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34TH ANNUAL REPORT
December 1995



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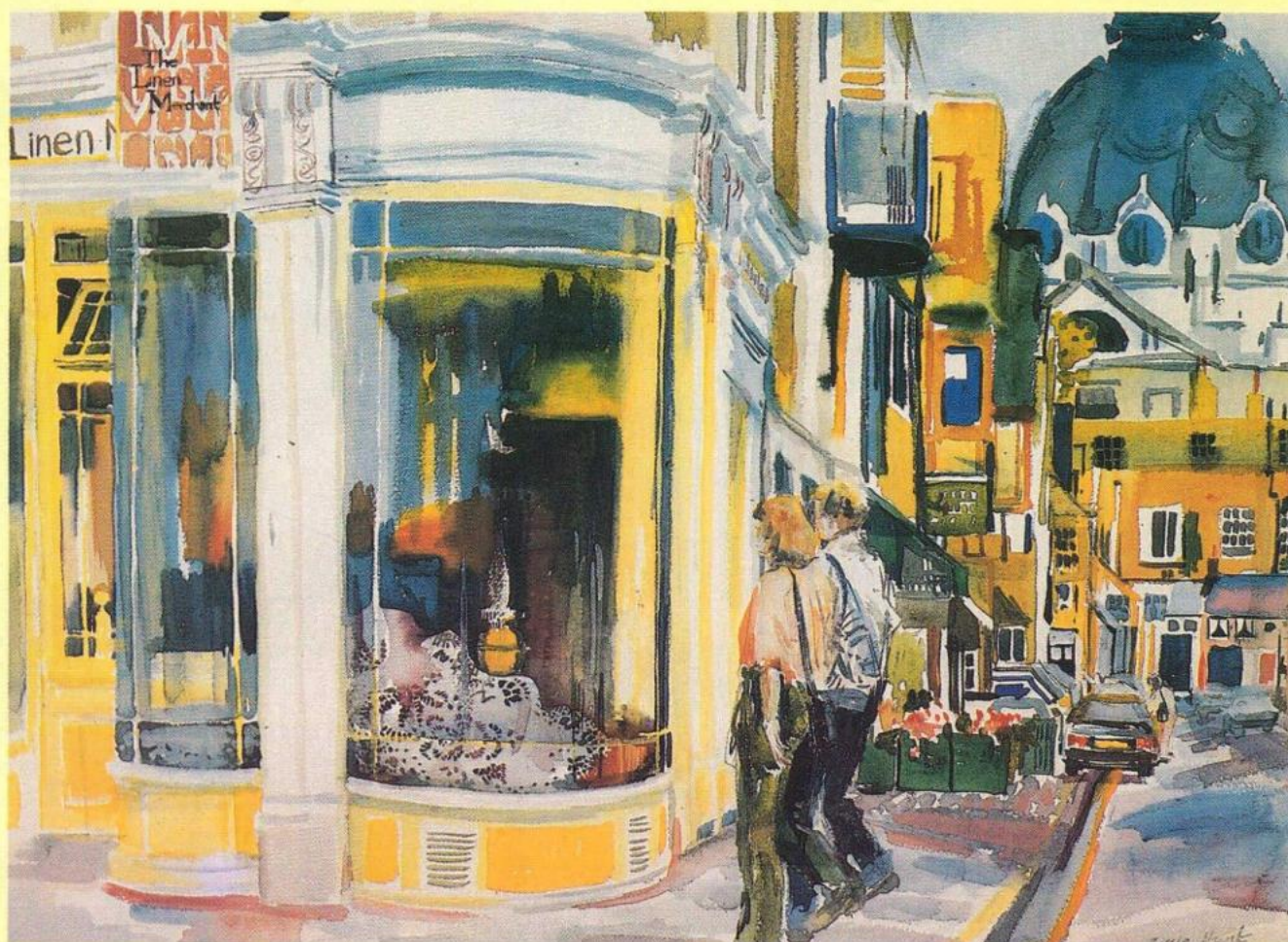
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SW1. Besides use of the garden in the square, it opens on to a shared garden at the back of the terrace. But its treat is spectacular joinery: French oak floors and deep mahogany in one bathroom. The other has

burr maple, even on the lavatory seat and the ceiling. A huge mirror emphasises the beautiful grain of the wood – and the sense of being in your own early-18th century cabinet.

Jeremy Davidson, of Chelsea office of De Groot Collis, says: "In prime central London areas, private parking facilities add about 10% to the value of a property and we have seen instances where clients have been prepared to pay up to £50,000 for a nearby lock-up. In the £1.5m-plus range, parking is as important as the number of bedrooms." De Groot Collis is selling one house in Chelsea with off-street parking for £545,000 and two in SW1, both with their own garage, for £400,000 and £535,000.

■ Two ritzy houses in L
for sale at about £5m. M
land Gate, SW7 is set
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PROPER

edon fever about to break out
t can help to sell a house

Davidson reckons "
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on adds

The

The National Heart Hospital in Westmoreland Street, W1, vacant for five years, has been sold to Gleneagles International, a division of Singapore developer Parkways Holdings. The buyer has negotiated new long-term leases on the site from the Howard de Walden Estate and has plans to develop a new hospital.

East buyer The dental agency, says the buyer wanted an 8 per cent yield and long-term capital growth. She adds: 'The difficulty in finding suitable investment opportunities for such investors has led to marked price increases, due mainly to healthy competition.'

... 3W7, lay empty for some years
ed by a Middle Eastern developer. New
uyers through De Groot Collis at pro
Far East, particularly in Singapore

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De Groot achieves

De Groot ac
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has paid £10 million for
ht 4, 5 and 8, Observatory
ndon W8.

The buyer intends to develop the properties into 15 flats. The equates to £470 a sq ft, de Groot Collis

£10m from Far
claim is the highest price they
have achieved in terms of
footage.

The sale was made off by de Groot Collis' Priscilla Stille, who took plans of the development to the Far East. Avril Butt, head of the resi-

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and ready buyers thr...
Far East

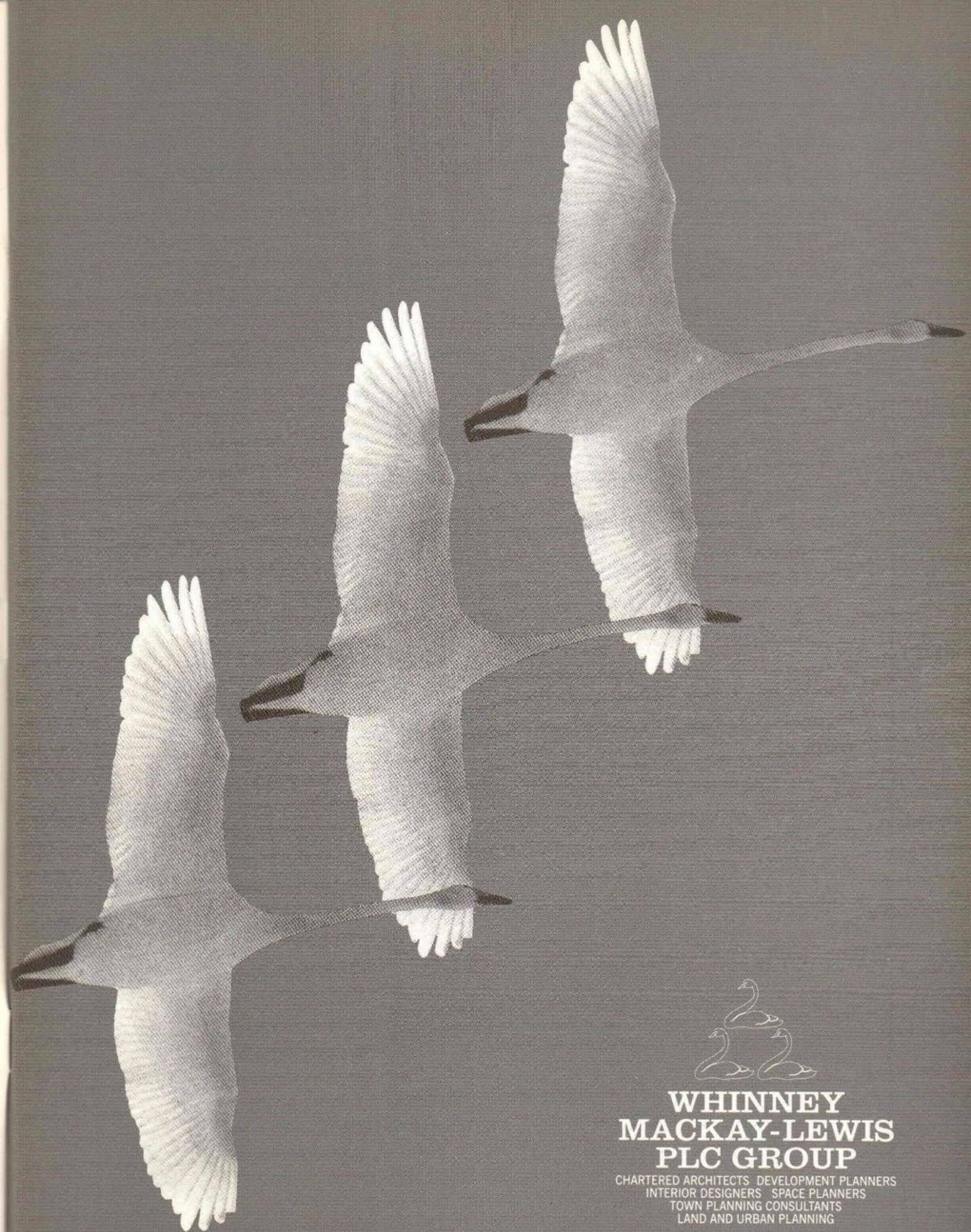
East buyer

SW7, lay empty for some years
a Middle Eastern developer. Now
through De Groot Collis at pro
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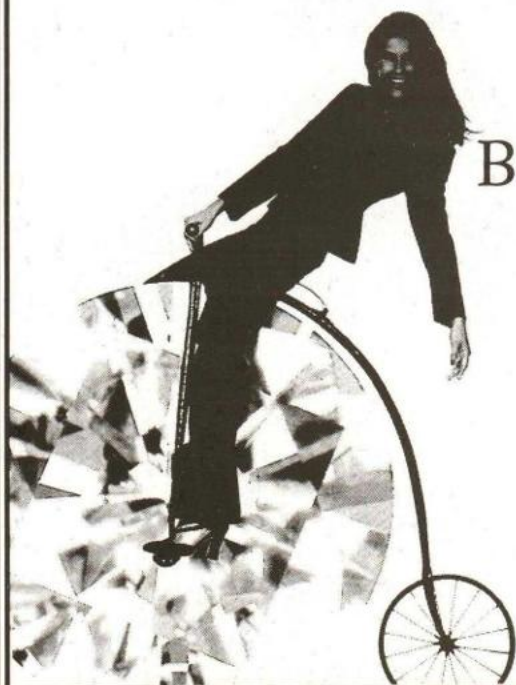
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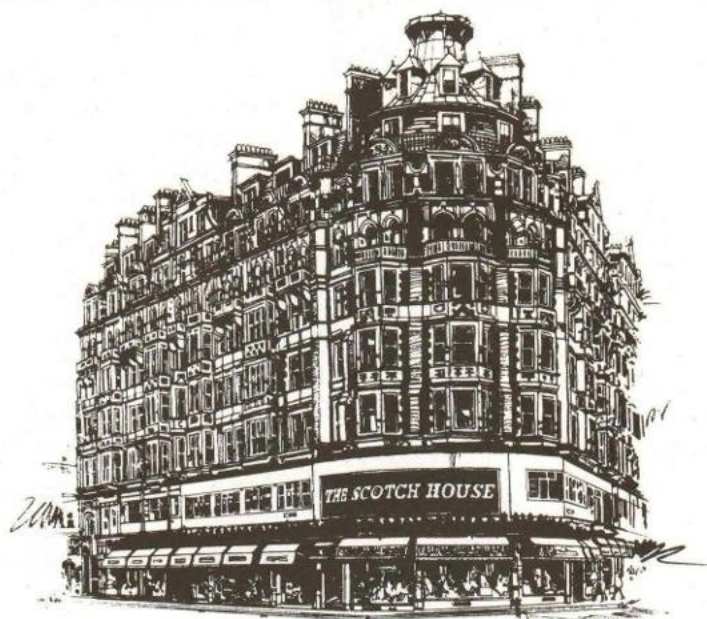


