

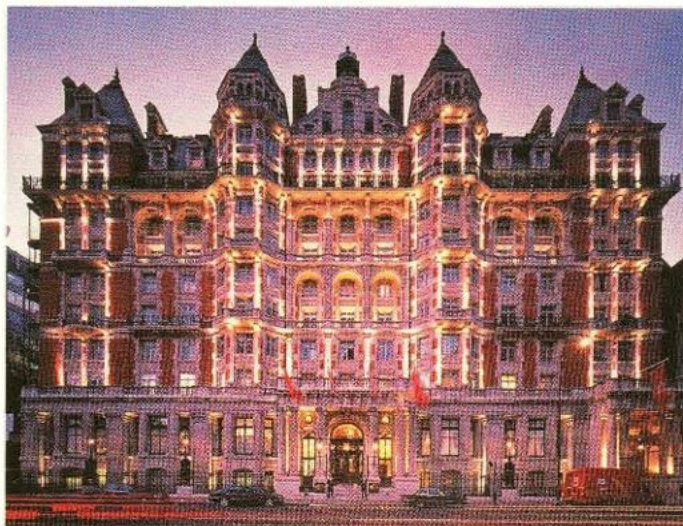
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38th ANNUAL REPORT

Millennium Issue

December 1999





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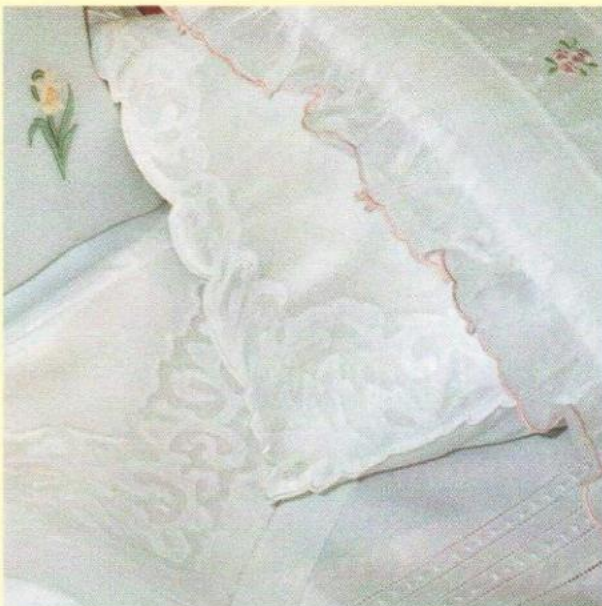
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Results reflect London

■ Handsome price, handsome flat... agent de Groot Collis (071-235 8090) is seeking offers of more than £2m for the 28-year lease of a ground-floor Knightsbridge apartment in Cadogan Square,

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.

Residential

Jeremy Davidson, of the 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, their own garage, for £400,000 and £535,000.

■ Two ritzy houses in London for sale at about £5m. No land Gate, SW7 is set at freehold through De Groot Collis (071-235 8090). It is a restored end-of-terrace house with views north along the 'rom the upper floor' from the Oratory station, Westminster and Crystal Palace. The joinery is beautiful.

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PROPER
Davidson reckons "a tennis court can help to sell a house."

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.

De Groot achieve £10m from Far East buyer
An investor from the Far East has paid £10 million for bought 4, 5 and 8, Observatory Gardens, London W8. The buyer intends to develop the properties into 15 flats. The sale equates to £470 a sq ft, which agents de Groot Collis claim is the highest price they have achieved in terms of square footage. The sale was made off-plan by de Groot Collis' Priscilla Stille, who took plans of the development to the Far East. Avril Butt, head of the residential 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."

side of Regent's Park. I admired Crown. It is also an er house but this terrace look fr

De Groot Collis has found ready buyers through De Groot Collis at exhibitions in the Far East, particularly in Singapore.

Homes **Mc**
The agent who sold a house for £20m

Mystery buyer, mystery seller - but a discreet super-saleswoman has just put the property coup of the year. Report by MIRA BAR-HILLEL and TIM BARLAS

who want something from you. One must also know how to handle such small details. I was once talking to Sheikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi and called him 'Your Excellency' instead of 'Your Highness', she says ruefully. "I nearly got my hands cut off."

The story started when Avril, as residential director of de Groot Collis, received a telephone call from a representative of a business man in the Far East - probably Hong Kong or Singapore - interested in buying a substantial London property. After showing him a few sites, she mentioned a castle House just might be the one.

