

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

31st ANNUAL REPORT
December 1992





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THE QUEEN MOTHER
DRAPERS

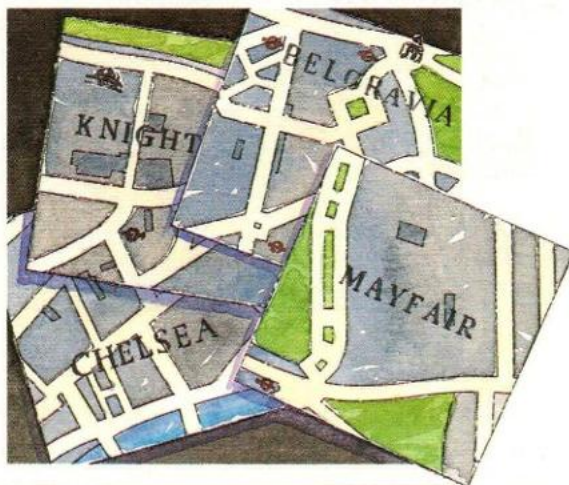
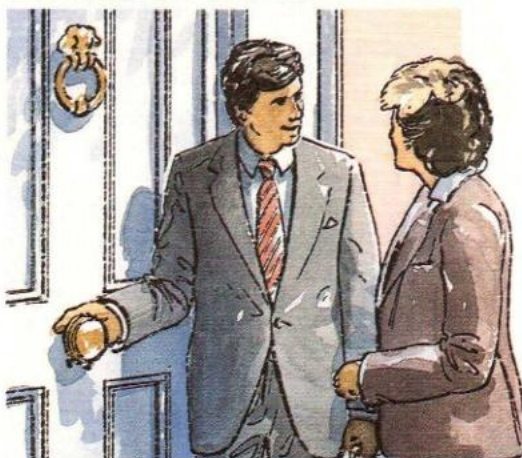
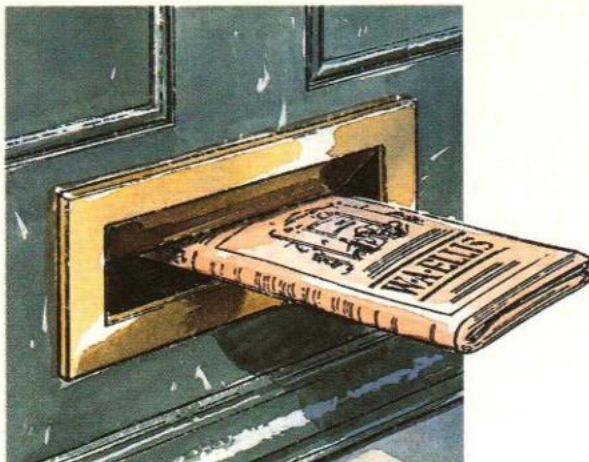


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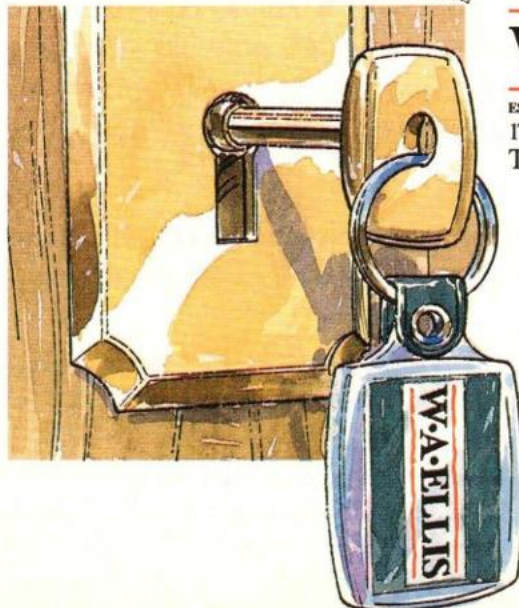
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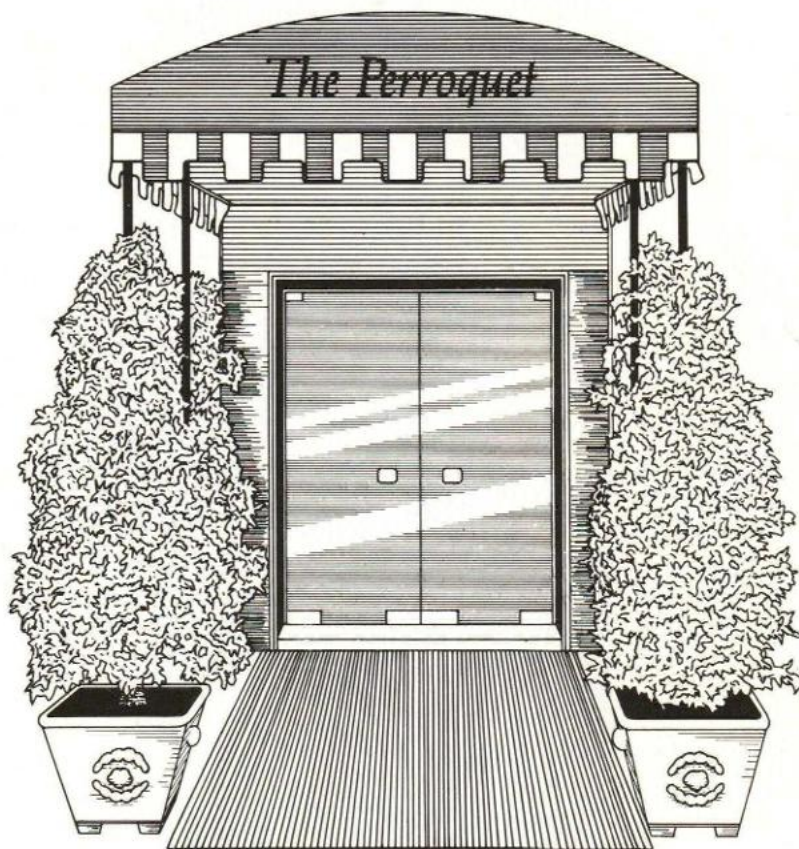
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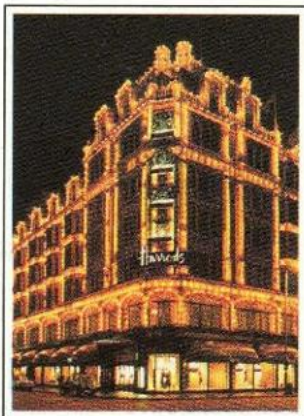
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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

Everything changes. Cities evolve and neighbourhoods continue to adapt to new circumstances. This is as it should be, and most Londoners would prefer to live in a thriving, pulsating city rather than one preserved in aspic. However, the free market cannot be unrestricted with regard to planning control, and hence conservation areas were established to preserve the familiar and well-loved buildings as well as the historic gems. As previous Annual Reports have emphasised, it is vital to preserve a strong middle-class community living in central areas, if we are to avoid the 'doughnut' syndrome which has blighted so many foreign cities, with those who can afford it escaping to the suburbs and leaving behind what quickly becomes a decaying and neglected centre.

People leave the centre of cities because the quality of life deteriorates and living there is no longer worth the increasing expense. To counter this trend, organisations such as the Knightsbridge Association have widened their original aim of preserving the fabric of the neighbourhood, and now also work to protect and improve the amenities enjoyed by the citizens. Thus, the Association has over the years expanded its range of committees. In addition to the Environment Committee (which deals with planning matters) the Association has other committees which address the problems of traffic and parking, litter and rubbish, the condition of the roads and pavements, and law and order.

The threats to Knightsbridge today are very much a product of its own success. It has become perhaps the capital's most interesting shopping centre, attracting very large numbers of people daily, including many tourists. Unfortunately, in London, people bring litter and tourists attract crime. Crowds of people

attract fast food shops, of which until recently Knightsbridge had very few. Fast food outlets create litter on a grand scale, although they try to control it.

Recently the pressure has increased from fast food outlets trying to open in Knightsbridge. An attempt by Kensington and Chelsea Council to limit their concentration in Brompton Road was frustrated when the Council's veto was overturned on appeal. There is concern in the neighbourhood that in some cases councils may be chary of making a right decision because of the possibility of heavy costs being

awarded against them in the case of a successful appeal.

The resident population has been puzzled of late by the actions of inspectors in overruling the local council in matters where local knowledge is arguably better able to judge the consequences of the decision. Local prejudices should not, of course, be allowed to override national requirements. If they were, no one would accept prisons or power stations in their neighbourhoods. In most cases, however, a responsible local authority, after consultation with the community, should

know best. It is unlikely that either Westminster City Council or Kensington and Chelsea Council would be disposed to turn away commercial advantages to their areas unless they felt that they were doing right by the planning balance.

