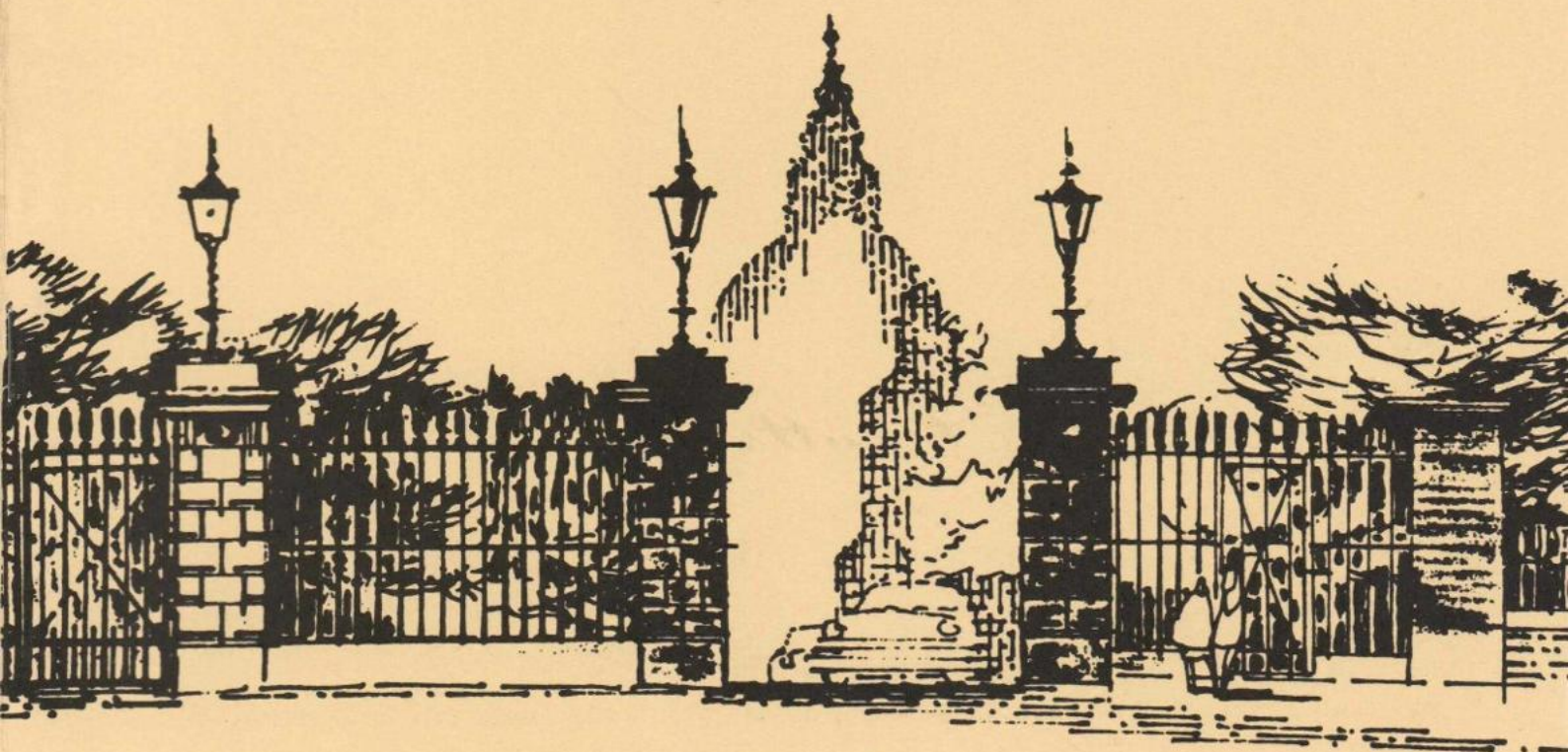


THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

28th ANNUAL REPORT December 1989



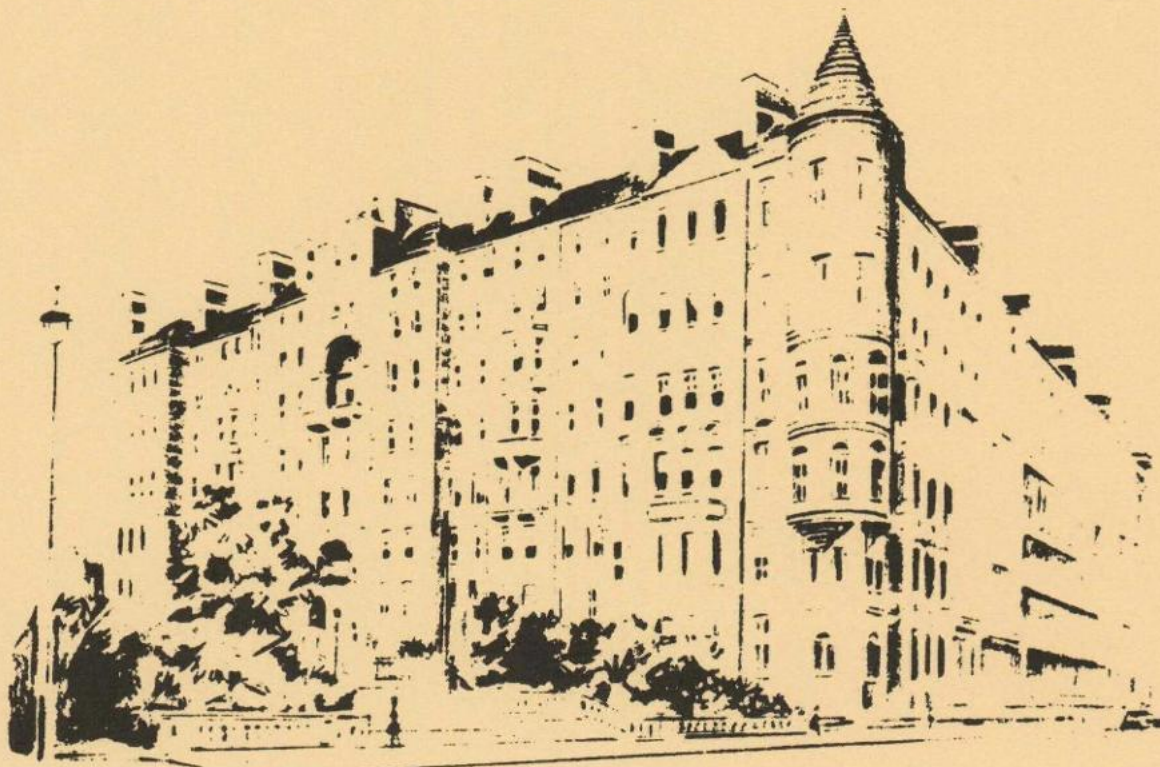
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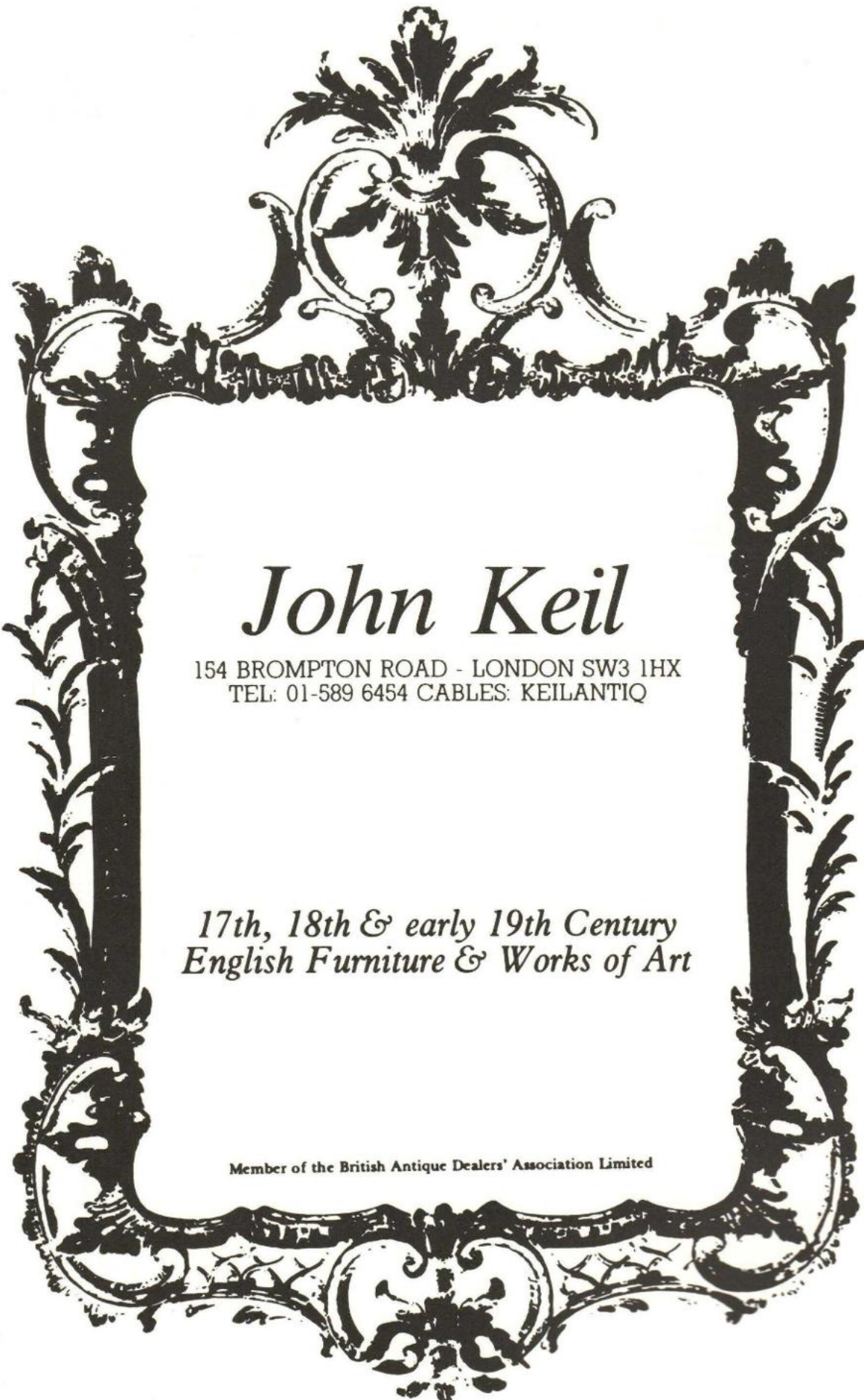
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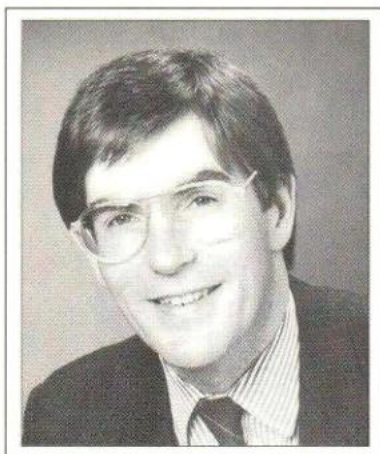
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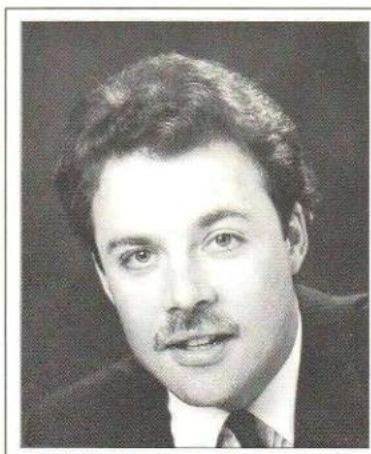
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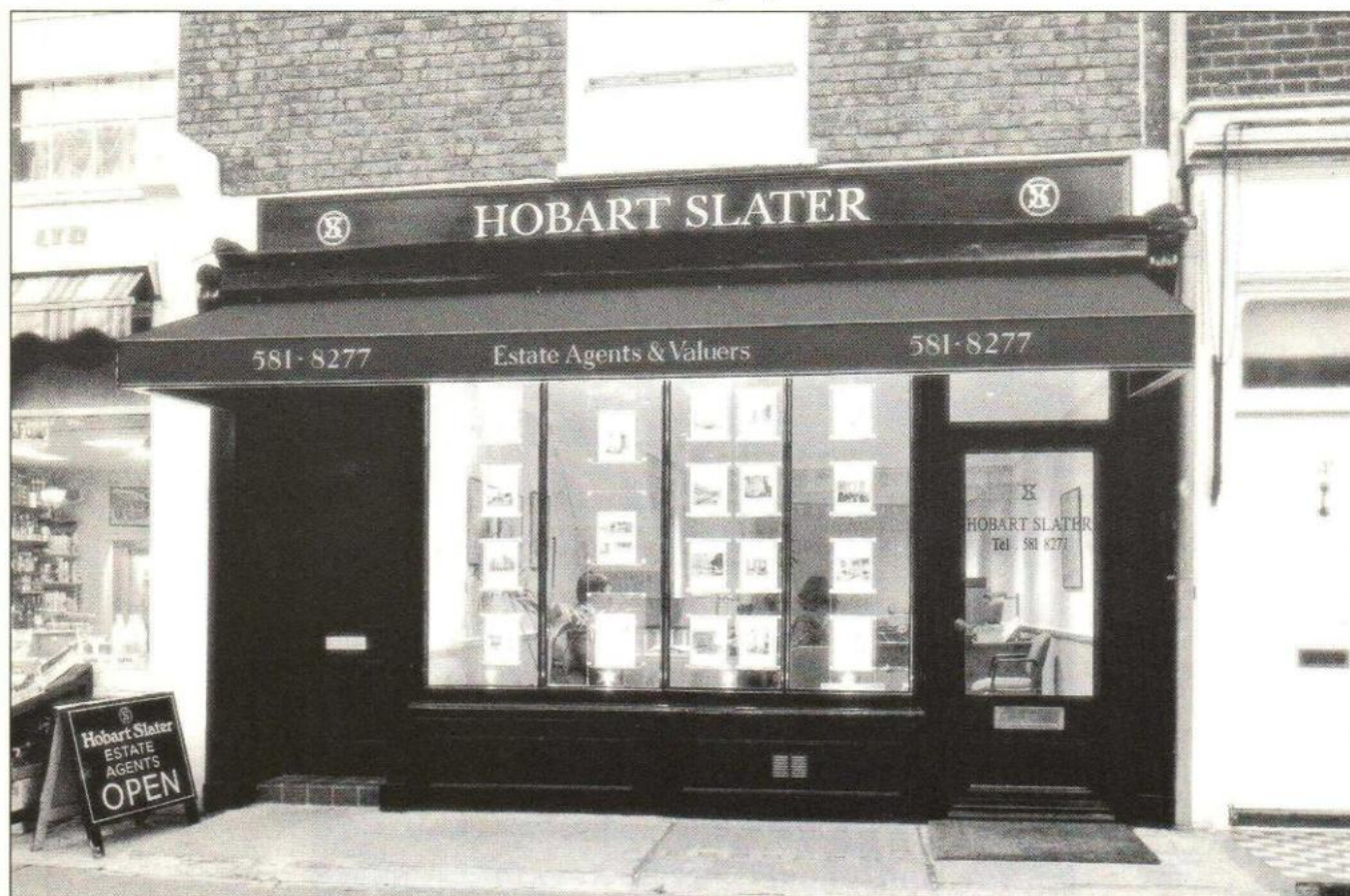