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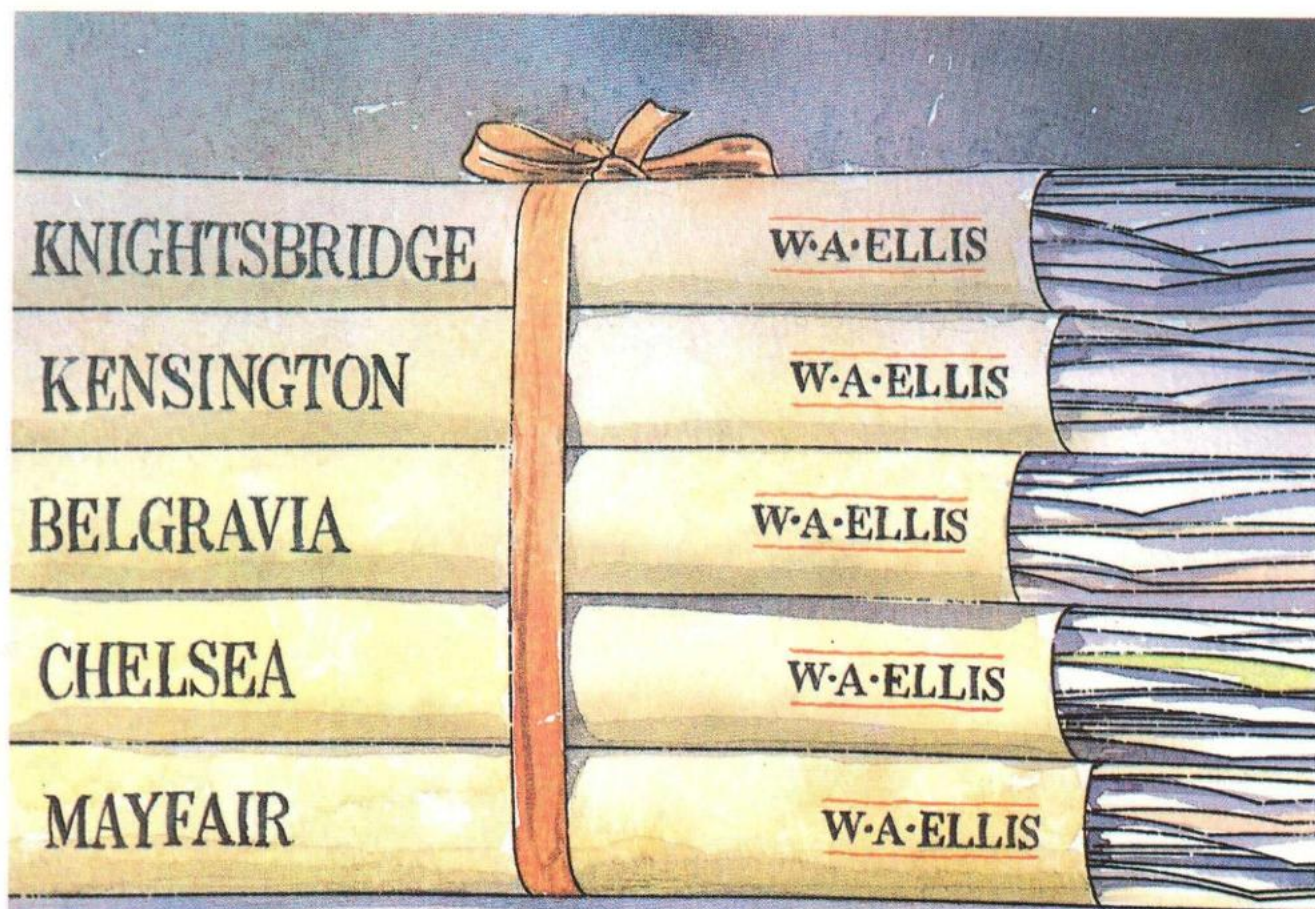
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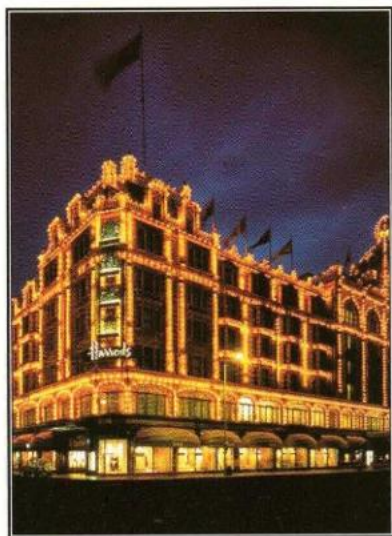
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Battle of Waterloo by Felix Philippoteaux, 1874

CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

A week is a long time in politics. For instance one might have an appointment with a cabinet minister and seven days later arrive at the private office to find, not only that the minister had a different face but possibly a different gender.

This is not really a frequent event since there are less women in politics than in the world of conservation, where women are at least as numerous as men and prominent as leaders. Protecting the neighbourhood is only one step on from protecting the home and family, and not far off from trying to defend the rain forests, and so, the planet.

In the last thirty-four years, the Knightsbridge Association has worked hard to maintain the integrity of the area against an onslaught that, during one period, would have swept away a large part of the beautifully proportioned streets and squares. To the question of who was right, one can only point to the fact that it is the houses in the nineteenth century squares that command the high prices, and it is the sixty's buildings that are being replaced.

It is an interesting fact that conservationists are often devotees of good modern

architecture. It is exhilarating to see a stunning modern building in the right place, and there are some very good examples in the ancient university towns.

There are few such in the squares occupied by Imperial College, one of our greatest seats of learning. There must have been no women in its higher reaches when Southside, Princes Gardens, was commissioned.

The College is anxious to fill in the spaces in Princes Gardens, but the density is already too great and the existing buildings too large, unsuited for the modern undergraduate, and needing millions of pounds of good money to be thrown after bad if they are to continue to be used.

Let us hope that the authorities, whose remit is within this area, will help Imperial College to demolish these unsuitable buildings, too high and too dominant, and replace them with the beautiful modern buildings that we have all been waiting for.

So why the Battle of Waterloo? No, it is not to represent the College and the Knightsbridge Association locked in combat. It is to draw attention to the interesting article on page 40, following the Report.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Last year's Report mentioned the extraordinary amount of time dedicated by members of the Environment Committee, even in a year without an application for a major development. In the twelve months that have followed, the committee has had its full quota of routine work, including the continuation of major schemes such as Harrods' Hotel and the Prudential Development which have taken up so much of its time. In addition, it has also begun to deal with proposals put forward by Imperial College for a scheme which has been rumbling in the background for some time, and which could have important consequences for the immediate neighbourhood.



The taxi entrance to Harrods' Hotel in Lancelot Place.

Harrods' Hotel

It is now three years since Harrods won its appeal to create a 5-star hotel from their Trevor Square depository, and its final form has not yet been decided, although decisions are very near. In April, the Association invited members and local residents to a presentation of the newest set of amended plans given by the architect, Michael Lyell. The meeting was attended by a senior officer of Westminster City Council, and it was clear that there was widespread objection to the two cinemas which had been suggested as part of the development, because of the problems that this would create, especially with parking in the evenings. There was also concern about the size of the restaurants.

As a result of the meeting, Harrods agreed to remove the cinemas and reduce the brasserie

back to its original seating capacity. These, and other amendments, mean that it will not be necessary to excavate the proposed new sub-basements beneath the depository.

Planning permission was granted for this revised application in August, however, it has been mooted that Harrods may wish to demolish Trevor House, destined to be the southern face of the hotel on Brompton Road, instead of re-modelling it, which from Harrods' point of view could be easier and more economical. This would entail yet another planning application with further consultation. Harrods is anxious to proceed with the scheme and hopes that work will start during 1996.

Trevor Square residents will remember that the planning permission includes a legal agreement whereby Harrods would restore the railings which had been removed from the

Square during the war. Harrods has also agreed to install the traffic calming measures at the bottom of Trevor Square, but if this is provided by the Prudential as part of an earlier agreement, then the money that has been allocated would be transferred to the scheme of improvement in Knightsbridge and Brompton Road, which is being promoted by the Association together with the local authorities.

The redevelopment of Harrods' car park in Brompton Road, which will provide flats, offices and several levels of underground parking, is due for completion in the spring of 1996.

The Prudential Development

This enormous development, probably the largest in Knightsbridge this century, has still not commenced and there is, as yet, no firm indication of when it is to begin. Some of the offices have been renovated and re-let, with break clauses in the lease.

Times have changed since the original scheme was given planning permission, and it is a matter of conjecture whether this development will take place in its original form.

The proposals took several years to prepare and discuss with interested parties, including the Knightsbridge Association, but in the present weak climate of property development it has been stated by the Prudential that the earliest the scheme could be ready would be the year 2000.

The Prudential will conduct a full re-appraisal of the development including scheme concepts and design. It is anticipated that there will be a significant reduction in the amount of offices proposed, with a consequent increase in the residential content.

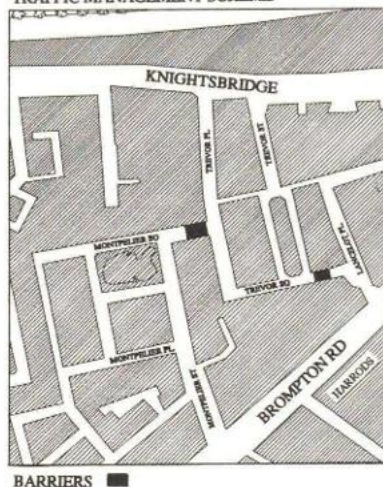
The Knightsbridge Association, which spent several years working on the original schemes, will be consulted on the new plans. It has not been indicated whether this would include abandoning the vast glass cover over the proposed retail shops in the manner of an American shopping mall, and perhaps replacement by a London square, albeit constituted by shops rather than houses.

The signing of the Section 106 Agreement took place in April. As a result, the experimental scheme of traffic calming measures at the bottom of Trevor Square and alongside the former George IV public house in Montpelier Square, are expected to be installed by mid 1996.

The two barriers will close the roads to the hordes of traffic using these squares as a shortcut between Brompton Road and Knightsbridge. Residents in the immediate



TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEME



ABOVE: The Brompton Road frontage of the Prudential site – the approved scheme for redevelopment is currently being re-assessed.

LEFT: Showing the barriers in Montpelier Square and Trevor Square.

areas will have smart cards to enable them to have access to their homes by both the northern and southern routes.

Kensington Gore

25 Kensington Gore, at the corner of Queen's Gate, was formerly the Yugoslav Embassy. It has been empty and increasingly derelict for many years, but it has now been sold and work has already begun to convert it into a single family residence.

An application was made to demolish numbers 23 and 24 and to build a small block of flats in their place. The Committee did not



Left to right: 23, 24 and 25 Kensington Gore.

approve of the design and Westminster City Council did eventually refuse permission. These buildings, which are owned by the Royal College of Art, are empty and derelict and the front gardens are full of rubbish and litter. It is to be hoped that their future is secured before too long.

Also in Kensington Gore is the Royal College of Organists which has an interesting decorative facade. It has been empty for some time and many rumours abounded as to which important body might decide to occupy it. In the event, we understand that it has been purchased for a family home, and plans for its conversion have been submitted to Westminster City Council.

Rutland Gate

Park House, which is a delightful Edwardian house in Rutland Gate, was occupied by the Accademia Italiana for some years. Recently the building became available for purchase and permission was given to change the use from office and residential to a solely residential home. At the same time, the Association opposed an alternative application for consular and diplomatic use.

The building was once used for this purpose and, as many residents will remember, it was not a great success in this role, since large queues were formed and the gardens were used for purposes for which they were not intended.

Montpelier Square

44A and 44B Montpelier Square, formerly the Omani Embassy, are to be demolished and replaced by single family houses. The George IV public house, next door, has now been closed and is also to be demolished. An application has been made to replace it with another family house which, it is claimed, will harmonise with the early 19th century character of the area. So this corner of Montpelier Square will be entirely residential.

Some people may regret the loss of a pub which has stood on the site for a very long

time, however, it has long ceased to serve the local population and there has been considerable friction between local residents and the rather noisy clientele.

South Kensington Station

Various schemes have been put forward to develop this landmark in South Kensington. Last year, the Committee considered a scheme by Terry Farrell & Company which was felt to be an overdevelopment, with an excessive increase in office accommodation and an unnecessary increase in shopping space. The proposals to deal with existing traffic circulation, which would of course increase greatly as a result of such a scheme, were thought to be totally inadequate and the overall design was disappointing for a site so pivotal to the whole South Kensington area. Recent minor amendments put forward during the year have not altered the Committee's view.

Kensington and Chelsea Council are still discussing various aspects of the scheme with the developers, including viability, design and a broader view of the traffic implications. It is possible that the proposals may come before the Council's Planning Committee before the end of the year but it is more likely to be some time in 1996.

