business before the spring of 1739.

Henry Thomas Greening inherited the Talbot and the 13 acres, subject to the life interest of his parents, in December 1741. The Marsh entail was broken and the deed of recovery enrolled in the Court of Common Pleas on 6 June 1752. Sarah and Thomas were then still alive, but both had died before 1761, the year in which their son made preparations to marry Ann, daughter of Richard Hooper of Kington, Herefordshire, gentleman. The marriage settlement provided that Ann and the lawful issue of the marriage should benefit from the husband's properties in Kent, Sussex and Middlesex, within which last, of course, were the 15 acres. Henry Marsh's grandson seems to have inherited his meticulous observance of detail and to have grown into a somewhat humourless, self-important man, aspiring to rise higher in the social scale. As his family increased and he periodically altered his mind about the best allocation of his money and properties (and in so doing generally varied the settlement or a trust, or both) he must have been a trial as well as a source of income to his lawyers.

Greening's change of name was tied up with another inheritance. Mary Gott of Street in Sussex, spinster, by her will of 1766 bequeathed her real and personal estate to her kinsman, this same Henry Thomas Greening, and in a codicil directed that he should take the name of Gott. This he did in 1769, by Private Act of Parliament. In 1770 he bought Newlands (subsequently called Newlands Park), an estate of about 550 acres in the parish of Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire, and made the Georgian mansion his home. Henry Thomas Gott served as High Sheriff of the county in 1774, was knighted in 1784, and in the following year had the satisfaction of erecting an obelisk, popularly known as Gott's Monument, to commemorate the killing of a stag on his estate in the presence of King George III. After many years as deputy lieutenant of Buckinghamshire and an active magistrate in that and other counties, he died at Newlands in November 1809, aged 79.

The Talbot and the 13 acres were for a long time leased by Gott to a John Hall, who had other holdings in Kensington. Hall's name appears in the Rate Books against this property as Gott's tenant from 1777 to his death in 1788, after which his son, another John Hall, became the tenant. Gott had early decided to sell his Middlesex estates, save for the paternal home at Brentford End; but he acted with great deliberation, in Kensington at any rate, for at Michaelmas 1794 he gave John Hall a fresh 21-year lease of the Gravel Pits

property. The question of selling it did not, seemingly, come up before 1798. The prospective buyer was the lessee, John Hall, who was ready to pay £2000 for the fee-simple, provided that certain doubts be dispelled as to whether the legal measures taken to break the Marsh entail in 1752 were 'good and sufficient' to allow Gott to sell the property freehold. It was agreed that a new recovery be suffered, partly to satisfy John Hall and partly because the recovery of this relatively small estate would also enable 'the title of divers other hereditaments of greater value, the property of the said Sir Henry Thomas Gott', to be cleared without further difficulties. John continued to hold the lease and eventually entered into full possession in 1806 for £2000. From then until the property had been transformed into a built-up area in the 1850's and 1860's, the Hall family were in control and by their actions largely determined the appearance of the estate as it is today.

The Halls were a big, typically middle-class family, who rose from moderate circumstances to affluence in two generations. A number of personal details are to be found in a declaration of 28 August 1860 made by George James Lock, retired hatter of St James's Street, for the satisfaction of one of the first purchasers of freehold premises on the 15 acres. Lock, by then nearing ninety, who had married into the Hall family in 1799, went obligingly from his home in Seramphore (sic) Terrace, Hammersmith, to a County Commissioner for Oaths at Hampton Court. He was well qualified to testify, '... having been as one of the family for many years during the earlier period of my life in habits of constant communication with my ... mother-in-law and my ... brothers- and sisters-in-law'.

Lock went on to state that John Hall, the father, then of Hamilton Street in the parish of St George, Hanover Square, had married Harriott Coates in 1756. He named each of the thirteen children of the marriage, giving the dates of birth, baptism and, where relevant, marriage. Five of them not personally known to him had, he supposed, died before he married Caroline Hall, the eleventh child, in May 1799.