Next, she owner of a tycoon.

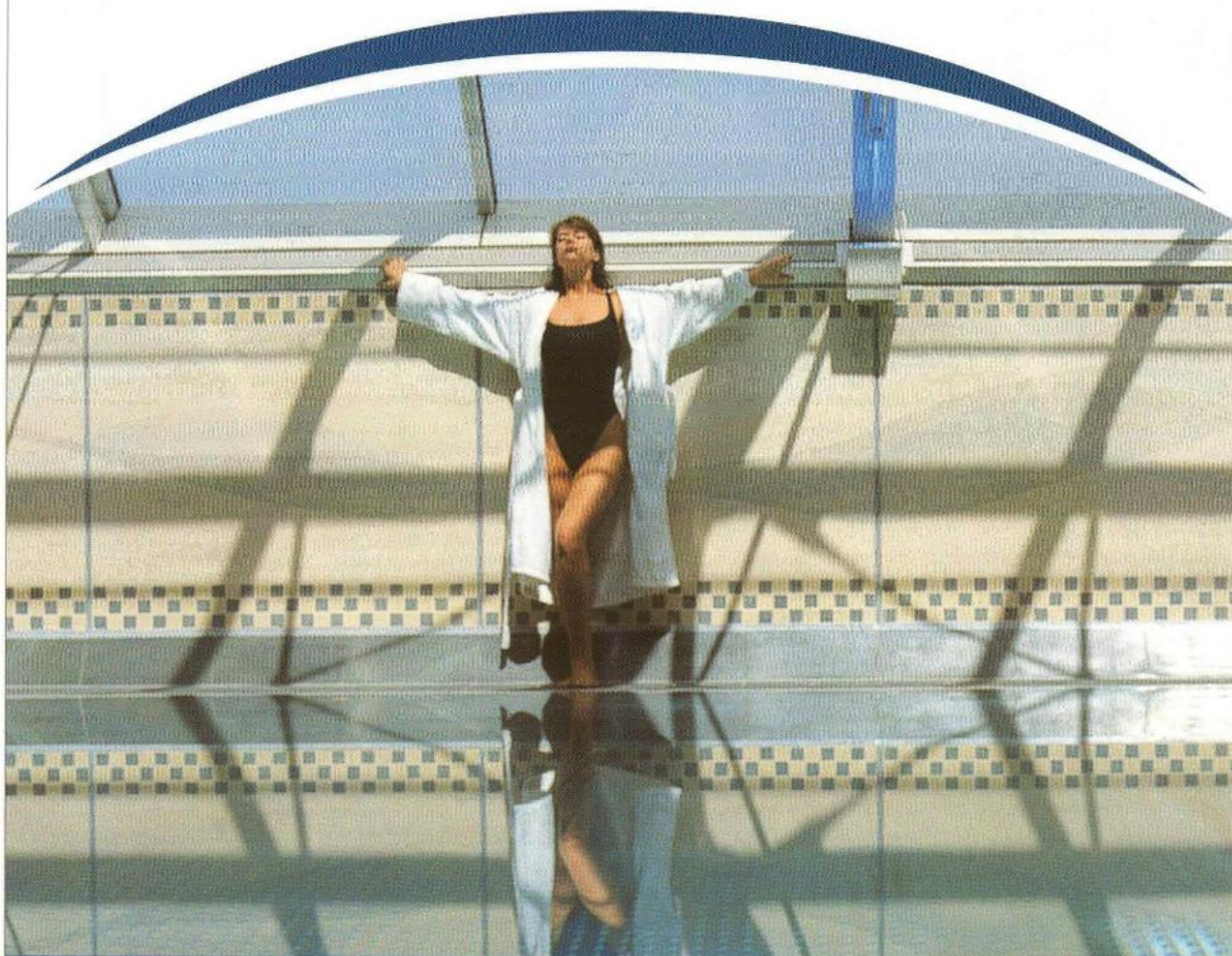
THE LONDON MAGAZINE

also computer-linked, as are De Groot's recently opened lettings department. Its Knightsbridge, Chelsea and West End offices. Involved in lettings since 1978, Emily Anson, who heads the department, says, "Renting has become an established and credible alternative to purchasing, despite the recent upturn in the residential property market. Being computer-linked means that we can give applicants instant information and instructions."