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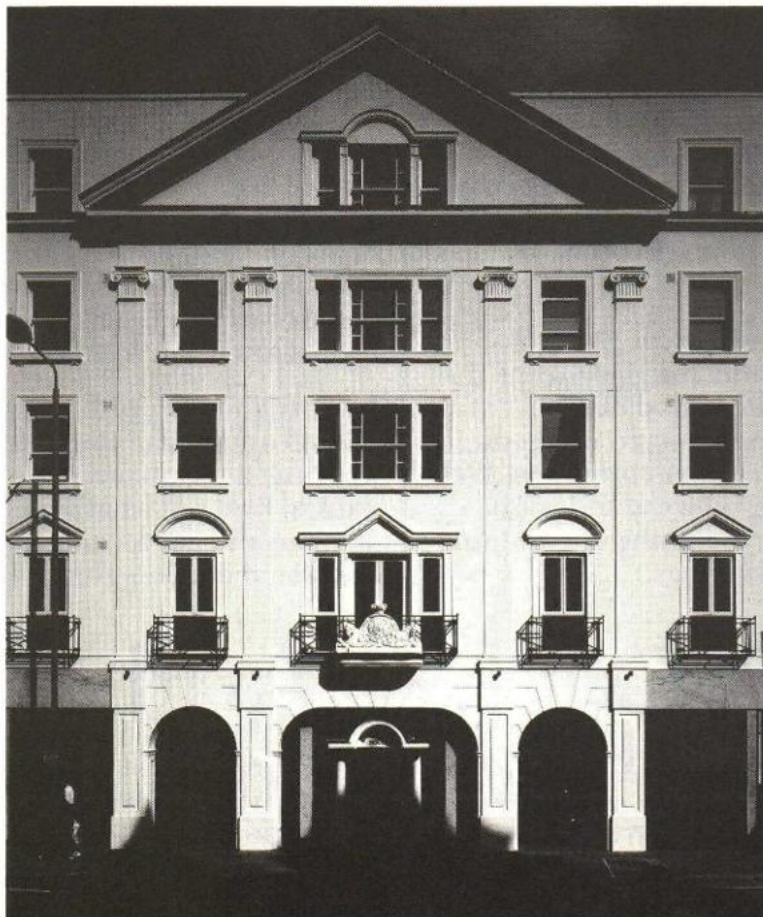


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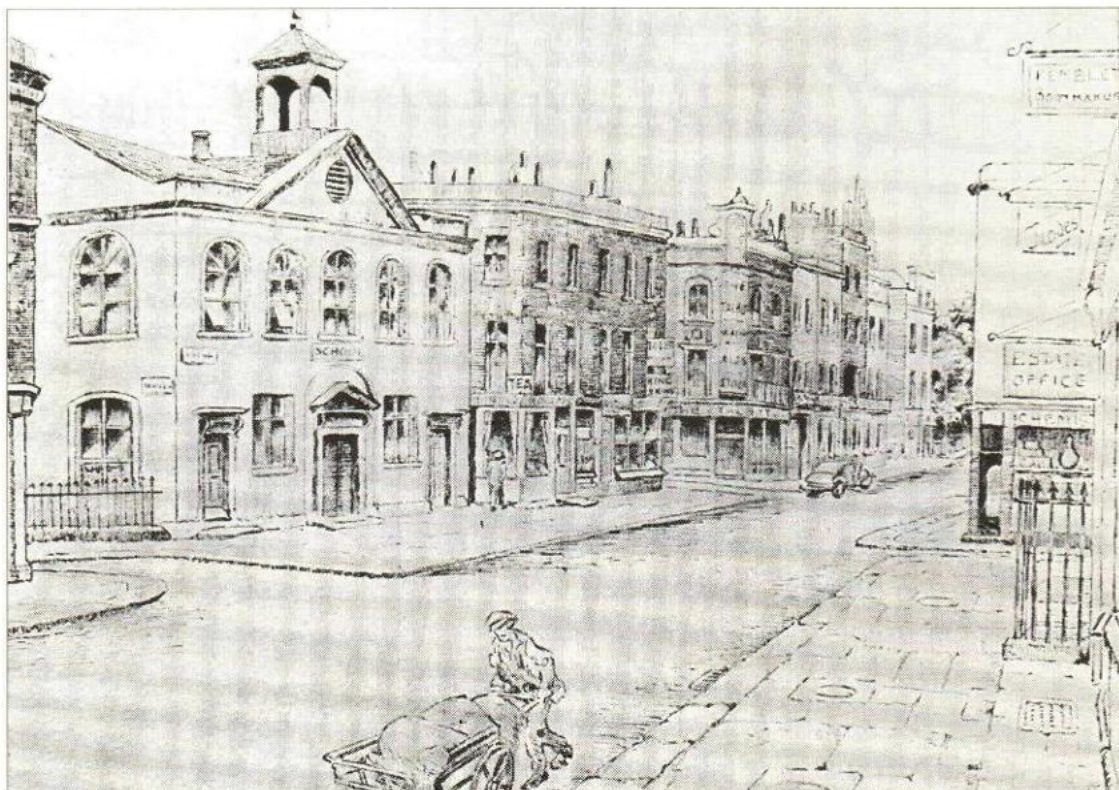
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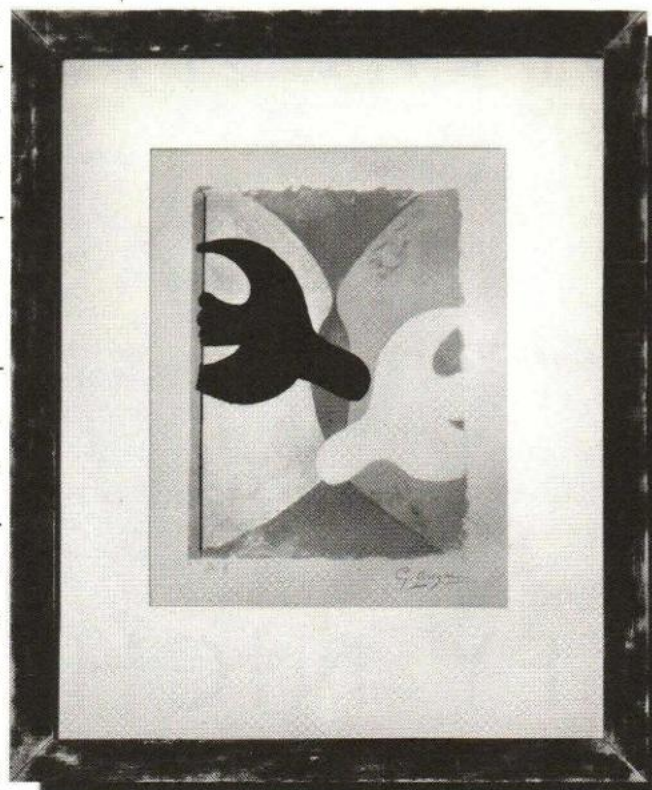
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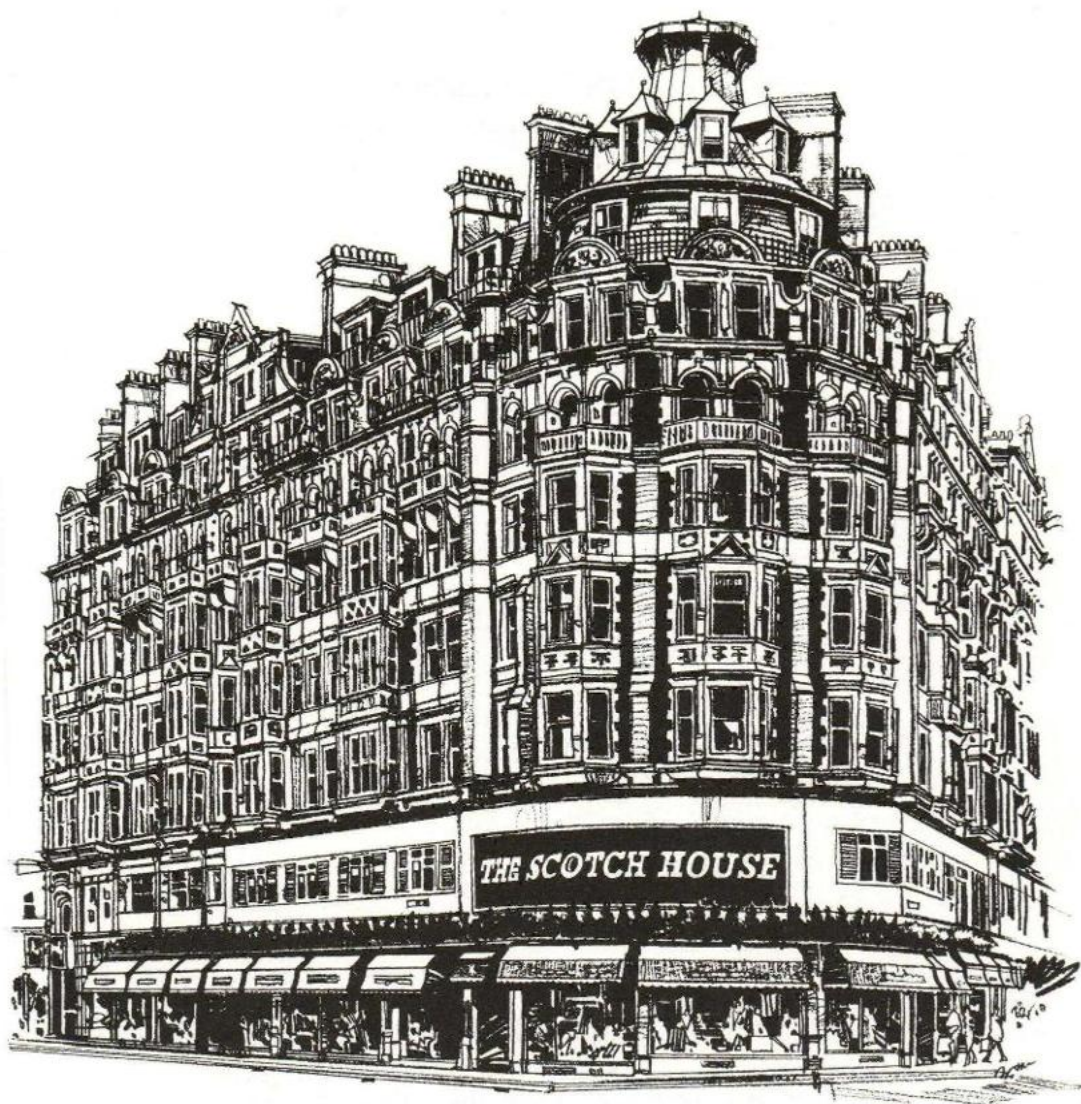
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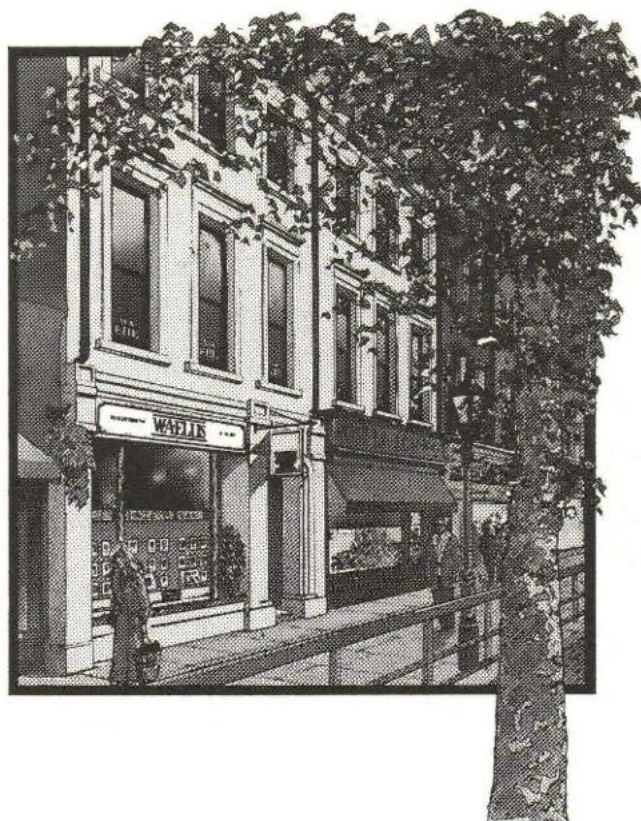