It must be appreciated that a major development in South Kensington will have a knock-on effect on adjacent areas, apart from the concern of all Londoners that this familiar landmark, if it is to be removed, should be succeeded by something worthwhile.

Upper Garden Rutland Gate

It is frustrating to report that it has still not been possible to make any headway with the new owner of Upper Garden through his solicitors. It is now over twenty years since this important garden fell into the hands of absentee landlords and, since that time, it has deteriorated sadly.

Neglect has been exacerbated by vandalism, such as the dumping of rubbish, which is only removed due to the public spirit of local residents.

Richard Robinson, who, before his retirement, was for many years an outstanding chairman of this committee, has managed from time to time to persuade his neighbours to provide the money to keep the garden as respectable as possible. This is a welcome stop-gap, but there must be a determination of this nonsensical position. The Environment Committee has been discussing the problem with Westminster Council for some time and it is hoped that a solution will eventually be found.



Buildings due to be demolished and replaced with single family homes.

The Royal Albert Hall

Last year's Report contained a feature article from the Royal Albert Hall on its extensive plans for the future of this special building. The facilities and servicing would be improved and the car park would be extended under the Albert Steps, acquired in 1993, allowing a large new underground service yard with direct access to the stage. This would mean a dramatic reduction in the setting up and removal times for events.

The south and east porches are to be restored to their Victorian glory, with the south porch being extended outwards to provide a more suitable entrance from Prince Consort Road and the Albert Steps.



The Royal Albert Hall

In addition there is a controversial idea to build a piazza extending from the front of the hall over Kensington Gore to the Albert Memorial, with the present main road running underneath. Various aspects of the proposals will be the subject of a planning application. The Committee will be consulted and there will be a presentation to members of the Association.

The Albert Hall will be partly funding the development from its own resources. Originally a member of the Albertopolis Group, it has now gone forward on its own and has made its own application for funds from the National Lottery.

The Albert Memorial

It has been a very long time since Londoners and visitors to the capital have been able to enjoy the sight of the Albert Memorial, and an even longer time since it has been seen in its original state.

The Knightsbridge Association which, together with the Victorian Society, pressed so hard for its rehabilitation, is naturally delighted that work is fully under way on the restoration of this monument to the exceptional prince, whose enthusiasm inspired the intelligentsia of a nation, and coincidentally brought about the

names of several of the streets of north-west Knightsbridge, as well as such famous neighbours as the Albert Hall and the Victoria and Albert Museum, to mention but a few.

After the government's decision to provide the first tranche of four million pounds, the task of overseeing the work was entrusted to English Heritage, and a charitable trust was formed to raise further funds for the enterprise. The Heritage chairman, Jocelyn Stevens, became chairman of the trust, and other trustees include the chairmen of the Victorian Society and the Knightsbridge Association. The total cost of the repairs is fourteen million pounds and the Albert Memorial Trust is concerned to see that funds are available to meet the scheduled completion in 1999.

One novel fund raising project is to seek sponsorship for the restoration of individual items on the Memorial itself, ranging from the Orb and Cross to one of the famous figures on the frieze round the base of the Memorial. Having played such an active roll in encouraging the Government to begin the refurbishment, the Knightsbridge Association decided to sponsor the figure of George Gilbert Scott, the architect of the Albert Memorial, which adorns the podium amongst poets, musicians, artists, architects and sculptors.

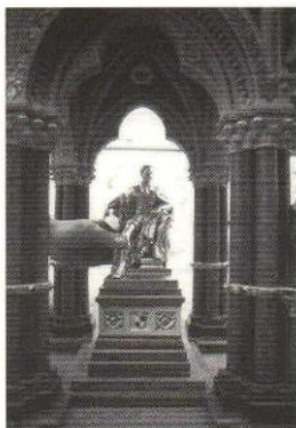
In June, the Prince of Wales, as Patron of the Albert Memorial Trust, opened the visitor centre alongside the Memorial in Kensington Gardens. The centre contains an exhibition designed to show visitors the extent and scope of the project which is being carried out by experts under the supervision of English Heritage.

At that time, the exhibits included a newly gilded angel from the top of the Memorial and a golden lion from the canopy level, with the central exhibit an exquisite six-foot high finely detailed model of the Memorial which reproduces in minute detail the foliage, stonework and gilding, and two hundred statues on the 180 foot monument.

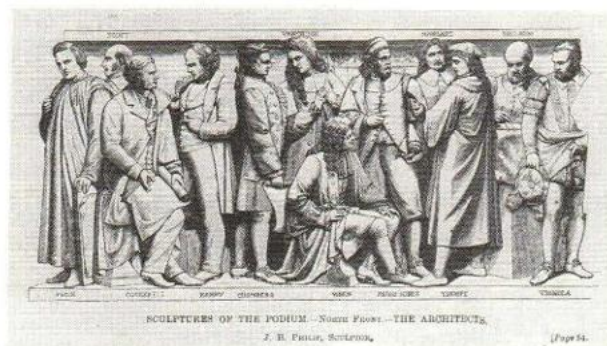


HRH The Prince of Wales and Jane Asher at the launch of the Albert Memorial Trust on 22 March 1995

The exhibits on show at the visitor centre alter from time to time according to the schedule of work, and over the next few years there will be displays of leadwork, decorative foliage, bronzework and ornate carved stone. The exhibition will also examine the life of Prince Albert and his contribution to the life of the nation. Over fifty thousand people have already visited the centre since it opened in April, and the opening hours in winter are from 10am to 4pm.



The Albert Memorial model at the Visitors Centre.



Sculptures of the Podium – North Front – The Architects. Showing second from left George Gilbert Scott RA architect of the Memorial. The Association is sponsoring the restoration of Scott.



The Albert Memorial Visitors Centre.

Knightsbridge Thoroughfare and Brompton Road

Last year, with the millennium in mind, the Knightsbridge Association suggested to Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea that they should join forces in an attempt to upgrade and improve the Knightsbridge thoroughfare and Brompton Road. These famous streets, which have become a major shopping centre, attracting very large numbers of overseas visitors, are in urgent need of a face-lift, and the fact that the borders of the two local authorities criss-cross the streets is of no help.

An early decision of the three bodies was to ask the Knightsbridge Group, representing major commercial interests in the neighbourhood, to join the project. A paper was presented by the Knightsbridge Association stating both long and short term improvements which are thought to be appropriate and necessary, and the two councils are working together to produce detailed proposals which are eagerly awaited.

There are two sides to this new initiative. Firstly, there is a need to achieve high standards in services and, when achieved, constant monitoring to prevent them falling. Ideally, there should be no discernable difference between the standards of any service regardless of whichever side of the street. This would encompass the quick and efficient repair of roads, pavements, street furniture, and lighting, and an adequate system of street sweeping and rubbish collection.

An unpleasant eyesore is the overflowing rubbish bins, due to misuse, and staggered rubbish collections from shops, causing black bags and waste packaging to be on the street at all times of the day, waiting for different private contractors to remove them.

The other facet of the new initiative is a series of environmental improvements. These would include upgrading the raised pavement areas in Brompton Road, repairing and replacing sub-standard pavements, upgrading street crossings, and substituting railings with ones of better design and manufacture. There should also be a review of bus stops and improvements to the underground station.

A major environmental improvement would be to provide a focal point at the Knightsbridge junction, where three important shopping streets, Knightsbridge, Sloane Street and Brompton Road, meet at a group of miserable islands.

At one time an equestrian statue stood at the centre and it would be nice if this area could again have some central focus, whether it be a statue, sculpture or fountain, combined with some imaginative landscaping.

Knightsbridge Underground Station

The project to improve and upgrade the area cannot succeed if any important section is left out. Thus, it is essential that the Knightsbridge underground station, should be included.

The Association has been able to commence an exchange of views with London Underground which has examined some detailed complaints and constructive suggestions.

In response, London Underground produced a project paper for discussion, which is to be followed by a feasibility study. There will be consultation with the Knightsbridge Association and the local authorities during the design process, and close liaison with these bodies to ensure that the scheme is co-ordinated with the package of improvements being planned for Knightsbridge thoroughfare and Brompton Road.

It is appreciated that London Underground has a constant problem of priorities in the disbursement of its money, and it is encouraging that the high profile which Knightsbridge shows to overseas visitors has been recognised.

The Association is pleased that its recent approaches have met with a co-operative response and looks forward to a successful contribution to the joint effort to uplift the area.

The French Embassy

Sadly, the hope expressed last year by the French Embassy that it would be able to clean and redecorate the exterior of its building in 1995, has not come to fruition. The building has continued to deteriorate, in contrast to its twin, number two Albert Gate, which has been restored to a very high standard for the Kuwaiti Embassy. Many voices, including English Heritage and Westminster City Council, have joined the Knightsbridge Association in urging the French Embassy to begin work, and it is understood that an encouraging reply has been received.



1 Albert Gate, The French Embassy, in great need of repairs and redecoration, adds to the dilapidated appearance of parts of Knightsbridge.



Crowd congestion outside Harrods at Hans Crescent.



LEFT: Faulty design means that this is a common sight.

BELOW: The desolate wasteland at the Knightsbridge junction where the Association would like to see a focal point.



Split level pavements in Brompton Road would benefit from re-landscaping. New more elegant railings would enhance the whole Knightsbridge and Brompton Road thoroughfare.

Imperial College

Imperial College is one of the world's great institutions of education and research, and many discoveries in science and medicine have emanated from its centre on Exhibition Road. Like other successful seats of learning, it is anxious to expand and to provide its undergraduates with up to date accommodation in which they can live and work. It was once mooted that the entire College move to a campus site outside London, and enjoy plenty of space, fresh air and facilities for recreation. However, it was decided in the fifties to retain its present site and expand across the main road to Princes Gardens, a pleasant and homogeneous Victorian square.

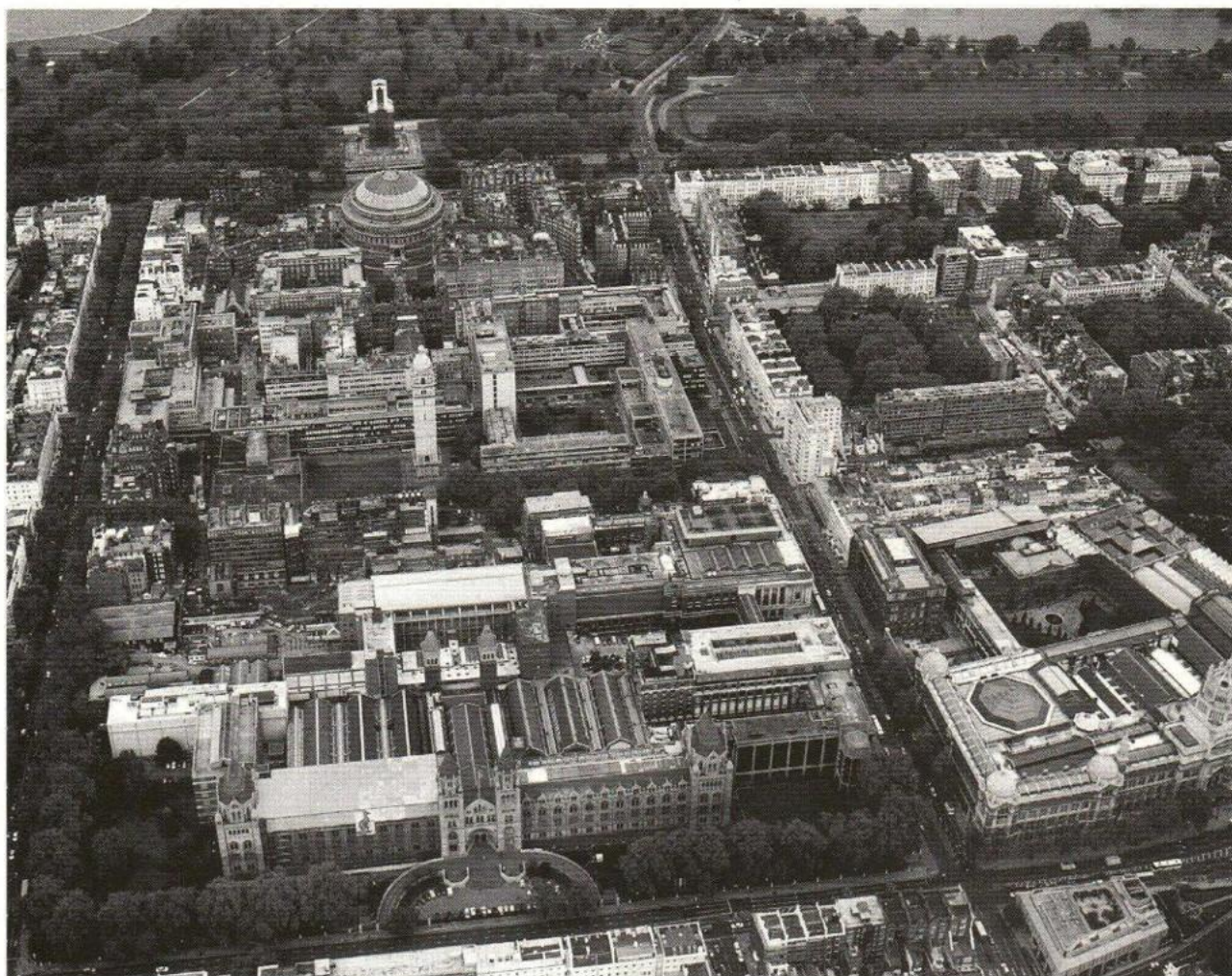
In 1956 the College obtained a compulsory purchase order to acquire from the Freafe Estate the whole of Princes Gardens, and work began on demolishing the Victorian houses on the south and east terraces and half of the north terrace. In 1959 the ten storey Weeks Hall was built at the north east corner. The

massive bulk of Southside Hall, which dominates the square was erected in 1963, followed by Linstead Hall in 1968 and the Linstead Hall extension in 1980.