It may be time to look again at the instructions given to inspectors, or even to change the system whereby a large number of council officers and elected councillors investigate a matter, further consult the community and are then overruled by a single individual, possibly without recent experience of the neighbourhood. In the Court of Appeal, three judges are thought necessary to overturn a decision. Perhaps this rule should be applied to planning.



The future of Knightsbridge?

In this case the large banner was removed after protests from the Association, but is it a sign of things to come?

THE ENVIRONMENT



These post-war buildings will be replaced in the Prudential development.

The major development schemes which have occupied the Environment Committee for so long continued to dominate its work during the year. The Harrods' hotel proposal and the massive Prudential project could, for example, alter the appearance and ambience of Knightsbridge for years to come. In addition to these major items, the regular flow of planning applications referred to the Association for comment by the planning departments of Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, all requiring individual attention, meant a heavy burden for this busy committee.

Harrods' Appeal

Last year Westminster City Council refused Harrods' application to convert their depository in Trevor Square into an hotel with entrances in Brompton Road and Trevor Square, on the grounds that it was against council policy. Harrods appealed and a public enquiry was held. The Inspector has recommended that

permission for the hotel be granted subject to appropriate legal agreements and the Secretary of State has endorsed this decision.

The Association is concerned chiefly with the interests of members in Trevor Square and its surroundings, as well as the general effect of the traffic generated in the area. The ultimate aim is to banish lorries which use the square to get to and from Harrods' depository. In the event of permission being granted for the hotel, the committee had asked for a whole range of conditions and legal agreements to be entered into by Harrods in order to protect the amenity of residents: for example, night-time access to the hotel from the ramp in Trevor Square being prohibited.

The Prudential Site

Last year's Report described in some detail the planning permission being sought by the Prudential to demolish and rebuild all the properties bounded by Brompton Road and Knightsbridge, Knightsbridge Green and Lancelot Place, making it one of the largest redevelopments ever contemplated in Knightsbridge.

This year the Environment Committee has continued its punishing schedule of meetings with the Prudential, and its architects and consultants, to try to obtain the best possible results for the area. Although the committee has not secured everything that it asked for, the Prudential has made several concessions and has generally been anxious to respect the concerns of the resident population. One unusual benefit that the Association has secured with the help of the Westminster planners, is the agreement of the Prudential to provide several ground-floor retail units at preferential rentals for community shops such as grocers and butchers.

One of the most welcome aspects of the scheme is that the fifties office buildings on Knightsbridge opposite the Barracks and along Brompton Road will be demolished. They are no ornament to the area and are not now even efficient for their original use. The design of the new buildings will give slightly less office space than before and will reflect a transition between the commercial area to the east and the domestic scale of the Trevors, where the Prudential has accepted the Environment Committee's suggestions that three family houses, identical to existing Trevor Street houses, should 'round-off' the street, and that flats on the Knightsbridge/Trevor Street corner

should architecturally mirror the Hill House terrace to the west. The Prudential has also agreed that access to the entire site, including the underground car park for the houses and flats, should be from Knightsbridge. In total the scheme will add 27 new residential units with underground parking to the area, with Lancelot Place becoming an almost entirely residential cul-de-sac.

The most significant change will be the fourfold increase in retail space, mainly sited in the new four-storey shopping complex with entrances from Knightsbridge Green and Brompton Road and direct access to Knightsbridge underground station. The architectural treatment of the Brompton Road buildings has had a mixed reception but the Prudential has tried to meet some criticisms on design and bulk by, for example, setting back the buildings at street level on the Brompton Road frontage by two metres, thus giving pedestrians more room to move freely and the opportunity for mature plane trees to be planted along the pavement.

The general public was invited to view the scheme on several evenings and it has had general acceptance from Westminster City Council Planning Committee.

Before the planning permission is actually issued, a most important matter remains to be resolved. For many years the Environment Committee, together with the Association's Traffic Committee and Westminster Council, has been concerned at the impact of traffic on the residential streets and squares of Knightsbridge. Remedial measures are long overdue and the committee was adamant that the Prudential's shopping centre would create an intolerable increase in the traffic coming to Knightsbridge, putting immense additional pressure on the residential areas.

Traffic management consultant, David Tucker, who was retained by the Association, attended many meetings with the Prudential's consultants and the traffic experts from Westminster City Council. An independent survey revealed that over 80 per cent of all traffic using the Trevors and Montpeliers came from outside the area and a large proportion had no origin or destination in Westminster. It was obvious that something had to be done to remove this traffic 'rat-running' which placed an unfair burden on the resident population and was contrary to Westminster's policies.

Consultations took place during the summer on a variety of options and the Association is continuing to work actively with Westminster City Council to devise an acceptable traffic management scheme for the area. Local



An artist's impression of some of the proposed buildings in the Prudential scheme, which will replace those shown on the facing page.

residents will be kept informed of progress.

The Normandie Hotel

A property company seeking to redevelop the Normandie Hotel won an appeal last year against Westminster City Council's refusal for a 154-room hotel. Not content with their victory, they have now appealed against Westminster's recent refusal of their subsequent application to increase the accommodation by a further 36 rooms. The Environment Committee's opinion is that the scheme represents a gross overdevelopment of the site, with more floors below ground, and at roof level, than in the body of the building. The committee made representations to the Inspector and hopefully the appeal will not go against the Council in this instance.

The Royal Thames Yacht Club

Another appeal, which has recently been turned down, was against the Council's decision to refuse permission to replace the Royal Thames Yacht Club at 60 Knightsbridge with a much larger construction which, whilst retaining accommodation for the Club, would

combine the larger part with the existing 19th-century building at 2 Albert Gate, to become yet another hotel. The committee objected to the plans – this is a sensitive site and although the present building may be undistinguished, the position merits a design that does justice to its place in the conservation area on the edge of Hyde Park.

Recently an application has been submitted on behalf of the Kuwaiti government to use 2 Albert Gate and several storeys of the existing yacht club building as an Embassy.

Albert Court

For nearly 20 years the Association has backed the Council and the tenants of Albert Court in resisting the building of extra flats at roof level. Yet another appeal against the refusal for planning consent by Westminster Council was made last year and this time was successful. The redoubtable Major General Desmond Smith, who had led the tenants' fight so successfully in recent years, died shortly before the appeal and did not witness the defeat.

There is some comfort in the fact that the permission is for five flats within the existing roof slope, as against the original plan for 34 flats in two storeys at roof level, and that the design has been greatly improved to take account of the architecture of the existing building.

Agriculture House

Permission has been given for the demolition of Agriculture House, 25-31 Knightsbridge, and its replacement by two new office buildings, but it is not yet known when work will start. There is, of course, much unoccupied new office space in the vicinity still awaiting tenants.

Albert Court.



The Accademia

In Rutland Gate, the Accademia Italiana's temporary permission to continue its present activities as an exhibition gallery was extended until the end of 1993, but none of the conditions governing usage, and hours of opening, was removed or altered. The Council supported the Association's view that it was essential for the amenity of residents in Rutland Gate to retain the conditions imposed by the Council at the time of the original application.

Upper Garden Rutland Gate

It appears that there may have been a change in ownership of the upper garden in Rutland Gate. Whilst the money raised last year is sufficient for maintenance of the garden for the time being, the committee is still anxious to discuss its long-term future with the owners.

Licensing

The problems experienced with *Bar Twenty 4* on the corner of Montpelier Place appear to have been resolved following the licensing hearing, when the local residents, supported by the Association, questioned the application. There is now a new licensee, who has reverted to calling the premises by its original name, *The Nelson*, and has shown himself anxious to be a good neighbour.

In the case of the *King George IV* pub in Montpelier Square, where permission was obtained to improve and extend staff accommodation, a further application has been lodged for a 'music and dancing, weekday and Sunday' licence. This has been vigorously opposed by the Association and local residents, as this type of licence is completely inappropriate in a residential area. Should the application go to a hearing, the Association will be legally represented.

Proposed buildings to replace Agriculture House.



The Royal Geographical Society

The plan to build 14 flats and an underground car park for 135 cars in the grounds of the Royal Geographical Society received a set-back when the Alpine Club, which was to occupy underground premises, withdrew from the scheme. The Society then applied to increase the number of parking spaces to 206 to take up the vacant space. The Association is very concerned about the whole question of traffic movement and the hazard from U-turns in Exhibition Road, and is pressing for a workable plan to be proposed and effected before considering any further increase in parking beneath the gardens.