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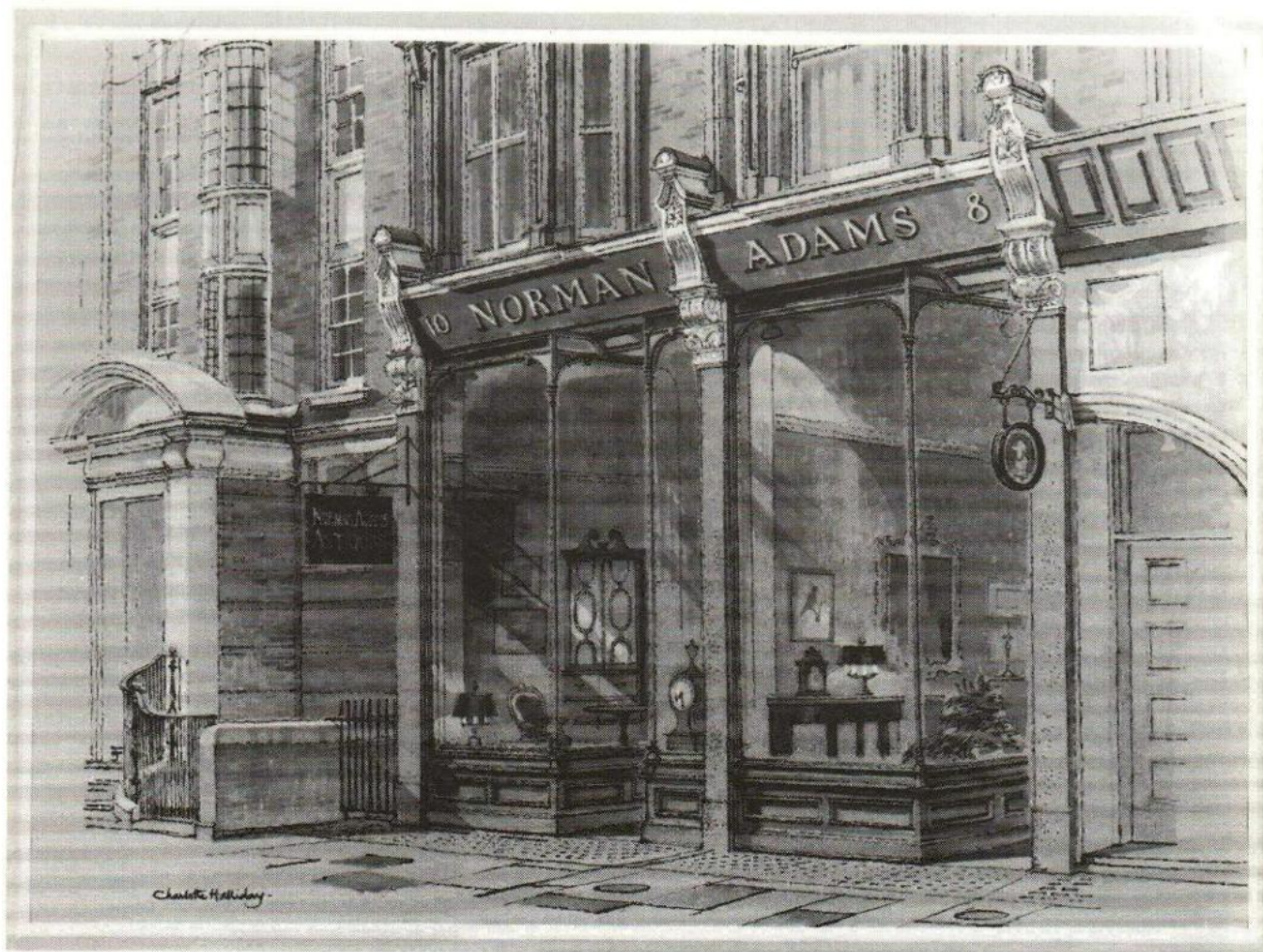
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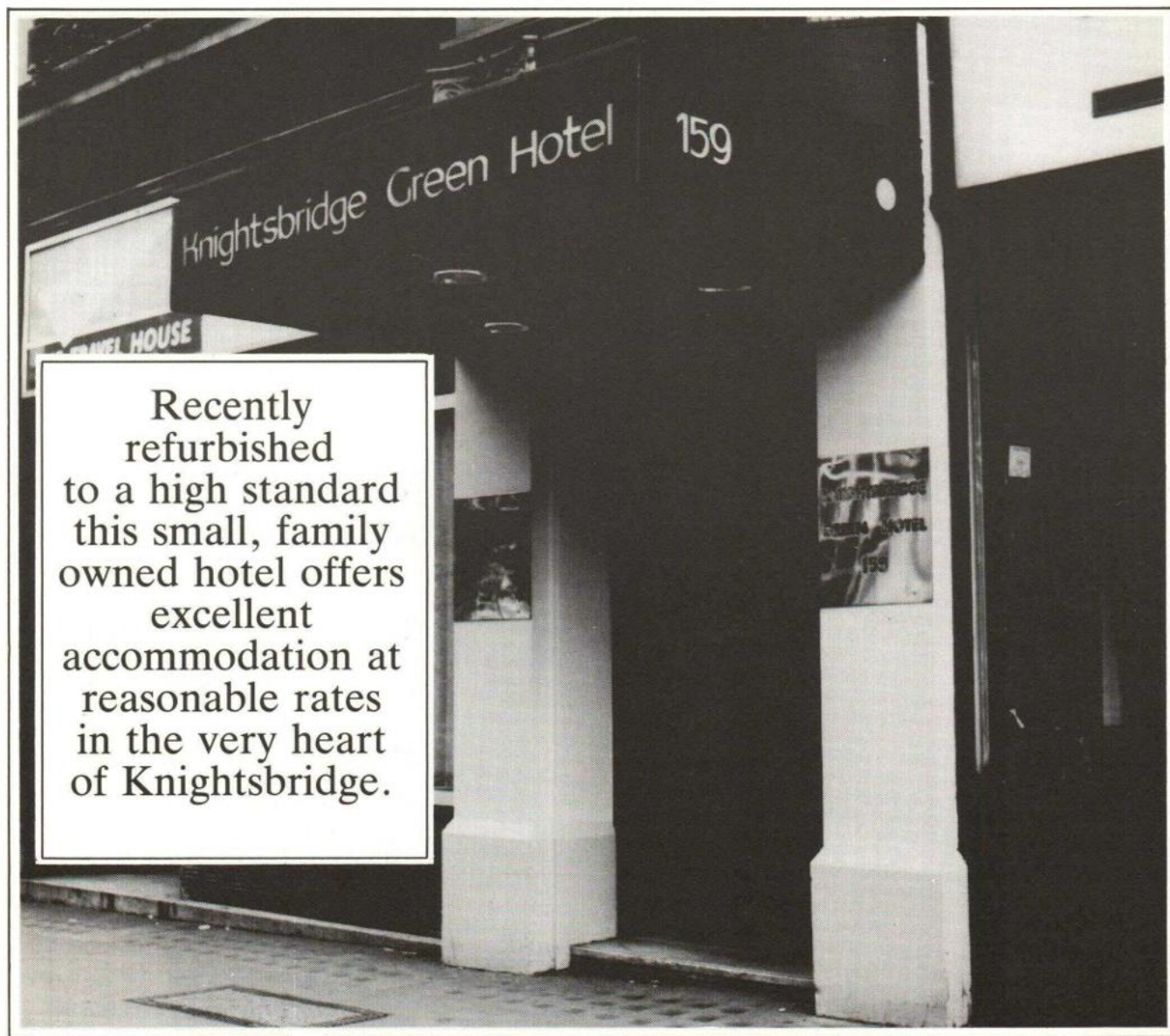
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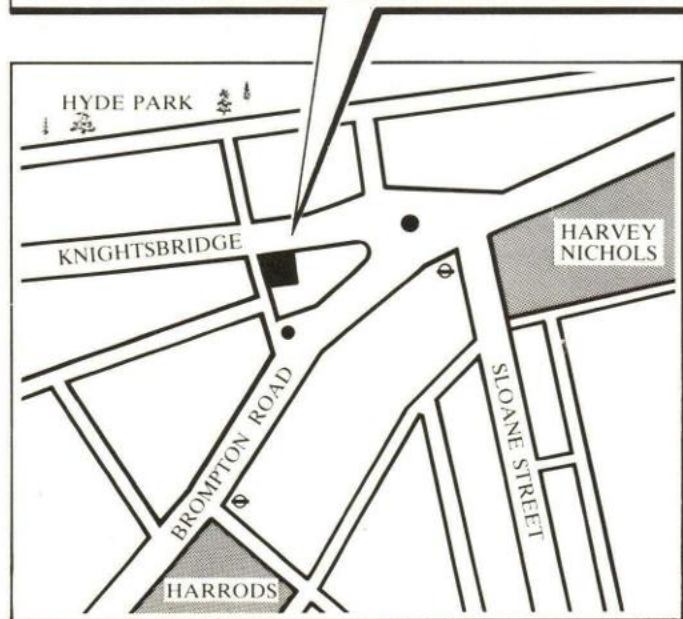
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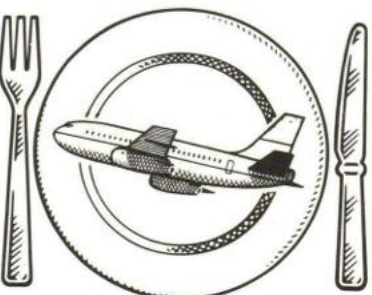