The gaps left by the original demolition have remained to this day and are not, as many people believe, due to bomb damage during the war.

In the late seventies the eight remaining houses on the north terrace were listed at the request of the Knightsbridge Association, and after a long period of discussions with Westminster City Council and the College, the Association was also able to ensure that the Linstead Hall extension had considerably less accommodation than originally planned.

During the years that followed, the question remained as to how Princes Gardens could be completed in a useful and acceptable way. There were too many people already living in the very large buildings in the square to justify the building of further halls of residence. In fact, at one time the College talked of installing a library and indoor sports facilities, as it was



Aerial view showing the whole of Imperial College's campus including Princes Gardens and the recently acquired Princes Gate Garden to the north.

obvious to all that the density was too high. It was also obvious that this overcrowding, coupled with the design of the buildings, was compounding the problems of noise, and disturbance of other sorts, suffered by the local residents.

In 1992, Norman Foster Associates were appointed to prepare a master plan for the development and expansion of the College. Some interesting ideas for the Queens's Gate to Exhibition Road area included expanding the Queen's Lawn and covering over the courtyards to create an underground car park, which would remove parked vehicles from Imperial Institute Road. Also suggested was a new and imposing entrance to the College in Exhibition Road. As far as Princes Gardens was concerned, it was only indicated that the empty sites would be built on.

The next step was not long in coming, and early this year the surveyors, Montagu Evans, were appointed to consult interested parties on the future of Princes Gardens. Following their report, the College drew up a planning brief and appointed architects MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard to prepare a scheme for the Gardens' sites. Since then the College has acquired the freehold of the large gardens north of the square, behind the north terrace.

A bizarre obstacle in any plan to re-establish some cohesion in Princes Gardens, is the surprise listing of Southside and Weeks Hall under a recently introduced category of post war educational buildings.

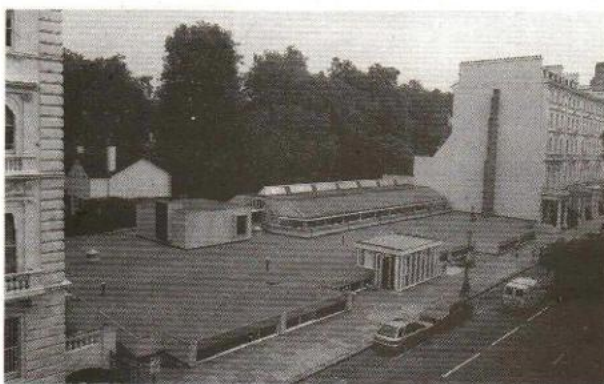
The truth is that these buildings are out of date and unsuited to the requirements of a modern university without the expenditure of very large sums of money. Not surprisingly, the College is as concerned as the Association by the listing of Southside, which is now adding to the problem of the proper development of Princes Gardens.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and in the fifties the brutalist style of architecture had its following especially among the creators of institutional buildings. There are many amongst the residential population who find the buildings too severe, out of scale and out of sympathy with their surroundings.

The Association has formed a special sub-committee to deal with all aspects of this development. It comprises members from the flats, terrace and mews properties who will be affected by whatever takes place. The chairman is Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, who heads a well known architectural practice, and is a member of the Environment Committee. It is felt that the further extension of the College must be considered as a whole and not in the piecemeal manner which has caused much of the friction of the last thirty years. The sub-



Southside and Linstead Hall dominate the mews houses but also the neighbourhood.



The Sports Centre and swimming pool.



The tennis court site and adjacent College buildings.



The massive bulk of Southside viewed from the rear.

committee is hard at work and has already had meetings with the College and Westminster City Council.

The problems that have emerged are considerable. Whether from the design or its application, the noise and disturbance suffered by the adjacent resident population during a period of some thirty years has been distressing. The number of students living in the halls of residence is excessive and these buildings are no longer efficient and do not provide the sort of accommodation that is required.

The sub-committee is prepared for a series of discussions with Imperial College. It is concerned that the quality of life of the residents should be born in mind by the College authorities and their architects, and that the area should be considered as a whole, so that a balanced group of high quality buildings can take the place of the present worn out and outdated structures, which no longer serve the purpose for which they were built.

Consultation Papers

Strategic Guidance for London: A Paper entitled "Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities" was issued in March 1995 by the Government Office for London as a consultation draft to set out a planning strategy for the capital, to which all Unitary Development Plans (UDP's) issued by local authorities should have regard.

Of particular concern to the Knightsbridge Association is the proposed definition of the "Central Area" which is significantly wider than the "Central Activities Zone" (CAZ) as already defined in the Westminster Unitary Development Plan. If this were approved, it would lead to pressure to expand the CAZ westwards along Knightsbridge and Brompton Road to the detriment of adjoining residential areas, for instance the Trevors and the Montpeliers.

Westminster City Council is alert to this danger, which would change the nature of the neighbourhood, and will be commenting accordingly.

The document also proposes that the lack of off-street parking should not be used to restrict conversion of existing properties to provide additional housing units. This is contrary to existing policy and it is to be hoped that the City Council will argue for its retention.

The Committee was also asked to comment on a review of Government policy on dropped kerbs and tactile paving and a Westminster City Council Paper on Public Art Strategy.

Use Classes Order: Certain aspects of the 1987 Amendments to the Use Classes Order continue to give concern. The permissions

given to food shops and restaurants under Class A1 and Class A3, for hot or cold food to be eaten on or off the premises, are confusing and difficult to administer in a way which protects the environment. Both Westminster Council and the Royal Borough have taken action to persuade the Government to modify the Use Classes Order by removing hot food takeaways from Class A3 and sandwich bars from Class A1, which would be a considerable improvement.

Deregulation: There is concern at the impact of some of the government's deregulation initiatives, especially those referring to shop closing hours, Sunday trading, street trading, night cafes, and liquor licensing. The Royal Borough organised a meeting to consider the consequences and wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment to express the concern of the Council and the residents at the dangers inherent in some of the deregulation proposals. The Association also wrote to the minister and Westminster City Council has taken an equally strong line.

Listed Buildings: The Government has issued a planning policy guide called "Planning the Historic Environment". This guide refers in some detail to listed buildings and conservation areas and, although it contains nothing controversial, it will necessitate some changes to the Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) of the Local Authorities.

It should also go some way to clarify the vexed question of repairs and alterations to listed buildings.

Following this initiative, Westminster City Council has published its own planning guide which includes the latest modifications to its draft Unitary Development Plan. This document, although in draft form, explains the system of listed building control and the standards applied by the Council. It will be of great value to owners, occupiers and potential purchasers of listed buildings.



54 Princes Gate – a Listed building currently at risk.

Permitted Development: The Development Order 1995 has extended a number of permitted development rights. These include allowing TV antennae, under certain conditions, to be fixed to buildings which are under 15 metres in height, and closed circuit television cameras are permitted subject to certain safeguards

Appeals

Last year an application by the owners of Montrose Court, in Exhibition Road, to add an extra storey, set back at roof level, was refused permission by Westminster City Council. The owners went to appeal and early this year the refusal was overturned and work on the new storey is likely to commence in April of 1996.

Last year's Report chronicled the dismissal of the appeal, by the owners of the Cascade shop in Brompton Road, against the refusal of the Royal Borough to allow an open shop front, which had never been submitted for approval. In February, a closed shop front was installed as instructed by the inspector and the shop is no longer trading on to the street.

Leasehold Enfranchisement

The disappointment with the final results of the Leaseholders Enfranchisement Act, which raised so much anticipation amongst leaseholders hoping to obtain their freeholds, was described in last year's Report. This Act of Parliament, began like a lion and ended as much less than a lamb. The Leasehold Enfranchisement Association, which pioneered the principle of allowing people to purchase their leasehold properties, advised leaseholders to tread warily and await the results of a few cases which were pending.

In the past year this organisation has given free advice and support to those who have already applied to acquire their freeholds, and attended all the tribunal hearings arising to date.

The sale in July of the Smiths' Charity Estate to the Wellcome Trust has raised eyebrows throughout the land.

In July, tenants were given 28 days following the sale to register an interest, which was thought to be inadequate in the midst of the holiday season. This could have left some tenants dis-enfranchised.

The Leasehold Enfranchisement Association, together with some of the tenants, displayed amazing energy by faxing absent residents around the world, which resulted in a large number of tenants expressing interest in buying their leases.

The Leasehold Enfranchisement Association advises those tenants thinking of applying to purchase the freehold, or extend the lease, that they should be prepared for a tribunal hearing.

It is obviously possible and preferable to deal with the matter by negotiation with the existing freeholder, but it appears that a tribunal hearing is an integral part of the whole statutory and enfranchisement process. In addition they advise tenants to present their own case, even though they are assisted by lawyers and valuers.

Further information and advice can be obtained from: Joan South, Leasehold Enfranchisement Association: 0171 937 0866.



Properties in Ennismore Gardens, part of the Ellsmere Estate, eligible for enfranchisement.



Montrose Court, built in the mid 50's. The extra storey will be set back from the front (see Appeals)..



For students of history, 32-43 Princes Gate, from a 1906 postcard – now the site of Montrose Court.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

It was the mass production of the motor car that freed urban dwellers to move through their towns and cities and beyond. At the same time, the underground railways were spreading to the outskirts thus creating vast dormitory suburbs, which would eventually release thousands of motor vehicles to choke the roads.

Now this freedom has given way to the tyranny of exhaust fumes and motorists are reduced to the speed of the hansom cab in many parts of London.

Urban motoring is not only frustrating for drivers, it also causes illness and possible death to pedestrians and those living near busy roads, from the noxious fumes that are emitted.

Despite the introduction of lead free fuel and catalytic converters, pollution from the internal combustion engine in central London continues to grow. Measurements taken in Westminster show an increase in number of "poor" quality days. The visible fumes may have disappeared but the deadly, odourless, invisible particulates still remain and exhaust tests have revealed failure rates of between 11 and 50 per cent of vehicles tested.



ABOVE: A bar across these signs would clarify the coach and lorry ban.

BELOW: Another driver who failed to interpret the coach ban sign.



It is no new idea that action should be taken to reduce the deadly poison, which is at a high level in parts of Knightsbridge, by possible restrictions to vehicles, by attachments to exhausts where possible, and by an increase in the amount and quality of public transport.

The work of the Traffic Committee is often frustrating in that it takes so long for suggestions to be absorbed and acted upon by the authorities. Sunday openings of the stores and shops last Christmas and during July this year have proved, yet again, the need for the full parking controls for which the Committee has been pressing. It is satisfying to report, that having taken the necessary steps, the local authorities will be extending parking controls to Sundays during the run up to Christmas.

The legal agreement between the Prudential and Westminster City Council, connected with the projected development, was finally signed in April and the traffic calming measures for Montpelier Square and Trevor Square, which form part of this agreement, are expected to be in place by mid 1996. This will protect these pleasant squares from the 'rat running' that has aggravated residents and which is on the increase.

Those householders living in the immediate areas will be given smart cards which will allow them access to their homes from either direction, and this experiment will be watched with considerable interest.

A continuing nuisance is the number of times coaches enter unsuitable streets which do not give them access to the main roads for which they are searching. This is despite the signs which have been strategically placed. Since the United Kingdom has been going metric, it would seem helpful if internationally recognised signage could be used, since so many of the coaches are from abroad. However, this would not solve the problem of the British coach drivers who ignore the present signs.