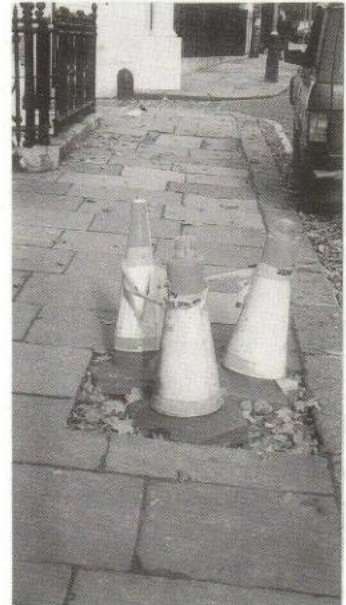
Fast Food in Brompton Road

The appearance of more fast food restaurants in the area always strikes consternation into the hearts of members of the Rubbish and Litter Committee, but often it begins with a planning application. McDonalds moved swiftly into 177 Brompton Road after the owner of the property won an appeal for restaurant use, thus enabling conversion of the premises into another fast food outlet, even though there was already a pizza restaurant in the block. Now, apart from one single corner shop, the only remaining building in the block not in restaurant use was 171/175 Brompton Road, formerly the Bank of Credit and Commerce. An application was made to Kensington and Chelsea Council for permission to change 8000 square feet of this building to restaurant use on the ground and first floors. This would have meant six consecutive shop units in restaurant use, very probably fast food, in one short stretch of Brompton Road.

Local residents, particularly those in Beaufort Gardens and Ovington Square, were appalled at this concentration of restaurant and fast food outlets, and the committee found it

necessary to retain professional planning consultants to reinforce objections to the council. In the end, the case was not determined, as, in the light of vociferous opposition by the Association and local residents, the applicants withdrew.

However, the worry persists that if the owners fail to find a retail tenant, they may again attempt to obtain restaurant use. This would be strenuously resisted. It should be noted that the application for restaurant use on 177 Brompton Road, now McDonalds, was rejected by Kensington and Chelsea Council but overruled on appeal by the Department of the Environment.



The 'dancing cones' mark a paving stone waiting repair for many months.

Streets and Highways

Many complaints about street lighting, either not working or not illuminating at the correct time, have been taken up quickly by both councils and the Parks' authorities. The fault seems to lie with the LEB and its contractors, but the responsibility still remains with the authorities.

The time taken for reinstatement after building works is also far too long. For almost a year the committee has been requesting that repairs be carried out at Montpelier Street and

An application to operate a restaurant in the building on the extreme left was withdrawn in the face of vociferous opposition from the Association.



Cheval Place, outside Eagle Star's redevelopment. This work should be completed before the end of the year.

Westminster City Council has a large programme of work on the roads and pavements of the city. There are 420 miles of footway and 206 miles of road in Westminster and in the period 1992-93, 32 miles of pavement and 14 miles of road are programmed for repair. There still remains a great deal of remedial work to be done with the footways and roads of Knightsbridge. In particular some of the pavements are in a dangerous state and many more are cracked, stained and unsightly.

Imperial College

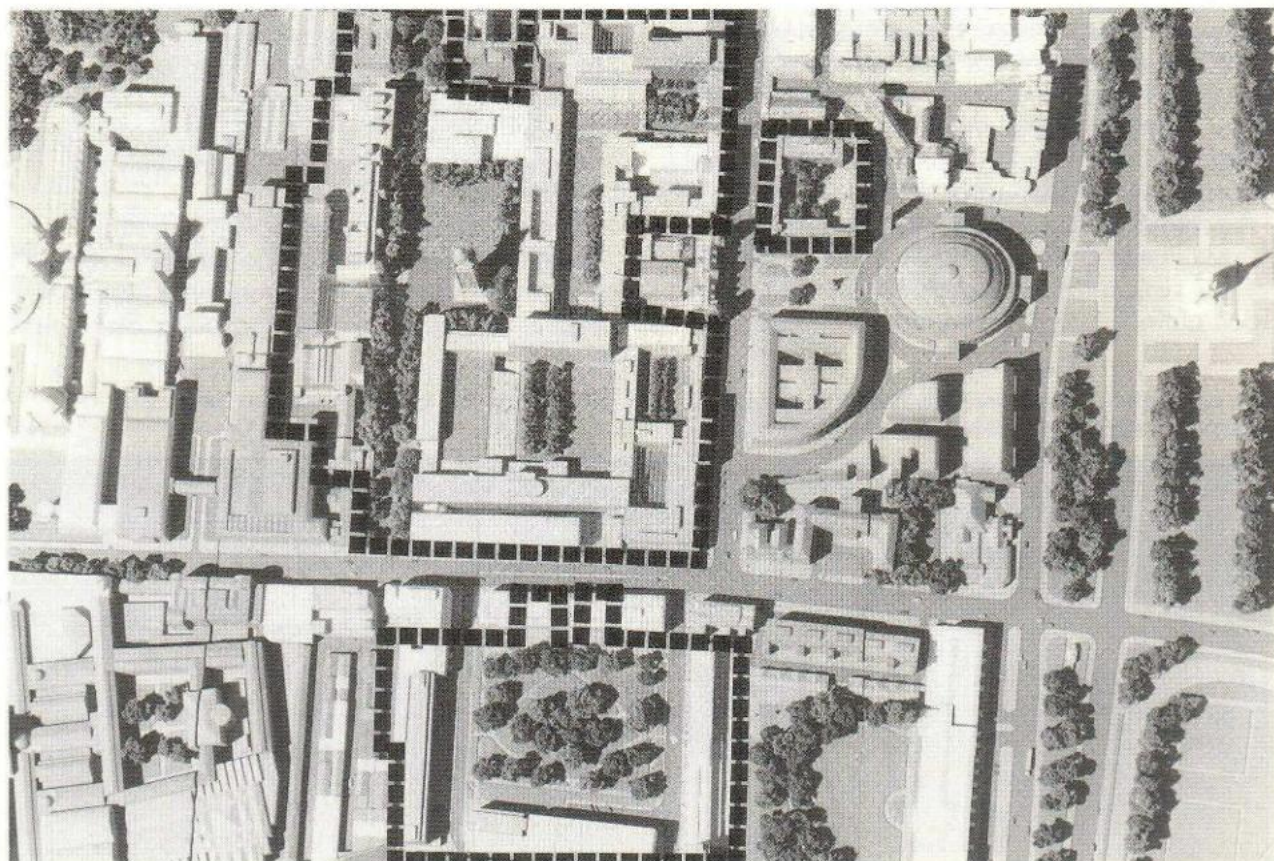
In late 1991, Sir Norman Foster and Partners were appointed consultant architects to Imperial College and asked to draw up a master plan for its future needs, concentrating on the three main sites: the campus south of Prince Consort Road, the Beit Quadrangle (north of Prince Consort Road) and Princes Gardens.

It is a particular source of regret that the main development of the College in the second half of the 20th century was during the architecturally impoverished 1950s and 1960s.

Great swathes of the area containing Victorian and Edwardian buildings, dating from the years following the Great Exhibition of 1851, were levelled and replaced as quickly and cheaply as possible to accommodate the expanding College. The result was a series of dull and characterless buildings, and the almost complete ruin of Princes Gardens. At the time there was a vogue for this type of building and London University was busy carrying out similar devastation of historic squares and buildings in other parts of London.

In their master plan, Foster and Partners recognised the low quality of most of what was built and the uninviting environment that has resulted for students, staff and the public generally. Members of the committee were invited to their offices to view the proposals. At this stage they are broad in outline and, given that they have not been asked to start from scratch, they are, in essence, cosmetic. They seek to create a 'heart' or focal point for the campus, and to remove all car parking and servicing from the surface of the campus by raising a landscaped deck between existing buildings over the north half of the site, to create an undercroft for all these activities. Another proposal would be to provide a front-door building to replace the jumble of 1960s

A model showing the proposed alterations to Imperial College; the three campus sites are indicated by thick dotted lines. (Exhibition Road runs across the picture, with the Albert Hall and Hyde Park to the right.)



blocks of varying height, depth and quality, and restore the original building line and strength of the Exhibition Road frontage. It is a peculiar feature of building complexes designed in the sixties that they failed to provide an obvious entrance. Imperial College is one example, the Barbican another.

Proposals for Princes Gardens are not spelt out other than to concentrate residential activities there, though the architects and the College make it plain that they are well aware of the sensitive nature of any development in the very heart of a residential conservation area. This is encouraging when considering the existing College buildings in this square. Imperial College is one of our great institutions, a world-famous seat of learning, discovery and achievement. It deserves to be housed in a setting worthy of its eminence and worldwide reputation.

