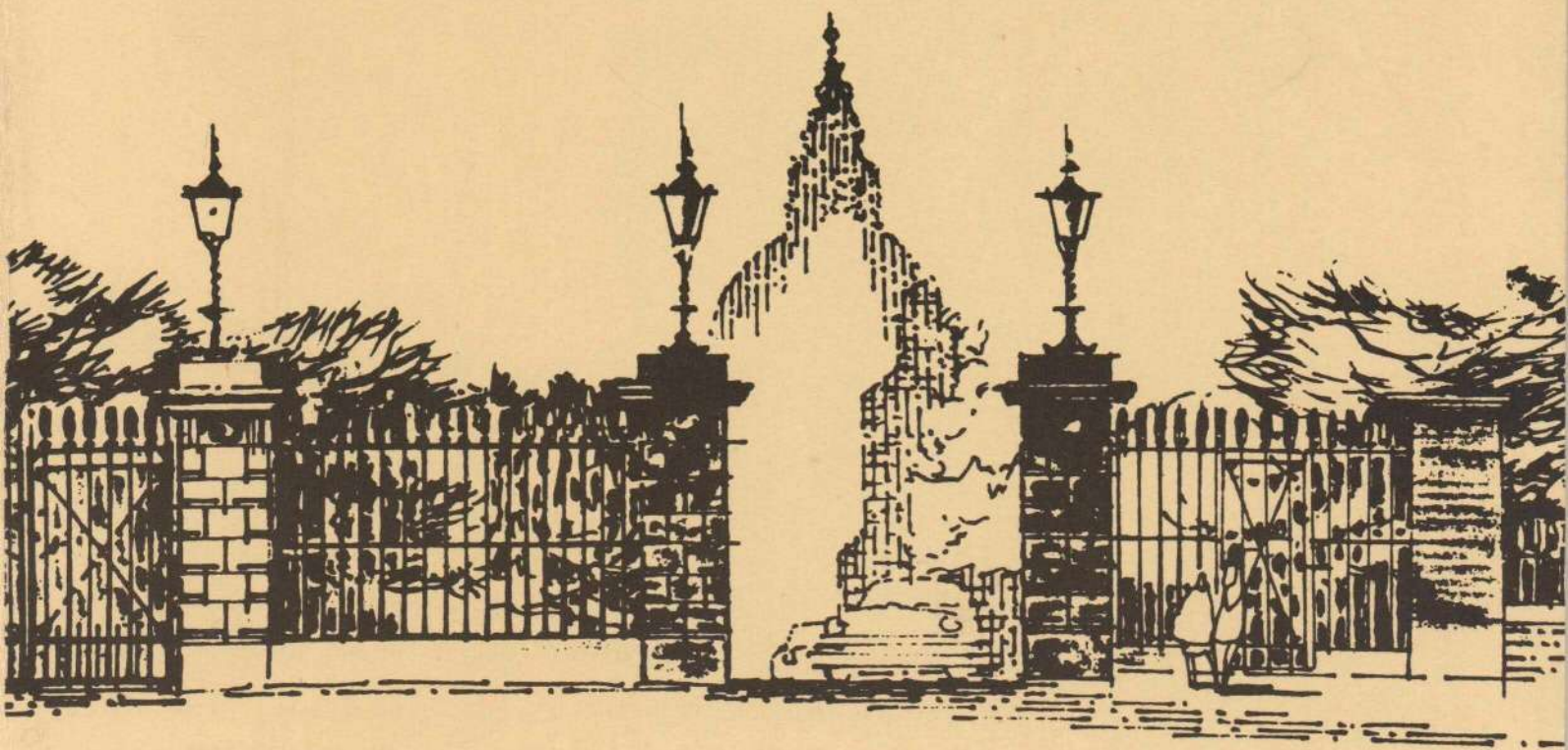


THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT **December 1988**



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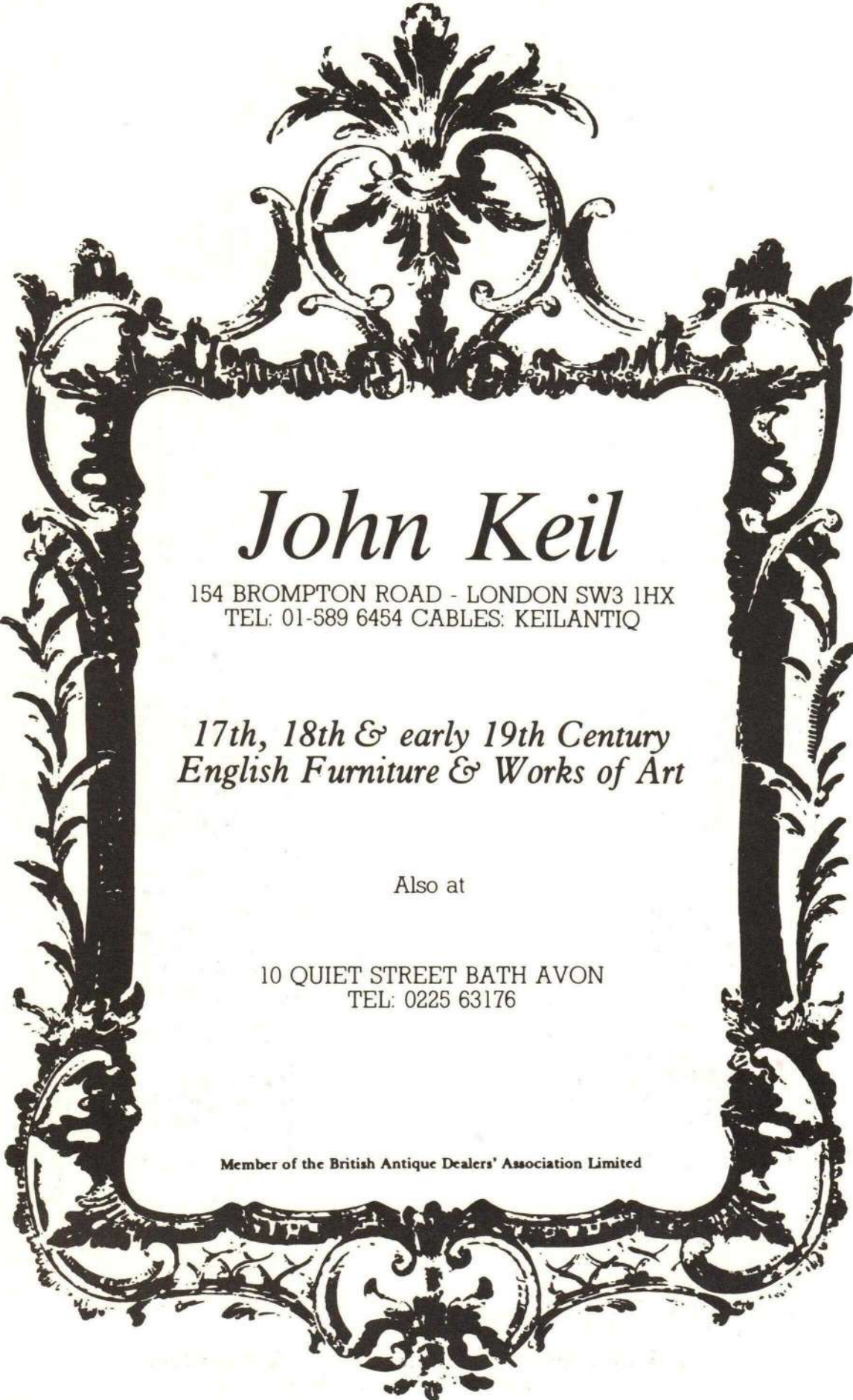
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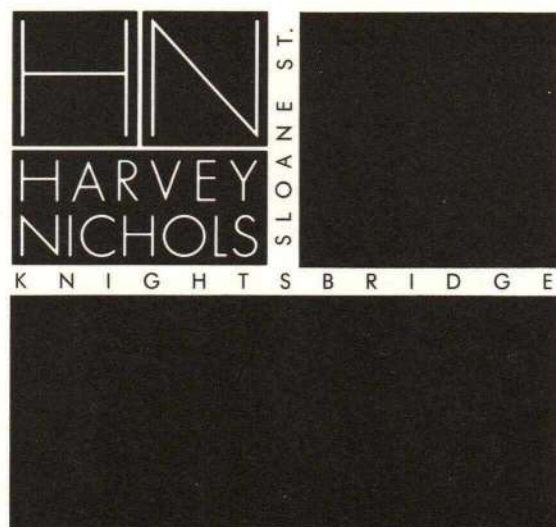
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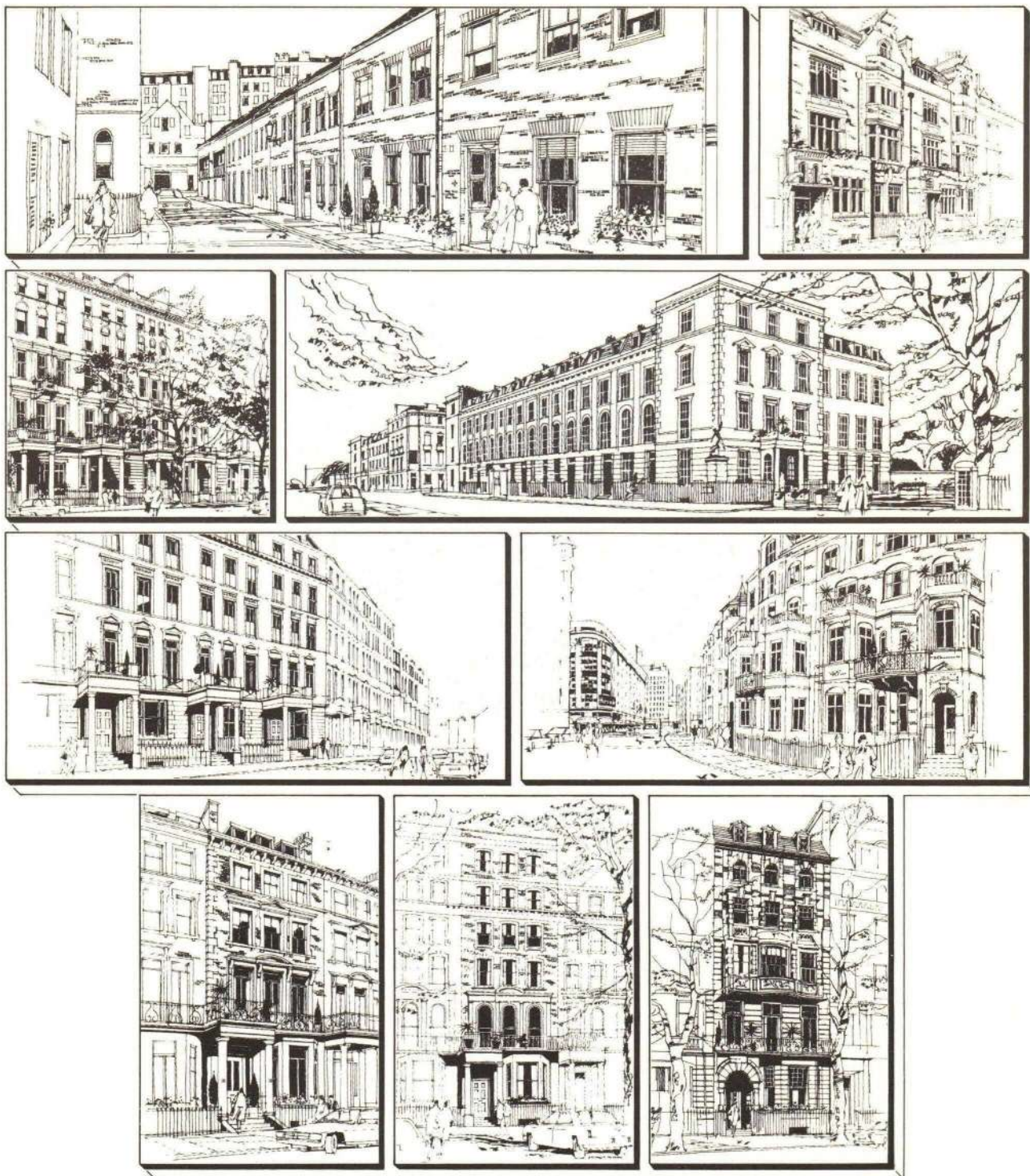
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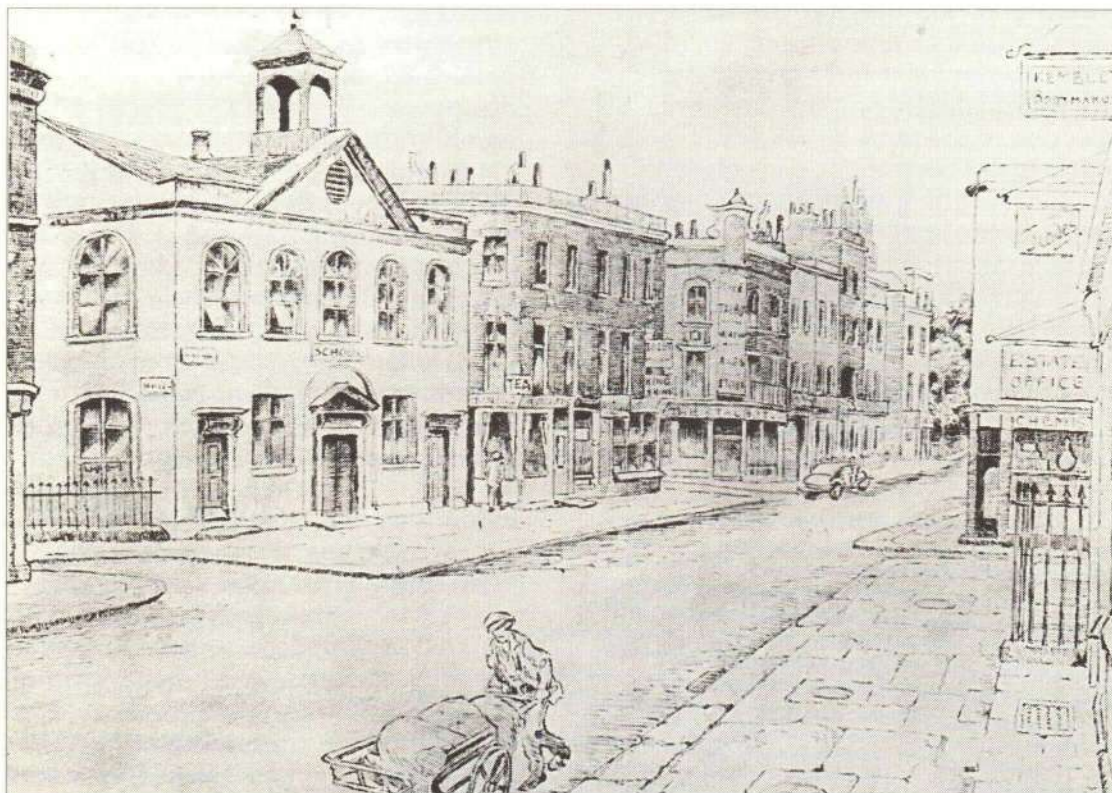
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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

One of the great strengths of this country is the way in which groups of people join together in voluntary efforts to achieve worthwhile goals. During the past three decades one of the most significant movements has been the rise to prominence of the civic and amenity societies which came into being to protect local neighbourhoods from wholesale destruction as the price of property soared beyond imagination. In Knightsbridge, old and loved buildings were saved from destruction literally as the ball and chain were made ready to demolish them.

In the early days, voluntary organisations

were looked on with suspicion by local authorities, but years of persistent protest and patient argument together with the disappearance of old and loved neighbourhoods, convinced councils of the value and effectiveness of these groups of dedicated people. Conservation areas were established and extended and the civic and amenity societies have become the allies of enlightened planning officers and a new breed of planning committee at Town and City Halls.

Today the threat comes from other quarters. Many times a local authority has rejected a development as being unsympathetic to and

against the interests of a neighbourhood, only to have its decision overturned on Appeal. There are examples which are so difficult to accept that they cause disquiet amongst the local population as well as frustration to skilled planning officers and planning committees.

Recently at a meeting in Kensington Town Hall, the Chairman of the Town Planning Committee, Councillor Gerald Gordon, resigned his position in protest at recent DOE guidelines and instructions which state that there must be 'presumption in favour of development' when dealing with planning applications. Mr. Gordon intends to campaign against this policy which prevents the Council from taking full account of the views of the local population.

There are times when the national good must overcome local prejudice; nobody is anxious to accept a prison or lunatic asylum in his or her neighbourhood, but they must be built. This does not extend, however, to



The Portico of St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner (see pages 16 and 27).

the elimination of old and loved townscape and its replacement by unsympathetic intruders which alter the scale and feeling of the neighbourhood.

Everyone has different facets to his or her personality and the most insensitive developer becomes a conservationist when a new building threatens his view, whilst 'modern' architects often live in perfect Georgian gems.