The members of the family on whom this part of the story mainly centres were the father, John Hall (died 1788), a riding-master, and his three unmarried sons—John (1762-1816), who is named in deeds and directories as, variously, stable-keeper and gentleman; Robert (1765-1847), who seemed to prefer a fixed income, trouble-free, to the cares of real estate; and Christopher (1777-1820), the thirteenth child, a horse-dealer.

The other sons of John the elder were Benjamin Hall (1768-1847), who with his son Benjamin was for many years a saddler at no. 15 Down Street, Piccadilly, and according to Kent's Trade Directory of 1810 was also a cap-maker; Thomas (1773, died by February, 1846), a builder and carpenter, who had some part in the development of Halkin and Chapel Streets, Grosvenor Place; and William (1775, died February 1846), of whom little is known. There were two

daughters: Harriet (1760, died by February 1846), married to Thomas Cuff of Half-Moon Street, gentleman, and one of the family trustees; and Caroline (1774-1821), married, as before said, to George James Lock of St James's, hatter. They and/or their children and grandchildren, together with a few other legatees, were beneficiaries under the wills of the three brothers John, Christopher and Robert Hall. The younger generations thus had a strong interest when the 15 acres were being broken up into building blocks and disposed of piecemeal in the mid-nineteenth century.

Properly to appreciate the Halls one must for a moment look beyond the 15 acres and see how soundly and steadily the foundations of their prosperity were laid by the elder John, and how ably they were extended and built upon by the younger. The elder John, son of John Hall of Selby, Yorkshire, set up in business under the wing of his father's brother Robert, who had been in London long enough to establish himself firmly. In 1741 this Robert leased property, valued at £20 per annum, for a stable-yard in Hyde Park Road, a few doors east of Tyburn (i.e. Park) Lane, and eighteen months later took a moderately sized house close by. He retained both until his death in 1769. From 1758 Robert was in addition rated on stables, or stables and riding-house, valued at £40 a year, in Hamilton Street near by. These premises he sold in 1763 to his nephew John, who straightway leased an adjoining house valued at £24 per annum. This move was the beginning of a long connection between the two Hamilton Street properties and this branch of the Hall family—twenty-five years under the elder John and about twenty more under the younger. When Robert Hall died in 1769 his widow, Sarah, kept the house (but not the stable-yard) in Hyde Park Road until she died in 1773. The nephew John, his wife Harriott, and the four children they then had, inherited from both their well-disposed relatives. They received at least £750, some treasured pieces of table silver and furniture, pictures and a few rings of sentimental value. John was also eligible for reversions worth fully £500 and was his aunt Sarah's sole executor and residuary legatee.

The year after John Hall had taken over the responsibilities of stable-keeper, riding-master and householder in Hamilton Street, he widened the scope of his interests. In 1764 we find the first entry of his name in the Kensington Rate Books, for land at the Gravel Pits with a rateable value of £114 per annum leased from Richard Ladbroke. In 1766 John Hall was also rated on two small holdings valued at £22; and in 1771 on further property valued at £50, part being tithe. By 1777 the rateable value of the Ladbroke leasehold amounted to £276; the small holdings to £55; and the £50 property, now described as Gott's, rose to £125 and included '½ the Great Tythes'. In 1778 were added vicarial tithes worth £250 and glebe worth £25. In 1785 the vicarial tithes dropped out and John Hall leased a farm, late Witt's, valued at £238, on the Notting Hill edge of the Norlands area. In the last year of his life, 1788, the rateable value of his known Kensington

leaseholds totalled just short of £700 and, as we have seen, he had other possessions.

John Hall's will, signed on 1 May 1788, states him to be 'now of Kensington Gravel Pits'. Possibly ill-health had caused him to reside in the country, for he died before the year was out. All his assets in Hamilton Street, comprising the leases of his dwelling- and riding-houses and stables, furniture, horses, carriages, harness, saddles and effects, were left to his wife and his sons John and Robert 'as a joint stock to carry on the business thereof for their joint use and benefit share and share alike'. Suitable provision was also made for the younger children. The leases of the several farmlands and premises at Kensington Gravel Pits and elsewhere in the parish, and all that went with them, were to be sold within six months or otherwise disposed of at the discretion of the executors, namely his son John and a friend, Richard Toft of Stapledon Hall, Hornsey. The estate evidently took some time to settle: it was 1794 before the executors ceased to pay the rates and the name of the younger John Hall was entered in the books.

