

THE
Kensington
Society



Annual Report
1999

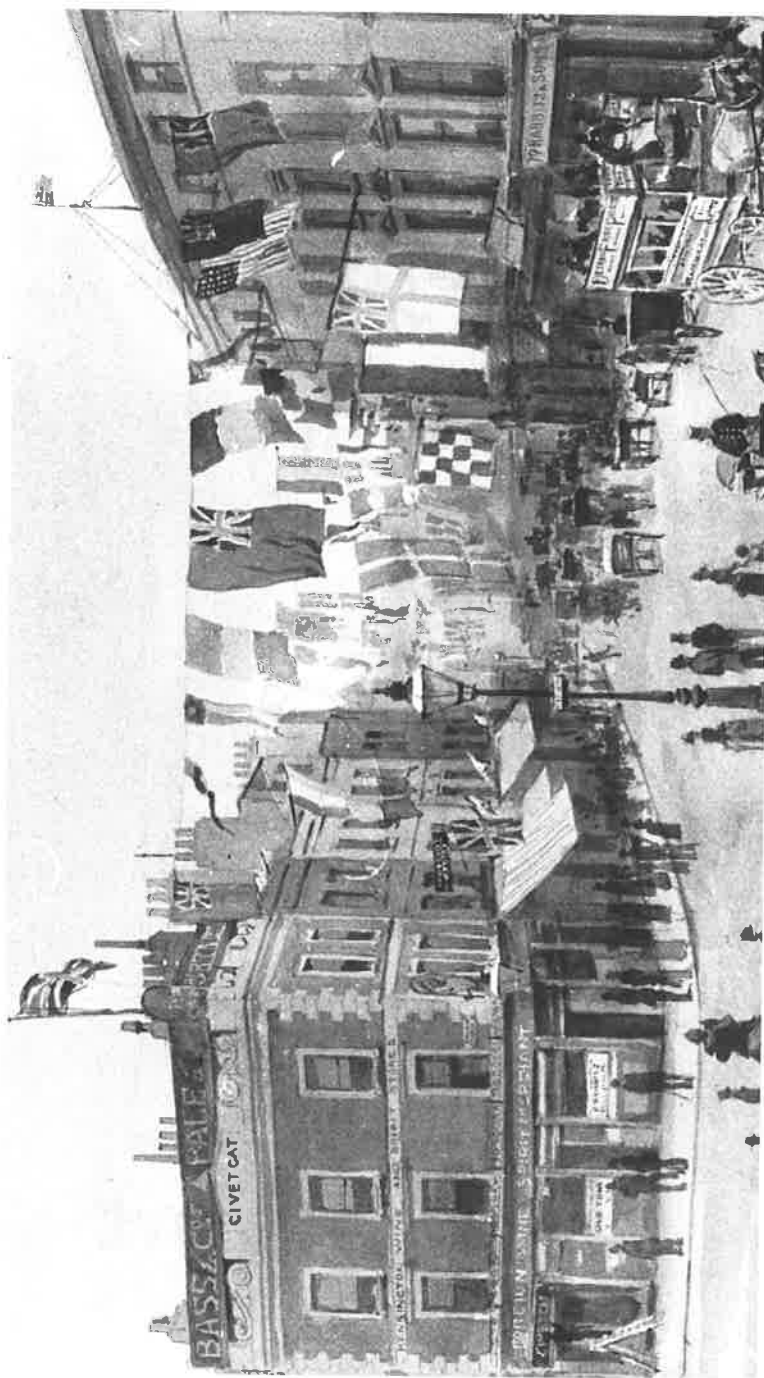
THE

Kensington Society

The objects of the Society are to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington for the public benefit by stimulating interest in its history and records, promoting good architecture and planning in its future development and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic or public interest.

Registered Charity No. 267778

Annual Report 1999



High Street - Jubilee Day, 1897.

The Kensington Society

PATRON

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

PRESIDENT

SIR JOHN DRUMMOND, C.B.E.

VICE-PRESIDENTS

**THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF SNOWDON, G.C.V.O.
MRS GAY CHRISTIANSEN**

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Barnabas Brunner	Sir Duncan Oppenheim
Philip English	Dr Stephen Pasmore
Arthur Farrand Radley, M.B.E.	George Pole
Peter de Vere Hunt	The Hon. Laura Ponsonby
Antony Jabez-Smith	Martin Starkie
Robert Martin	Tom Wilmot
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Sir Ronald Arculus, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O.	Robert Meadows
Michael Bach	Robert Milne-Tyte
Mrs Angela Darwin	Harry Morgan
Mrs Dianne Gabitass	Robin Price
Ms Susie Symes	Celia Rees-Jenkins O.B.E.
Mrs Susan Lockhart	Mrs Ethne Rudd
David Meggitt	Robert Vigars
Nigel Wilkins	

CHAIRMAN: Sir Ronald Arculus, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O.

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Robert Meadows

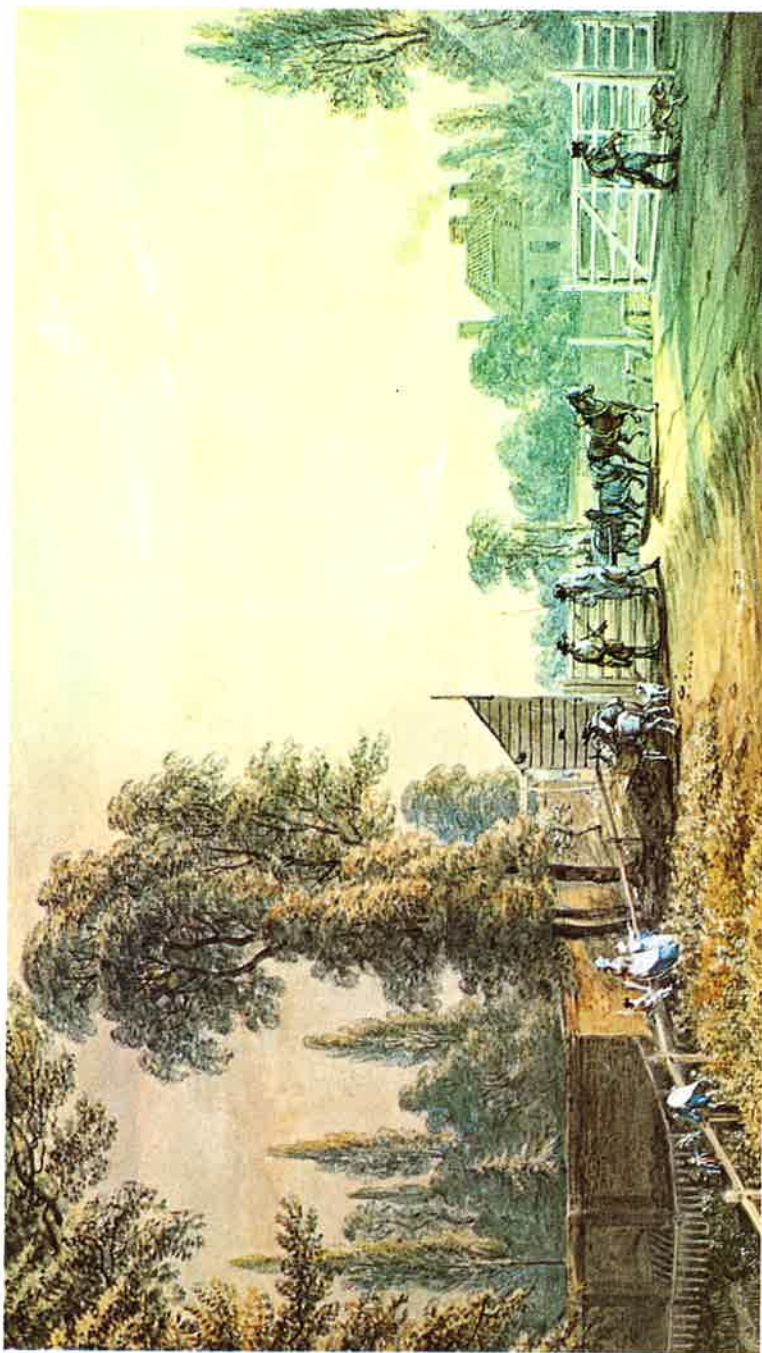
HON. SECRETARY: Mrs Ethne Rudd

HON. TREASURER: David Meggitt

VISITS SECRETARIES: Robin Price & Mrs D. Gabitass

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Mrs Angela Darwin

ANNUAL REPORT: Mrs Gay Christiansen



A view of Bayswater Turnpike - Paul Sandby English 1731-1809 from City of Hamilton Art Gallery, Victoria, Australia.

President's Foreword

IT is always intriguing to discover reminders of home when far away. I was recently in Australia, my other country, and for the first time visited the town of Hamilton in western Victoria. There in the Art Gallery, which has an impressive collection of English drawings and watercolours, was a small picture by Paul Sandby, called *A View of Bayswater Turnpike*. There is one small house on the north side of the road and what looks like a garden wall to the south. Judging by the clothes, it dates from the last quarter of the 18th century. Two hundred years ago there is not much evidence of Kensington, and yet we think of Australia as a 'new country'. I remember the surprise I felt when I discovered that, until well into the 19th century, there were gravel pits where the Czech Embassy now stands, close to the vanished Turnpike. Holland Park was indeed a park and Notting Vale open country. As late as 1830, great swathes of the Royal Borough were as empty as Victoria.

Over the intervening years we have become accustomed to living in the middle of a great metropolis, in one of many boroughs that make up the capital city. But what does the idea of London represent for most of us? Is it merely a geographical area or is it something more? Even the most vehement supporters of the abolition of the G.L.C. have come to recognise that somehow something has been lost. Now there is a chance to try a new version of city government. Quite a lot is still unclear about where responsibility will start or stop between the boroughs and the new Mayor's department. But at best it may give an opportunity for the overview of London's needs, which has been so lacking in recent years.

But will anyone bother to vote? We speak all the time of the virtues of democracy, yet more than one in four do not make the effort, even at a General Election, while fewer than one in four turn out for Local Elections. How many will bother for the Mayoral opportunity, especially given the inadequacy of the so far expressed candidates? In Australia voting is mandatory. Here, without that sanction, we must find a way to get people more involved, to recognise that participation does matter and can make a difference.

And that, of course, is as true for the Kensington Society as it is for the Royal Borough or London itself.

John Drummond

Annual General Meeting 1999

Four causes celebres confronted during the preceding year were outlined by Mr Robert Vigars, Chairman of the Kensington Society's Executive Committee, after the President, Sir John Drummond, had opened the 46th Annual General Meeting of the Society at the Convent, Kensington Square, on April 22nd, 1999. Mr Vigars, moving the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts, said that these four projects had been the proposed Princess Diana Memorial Garden in Kensington Gardens; the Liebeskind extension at the V & A Museum; the redevelopment of Holland House west wing, and plans for the Thames Waterworks site at Campden Hill.

The first of the four, the Memorial Garden, had been successfully opposed, but opposition to the second, the Liebeskind extension, had not succeeded. The Society, said Mr Vigars, had considered the proposed building to be contextually inappropriate, but the Council had given planning approval for it. The third project, at Holland House, had seen the original redevelopment plans considerably modified following observations by the Kensington Society and other interested organisations. Among matters now resolved was a decision to rebuild the cafe at Holland Park on the existing site. Finally there was the uncertainty about the Waterworks site on Campden Hill, but this, said Mr Vigars, remained unsettled and would be the subject of close scrutiny in the months ahead.

Mr Vigars also announced that after having served five years as Chairman of the Executive Committee he did not wish to be re-elected, although he would remain a member of the Executive Committee and continue his work with the Planning sub-committee. Sir Ronald Arculus, he reported, had declared himself willing to serve as Chairman for a two year period. The minutes of the 1998 AGM were then carried, and the Annual Report adopted. The suggestion of a vote of thanks to the Annual Report editor, Mrs Gay Christiansen, was supported with acclaim.

The Society's accounts for 1998 were formally approved, the Treasurer, Mr David Meggitt reporting the finances to be in a healthy state.

Sir John Drummond, who had earlier expressed his personal support for the proposed Liebeskind addition to the V & A, reminded the meeting that he had been President of the Kensington Society for 15 years and wondered whether there was any desire for change. None being exhibited, he was duly re-elected, as were the Vice Chairman, Lord Snowdon and Mrs Gay Christiansen. The Honorary Secretary (Mrs Rudd), the Honorary

Treasurer (Mr Meggitt) and ten members of the Executive Committee were also re-elected, en bloc. Three additional members, Mrs Gabitass, Mr Lanigan and Mrs Lockhart would again be co-opted.

Mr Robin Price, Visits Secretary of the Society, made an appeal for the loan of large drawing rooms, capable of seating 20 or 30 people, for the purpose of staging occasional lectures. Two such lectures were scheduled for the autumn of 1999 but requests for use of such facilities were unlikely to be made more than once a year to any individual. Mr Price also reported a proposed Millennium event in October 2000. This would take the form of a trip to the Isle of Wight, with an overnight stop at Farringford, formerly the home of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Various places of interest on the island would be visited.

In Other Business the Chairman reported that the Kensington Society was to mark the Millennium with the gift of a clock, to be sited on an outside wall of the Town Hall and be seen from Hornton Street. This project would be funded by a generous gift from an anonymous member of the Society.

The principal speaker on this occasion was Mr Simon Jervis, Director of Historic Buildings at the National Trust, the subject of his speech being entitled 'Houses or Museums? The National Trust Approach.' Describing the organisation's attitude to its properties Mr Jervis said that each was, in a sense, interrogated, in an attempt to draw out what was significant, what was essential, what was its 'spirit of place'. In rare cases this consisted of a single element but most were highly complex with many dimensions requiring investigation. The answer to the question 'Houses or Museums?' was that they were not the latter, in that they were not designed from the outset to preserve and display objects for study and interpretation, and yet their contents were preserved with the same care as if they were a museum collection, and the attention accorded to the building itself rendered it too a kind of museum specimen. There was added complexity, compared to most museums, in that objects in the charge of the National Trust were inextricably intermingled in domestic settings - paintings, sculptures, metalwork, textiles, furniture and much else - with no museum showcases to protect and segregate different classes of object. Furthermore, whilst some houses were very unmuseum-like others contained great galleries of paintings or sculpture which would not be out of place in any conventional museum.