Westminster City Council and The Royal Borough have helpfully provided the much needed pedestrian crossing in Queen's Gate which is now frequently used and much welcomed by local residents. The parking problems around the Albert Hall, at the top of Exhibition Road, were the subject of surveys by Westminster City Council, and proposals for improvement are imminent.

The introduction of 'pay and display' parking is working well, but a disadvantage is, if one machine is out of action it can prevent a whole bay from being used. There must surely be some way to overcome this problem which needs to be addressed urgently.

RUBBISH AND LITTER

The Rubbish and Litter Committee has always been a body that cannot relax. After many years of constant endeavour, the residential streets and squares of Knightsbridge were clean and cared for and an example to other parts of the metropolis.

Last year's Report, however, sounded a warning note and the reality is that, after many years of improvement, the standards of rubbish collections have collapsed and instead of taking place at the published times, household rubbish has been left on the pavements for up to four hours.

Westminster City Council did not renew the contract of the cleansing company, which had operated since the work was first put out to tender, and the new contractors took over in mid-September.

It was not a promising start as the collections were even later.

The new company will be operating with more efficient vehicles. Although these have been ordered they have not yet arrived, but it is hoped to phase them in by the end of the year.

Other machinery which will be introduced will facilitate street sweeping, leaf clearance and dog waste removal.

The sweeping and collection contract is for seven years, but the contract for the transporting of waste is for 21 years. Seventy per cent of the waste will be taken by lorry and incinerated at a heat and power plant in Lewisham and the remaining thirty per cent will be packed into containers and taken down the Thames to landfill.

In the view of Westminster Council the new contract should result in a higher level of service. The Committee hopes that the initial problems will prove temporary and is carefully monitoring the position.

The situation in the shopping streets of Knightsbridge is a different proposition. The rubbish that clutters the pavements is a constant eyesore and the Committee is in almost daily communication with both Westminster Council and the Royal Borough. On the Kensington side of the border the cleansing contract has another two years to run.

The current plans include more frequent emptying of bins and a permanent sweeper. A strong effort is to be made to co-ordinate private waste collections to try to eradicate the situation where black bags are on the pavement throughout the day.

The Royal Borough is pleased with the results of the successful doorstep paper

collection which it has been operating and intends to extend the service to blocks of flats. Westminster is also going to introduce a fortnightly collection of paper and plastic bottles for recycling.



ABOVE AND LEFT: Late collections have meant pavements piled with rubbish for up to four hours.

BELOW LEFT: New suction machine for litter.

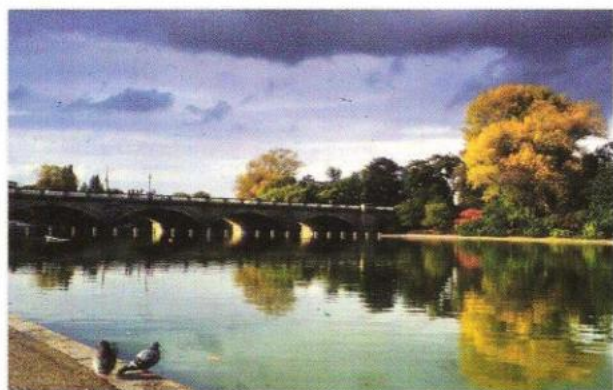
BELOW RIGHT: Hours of collection.



HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS

The grass and trees of these beautiful parks continue, as always, to give pleasure and delight to those Londoners who are able to take time off to walk or sit in their lovely surroundings, or even only to pass through on a journey elsewhere.

Whilst the parks may always look the same to visitors, work never ceases. The Dell restaurant has undergone a complete refurbishment and work is progressing on landscaping the Lido site, which will be re-opened next Spring with a new cafeteria



Royal Parks' Agency/Martin Jones

The Serpentine in Autumn



Royal Parks' Agency/Martin Jones

New landscaping is proposed round Peter Pan.



Too many Canada Geese cause damage to the eco-structure

and enhanced facilities for swimmers.

Pedestrians will be pleased to know that a new crossing is to be installed on West Carriage Drive, as part of a package of improvements to calm traffic on this busy road. At Temple Gate, between the Gallery and Serpentine Bridge, a new turnstyle gate is to be installed in line with the new pedestrian crossing, leading from Hyde Park to Kensington Gardens.

In Kensington Gardens the replanting of lime trees to the south of Round Pond, on the original lines of Charles Bridgeman's planting plan of 1734, continues. At Palace Gate, the old rose garden has been planted with a new rose called Peacemaker to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations' Association this year.

Every silver lining has a cloud and the Canada geese continue to cause damage to the Round Pond and its surrounding grassy area. These fine looking birds are now returning to the park for winter and hopefully the Royal Parks' Agency will be able to exercise its knowledge of family planning.

Rollerblading

Whilst the main object of the Royal Parks is to allow visitors of all ages to take their pleasure in peace and quiet, Hyde Park has always been accommodating to those who wish to enjoy recreation. These diversions have been segregated where possible, with ball games being played in large open spaces, riding on famous Rotten Row, bowls, and now also boules, in their own patch and, of course, boating on the Serpentine.

What these pastimes have in common is that they do not interfere physically with pedestrians, by whom they can be seen and avoided.

In the past few years, cyclists have entered the parks in increasing numbers and, whilst the Parks' authorities have tried to give them their own bicycle lanes, these are often shared with pedestrian paths. There has been inevitable friction, for while cyclists ask to be segregated from cars, pedestrians wish to be separated from cyclists.

The problem increased dramatically with the invasion of large numbers of rollerbladers who sped around the Broadwalk in Kensington Gardens, a place beloved of children, and the busy paths of Hyde Park. From the first assault there was an immediate reaction from park lovers who prophesied disaster. Very soon a cyclist was killed and a lady rider lost her eye after clashes with rollerbladers. It should be



Conflicting paths – a new headache for the Parks.

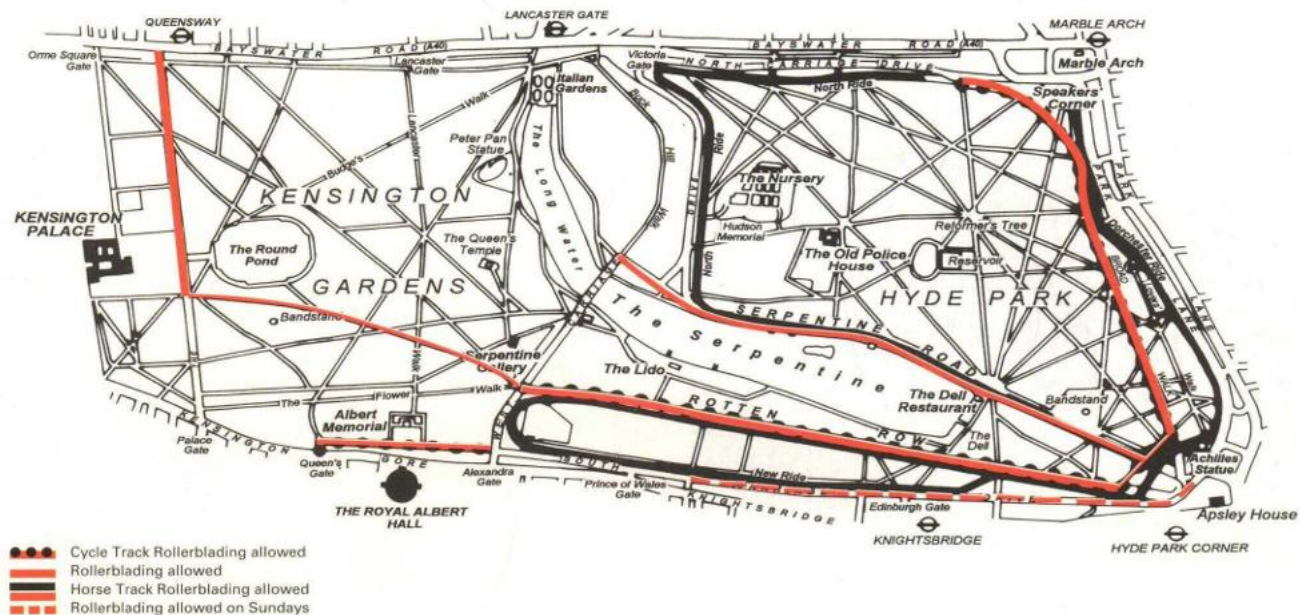
noted that the victims were neither elderly people, nor children, but young people in the prime of life.

These catastrophes caused great unrest and drew scathing remarks from the coroner who presided at the inquest on the death.

The Parks' authorities have met with representatives of the rollerbladers and offered them some specially designated areas in the hope that they will confine themselves to these

roads. These include, the use of some cycle tracks, the Serpentine Road and, on Sundays, the South Carriage Drive in Hyde Park, and in Kensington Gardens, Albert Memorial Road, Palace Walk, which runs from Mount Gate to the Broadwalk, and an area of the Broadwalk itself. This is a six month trial period which may well be re-thought if the letters of complaint continue to be as numerous as they have been.

HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS



LAW AND ORDER

It is a sign of the times that the Law and Order Committee, the most recent of the Association's specialist bodies, should have expanded so quickly and carry such a heavy workload. The success of Knightsbridge as a highly sophisticated shopping area, visited daily by great numbers of overseas visitors, has brought with it an increase in crime of all types, requiring constant vigilance amongst both the resident population and the business community.



CCTV: Police Command post with screens monitored round the clock

Closed Circuit Television

In January, the Closed Circuit Television Project for South Westminster was launched. The Law and Order Committee was heavily involved, with numerous presentations at New Scotland Yard attended by large and enthusiastic audiences of residents and business people, who were keen to support a project aimed at making the main streets of the area a safer place.

The system, which is known as CCTV, has already proved its worth in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where a significant reduction in crime is attributed to 16 cameras. In only two years the crime figures have been reduced by 6,000 offences and, contrary to what might have been expected, the criminal activities have not moved to adjacent streets.

The Newcastle police report a 56% fall in vehicle theft, a 50% reduction in burglary of commercial premises, significant falls in theft from individuals and a similar drop in assaults. One of the reasons for this is that the pictures are of a high standard and are acceptable in court as evidence. The local businesses are delighted with the reduction in their insurance premiums.

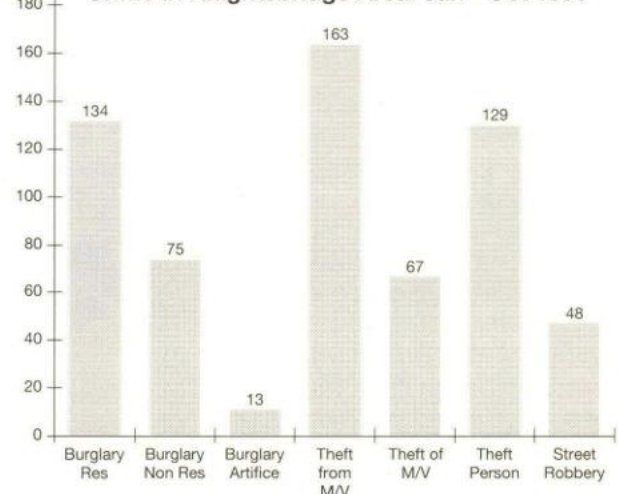
In Knightsbridge, the Metropolitan Police, who will be manning the control centre day and night, are looking to local business and property owners, who will be the beneficiaries of the reduction in crime, to support them by

helping to raise the money to install the state of the art equipment. The Knightsbridge Association has set an example by making the first donation.

Burglary Artifice

This crime is still prevalent and consists of bogus officials, such as meter readers, who concentrate on buildings without porters or caretakers. The imposter claims that he has come to read the meter or check the wiring and, in all cases, should be asked to produce identification.

Crime in Knightsbridge Area. Jan - Oct 1995



Automobile Theft

Sadly, thefts from cars still occur because people continue to leave valuable items, including cameras and mobile telephones, in full view in parked cars.

A special Police Task Force has been brought into operation in this area to tackle a group specialising in the theft of expensive cars, often to order, for immediate shipment overseas. Owners should consider the installation of an electric tracking system, recommended by the local crime prevention officer.

House Burglary

Thanks to the Metropolitan Police's 'Operation Bumblebee', which has been most successful in reducing house burglary, the police are able to concentrate on other types of crime.

House burglary will always be with us, however, particularly in the summer, when illicit entry to terraced houses is facilitated by scaffolding which has not been protected by an electronic surveillance system. This is something that the Knightsbridge Association has been commending to local residents for many years.