At 26 years of age the new head of the family quickly proved himself capable of consolidating and continuing what his great-uncle and his father had begun. Shrewdly alive to the advantages of being both landholder and stable-keeper, he carried on the Hamilton Street business and exercised wise discretion in regard to the Kensington leaseholds. Gott's property had a special attraction because of its owner's avowed intention to sell the freehold. In 1798, as has been noted above, John Hall offered £2000 for the fee-simple of the Talbot and the 13 acres on condition of a clear title, and obtained unfettered possession in 1806. In what concerned Kensington, this was a year of some importance in John's life. He purchased outright the freehold estate at the Gravel Pits; he continued to lease (and seemingly soon bought) '½ the Great Tythes'; and he also leased a Ladbroke property with the high rateable value of £400 per annum. This property was at the time described as 'late Worrall's' in Notting Hill, but was afterwards more often referred to as 'house and land, Norlands'. In the same year the rateable value of the original Ladbroke holding at the Gravel Pits rose from £276 to £500 and was for the first time entered against John's name in the Rate Books as 'house occupied by Col. Lowther, and farm'.

Even before John's ownership was legally secure, he seems to have made improvements on the 15 acres. The Talbot must have undergone some change since the days when John Loughton held the licence. By 1803 it had become a private dwelling-house of a type that enabled John to sub-let it to a member of the nobility. There, seeking the calm and quiet of a country retreat, we find the Lady Valentia as tenant, and she remained until the further and more drastic changes which preceded his death in 1816.

The Halls not only turned their horses out to grass and grew fodder on their Kensington lands, or otherwise cultivated or let them, but

they also used first one, and then another of the dwellings as a country house. When in 1788 the elder John called himself a resident of the Gravel Pits, he was probably occupying the house on the Ladbroke property there which he had leased since 1764 (and which seems to have been the one his son subsequently let furnished to Col. Lowther).

Despite prosperity and perhaps intermittent periods of country sojourn, the Halls kept the house by the stables in Hamilton Street as their headquarters until about 1808. Then came changes. Hamilton Street with its score or so of houses was superceded by Hamilton Place with residences for a few noble families; and the old livery stables apparently became 'The Mews'. The Halls were dislodged, but had not far to seek for a new and eminently suitable location.

In May 1808 Robert, Earl of Grosvenor, leased to John Hall for 96 years from Lady Day last passed five contiguous sites near Grosvenor Place, four of which faced north upon a 'new intended street . . . called or intended to be called Halkin Street'. The largest of these four sites widened out at the rear and afforded space for extensive stabling; it moreover abutted westwards on an outlying field in the occupation of Edmund Tattersall—a magnetic name in sporting and horse-dealing circles. Further, the four houses that were built forthwith fronting Halkin Street looked straight across partly open land to Tattersall's proper, to the famous Ring, the gardens, the main repository for horses, the betting rooms and the two rooms 'elegantly fitted up for the Jockey Club'.

John, Robert and Christopher, with their mother, quickly established themselves and the business in Halkin Street. Their brother Thomas, the builder and carpenter, who had taken a house in Chapel Street in 1807, had set up workshops at the back on ground touching part of the land John was then about to lease. So placed, he could join promptly and profitably in the building projects ahead. John paid the rates on two of the Halkin Street properties and let the other three. At the same time, the house on his major Ladbroke leasehold (late Worrall's) at Notting Hill, served as a country residence.