Mr Jervis then proceeded to outline over a dozen categories into which different sorts of the National Trust's 200 or so houses might be placed. These categories included the House as a pure monument - Kedleston, for example; frozen as a museum - Snowhill; regarded as a shrine - Chartwell; as an art gallery - Petworth; as a palace - Waddesdon; as an activity centre - Sutton House, Hackney; as a picturesque monument - Chastleton, and as a ruin - Bodiam.

Was the National Trust responding to its houses, asked Mr Jervis, or was it imposing a 1990's view of what they should be? The Trust attempted the former, although unlikely entirely to avoid the latter, but by careful attention to what might be called the poetics of the place, by respecting that which was permanent in each one, there was the chance to preserve them as theatres of memory.

The speaker concluded with a quotation from John Ruskin concerning the buildings of past time, the opening words being: "They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us."

The Annual General Meeting will be held on April 12th, 2000, Ambassador Raymond Seitz will be the speaker. The meeting will be held at 23 Kensington Square, 6.30pm.

Chairman's Report

Your outgoing Chairman, Robert Vigars, handed over the running of the Society as a going, indeed a flourishing, concern. He had gathered into the Executive Committee people of various talents who between them divided up the tasks. Happily Mrs Gay Christiansen agreed to continue to produce this Annual Report, a distinguished publication as Kensington merits. Robert Vigars continues to lead on planning matters.

As the Princess Diana Memorial Affair clearly showed, sheer numbers do count, and though our membership is increasing slowly, we do need more.

Prospective members often ask - but what does the Society actually do? First, it helps residents to know more about the rich tapestry of the Kensington fabric. Secondly, it tries to keep it as civilised and livable as possible by resisting bad development and encouraging good. Thirdly, it offers to members a varied programme of visits and events in return for their support. Only in exceptional cases does it ask them to show solidarity in standing up for our common interests. In all this it works closely with active local residents' associations, and with neighbouring amenity societies like our own; keeps in close touch with the Council over developments that affect us; participates in discussions about wider issues; and lobbies Ministers and Members of Parliament as necessary. We shall soon have to take account of changes resulting from the appointment of a Mayor of London, and of a new Member of Parliament.

More detail can be found in the Secretary's report, the Planning report, those from local associations, and elsewhere in these pages. Enjoy this Report, keep it for reference, and commend your Society to friends and neighbours.

Sir Ronald Arculus

The Baroness Hanham of Kensington

The Life Peerage conferred on Mrs Iain Hanham in June is a fitting tribute to a lifetime devoted to public service. Joan Hanham was elected a councillor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 1970 at the age of 31, and has been leader of the Tory-controlled Council since 1989, following the resignation, and untimely death soon after, of Nicholas Freeman. Nicholas Freeman was always going to be a hard act to follow, and it says a great deal about Joan Hanham's character that the transition was achieved without any noticeable diminution in the high standards set for the Council by her legendary predecessor. Her experience of local government was already well-established by the time she was appointed to the leadership, having served at various times as Mayor of the Royal Borough, as the Tory majority's Chief Whip, and chairman of several of the Borough's key committees, including Policy and Resources, Health and Housing, Town Planning, Social Services, the Earl's Court Study Group. In addition to her leadership duties, Mrs Hanham held an impressive range of public appointments as a City of London magistrate, as a non-executive director of the Chelsea and Westminster Health Trust, as a member of the Local Government Association's Policy & Strategy committee, its Urban Commission, Resources Committee, Community Safety Panel and borough leaders' committee, as well as serving as a member of the EC Committee of the Regions, a Freeman of the City of London, as a Trustee of the Commonwealth Institute and the Sir John Cass Foundation, as a member of the Children's Hospital Trust at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, and as a director of London First. Although her leadership of the Council co-incided with a particularly turbulent phase in the Borough's history, Joan Hanham did much to encourage and support the involvement of local residents' associations and amenity groups in the work of the Council. That she has managed to cram in so much in her 30 years of public service, while at the same time fulfilling her duties as a mother and wife - Joan and her medical consultant husband Iain have a grown up son and daughter - is further testimony to Joan Hanham's outstanding qualities. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that at the time of going to press, the name of Baroness Hanham of Kensington has been added to the list of candidates who will be vying for the Tory nomination in next May's elections to choose the Mayor of London.

Harry Morgan.

The High Courts of Kensington

As the year ends, the long-running saga of Thames Water plans for its Campden Hill site may be nearing a final denouement. The High Court has been asked to give the Royal Borough leave to appeal for the inspector's decision in October - to allow the application with conditions - to be quashed.

This time last year the Thames Water plans were out for public consultation. By a majority of an estimated ten to one if not more, letters from residents gave the plans a firm thumbs-down. The minority voting in favour appeared to be largely from other areas of London whose support probably indicated membership of the tennis club. The total opposition of this Association and other nearby residents' groups was forcibly argued. Most prominently, the Campden Hill Action Group was highly active with funds it raised among its members funding legal and other professional advice - and by midsummer this Association raised around £8,000 to contribute to the Action Group's funds.

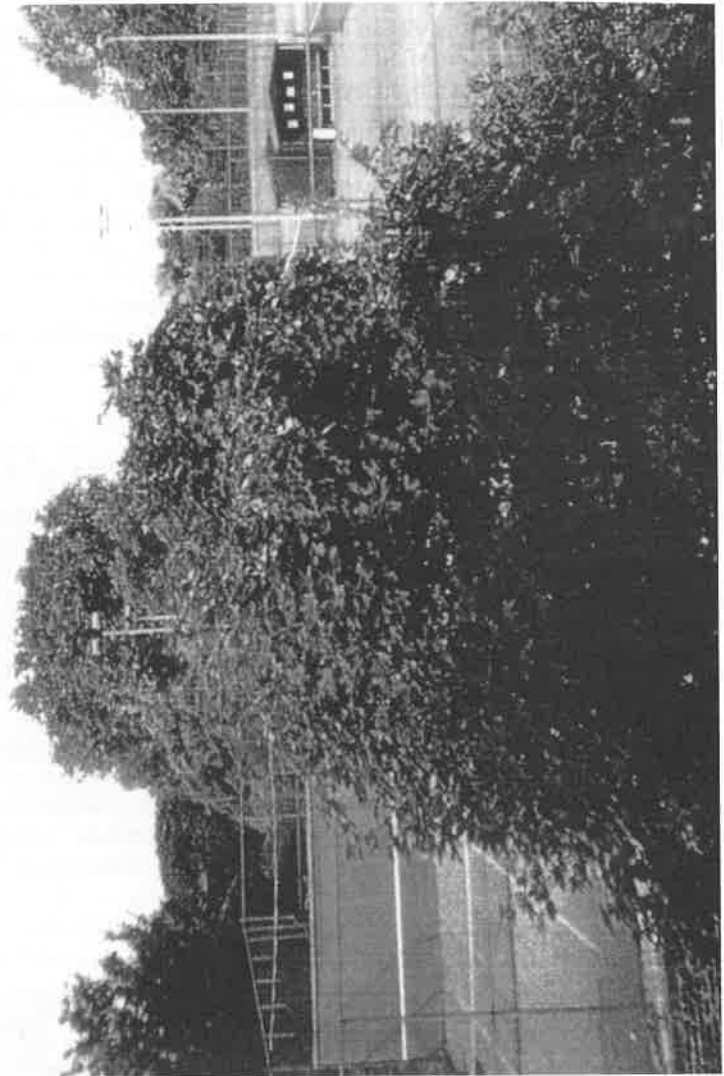
The opposition of the Kensington Society was particularly welcome.

After six months of, it seemed, largely futile discussions between Council officials and Thames Water representatives, the issue finally reached the Council's Planning Services Committee on June 8th. A few days earlier, Council officials agreed that their recommendation to the Committee would be to reject Thames Water's application and this was duly adopted without a single member of the Committee offering support for the scheme.

A month or so later, the parties reassembled at the Town Hall for the inspector's inquiry, QCs appeared for the Council and Thames Water. Interested third parties who spoke included Councillors Freeman and Buckmaster (the latter with a particular interest as a governor of Holland Park School seeking greater open sports area), and representatives of CHRA, the local Action Group, St Georges Church and the Kensington Society. In the late days of a hot July and on balance, it seemed to many observers that enough had been done to win the argument.

So the inspector's decision letter in October was a bombshell. He allowed the appeal against the Council's refusal of planning permission setting relatively easy conditions regarding social housing and environmental issues. To the lay reader, the decision letter did seem remarkably dismissive of a number of arguments raised at the inquiry in relation to the key issues of the loss of open space and local amenity.

And so it proved - or will if the arguments of David Holgate QC, on behalf of the Royal Borough prevail. Put very simply, in



Site for Thames Water Plan for Campden Hill.

calculating the loss of open space involved, the inspector ruled that as the tennis courts are some four metres high above normal ground level the land on which they sit cannot be regarded as open space and can be ignored. Using this logic, the loss of open space from the scheme is minimal.

A decision - from the High Court in the Strand - is expected in the early months of 2000.

Anthony Land

Kensington Society News

Sir John Drummond C.B.E. has been President of the Society since 1985, he followed his friend Alec Clifton-Taylor.

He joined the BBC in 1958 and worked on Radio production and later as an Assistant in the Paris Office. In 1962 he produced, Music and Arts Department, Television, becoming Assistant Head under Humphrey Burton.

Some programmes produced:

Tolrelier Master Classes 1964;

Leeds Piano Competition 1966 (first prize, Prague Festival 1967);

Diaghilev 1967;

Kathleen Ferrier 1968;

Music Now 1969;

Spirit of the Age 1975;

The Lively Arts 1976-8 (including John Julius Norwich on 'Sense of Place').

In 1978 he resigned from the BBC;

1978-83 Director, Edinburgh Arts Festival;

1985 Re-joined BBC;

1985-91 Controller of Music and (1987-91) Controller Radio 3;

1992-95 Director of BBC Proms.

What a busy life and how fortunate the Society has been to have him as its President for so many years.

Sir John wishes to retire, but has agreed to continue until the 2001 Annual General Meeting when Sir Ronal Arculus, Chairman at present of the Executive Committee has been elected to follow Sir John Drummond as President.

Will members please note that the Annual General Meeting for 2000 will be held on April 12th at 23 Kensington Square at 6.30pm.



H.R.H. Princess Alice, planting a tree in Kensington Square Garden.

Acknowledgements

Mr Vigars, Mr Meadows and Mr Bach have attended and reported on planning applications before the Borough Council's Planning Committee. We are, as usual, indebted to Tony Jabez-Smith and to Mr Farrand Radley, M.B.E. for reading the proof copies of this report. I am grateful to Miss Tracey Rust, Planning Officer in the Planning Department, Tracey is always most helpful and will take a lot of trouble to find answers to our queries. We are grateful to our advertisers, without their help this Report could not be printed. Miss Barbara Thomson has helped with much typing and, of course, we are grateful to John Bickel for his work on the garden.

Princess Alice Memorial Garden

In 1983 H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, K.G., G.C.V.O. unveiled the commemorative plaque on the Garden in memory of H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, Patron of the Society for many years. She was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria.

An appeal was launched by the Society shortly after Her Royal Highness died, contributions came from all over the world, where she was known and loved particularly from Canada and South Africa. A decorative book was published with the names of the subscribers.

Robert Martin, a member of the Society's Council, and in 1982 Architect and Planning Director to the Borough Council, managed to persuade Nicholas Freeman, the Leader of the Borough Council to allow Mrs Christiansen to make the redundant water way on the forecourt of the Town Hall into a Princess Alice Memorial Garden. John Bickel, a member of the Society, has been largely responsible for the management of the Gardens since Mrs Christiansen's illness this year.

Unfortunately, the Town Hall forecourt is due for refurbishment, owing to water in raining conditions seeping onto the cars in the basement garage. The whole forecourt is being refurbished and the work will start this Spring and will result in all the plants being removed from the Garden in the Autumn. Mr Alan Taylor, the Chief Executive and Town Clerk has been most helpful in keeping the Garden personal and informal. The plants in the Garden will be removed by a recommended firm, stored and replanted after the work is completed on Town Hall forecourt.

The Princess Alice Memorial Fund is still managed by Mrs Christiansen, who hopes that members will visit the Garden this Spring and decide that it is worth a small donation.

Kensington Housing Trust

Few people know Kensington better, and the Kensington Housing Trust (KHT) in particular, than lifelong Kensington resident Mrs Belinda Norman-Butler. As an active KHT committee member from 1963 and Honorary President since 1993 Mrs Norman-Butler believes in local solutions to meet local needs.

KHT was set up in 1926 by local people to provide homes for the most vulnerable people in the Royal Borough of Kensington (The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea came later). This was with the knowledge that good housing is a first step to the attainment of good health and education, leading to greater opportunities for its tenants.

"This remains our approach today" says KHT's Chairman, Peter Scott QC who was appointed last year and who has also been a Kensington resident for many years. "While good affordable housing is our top priority, we are acutely aware of the extra support needed by our many vulnerable tenants."

KHT owns and manages almost 2,400 homes for families, the elderly, single people and people with special needs in West London. 96 percent of these homes are in North Kensington and many are in the Golborne Ward - an area which is amongst the five percent most deprived wards in London when measured by the 1998 Index of Local Deprivation. This is a far cry from most people's idea of Kensington!

With a death rate in the ward which is 27 percent above the national average there are some other startling statistics. It has twice the density of population as the inner London average; more than twice as many children live in households without earners compared with the rest of the borough - nearly half of children qualify for free school meals. Unemployment is 50 percent higher than the inner London average and the average weekly earnings for those in employment are £288 per week compared with the Greater London average of £480.

Over half of KHT residents are over 65 and many are physically disabled in some way. "People often think of those in social housing as living at the expense of the rest of us. It is an understandable reaction, but a misjudged one given the needs of the people we look after", says Peter Scott.

Currently, KHT is playing a major role in the Royal Borough's successful bid which secured Single Regeneration Budget funding for the Golborne ward. The bid focuses on community safety and health issues, and KHT has plans to extend its home visiting service for older people and expand the Youth Worker Project on the Wornington Green Estate which is at the northern end of the Portobello Road.

Projects for the elderly, disabled, disadvantaged young people, and those in desperate need depend almost entirely on KHT's fundraising activities. During the early years, fundraising was central to KHT. Lord Balfour of Burleigh, a founder member of both KHT and the National Federation of Housing Associations, was a leading light, ably abetted by Miss Rachel Alexander who organised fundraising events in her delightful Aubrey House.