It is so often charged against conservationists that they are against modern architecture, that they live in the past, that appreciation of architecture, as of art, is subjective, and that, had they been alive at that time, conservationists would have objected to St. Paul's cathedral.

This is a gross distortion of the facts and is of no help to serious discussion of the problem. There may be such living fossils amongst the conservation movement, but they are not the majority, nor are they amongst its leaders.

Great cities have to evolve and the buildings we see today have often taken the place of others which may have been attractive in their own right. But up to recent years cities have grown organically and never before had to suffer the sheer magnitude of destruction and rebuilding in such a short space of time. This calls for sensible control if throughout the world cities which have their own persona are not to be indistinguishable from one another – as in the satire by Jacques Tati filmed so long ago and yet so prescient.

Conservationists, like other citizens, are uplifted by *great* modern architecture. We do not see enough of it. The technical possibilities of today allied to artistic genius can create new environments and beautiful surroundings. What the citizen is concerned about is what is demolished to make way for the newcomer and will the new building sit as a good neighbour with its incumbent companions. For buildings cannot be displayed on white walls like modern art; they must be lived with every day and mostly not by those who built them or caused them to be built.

The challenge to great cities like London is to keep people (and that includes the middle classes) living and working in their centres so that they do not become victims of the 'doughnut' syndrome suffered by many American cities. In Westminster the number of residents is falling despite the influx of foreign visitors on temporary assignments.

To keep the population within our city centres requires a policy which respects the

wishes and needs of the citizens. These include continuity of cultural memory, a long term strategic plan to maintain a swift, cheap and above all tolerable transport system; and properly maintained roads and pavements, kept clean and safe. In these respects it would be encouraging if central Government would lean upon the experience and dedication of voluntary bodies, as some local authorities have learned over the years to do.



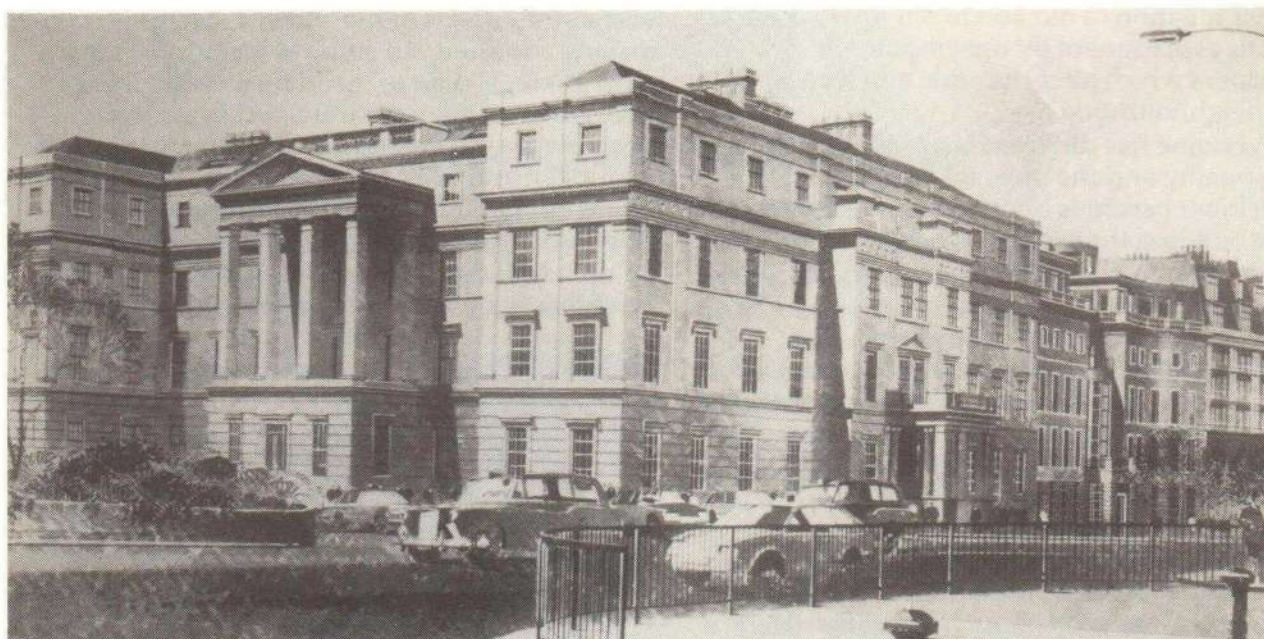
HRH the Prince of Wales

These words are written following the significant television broadcast given by the Prince of Wales in which His Royal Highness gave his views on the tragic consequences of recent architectural misadventures. The Prince's polished performance has given great heart to conservationists throughout the realm, and has produced the expected backlash from those who consider themselves his target.

It is true that Prince Charles did not include developers and planners and government amongst the perpetrators of some of the worst misdemeanours, but everything cannot be accomplished in one lecture and it is to be hoped that there will be more. Certainly he voiced the feelings of the majority, and if he did go over the top a little, it is high time that the views of the consumers were heard in this neglected arena.

Conservation has at last found a champion and millions of people in town and country hope that the Prince will not be deflected from his concern for the integrity of our towns and villages by the hornet's nest that he has stirred up.

The battle is not between conservationists and architects, because some of the best architects are, in fact, jealous of their heritage. The fight is between good planners, caring developers, fine architects, politicians with taste and vision and those others of the same disciplines who are second rate and philistine in their outlook. Let those of the first category win the day, led by the Prince who does so manifestly care.



Artist's impression of the proposed redevelopment of St George's Hospital. The new office block is to the right of the picture.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Association's busiest and most important committee is the Environment Committee, which has for the last six years been led with outstanding flair by Richard Robinson. To cope with the heavy workload of planning applications, site visits, and liaison with public authorities he has had the support of his two deputies, Raymond Henley and Michael Wright (who with Jeremy Mackay-Lewis is one of our two distinguished architects) and a group of dedicated members.

During the year they have examined over 200 applications, some of them of major consequence to the area.

The development of St. George's Hospital and the adjoining buildings, which was dealt with so thoroughly in last year's Report, again occupied a great deal of the Committee's time. After the major alterations called for by the Knightsbridge Association and other bodies including the Royal Fine Art Commission and English Heritage, the developers commissioned new architects whose plans were eventually passed by Westminster City Council's Planning Committee. As members know from the previous Report, great changes were made to the developers' original scheme and the resulting plans will have a more satisfactory streetline than was previously proposed. Great attention will be paid to the integrity of the restoration of the facades of the Wilkins building which is to become a luxury hotel.

The resulting development should be interesting although the Association is still

sorry to lose six adjoining listed buildings on the Knightsbridge frontage to make way for a large new office block, and it is to be hoped that the extra people and vehicles resulting from this will not add too much to the increasing pressures on Hyde Park Corner.

The Environment Committee is glad to report that the original scheme for 1-11 Montpelier Street, which included an extra mansard storey, the conversion of the upper three floors into 21 residential units, and the basements into an underground car park, entered from the already congested Cheval Place, has now been drastically modified. Extensive talks were held with the owners, Eagle Star, and with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the result has been the abandonment of these proposals. The new scheme preserves the integrity of the Montpelier Street frontage, the flats have been reduced to nine in number and the underground car park has been abandoned. The only sour note is the design of the adjacent Cheval Place site where two houses are to be demolished and replaced by two buildings which are considered to be of unsympathetic design for the neighbourhood. The Planning Sub-Committee of the Royal Borough accepted the Association's submission on this point, but it was sadly overruled by the main Planning Committee. Hopefully the shops that have been established in Montpelier Street for so long will be able to return after the refurbishment.

Work has at last begun on 130 Brompton

Road. The Association was reluctant to see yet another building society, especially on the corner of the entrance to the conservation area, but we are promised that the restoration work will be faithfully carried out and that the signs and fascia of the new Bristol & West branch will be restrained and prove worthy of such an important position.

Work is also to start on 112-120 Brompton Road, next to Lord Roberts' Workshops, in February 1989. This mixed development of shops, offices and residential units was dealt with in detail in the last two Reports which chronicled the Environment Committee's efforts to modify the original proposals.

Talks have been held with Imperial College and the City Council to discuss the College's plans to redevelop the two remaining sites in Princes Gardens, 1-7 on the north side and the tennis courts. The discussions ranged over a wide area and included the College's needs for accommodation over the medium term. A joint working party has been set up and the College has commissioned planning consultants to advise on the best way of meeting their requirements. Their report is awaited with interest.

The Royal Geographical Society's revised plans to build a block of 14 flats backing on to Albert Hall Mansions and to build nine subterranean flats, underground premises for the Alpine Club and an underground carpark for 115 cars have caused a great deal of local concern. Although an intriguing plan in many ways, there was no support for the subterranean flats and the scheme was felt to be an overdevelopment.