Leasehold Enfranchisement

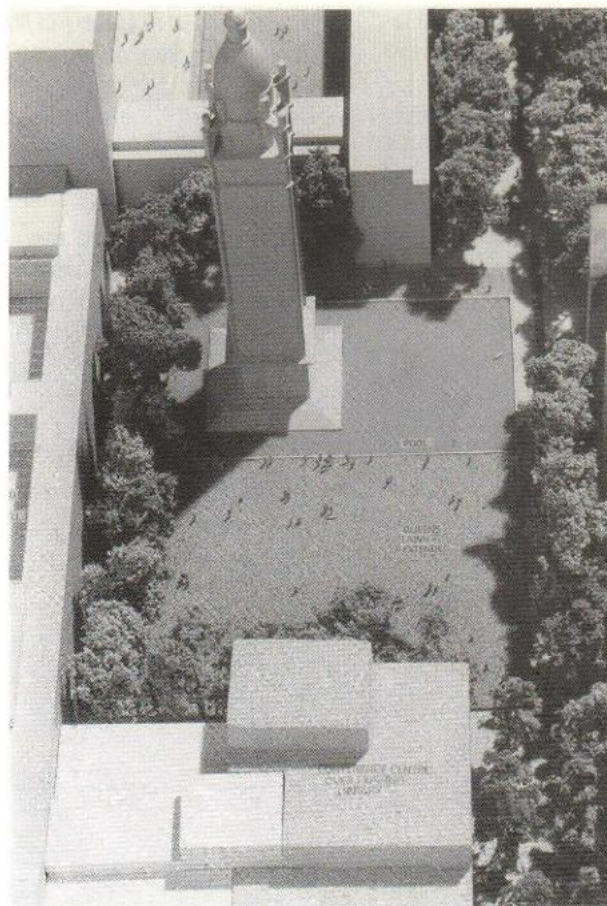
The Housing and Urban Development Bill recently published by the Government proposes giving long leaseholders in houses and flats the right to buy the freehold of their homes under certain circumstances. In other cases, leaseholders who do not qualify will have the option to buy 90-year extensions to their leases.

This proposal will be welcomed by many local residents and would seem likely to be put on the statute book next year. Proposals for Commonhold, which are more complicated, are still being worked on by the Lord Chancellor's office and will be published at a later stage in this Parliament.

Committee Changes

The work of the Environment Committee places a heavy responsibility on its members. Negotiating on the Prudential scheme alone was a time-consuming task requiring, as it did, much research and many conferences in addition to the normal regular meetings. The work was done by a special group of the Environment Committee headed by the Chairman, Richard Robinson, and with a particular contribution on the traffic side from Lesley MacDonagh. Naturally, the committee's two distinguished architects, Michael Wright and Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, were very much involved.

Richard Robinson has been Chairman of the Environment Committee for nearly ten years, having previously been Vice-Chairman. He has led the committee with great panache and



Aerial view of the Imperial College model, showing the Queen's Tower, with surrounding pool and extension of the Queen's Lawn.

success. Now his responsibilities as director of a division of one of our leading merchant banks is requiring increasingly frequent overseas journeys and he has decided to relinquish the chairmanship whilst remaining a member of the committee.

The gap that he leaves is a hard one to fill and the Association is lucky that the senior Vice-Chairman, Michael Wright CMG, FRICS, RIBA, has agreed to become the committee's Chairman. Trained as both an architect and a chartered surveyor, Michael Wright served as Director of Public Works in Hong Kong for several years before being appointed Hong Kong Commissioner in London. He will be supported by the Vice-Chairman, Lesley MacDonagh, who is head of the planning department of a leading firm of solicitors. Her mastery of planning law has proved invaluable to the work of the committee and with the support of both Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, senior partner of one of London's best-known architectural practices, together with the other dedicated members, the Environment Committee remains a formidable negotiating body.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

The work of the Traffic Committee has been increasing in importance throughout the years. The motor vehicle, whether moving or static, remains one of London's most intractable problems, and, as in so many areas, there are conflicting interests. The traffic must be kept moving whilst the pedestrians must be given time to cross the 'metal river' of Brompton Road. The traffic anomalies of Exhibition Road – where cars coming from Princes Gardens cannot turn right to go north, and cars proceeding west along Kensington Road or South Carriage Drive are similarly prevented from turning north across the park – means that hundreds of cars each day are forced to make U-turns in Exhibition Road.



ABOVE: ugly signs at Coalbrookdale Gate, and BELOW, there are still problems at the underpass at Hyde Park Corner.



The closure of part of South Carriage Drive in Hyde Park on Sundays was mentioned in last year's Report, which drew attention to the long tailbacks that resulted. It was hoped that the closing for repairs of the underpass at Hyde Park Corner would mean at least the relaxation of this order, but this has been requested in vain. To make matters worse, preparations for the new ornamental gates nearby are taking place at the same time, causing further tailbacks in the park itself on weekdays.

Although everyone respects the sanctity of Hyde Park, South Carriage Drive is already established as part of the normal traffic system, and to reduce the lanes of two important traffic

routes so near to Hyde Park Corner at the same time could surely have been avoided.

The Committee has been informed that work should be completed and the underpass fully operational again by mid-February 1993, and that one of the eastbound lanes in the park alongside Apsley House, temporarily closed due to work on the Queen Elizabeth Gate, should be open to traffic again midway through next year.

Bank Holiday and Sunday Opening

The Association has been pressing hard for parking restrictions to be extended to meet future Bank Holidays and possible Sunday opening hours. Local residents will remember the gridlock that resulted earlier this year when Harrods not only opened on New Year's Day, but also made it the first day of their sale, advertising on commercial radio the fact that there would be no parking restrictions. Traffic and parking conditions on that day were intolerable and after strong protests it has been announced that from New Year's Day 1993, meter and residents' parking rules will apply from 8.30 am to 6.30 pm on Bank Holidays (Christmas Day excluded) in Westminster. Kensington and Chelsea Council propose introducing a similar system later in the year. If Sunday opening becomes a reality the restrictions will have to be extended.

Naturally, the Traffic Committee is in close touch with its colleagues of the Environment Committee in their efforts to overcome any traffic problems arising from the Prudential's proposed development. Recent surveys carried out in the area in connection with the scheme have shown that traffic causes more problems to residents than anything else. Residents placed visitor parking, residents' parking, unreliable buses, high traffic speeds, pollution, damaged pavements and street furniture high on their list of problems.

The Ministry of Transport has designated over 300 miles of road in the capital as Red Routes, where parking will be forbidden. These will be phased in over the next three years. Brompton Road is included as one of these routes, with all its restrictions, but the date for its incorporation has not yet been announced.

Knightsbridge Underground

London Underground unfortunately say that they have no plans at present to refurbish the concourse at the Harrods entrance to Knightsbridge station, but promise that all escalators will soon be fully operational.

Committee Changes

After five very busy years as Chairman of the Traffic Committee, Dr Stanley Steel has retired, but will still be available to lend his

experience and advice. The new Chairman is Kevin Gardner, a member of Westminster City Council and a former Lord Mayor. His expertise will be of immense value to the committee.

RUBBISH, LITTER AND RECYCLING

For many years the banishment of litter and rubbish from the streets was considered top priority. Since those early days, the Litter and Rubbish Committee has been led by Frances Rice, whose dedication and amazing energy helped to bring about a significant raising of standards in the residential areas of Knightsbridge. Her liaison with the authorities at Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough, and presently with the private contractors, has been invaluable to the neighbourhood.

This battle to keep the streets clean is never ending and fought every day. It is essential that the council's contractors maintain the schedules of collection and street sweeping, for any variation is immediately noticeable on the streets. It should always be remembered that this is a two-sided partnership and residents must play their part. Householders are urged not to put refuse bags on the street on non-collection days, even if they are going away for the weekend. It is only by setting an example that litter and rubbish can be controlled.

In contrast to the residential area, the squalor in Brompton Road, stretching from Sloane Street to Harrods, and around the areas to the west selling fast food, is unacceptable. The committee has great sympathy with the Kensington and Chelsea Council which has to deal with this problem, but something must be done to stem this tide and reverse it.

The very popularity of the shopping in Brompton Road has become its greatest threat. Even in these bad times, the area has just received an addition to its fast food outlets with the arrival of McDonalds and it is understood that at least two other major chains are scouting for premises.

Recycling is now catching on and there are several recycling facilities in the area – bottles and cans behind the Albert Hall, bottles, paper and cans in Relton Mews, off Cheval Place, and also bottles at the service entrance to the Science Museum in Exhibition Road. By the end of the century councils are supposed to ensure that all household waste suitable for recycling be recycled, and by then people are expected to help by pre-sorting.