Forthcoming fundraising events include an art sale at the Cromwell Hospital, SW5 on Thursday, February 17th and a concert by the Portobello Orchestra at St Peter's Church, London W11 on Saturday, March 18th. KHT is also half way through the Millennium Capital Appeal which aims to raise £500,000 to finish vital security and environmental work on the Wornington Green Estate.

Another of KHT's main areas of focus locally is in the provision of homes for workers in essential services including nurses, junior doctors, teachers, fire fighters, care workers and the police. KHT currently provides homes to more than 1,300 of these key workers. A recent report, *Closing Doors*, by the London Housing Federation highlighted the severe shortage of affordable housing for the capital's key workers. Many of these workers simply cannot afford to live where they work and are being forced to travel long distances or leave their professions altogether. This is a particularly difficult problem in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea where market rents are some of the highest in London. Providing affordable homes makes recruitment easier and helps to build a strong community.

Both aspects of KHT's work are rooted in its overall mission to create thriving communities and foster sustainable regeneration.

If you would like to support KHT or would like more information on our work please contact Sue Payne on 0181-743 3177.

Environmental Awards

1999

The annual scheme of Environmental Awards is one way in which the Borough Council tries to encourage a high standard of design in the built environment in this Borough.

In 1999 there were fewer entries than usual for the Awards. This was disappointing, for the assessors considered that some recent work could have been nominated but, for some reason, was not. Perhaps the scheme needs more publicity to encourage individuals and amenity societies as well as architects to nominate work each year.

As many as six Awards can be made each year for various categories of building work. However, this year, due to fewer entries, no Awards were made in the 'Commercial' and 'New Building' categories.

The assessors spent a day visiting the various nominated places, before discussing and making their recommendations. This is a good way of getting an overview of the Borough, with its very varied character, from Harrow Road in the north to the river in the south. This year four Awards were made in the north of the Borough - evidence of the way this area has become more popular, prosperous and some would say, more 'trendy'.

Increasing emphasis is put on convenient access for the disabled, to and within buildings. An Award in this category was made to the Ion Bar & Restaurant which is built below the flyover in Ladbroke Grove. This building was also Commended for the way it has improved the environment in what used to be a dreary location.

Some time ago the Tabernacle, a former chapel in Talbot Road, was converted into a community centre. Recently it has been restored and upgraded for multi-purpose community use, to a very high standard. The assessors were very impressed and felt that this well deserved an Award for Restoration and Conversion.

An Award for Restoration and Conversion to Commercial use was given to the Paul Smith building at the corner of Kensington Road and Westbourne Grove. This 'shop in a house' building had been very carefully restored and adapted to its new use. The forecourt relates well to Kensington Park Road and the shopfront, after initial design problems, is an acceptable addition to the shops in Westbourne Grove.

The Award for General Environmental Improvements was made to Emslie Horniman Pleasance. This is a lesser-known public open space off Kensal Road, in the extreme north of the Borough. This started as a gift of land in 1911, which was laid out as a public garden. This has been restored and extended and developed as a multi-purpose public open space. Some aspects of the design were thought to be controversial, but the Award was well justified.

Blandel Bridge House, Sloane Square was Commended for its immaculate restoration, including some discreet shop fronts. The Ask Pizza restaurant, Kings Road, was also Commended. It has been converted from former bank premises but retains the integrity of the whole building, and its advertising is restrained. Shopfronts are an important element in the street scene and it would be good if more examples were worthy of nomination.

The Environmental Award Scheme is most valuable in its aims, and it is hoped that next year there may be many more suitable candidates nominated for the Annual Awards.

Robert Meadows

Planning and Conservation in 1999

The Society's Planning Sub-Committee continued to meet monthly at the Town Hall to scrutinise current planning applications and to lodge objections where appropriate. The Society also lodged objections and comments on the proposed amendments to the Unitary Development Plan, but no major change of policy is proposed in the amendments. The more important applications and other items were as follows:

Earls Terrace: the developer's application to make this a private road failed on appeal.

Holland House: the Council's proposal for partial rebuilding failed to obtain a Lottery Grant and has been abandoned.

Kensington High Street Study: improvements to pedestrian crossings and side road junctions are currently out to public consultation.

Campden Hill Tennis Club and Waterworks: in response to strong objections, the Council refused the application for redevelopment, but disappointingly this was allowed on appeal. The only comforting part of the appeal decision was a requirement that the new garden square and all access roads should be open to the public and not gated.

Forecourt Parking: a number of applications were again successfully opposed.

Brompton Cemetery: following public consultation a Conservation Area Plan Statement was approved and published by the Council.

Aubrey House: a scheme for restrictions and minor alterations was considered satisfactory and approved.

Night Flying at Heathrow: after consultation the Government fixed the winter season noise quota for 1999/2000 and onwards at a level slightly below the actual usage in 1998/9.

Huntingdon House, Cromwell Road: a scheme for redevelopment which would have resulted in the facade only remaining freestanding with a completely new building behind a void was strongly opposed. The Council's decision is awaited.

Campbell Court, Queens Gate Gardens: a proposal for car parking on a strip of land at the rear was successfully opposed but is now the subject of appeal.

Robert Vigers

Obituaries

It is with sadness that we report the death of the following members Sir Hugh Casson CH, KCVO, died on August 15th, Dr Jill Allibone, Dame Gillian Brown, Mrs A. Pott, R. L. Ward Esq., H. C. Gilbert Esq., Lady Forbes, Miss Mavis Walker, Mrs Anthony Mallinson.

Alan Clark MP

Although the untimely death last September of Alan Clark allowed him a mere two years as Conservative MP for Kensington and Chelsea, he proved in that short period a valuable supporter of the interests of his Kensington constituents through his shrewd advice and assistance during the controversy over proposals for a Princess Diana Memorial Garden in Kensington Gardens. Initially his attitude on this issue had been one of cautious compromise, a fact which, to his concern, led to newspaper reports that he welcomed the concept in outline. His numerous reservations concerning detailed implementation of the project, he complained at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Kensington Society, had failed to find reflection in the Press. As he explained at that time, his total opposition at the outset would have been the very worst basis on which to conduct negotiations, and, he advised, an unyielding stance by the Society would also be unwise.

The fact that the Society's position was not obdurately negative was stressed by the Chairman and is likely to have encouraged Mr Clark to initiate, on behalf of all those in Kensington who objected to the proposal, a meeting with Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary. This meeting, attended among others by the Chairman and Honorary Secretary of the Kensington Society, was preceded by a strategy session chaired by Mr Clark at the House of Commons. The ensuing encounter with Mr Smith proved useful to both sides, the information imparted to the Minister providing him with a clear picture of the well-founded reservations held by the Kensington representatives. He appeared to appreciate their position, and there can be little doubt that the meeting contributed materially to the Memorial Committee's decision to abandon the Kensington Gardens proposal.

The Kensington Society's amicable relationship with its local MP is likely to have been enhanced by the fact the Honorary Secretary and her husband were old friends of Mr and Mrs Clark, a friendship existing since student days at Oxford University.

R.M.T.

Lady Forbes

When I first met Jan Forbes, her marriage to the son of the Bishop of Willesden had just broken up and she was looking after their only daughter, Sarah, who was a beautiful little girl of three with ash blonde hair. My own daughter was three too and she and Sarah have remained close friends.

Jan was teaching games and gym at a girl's school at that time and then moved onto being a Games Inspector for London schools. Then she met Hugh Forbes who was a barrister who then became a High Court Judge. With Hugh she had a happy married life for nearly 16 years until he died suddenly.

Jan then started working for the Kensington District Nurses Trust and at the same time enrolled in Birkbeck College to do several degree courses.

Jan was a wonderfully straight forward person, frank and honest with herself and her friends. She had great energy and enthusiasm for all she did. We shall all miss her enormously.

E. Rudd

Sir Hugh Casson CH, KCVO

Sir Hugh Casson was a member of the Society in 1953. He died August 15th, 1999 aged 89. Sir Hugh gave many lectures and was a tremendous help when the Society was started in 1953.

Hugh Casson was one of those gifted men who could have made a mark in any of several professions. He chose architecture and put much of himself into it. Yet he could have made a successful career in the theatre, literature, journalism or teaching and did indeed practise the last two with distinction.

Miss Mavis Walker

Miss Mavis Walker had been a member of the Society for many years. She was born in 1913 and attended Channing School for Girls in Hampstead and then the Central School of Speech and Drama, where she gained a teaching diploma. Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music (LRAM), Mavis made her theatre debut in 1935 at the Malvern Festival which was run by Sir Barry Jackson. He invited her to join him at the Birmingham Rep where she played from 1936-38. During the war she played with ENSA in France (*Night Must Fall*, 1939) and England, and with CEMA in Germany in 1945 (*The Linden Tree*) after peace was declared.

Mavis went on tour with H.M. Tennant in *Black Chiffon*, *Present Laughter*, *Waters of the Moon* and in the 1950s played Dame Peggy Ashcroft's part in the *Chalk Garden*, having played in the original London production.

Mavis was appointed an examiner in speech and drama, and English as a second language, for Trinity College of Music, under the auspices of the British Council, and proceeded to travel the world examining candidates from Spain to Japan. She did this for 16 years and was made an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College.

Mavis compiled and performed several small shows: *These Our Actors* at the Orangery, Holland Park; *To Celebrate a Defeat*, to mark the bicentenary of the American War of Independence, which she took on a tour of National Trust properties including Washington Old Hall, Northumberland, and again at the Orangery: *The Bed and its Trappings*, an entertainment, which she performed for the Georgian Society (both English and Irish) and Nadfas (the National Association for Fine Arts); and an adaptation of Isabella Bird's travel memoir *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, which was read by Peggy Ashcroft on radio.

Mavis spent 10 years as Sir John Geilgud's personal assistant whenever he was filming on location, and again travelled much of the world. Among her later television appearances were an adaptation of Molly Keane's novel *Time after Time* and Herman Wouk's *War and Remembrance*.

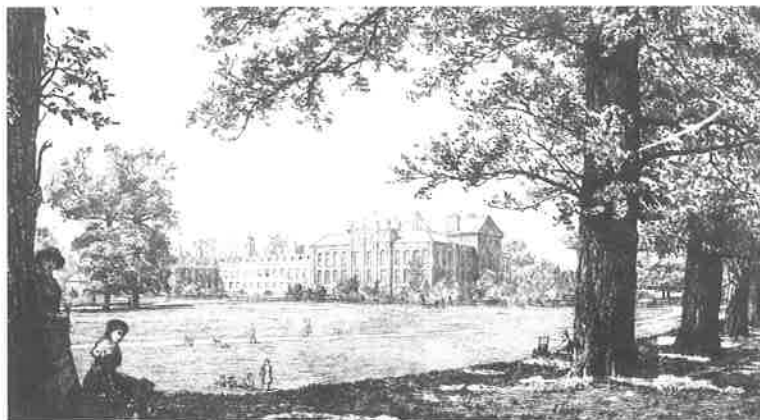
She was a great friend of the painter Flory Mackey, who helped to start the Kensington Society.

Michael Walker

Mr Hugh Gilbert

We regret to report that Mr Gilbert died on April 26th 1968, he had lived a very busy life. He was educated at Glasgow University before and after Military Service and had lived in Kensington from 1962. After retirement he was Chairman of Kensington Crime Prevention and Chairman of Wynnstay Gardens during the time the flats changed from being rented to being owned by residents.

B. G. Gilbert



Kensington Place 1887.



Holland House Library 1886

Holland House

The future of Holland House has been under consideration by the Council for over two years. The Council engaged consultant architects, Fielden and Mawson, to solicit ideas and views. To date the schemes have ranged from a full Jacobean restoration costing an estimated £4.5 million to a modern structure housing and a new café in the region of £2.5 million.

English Heritage are keen to see Holland House rescued from further decay and built in a sympathetic manner.

The application for Lottery Funding was turned down for the following reasons:

1. "The main subject of the application, the new building for visitors facilities, is a low priority for Heritage Lottery Fund."
2. "The application fails to demonstrate that the project is financially viable."

I would like to refer members to the 1953 happenings (page 22). The Society hopes that a solution can be found.

1953

December

To: The Editor of The Times

Sir,

Members of the Kensington Society are greatly distressed at the likelihood of losing one of London's major historical monuments, Holland House. The Leader of the London County Council has stated in his letter to you that the East Wing of Holland House can be saved, but due to the cost of repair and the difficulty of finding a use for it, it is to be demolished with the rest of the House. Members of the Society have recently visited the site with an officer of the London County Council and we understand that the demolition would be completed by May 1st. We have now asked the Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Committee of the London County Council to receive a deputation to discuss the future of the East Wing. We feel the demolition of this Wing should be delayed so that further time may be given for the consideration of possible uses to which it might be put.

Yours faithfully

G. Christiansen

1954

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL **THE COUNTY HALL, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, S.E.1**

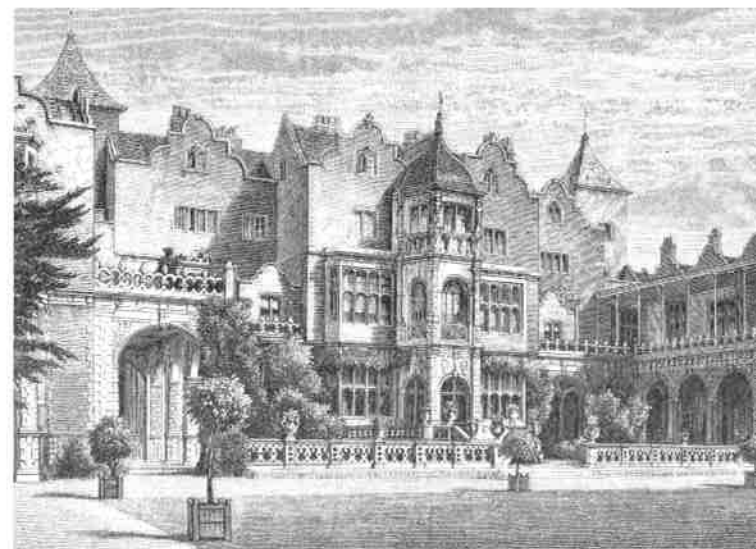
4th January

Dear Madam,

With reference to the recent telephone conversation, I am writing to confirm that the Chairman of the Town Planning Committee will be prepared to receive a deputation from your Society on Thursday, January 7th, at 3.00 p.m. in Room 186, County Hall.

Yours faithfully

Howard Roberts
Clerk of the Council



Holland House, South Side.