The Royal College of Art has been conducting a major re-organisation to bring most of the activities of the College on to one site in and around the Darwin Building in Kensington Gore. During the year work has begun on 198-200 Queen's Gate. Here they are retaining the facades and



redeveloping the backs which are part of Jay Mews.

The Association is being consulted by the local authority on the Conservation Area Draft Proposals Statement for Queen's Gate, and amongst the points we have raised are the future of the sheds alongside the Natural History Museum which house the RCA's Sculpture School and other faculties, and the restoration and maintenance of the balustraded walls fronting properties in Hyde Park Gate.

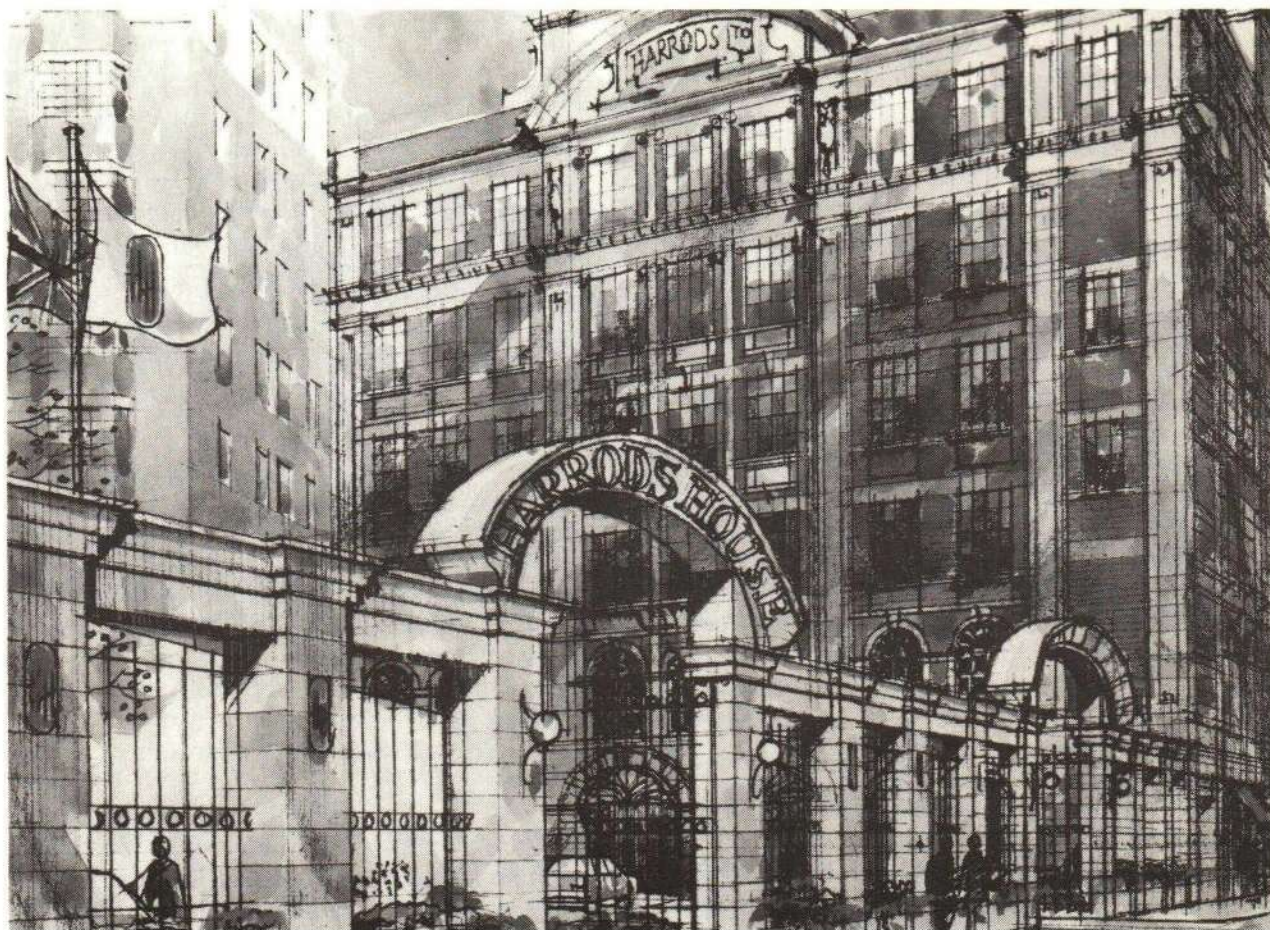
The Association has backed the tenants of Albert Court in objecting to three proposals to build flats on the roof of this well-known building, and three times Westminster City Council has turned down the developers' applications. Now a fourth proposal has been made and similarly rejected. The current owners, Lingo Corporation NV of Geneva and the Antilles and the Caribbean Management Company of Curacao, have taken the two most recent applications to Appeal. Scheduled to last three days, the hearing, which started on the 31st August was adjourned at the half way stage on the 2nd September and will resume on the 11th January.

Residents of Rutland Gate will be pleased to know that the corner building at 2-8a should be completed by late Spring 1989. The



Above: Albert Court, where the tenants, backed by the association, are objecting to proposals to build flats on the roof of the building.

Left: Model of the new building at 112-120 Brompton Road.



Proposed improvements to Harrods Depository at Trevor Square (above), and (right) the existing building, showing the single storey block which would be demolished.

Association in conjunction with residents in Rutland Gate is still battling to sort out the future of the Upper Gardens. It is hoped to obtain the support of those who have the right to use the garden to enable a request to be made to Westminster City Council to take over its maintenance and include a charge on the rates.

For many years, residents of Trevor Square have suffered from the intractable problem caused by the ever increasing size and number of vehicles delivering goods to Harrods Depository at the south end of the square. It is, therefore, welcome news that Harrods has built a vast new warehouse at Isleworth and all its major incoming deliveries will be made to that site by the end of next year. Harrods will then bring the goods in vehicles via Lancelot Place. Deliveries from Harrods to its customers will still take place from Trevor Square, but this should not cause the same environmental problems as in the past. Harrods intend to begin to operate the new system in the late spring of 1989. It is greatly to be hoped that this will markedly improve the quality of life for those of our members living in the Trevors.

The change in warehousing methods means that Harrods is now looking for a new use for the terracotta building, which will be retained, whilst the one storey building will be demolished. The Environment Committee has been consulted about three possible uses for this building, namely, hotel, residential or office. It is felt that a hotel would not be acceptable on this site, and in any case would be contrary to the policies laid down in Westminster's District Plan. Naturally, this is a very sensitive site and any proposals will be inspected most carefully. Once a plan has eventually been formulated the committee will organise a public viewing for local residents.

Harrods is also anxious to develop its site in Brompton Place which includes their one storey carpark, and here again the Association has been consulted. Members of the committee visited the architect's office to see plans for a four storey block of flats on top of a five storey underground car park with the retention of the two storey houses, numbers 1-10. As the result of strong opposition from local residents, traders and amenity groups the plan has twice been modified, and we are

currently awaiting revised plans for a four storey office building and four levels of underground car park. We understand that in the latest proposals the use of the car park will be related to Harrods shopping hours and not, as originally planned, on a 24 hour, seven day-a-week basis. The main concerns raised at a presentation given by Harrods in September were structural damage to surrounding properties, noise and pollution during and after construction, and adverse effect on the traffic in Brompton Road.

A proposal to incorporate the old Normandie Hotel at 163 Knightsbridge in a large scheme for a new hotel comprising twelve storeys with six basement levels and an element of residential accommodation and shopping has raised considerable opposition. The Committee opposed the plans vigorously on grounds of design, overdevelopment, adverse effects on the surrounding residential area, and exacerbation of the already difficult traffic conditions. These plans were withdrawn. However the revised plans showed no improvement and we have opposed them on similar grounds.

The Association and others in the area have urged Westminster City Council to include this block in the Knightsbridge Conservation Area. The Council has drawn up proposals to designate two new conservation areas, Albert Gate and Knightsbridge Green and is now seeking approval from the Department of the Environment.

During the year the Association has held talks with Westminster City planning authorities to draw their attention to the detrimental effects of sub-dividing single family houses of modest dimensions, and sub-dividing existing flats in larger converted houses into unsatisfactorily small units.

A very disturbing application was made to build a surface car park for 41 cars on the west side of Princes Gardens. Opposition was raised not only by the Association, but also by the leaseholders, Imperial College, and the surrounding resident population, and the Council refused permission for this encroachment on the gardens.