Ever present problems: overflowing bins, and refuse put outside at the wrong times.



RECEPTION BEFORE THE 1991 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Roger Hoffer; The Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Mrs Frances Taylor; The Deputy Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Joe Glickman; Roy Anderson; Iain Walker.



Michael Wright, Editha Mork and Michael Clements.



ABOVE: Lady Strathcarron, the Hon. Lady Lowson and Lord Strathcarron. BELOW: Simon and Lesley MacDonagh and David Tucker.



Councillor Robert Moreland, Cynthia Thompson and George Wilk.



Jacquie Lund; Jeffrey and Sandra Davis.



ABOVE: Hermione Hobhouse, Editor of the Survey of London, with Jennifer Adams, Acting Bailiff of the Royal Parks. BELOW: Naim Dangoor.



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

6 Montpelier Street,
London SW7 1EZ.
Telephone 071-823 9103

MAIN COMMITTEE

Chairman: Neville Labovitch MBE
Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton
Hon. Treasurer: Christine Gilbertson
Raymond Benardout
Jonathan Charkham
Rosalie Digby-Seymour
Lady Duncan
Baroness Gardner of Parkes
Kevin Gardner
Lady Grade
Jean Lyell
Frances Rice
Richard Robinson
Gordon Shingleton
Nina Wallis
John Wallis
Sarah Wills
Michael Wright CMG FRICS RIBA

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Chairman: Michael Wright CMG FRICS RIBA
Vice Chairman: Lesley MacDonagh
Kevin Gardner
Joyce Goodman
Diana Jenkins
Neville Labovitch MBE
Jean Lyell
Jeremy Mackay-Lewis BArch FRIBA
Frances Rice
Richard Robinson
Carol Seymour-Newton
Stanley Steel MD FRCP
Cynthia Thompson
John Wallis
Sarah Wills

LITTER AND RUBBISH COMMITTEE

Chairman: Frances Rice

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE

Chairman: Gordon Shingleton

TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Chairman: Kevin Gardner

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Chairman: Raymond Benardout
Hon. Secretary: Rosalie Digby-Seymour

SOCIAL & EVENTS COMMITTEE

Chairman: Lady Grade



Cllr. Alex Segal, Westminster's Chairman of Planning; Cllr. Martin Jiggins, Chairman of traffic sub-committee; Cllr. Robert Moreland.



Lt. Col. Gordon Birdwood and Linda Benardout.



ABOVE: Anne Hawkins and Angela Pitt.
BELOW: Jacqueline and Tony Shead.



Professor Peter Grootenhuis, Baroness Gardner and Sally Grootenhuis.



Alan Husher and Gabrielle Pinto.



ABOVE: Gordon Chard and Lady Grade.
BELOW: The Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Mrs Frances Taylor; Neville Labovitch; Iain Walker





From Westminster City Council: Gavin Clark, Jonna Wegefelt and Councillor Robert Michaels.



Georgina Greene, Kai Leslie, Erica de Bosdari and Lana Poole.



ABOVE: John Sudbury, Fred Guy and Joe Nduva. BELOW: Carol Seymour-Newton with the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, Mrs Frances Taylor, and Roger Hoffer



SOCIAL EVENTS

There have been no special events to report this year. The amount of time devoted to the general problems of the neighbourhood has kept the members of the committees very busy. However, Lady Grade, the Chairman of the Social and Events Committee, has several ideas for future events and details of these will be circulated to members early in the New Year.

The Christmas lights in Knightsbridge, which were inaugurated by Raymond Benardout, one of the Association's members, are once again a pleasing addition to the festive season.

A social event which is always popular with the membership is the Reception before the



Knightsbridge Association member, Dr J. Clementi, aided by Lt. Col. Gordon Birdwood, planting her sponsored tree beside the Barracks.

Annual Meeting, which this year will take place at 6 o'clock on Monday, 7th December, with the meeting itself beginning half an hour later.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Dr Cyril Nemeth, and the Lady Mayoress, and the Mayor of Kensington, Miss Elizabeth Christmas, and many other distinguished guests will be present. There is always a good attendance by councillors and officers from both Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. There will also be a large contingent from the local police stations, including senior officers. As usual our guests are happy to answer questions from the floor during the meeting.

LOCAL AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

As the contents of this Report show, there is constant communication between the Association's committees and the local authorities, particularly the planning committees and their supporting officers. Since the greater part of Knightsbridge is in the City of Westminster, it is chiefly with Westminster City Council that discussions and negotiations take place. After many years of co-operation a very good relationship has grown up both with councillors and officers, and both parties share the disappointment which comes from the overturning by appeal of decisions taken by the council in the interests of the community.

The Association is particularly grateful to Sid Sporle, the Director of Planning and Transportation, who, despite occupying one of the most taxing positions in local government, has always been of great assistance to the Association and the local community. We are also grateful to Gordon Chard, Divisional Director (Development), and all the other officers who have been concerned with matters pertaining to Knightsbridge throughout the year.

David Weeks, who has always been supportive of the Association, is now well established as Leader of the Council. The

Association's Planning Committee has enjoyed the help and support of Alex Segal, the Chairman of Planning, throughout the year and, similarly, the Association has profited by the co-operation and advice of Martin Jiggins, who is Chairman of the council's Traffic Committee.

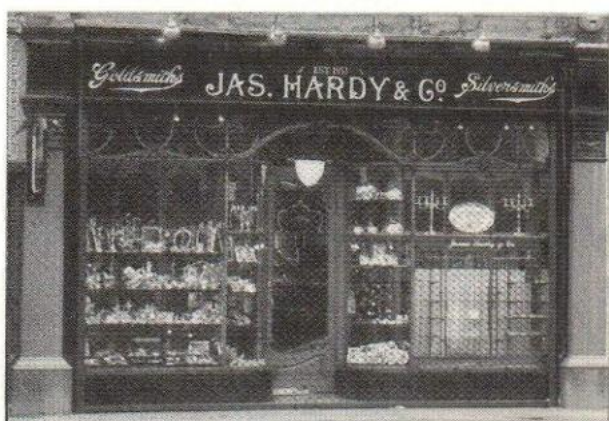
Although the area covered by the Knightsbridge Association which extends into the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is much smaller, it is nevertheless a very important part of Knightsbridge. There is a busy exchange of views between members of the Association's committees and the councillors and officers of the Royal Borough. The Association is grateful for the interest of the Leader, Joan Hanham, in its affairs and similarly of the Chairman of Planning, Andrew Fane. The Executive Director of Planning and Conservation, Mary Dent, and Michael French, Director of Planning Services, have been especially helpful.

Helpful, too, has been the MP for Chelsea, Nicholas Scott MBE, whose constituency covers a part of the Knightsbridge area. He has been particularly interested in planning matters regarding changes of use in Brompton Road.

At the last elections Knightsbridge elected

RIGHT: Now under new ownership and management, Harvey Nichols has been undergoing a major refurbishment. One of the new features of interest to K.A. members is the 1,200 square metre Food Market which opened in November, billed as "a veritable gastronomic haven".

BELOW: Both the Councils of the Royal Borough and of the City of Westminster have policies which encourage the erection of shopfronts which are in sympathy with the buildings in which they are housed. Those on the left, whilst eye-catching, show little respect for their surroundings, whereas Jas. Hardy & Co, on the right, have happily retained their original shopfront which is contemporaneous with the 1886 building.



two brand new councillors to serve on Westminster City Council, Robert Michaels and Robert Moreland. Knightsbridge has been well served by its councillors and they have been a great help and support to the Association. The committees look forward to continuing to work with them and maintaining this successful relationship.

The Association is grateful to the local councillors of the Royal Borough, David Hudson, Simon Ingham and, in particular Desmond Harney who is also Deputy Chairman of the Planning Committee, and it looks forward to another year of co-operation.

The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke CH, MP

For some years now Knightsbridge has enjoyed as Member of Parliament one of the most conscientious and dedicated of representatives. It might have seemed an easy task to fulfil in a constituency which is in the centre of the

capital, but Peter Brooke's concern and interest in his constituents was ever present, even when he became, first, the Chairman of the



Conservative Party and then the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

It was a very happy surprise when he was recently appointed to be Secretary of State for National Heritage. This is a post which seems particularly

appropriate to his talents and interests, and brings him very near to the work of the Knightsbridge Association of which he has always been a great supporter.

Members are particularly pleased that Peter Brooke's work and contribution to the nation were recognised when The Queen made him a Companion of Honour.