Holland House — an unnecessary loss

Future generations seeing the Holland Park Youth Hostel in the old East Wing of Holland House may wonder what happened to the remainder of this old house. A myth has arisen that its loss was inevitable owing to the bomb damage in 1940. The truth is very different and a sad reflection on the attitudes of the London County Council.

Holland House, the family home of Lord Ilchester was a Jacobean red-brick house with a central block, flanked by East and West Wings. In 1940 the centre was hit by incendiary bombs, damaging the roof and interior and breaking some of the windows, but the wings escaped all but superficial damage.

After the war, Lord Ilchester sold the house and grounds to the London County Council on the understanding that the place would become a public park. The L.C.C. then had the problem of deciding on the future of Holland House. Rumours spread round Kensington that plans for demolition were being made and I tackled the Leader of the L.C.C. about them, saying that I felt it would be a pity for London to lose such a historic and interesting place. Sir Isaac Hayward, the L.C.C. Leader, took a different view saying "Holland House should go, it is a relic of an outdated aristocracy and anyway, it would cost £25,000 to restore."

That evening I visited Holland House, it was a melancholy

sight, surrounded by barbed wire and demolition workers had already started work on the centre block. But it was still possible to walk through the central doorway into the large entrance hall and to see that the staircase appeared to be intact. Both wings also looked intact with no signs of broken glass.

From then, it became a battle of wills between the Kensington Society and the L.C.C. - the Society pleading for delay in demolition and seeking new uses for what remained of the house. Finally the Youth Hostels Association agreed to take the East Wing, but they needed more space, for which the old house would have been ideal, but by then the fine old rooms had been demolished and new additions were built.

But it was not just an ordinary Jacobean house. In it, Addison died in 1719 and it was the early home of the wittiest Member of Parliament of the 18th century - Charles James Fox. A Victorian lover of Holland House - Princess Marie Liechtenstein, on whose 1873 history of the house I shall draw copiously - describes how Fox returned shortly before his death to walk over all the grounds 'looking tenderly at each spot, as if he wishes to carry through the gates of death, the impressions gained on his soul in his childhood'. The house's greatest period was 1800-1840, when Lord and Lady Holland made it perhaps the greatest salon ever known in England and hardly a distinguished man in politics, science or literature was not a guest there. Lady Holland was an imperious hostess, but several of her guests knew how to handle her; when she said to Sydney Smith "Sydney, ring the bell" he replied "Oh yes and shall I sweep the room?" Her dining-table was generally crowded and when she told one guest, "Luttrell, make room" he answered "It must certainly be made, for it does not exist."

The East Wing, now part of the Youth Hostel, although architecturally interesting, contained the least important interiors, much of it being servants quarters. The grand rooms were in the centre and the West Wing. The decorations were a skilful mixture of old and new, when Lord Holland modernised the house around 1800, he studiously preserved the old features. The ground floor of the central block contained a grand entrance hall with a carved wooden staircase and outside a portico, used in olden times for sedan chairs. Typical decorations were Venetian looking glasses and Genoese silk brocade wall hangings. On the first floor was the grandest room of the house - the Gilt Room, used as a ballroom and containing 17th-century frescoes restored by G. F. Watts.

But it was the West Wing, which in many ways was the most interesting in the house. The room in which Addison died became a dining room, straddling the central and western block. Addison had married the Earl of Holland's mother, a far from happy alliance, which provoked the comment that 'Holland, although a large house, could not contain Mr Addison, the Countess of

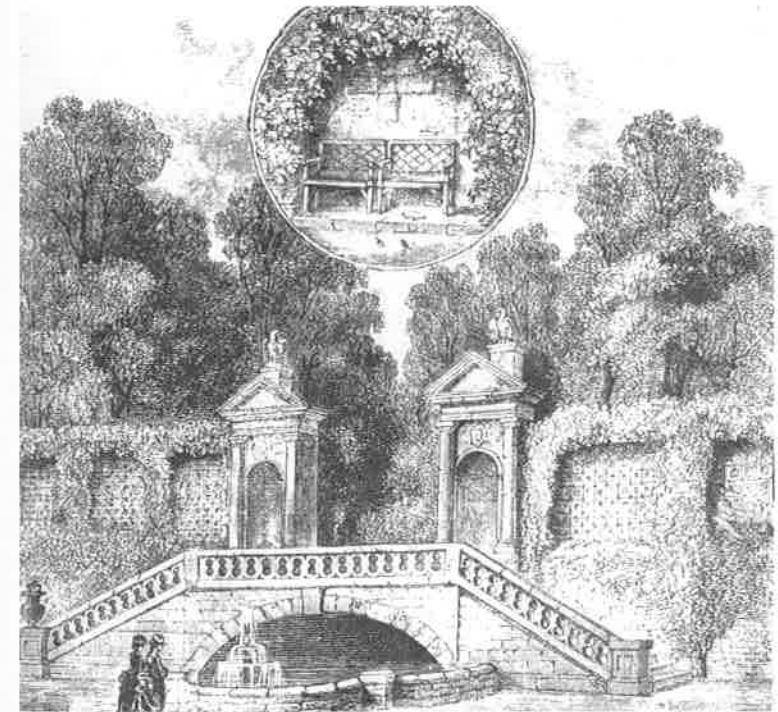
Warwick and one guest, Peace'. Not surprisingly Addison was described as drowning dull care by pacing the table with a bottle of port at one end and a bottle of sherry at the other.

The Library occupied the entire first floor of the West Wing and for many, was the finest room in the house, largely for its historical associations. Macaulay immortalised it, writing 'With peculiar fondness, they will recall that venerable chamber, in which all the antique gravity of a college library was so singularly blended with all that female grace and with could devise to embellish a drawing-room. ... They will recollect how many men who guided the politics of Europe ... were there mixed with all that was loveliest and gayest in the society of the most splendid of capitals'.

Tragic though the loss of Holland House was, nevertheless there was one compensation. For it was the sense of outrage felt by Kensingtonians, which gave momentum to the activities of the newly formed Kensington Society. Without the Society's efforts, the East Wing would have been destroyed and passers by would have lost the opportunity of seeing this relic of the historic old house.

R.T.D. Wilmot

Member of the Kensington Society's Executive Committee 1953



Rogers' Seat and Inigo Jones' Gateway, Holland House.

Kensington High Street: 1999 Progress Report

At last something is going to happen - but after such a long, stop-start-stop gestation period, it is hard to believe it. It is now going to happen - and in a hurry!

The threat of the sub-regional, out-of-centre shopping centre just north of Shepherd's Bush at White City, which has been hovering like a cloud for the last ten years, is, it would appear, going to start work next year and could be open within three or four years. That is all the time we have to make Kensington High Street more attractive and more competitive to withstand the challenge that this new centre will present.

The White City shopping centre will be the biggest new free-standing shopping centre ever built in London - bigger than Brent Cross. Much of its trade will be achieved at the expense of the West End and large centres in West London. But both Kensington High Street and King Street Hammersmith are likely to lose a significant amount of trade to the new centre - between 10 and 15% of their trade.

Stop-Start-Stop-Start

1999 started badly. The Council's proposals for short-term measures to improve pedestrian conditions whilst welcomed by most members of the High Street Working Party were the subject of dispute amongst Councillors, resulting in the cancellation of the March meeting and the deferral of the measures being put to the Highways and Traffic committee until September. The proposals for improving the time given to pedestrians crossing the High Street were implemented in June and have resulted in an improvement in the convenience of using them. This will not only help make crossing the High Street easier, but will encourage people to use the crossings, which will tackle the accident problem.

The other area where progress was to have been made in 1999 was to employ consultants to give the High Street a makeover - to clear the clutter, widen the pavement and make it 'continuous' from end to end through raising the road level at junctions, and to improve the quality of paving and street furniture. The Working Party agreed a brief for the consultants in May, although the brief had been drafted the previous October. Potential contractors were interviewed in July and tenders were received in September, but none were eventually accepted mainly due to price.

One of the main obstacles to agreeing on the way forward has been uncertainty as to what we are really trying to do. In August a sub-group of the Working Party, with representatives from the Council, the Kensington High Street Association and residents,

met to try to set out a 'vision' for where we want to get to in the next ten years. This has still to be presented to the Working Party. What it showed was that there is consensus about what we want to achieve.

At the Working Party meeting on October 6th, following mounting frustration about lack of action, the Council suddenly decided to take action. The Chairman, Councillor David Campion, announced that a steering group, consisting of himself, the Chairman of the Highways and Traffic Committee and the two Executive Directors of Planning and Conservation and of Environmental Services, and 'an outside programme manager', would be appointed to drive the project.

The new steering group's job would be to push ahead with the transport and townscape proposals. Suddenly everything is going to happen. The proposals for rearranging the traffic management, changing junctions and crossings and limited widening of the pavement have now been agreed for public consultation and an exhibition was held in December. The Council has provisionally earmarked £3 million to be spent over the next two years to make the changes to the highway, completely repave the pavements in stone and to clear away the clutter.

Partnership

The Society welcomes this new-found sense of urgency - we have been becoming increasingly impatient about the lack of progress from year to year. But we are concerned that there is no sense of partnership in the Council's approach. The new arrangements are likely to mean that all the decisions will be taken by the 'steering group', will be approved by the relevant Council Committees and reported to the Working Party as information. We have a long way to go before the Council sees us as partners in this process - before we can create a genuine and working partnership.

So the good news is that by the end of next year we may have some significant progress. The bad news is that the retailers and the residents may still feel like outsiders in this important project in which we have the biggest stake in making sure that after committing £3 million we get something we really want.

I hope we have some real progress to report next year, both in terms of tangible change on the ground and in terms of creating a real partnership which involves all the main players. We have not started yet.

Michael Bach

The Secretary's Report

Kensington Gardens

By the beginning of 1999 it was fairly clear that we had won our campaign to prevent the Government from imposing a 27 acre formal garden in Kensington Gardens in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales. The Kensington Society was the focus for the opposition to this plan and therefore we were involved in a lot of publicity and paperwork in responding to people who wrote to us urging us to take more action. Early on we had decided that our case could only be won by weight of public opinion and this proved to be the case.

At all times we stressed that we were not against a memorial for Princess Diana but only for one in Kensington Gardens which most people felt was the wrong place.

After consultation we agreed on a compromise. There would be a Diana Walk over seven miles linking all the Royal Parks and improvements to the playground to make it available to disabled children. We all felt that a memorial to Princess Diana should be concerned with children, which were so close to her heart. We were also assured that nothing would be done without consultation with the local societies, and several meetings were held where we discussed how these decisions should be implemented.

Then in the Autumn Mr Blair was asked where the Princess Diana Memorial was going to be, and he said there would be a fountain in the Park. This was the first we had heard about it and as we rang around it appeared that this was the first that anyone had heard about it!

We wrote a letter to *The Times* pointing out that we had agreed a compromise and that we had been assured that nothing would be arranged without consultation. We have written letters to the Chancellor and Secretary of State and so far we have had no replies. We can only presume that they do not know what to say. We await developments with interest.

Commercialisation of the Parks

This summer we were also concerned with the increasing commercialisation of the Parks. The problem is caused by the Government telling the Parks Agency that they must raise money to cover their costs. The Agency has given the task of raising this money to a company called Cardington from whom it will get a portion of the profit. Six concerts were held in the Summer plus one for the Prince's Trust. The worst thing for Kensington was the traffic problem, particularly when the Prince's Trust concert was held, because the road across the Park was shut thus causing unbelievable traffic chaos in Church Street. Otherwise the main annoyance was to the residents who live near Hyde Park where the

concerts are held. We are watching developments with apprehension.

The Millennium

This year we shall be donating a clock to the Town Hall to mark the Millennium. It will be sited on the wall opposite the Library and above the Princess Alice Garden which was given to commemorate the work that Princess Alice did with the Society. More details of when it will be donated will be in the Newsletter.

Membership and other matters

Our membership continues to increase and we feel that if more people realised what interesting and useful work we did, it would increase even more. To that end we do try and get publicity for the Society. There will be an article in the Royal Borough's Newspaper in the future and there was an article in *The Hill*. We arranged with the Kensington National Trust to have a paragraph in their magazine to try and recruit members, and we have a page in the Kensington Parish News. If any members feel they could arrange an article in a magazine or newspaper I should be most grateful if they would ring me.

We continue to urge all members to try and recruit their friends because the greater our numbers the greater our influence.

E. Rudd

Millennium Clock

Early in the year it was suggested that the Society, like so many organisations, should do something to mark the Millennium.

The problem was to think of something suitable and appropriate. Various ideas were discussed by the Executive Committee, and finally it was decided that a public clock was a good idea. The place chosen for it was the south-east face of the Council Chamber above the Memorial Garden at the Town Hall. Here it would be visible as one walks from the High Street up Hornton Street to the Town Hall. This proposal was put to the Council Millennium Committee where it was welcomed. Various designs were considered and eventually planning consent was obtained and estimates of cost.

It is hoped that the clock will be 'unveiled' in May or June 2000 at an official ceremony. The cost, we are delighted to say, is covered by a donation from a generous member of the Society.

R.R.M.

A Racecourse at Notting Hill

One hundred and fifty years ago what is now the High Street was bounded by gravel pits and a few houses. Although it had the reputation of being the healthiest part of London, few took advantage of this recommendation and the land to the north of that road was still open country.