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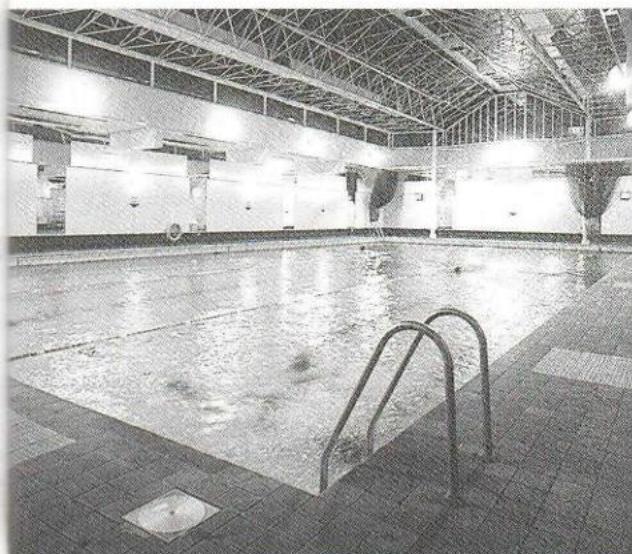


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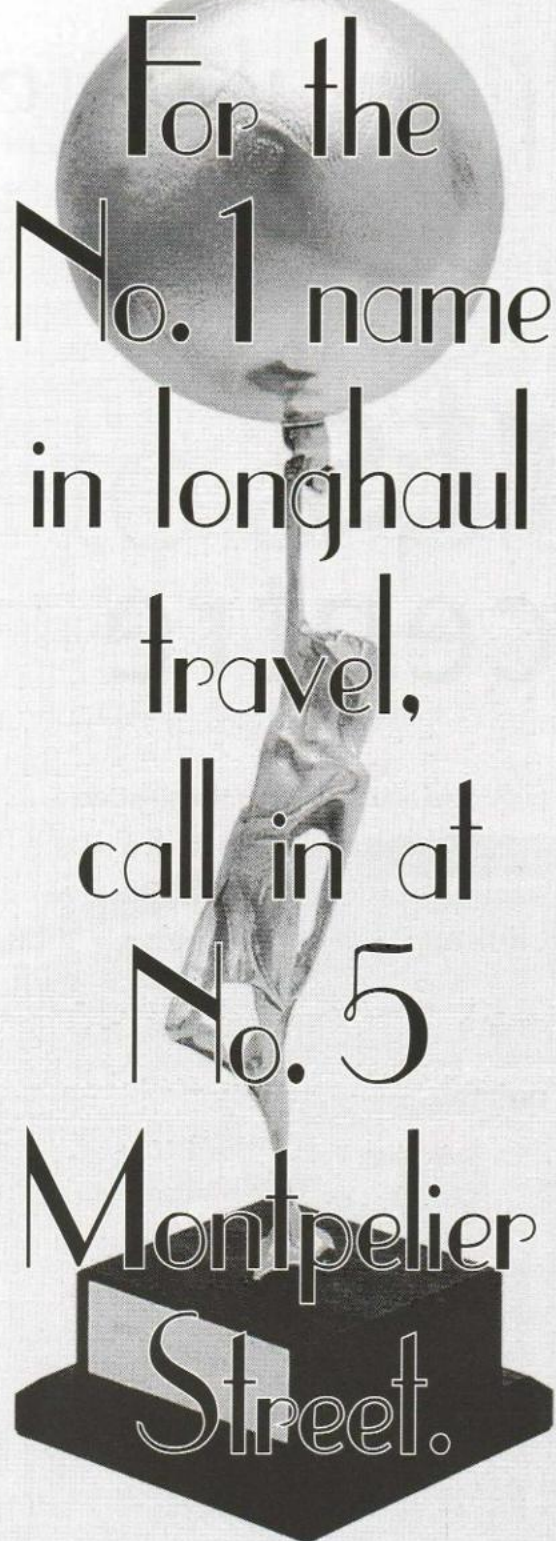
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A black and white photograph of a hand holding a globe on a pedestal. The hand is positioned as if holding the globe, which is resting on a dark, rectangular base. The text is overlaid on the image.