THE ROYAL PARKS

There was widespread unease when it was first announced that there was to be a fundamental change in the management of the Royal Parks. Henceforth, their upkeep would be put out to tender by private firms. Furthermore, this



ABOVE:
*Hyde Park or
Coach Park?*

RIGHT: A
*responsible
dog owner
shows the way*



priceless heritage was to be investigated by a committee of enquiry which would make recommendations for the future of the parks.

So far, all the news has been good. The new post of chief executive has been filled by David Welch, a horticulturist of repute. Under his guidance it is inconceivable that there would be any drop in standards, and with so many of the original management remaining, there should be strict and regular supervision.

It was encouraging, too, that the Review Panel was chaired by Dame Jennifer Jenkins, and the high expectations which were raised were realised by an excellent report. The status of the parks as islands of peace, green oases for the quiet enjoyment of the general public, is to be maintained. Most of the panel's recommendations are to preserve the main use of the parks, to provide, in the spirit of the Knightsbridge Association's submission to the committee, large, calm, open green spaces in which Londoners and visitors alike may take their leisure away from the noise and bustle of city life. The report contains much good common sense and anyone interested in the future of this matchless legacy would enjoy reading it.

The only culprit singled out is man's best friend. Dogs have taken much blame for causing nuisance and hazards to health, and they are fighting a rearguard action against restrictions on their freedom. With an adequate supply of equipment and facilities, and with the responsible attitude of the recently formed

Royal Parks' Dog Owners' Association the problem might well disappear.

The Canada geese, however, which are so popular with visitors, are causing destruction and considerable pollution and, hopefully, steps will be taken to control their numbers.

The recommendation by Dame Jennifer's Review Panel which pleases members of the Association's Traffic Committee, is the one to alleviate traffic problems in the park. This

would entail reversing the trend towards using East and North Carriage Drives as coach parks, and picking up on an earlier suggestion to deepen the Park Lane Garage, which at present is too shallow to accommodate coaches.

After a rainy year the parks have been looking very green. It is heartening to see that the litter is much less evident and the parks are a great deal cleaner.

LAW AND ORDER



Police line up: Gordon Shingleton, Chairman of the Law & Order Committee, on the extreme left, with, left to right, Chief Superintendent Frank Haughian, Crime Prevention Officer Alan Husher, Chief Inspector Peter Isaacson, P.C. Clive Coleman, Inspector Frank White and Sergeant Susan Edwarde.

The Law and Order Committee was formed only a few years ago in answer to the wave of crime which migrated from Oxford Street to Brompton Road near Harrods. Here, illegal traders, pickpockets and other malefactors are rife, and ice cream vans create obstructions. Sometimes these vans park three in a line on Cromwell Road and have even been seen three deep in Exhibition Road.

The committee is chaired by Gordon Shingleton, an expert on security matters. A close liaison exists with all the Metropolitan Police stations in the area. Officers from each station attend the committee's meetings, whilst two committee members have been elected to the Belgravia Crime Prevention Panel and attend all community meetings with the police.

One of the obstacles to dealing effectively with the illegal traders is the discrepancy between the money that passes through their hands and the fines that are imposed by the magistrates in court. This is a problem which the committee will continue to discuss with the authorities.

Over 70 per cent of break-ins are committed by young people between 14 and 21 years of age. Many of these burglaries are opportunistic and rely on the fact that many premises are still not properly protected with adequate locks and alarms, whilst in other cases householders are tricked into opening front doors via entry phones. The committee advises all residents to accept the offer of the local Crime Prevention Officer to visit their premises and advise on any precautions he may think necessary.

An aid to crime has always been the use of scaffolding, especially on terraces of houses. When scaffolding is proposed, the local police should be consulted and asked for advice about electronic scaffolding surveillance.

During the last two weeks of September the police operated a very successful 'Cop Shop' in Sloane Street which had on display many protective devices for the home and motor car. As usual there will be a display at the Annual General Meeting and several officers of the local police, including the Crime Prevention Officer, will be present.

FINANCE

The Association's finances, presided over so ably by Christine Gilbertson, continue to be satisfactory. Compared to many organisations of a similar kind, the Association has very low overheads.

This is due to a very tight fiscal policy and the fact that several members of the committee have professional expertise which is available

to the Association. Members will have seen in the Report, however, that it has been increasingly necessary to secure specialist help and advice on occasions, especially nowadays when it is necessary to research the effects on the area posed by large schemes, even those which might once have been thought to be of a peripheral nature.

APPRECIATIONS

It is quite impossible to name everyone who has contributed to the work of the Association during the year. On this occasion there are changes in the chairmanship of two of the most important committees and these have been dealt with in the appropriate sections of the Report. I would, however, like to say a personal word of thanks to Richard Robinson and Stanley Steel, and to couple this with my thanks in general to all the chairmen of the committees who bear the main burden of the Association's work. Without them and the dedicated members of the committees who support them, this organisation could not achieve what it does.

I must, however, mention the great contribution given by Raymond Benardout in organising the advertising pages for this Annual Report. These expressions of support from the commercial community are very valuable to the Association. The famous

companies that trade in Knightsbridge appreciate the benefits which they share with the local community from the work done by the Knightsbridge Association. We are very grateful to them for their support.

Nearly all the work of the Association passes through the hands of our honorary secretary, Carol Seymour-Newton. The organisation could not function at the level that it does without her amazing energy and dedication to the well-being of Knightsbridge. As always, we are greatly indebted to her.

Like all similar bodies, the Knightsbridge Association relies on the support of a concerned and interested membership. It is this that encourages the committees in their work to protect and enhance the quality of life in Knightsbridge.

Neville Labovitch
December 1992



Not the Decimus Burton Screen, but an imaginatively conceived sponsored painted canvas hoarding, hiding unsightly scaffolding during repairs.

THE HISTORY OF THE PRUDENTIAL SITE

by Hermione Hobhouse
General Editor of The Survey of London

Before it was comprehensively redeveloped in the late 1950s the Prudential site, bounded by Brompton Road, Knightsbridge Green, Raphael Street and Lancelot Place, was one of the most interesting parts of Knightsbridge. It consisted of an unchic mixture of commercial and residential buildings, dating mostly from the 19th century though with some earlier survivals.

This article draws on the research being undertaken for a volume of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments *Survey of London* which will describe the Knightsbridge area. This work is still in progress and the authors would be very pleased to receive any additional information or corrections.



The Brompton Road frontage in Thomas Salway's survey. Reproduced by permission of the British Library (Add. MS 31326)

THOMAS SALWAY'S SURVEY OF 1811

Thomas Salway's survey of the Brompton and Fulham Roads in 1811 illustrated the Brompton Road frontage of the Prudential site between Knightsbridge Green and Lancelot Place. The finest of the buildings was the mansion on the west side of Knightsbridge Green, which was erected in the early 18th century for James Philip Moreau, a prosperous Huguenot merchant whose family were significant landowners in the area. A sale catalogue of 1759 described it as 'a large substantial modern brick Mansion House . . . pleasantly situated in an open and airy part of Knightsbridge'. It had a walled garden of about an acre, 'well planted with fruit trees', with gravel walks, grass plots, espalier hedges, a wilderness and a shrubbery. The mansion was demolished about 1863, by which time it had become a boarding house called Grosvenor House, and Tattersall's new auction rooms were built on the site.

Just visible to the east of the Moreau mansion is the house lived in until 1821 by Durs Egg, a well-known gunsmith of the period; his home was later redeveloped as the Pakenham Tavern. Immediately west is a group of late 18th-century cottages called Gibbon's Rents. Between 1918 and 1924 these were replaced by a terrace of four-storey brick houses with shops (Nos 42-58 Brompton Road), built by the Chelsea-based firm of William and John Whitehead. The Whiteheads' houses were demolished when Caltex House was built on the site in the mid-1950s.

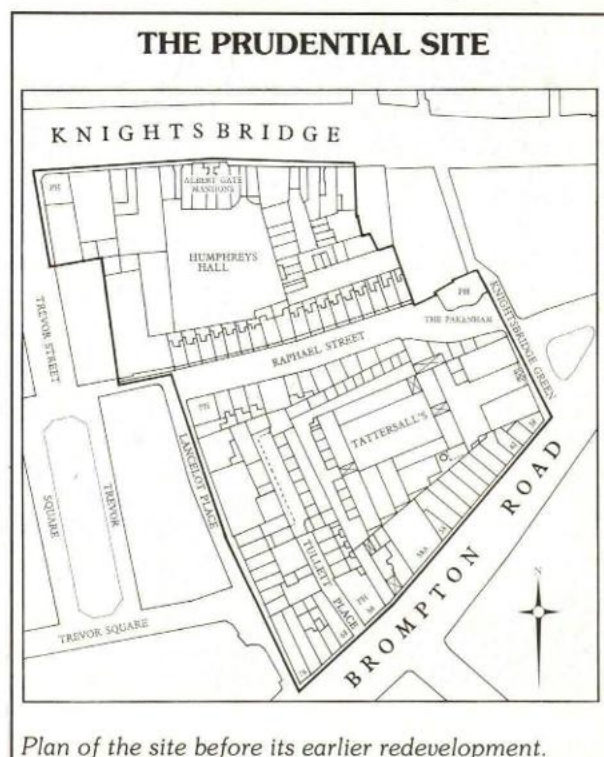
The undeveloped site west of Gibbon's Rents, known as the Melon Ground, remained vacant until 1841, when the Brompton National School (see below) was built there. To the west of the Melon Ground is a small group of houses with the Fulham Bridge Tavern at the end (Nos 62-66), built in the late 1770s. Nos 60 and 62 were pulled down about 1905 when ornate showrooms and flats, fronted in red brick and terracotta, were erected for the motor car and bicycle manufacturers, Humber Limited. The public house was substantially altered in the 1880s.