Yet, while Notting Hill Gate has achieved no niche in the guide books during its short history, it has one claim on the attention of those who are interested in London's past. Beyond the High Street on the way to Shepherds Bush the road dips downwards. On the left Camden Hill rises steeply, and to the north Ladbroke Grove rises less abruptly over the hill on top of which now stands the Victorian Gothic Church of St. John. Round this hill, now a pleasant region of Squares and Gardens, once ran The Hippodrome. This, London's last Racecourse, had a brief but hectic existence between 1837 and 1841. In 1836 a certain Mr Whyte of Bruce Cottage, Notting Hill, purchased two hundred acres of farm land surrounding Notting Hill for the purpose of forming a Racecourse, and the first Meeting was held on June 3rd, 1837. A Sporting Magazine of 1837 contains an excellent account of it: "Making the Course Aristocratique of Routine (alias Rotten) Row, you pass out of Cumberland Gate and then trot on to Bayswater. Then you arrive at the Kensington gravel pits and, descending where on the left stands the terrace of Notting Hill, you find opposite the wooden gates of a recent structure. Entering these I was by no means prepared for what opened upon me. Here, without figure of speech, was the most perfect Racecourse that I had ever seen. Conceive, almost, within two miles of mortality, an enclosure of some two and a half miles in circuit, commanding from its centre a view as spacious and enchanting as that from Richmond Hill, and where almost the only thing you cannot see is London. Around this, on the extreme circle next to the lofty fences by which it is protected, ... is constructed, or rather laid out, for the leaps are natural fences, the Steeplechase course of two miles and one quarter. Within this, divided by a slight trench from the place appropriate to carriages and equestrians by strong and handsome posts all the way round, is the Racecourse. Then comes the enclosure for those who ride or train as aforesaid, and lastly the middle, occupied by a hill from which every yard of the running is commanded, besides miles of country on every side beyond it, and exclusively reserved for foot people. I could hardly credit what I saw. Here was at our doors a Racing Emporium more extensive and attractive than Ascot or Epsom with ten times the accommodation of either, and where carriages are changed for

admission three-fourths less. This is an enterprise which must prosper ... As a site of horse exercise can any Riding House compare with it? For females it is without the danger or exposure of the Parks: as a Training Ground for the Turf or the Field it cannot be excelled, and its character cannot be better summed up than by describing it as a necessity of London life, of the absolute need of which we were not aware until the possession of it taught us its permanent value."

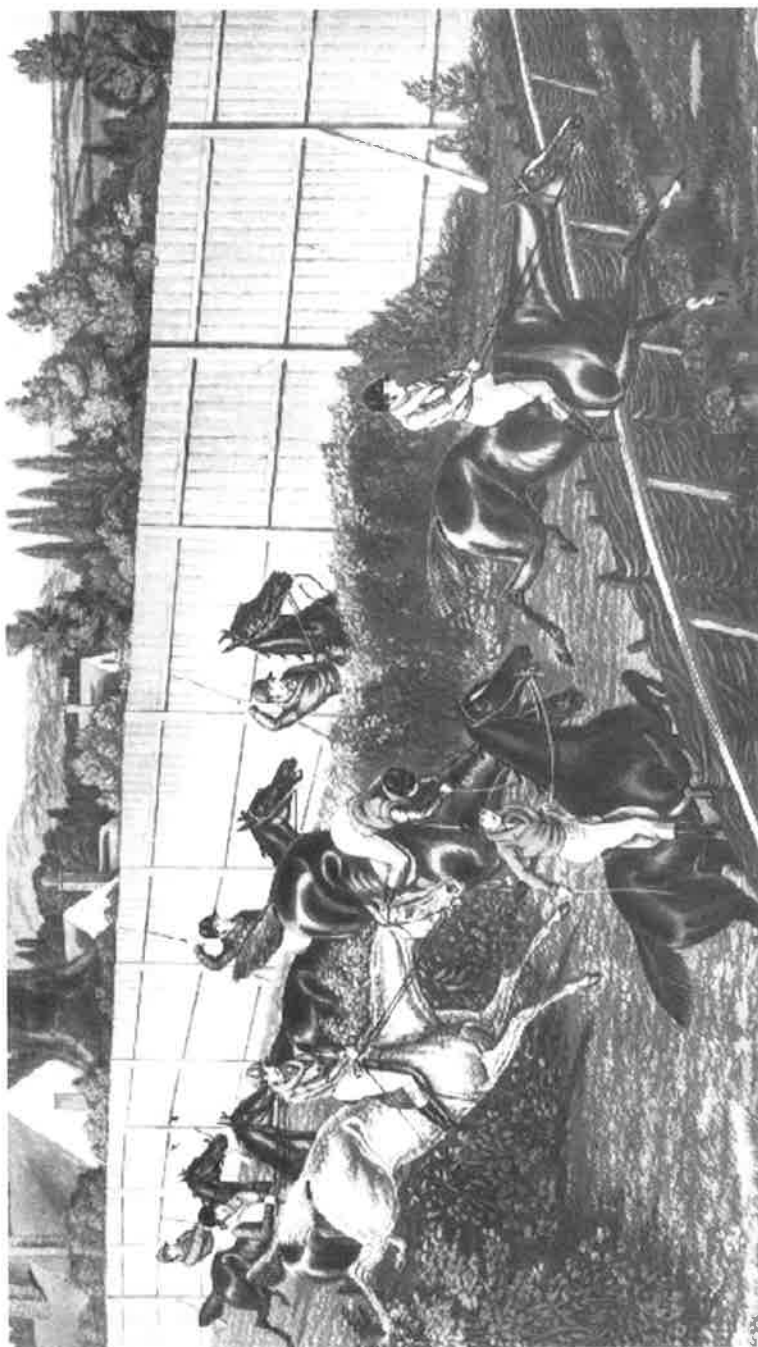
Placed so near the centre of London, one would have expected the Racecourse to have been as successful as Dog Racing Tracks appear to be today. Also, as contemporaries pointed out, there were no competitors, and but for two circumstances Londoners might still be able to 'assemble there with perfect ease in the afternoon' after 'having previously attended to the material interests of their respective avocations'. The Earl of Chesterfield and Count d'Orsay were appointed Stewards and, though neither the stakes nor the standard of racing ever appear to have been high, one reads that 'splendid equipages occupied the circle allotted to them, while gay marques, with all their flaunting accompaniments, covered the hill, filled with all the good things of life and iced champagne which can hardly be called a mortal beverage.'

Among those who are reported to have attended Meetings at the 'London Epsom' were the Duke of Beaufort, The Duc d'Ossuna, Lord George Bentinck, The Hon. G. Anson, The Hon. Charles Forester, C. Greville, J. Hunt, Colonel Copland, Count Danneskiold, Count Tolstoi, Count Batthiany, The Hon. A. Villiers, Baron Austen and The Hon. Gerald Upton.

But, unfortunately for Mr Whyte, the Proprietor, a footpath which ran over Notting Hill towards Paddington was closed by the formation of the Course. This met with immediate protests; public opinion appears to have been quite as strong on this point one hundred years ago as it is today.

The fence round the Course was repeatedly broken down and crowds of 'the dirty and the dissolute' gained access to the Course on the pretext that they were using a right of way. Whyte, seeing that this was spoiling the reputation of his venture, applied to Parliament for powers to divert it. The Press reported that 'by the placards at the gate of The Hippodrome it appears to be the intention of Mr Whyte to apply to Parliament to stop up, alter, sink, lower or divert the footpath, together with such tunnels, bridges and archways as may be rendered necessary in consequence thereof.'

The opposition was too much for him. A resolution of a meeting of Kensington Ratepayers stated that "The inhabitants of Paddington were coming to the Course to assist those of Kensington in asserting their rights. A body of Parishioners intend going on the morrow to the Course with axes and saws for the purpose of cutting the fence down." Living up to their threats, on June 17th, 1837, a body of parishioners, led by the Parochial



In and Out, 1841. Representing the last steeplechase which took place at the Hippodrome Race Course, Kensington, London.

Surveyor, made wide apertures round the palisading and, halting on top of the hill, gave three resounding cheers for the Parish of Kensington. Almost it would seem that G. K. Chesterton's book *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* was founded on fact.

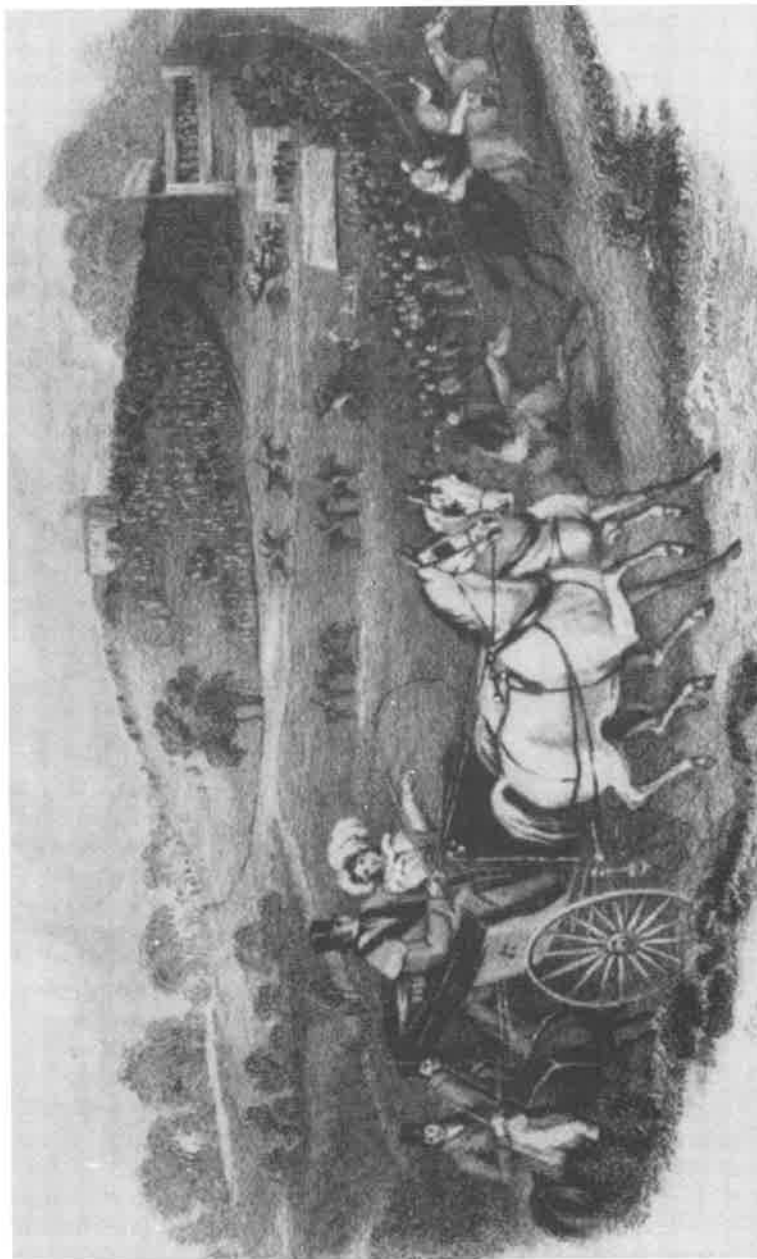
The Bill in Parliament was given up, and in 1839 part of The Hippodrome was sold, restoring the footpath to the public. Some land was purchased to the North West, and the Racecourse was renamed Victoria Park, after the young Queen, perhaps under the idea that a new name would give it new respectability.

There was, however, another and fatal reason for its failure. The soil of Notting Hill is heavy clay and after bad weather the going at The Hippodrome was too heavy for both horse and man. Carriages stuck fast in the mud and their occupants did not return a second time. More important, leading owners refused to enter their horses, and jockeys refused mounts on those that were entered. In 1839 there was one successful meeting: 'A group of foreign notables condescended to visit the "London Epsom" and a gold cup was offered by a Grand Duke of Russia. It was, however, a flash in the pan, and though The Hippodrome struggled on for two more years, failure was inevitable. There were no Meetings after 1841 and in May 1842, the Racecourse was taken over by the Mortgagees for building purposes.

One of the illustrations to this article is a reproduction of an uncommon print of The Hippodrome roundabout 1839, with a Flat Race in progress. On the right-hand side can be seen houses bordering what is now Holland Park Avenue and Campden Hill Square rising above them. Ladbroke Square is the only open space of any size still remaining on the site of the Racecourse. There is, however, still Hippodrome Place on the edge of the slums of Notting Dale, to the north of the old Racecourse, where there are mews known locally as 'The Racing Stables', which are believed to be the remains of a Training Establishment. The other illustration is from a print by Alken of 'The last Grand Steeplechase at The Hippodrome'. On the back of one of these prints is pasted an old advertisement which shows that the Racecourse was sometimes used for other purposes. Mr Batty announced 'By particular desire a Grand Day Performance' of what appears to have been in the nature of a Circus. The grandest of all the 'Georgous classical scenes' was a 'Desert Race by Ostriches drawing cars with their Arab Guides'. These are depicted on the Bill with the greatest spirit. There was a pageant called 'Carousal', with 'twenty ladies and gentlemen on highly-trained steeds, armed with swords and javelins, running at the Quintain and ending with a characteristic dance'. There were also 'Grand Car Races by two Roman Warriors', Grand Ascensions on Elevated Platforms, three Grecian Maids, 6 Olympians, Comic Monkey Racers on Ponies, 'Car of the Sun', as to which no explanation is vouch safed. Finally, 'In order to enliven the

amusements' there was a magnificent brass band. Such was the grandeur that was once Notting Hill.

Edward Norman-Butler



c.1839 T. C. Turner artist J. H. Engleheart engraver.

Events

January-October 2000

Thursday, February 10th

**British Library,
Euston Road, NW1**

We are very fortunate to have obtained a privileged guided visit to the new British Library, during which we shall be shown an exhibition of early printed books specially retrieved from the collections for us. The fee includes tea and biscuits and a contribution towards the acquisition of early printed books for the British Library.

**Meet at 2.15pm by the Reception Desk
in the Main Hall, Euston Road, NW1.**

£10 per person

Tuesday, March 14th

Lecture by William Dalrymple

William Dalrymple, the best-selling travel writer, will give a talk, with slides, based on his *From the Holy Mountain*, a remarkable and most unusual travel book, described by Eric Newby as 'witty, learned and very funny'. An evening not to be missed! A glass of wine precedes the talk.

**Meet at 6.00 for 6.15pm at St Mary Abbots small
(ground floor) Church Hall,
Vicarage Gate, W8**

£10 per person

Wednesday, April 12th

Batemans, East Sussex

Rudyard Kipling's home from 1902-1936, this Jacobean House remains much as it was in his time and reflects the author's associations with the East. Fee covers coach and entry where applicable. Coffee, lunch and tea at personal choice and charge. *National Trust Members - please remember to bring your card!*

Meet 10.00am sharp at

18 Kensington Square, W8

£25 per person

(Members of National Trust £20 per person)

**Wednesday, May 17th Arundel Castle, The Parish Church,
and R.C. Cathedral**

Arundel Castle, the seat of the Earls of Arundel and the Dukes of Norfolk for over 700 years, is well worth a visit. We see first the Parish Church of St Nicholas and the R.C. Cathedral, and after lunch we visit the Castle and Fitzalan Chapel to see the ancient tombs of the Norfolk family. Lunch at the reasonably-priced Castle View restaurant and tea in the Castle restaurant at personal choice and charge. The fee includes entry fees and coach travel.