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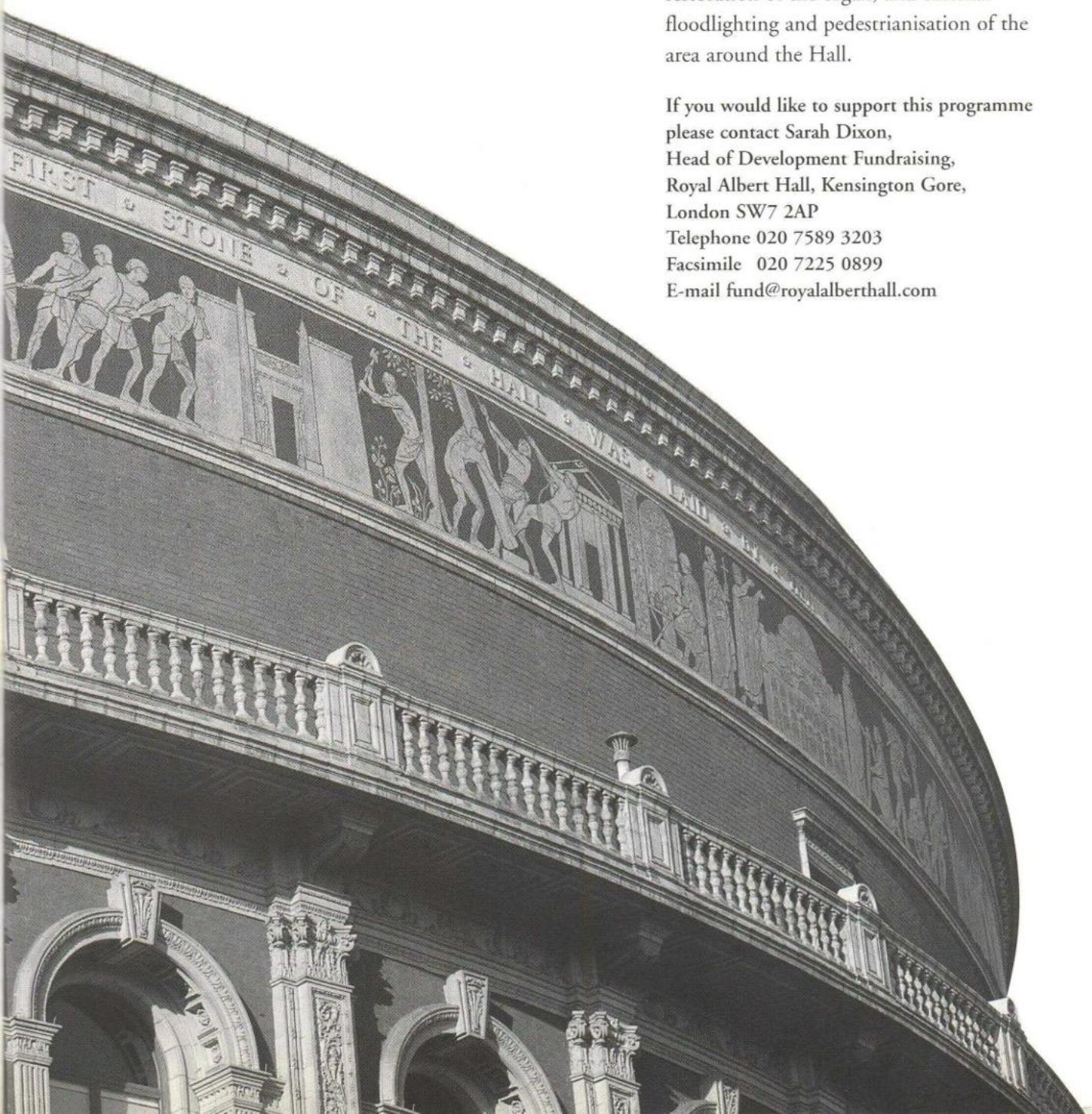
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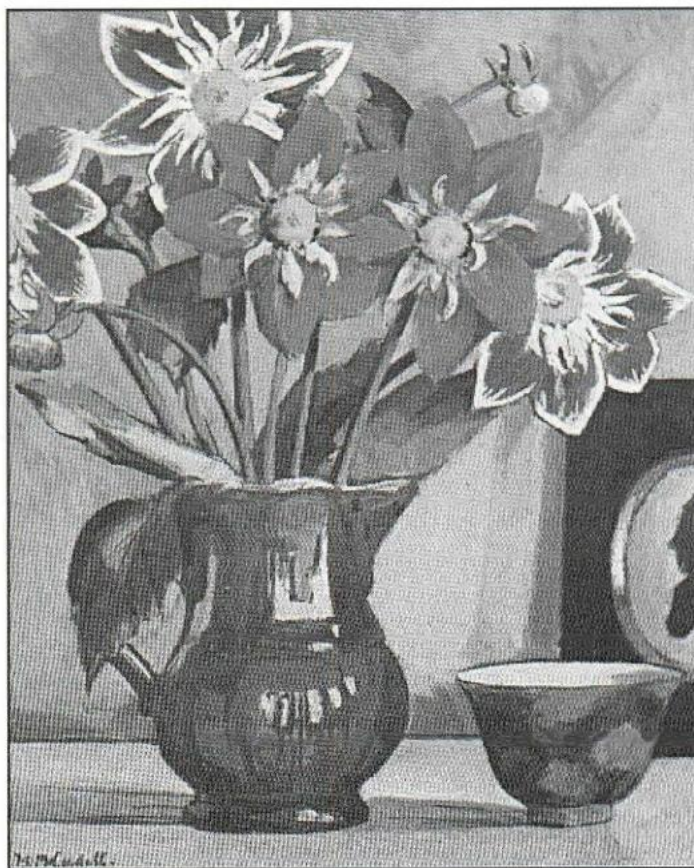
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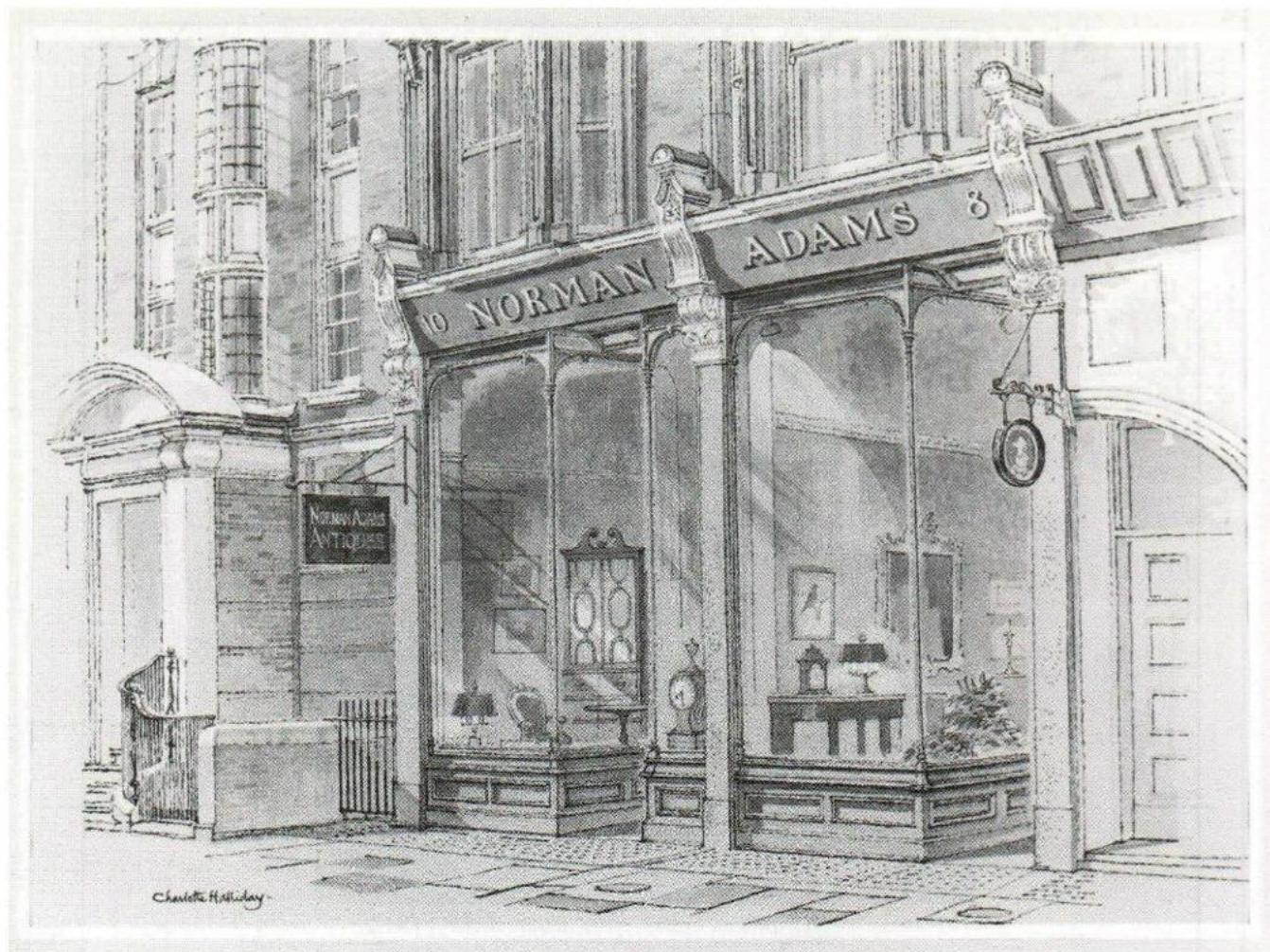