From the Kensington Rate Books and the Middlesex records of Land Tax Assessments one gains a fair idea of the enduring landlord-tenant connection between the Ladbroke and the Halls. Striking supplementary facts as to its scope are supplied by a schedule drawn up nearly five years after the death of John the younger and appended to a Private Act of Parliament of 1821, 'to enable James Weller Ladbroke . . . to grant Building Leases of Lands in Kensington, Paddington, Nottingbarns, and Westborne, in the County of Middlesex'. The lands comprised two houses with their appurtenances and practically 212 acres, all of which had been leased to John Hall until Michaelmas 1821 at a rent of £950 per annum.

John Hall died, an important and respected figure in Kensington, on 10 October 1816 and was buried at St Mary Abbot's. An 'elegant

marble tablet surmounted with an urn' was placed in the church to his memory. By his will, proved 11 November 1816, the bulk of his fortune passed to his relatives. The outstanding exception was Jane Cholerton, 'my housekeeper at Notting Hill', for whom both John and Christopher seem to have had a great regard. In addition to an immediate legacy of £500, the rent of the house in Halkin Street leased to the Hon. Charles Wyndham was to be paid to Jane for life, and after her death to her son, John Bolton Cholerton (born 1805). Meanwhile £150 a year, drawn from a leasehold estate in Down Street, was to be applied to his education and maintenance, the whole Down Street property to be his absolutely on reaching the age of 21. Elizabeth Ham of Gray's Inn Lane was to receive £50 for her care and attention to the boy.

In lieu of an earlier bequest of £8000, John left to his brother Robert 'my freehold estate at Kensington Gravel Pits which I have purchased of Sir Henry Gott', together with a legacy of £500, one-third of the household linen, half the stock of wines, spirits and other liquors, and his best saddle horse. Christopher, the youngest of the family, was named as residuary legatee, sole executor and trustee. In a codicil of 1809 John had revoked an annuity of £200 and left only a token legacy of £50 to his mother, since he was 'taking it as nearly certain that [she] will continue to reside where she now does at Notting Hill or Halkin Street with my brother and executor Christopher, on the same terms as she has done with me since my Father's death'.

In January 1817, less than ten weeks after the will was proved, Robert, perhaps to avoid the trouble of looking after real estate, entered into an agreement to hand over his inherited Gravel Pits freehold to Christopher, in return for a guaranteed annuity of £400 for life, secured on the principal Halkin Street property. From this indenture we learn that John had taken down the 'capital freehold messuage . . . anciently called the Talbot . . . heretofore in the occupation of Lady Valentia as tenant' and 'sometime before his death began to erect and build a brick messuage . . . on part of the . . . lands but died before finishing the same . . .'. Christopher continued with the building of this house and paid rates for a bailiff to live on the premises while the work was in progress. How far he was responsible for the garden is not known, but its size and careful, even elaborate, lay-out can be judged from Starling's map of 1822. The map, furthermore, makes it quite clear that the house and grounds, approximating to the site of the old Talbot, covered the southern half of what is now Pembridge Gardens.

The new house, which initially had a rateable value of £98, was finished in 1819, and at the beginning of 1820 the name of its first tenant appeared in the Rate Book. This was none other than Frederick Crace (1779-1859), Commissioner of Sewers, the well-known collector of London maps and topographical drawings. He lived in the Hall's house for about seven years, enjoying the good air

and pleasant situation. On a clear day, as he wrote appreciatively in a letter, he had a view across open country to Harrow-on-the-Hill. He also referred to the delightful garden, the meadow at the back and the turnpike in front. It is singularly appropriate that the garden so carefully depicted in 1822 should be the one in which this kind and genial *amateur* of London topography was then taking pleasure.

Before Crace had been four months in the new house, its owner died. Christopher Hall, aged 42, was buried at St Mary Abbot's on 27 April 1820. By his will, proved 19 July 1820, Jane Cholerton, who was still house-keeper at Notting Hill, received 'all the furniture, plate, linen, books, etc., in the house'. In addition, the income from £10,000 left in trust was to be hers, 'for her sole use . . . independent of any husband she may have'; and at her death, her son was to have the capital. Christopher bequeathed to his brother Robert £500 and 'all my freehold property at Kensington Gravel Pits'. Subject to several other legacies, the rest of the leasehold and personal property was to be sold, the proceeds invested in the 3% Reduced, and the income paid to the other brothers and sisters—Benjamin, Thomas and William Hall, Mrs Cuff and Mrs Lock. After the death of the last of them, all was to be shared equally by their surviving children. Mrs Cuff's eldest son Thomas, of Half-Moon Street, a land surveyor, was appointed an executor.