Meet 10.00am sharp at

18 Kensington Square, W8.

£27 per person

Events

January-October 2000

**Tuesday, June 20th Dinner at the Arcadia Restaurant,
Kensington Court, W8**

A dinner to celebrate Kensington, ourselves, and the Millennium, at a very pleasant restaurant, for which we have booked the downstairs area. We hope to be joined by members of the Sydney Smith Association. The reasonable fee includes all charges, including wine.

Assemble at the Arcadia at 7.30pm. £35 per person

Wednesday, July 19th Regent's Canal Boat Trip

Join us for a three hour journey aboard a colourful traditional narrowboat on the Regent's Canal. Enter a hidden part of London - secret and peaceful. Fee includes buffet luncheon with wine. Bar at personal choice and charge.

Meet at 11.30am sharp at Jason's Wharf opposite

60 Blomfield Road, Little Venice,

London W9.

£39 per person

Preliminary Notice

**Thursday, October 19th- Isle of Wight - to celebrate the
Friday, 20th Millennium**

England's best kept secret has magnificent sea views, Carisbrooke Castle (once home of Princess Beatrice), Osborne, ancient churches, a Roman villa, Bembridge, the extraordinary Shanklin Chine, and much else. We have booked all 19 rooms - doubles, twins and singles - at the Farringford Hotel, Tennyson's former house at Freshwater, itself a considerable pleasure. All rooms can be used as singles for this venture, but if members wish to share, that will increase attendance - though sharing cannot in this case mean a reduction in cost.

Return travel to Ryde, lunches, and teas at personal choice and charge. The fee, in the region of £95 (still to be finalised), includes dinner, bed and breakfast inclusive of VAT at the Farringford Hotel, coach travel within the island, and all entry fees.

Please let Diane Gabitass know as soon as possible, if you wish to come, and what kind of rooms you would prefer (a few rooms are a few metres away in cottage accommodation, but they are all en-suite). A deposit (non-refundable) of £30 per person will be required at the same time (made out to the Kensington Society). Some rooms may be available after this date, depending on uptake. We will keep applicants informed of final cost, and the time of the best train for Ryde to meet the bus there on Thursday, October 19th 2000.

Kensington Society Booking Form

Date	No.	Name of Event	Fee payable
Total £			

1. Please enter your bookings in date order.
2. When you have completed the booking form make out a cheque payable to 'The Kensington Society' (crossed 'Account Payee only' if not already printed on cheque), and sign it - but do not fill in an amount. However, to protect yourself, write at the bottom of the cheque 'Amount not to exceed £ ' (amount shown in total).
3. Forward booking form, cheque and a stamped addressed envelope to **Mrs Dianne Gabitass, 37 Kensington Place, W8 7PR.** The booking form will be processed and any events not available marked on it. Your cheque will then be completed and banked, and your booking form returned to you in your S.A.E.

Your Name

(block letters please)

Address

.....

.....

Telephone No.

Please add any suggestions for future visits.....

.....

.....

Chess Champion Howard Staunton (1810-1874)

A Double Royal Borough Honour

The English Heritage commemorative plaque unveiled on September 28th 1999 on the wall of 117 Lansdowne Road, W11 is the second act of recognition in the Borough for the British chess player whose unmarked grave in Kensal Green Cemetery was bedecked with a permanent memorial two years ago.

For both initiatives we can thank the Staunton Society and particularly its Chairman Raymond Keene OBE, Grandmaster and Chess Correspondent of *The Times*, and its Secretary Barry Martin ARBS, to whom I am indebted for the material for these notes.

Staunton started as an actor - Lorenzo to Edmund Kean's *Shylock* - and later became an authority on Shakespeare, compiling a complete edition illustrated by the leading artist Sir John Gilbert PRA. He was also an educationalist, ahead of his time in castigating the public school system for its undue emphasis on classics at the expense of science.

But Chess remains his biggest thing. He was a multiple pioneer: in administration, master-minding the international tournament for the 1851 Great Exhibition; journalism, editing the first regular Chess magazine in English; and, it could be said, in electronics, playing a game using the new-fangled Electric Telegraph running alongside the London to Portsmouth railway. And the whole world still uses the Staunton chess set, which he didn't actually invent but was of a stature commanding enough to allow it to bear his name.

And as a player he set the seal on a noble procession of masters with London connections starting with Francis André Danican Philidor (1728-95) - who later flowered as an opera composer - through the two mutual opponents who also lie at Kensal Green, Alexander Macdonnell (1798-1834) and Louis Charles Mahé de La Bourdonnais (1795-1840). Staunton forsook the boards for the chessboard early and in 1843 took on the *de facto* World Champion Pierre Charles Fournié de Saint Amant in a match for the first eleven wins. He had scored ten of them by the fifteenth game but then hit a bad patch until the last one, which nail-bitingly lasted for fourteen hours! His absolute supremacy held for eight years until 1851, during which he was universally acknowledged as the World Champion, although the title only became official in 1886. The redoubtable Bobby Fischer classes him among the top ten players of all time.

Despite all this he died poor and was buried, like Mozart, in a pauper's grave with no stone. The Staunton Society resolutely

scored a signal success therefore in erecting that splendid black granite memorial, designed by Barry Martin with an engraved text selected by Raymond Keene. This was dedicated by the Parish Priest of St John the Evangelist, Kensal Green, Father Royston Beal TDBD AKCCF, on July 28th, 1997 at a ceremony which I attended as a humble sometime Chairman of the BBC Chess Club. The headstone shows a typical Knight in the Staunton set, the wording reflecting his Shakespearian scholarship, being adapted from Henry VI Part I, Act IV, scene vii. The key words 'it were enough to fright the Realm of France' recall his definitive battle with Saint Amant.

And now, on September 28th, 1999, a commemorative plaque was unveiled outside his penultimate residence, 117 Lansdowne Road, W11, where he lived for four years before moving in 1874 for his last short stay in nearby Elgin Crescent. This was again arranged by Barry Martin, in conjunction with English Heritage, and the Chairman of their Commemorative Plaque Panel, Francis Carnwath CBE, joined him for the unveiling shown on BBC TV. The distinguished company present included Sir Brian and Lady Tovey, Grandmaster Keene, the current British Champion Grandmaster Julian Hodgson, and a potential Staunton aged eight - David Howell, the youngest player in the world to have defeated a grandmaster under competition rules.

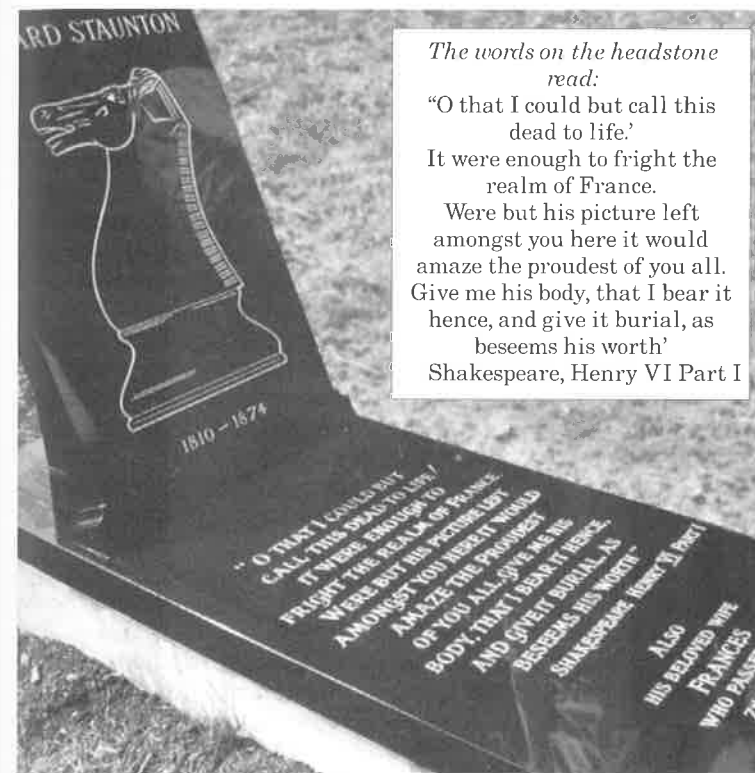
Not everyone now has two official tributes in the same Borough
Arthur Farrand Radley



Barry Martin ARBS at the plaque unveiling.



Howard Staunton.



The words on the headstone read:

"O that I could but call this dead to life."

It were enough to fright the realm of France.

Were but his picture left amongst you here it would amaze the proudest of you all. Give me his body, that I bear it hence, and give it burial, as befits his worth'

Shakespeare, Henry VI Part I

The Staunton tomb in Kensal Green Cemetery.

Roads to Kensington

During the period when kings and queens regularly resided at Kensington - from 1689 when William the Third began to create the palace, until 1760 when George the Second collapsed and died in a lavatory there - the state of the roads to Kensington was a matter of regular concern. For the journey was liable at times to present vexing problems to the government ministers, diplomats, foreign dignitaries, medical men, tradesmen and the host of others who had occasion to visit the distant village of Kensington. A glimpse of one of the problems was provided in 1736 by Lord Hervey, chief gossip-monger to George the Second's queen, Caroline. Writing from Kensington Palace on a November day in that year his lordship reported to a friend, 'The road from this place to London is grown so infamously bad that we live here in the same solitude as we should do if cast on a rock in the middle of the ocean, and all the Londoners tell us there is between us and them a great impassable gulf of mud.'

Kensington's spasmodic inaccessibility could have been one of the reasons leading to the long period of neglect to which the palace was subjected when George the Third became king upon the death of his grandfather, George the Second. For the new monarch, only 22-years-old when ascending the throne, resolutely declined throughout his reign to have anything to do with the palace, or spend much on it. He was happy, however, to park some of his troublesome sons there at various times.

The problem of travelling the three miles from Whitehall to Kensington had been recognised by King William the Third upon purchasing from Lord Nottingham the modest house which came to form the core of the palace. This purchase was prompted by the fact that the Dutch king, always weak-chested, had found himself coughing blood after a few months in the foul, dank air of Whitehall following his overthrow of his father-in-law, King James the Second. A move to the country was imperative, but the choice of Kensington presented one challenge much beyond that of the weathers vagaries, namely, crossing Hyde Park, especially at night. This was an age when travellers customarily checked their wills before embarking on any journey of consequence, and although the Hyde Park trip might be a brief one, a well-constructed will would have been considered prudent in the extreme. The park was, in short, swarming with criminals of every stripe.

With visitors to his new palace in mind, King William set about countering the crime problem by ordering a new road to be built between London and Kensington, and commanded that it be lighted along its length. It was the first continuously lighted road in England, and as such, a wonder of the age. The King's Lamp Road, as it became popularly known, also contained another

security aspect - guard posts at regular intervals. Although the public termed it simply the Lamp Road its official title was *Le Route du Roi*, a term corrupted in time to Rotten Row.

The appalling state of practically all roads at the beginning of the 18th century was painfully emphasised in King William's case following his fall from a stumbling horse in Richmond Park on a March day in 1702. A broken collar bone resulted from the fall, and although the break was set before the monarch boarded his coach for the return journey, the jolting caused by the pot-holed road to Kensington led to the setting becoming displaced. After an agonising journey the bone was re-set at the palace, but in an enfeebled state William contracted pleurisy two weeks later through dozing in front of an open window in the King's Gallery. He died soon afterwards.

His sister-in-law, Queen Anne, who succeeded him, was not a great traveller, the chronic asthma suffered by her husband, Prince George of Denmark, demanding a settled life, mainly at Kensington. The queen did enjoy an annual summer stay at Windsor, however, and when that was in the offing orders were routinely issued for the road from there to Kensington to be brought up to scratch.

Meantime, although King William's lighted road led to a diminution of crime in the Hyde Park area it by no means eliminated it, so that eventually journeys to and from London came to be made in convoy. At the Kensington end travellers, summoned by a bell, would assemble near The Goat public house, just beyond the southern wall of the palace, and, protected by guards, brave the hazards of the park. The Goat, which opened in 1695, survives to this day.

The chronically poor condition of most roads in the area led to the Duke of Grafton suffering a broken collarbone, and his coachman losing a leg, when their coach hit a deep pothole and overturned on the way to Kensington Palace. King George the Second's daughters were also involved in a serious accident when their coach, drawn by six horses, was in collision with a one horse chaise near the palace. The chaise, containing a man and his daughter, overturned and the horse went under the feet of the royal horses which began to rear and plunge so much that before long four of them had also fallen. The screams of the princesses brought help and the chaise was dragged clear, its occupants badly hurt. The distraught members of the royal party were taken back to Kensington Palace, where, inevitably, doctors prescribed bleeding.

Another factor to affect the roads between Kensington and London was the tendency of the Serpentine to flood from time to time, something Queen Caroline, wife of George the Second, could not have foreseen when she colluded with the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, to get the lake created. The King had been unenthusiastic about the project, but thinking she was financing

it with her own money, raised no objections. In fact, Walpole quietly contrived to direct a slice of government funds towards it. The flooding did not cease until the West Bourne river, which fed the Serpentine, was diverted into a sewer in the 19th century when, with London's population rapidly expanding, the river began to carry sewage into the lake. Today it is fed by a well.

A few years before the Serpentine came into being the main east-west road through Kensington had become part of the turnpike system, the section from Hyde Park Corner to what is now Addison Bridge being the responsibility of a local trust. Turnpike trusts were frequently the subject of newspaper criticism, both for the way in which tolls were mishandled - money disappearing into trustees' pockets - and for the lax manner in which such roads were cared for. Maintenance often consisted of no more than heaping stones indiscriminately upon worn patches, building up the camber to such an extent that occasionally coaches overturned. Not until John Loudon McAdam began experiments in efficient road building towards the end of the 18th century did turnpikes improve, his system of carefully graded stones soon being employed throughout the civilised world.

Kensington's turnpike had its main tollgate near the present junction with Palace Gate, while another gate was located at the southern end of Church Street. Unpopular as the gates were to many people, most had no alternative but to use them. At Holland House, however, the first Lord Holland went to the trouble of repositioning the entrance to his estate to avoid a tollgate which stood between him and London.

Today along the well-ordered roads to and from Kensington the principal inconvenience is likely to be no more than tailbacks at such points as Knightsbridge and Hyde Park Corner, but those who fume at these delays might console themselves by pondering upon the problems confronted on that same route by legions of distant forebears.

Robert Milne-Tyte



Thackeray outside his house, 2 Palace Green, 1891.