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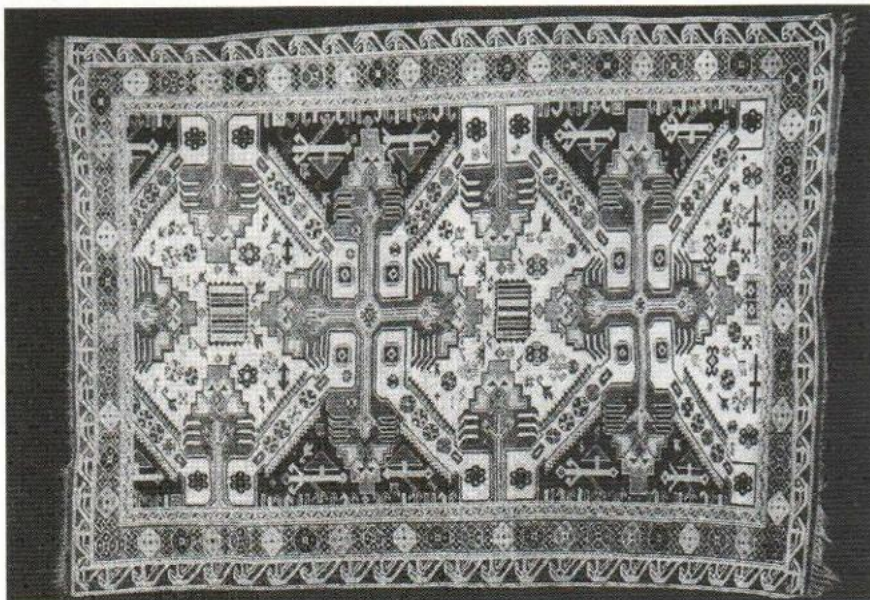
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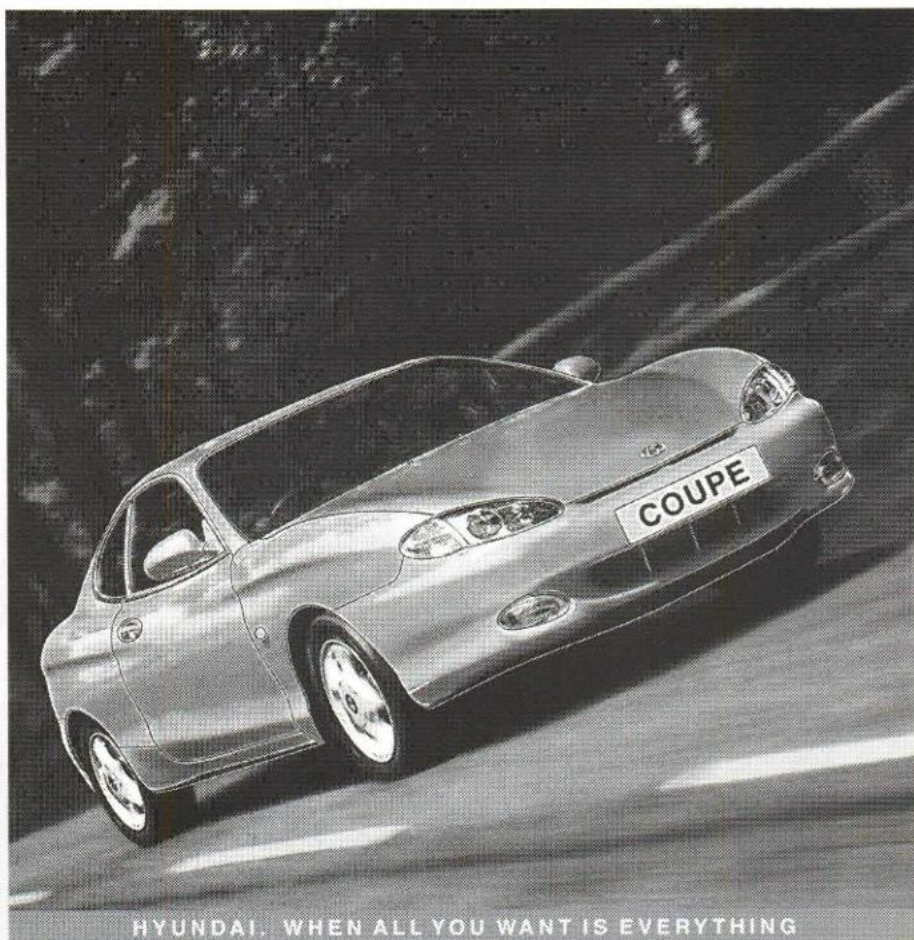
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A Bedroom.