Christopher Hall's death accelerated the speed of changes to come. The Halkin Street leases were sold; and in Kensington the executors had by the end of 1820 ceased to pay rates on the Notting Hill (or Norlands) farm and on the property for so long linked with the name of Col. Lowther. The 15 acres, now for the second time inherited by the land-shy Robert, were retained by him, together with the £400 annuity for which he had bartered them three years previously.

When Frederick Crace moved from the Gravel Pits in 1827, the house on the Talbot site was entered for a year in the Rate Books as empty, and a Mr Howard was paying on certain land, late Crace, valued at £32 per annum. In 1828 a Charles Moore, who had other holdings in the vicinity, took this land, still valued at £32, and the house, reduced to £80. Early in 1829 Moore was rated as well on a cottage and livery stables (£20); and later in the year a Joseph Cook was rated on a £25 property next door to Moore's. The entries for 1830 were much the same but by 1833 some changes in tenancies had so perplexed the rate collectors, that Robert Hall's solicitor, Stephen Garrard, wrote to the Vestry Clerk giving full information as to the acreages and tenancies of all the rateable properties in Kensington for which his client was responsible. These consisted of the 15 acres, let to five tenants, and two further areas, one $9\frac{1}{4}$ and the other $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres, let to two tenants. The last two pieces of land formed the 12 acres which abutted on the north-west corner of the 15 acres and which have already been located as plots 49 and 52. Garrard's letter proves that Robert Hall owned these plots in 1833, but when or how he came by them is not certain.

Regarding the 15 acres, Garrard stated, among other matters, that the house, garden and home paddock had been leased by a Dr Holloway from Christmas 1832; that a cottage and stables were let to a Mr Davis; and that a Mr Cook, hairdresser, occupied a 'tenement fronting the road'. Mr. Cook's business was the first sign on the 15 acres of the small trading enterprises which were soon to characterize Notting Hill Gate in general. Dr Holloway was the Rev. Dr James Thomas Holloway, for a number of years incumbent of the fashionable Fitzroy Episcopal Chapel in London (now Maple) Street. He remained tenant of the Hall's house until mid-1845. By then it was becoming known as Elm Lodge and is so named in the curious *Diagrams of the Parish of St Mary Abbot's* (1847). Another of Robert's tenants was the architect (Sir) Thomas Allason, who leased 5 of the 15 acres.

Development during the 1830's and 1840's, though slight, foreshadowed the changes of the next two decades and the character the district would assume. Until Robert Hall's death, late in 1847, his and the neighbouring properties were for the most part fields, although by then Portobello Road, Pembridge Villas and Westbourne Grove had begun to be main arteries and some tributary streets were being cut across the fields. A few houses had been built at the northern ends of Pembridge Villas and Chepstow Place, as well as a little farther south along Pembridge Villas. Even Robert Hall was affected by the development craze: in May 1847 he leased two messuages and their sites on the north side of Chepstow Villas near Ledbury Road (north-west of the 15 acres on plot 49) to William Cullingford, a local builder who had probably erected the houses. As the Rate Books show, the rest of the Hall property was being let more or less as before.

When Robert Hall died on 14 December 1847, he left a twice-signed will. On 24 February 1846 Robert, then in his eighty-third year, had gone from his house in Old Bond Street to his solicitor's office to sign his will. When he 'had subscribed his name at the foot . . . Stephen Garrard remarked that he should by right have signed . . . a little lower down . . . at the same time pointing with his finger to the space . . . more immediately opposite the clause of attestation . . . whereupon the testator immediately began to write his name again . . . before the said Stephen Garrard could make further observation and having so begun to write he was allowed to complete such second signature . . .'. The dry factual statement calls up a lively picture of the aged, amiable Robert and the perhaps slightly testy but business-like Garrard, quick to prefer a future attestation to the immediate trouble of re-writing so long and complicated a document.