Pickpockets and Bagsnatchers

These criminals are active in Knightsbridge, especially where there are crowds, as at underground stations and bus stops. A Z-car, an unmarked car with plain clothes police, has had considerable success operating with fast response time in this area.

Crime Prevention

Officers on the Crime Prevention Stand at the Association's Annual General Meeting, will be pleased to give advice to members. A number of presentations on personal safety have been given to small groups of residents and more are planned.

The police hope that members will come and introduce themselves at the AGM if they are interested.

Illegal Street Trading

The Illegal Street Traders Liaison Group, which consists of officers of Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council, Kensington Police and the Knightsbridge Association, has been lobbying for changes in the law and more understanding from the courts.

New laws have included heavier fines and the seizure of goods as well as vehicles. This will not eradicate the problem of the sale of counterfeit and fake goods, but it should effect a reduction.

Knightsbridge is full of overseas visitors, who are targets of this crime, and the heather

sellers who accost them are becoming more aggressive. This is one of the areas where the new TV equipment would be most useful.



ABOVE: Illegal traders awaiting their targets outside Harrods' door 6.

BELOW: Fresh supplies of counterfeit scent awaiting collection in Hans Crescent.



SOCIAL EVENTS AND THE A.G.M.



Steven Norris MP, Minister for Transport in London, addressing members at the Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting had another record turnout and a packed audience listened to Stephen Norris MP, Minister of Transport for London, who gave a comprehensive run down on some of the seemingly intractable problems of traffic in the capital. Amongst the guests were, the Rt Hon Peter Brooke CH, MP, Member of Parliament for Westminster, the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, several other councillors including the chairman of the traffic committees for both councils, Councillor David Harvey and Councillor John Corbet-Singleton. Also attending were many senior officers of Westminster City Council, amongst whom were Sidney Sporle, the Director of Planning and Transportation and from the Royal Borough, Michael French, Executive Director of Planning and Conservation and Michael Stroud, Executive Director of Environmental Services. As usual, there was a large contingent of senior police officers.

Prior to the meeting there was the customary reception where members were able to meet their neighbours and the Association's guests. This was, as ever, a most enjoyable party.

Town and Gown

Following last year's successful party, another joint event was arranged by the Friends of Imperial College and the Knightsbridge Association at the Rector's Lodge, 170 Queen's Gate, a most agreeable and interesting house designed by Norman Shaw. The weather was

again pleasant and guests were able to enjoy their refreshments in the beautiful garden. The rector gave a brief outline of the College's achievements, and his speech was followed by a charming recital by the College's own quintet, formed by the Ash Music Scholars, who were taking a joint degree course in physics with studies in musical performance.

This Year's AGM

This year's AGM will be on Monday, December 4th in Holy Trinity Brompton Church Hall. The reception will take place at 6pm and the meeting will start at 6.30pm, when members will be addressed by the Rt Hon Virginia Bottomley MP, Secretary of State for National Heritage. This government department is one of the two most important to the Association, and it will be most interesting to hear the views of its fourth incumbent.



The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley JP, MP, Secretary of State for National Heritage.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of the Royal Borough will be present as well as councillors and officers from both local authorities together with many other important guests. The Metropolitan Police will again attend in force with a stand exhibiting crime prevention.

RECEPTION BEFORE THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING DECEMBER 1994



Sir Robin Gillett, Jonathan Charkham and the Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke MP.



Iain Walker and Cllr. Angela Hooper, Lord Mayor of Westminster.



Peter Brown, Assistant Traffic Director for London, Cllr. Doreen Weatherhead, Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea and Cllr. Alick Whitfield.



Cllr. David Harvey, Chairman of Westminster City Council's Traffic Sub-Committee, Lady Grade and Cllr. Kevin Gardner.



Nina Wallis, Sir Wilfred Robinson and Lady Robinson.



Lady St. Levan and June Stubbs.



Lorelei Keay, Maurice Lambert and Rosemary Lambert.



Professor Michael Ellison, Lady Gillett & Sir Robin Gillett.



Frances Phillipps and Nora Black.



Joyce Goodman and Roy Anderson.



Robert Morris and Sgt. Don Martin.



*P.C. James Butler, Maya Bradley and
Sgt. Jeremy Blood.*



Jennifer Skelsey and Moira Charkham.



Cllr. David Harvey, Chairman of Westminster City Council's Traffic Sub-Committee, and Dr. Anthony Brigginshaw.



Dr. Francis Singer, Councillor John Corbet-Singleton, Chairman of Kensington & Chelsea's Highways & Works Committee, Ellie Brook and Councillor Kevin Gardner.



P.C. Steve Hayward, Ray Dyer, Madeline Eldson and P.C. Clive Coleman.



David McDonald, Principle Planning Officer, Kensington & Chelsea and Michael French, Executive Director of Planning and Conservation, Kensington & Chelsea.



Cynthia Thompson and Lesley MacDonagh.



Sarah Wills, Klaus Leist and Lise Graves.



Carol Seymour-Newton and Diana Jenkins



Norab Black and Lady Grade with the Raffle.

LOCAL AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

It is not often that the Annual Report notes many changes to the most important posts within the ministries and councils with which the Association's work is mainly involved, but this year is an exception.

In the recent Cabinet reshuffle Mrs Virginia Bottomley has been moved from the Department of Health to become Secretary of State for National Heritage and the Association will have the pleasure of congratulating her at the Annual Meeting.

In local government the Leader of Westminster City Council, Miles Young, has resigned his position, having been posted overseas, and has been succeeded as Leader by Councillor Melvyn Caplan. In this climate of change it is good to see that Robert Davis remains Chairman of Planning and Transport and Councillor Robert Moreland, one of our local representatives, remains Chairman of the Environment Committee. Councillor Jonathan Djanogly takes over from Councillor David Harvey as Chairman of the Traffic & Works Committee.

The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea which covers the smaller but equally important part of Knightsbridge, still retains the same

councillors in the key positions. Councillor Joan Hanham is Leader of the Council with Councillor Desmond Harney as Chairman of Planning and Conservation and Councillor Nicolas Paget-Brown as Chairman of Environmental Services.

The senior officers of both local authorities, headed by Sid Sporle at Westminster and Michael French at Kensington and Chelsea, have been sensitive as always to the Association's concerns. The new initiative to upgrade Knightsbridge thoroughfare and Brompton Road has brought several helpful new friends amongst the officers of both councils.

FINANCE

The Association was faced with extra costs during the year due to consultancy fees connected with the successful conclusion of the case against Cascade; expenditure on a membership drive; and a donation to the police closed circuit TV scheme for Knightsbridge and Brompton Road. In spite of this the Hon. Treasurer was able to report an increase in funds. The Association continues to sponsor litter bins of both Councils and also makes a contribution to the Knightsbridge Group's Christmas Lights scheme.

APPRECIATIONS

This is the 34th Annual Report of the Knightsbridge Association and it is heartening to see this voluntary organisation still expanding its activities in changing circumstances, but never wavering in its determination to preserve and protect the fabric of Knightsbridge and maintain and improve the quality of life of its citizens.

The basis of the Association's achievements is the quality and dedication of the chairmen of its various committees.

The heaviest load is born by the chairman of the Environment Committee, Michael Wright, an architect and surveyor who was once in charge of planning in Hong Kong. He is supported by the vice-chairman Lesley MacDonagh, an expert in planning law and a name to conjure with in legal circles. They are backed up by two other architects, Ian Caldwell and Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, who heads a well known practice, and is chairman of the sub-committee which is examining the proposed extension of Imperial College.

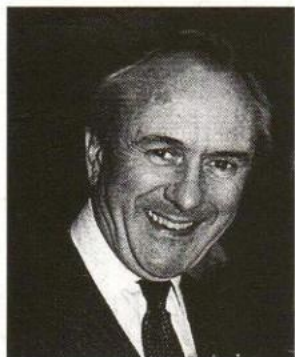
Another committee member, Robert Morris is working with the local authorities on the new initiative to upgrade Knightsbridge thoroughfare and Brompton Road. Together



Cllr. Joan Hanham, Leader of Kensington & Chelsea Council.



Cllr. Melvyn Caplan, Leader of Westminster City Council.



Cllr. Desmond Harney, Chairman of Kensington & Chelsea's Planning & Conservation Committee.



Cllr. Robert Davis, Chairman of Westminster's Planning & Transport Committee.

with its other members, the Environment Committee is a formidable body which deserves the thanks and appreciation of us all.

A daily aggravation and concern to every citizen is the motor vehicle. The Traffic Committee is chaired by Councillor Kevin Gardner, who brings to it his experience as a serving member of Westminster City Council. He has been pressing for some time to protect the locality from an avalanche of Sunday shoppers.

The Rubbish and Litter Committee is always on duty. It is chaired by Frances Rice who has toiled during the years to see that the streets and squares of Knightsbridge are as clean as every residential area should be.

Now that the standards of collection have dropped significantly, Frances has a worrying time on her hands.

The Law and Order Committee was the latest to be formed, but is now one of the busiest. It is chaired by Gordon Shingleton, an expert in security matters, and his deputy is Ellie Brook.

Members who enjoy the offerings at the party before the Annual General Meeting, will already know that the Social and Events Committee is chaired by Lady Grade.

Another success is the way Klaus and Elizabeth Leist have taken on the Membership Committee, and their hard work and enthusiasm are already showing results.

All those exceptional people who have been mentioned, together with the other members of the committees, deserve the thanks of all the members and, indeed, that of everyone who lives or works in Knightsbridge, for the great contribution that they make towards its protection and enhancement.

The Hon. Treasurer, Christine Gilbertson, keeps coming up with good results and should be doubly thanked for her work. I would also like to give special thanks to Stuart Corbyn, chairman of the Knightsbridge Group of traders, which has joined with the Knightsbridge Association in the new initiative to upgrade Knightsbridge thoroughfare and Brompton Road.

I have run out of superlatives to describe the contribution of our Hon. Secretary, Carol Seymour-Newton. She is an example of selfless dedication to a cause that cannot be equalled, and the residents and business houses of Knightsbridge owe her their gratitude and appreciation.

As always, the thanks of the Association to the members for their constant support and encouragement.

*Neville Labovitch
December 1995*

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Cynthia Thompson
The Hon. Sarah Wills

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Chairman: Raymond Benardout
Hon. Secretary: Elizabeth Leist

SOCIAL AND EVENTS COMMITTEE

Chairman: Lady Grade



Apsley House, re-opened June 1995.

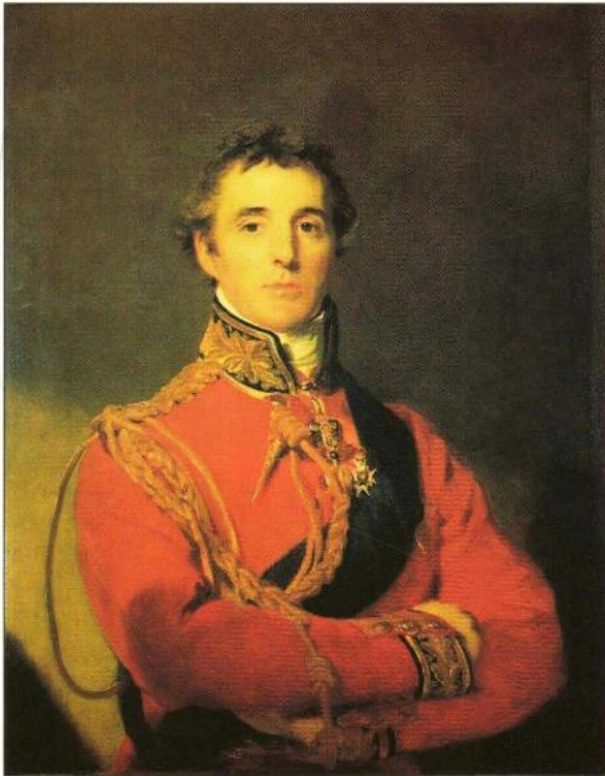
APSLEY HOUSE: The Re-making of 'Number One, London'

by Siân Evans, Victoria & Albert Museum

While Londoners sweltered through the hottest summer for centuries, a small army of museum curators, conservators and craftsmen was putting the finishing touches to one of the most famous historic residences in the capital. Apsley House opened its doors once again in June 1995, after a three-and-a-half-year programme of essential renovation and repair work costing £6 million.

Located at the junction of Knightsbridge and Park Lane, Apsley House is a building of unique architectural and cultural significance, and has been the London home of the Dukes of Wellington since 1817.