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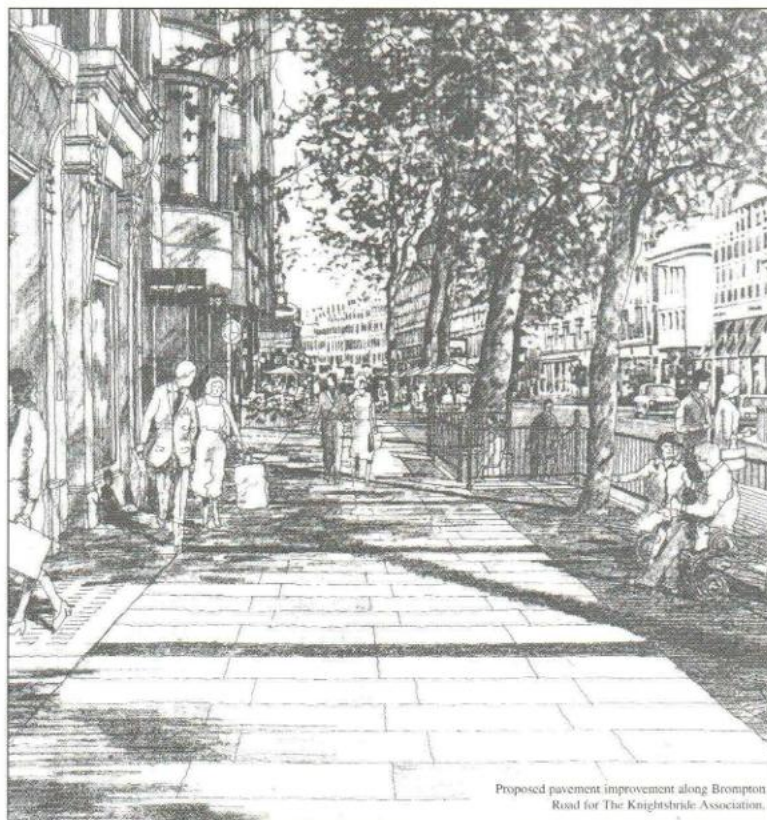
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Proposed pavement improvement along Brompton Road for The Knightsbridge Association.