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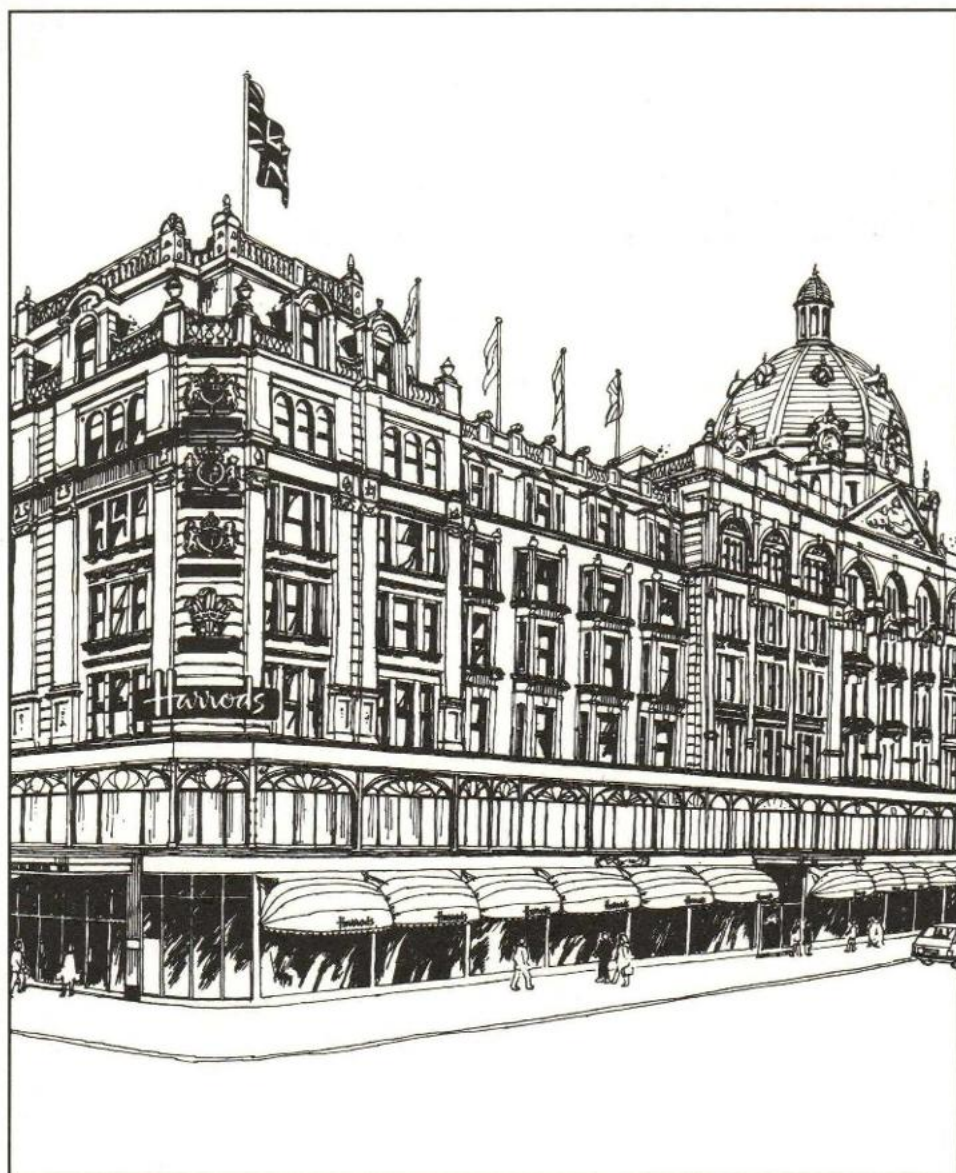
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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

We are all green now. To those inspired campaigners, who have laboured for so many years to make us all appreciate the fragile nature of our planet, this must bring a sense of satisfaction and achievement. They must also exchange rueful smiles as they witness the enthusiasm with which so many in high places now preach the message with all the zeal of the converted.

Unfortunately, conservation – in the sense of caring for our urban heritage – has not yet become so universally accepted. Bodies such as the Knightsbridge Association cannot relax and take for granted a general acceptance of what seems to its members the only common sense approach to modern living.

The issue is no longer one of senseless demolition. That battle has largely been won, although there are still cases where respectable and well-known buildings are removed for no reason other than to replace them by more valuable ones. It is certainly not because of an antipathy towards modern architecture, because many conservationists, and the Knightsbridge Association in particular, welcome modern architecture provided its quality matches that of its surroundings.

The concern is all about preserving the

quality of life in an increasingly congested city. London has a traffic system unable to cope with this congestion which is often greatly increased by over-development. It is natural that the most successful and prosperous areas should attract new development – but such areas will rapidly lose their charm if new building plans do not take account of the capacity of the neighbourhood to support a higher density and, in particular, the amount of extra traffic which the new development would bring, together with the ability of the public transport system to cope with an increased load.

A recent example is the proposal by London Transport to put a very large and obtrusive building over South Kensington underground station with three floors of shopping and four of offices. The original plans, which have luckily now been withdrawn, would have changed the whole nature of a neighbourhood which, at the moment, works very well. It would be a classic example of cultural shock. Conservation means more than maintaining historic buildings; it also means protection of the integrity of people's way of life.

It is very much a question of standards. The Association, like its counterparts in other areas of the city, has been working for

decades now to counter the floods of litter, rubbish and general sleaze which threaten to engulf the streets and also, what seems to visitors to this great city, a general neglect of the highways and infrastructure.

It is the duty of everyone living and working in Knightsbridge to help in every

way to keep the neighbourhood clean but, in the end, it is political will that counts. The centre of London should be an example to visitors and not a disgrace and an inconvenience to its citizens. It is up to those who control local government to get their priorities right.



2-8 Rutland Gate. The new building which sits happily with its older neighbour as a fitting entrance to Rutland Gate.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Environment Committee, which carries the heaviest burden of all the Association's committees, had another busy and productive year. Every planning application in the area submitted to Westminster City Council or the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea was examined and, when necessary, further investigations were made and site meetings held.

In recent years, developers have increasingly approached the Committee for its views prior to submitting planning applications, thus apprising themselves of local feelings and saving much time in the planning process for all concerned. This does, however, increase the workload of members of the Committee.

The Committee is led with considerable flair by Richard Robinson, who has occupied this important position for five years. He is ably assisted by his two Vice Chairmen, Michael Wright and Raymond Henley. The Committee has a group of dedicated members, including Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, one of our distinguished architects, and it is pleasing to report that Lesley MacDonagh, a planning solicitor, has agreed to join the Committee,

where her expertise will be greatly appreciated.

Due to the size and complexity of some of the developments in Knightsbridge, many of the applications dealt with in the previous year have again been before the Committee in revised form. Following the unfavourable reaction to plans to build underground flats in their garden, the Royal Geographical Society dropped this controversial element from the scheme. Permission has now been granted by Westminster City Council to build fourteen flats against the flank of Albert Hall Mansions, facing onto the garden, underground accommodation for the Alpine Club, and an underground car park. The Committee is still unhappy about this development and continues to make representations to the Council about the need to reconsider traffic circulation in Exhibition Road, which is plagued by U-turns. This problem will only be exacerbated by the effect of the traffic from the large car park debouching onto the road at this particular point. Building work is due to begin in the spring, and one satisfactory matter is that the railings will be restored on the Kensington Gore frontage.

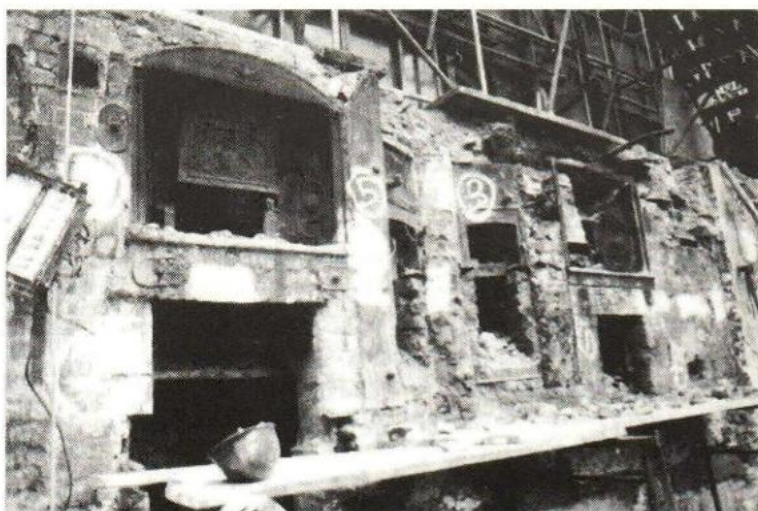
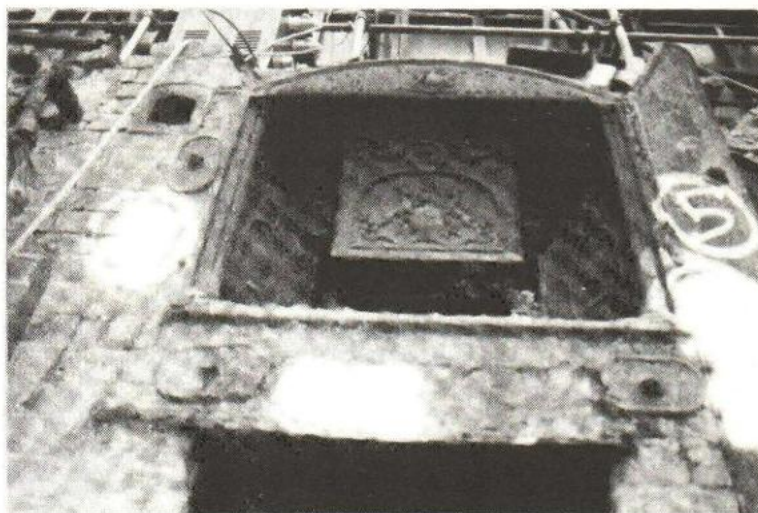
The plans put forward by Harrods to increase the size of their car park in Brompton Place and to develop the site further with a block of offices, continue to cause concern to residents living near by. There is further concern about an increase of traffic turning into Brompton Road. This proposal was again turned down by the Planning Committee of the Royal Borough and so far there has been no new application. We are still awaiting proposals by Harrods for the future of their depository at the bottom of Trevor Square.

The preliminary work is well under way for the restoration of the former St George's Hospital building, which is being converted into an hotel, and also on the new office block which is being constructed beside it. Ownership has again passed to a new company and during the year the Association has been consulted on various revisions to the original plan.

The Appeal by the freeholders of Albert Court against the Council's refusal to allow a development of flats on the roof of this listed building was finally rejected after a six day hearing. The plan was opposed strenuously by the Council and Albert Court Residents' Association with the support of the Association. There remains concern about the pressure by the owners to convert more basement space into offices.

2-8a Rutland Gate, which occupies the western side of the entrance to this imposing square, is now almost complete. The developers have been conscious of the need to create a fitting entrance to Rutland Gate with a building that sits comfortably with the one facing it on the east side. This has been accomplished, reflecting aspects of the Mathew Wyatt buildings originally on the site, and a high standard of workmanship and detailing has gone into the construction. Whilst the top floor and the tinted glazing slightly detract from the overall effect, the result is a welcome addition to Knightsbridge and a great improvement on the old

Nineteenth Century Bakery



19th Century cast iron ovens revealed in the vaults of 118 Brompton Road during the recent demolition work. They belonged to Spiking's High Class Bakery which stood on the site.

German Consulate which it replaces. To complement the building, the developer has restored the frontage wall, complete with railings and lamps, most effectively and it is the Association's hope that the east terrace may be inspired to follow suit by restoring their currently dilapidated frontage wall. As a contribution to the neighbourhood, the developers have also repaired the damaged pillar at the top of the garden and are restoring the lamp which has been missing for years. This is much appreciated.