There are many small areas in the neighbourhood which fall into disrepair, and it is then found impossible to establish ownership in order that restoration can take place. Members will recall the Ennismore Gardens Mews Arch where a protracted search to find an owner proved fruitless and the Association raised money from the neighbourhood to help the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea to restore and repair



this well-known landmark. A new case is the Ennismore Gardens Mews wall, part of which fell down two years ago. Again it has been found impossible to discover the owner, and RBKC will shortly be applying to the Department of the Environment for permission to carry out repairs. This usually takes a little time to obtain, but the Council has already voted the necessary money through its Brighten up the Borough Fund, and hopes to be able to carry out the remedial work by the end of the year. Meanwhile Holy Trinity Brompton are carrying out repairs and repointing their wall along Cottage Walk.



The Normandie Hotel: redevelopment opposed.

LAW AND ORDER

Thirty per cent of all burglaries in Westminster take place from scaffolding and with the amount of building work taking place in Knightsbridge there is a good deal of scaffolding in the area. The Police have pinpointed five methods of securing the scaffolding against use by would-be thieves and they would like Westminster City Council to include these points in their licences for the use of scaffolding. But the Council has claimed that it does not have the power to enforce these requirements. Frances Rice has organised a campaign to petition the Lord Mayor to request these powers from central Government and the Knightsbridge Association has asked other amenity societies and neighbourhood watch committees to join in organising the petition throughout the City of Westminster.

The situation in Brompton Road in front of Harrods and Knightsbridge Tube Station has now become most worrying and unpleasant

for residents and visitors alike. The pavements are clogged with crowds around unlicensed street traders, three-card tricksters and ice cream vans which are parked on double yellow lines all day and every day.

Recently the Knightsbridge Association convened a working party with officers and Councillors of Kensington and Chelsea Council, representatives of the local Police, and of Harrods, to examine ways of tackling the deteriorating situation. We are delighted that the police took action in November, and mounted a large undercover operation to tackle the more blatant offences. At the same time, Kensington & Chelsea Council announced that it was considering taking civil measures to support the police action.

In view of the escalating problems it has been decided to create a Law and Order Committee under the chairmanship of Gordon Shingleton, an expert on security matters.

LOCAL AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

Most of the everyday contacts between the Association and local authorities are with Westminster City Council and to a lesser although important extent with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

A close working relationship and mutual respect has grown up with the officers of Westminster City Council, particularly in the Planning Department under Sid Sporle, the Director of Planning. The planning department is helpful and considerate concerning Knightsbridge and consults the Association on all potential developments in the area. This has greatly facilitated the Environment Committee's task in dealing with its heavy workload.

The Association is grateful, too, to Ian Cooper who heads the Cleansing Department which is now to be privatised, and we look forward to learning how he intends to re-organise what is left of his department, and also to Max Mussi who is in charge of the Works Department. The Association is of course a statutory body for consultation under the planning act and the views put forward by our Committees have received most considerate attention by the Chairmen of the Council Committees.

In our relationship with Westminster City Council, we have been aided, as ever, by the work of our two Councillors, Anthony

Prendergast and Dr. Michael Dutt. Their help has been invaluable and is much appreciated by the Chairmen of the Association's committees.

Although the part of our area which lies within the borders of Kensington and Chelsea is smaller, the work involved is proportionally greater because the Council does not send copies of plans to the Environment Committee and these have to be viewed at the Town Hall.

Despite these logistic difficulties, the Association enjoys a good working relationship with the Planning Department under Alan Sanders, the Director of Planning, and the Works Department under its Director, John Ff. Davies.

The Royal Borough has been most co-operative in the recent deliberations concerning Montpelier Street and talks on matters pertaining to law and order in Brompton Road. We are grateful to our local Councillors Melinda Libby and David Hudson for their assistance.

With matters of law and order becoming of ever increasing concern, the co-operation of the Police at Gerald Road under Chief Superintendent Iles and Chief Inspector Peat, and at Chelsea Police Station under Chief Superintendent Beresford-Peirce and Chief Inspector Cook, has become of even greater value to the Association. With the

establishment of the Law and Order Committee this relationship is expected to become even closer.

The support and assistance given to the Association by our Member of Parliament, the Rt Hon Peter Brooke, has continued as strongly as ever, despite the increased

responsibilities that he has undertaken during the past year. Combining the position of a Minister of the Crown and the Chairmanship of the Conservative Party, he has yet found time to be a model constituency M.P. and the Association is grateful to him for his help and encouragement.



Unveiling the Plaque at the Hole in the Wall. Left to right: Neville Labovitch, Wing-Cdr W. Kearney (Lord Mayor, locum tenens), H.E. Baron Rüdiger von Wechmar (West German Ambassador), Mrs Ludmila Mathias.

HERITAGE

At the end of October an amusing little ceremony took place at the 'hole in the wall', when the acting Lord Mayor unveiled a plaque to celebrate this famous landmark.

Many new members do not know the origins of this useful passage down to the Brompton Road. Prior to the Second World War a wall existed for the sole purpose of keeping Rutland Mews East and Rutland Street apart, and denying access from one to the other. In September 1940 a bomb destroyed the wall and an adjoining house, no. 43 Rutland Gate. Four people were rescued from the building and there were, luckily, no casualties.

When the wall was being rebuilt in 1948 an enterprising local resident, the late Mr. John Mathias of Rutland Gate, organised a petition to request the Council to take over the maintenance of the wall from the Rutland Estate and leave a right of way from the northern part of Knightsbridge to the south and Brompton Road. Those of us who live nearer to Hyde Park have reason to be grateful to the memory of Mr. Mathias, and it was his widow, Mrs. Ludmila Mathias, a member of the Knightsbridge Association, who

suggested the plaque to commemorate the story of this unusual amenity.

His Excellency Baron Rüdiger von Wechmar, performing his last duty as Ambassador from the Federal Republic of West Germany, joined in the ceremony and the acting Lord Mayor presented a bouquet to Mrs. Mathias.

The storm of October 16th 1987 destroyed many trees in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens and the Association was quick to respond to the invitation from the Prince of Wales' Royal Parks' Tree Appeal to join in raising money to carry out an extensive replanting programme.

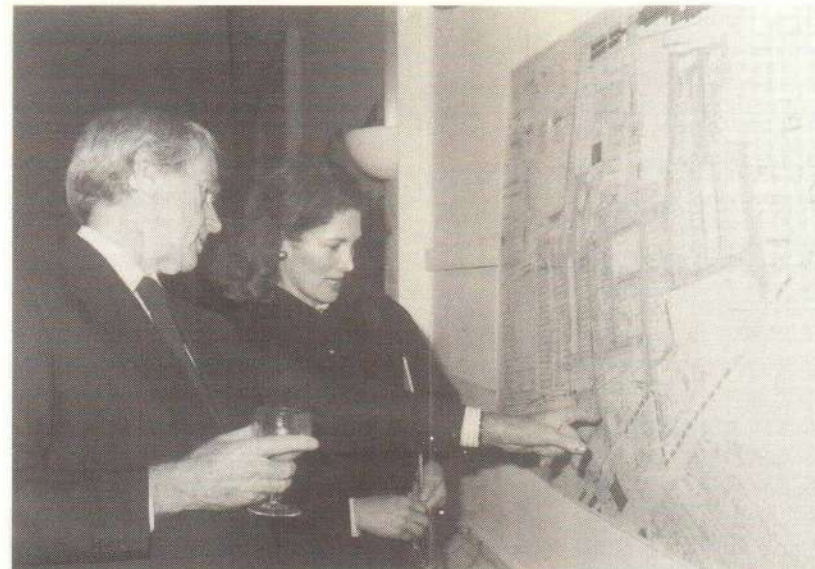
Individual members of the Association have contributed generously, and during May many members and friends manned three collection stands in Harrods which the management had kindly agreed to make available, as well as generously contributing on their own account.

Money is still needed for this important cause, and the Treasurer will be happy to continue to receive donations. A ceremonial planting for the Association will take place in Hyde Park in the early Spring.

RECEPTION BEFORE THE 1987 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



John Olofson, Frances Phillipps and Patricia Ford.



Digby Wills and Greta Fenston.



The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Kevin Gardner, the Mayor of Kensington, Cllr Elizabeth Russell, and the current Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Elizabeth Flach.



Michael Goldstone, Klaus Schilling and Gordon Shingleton.



Peter Grootenhuis and John Wallis.



Moira Charkham, Teddy Mitford and Jonathan Charkham.



David McDonald, Cllr Mrs Elizabeth Flach and Sidney Sporle.



Sir Archibald and Lady Ross.