Once described as "the most renowned mansion in the capital", Apsley House contains a magnificent collection of paintings, silver, porcelain, sculpture and furniture. Its rich



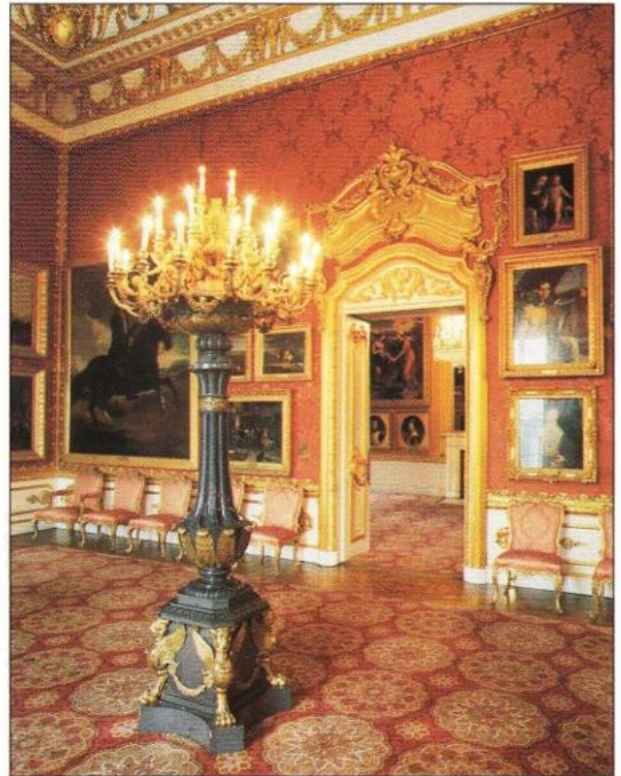
*Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington (1769-1852)
by Sir Thomas Lawrence, c1815.*

interiors have now been returned to their former glory as the private palace of the Iron Duke. Today Apsley House is the last great London town-house with its collections and its family still in residence.

The house, originally built between 1771 and 1778 for Baron Apsley, Second Earl of Bathurst, acquired the popular name 'Number One, London' because it was the first building encountered upon entering the capital from the west.

Following his dazzling military career in India, Spain and Portugal and culminating in his famous victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, Arthur Wellesley, the First Duke of Wellington, bought the house from his brother for £42,000. At that time, Apsley House was the last property in a terrace designed by the celebrated neo-classical architect Robert Adam (the rest of the terrace was demolished as late as 1961, to improve the flow of traffic between Hyde Park Corner and Park Lane).

Wellington needed a London base to make into a "Waterloo Palace"; he wanted to celebrate his prestige as the most powerful military commander in Europe, and to use his enormous popularity with the British people to support his entry into politics. The Iron Duke also had advanced tastes in the fine and decorative arts. Wellington engaged the services of the architect Benjamin Dean Wyatt and together they embarked on an ambitious



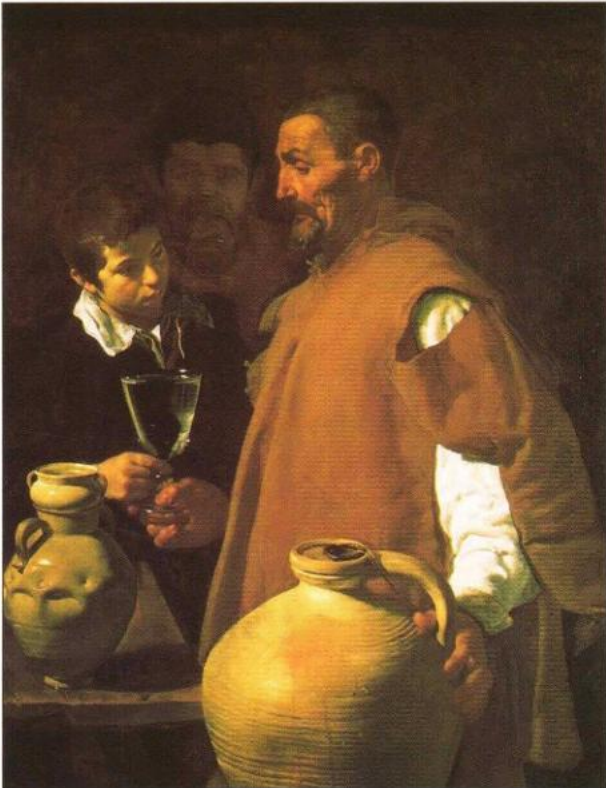
The Waterloo Gallery.

programme of rebuilding, enlarging and redecorating. Wyatt extended the original Adam brick construction and encased the whole in Bath stone, adding the Corinthian portico. He created the great 90ft long Waterloo Gallery in the Louis XIV style, evoking the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles. From 1830 till the death of the First Duke in 1852, annual banquets were held here for the officers who had served under Wellington at Waterloo. Wyatt's alterations incorporated the Iron Duke's State and private apartments and contained interior decorations and collections that reflected Wellington's personal taste as well as the fashion of the period.

The project was to last for nearly all of Wellington's life. He would undertake more work when funds became available, although he complained bitterly over the cost – by 1831 he had spent £64,000 on improvements to the house. However, he succeeded in creating a great London residence suitable as a setting for his remarkable collections and appropriate to his status as a (shortlived) Prime Minister, a national figurehead of heroic stature.

The contents of Apsley House include the First Duke's magnificent collection of the fine and decorative arts and many original furnishings. Many of the two hundred paintings originally came from the Spanish Royal Collection, and were captured by Wellington when his forces overtook Joseph Bonaparte's

baggage train after the Battle of Vitoria in 1813. In addition to outstanding seventeenth century Spanish pictures, there is a considerable group by seventeenth century Dutch and Flemish masters and by the nineteenth century British School. The collection also includes important works by Velasquez, Murillo, Goya, Rubens, Correggio, Steen, De Hooch, Brueghel, Wilkie and Lawrence.



ABOVE: *The Waterseller of Seville*, by Diego Velasquez, about 1620.

BELOW: *The Piccadilly Room*, designed by Robert Adam, 1771-1778.

BOTTOM RIGHT: *The Striped Drawing Room*; watercolour by Thomas Shotter Boys, 1852.



Of particular interest to visitors is the collection of porcelain and silver from the most important factories in Europe; the Sèvres Egyptian Service was commissioned by Napoleon as a divorce present for the Empress Josephine, who rejected it. Outstanding examples of presentation plate include a twenty-six foot long Portuguese silver centrepiece which graces the Dining Room. The romantic Lawrence portrait of the First Duke inspired the design of the old £5 note, while a colossal nude statue by Canova of Wellington's old adversary, Napoleon (which displeased its subject, who thought it was "... too athletic ...") dominates the ornate flying staircase.

Apsley House survived where other great houses did not, due to the generosity and foresight of the Seventh Duke of Wellington, a founder member of the Georgian Group and a pioneer of the Regency Revival, who gave the house and most of the contents to the nation in 1947. The Eighth Duke and his eldest son, the Marquess of Douro, retain private apartments in the building to this day. Apsley House opened to the public as the Wellington Museum in 1952; the Department of National Heritage is responsible for the care and upkeep of the building while the Victoria and Albert Museum cares for the contents and runs the building as a Museum.

The need to close Apsley House to carry out essential repairs was seen by both the Department of National Heritage and the V&A as the ideal opportunity to refurbish the public areas of the building. The intention was to return those areas of the House, as far as possible, to the condition in which they were known by the First Duke. The inevitable wear and tear of two centuries was exacerbated by the location of the house on Hyde Park Corner, probably one of the busiest road junctions in Western Europe. Similarly the proximity of





Napoleon Bonaparte, by Baron François Gérard. Formerly attributed to Robert Lefeuve.

Underground lines and the demolition of the rest of the terrace in the 1960s had had a detrimental effect on the structure.

Apsley House closed to the public in January 1992. Before essential repairs could begin in July 1992, all moveable objects from the 2,500 strong collection were removed from the House, a complex and delicate task given the fragility and the great age of some of the objects.

Eleven of the most famous paintings from the collection of two hundred were loaned to the National Gallery for display; others went to the V&A for conservation where necessary. Some objects were immovable, such as Canova's 11ft high marble nude statue of Napoleon, which would have been too large to take from the building – indeed it had not been moved since being placed in situ by the First Duke in 1817. Similarly the 23ft long Egyptian Centrepiece and the Adam and Wyatt decorations were protected during the extensive rebuilding work. The crystal chandeliers and lanterns were taken away for specialist cleaning and restoration. An intensive programme of conservation work then began.

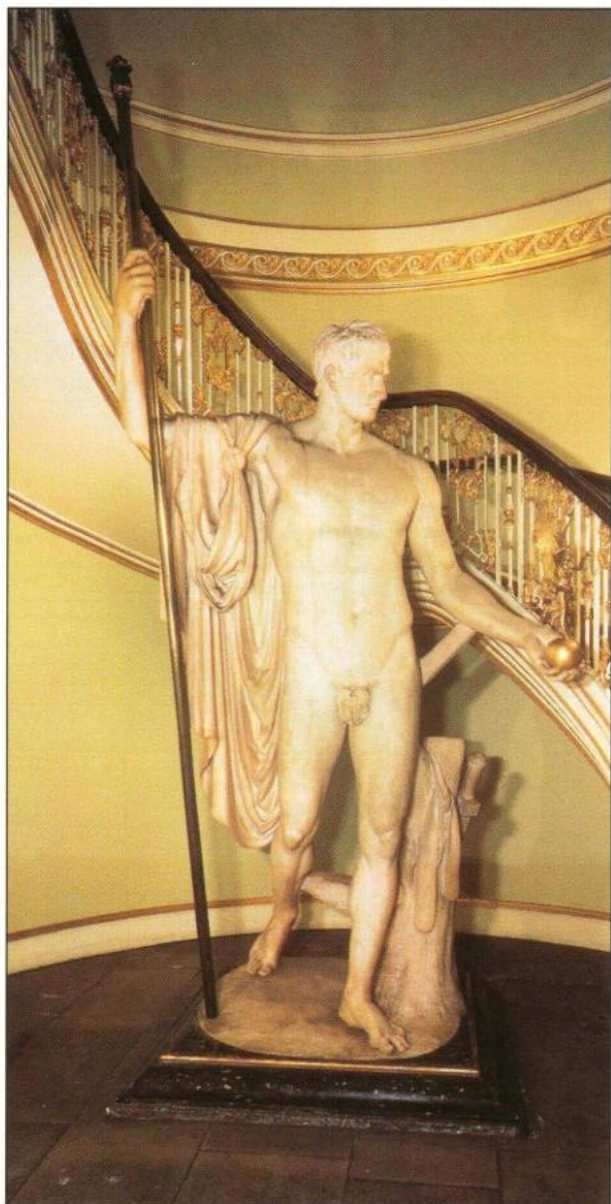
While work commenced on overhauling the roof and replacing the electrical, heating, fire and security systems and installing a new air-conditioning plant to improve the environment for the priceless collection, extensive redecoration of the interiors was carefully planned. Over 300 metres of special fabric for the wall-hangings, curtains and banquettes in



The central feature of the centrepiece of the Portuguese Service, silver parcel gilt, about 1816.



A Wellington Boot or the Head of the Army; cartoon by Paul Pry, 1827.



ABOVE: *Napoleon*,
by Antonio Canova (c. 1806).

BELOW: *Round Dish* from
the Austrian Service c 1829.