The Committee has been aware for some time that several major sites are due for redevelopment in the next few years in the streets from Knightsbridge Green to Lancelot Place and is pleased that, after pressure from the Association and others, the Council has recently designated a new Knightsbridge Green Conservation Area. The Committee has also recommended to the Council that they draw up a planning brief for this area in order to have adequate control over future development, and this is now being done.

The huge overdevelopment on the Normandie Hotel site, which was discussed in last year's report, was turned down by the Council and the developers are taking it to appeal. In the meantime we have recently received revised proposals abandoning two of the proposed basement levels and reducing the size of the hotel from 218 to 154 rooms. The main concession, which is very welcome, is that the developers intend to retain the Knightsbridge frontage as it now stands, which is typical of the Edwardian style of so much of Knightsbridge. The Committee, however, still feels that the present plans are an over development of the site.

In the Montpeliers there has been a trickle of applications for the conversion of houses into flats and maisonettes. The Committee is concerned that the stock of single family houses, which are so much a feature of the hamlet of Knightsbridge, may be greatly reduced and that the nature of this area would change. This is quite apart from the problems caused by increased pressure on the already acute lack of parking for cars. Noting the Association's concern, the Council has agreed to a new policy whereby family dwellings in the Trevors and Montpeliers will be protected, and has also accepted that increased pressure on parking arising from residential conversions will be taken into account in considering planning applications.

The major construction on the west side of Montpelier Street, which has been

undertaken by Eagle Star, was due to begin towards the end of this year. The scheme, which was reviewed in last year's report, is to retain the facade of these well known buildings, rebuild the shops and flats behind them, and demolish two small buildings in Cheval Place replacing them with new structures. All the traders who have been occupying the shops for very many years, including the pub, have now moved out of the buildings. It is sad to see old friends disappearing and it is hoped that it may be possible, both practically and economically, for them to return when the building work is completed.

One phenomenon of the late eighties has been dish antennae. It is just beginning to be evident how damaging to the street scene a poorly sited dish can be. It is pleasing to report that the local authorities are beginning to enforce the existing legislation. The Environment Committee has been active in campaigning to strengthen this control and, during the year, has been working with the Civic Trust, the Royal Fine Art Commission, English Heritage and other conservation bodies to encourage the Department of the Environment to ensure that adequate guidelines and procedures are in place so that serious impairment to the appearance of our towns and country does not take place as the popularity of this form of communication increases.

There has been no news about the two empty sites owned by Imperial College in Princes Gardens on the north and the east sides. Imperial College's advisers have produced a report giving broad outlines for the future of the university campus, but as yet there are no firm propositions on the future of these sites.

The building owned by the Malaysian Government at 37 Ennismore Gardens and 31a Brompton Square has now been sold. Several proposals were put forward for its use, including a teacher's training college, which were strenuously opposed by the Association. But happily it is reverting to residential use and work has now commenced on its refurbishment.

In Hyde Park the Rotten Row Tercentenary Committee has established a manege or open air all-weather riding school. This is sited opposite the barracks in place of the children's playground which has now been moved further east. Princess Anne performed the opening ceremony.

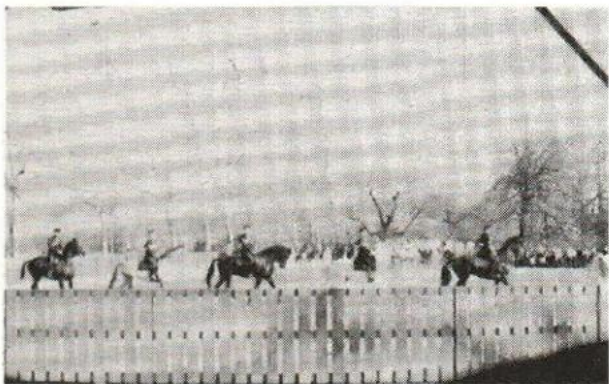
A major change in the park is that the catering rights have now been changed and



1-3 Cheval Place in course of demolition.



An example of dish antennae in the conservation area.



Opening day of the manege in Hyde Park.



The Serpentine Restaurant which is being demolished.

have been awarded to Leith's. The Serpentine restaurant itself is to be demolished because it is unsuitable for modern catering and a new temporary structure is to be erected on the hard shoulder next to the Lido until agreement can be reached on the design and construction of the new restaurant. This is expected to be completed in about three years' time.

Work has not yet started on the repairs to the Albert Memorial, since a great deal of investigatory work has still to be carried out. In order to do this, scaffolding has already gone up around the figure of Prince Albert and, early in the spring will cover the entire monument to its full height. It will take about eighteen months to make a full investigation and it is then expected that a major repair contract will be awarded. The work itself will take about four to five years to complete.

Although the Association's main concern is within Knightsbridge, anything of a major nature which takes place in surrounding areas can have a knock-on effect in adjoining districts. For this reason, the Association was consulted along with other amenity associations on the proposals for the South Kensington station redevelopment. The proposal is for a very large building with four floors of offices above three floors of shopping arcades at the western end of the site. At the eastern part covering about two thirds of its length along Pelham Street it was proposed to have a block of 137 flats with off street parking. Deliveries and servicing to the building were to be via a narrow entry with an internal turntable.

This development, quite unsuitable for such a small scale area, would have a disastrous effect on residential areas surrounding the site. The floor area of the proposed development is more than twice that laid down in the Council's District Plan for the area.

Local opinion is strongly opposed to the scheme and this attitude has been supported by English Heritage and the Royal Fine Art Commission. These bodies have been unanimous in condemning the size and design of the buildings, but there is also the question, not only of the already critical traffic circulation in the area which these proposals will materially worsen, but also of the whole concept of putting such an enormous building in this position. It would completely alter the scale of the neighbourhood with its effects reaching as far as the Boltons in one direction and the Park in the other. It presupposes the need for offices and further shops in an area which is primarily residential.

HERITAGE

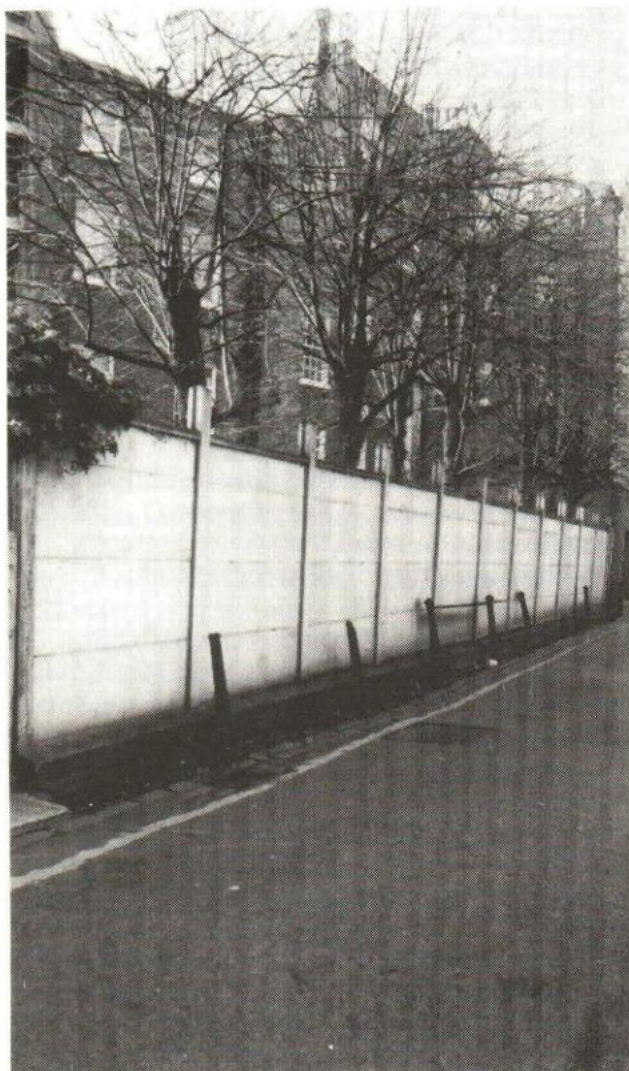
A matter of grave concern to the Heritage Committee is the state of the Albert Steps, where the stone balustrading has been allowed to deteriorate alarmingly. This is broken and eroded and several stretches are missing. The Committee has drawn the attention of Westminster Council to the state of this important historical feature and has forwarded photographs of the damage. The freehold of this site is under the same ownership as Albert Court, which is mentioned in the report of the Environment Committee. It is hoped that the Council will be able to make the necessary arrangements for the freeholder to repair the property but, if not, we will press the Council to take whatever action is necessary to see that the repairs and restoration are carried out.

It is the Heritage Committee's practice to encourage the restoration of garden railings wherever possible and it was welcome news that the Montpelier Square Garden

Committee had decided to raise funds to restore the railings to that attractive square. The Knightsbridge Association has made the first donation to their funds and has written to Westminster City Council urging them to make a grant towards the work. We have no doubt that the Garden Square committee will be successful in completing its task in which it will receive every assistance from the Association.

The Association was again happy to make a small contribution to a very pleasant example of co-operation between Westminster Council and the Royal Borough, which resulted in the reinstatement of the old hitching posts and rails in Ennismore Street. The Royal Borough paid for the casting made from the one remaining undamaged post and Westminster City Council carried out all the necessary work. This has restored a charming feature to Ennismore Street.

Earlier during the year the Association was



Before: The sad relics of the original hitching posts in Rutland Street. After: The restored hitching posts and railings cast from the one remaining original.

approached by the Heritage of London Trust, which was founded to promote architectural conservation in London, to give a donation for the restoration of the cabmen's shelter in Thurloe Place opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Heritage Committee was happy to recommend this.

The Rotten Row Tercentenary Committee, founded to promote the restoration of civilian horsemanship in Hyde Park, is seeking funds to restore the two miles of cast iron railing removed from the Row at the beginning of World War II. The Association has been able to make a contribution both to the railing and to another scheme, brainchild of former Colonel of the Household Cavalry, Lt. Col Seymour Gilbert-Denham, the building of a manege, or all-weather outdoor riding school opposite the barracks, which has now been opened.

The Tercentenary Committee is preparing a programme of equestrian celebrations to mark the 300th anniversary of Rotten Row, and this will include a polo match on the games pitch opposite the barracks some time next year.

Three years ago, during the Association's jubilee celebrations, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales switched on the first of the restored lamps along Kensington Road at the top of Rutland Gate; it was the Association's jubilee project to restore all these ornamental lights. The completion of work at 2-8a Rutland Gate will see the restoration of three more, but there are still some missing and it is hoped that eventually they will all be in place. We also hope that the restoration of the wall and railings fronting 2-8a Rutland Gate will persuade other freeholders and leaseholders along Kensington Road to co-operate with the Association in restoring their railings and lamps.

The Albert Steps – A delightful feature of Knightsbridge now neglected and with large sections of its balustrades missing or in bad condition.





Klaus Schilling, Michael Goldstone, Peggy Walmsley

RECEPTION BEFORE THE 1988 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Raymond Benardout, Linda Benardout and Paolo Biscioni



Ian Walker, Prof. Peter Grootenhuys, The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke MP, Jonathan Charkham.



Sir Robin and Lady Gillett.



The Hon. Sarah Wills, David Evans, Joyce Evans



R Crolla and Esther Simler.



Richard Rice and Richard Thompson



Chief Superintendent Derek Cook, Chelsea Police, Superintendent Alan Wareing, Westminster Police and Christine Gilbertson.



The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr. Elizabeth Flach, and Kai Leslie.

1988 AGM RECEPTION



Sir Nicholas Henderson



Bill Heinemann and Malcolm Peech



Moira Charkham and Pam Burton



The Mayor & Mayoress of Kensington & Chelsea, Cllr. & Mrs. Ernest Tomlin.

SOCIAL AND EVENTS

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 11th December at Holy Trinity Brompton Church Hall. As usual the meeting will be preceded by a reception starting at 6 o'clock and attended by many distinguished guests, including the Lord Mayor of Westminster, the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, members and officers of both councils and members of the

local police forces. At the meeting our guests have always been happy to answer questions and join in the discussions.

The Association had intended to have a tree planting ceremony during the autumn following its support for the Prince of Wales Royal Parks Tree Appeal. However, this has now been deferred to the early part of next year.

LAW AND ORDER

The newly formed Law and Order Committee met for the first time this January under the chairmanship of Gordon Shingleton, who is an expert in security. The committee includes two Justices of the Peace and officers from the local police, as well as representatives from the business community.