Sir James and Lady Duncan and Tryfon Kedros.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

The Traffic and Parking Committee, chaired by Dr. Stanley Steel, has found its workload increasing as vehicles of every type continually threaten to take over the city from its inhabitants.

Increasingly, planning applications demand careful scrutiny of their implications on traffic flows and their provision for extra parking which is already woefully inadequate in the neighbourhood.

New developments must be looked at not only for their artistic merit and their impact on the environment, but also for their effect on traffic movement. Also single occupancy buildings which have one car parking space in front of them, if converted into flats will then generate several extra cars which need to be accommodated somewhere in the neighbourhood.

The Traffic Committee has been asking both local authorities to inspect the area to see what extra residents' parking can be provided. The good news from Westminster Planning Department is that it is intended to increase the 'respark' spaces in the locality substantially in the coming months.

Westminster has currently introduced an

experimental pay and display machine on streets in a limited area. The scheme for the dual use of meters, allowing their use by residents holding valid parking permits, has been recommended to be extended to all the controlled parking zones in Westminster, and we hope that the relevant committee will confirm it.

Continuing its campaign to sign the streets to deter lorries and coaches from entering residential squares and streets which are unsuitable for such traffic, the Committee is still pressing for a sign to the entrance to Montpelier Street saying 'unsuitable for long vehicles'. Frequently lorries or coaches entering this deceptively wide street, get stuck either at the top of Montpelier Square or at the entrance to Trevor Place, bringing traffic to a standstill in both directions.

The closure of South Carriage Drive in Hyde Park on Sundays has caused some irritation, and the Committee has recommended that large clearly printed notices should replace the present handwritten ones at the entrances at Princes Gate and Bowater House so as to be easily visible to motorists.

LITTER AND RUBBISH



Refuse dumped at the wrong time; an eyesore for the neighbours.

The constant war against litter and rubbish waged by Frances Rice and her Committee has succeeded in making the residential areas of Knightsbridge comparatively clean compared with other parts of the City. To achieve this has meant dedicated work and constant communication with the Cleansing Departments of both local authorities. It is most important that people co-operate by putting out their rubbish on the appointed days and times, and there are still far too many residents who dump bags of rubbish outside their houses on non-collection days. Westminster City Council has recently begun putting signs on the lampposts in the area giving collection details.

Unfortunately in commercial areas also, and in particular in the Kensington & Chelsea area of Brompton Road and Cheval Place, too many businesses are putting bags of rubbish in the streets on the wrong days and times whilst the litter and rubbish thrown into the streets is once again on the increase.



Left: Collection times are now clearly signposted in parts of Westminster. Right: Dilapidated and unswept island in a Brompton Road crossing.

As foreshadowed in last year's Report, Westminster City Council has gone ahead with its intention to privatise the collection of refuse and street cleansing. It is a pointer to the complexity of the task and the expertise needed to perform it, that there were only two contenders for the job, one from the Council's own Cleansing Department, and the second from the Council officers themselves in a private capacity. Thus, when the City's own labour force disappears there will only be the newly licensed company in private control as the sole body prepared to take on this responsibility, producing a quasi-monopoly

situation in future years.

For the present it should be said that the three ex-Council staff who are to run the new operation are very experienced men who have co-operated with the Knightsbridge Association for many years and the Committee wishes them well in their venture.

It must, however, be emphasised that it is still a fundamental duty of Westminster City Council to keep the streets clean of rubbish and litter. Ratepayers will hold the Council responsible for any fall in standards and no penalties levied against the contractors would be of any comfort should this occur.

SOCIAL AND EVENTS

There were again no major social events during the year but, it is hoped that these popular gatherings will begin again in 1989 starting with the tree planting mentioned in the Heritage report. The Chairman of the Social and Events Committee, Nina Wallis, would be very grateful to any one who would like to help her in organising events. It is pleasing to report that in the Westminster City Council garden and window box competition members of the Association figure prominently.

The silver cup for first place in the garden square category was awarded to Ennismore Gardens and a Certificate of Excellence to Rutland Gate lower garden. Certificates of

Excellence also went to Mrs. Jean Lyell, a member of the Main Committee, for her window box display, to Kingston House South in the communal category and to the YWCA at 39 Ennismore Gardens for their 'small commercial display'.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, 15th December, 1988 at Holy Trinity Brompton Church Hall. The reception, which will be from 6 o'clock, will be attended by the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Kensington and other dignitaries and guests from both Councils, and the local Police, and all are always very happy to answer any questions and to join in discussions.



THE TREE ON KNIGHTSBRIDGE GREEN

Two years ago the Knightsbridge Association and some of the leading traders in the area co-ordinated an effort to raise the necessary funds to illuminate the large plane tree on Knightsbridge Green. Such has been the response that this year, with the aid of Harrods Engineering Department on the technical side, and help from a number of new contributors, it has been possible to double the illumination. The Association is grateful to all those who have made this possible.

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FINANCIAL

The finances of the Association, controlled by our Treasurer, Christine Gilbertson, continue to be satisfactory. As always this is due to the careful husbanding of our resources.

Much of the work of the Association is as valuable to the local business concerns as it is to the resident population, and it is pleasing that so many business houses appreciate this fact and support our efforts.

It is essential that this support should continue because funds may be required at any time to obtain professional assistance in the face of a threat to the integrity of the neighbourhood.

APPRECIATIONS

The activities described in this report could not have been achieved without the selfless dedication of so many people who devote much of their time and talents to the protection and enhancement of life in Knightsbridge.

It is of course impossible to name them all, but the Committee owes a debt to Richard Robinson who continues to chair the Environment Committee despite the heavy demands of City life. This committee, has, too, been lucky to have had so much time and expertise from Michael Wright who has borne much of the burden associated with planning applications. Terence Digby-Seymour, who is retiring from chairmanship of the membership committee, deserves the thanks of the Association for his hard work during recent years.

My grateful thanks are due to Joyce Goodman for her help with this report and to the chairmen and members of all the Association's committees. It is impossible to find new words each year to express my gratitude, and the Association's debt, to our honorary secretary, Carol Seymour-Newton, who runs the administration so charmingly and efficiently and without whose amazing efforts it would not be possible for the Association to function at such a high level.

Lastly, my wholehearted appreciation and the Committee's grateful thanks to all the members of the Association whose interest and public spirit assure the continued success of the Knightsbridge Association in the service of the community.