Nikolaus Pevsner

**Address given at the Memorial Service in the
Church of Christ the King, Bloomsbury for
Nikolaus Pevsner -
December 6th, 1983 by Alec Clifton-Taylor**

We have all come here this morning, to this fine church of 1853 which he described as built 'on a Cathedral scale and in a Cathedral style', to honour the memory of a great man, a good man, and a wonderful - and indeed in one respect an incomparable - friend and lover of England.

Nikolaus Pevsner's paternal grandparents were Russian - Russian Jews. Towards the end of the last century they moved west, first to Poland then to Germany.

His father, Hugo Pevsner, built up a very successful business in furs at Leipzig, where Nika, the younger of the two sons, was born in 1902. His mother was an intellectual, the friend of writers, painters and musicians - Paderewski, for example - who gave her son, after 1918 her only surviving son, every encouragement to become an art historian. Not very long after her husband's death in 1940, she took her own life, to escape the concentration camp.

Nika met Lola when he was only fourteen, and never wanted to marry anyone else. They were childhood sweethearts. Lola's mother was Jewish, but died when she was only sixteen. Her father was not. He was a very prosperous Leipzig lawyer. This too was a cultured family, with very Liberal ideas. Orthodox religious observance, whether in church or synagogue, never counted for much in either of these families, but Lola was a Protestant, and at the age of nineteen Nikolaus, who in other circumstances might perhaps have been a Quaker, was also received into the Lutheran church. Two years later they were married, and within quite a short time there were three children.

It was fortunate that both families were affluent, for Nika's pay as an academic was by no means sufficient to support five people; and until 1933 he was largely financed by his father. He had moved in 1923 to Dresden, to become an Assistant Keeper in the great Art Gallery, and in 1929 to a lectureship in the University of Göttingen.

He paid his first visit to this country in 1930, to do some research for his book on the History of Academies. He returned in the winter of 1933-34, and it was then that I first met him. W. G. Constable had invited him to give a course of lectures at the Courtauld Institute. The subject was not academies, nor architecture, but Mannerist and Baroque painting in Italy, on which he had already published a book.

I was at that time a student at the Courtauld; the lectures were

very good, and one day I went up and told him so. I have often thought about that since. Here was this tall, thin, shy German, speaking good but by no means perfect English. It wasn't my practice to walk up to lecturers and offer gratuitous comments upon their performances; in fact I never did it to anyone else. It must surely have been because his personality captivated me. He was evidently pleased, for he proposed lunch; the first of, I would think, several hundred.

Some months later he enlisted my help in translating his Academies book into English; rather an irksome task, as it proved.

At this time Nikolaus was still only a visitor to England. It wasn't until the autumn of 1935 that he decided that he must leave Germany for good and settle here. He came with his eldest child, his daughter Uta, and stayed at first with Quaker friends, John and Dorothy Fletcher, in Hampstead Garden Suburb. It was about another six months before Lola followed, with the boys.

Until his long last illness, the years 1935 to 1945 were far and away the most difficult in his life. In the first place, from being comfortably off he suddenly found himself decidedly hard up. He was able to bring over from Germany his books and some of his furniture and effects, but very little money. His first concern was to find somewhere to live, somewhere large enough to accommodate a family of five. In 1936 he found that tall, gaunt, Victorian terrace house facing a corner of Hampstead Heath which was to be his home for the rest of his life.

Still, he needed work, and it only came slowly. Early in 1934 he had been given a short-term appointment as a research assistant in the Department of Commerce at the University of Birmingham, out of which was to emerge, in 1937, his book about English industrial art. Out of this came his work for (Sir) Gordon Russell as adviser on modern furniture (which brought him in £500 a year). Otherwise, for some time there were only occasional articles and lectures. Sir James Richards, then editing *The Architectural Review*, has described how good those early articles were in content, but what a lot of work he had to do on them at first to turn them into acceptable English.

December 1st, 1937: dinner at Wildwood Terrace. I visit all three children in bed; they are delightful. N observes, with some relish, that the Lord Mayor of London is going over to Paris to open the British Pavilion and that they are only sending the second best coach. Nikolaus only learned to drive after 1945, hated it, and after driving one county for *The Buildings of England*, never drove again; while she lived, Lola did it all. But, lithe and sprightly, he was a prodigious walker. When he first got into *Who's Who* he used to list as his recreation 'walks of twelve miles or over'.

The end of the year 1936 saw the publication of the first book that he wrote in English. This was his *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, which, after

two considerable revisions, reappeared in 1960 with the title *Pioneers of Modern Design*. It was a seminal work at the time, and, like its author, a great educator. The outbreak of war was for him a shattering experience. He found himself not only with virtually no work, but classed as an enemy alien, because naturalisation takes five years, and there just hadn't been enough time for his naturalisation papers, applied for in 1935, to go through. As a result he had to face internment at Huyton in Lancashire. From there, on the petition of a few friends, he was released just in time, for, we were recently horrified to learn from Sir James Richards, he was found to be on a list of enemy aliens due to be shipped off to Australia. The ships went; one was torpedoed; many were drowned. Nikolaus was released, but how was he to live?

In desperation he took a job - imagine it - helping to clear bomb debris from the streets.

Happily, though, not for long, for in 1942 he was called upon to edit *The Architectural Review* while its editor was engaged in war service. This lasted for three years and he did it amazingly well. In the same year began his long association with Birkbeck College. Also in 1942 Allen Lane, who was to become a wonderful friend, published, as a Pelican paperback, the first of many editions of *An Outline of European Architecture*. This book has been translated into fourteen languages, including Japanese, and has sold, I believe, over a million copies.

With valuable help from the family, I have dwelt at some length upon those early years because I thought that many of you might not know very much about this period of Nika's life, and might like to hear more. The picture of his first ten years in England that I want to leave with you is one of indomitable courage and resourcefulness, and, of course, as always, immense industry; and I never heard him utter a single word of self-pity. He appeared to view his somewhat horrendous experiences entirely without rancour.

In 1955 the Reith lectures, and many others scarcely less prestigious Slade Professorships at both Cambridge, and, later, Oxford, as well as a Chair at Birkbeck College specially created for him; Honorary Doctorates galore; the Gold Medal of the RIBA; Editorship of the Pelican History of Art and of the King Penguin series; Chairmanship of the Victorian Society; Membership of many Advisory Boards and Councils; the CBE in 1953; and then, without his ever having seemed to curry favour with the establishment by anglicising the spelling of his first name, in the Birthday Honours of 1969, the richly merited accolade of Knighthood.

Did this all go to his head? Not in the least; he scarcely ever referred to his honours. He would take his students for day visits to one or other of our cathedrals. The length and concentration of these marathons of study were legendary. Eight hours, with only the shortest break for lunch, was normal.

Nor should any tribute to Nikolaus fail to mention his astonishing mastery of language. It will probably come as a surprise to many of you to hear that for a long time his second language was not English but Italian. I well recall what happened at the triennial International Congress of the History of Art held in Venice in 1955. Nika was due to lecture, not in Venice but in, of all places, the Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza. He was to speak in English, but, only one day before the lecture, he was asked to deliver it instead in Italian. This he did with perfect fluency and scarcely a note. Only the bad acoustics of Palladio's theatre, not of course equipped with a microphone, prevented some of us from hearing the lecture as well as we could have wished.

I have referred to his initial difficulties with English. These didn't last long. In a now defunct monthly magazine, *The Twentieth Century*, there appeared, in January 1960, a delightful article by the late Colin MacInness entitled *The Englishness of Dr Pevsner*. He declared that no other writer of foreign birth, except Joseph Conrad, had 'made of the English language such a superb instrument of his own ... Rarely', he went on, 'can a writer on architecture have kidnapped so audaciously so many adjectives' and he might have added, so many nouns and verbs too - 'not usually applied to architecture'.

Here are just two or three from *The Buildings of England*: Winchfield, Hants; 'Much of the church is Norman of a *singular ferocity*.' Willingham Church, Cambs: 'There are no collar-beams, so the eye can explore right up to the ridge, between the *bristling crags* of the timber decoration'. Bracknell, Berks - at the time of writing a New Town with just one 17-storey tower block: 'rising in solitary splendour, it none the less *cudgels down* the whole scale of the town.' Vivid phrases indeed - and there are many more.

Well, we're now among *the Buildings of England*, and that's the last facet of the Pevsner diamond on which I want, all too briefly, to dwell. For, admirable as are many of his other books, and some, like his very last, *The History of Building types*, of truly astonishing erudition, it is the forty-six volumes of the *Buildings of England* - of which he himself actually wrote, in total, about thirty-eight - that will ultimately prove to be his most enduring memorial.

I referred to the one hitch in his triumphal progress after 1945. It was in 1954, when Allen Lane momentarily lost heart. Despite their incredibly low price, the early volumes sold far more slowly than Lane hoped or expected, and lost so much money that the time came when he declared, quite understandably, that he couldn't go on unless financial assistance was forthcoming from outside. 'For over a year', Nikolaus later wrote, 'I almost despaired of ever being able to continue.'

The task of enlisting help was left to him, and I remember very

well how many disappointments he had to suffer, until the great day when the Leverhulme Trust agreed to finance the research for the next six volumes, support that was afterwards several times renewed. Later, invaluable help also came from Guinness's and from ABC Television, and the series was saved, to achieve thereafter an ever high standard. Nothing about this series of books was more extraordinary than the speed with which they were written. The whole forty-six volumes took about the same time as the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments team spent in compiling their Inventory of Dorset. Only a superman could have done it.

Essential to the enterprise were Nikolaus's fixity of purpose - no invitations to meals were accepted, not even to dinner, for he had to write all the evening - and his amazing speed of observation.

This could cause heartaches. I remember an attractive stone-built manor house in Somerset to which I was once taken to tea. The owner was an elderly widow who loved and doted on this house in the possessive way that other people sometimes show for their children or their dogs. At the tea-table Nikolaus's name cropped up. "Don't speak to me of Mr Pevsner", said the chatelaine: "he came here earlier this year, and how long do you think he stayed? Twenty minutes. *Twenty minutes*. I've never been so insulted in my life. They came at half past three, so of course I asked my household to prepare tea, but by ten to four they were gone. I think he said he was writing a book about Somerset: but whatever it was, it'll be absolutely useless." Our tour started after tea, and lasted for an hour and a half, which *was* rather too long. So when, the following year, the book came out, I turned up this house before anything else. There it was: two-thirds of a page, with everything just right, and not a single feature that mattered left out.

There's nothing in the least superficial nor skimmed about these books. Indeed, the descriptions of the cathedrals are so detailed and so illuminating that they have been gathered together into a separate book of their own, due, I understand, for publication about a year hence.

Revised and expanded *The Buildings of England* will be, and that is what he always wanted: 'the first editions', he wrote, modestly, 'are only *ballons d'essai*; it is the second editions which count'. Happily these are now steadily appearing, and, I rejoice to say, are better than ever. It will be a very long time indeed before these books are superseded. And presently, if all goes well, there'll also be complete surveys of the buildings of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, by other hands but all Pevsner-inspired.

I love to go a-wandering along the District Line; From Enfield Lock to Brentford Dock, what country is so fine? Yes, Hanger Hill's my Helicon; I hymn the Ealing track, And when I'm out I've always got my Pevsner in my pack.

Peter Clarke, who wrote that, was a cherished friend, and Nikolaus delighted in his often brilliant rhymings and hilarious parodies.

I have attempted to give you some sort of picture of this marvellous man, all too well aware of how much I've had to leave out. I've chosen to do it without undue solemnity, because I know that that's the way he would have liked it - if, he would have added, it had to be done at all. The follies and wickedness of the Nazis deprived their country of some very choice spirits. But their loss was often our gain; and of no one is this truer than of him whose memory we are assembled here to honour this morning.

Peter Clarke, was a member of the Executive Committee of the Kensington Society



*The Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley - Vice President 1983
and Alec Clifton-Taylor - President 1983.*



The Alec Clifton-Taylor Plaque.

Reports from Local Societies

Kensington Court Residents Association

The problems in our area do not change much. We have had to resist a proposal for a penthouse on top of a mansion block, contrary to the provisions of the U.D.P. We continue to try to keep pavement cafe within proper bounds, and to resist late night licences on the High Street.

Our worst long-standing local nuisance is the unholy alliance between our local pub, The Builders Arms, and the nearby (American) Richmond College students. No such problem arose in the '80's when the pub was our friendly 'local'. In the '90's drinking on the pavements and in the streets, and rowdiness several evenings a week have tormented many local residents for years. Finally we have said 'enough', and have recorded on tape and film evidence for the Magistrates Court in respect of the licence for the pub. We have also pressed the College to become non-residential while they find a proper campus where students would be more suitably located.

Meanwhile the Government and the Police are showing some signs of wanting to tackle rowdiness and other street offences with new measures. High time.

Sir Ronald Arculus
Chairman

Cornwall Gardens Residents' Association

This was a very sad year for Cornwall Gardens Residents' Association. Our previous Chairman, Robin Balmer, passed away in July. He chaired the association for seventeen years and did an absolutely magnificent job for our residents. We will all miss him tremendously because not only was he a great friend but also a lovely person and a real gentleman.

Last summer we had our second Garden Party which was again a great success; we were lucky with the weather for the second year running. Later in the summer there was a planning application for a development in our East Garden which was vigorously opposed by the association and by the residents.

Finally, our long serving Secretary, Miss Ursula Ovebury, has resigned and will be succeeded by Mr Gary Codd. The Committee on behalf of the entire association is extremely grateful to her for all her hard work over the years and for the time she had dedicated to our neighbourhood. Ursula's contribution will be greatly missed.

Dr Theodora Bond
Chairman

The Ladbroke Association

1999 has been a very active year for the Ladbroke Association, although, happily, no new particularly controversial planning questions have arisen, perhaps because the strong and vigilant

representations made in the past have raised accepted conservation standards. An earlier controversial rebuilding, the Paul Smith building on the corner of Kensington Park Road and Westbourne Grove, was one of this years environmental award winners - surely a result of successful compromise.

The increase in rents for the shops in and around Elgin and Blenheim Crescents, and the Portobello Road, has put considerable pressure on some of the traditional traders, and a new body known as the Notting Hill Action Group has arisen to try to preserve the sole traders from too many incursions from the multiples. This was set off by the Juice Bar being set up in Elgin Crescent whose frontage was not initially approved by the Council Planning Department and which was felt to be inappropriately designed for the area. A public meeting attended by some 800 people was held in St Peter's Church. The new group is already making itself felt.