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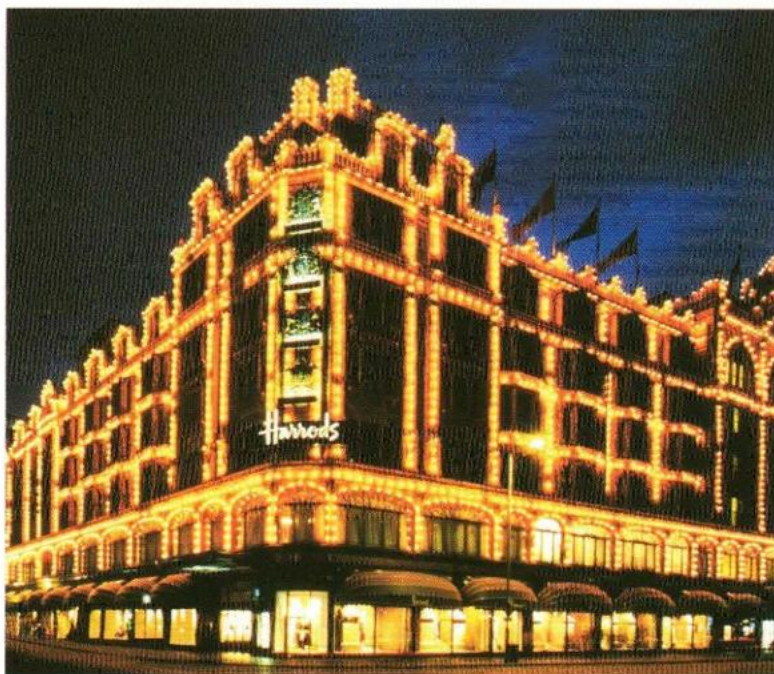
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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