Neville Labovitch
December 1988

ST GEORGE'S HOSPITAL, HYDE PARK CORNER, AND ITS ARCHITECT

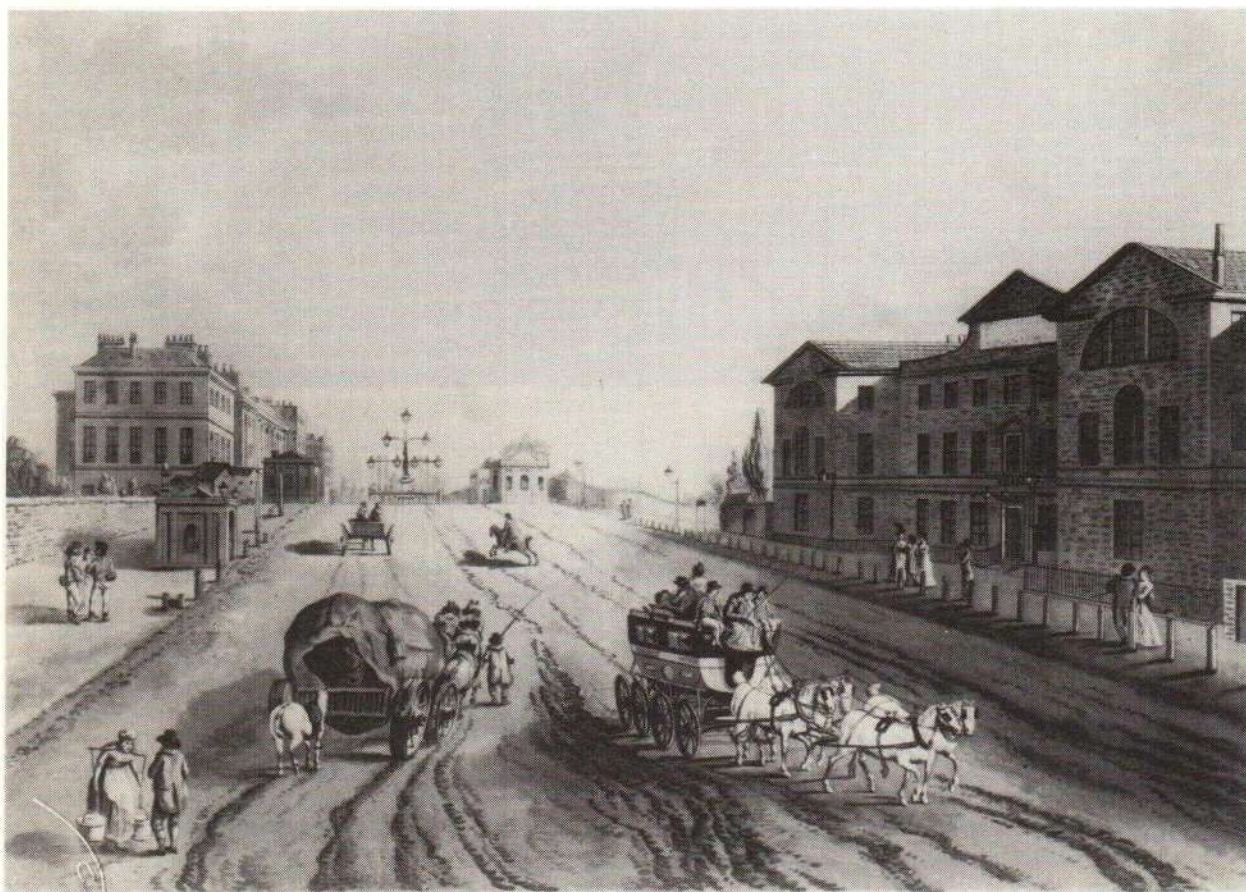
A brief history

by Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert

St George's Hospital was founded in 1733 by a group of Governors from Westminster Hospital who considered their own building unequal to the needs of the charity. They looked at a number of buildings and settled on Lanesborough House at Hyde Park Corner, thus providing the patients with the benefit of a country air 'which in the general opinion of the physicians would be more effectual than physick in the cure of many distempers, especially such as mainly affect the poor, who live in close and confined spaces within these great cities.' The village of Knightsbridge had a reputation for healthiness. Lanesborough House was built in 1719 by James Lane, 2nd Viscount Lanesborough. The Governors rented it for £60 a year. It was a plain redbrick building, three storeys high. Wings were added later by Isaac Ware. It faced north on to Hyde Park. By 1745 it accommodated 250 patients and 20 nurses. A rustic cottage lay about 30 yards west of the hospital occupied

by Huggitt, the cow-keeper, who supplied the hospital with milk. Originally there were six physicians, and three surgeons. The full diet was, Breakfast: one pint milk pottage; Dinner: 8 oz meat (four days), 1 pint pease pottage (other three days); Supper: 2 oz cheese or 1½ oz butter or 1 pint or broth; Daily: 14 oz bread, quart of small beer. Patients who died were buried in the burial ground of St George's, Hanover Square, hence also presumably the name of the hospital.

The greatest son of the hospital was John Hunter, father of scientific surgery and furtherer of all biological sciences, who was appointed in 1768, aged 40. He suffered from angina and often said that if his temper was roused he might die, which he did in a board meeting at the hospital. In the 1820s demand for a new hospital and more accommodation to house 350 patients led to a new structure, designed by William Wilkins, which was held to be remarkable for the use of square



The first St George's Hospital, originally the house of Lord Lanesborough, and the Hyde Park Corner turnpike in about 1797.



WILLIAM WILKINS & THE DESIGN OF ST GEORGE'S

The architect, William Wilkins, 1778–1839, who also built University College, London, and the National Gallery, based his design on the monument of Thrasyllos on the Acropolis at Athens. He was an expert on classical Greek architecture and nearly all his buildings are in the Neo-Grecian manner, which had become popular in the Regency period. Tastes in architecture can change rapidly, however, and in 1838 'when the National Gallery opened Wilkins was acutely distressed by the storm of abuse it provoked from Gothic revivalists such as Pugin'. (A. Service, *The Architects of London*, Architectural Press.)

Wilkins won an open competition to design the new hospital in December 1826 and part of the building had been completed by 1830 – it was built in three stages as funds were raised – although one wing of the old hospital

was then still in use. Wilkins originally designed a portico with Corinthian columns, but changed these to square Doric columns in order to avoid conflict with the Corinthian portico which the Wyatts had added to Apsley House for Wellington. The building was later modified by A P Mee, who added a further storey to the side wings in 1859. This was extended across the front in 1868 when the 'ablution extensions' were added to the north and south elevations.

There are a number of interior rooms in the hospital that are considered to be of special architectural interest. These include the chapel, the entrance foyer, the main corridors and staircases and the first floor gallery. Over the years the interior has been greatly altered and modernised.

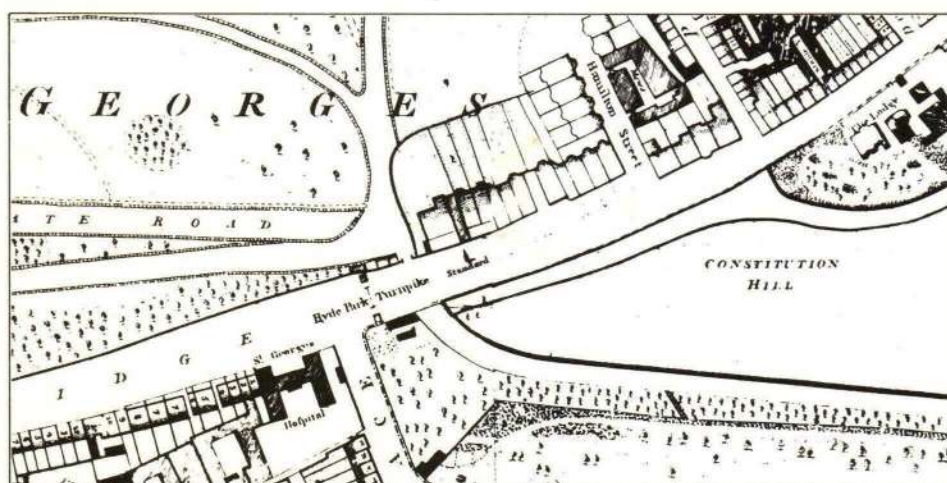


columns. Wilkins's building, which was begun in 1827, cost £40,000. The hospital has many other famous sons including Thomas Young, Professor of Natural Philosophy to the Royal Institution, and Henry Gray whose *Anatomy* (1858) has gone into over 30 editions. In 1834 a medical school was set up in Kinnerton Street nearby. Previously teaching had been done at Lane's School, 1 Grosvenor Crescent across the road. In 1868 the school was moved to the hospital. In 1869 a convalescent home was established at Wimbledon on 28 acres with money left by Atkinson Morley.

The hospital and medical school moved to Tooting in 1980.*

The first lease of the extended site, granted by Sir Richard Grosvenor in 1767, was valid 'as long as the premises should be occupied as a public hospital', a condition which remained in subsequent extensions of the lease. When the NHS ceased to occupy the hospital, the site therefore reverted to its owner, the Grosvenor Estate. Imry Property Holdings Ltd is now converting the hospital into an hotel and developing the adjoining site as an office block.

*From *The Encyclopaedia of London* published by Macmillan, London.



Above: The view from the hospital windows in the late 19th Century. Compare the portico of Apsley House, which, remaining connected by adjacent buildings to Piccadilly, still justified its nickname of 'No 1, London'.

Left: Map of Hyde Park Corner in 1819, showing the old hospital and the site of the turnpike. Apsley House, built for Lord Bathurst, had not yet been enlarged by the Wyatts for Wellington.