The Ladbroke Association has published two editions of its newsletter. They organised a garden walk through some of the garden squares in May: these squares are one of the major delights of the area and, although access is limited to the surrounding houses, many enjoy walking past so a visit to them at the peak of the year is an especial delight.

Finally on November 23rd Mark Girouard gave the Ian Grant Memorial Lecture on Sir Edmund Davies - the Napoleon of Notting Hill and the artists he patronised before and during the First World War. The hall at Leighton House was completely full to hear this fascinating story. Davies built Lansdowne House and let the studios there on low rents with 21 year leases to painters. Even more he encouraged them by collecting their pictures and presenting them to galleries in France and South Africa. It was a fitting memorial to Ian Grant who was involved with the Ladbroke Association for nearly 30 years and a reminder that the pressures on the creative members of our society are not new, and that successful entrepreneurs of an earlier era felt proud and rewarded by supporting them.

Niel Sebag-Montefiore

Norland Conservation Society

Planning applications have been more numerous and more varied than in the immediately preceding year, a symptom of the economic upturn. On many of these we have commented, and as some we have won an improvement (as on the Swanscombe Road piano factory site) or a withdrawal of the application. The planning application for 20 Penzance Place aroused considerable concern, and the Society enlisted specialist advice in commenting on it. So far the Council has not received a revised application on this proposal.

As to traffic matters, the ill-conceived lighted ballards in St James's Gardens and Norland Square have at last been removed, and Thames Water has consulted, and is continuing to consult, residents on the effects on traffic flow in Holland Park Avenue of trenching in Holland Park Avenue, and the associated works on their Campden Hill site, to allow the closure of the redundant Victorian main pipeline which runs down the Avenue.

Parking remains a problem. Owing to considerable local pressure, six short-term parking meters for shoppers will be reintroduced in roads adjacent to Holland Park Avenue, bringing the total number to eleven.

The Annual Lecture in April by the founding Chairman, Gordon Michell, and the founding Secretary, Clive Wilson, held to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Society, was a singular success. We are grateful to them for the farsighted and energetic foundation of the first local conservation society in the Royal Borough.

Robin Price

Onslow Neighbourhood Association

It has been a quiet year. Planning matters have been restricted to rear extensions and internal alterations to listed buildings. The redevelopment of the former North Block of the Royal Brompton Hospital is nearing completion. The developers, Northacre, are to be congratulated on the standard of workmanship of both the refurbishment of the old block and the two new terrace blocks with their faithful reproduction of the design detail and materials. There has been no recent news of the South Kensington Station redevelopment.

Both our Association and our neighbours, the South Kensington and Queens Gate Association have been increasingly concerned at the increasing traffic congestion in the Old Brompton Road. This mainly caused by large delivery vans, often flagrantly ignoring parking restrictions, often parking both sides of the street and obstructing the traffic flow. The main culprits are those serving Christies' showrooms. The congestion caused thereby caused frequent tailbacks, blocking adjacent roads and in particular, the one-way system around the station. The Council have made various proposals and are trying a traffic warden blitz but, so far, to little avail.

Once again we were unlucky with the weather for our Summer Garden Party. But unlike on the previous occasions, we did not cancel, but held a mostly enjoyable, if crowded, al-fresco evening in the front hall of number 105 Onslow Square.

To commemorate the Millennium, the Association is undertaking a membership drive, targeting some 1500 households in the area who are not already members.

Hugh Brady
Chairman

Victoria Road Area Residents' Association

This has been a relatively quiet year, although the proposals for a major extension to the Church Hall at Christ Church, Victoria Road caused controversy at the beginning of the year. The Rev. Tim Thornton of St Mary Abbots called a meeting on February 13th to discuss the proposals which provided everyone with the opportunity to make their views known. The proposals have now been shelved.

Traffic is still a major issue, even though the area already has a number of traffic calming measures. The Association has asked the Council to address the problems, either as a 20 mph zone or to make the area the subject of a traffic action plan. We had hoped to get some improvements from the proposals for Kensington High Street, such as junction treatments to the entrances from Kensington Road.

There have been relatively few developments this year. Some, like the Viscount Hotel in Prince of Wales Terrace, represent opportunities to secure long-awaited improvements; others like 36 Gloucester Road and Albert Mews represent long-running threats that never seem to go away.

We are still concerned about the prospects of proposals to extend parking control to 10.00pm and on Saturdays until 6.30pm. We do not need them - nor indeed do many of the areas who are likely to get them next year - but the Council seems set on making life more difficult, although it is not their intention.

After more years than I like to remember, I am retiring and Peter Dixon has taken over as chairman.

Kenneth Woodward-Fisher, Chairman



Alec Clifton-Taylor Memorial Garden.

Constitution of The Kensington Society

1. The name of the Society shall be The Kensington Society.
2. The objects of the Society shall be to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington for the public benefit by stimulating interest in its history and records, promoting good architecture and planning in its future development and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic or public interest.
3. **MEMBERSHIP.** The membership shall comprise Ordinary Members, Corporate Members and Affiliated Societies, i.e. amenity societies for areas within Kensington who apply for affiliation with the Society and are accepted by the Executive Committee.
4. **SUBSCRIPTIONS.** Corporate members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of £25. Ordinary members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of £10. Affiliated Amenity Societies shall pay an annual subscription of £10. The minimum annual subscription for different classes of members (ordinary, corporate, affiliated amenity societies) shall be such sums as may be determined by the Executive Committee from time to time. Subscriptions are payable on January 1st each year.
5. **THE OFFICERS.** The officers of the society shall be the President, one or more Vice-Presidents, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, the Hon. Secretary, the Hon. Treasurer and such further honorary officers as the Executive Committee may from time to time appoint.
6. **THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.** The Executive Committee shall consist of not more than twelve members including the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer.
7. (a) The Executive Committee shall be the governing body of the Society. It shall have power to (i) Make byelaws; (ii) Co-opt members and fill vacancies on the Executive Committee or among the officers of the Society that may arise for the current year; (iii) Take any steps they may consider desirable to further the interests and objects of the Society.
(b) A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of not less than five members.
(c) Not less than three Executive Committee Meetings shall be convened in any one year.
8. **THE COUNCIL.** The Council shall consist of not more than thirty members. They shall be appointed by the Executive Committee. The function of the Council shall be to support the Executive Committee in any matters relevant to the objects of the Society.

9. GENERAL MEETINGS.

- (a) An Annual General Meeting of members of the Society, of which not less than 28 days' notice shall be given to members, shall be held in each calendar year at which the Executive Committee shall submit a Report and an audited Statement of Accounts for the year to the previous 31st December.
- (b) Other General Meetings of members may be convened from time to time by the Executive Committee on not less than 14 days' notice to members.
- (c) The date, time and place of each General Meeting shall be fixed by the Executive Committee, and the Chair shall be taken by the President or in his absence by some other Officer of the Society nominated by the Executive Committee.
- (d) Twenty persons present, being Ordinary Members or authorised representatives of Corporate Members or Affiliated Societies, shall form a quorum at a General Meeting.
- (e) Resolutions of the members in General Meeting shall (except where otherwise stated in these Rules) be passed by a simple majority of members present and voting on a show of hands, each member having one vote. Corporate members and Affiliated Societies must notify the Hon. Secretary of the Society in writing of the persons authorised to receive notice, attend and vote on their behalf, failing which they shall not be so entitled.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

- (a) The election of Officers of the Society (other than the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee) and of members of the Executive Committee shall be effected by resolution of the Members of the Society at the Annual General Meeting, and the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee shall be effected by resolution of the Executive Committee at its first meeting after the Annual General Meeting.
- (b) Subject to paragraphs (c) and (d) below, any Ordinary Member shall be eligible for election as an Officer of the Society or as a member of the Executive Committee.
- (c) Candidates for such election, other than those standing for re-election under paragraph (e) below, must be supported by nominations signed by two other Members, which nominations must reach the Hon. Secretary not less than fourteen days before the Annual General Meeting.
- (d) In the case of election as an Officer, the candidates must also be approved by the Executive Committee, which approval may be conferred either before the Annual

General Meeting or at the first meeting of the Executive Committee thereafter. If such approval be withheld the office in question may be filled by the Executive Committee for the current year.

- (e) Unless curtailed by death or resignation or under paragraph (i) below, the tenure of office of the persons elected shall be -
 - (i) in the case of the President, until the third Annual General Meeting after his election;
 - (ii) in the cases of the Vice-President(s), the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer, indefinite;
 - (iii) in all other cases, until the next Annual General Meeting after their election;but in cases (i) and (iii) those vacating office shall be eligible for re-election.
 - (f) The tenure of office of any Officer of the Society other than President may be terminated at any time by resolution of the Executive Committee.
11. ALTERATION OF THE RULES. No rule shall be altered or revoked except by a resolution of the members in General Meeting passed by a majority consisting of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting.
12. DISSOLUTION OF THE SOCIETY. The Society shall not be dissolved unless a majority of two-thirds of the subscribing members signify their approval of such a course by means of a ballot taken after receipt by the said members of a statement by the Executive Committee, whom failing by not less than ten Ordinary Members or the President of the Society, setting forth a summary of the arguments for and against such a course and their or his views thereon.
- 13 SURPLUS ASSETS. In the event of such dissolution the surplus funds (if any) of the Society may be transferred to such one or more charitable bodies, having objects similar to or reasonably consistent with those of the Society, as may be chosen by the Executive Committee and approved by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales.

4th February 1991

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

Statement of Accounts for the year 1999

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

Year to December 31st 1999

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

INCOME	Y/E 31/12/98	Y/E 31/12/99
	£	£
Subscriptions	4758.80	4821.30
Donations	9262.00	585.68
Visit Receipts	2639.25	3160.50
Advertising	920.00	1270.00
Interest	403.48	982.81
Other	52.11	0.00
Total	18035.64	10820.29
EXPENDITURE		
	£	£
Visits	1828.75	2101.45
Typing	330.00	336.84
Stationery/Printing	1322.42	640.42
Postage/Telephone	489.17	338.01
Wren Press	132.78	0.00
Annual Report	2850.00	3679.78
Subscriptions	188.50	68.00
Advertising	360.00	60.00
Meeting Room Hire	270.10	332.00
Catering	258.25	141.83
Total	8029.97	7698.33
Surplus (Deficit)	10005.67	3121.96

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

Balance Sheet as at December 31st 1999

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS	Y/E 31/12/98	Y/E 31/12/99
	£	£
Cash - Current A/C's		
General Fund	10,915.69	3,125.65
Princess Alice Memorial Fund	3,023.26	2,541.10
Cash - Deposit A/C's		
High Interest Account	7,858.32	18,254.49
National Savings Investment a/c	7,194.31	7,710.14
	28,991.58	31,631.38
LIABILITIES	0.00	0.00
TOTAL ASSETS	28,991.58	31,631.38
REPRESENTED BY		
General Fund b/f	15,962.65	25,968.32
Surplus/(Deficit)	10,005.67	3,121.96
	25,968.32	29,090.28
Princess Alice Memorial Fund b/f	3,936.18	3,023.32
Surplus/(Deficit)	-912.92	-482.16
	3,023.26	2,541.10
TOTAL RESERVES	28,991.58	31,631.38

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY
PRINCESS ALICE MEMORIAL FUND
Year to December 31st 1999

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

INCOME	Y/E 31/12/98	Y/E 31/12/99
	£	£
Miscellaneous Income	0.00	413.78
Interest	49.56	11.20
	<u>49.56</u>	<u>424.98</u>
 EXPENDITURE		
A/R Costs	325.95	0.00
Tablet	200.00	580.00
Plants & Bulbs	418.03	275.91
Sundry	18.50	51.23
	<u>962.48</u>	<u>907.14</u>
 Surplus (Deficit)	 -912.92	 -482.16

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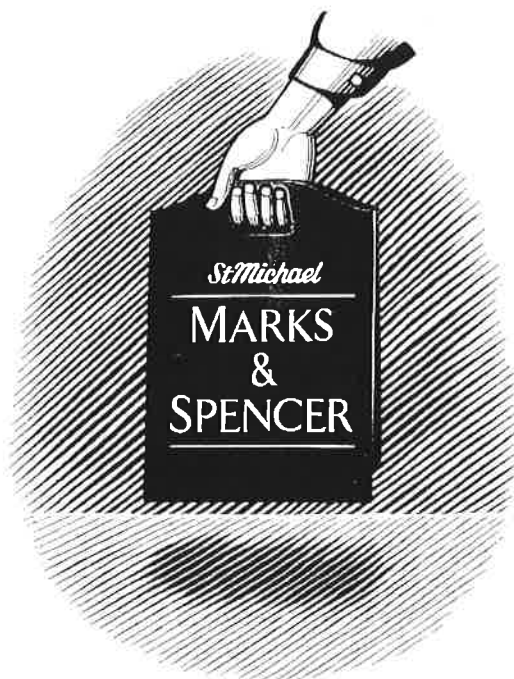
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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

I,
(Full name)

of
(Address)

HEREBY COVENANT with THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY, c/o 15 Kensington Square, W8, that for a period of years from the 1st day of 20, 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 £10.

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

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

WITNESS

ADDRESS

.....

.....

.....

OCCUPATION

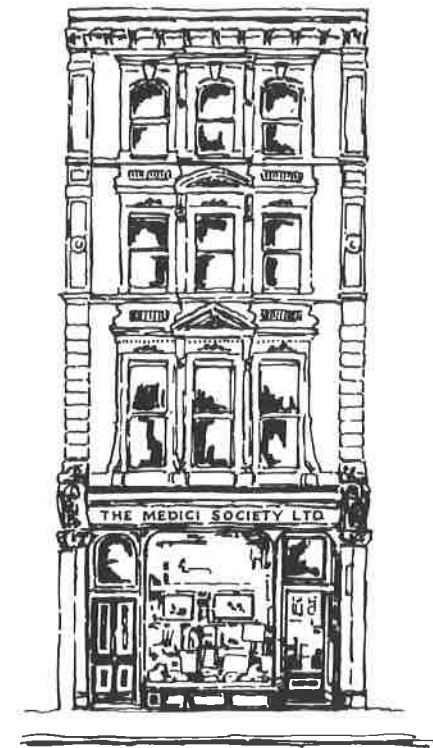
SIGNATURE

PLEASE NOTE

- 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.
- 4 The document should be returned as soon as possible after completion, in order that it may not be out of date for stamping.

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