It is hoped that regular contact between the police and the local population will increase the security of the neighbourhood. One of the first actions of the committee has been to produce jointly with Gerald Road Police

caused by illegal traders in front of Harrods and the Knightsbridge tube when, just before last Christmas, the Chelsea police arrested twenty nine offenders, which resulted in some twenty convictions.

There still remains a great deal to do in this area, particularly as illegal traders, both on the pavements and by parking on double yellow lines in front of the tube station, cause unacceptable congestion which is exacerbated by the dumping of rubbish and by free newspaper stands. These are also the concern of the Rubbish and Litter Committee. Kensington and Chelsea Council are currently taking action through the courts against their use. If this is successful, this will remove one cause of congestion and reduce the amount of discarded paper on the streets. The Council is also considering building out the pavement to reduce congestion and prevent some of the illegal parking. The Law and Order committee will continue to keep all these matters under review.



Rubbish and free newspaper stands block pavements in Brompton Road.

Station a set of instructions giving advice on how to foil would-be intruders. The resulting laminated Door Step Card was funded jointly by the police and Metropolitan Safe Deposits and the Association is grateful for this sponsorship. Twenty thousand copies have been distributed by beat officers and neighbourhood watch groups. It is sincerely hoped that residents will take notice of the helpful hints on the card.

A start was made to clear up the problems



Severe congestion between Harrods and Knightsbridge underground station caused by illegal trading vans.

LITTER, RUBBISH AND HIGHWAYS

The tireless labours of Frances Rice and her Committee have again produced relatively clean residential streets and squares, in contrast to the disgusting state of most of the central area of the capital. It is a never ending task however and the Committee is never satisfied with the results of its own efforts. In its endeavours it is in regular communication with the cleansing departments of both local authorities and with the cleansing contractors but voluntary efforts are not enough without stronger action from the Council's own resources of manpower and finance.

The impetus to make an onslaught on London's tide of litter and rubbish came originally from voluntary effort. Now the media has espoused the cause of a cleaner London and there are declarations and stunts by prominent people. The only effective solution, however, is regular hard work and enough money dedicated to the task with the support of an adequate enforcement service. The Association, in common with other amenity societies, has for a long time reported

the state of the roads and pavements to the local authorities, and also conducted a campaign amongst residents and businesses in the area to persuade them to co-operate in keeping Knightsbridge clean.

Its efforts are, however, wasted without a stronger commitment from the local authorities. It is, after all, their business to keep the streets clean and the rubbish collected. The Association sponsors bins in both Westminster and in Kensington & Chelsea, in common with many other bodies and businesses. Although businesses and residents could do more, everybody is paying rates and taxes to fund the efforts of the local authorities. It is up to them to decide the priorities for spending the money they collect, and also the rate which they levy for completing their tasks on behalf of the community. There is no achievement in keeping rates to a low figure, if the money collected is inadequate to perform the tasks for which the councils are elected.

Of course, Westminster is a special case in that it plays host on behalf of the whole of the country to tourists when they visit the borough's monuments and museums. It is also true that Westminster is crowded every day with commuters from all over London and from the country. Thus, there is great support for the feeling that Westminster's problem is that it has been giving more money than it can afford to other boroughs.

It is up to the Council to make this case and to obtain the money necessary to run the city, just as it is up to the Council to bring an end to the system by which different statutory authorities dig up the roads with no relation to a common plan, with each one responsible for putting right the damage they do with no recognised standards. There has been much talk of a common policy between all statutory bodies, but again it is up to the Council to negotiate this reform.

It is also high time that more modern equipment was in the hands of the operatives who deal with the litter and rubbish daily. The equipment is looking exceedingly old-fashioned compared with the machinery that we are told is constantly being tested. It seems a very long time since anyone has seen the streets being washed regularly, as they used to be. It would also be helpful to see the City's public relations resources being gainfully employed in recommending an increase in the use of rubbish compactors by businesses, traders and blocks of flats.



The Upper Garden of Rutland Gate has now become an eyesore. Elizabeth Manzoni, Diana Jenkins, and Ray Sherning are three of the six volunteers from the Knightsbridge Association who recently cleared away twenty sacks of cans, bottles, paper and other assorted rubbish. The legal problem of how to deal with the absentee owner of this garden has not yet been settled.



Domestic rubbish pollutes the pavements in a residential area, a broken bollard lies untouched for weeks, a missing access plate leaves switch gear exposed for a similar period, and traders' rubbish shames fashionable Brompton Road.

Recycling

One very productive way of getting rid of rubbish is to recycle it. The Government has announced that in the next ten years it is the intention that 50% of all recyclable domestic waste should be processed.

In an effort to increase recycling in Knightsbridge the Committee has asked Peggy Walmsley to look into the whole question and to bring pressure on the local authorities to provide facilities for collecting paper, bottles, cans and eventually plastic.

A small start has been made by the establishment of two bottle banks in the area, one behind the Albert Hall and one in Princes Gardens which belongs to Imperial College

but which has been extended by their kind permission for use by local residents. Paper can be taken to Westminster's depot at Gatliff Road near Chelsea Bridge, or bundled and marked 'for recycling' and left at the Relton Mews cleansing depot. Kensington & Chelsea residents can take their paper to the depot at Cremorne Wharf in Lots Road. Westminster has a bottle bus scheme for collecting glass from hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars and a service which collects paper from West End businesses. They have announced that it is intended to extend the service to residential areas and the details of this scheme are expected soon.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

The Traffic Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr Stanley Steel continues to grapple with the intractable problems of traffic and parking. Increasing numbers of developments of large office buildings containing more employees bring a higher concentration of traffic to the area, and the continuing conversion of houses into flats means more and more cars seeking parking spaces. In this respect, it is fortunate that Westminster has been able to designate a considerable increase in the number of parking spaces for residents.

The same problems highlighted in our previous reports continue in the same areas. The pressures on residential streets from traffic seeking cut-throughs from the main traffic arteries continue and the Committee has asked the Council to install sleeping policemen to slow traffic on residential streets used as short cuts. Signs are now in place at the top of Trevor Street and Trevor Place saying 'unsuitable for long vehicles', and an imaginative scheme has been put forward and studied for narrowing the Brompton Road entrance to Montpelier Street to discourage heavy traffic.

Trouble is also caused by tourist coaches trying to reach Brompton Road via Ennismore Gardens and Rutland Gate, despite notices saying 'no through road to Brompton Road'. It is now suggested that international 'No Coach' signs should be erected. There is a considerable problem in Exhibition Road

because of the difficulty caused by countless U-turns which need to be made throughout the day because of the difficulty of turning right. The problem will be exacerbated when the Royal Geographical society's development takes place, unless Westminster takes some remedial action.

Another problem causing severe traffic problems is the fact that every Sunday the South Carriage Drive in Hyde Park is closed. This causes immense blockages particularly when, as happened recently, the road is being repaired at a sensitive point along Knightsbridge. The South Carriage Drive has now unfortunately become part of the regular traffic flow and it is worth considering whether it is not possible to keep this road open on Sundays by enforcing no parking regulations along its whole length.

There have been many complaints in the past years by residents who have been inconvenienced by parking problems during the opening of local stores and shops on bank holidays. Looking ahead to the possibility of Sunday shopping at some time in the future, it was thought sensible to address this problem in advance. A member of the Main Committee, Jonathan Charkham, has produced a paper on the problems of bank holiday and Sunday opening and the possible solutions. This paper was well received, the views of the Association have been noted, and will receive consideration if Sunday opening becomes a reality.

LONDON TRANSPORT

There has been a great deal of concern throughout the last few months over dangerous overcrowding in Knightsbridge tube station at the north-eastern corner of Harrods. It was hoped when the recent reconstruction took place that the approaches to the escalators would be widened to allow for the considerable number of people who use the station during sales and special events at Harrods and other stores. Unfortunately, the management have not only reinstated the shops, leaving an inadequate place for large crowds, but have exacerbated the problem by siting the new automatic ticket machines so that queues form at right-angles to the approaching crowds. It would seem obvious

that these machines should have been installed at the back of the station, in the same way that they are at Piccadilly Circus.

The Association has been in correspondence with the management, and has had a meeting on site with the local manager, who proved to be most helpful. However, letters to senior management, when answered, have not produced a satisfactory response and the Association will continue to press the interests of the customers in matters both of safety and comfort.

The escalators in the station are constantly out of order and members of the committee were concerned to discover from London

Transport that, even when new machinery is delivered, it takes a year to install. In view of the problems that have taken place in other stations, the question is again being raised with the management as to why the broadcast announcements are still often unintelligible to

passengers. Whether this is because of faulty equipment or lack of training in the use of the microphones is not apparent, but it is certainly a simple matter to cure and yet annoying and possibly dangerous until it is put right.

LOCAL AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

The work of the committees necessarily means frequent contact with officers at both Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

Accordingly, a mutual respect has grown up between members and council officers. It is, therefore, sad when old friends eventually depart. This year has seen the retirement, after 21 years service as Director of Cleansing at Westminster, of Ian Cooper MBE. At the Royal Borough, Alan Saunders retired as Director of Planning and Transport and has been succeeded by Mary Dent, who was formerly Assistant Director of Planning at the Corporation of London. The Leader of the Council for the past eleven years, Nicholas Freeman (who died soon after his retirement) has been succeeded by Mrs Iain Hanham.

During the year the committees have enjoyed the help and co-operation of the officers and politicians at both local authorities. The Chairman of Planning at Westminster, Councillor David Weeks has been most sympathetic to the views of the Environment Committee, which has also benefited from the understanding shown by Councillor Sir Anthony Coates, the Chairman of Planning at RBKC.

The heavy responsibilities borne by Sid Sporle at WCC necessitated a great deal of contact with more than one of the Association's committees. They are all grateful for the time and patience given by him and members of his department to the interests of the Knightsbridge community.

The Association has always enjoyed close co-operation with the local police and the formation of the Law & Order Committee should cement this even further. At Gerald Road Chief Superintendent Isles has retired and his place has been taken by Superintendent Alan Wareing.

The conduct of local government has changed a great deal during the years, and the Association has fought many battles at Westminster City Hall as well as conducting many co-operative enterprises. In every

aspect of local government, the people of Knightsbridge have been served for thirty years as their senior councillor by a man of



Councillor C. A. Prendergast CBE DL.

rare talent and experience. It has come as a great shock to the community to learn that Anthony Prendergast is to retire at the next election. Tony Prendergast has been a strong supporter of the Knightsbridge Association and has represented its interests, not only at City Hall, but in many other spheres of public life. He was an outstanding Lord Mayor and will be missed, not only in Knightsbridge, but also in the political life of the city. No doubt his influence will still be felt in wider political circles and the Association extends its grateful thanks and best wishes for the future to him and Dame Simone.

Westminster's Member of Parliament, The Rt. Hon Peter Brooke, continues to climb the political ladder. Recently Chairman of the Conservative Party, he has now been appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Despite his many responsibilities he has remained a model constituency member and a consistent supporter of the Knightsbridge Association. The Committee is grateful for the help and advice he has given on many matters during the last twelve months.

FINANCIAL

Under the watchful eye of our Hon. Treasurer, Christine Gilbertson, the Association continues to cover its annual expenses and contribute modestly to good causes in Knightsbridge.

The cash balances remain healthy but, with continuing inflation and the need to seek expert advice or representation at any time,

they are really quite modest. Lately, it has also proved necessary to invest some money in up-to-date office and communication equipment to support an entirely voluntary organisation. The Association receives no grants or public money and exists entirely on the contributions of its members and supporters.

APPRECIATIONS

A great deal of time-consuming and imaginative work goes into the conduct of the Association throughout the year. Most of it is done by busy people who yet find time to devote energy and flair to the protection and enhancement of Knightsbridge, and the improvement of the quality of life in this delightful and historic part of London.



The 1988 AGM. Carol Seymour-Newton, Neville Labovitch, Richard Robinson.

It is impossible to mention everyone who has given time and talent during the year, but I hope that I have mentioned some of them in appropriate places in the report. I am grateful to all the chairmen and members of the Committees, particularly to Richard Robinson who guides the important Environment Committee and to Michael Wright for his continuous labours and expertise in dealing with planning matters.

I would like to add a special word of thanks

to Raymond Benardout who joined the Main Committee last year and bravely stepped into the breach to handle the advertising section of this report when Joyce Goodman suffered the unfortunate accident from which she is happily recovering. His successful initiative is apparent at both ends of this document.