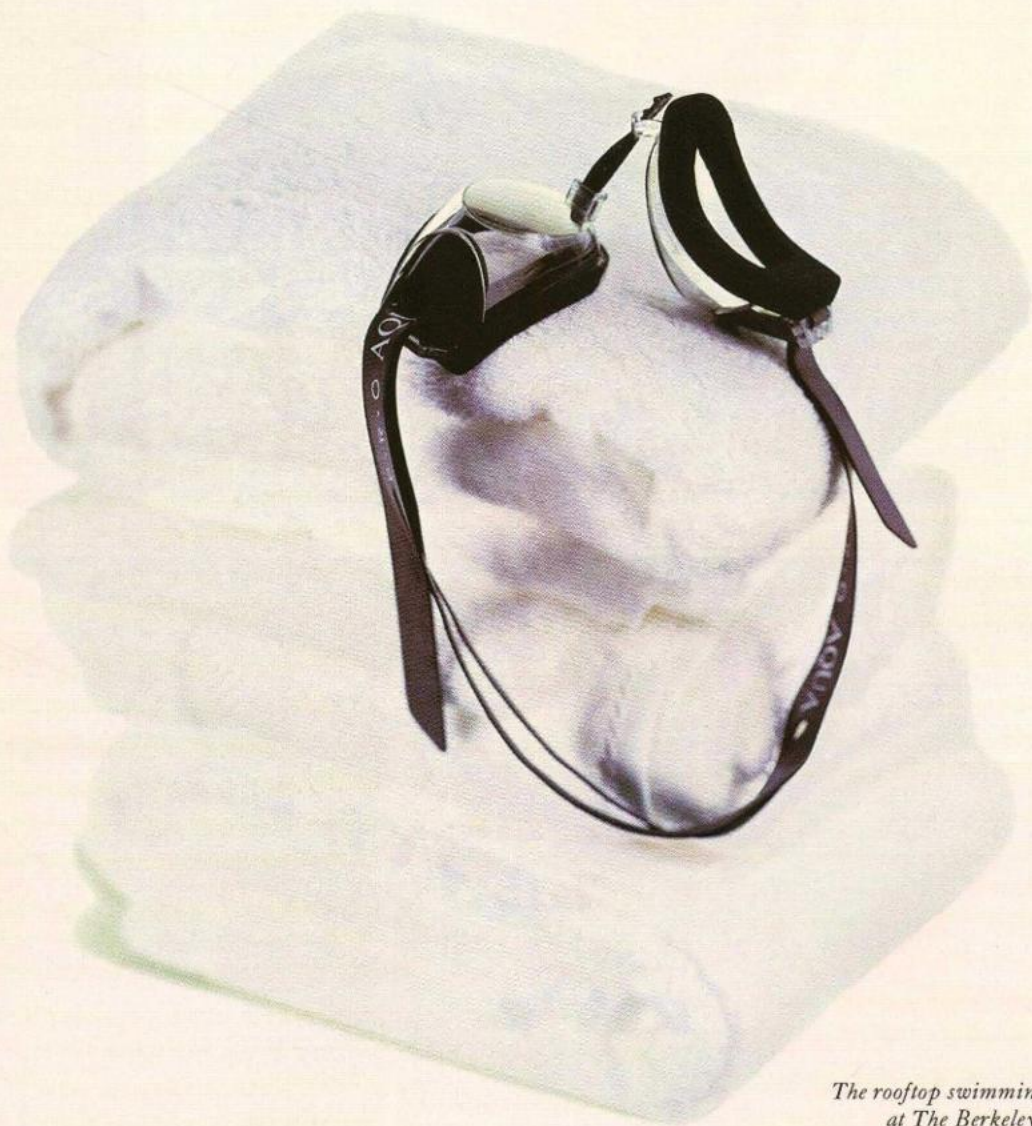
the Striped and Yellow Drawing Rooms were handwoven on wooden looms from the 1820s, to match a fragment of original silk found behind a bell-pull during the restoration programme and to correspond exactly with Victorian renderings of the rooms. Similarly a fragment of the original carpet was found in the attic at the Duke of Wellington's country house, Stratford Saye; it was identified as being the same carpet depicted in early watercolours of the interior of Apsley House, and has been faithfully copied to match the original. Fortunately examples of curtain rails, French pulley rods, windows and door handles and all other brass accessories had survived, and exact copies were made where items were missing.

Numerous paint sections were taken to enable specialists to match exactly the colour and finish of the walls; the entrance halls were remarbled and the gilding was cleaned and restored where necessary. Great care was taken to retain and conserve original decorative surfaces and, wherever possible, to reproduce exactly the arrangement of pictures adopted by the First Duke. The paintings so avidly collected and carefully displayed by Wellington were rehung on great gilded metal chains, which had been stored on the premises in tea-chests since this method of displaying paintings fell from fashion in the last century. In this respect, the Curator of Apsley House, Jonathan Voak, was greatly assisted by bills and documentary material relating to the original decorations during the lifetime of the First Duke, and a set of contemporary watercolours by Thomas Shotter Boys, along with detailed inventories, all undertaken just after the death of the First Duke in 1852. Of particular assistance in the refurbishing of the Waterloo Gallery was the 1836 painting of *The Waterloo Banquet*, by William Salter. It has been lent to Apsley House by the present Duke of Wellington, having been at Stratfield Saye for many years.

Apsley House re-opened in June 1995 to great critical and popular acclaim; "... a palace of gilt and satin with a significant history and a notable collection of paintings" was the verdict of *The Independent* on Sunday, while *The Times* called it "... one of the most lavish and meticulous restorations ever undertaken in Britain."

More than 40,000 visitors queued for admission in the first 20 weeks that the house was open, an increase of 33% on the annual attendance figure for the last year that Apsley House was open before the restoration and refurbishment programme commenced. Restored to its former magnificence, Apsley House is living up to its affectionate epithet of 'Number One, London'.

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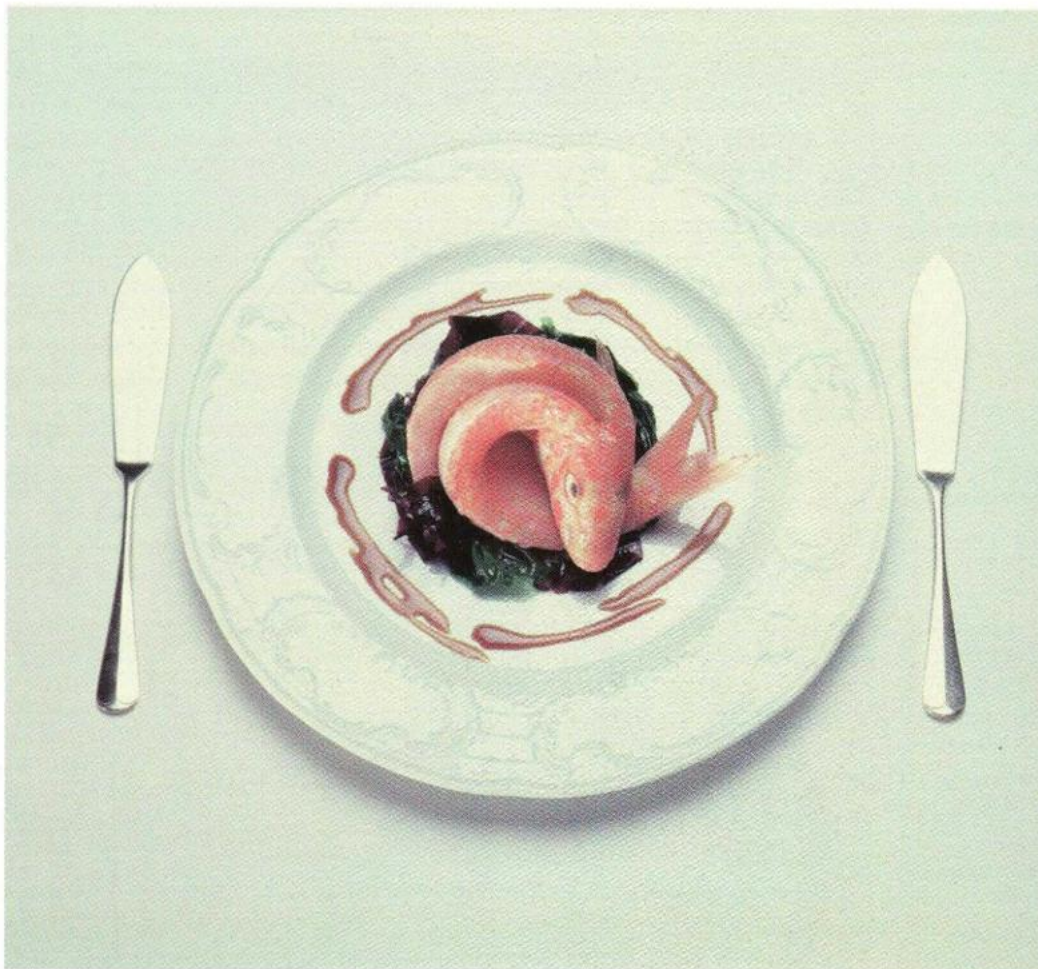
*The rooftop swimming pool
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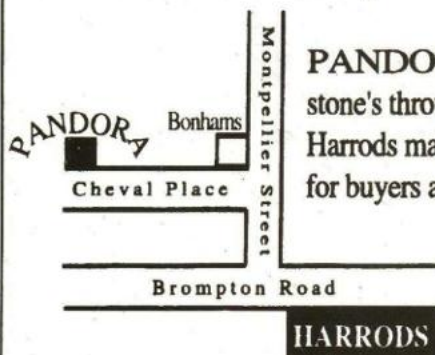
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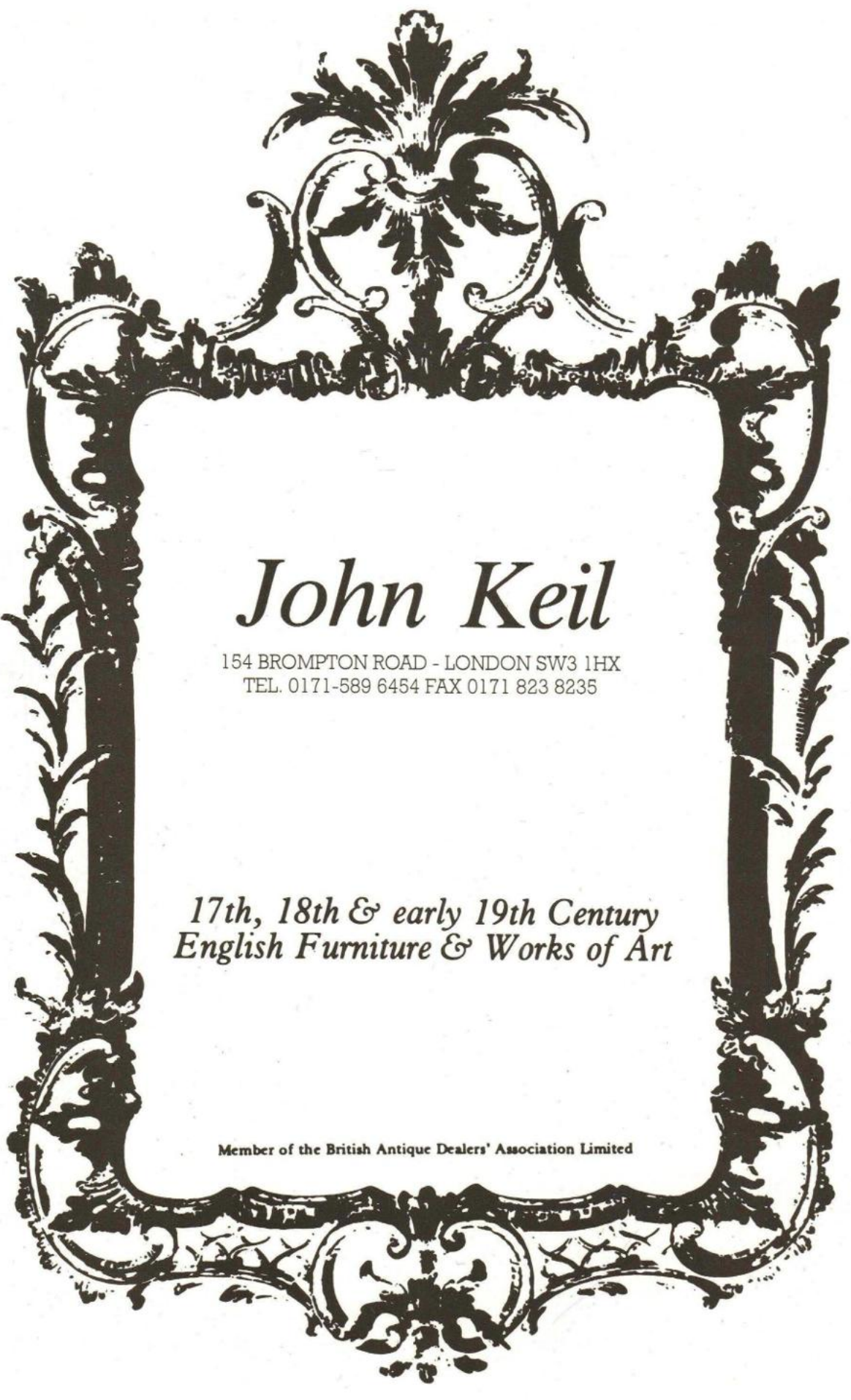
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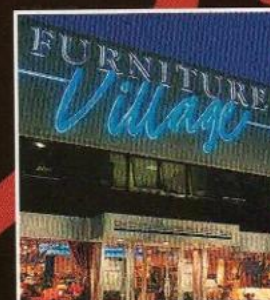
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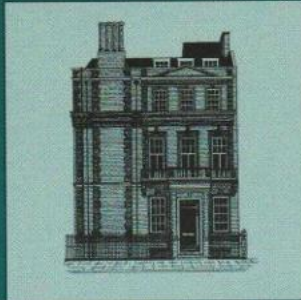
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