By the will, proved 11 January 1848, Robert's brother Benjamin was to have the 'freehold messuage, farmlands and hereditaments within the parish of St Mary Abbots Kensington'. Subject to a few minor bequests, the rest of Robert's estate was to be sold at the

discretion of the trustees, Benjamin Hall the younger and Stephen Garrard, and the income from the invested proceeds paid for life to the elder Benjamin and/or his wife Sarah. Should this Benjamin pre-decease the testator, the 15 acres were to fall into the residuary estate. In the event, Benjamin did not inherit: he died three weeks before Robert, and his widow Sarah, the sole surviving beneficiary of her generation, accordingly enjoyed the entire income until her death in 1852 at the age of 73. Thereafter the estate was, as Robert had directed, shared 'as one family, *per capita* and not *per stirpes*', by the children of his brothers and sisters, with certain named exceptions, perhaps the black sheep of the family. The next generation was to inherit '*per stirpes* and not *per capita*'.

For the full reference to the sources upon which this article is based, please see the annotated copy from the above London Topographical Record, in the Reference Library, Kensington Main Public Library, Hornton Street, W.8.

An eyesore for sore eyes

Excuse me if I've got my facts wrong, but I seem to remember that the late Sir John Betjeman was passionately opposed to the wanton destruction of Victorian buildings. I'm not sure, but I think Sir John also used to object to the monstrosities that were put up in their place.

But I must be wrong, if events in Kensington and Chelsea are anything to go by. A couple of years ago the council sneakily sent in a demolition team at dead of night to hurriedly tear down the lovely late-Victorian town hall moments before it could be included in a conservation area. In its place, a horrid office and shop development is planned, just the kind of thing Sir John would have despaired of.

For some inexplicable reason, the developers (the well-known aesthetes and merchant bankers, Guinness Peat), in seeking to give the plate-glass structure some respectability, are proposing to call their eyesore 'Betjeman Court'. According to the *Architect's Journal*, Lady Betjeman has been approached to give her permission for the use of her husband's name. Lady Betjeman has not agreed, probably because the name would have been the only attractive thing about the building.

Sunday Observer, February 10th, 1985.

HOLLAND PARK

(Reprint from the Society's 1968 Annual Report)

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

Sir,

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

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

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

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

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

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd.)

President



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Society considers that the future management and control of Holland Park should come under the Royal Parks or a London wide authority, such as that proposed for the Historic Buildings Section of the G.L.C. This would reflect the London wide status of the Park, as well as securing that the right level of expertise is always available to ensure a reasonable standard of day to day maintenance.

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

Statement of Accounts for the year 1984-85

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY
BALANCE SHEET
as at December 31st, 1984

1983		£	£
	Assets		
	Office Equipment at cost,		
34	less depreciation		29
	Balance at Bank		
2,866	Deposit Account	3,056	
1,228	Current Account	2,116	5,172
4,128			5,201
	Liabilities		
15	Subscriptions received in advance		
149	Creditors for Expenses	173	
164			173
£3,964	Net Assets	£5,028	
	Accumulated Fund		
2,979	Balance at January 1st, 1984 ..	3,030	
	Less: Deficiency from Income and		
51	Expenditure Account	(201)	
3,030			2,829
	Princess Alice Memorial Fund		
1,953	Balance at January 1st, 1984 ..	934	
(1,019)	Excess of Income over Expenditure ..	1,265	
934			2,199
	KEON HUGHES, Hon. Treasurer		
	G. CHRISTIANSEN, Hon. Secretary		
£3,964		£5,028	

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.

CROFT, MAY & CO.
Chartered Accountants.