Jonathan Charkham too has been helpful, not only as a member of the Main Committee but also in producing a thoughtful and timely plan to take account of the possible impact that the Sunday opening of shops might have on parking in the neighbourhood.

My grateful thanks and those of the Committee are extended to the many business houses which support the work of the Association by taking display space in this report. The Association does so much in Knightsbridge that benefits business as much as the resident population, whether it is in promoting better street cleansing, repairing the highways, fighting crime and seeking better management of traffic and in so many ways seeking to improve the quality of life. It is very satisfying to know that this effort is appreciated by the business community.

In thanking our Honorary Secretary Carol Seymour-Newton, I confess I am running out of superlatives to express the value of her work to the Association and the general community. Without her dedication and amazing energy it would be impossible to carry out the immense amount of work which is undertaken every year.

Lastly, my grateful thanks are, as always, extended to the members of this Association whose public spirit and support enables the Association to do so much to protect and enhance Knightsbridge.

Neville Labovitch,
December, 1989.



The western end of Rotten Row during the 1920's. Note the 18th century cast iron railings removed and melted down for munitions in 1941

ROTTEN ROW'S 300th ANNIVERSARY IN 1990 CROWNS 900 YEARS OF HORSEMANSHIP IN HYDE PARK

A brief history

by Neill Mitchell, Hon. Chairman of the Rotten Row Tercentenary Committee

Some 5,000 years have elapsed since Mankind first imposed servitude upon the horse and harnessed its power as a means of transport, a beast of burden and as an instrument of war. Consequently, post World War II western generations have been the first since the dawn of civilisation to dispense with the services of this versatile animal for all purposes, other than sport and recreation. It is therefore hardly surprising that we have been left with a rich equestrian heritage in art, sculpture, architecture, literature, vocabulary, fashion, leather crafts, ceremonial, street patterns, City Livery Companies, photography and, of course, the very survival of the great Royal Parks as open spaces. One of the finest examples of this legacy is London's Hyde Park and its 4-mile network of public riding tracks, including the most famous in the World – Rotten Row.

Whether Celts, Vikings, Romans or Danes rode in the Hyde Park vicinity we will probably never know. However, documentary evidence of the Park's

remarkable equestrian history does extend back nine centuries to the year 1085, at which time the Domesday Book showed the Manor of Hide as being held by a Saxon nobleman called Asgar. The latter is recorded as holding the title of "Stallere", a very senior office at Court which has survived to this day as The Master of the Horse (currently the Earl of Westmorland). His duties at that time would have included the breeding and training of Court horses for travel, war, hunting and general recreational pursuits. This early reference marks the beginning of an unbroken tradition of horsemanship which has seen Hyde Park being used for most of the sports' disciplines e.g., hunting, jousting, racing, driving, mustering and modern hacking.

Henry VIII was undoubtedly Hyde Park's most enthusiastic huntsman, whereas James I (who opened the park to the public) and Charles I both favoured horse racing within its enclosed acres. During the Civil War, Hyde Park was used as an important military base for the training of Cavalry squadrons. Later,

following the Parliamentary victory, Oliver Cromwell took to driving in the Park and political satirists of the time recounted that on one occasion Cromwell suffered a heavy fall from his coach when his team of six grey Frisian horses bolted, apparently due to his over-zealous use of the whip.

Charles II was a keen patron of riding and driving and successive Monarchs were regularly to be seen enjoying equestrian pursuits in Hyde Park, notably Queen Victoria. This tradition ended comparatively recently with the death of George V in 1936, the last reigning Sovereign to ride regularly in the Park.

There is, however, one appellation which is perceived throughout the World as being synonymous with horsemanship in Hyde Park – that is its principal riding track, “Rotten Row”. The survival and naming of this magnificent public equestrian thoroughfare are both largely accidents of history, yet the Row’s role in the development of horsemanship is without parallel.

The construction of Rotten Row was a consequence of William III’s accession to the Throne in 1689 and his decision to acquire, improve and reside at Nottingham House (Kensington Palace). This necessitated the provision of a broad carriage drive to give better access between the new palace at Kensington and the old at Westminster. The works were carried out under the supervision of the Surveyor of The King’s Roads, Captain Michael Studholme, during the winter months of 1689–90. A unique feature of the new carriage drive was that it was illuminated by lanterns hung from trees along its length in an attempt to reduce the serious threat posed by the highwaymen who frequented the western approaches to London. Thus, the

“King’s Own Road” as it was initially known, became the first lamplit road in the United Kingdom.

However, in 1737 the original route of William’s carriage drive was rendered obsolete by an order of George II requiring the building of a new road slightly to the south (today’s South Carriage Drive). Having initially been earmarked for grassing over by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, the old road was instead swiftly adopted by the very numerous Park riders as a permanent bridle route. Thereafter it very quickly became the favourite promenade of Court beauties and socialites on horseback wishing “to see and be seen”.

The colloquial name “Rotten Row” for what is technically still today The King’s Old Road seems to have come into common use in 1781. The origin of the new name is unclear but 19th Century historians gave credence to the theory that it lay in the use of French at Court, combined with a typical cockney corruption, resulting in the “Route due Roi” becoming “Rotten Row”.

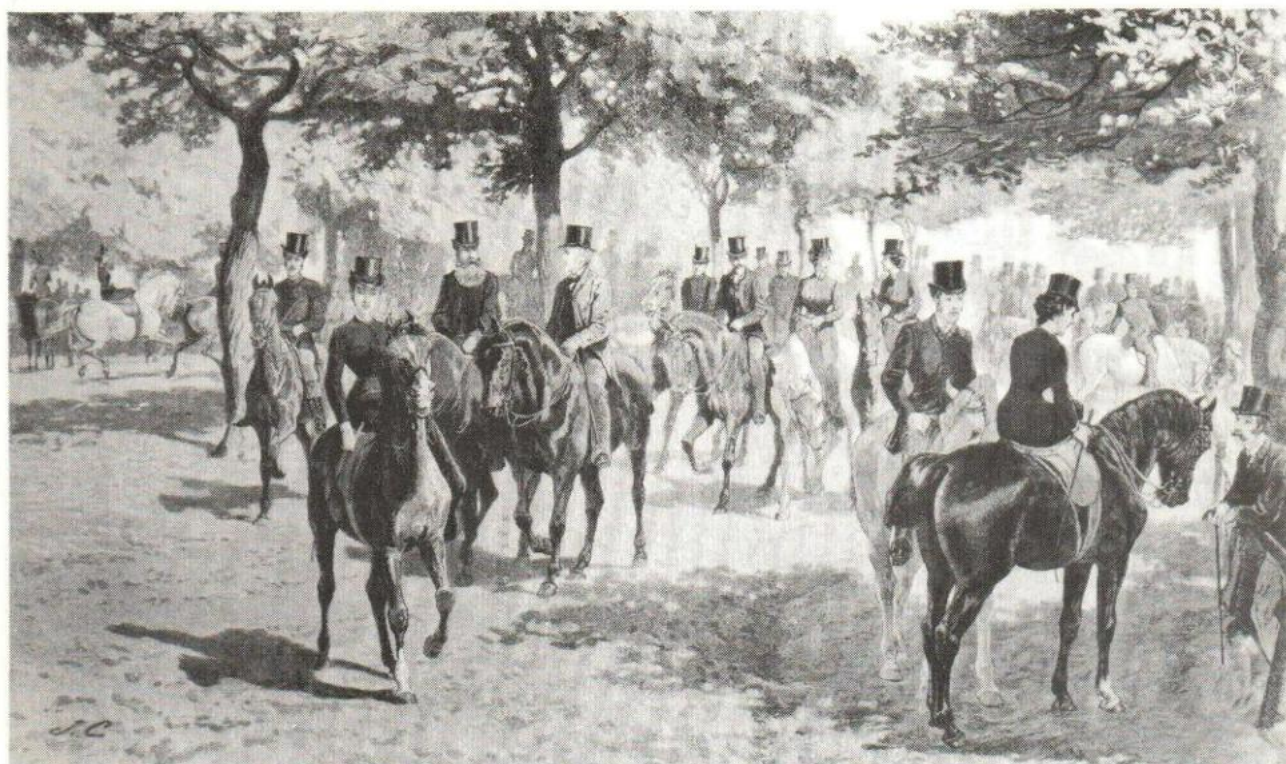
In 1793 substantial cast iron railings were erected to separate the increasingly proliferant riders from the pedestrian walkways on either side. Ultimately removed for War metal salvage in 1941 these railings are to be replaced with exact replicas as part of the Rotten Row 300 project financed by public subscription.

The growth in Rotten Row’s use was closely paralleled by the success of Tattersalls, the nearby bloodstock auctioneers. Richard Tattersall’s first sale yard was established in 1766 on Hyde Park Corner, to the rear of St. George’s Hospital (now Grosvenor Crescent Mews). The adjoining “Turf Tavern” simultaneously became the headquarters of the Jockey Club. However, when the Grosvenor lease expired in 1865, Tattersalls moved to Knightsbridge Green where the firm’s premises grew to occupy some 2 acres between Knightsbridge and Brompton Road. As a consequence of flying bomb damage suffered in 1944, the building was abandoned and the business moved to Newmarket after the war (taking with it some of the stone arches and cupolas from the Charles Freeman building in Knightsbridge). Today, Tattersalls are the world’s greatest racehorse auctioneers, but the only reminder of their former dominance of Knightsbridge is the modern pub “Tattersalls Tavern” on Knightsbridge Green.

Queen Victoria’s accession marked the beginning of Rotten Row’s zenith, largely



The London Season in Rotten Row in July 1882.



An afternoon in Rotten Row in May 1889. Overcrowding created serious difficulties in the Row during the seasons throughout the 19th century.

stimulated by the Queen's avid personal enthusiasm for horses and riding. This resulted in the Row being known as "The Queen's Ride" for the rest of the century. Inevitably, complex rules of social and practical etiquette evolved to govern and perpetuate the conventions and elegance of Park riding. Particular attention was paid to the courtesies to be observed by men in the presence of Ladies, whether as instructors, chaperons or suitors. In this context, the "Illustrated London News" of 25th May 1889 remarked upon one of the potential benefits of riding in the Row:-

"Some ladies of considerable London experience are manifestly skilful in steering their course along the ride with a dexterous keeping of safe distance, where symptoms of an undesired approach have been perceived."

Men could similarly take advantage of riding in Rotten Row, suggested the writer:-

"A man on horseback cannot easily be caught by the buttonhole, as in Pall Mall, and compelled to listen to a bore!"

Society tended to ride during the afternoon, although never on Sundays. Henry B. Wheatley's "London Past and Present" of 1891 recorded that: "Between the hours of 12 and 2.00 and 5.00 and 7.00 Rotten Row is crowded with hundreds of equestrians". At the height of The Season, however, some

young men would often ride early in the morning after a night of over-indulgence and they were appropriately nicknamed the "Liver Brigade".

Riding fashions were of major importance. The distinctive figure of the Iron Duke of Wellington would often be seen riding out from Apsley House, dressed in a silk top hat, plain blue frockcoat with white waistcoat and trousers, generally mounted upon an Arab horse (a breed which he had come to appreciate whilst serving in India). Generally men wore dark frock-coats, collar and tie, tight trousers and top hats. Women wore habit bodices buttoned to the neck with small coat tails at the back, a long full skirt, varnished boots and silk hats not unlike the men's. At the end of the century, however, the transition from side-saddle to riding astride led to progressively more comfortable riding clothing for women.