Alongside the tavern was the entrance to Fulham Bridge Yard (later Tullett Place), where there was a stable with 43 stalls and a 'Ride for Exercising and

Shewing of Horses'. Horse dealing thus seems to have been an established tradition in the locality well before Tattersall's moved to Knightsbridge Green.

Between Tullett Place and Lancelot Place was a short terrace of houses built in the 1790s, called Brompton Place (Nos 68-76). In 1896 Nos 70-74 were replaced by a handsome brick and stone building with shops and oriel windows, erected for Cooper's, the grocers and tea dealers.

Several buildings along the Brompton Road frontage were destroyed or badly damaged during the Second World War, and the rest were demolished in the mid-1950s when the whole area was redeveloped.



Plan of the site before its earlier redevelopment.

Tattersalls

'The best plan of all for a man who does not mind putting his hand in his pocket . . . is to go to Tattersall's when a celebrated stud comes up for auction . . . when satisfied that he has seen the stamp of horse he requires . . . let him boldly take his stand under Mr Tattersall's eye.' This advice from the *Badminton Library* to the tyro horse owner in 1891 held good for nearly a hundred years.

Tattersall's had two attractions for the man about town – the sale of horses and carriages, and the betting facilities. The auction rooms were originally at Hyde Park Corner, behind St George's Hospital, but when the Grosvenor Estate refused to renew the lease, Edmund Tattersall (1816-98) moved the family business to Knightsbridge Green. The new premises were designed by Charles Freeman of Lincoln's Inn (1813-69), surveyor to the Sun Assurance Company and to the local Harrington Estate, and the contractors were Holland and Hannen, one of the best-known London builders.

The handsome entrance on the west of Knightsbridge Green was flanked by two wings built of yellow brick with stone dressings, the northern one housing the offices and the southern a magnificent 'Subscribers' Room', 60 feet by 30 feet, and almost as high. It was lighted by two glass domes, and by a sunburner at night, and had an elaborate, decorated ceiling whose design was echoed in the tessellated floor. A raised dais round the room supported leather seats, with desks in the centre 'appropriated to the recording of wagers, the writing of letters, despatches, etc'. At the far end, folding doors gave on to an open-air paved area

equipped with a telegraph office, also for betting.

The actual sales took place in the double-height auction ring, dominated by the famous 'Fox', housed in a classical temple surmounted by a bust of the youthful George IV. The balcony, served by a hydraulic lift manufactured by the firm of Easton and Amos, held the carriages, while the ring was surrounded by stabling. During the London season the premises were a favourite haunt of sporting figures and their ladies.

The firm held additional sales at Newmarket and Doncaster, and, as Londoners ceased to ride and drive horses, auctions of racehorses and bloodstock became more important. Hunter sales continued in London until 1939, but were never resumed after the war, when the firm finally moved to Newmarket.

The Knightsbridge premises were hit by a flying bomb in August 1944 and Kenneth Watt, the managing director, approached (Sir) Albert Richardson for help in moving the 'Fox' to Newmarket. To rescue this splendid classical object, Richardson decreed that it would have to be dismantled and the stone cupola sawn into pieces – work that he claimed could be done by only one man in England. This mason, according to legend, worked all morning, then retired to sharpen his blunted saws in his workshop, and blunt his faculties in the local pub, reappearing the following morning to repeat the performance.

Tattersall's sold up in 1947 to Messrs Oetzmann, a well-known firm of house furnishers with premises in Tottenham Court Road. Though they advertised their Knightsbridge premises from 1950, they do not seem to have made much of a mark in the Brompton Road, and disappeared in the mid-1950s when redevelopment took place.





LEFT: The main entrance to Tattersall's on Knightsbridge Green, about 1950, with Oetzmann's showrooms on the left; the archway was later moved to Newmarket. (RCHME, crown copyright).

OPPOSITE: The main auction ring of Tattersall's, with the 'Fox' in the middle, 1896 (RCHME, crown copyright).

Raphael Street and The Pakenham Tavern

Raphael Street was developed in 1846-8 by Edward Nangle, a Knightsbridge builder, on land leased from Lewis Raphael, the owner of a prosperous dairy farm at

King's Cross. The street followed the path of an ancient driftway which ran from Knightsbridge Green to the Rose and Crown Inn in Knightsbridge. Although Nangle's houses had conventional brick and stucco

fronts, several different elevational designs were employed. Those on the north side had intricate metalwork balconettes to the first-floor windows.

The house that was to become the Pakenham Tavern was built by Nangle about 1844 on the site of the former home of the gunsmith, Durs Egg. It seems that Nangle lived there until about 1848, possibly using it as a base from which to oversee the development of the rest of Raphael Street. The building was then fitted out as a public house and leased to the Stag Brewery. Perhaps named after Admiral Sir Thomas Pakenham (1757-1836), the Pakenham Tavern is first listed in directories in 1850 and rapidly became a favourite drinking spot with the guardsmen at the nearby barracks.



LEFT: Raphael Street and the Pakenham Tavern, 1955 (RCHME, crown copyright)

The Brompton National School

Built in 1841-2 on the vacant plot between Nos 58 and 60 Brompton Road, the Brompton National School was a picturesque Tudor-style building designed by George Godwin junior, editor of *The Builder*. After the school moved to the old Brompton Chapel in Montpelier Street (now Bonhams auction rooms) in about 1889-90, the site (No 58A) was redeveloped as 'The Art Workshops', a striking red brick building in the Queen Anne manner, containing craft studios. The ground floor was later converted for Mac Fisheries.