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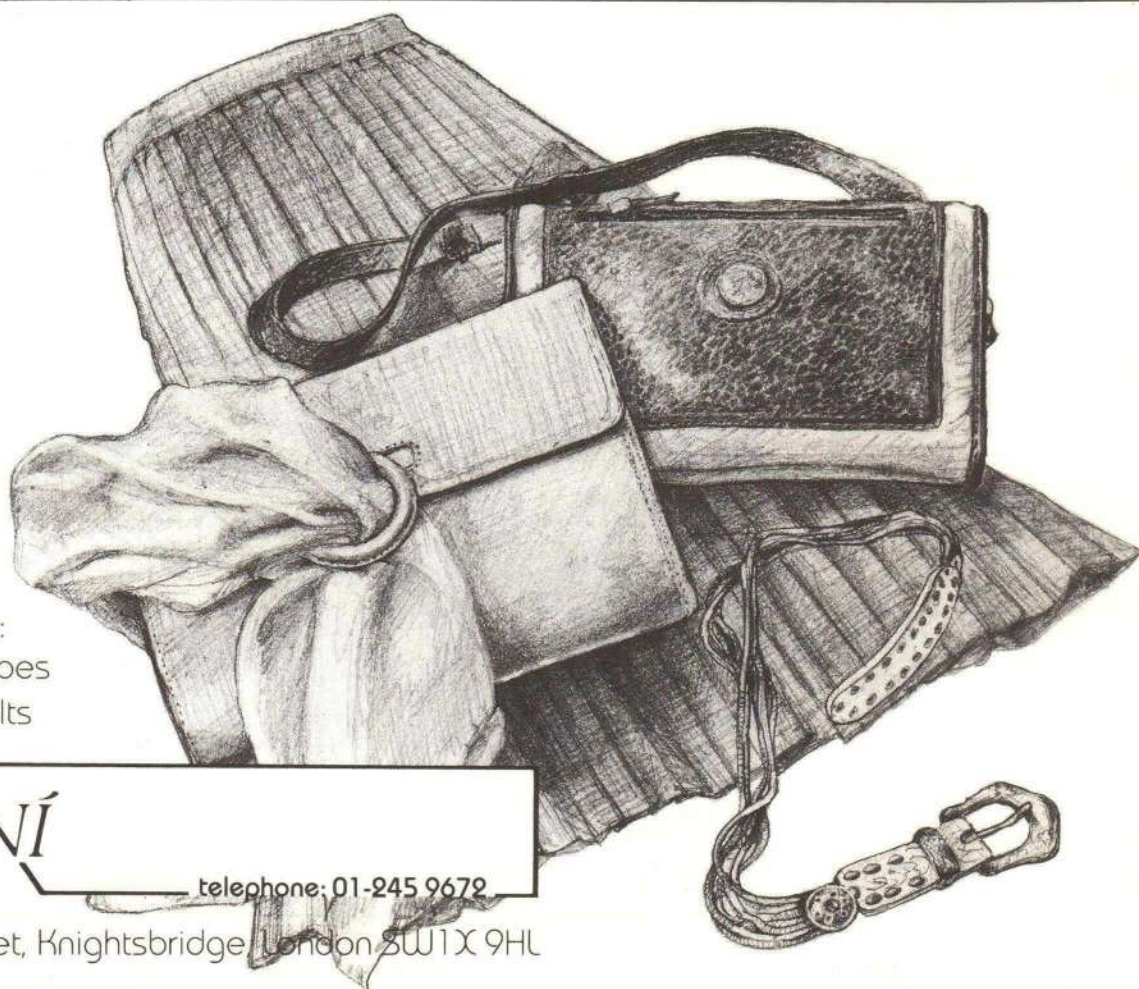
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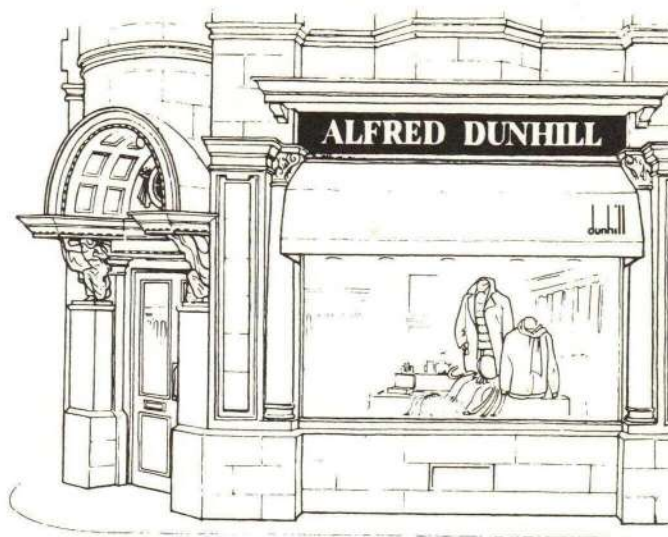
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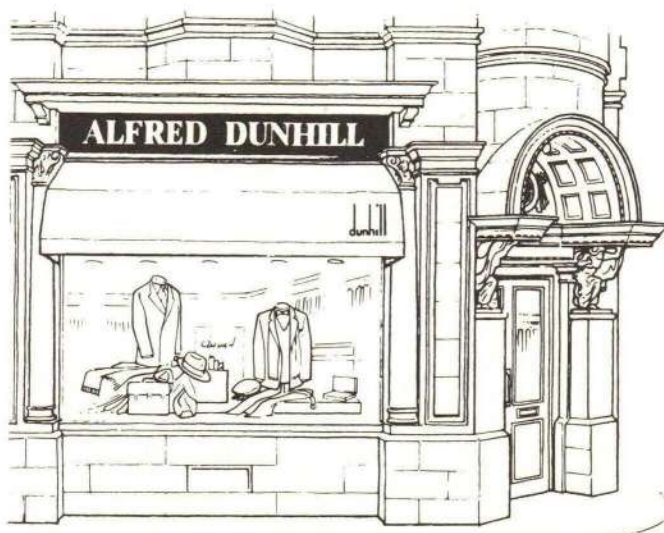


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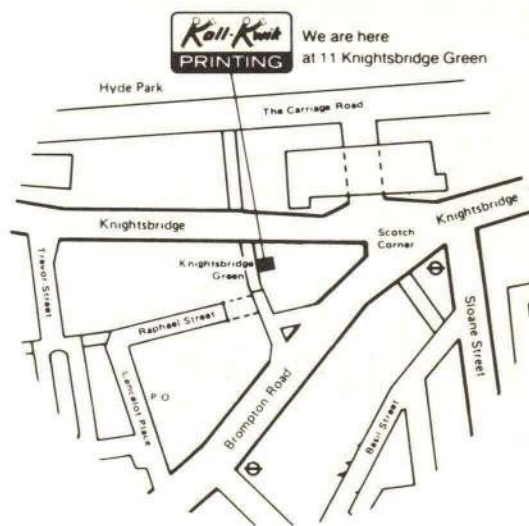
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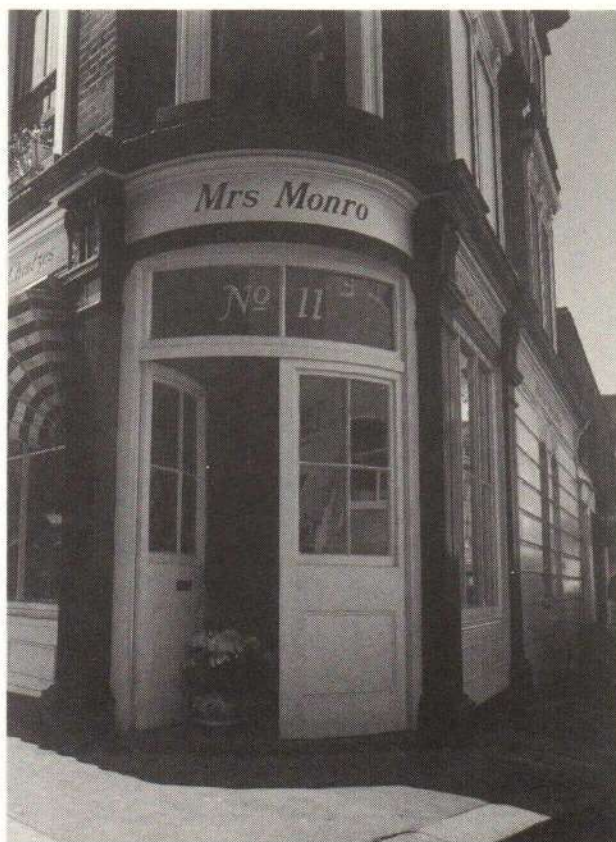
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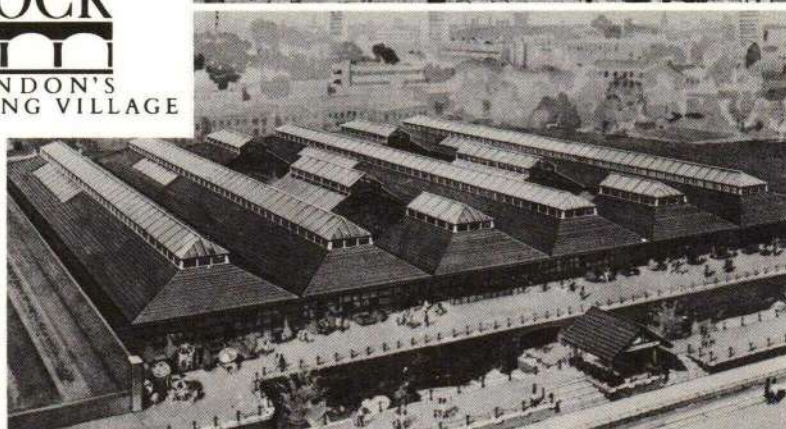


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