33 Marloes Road
Kensington
London W8 6LG
January 23rd, 1985

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT for the year ended December 31st, 1984

1983		£	£
2,316	Subscriptions		1,854
	Other Receipts		
132	Profit on Sale		42
169	Bank Deposit Interest		182
518	Receipts for Visits		630
525	Advertising in Annual Report ..		580
500	Donations		1,000
4,160			4,288
	Expenditure		
719	Printing, Typing and Stationery ..	869	
923	Postage and Telephone	1,033	
1,100	Producing Annual Report	1,355	
149	Professional Charges	173	
29	Advertising	15	
183	Sundry Expenses	160	
412	Reception and Meeting Expenses ..	73	
531	Coach Visits, etc.	728	
16	Subscriptions and Donations	66	
—	Tree Planting	—	
41	Photographic Records	12	
6	Depreciation of Office Equipment ..	5	
4,109			4,489
£51	Deficiency		
	Transferred to Accumulated Fund ..		(£201)

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY
PRINCESS ALICE MEMORIAL FUND
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
for the year ended December 31st, 1984

<u>1983</u> £		£	£
Income			
2,116	Donations Received		605
1,733	Profit on Sale		1,270
8	Bank Deposit Interest		8
<u>3,857</u>			<u>1,883</u>
Expenditure			
2,686	Cost of Memorial Garden	460	
1,500	Railings		
35	Postage and Telephone	9	
602	Memorial Tablet	99	
53	Sundry Expenses	50	
<u>4,876</u>			<u>618</u>
Balance			
<u>(£1,019)</u>	Transferred to Balance Sheet		<u>£1,265</u>



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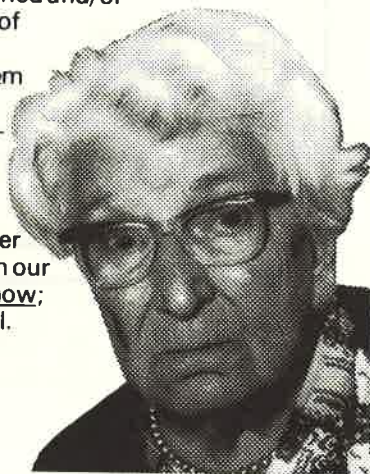
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138 Freston Road, W10	01-727 1257
74 Rochester Row, SW1	01-834 4624
9 Pond Street, NW3	01-794 3535
6 Woodhouse Road, N12	01-445 1651

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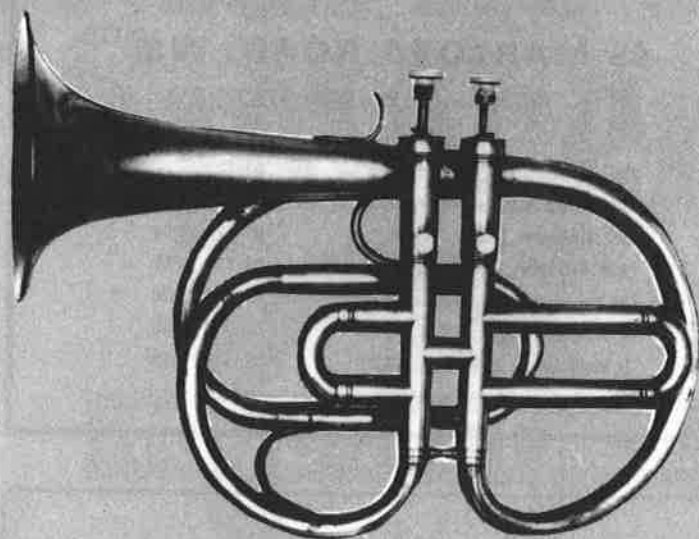
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The Times



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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

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(Full name)

of
(Address)

HEREBY COVENANT with THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY,
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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 £5
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

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- 1 The number of years for which the covenant is being made should be inserted in the space provided. This can be for any period from four years upwards or for life.
- 2 The date to be inserted as the beginning of the period should not be earlier than the date on which the covenant is executed.
- 3 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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