The First World War not only despatched many fine Hyde Park hacks on one-way journeys to the front, but also accelerated mechanisation generally. Nevertheless, riding regained great popularity amongst London's inter-war generation, particularly more leisure-orientated office workers. The boom led to the Serpentine bridleway being added in 1936 to the North Ride (of 1850 vintage). Rotten Row had much earlier been supplemented with the "New Ride", parallel



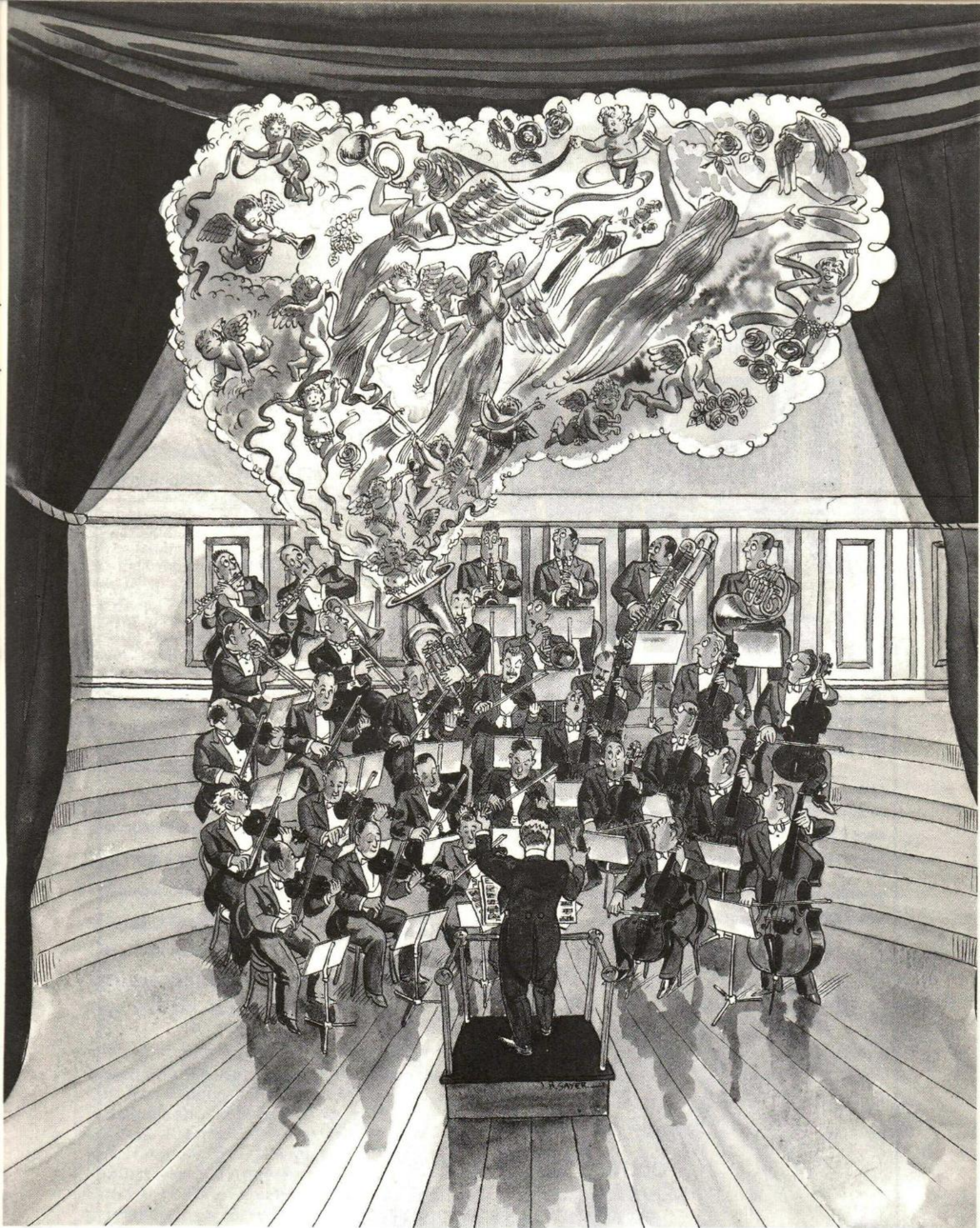
In the 1930's, an older generation looks on from behind Rotten Row's 18th century railings as a group of riders pass.

with South Carriage Drive, the Row itself having been truncated in 1869 to make way for the Albert Memorial. Standards of dress during the 1930's gradually became less formal, despite a vigorous rear-guard campaign by Sir Walter Gilbey who was frequently reported in the press as lamenting the wholesale desecration of the 19th century conventions. It was a subjective view, as riders were still very smartly turned out by today's standards.

At the beginning of the Second World War, U.S. Ambassador Kennedy was one of many notable regular riders in the Row, but as conditions worsened local riding establishments were progressively lost to bombing or evacuation to the countryside. The railings were removed and the Row declined into semi-dereliction. However, after the War, a number of stables and indoor riding schools re-opened and during the 1950's it seemed as though riding in Hyde Park would become more popular than ever before. However, the gathering momentum of the property boom began a process which has led to the redevelopment of virtually all the surviving stabling around the Park. The most recent loss (32 Grosvenor Crescent Mews)

being the last traditional mews stable on the south side of the park, leaving just two operating on the north side in Bathurst Mews, one of whose lease (Ross Nye's) expired earlier this year and has not so far been renewed by the Church Commissioners.

Thus, despite unprecedented demand for public riding facilities in Hyde Park, the future currently looks uncertain, as planners have been unable to secure recreational amenities from the inexorable commercial redevelopment of Westminster. Nevertheless, the opening of the new Hyde Park riding manège by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal on the 16th November marked a highly significant step forward in the provision of facilities for the teaching of equitation in the heart of the Capital. It is the hope of the Rotten Row Tercentenary Committee that the Row's 300th anniversary will therefore not only lead to the restoration of its railings and pre-War appearance, but will also focus attention upon the need for the permanent retention of civilian stabling to enable the public to ride in Hyde Park. In short, Rotten Row's Tercentenary will be a celebration of the past to secure an exciting long-term future for riding in Rotten Row.



With acknowledgement to the creative genius of the late H. M. Bateman

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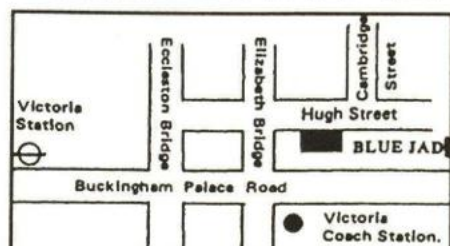
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Noisy Builders	01-798 1060
Noisy Party Patrol	01-828 8070
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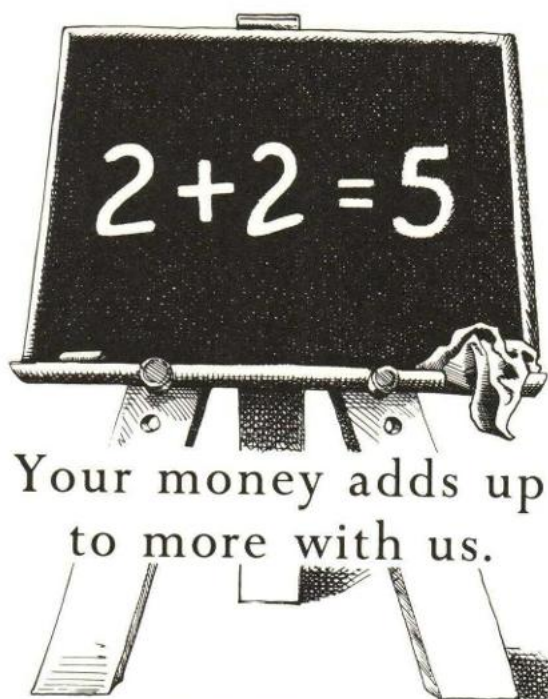
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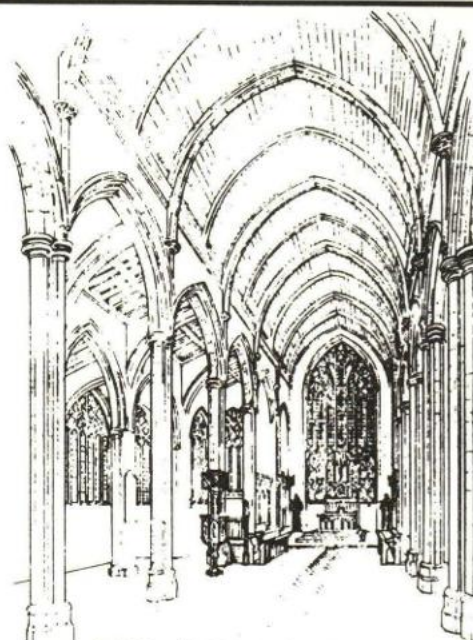


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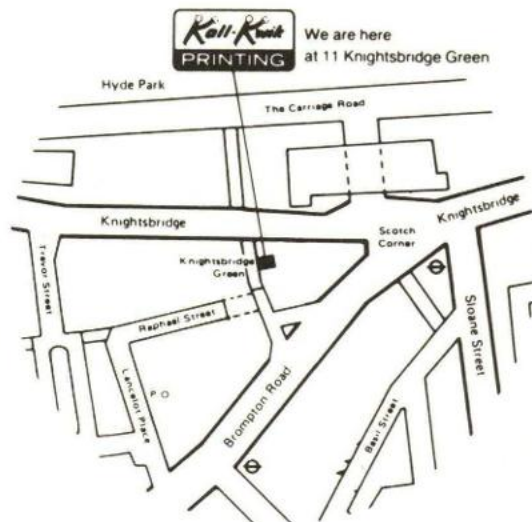
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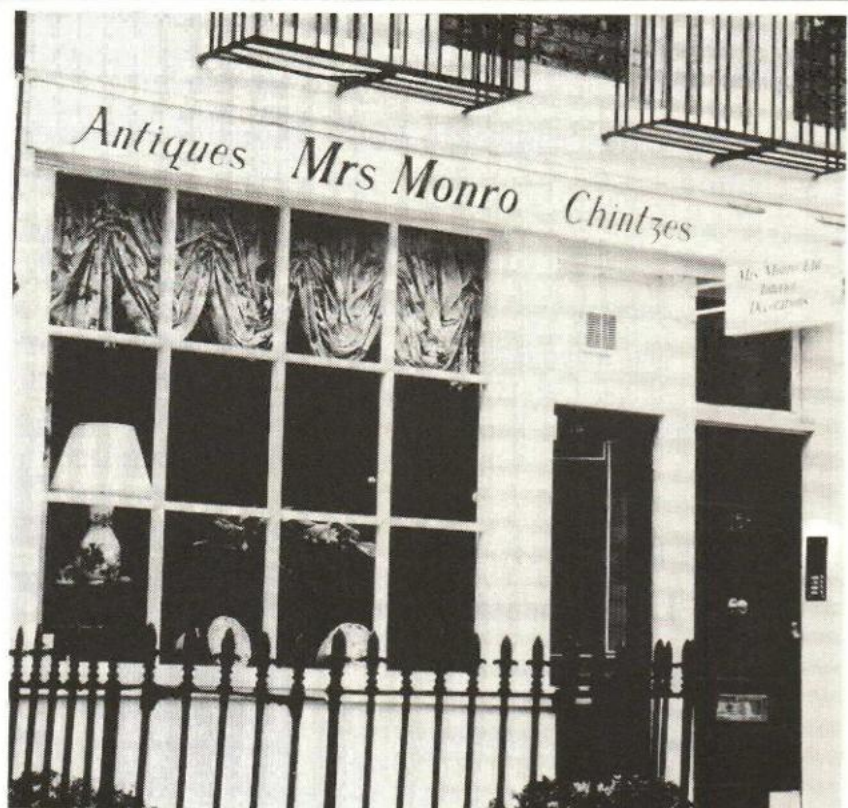
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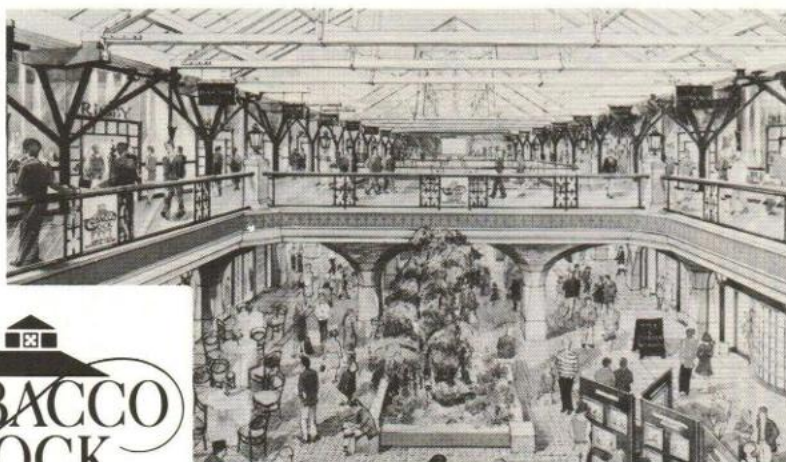
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