The Brompton National School, from The Builder, 1845

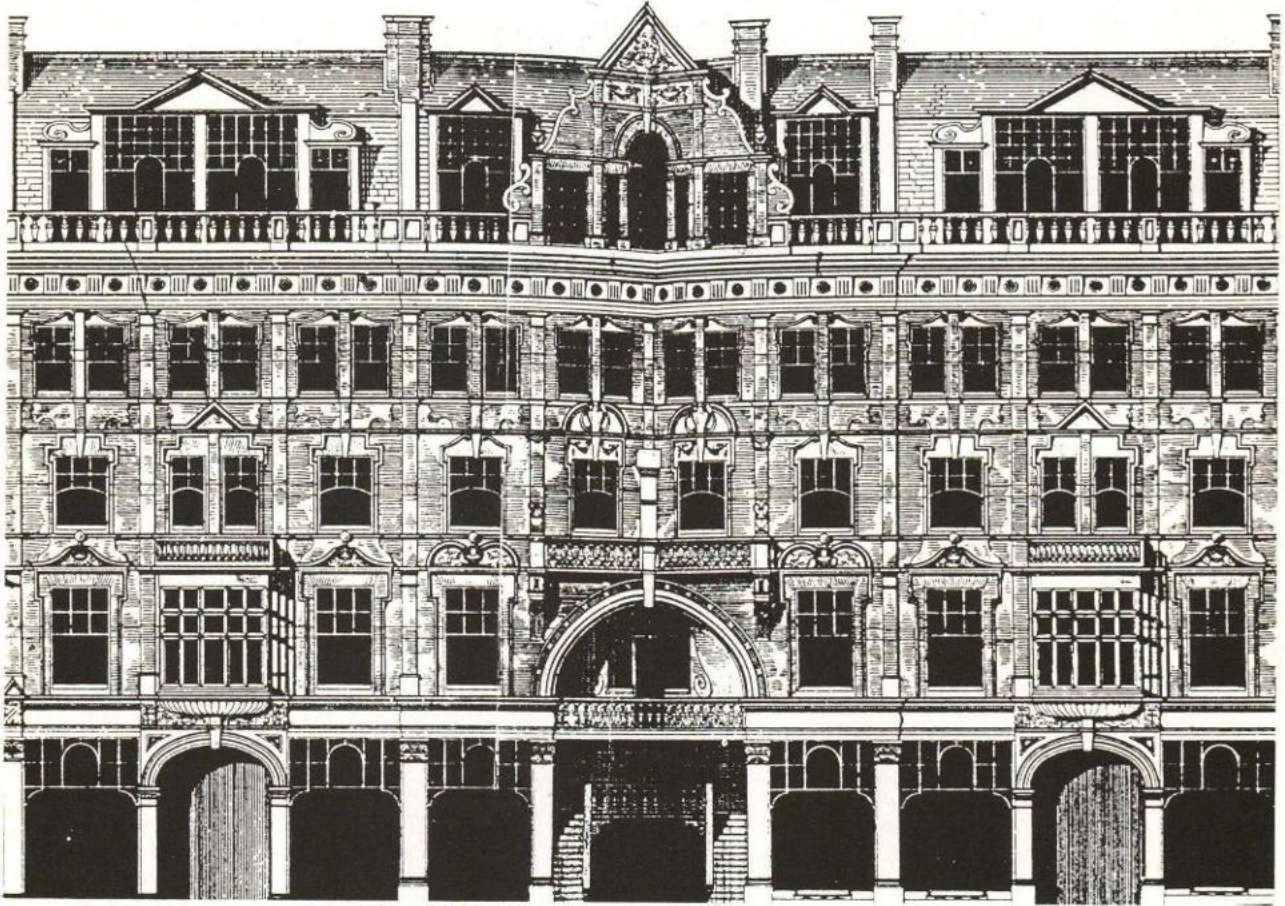


Albert Gate Mansions

This five-storey mansion block was built in 1883-4 on the south side of Knightsbridge facing the park. The architects were Romaine Walker and Tanner, working for the site's owner, James Charlton Humphreys, a manufacturer of iron buildings with a showroom and factory at Albert Gate. The three large entrances provided access to Humphrey's Hall, a large exhibition

hall at the rear, and the block was known at first as Humphrey's Hall Mansions. It was soon renamed Albert Gate Mansions, perhaps to distance it socially from the exhibition hall.

On the ground floor there was a mix of shops and a restaurant, while on the next three floors were a dozen high-class flats. A fine reception room on the top floor could be hired by residents and societies for functions.



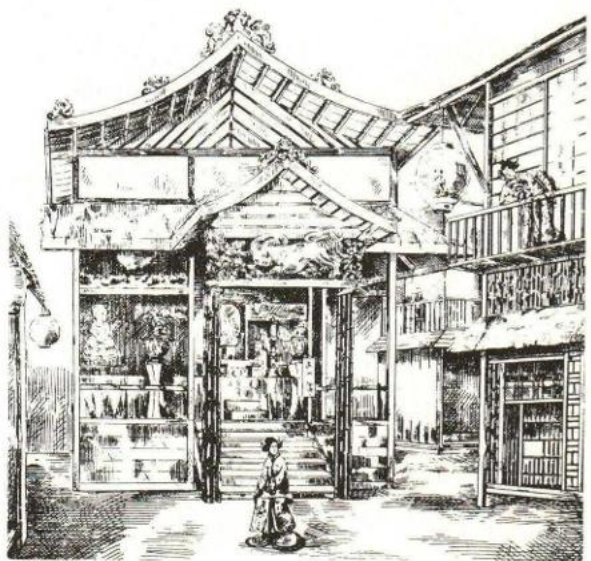
The Japanese Village at Humphrey's Hall (see below)

The instigator and organiser of the Japanese Village exhibition which took place at Humphrey's Hall in 1885-7 was a Japanese resident of London, Tannaker Buhicroson, who was appalled by the prevailing view of many Westerners that the Japanese were semi-barbarians. He employed only native Japanese workmen in the construction of the houses, workshops and Buddhist temple which made up the village, and a hundred Japanese artisans and their families lived there, performing the daily rituals of Japanese life.

The temple was attended each day by a priest, while on a nearby stage displays of Sumo wrestling and Japanese martial arts took place and Japanese music was performed. Visitors could take refreshment in authentic tea houses, where they were served tea from lacquer trays by Japanese attendants dressed in kimonos. Elsewhere in the hall Japanese craftsmen displayed their skills in wood and ivory carving, toy-making, metalwork, lacquerwork, pottery and fan-making. The only regret expressed was that none of the artifacts were for sale.

The Japanese Village was an immediate success and was perhaps the theatrical realisation of a fashionable obsession with all things Japanese, stimulated by the Oriental Bazaar at Liberty's and expressed elsewhere in the acclaim accorded to *The Mikado*.

Albert Gate (formerly Humphrey's Hall) Mansions, Knightsbridge, 1883



The Buddhist temple and a gentleman's house at the Japanese Village exhibition of 1885-7, Humphrey's Hall, Knightsbridge; illustration from *The Builder*

Another attractive development
by Eagle Star. (Until March, you'll
have to take our word for it.)



On the corner of Brompton Road opposite Harrods, stands a new development
by Eagle Star Properties, 1-11 Montpelier Street.

Not that there's much to see at present - it's well and truly wrapped up for winter.

But come spring, 1-11 Montpelier Street will reveal itself in its true glory.

A sensitively renovated Georgian building with an
imaginative mixture of shops, offices and superb apartments.

If you'd like to find out more, ring W.A. Ellis on
(071) 581 7654 or Pepper Angliss and Yarwood on (071) 499 6066.

And ring soon. Because there'll be a lot of people
showing a lot of interest.

Take our word for it.



The Knightsbridge Association
30th Annual Report, December 1991.

As you can see, we kept our word.



'A sensitively renovated Georgian building with an imaginative mixture of shops,
offices and superb apartments.'

That's what Eagle Star Properties promised. And that's exactly what Montpelier Row,
opposite Harrods, has been revealed to be.

We believe it's a development that Knightsbridge is pleased to
be associated with. And should you care to be personally associated
with it there's still time (but only just), to make enquiries.

For residential, ring W.A. Ellis on 071 581 7654.

For retail, ring Kitchen La Frenais Morgan on 071 495 7578.

For offices, ring Pepper Angliss and Yarwood on 071 499 6066.



EAGLE STAR
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Personal service, FREE LOCAL DELIVERY, a wide range including:

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Every quality food you need for a special occasion or everyday pleasure

Christmas gifts which can be savoured

Midday snacks to take away

Come to the pantry — the gourmet's delight

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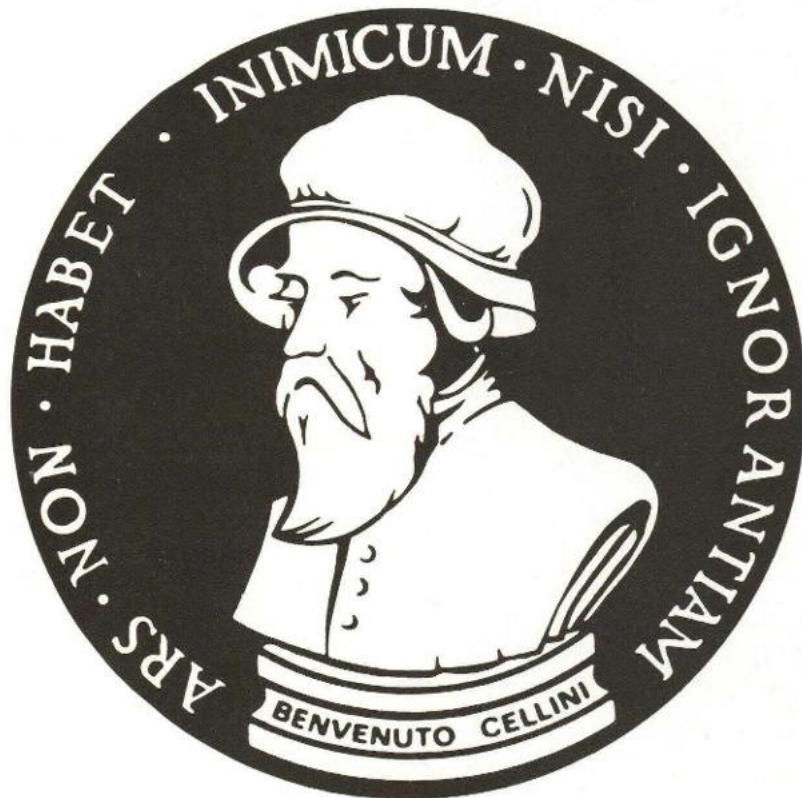
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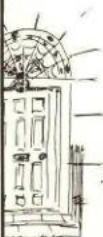
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