The last year of the Millennium has been exceptionally busy for us. We have watched with dismay a great opportunity being missed to celebrate it by an imaginative development of the great site at the junction of Knightsbridge and Brompton Road. At present it is blighted, derelict and miserable. We have struggled, with others, to restrain the tide of commercialism in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. We have examined, as we always do, dozens of applications of one sort or another, commenting where we should and opposing where we feel we must.

There have been several positive developments. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea intends to bring to fruition the first element in the Knightsbridge Initiative, now that we have received pledges of generous help from so many owners and occupiers near the first stage - the split level pavement in the Brompton Road west of Montpelier Street. The Harrods end of Knightsbridge Underground station is being rebuilt and

extended. The CCTV system is up and running in Knightsbridge and part of Brompton Road.

The Association held two very successful social occasions and plans more for next year. Every year many members leave the area and it is therefore a continual task to bring in newcomers and to make them welcome. We have made an especial effort to do so.

Among the innovations in our Report this year there are articles by the Kensington Society and the Chelsea Society which they have supplied at our invitation. We co-operate with them both regularly on matters of common interest and we felt our members would like to hear about their work.

The coming year will see the election of London's Mayor and the new Authority. We wish them well, and will engage in a constructive dialogue whenever we have the opportunity to do so. They will have much to do. If they can do something to improve transport and traffic, they will receive and will have earned the respect and admiration of us all.

THE ENVIRONMENT



Left: View from basement to Wellcome Wing.

Right: View from exhibition tray in Wellcome Wing.



Science Museum

The Wellcome Wing, as it will be called in recognition of the generous financial contribution of the Wellcome Trust, is taking shape and is on course for completion by June 2000. Additional funding has been provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Designed by MacCormac Jamieson Prichard, its exciting interior, reflecting the dramatic nature of contemporary science, will increase current exhibition space by 30%. The single large exhibition space at ground level will contain three more exhibition spaces and a suspended IMAX cinema. Sited to the west of the existing Museum and connected to it, the exterior will be dominated by a vast blue glass window capable of reducing the high summer light levels down to that needed for exhibitions.

Plans for a seminar building on Queen's Gate



The Wellcome Wing under construction.

were withdrawn at the end of last year after strong local opposition to the design. Revised proposals were put forward in May for two buildings, the Queen's Gate one, comprising a number of seminar rooms, offices and bedrooms for conference visitors, and a separate circular lecture hall behind it. The Association again objected to the design, the large expanse of louvres on the Queen's Gate frontage and a stair tower clad in silver aluminium panels on the south elevation being alien to the Conservation Area setting. The Science Museum apparently qualifies as a Government institution and does not have to seek planning permission from the local Authority, so it looks as if the new building will go ahead.

Victoria & Albert Museum

The controversial "Spiral" extension to the Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind, was, after a lively debate, given approval by Kensington & Chelsea's Planning Committee in November 1998. This included permission to dismantle Aston Webb's listed Screen in Exhibition Road and to re-erect it as an entrance to the Museum from the pedestrian subway leading from South Kensington Tube Station. Last year's Report detailed the strong opposition to the proposals from the Association, many other organisations and a large body of the general public.

The lower floors of the new building will contain an Auditorium and a Resource Centre.



View of the Spiral from Museum Lane looking down Exhibition Road.

Detailed advice on the Museum's collections and exhibits will be available in the "Information Café" on level 1. Above this café there will be four levels of Exhibition Galleries and a "workshop" level where artists and designers will be available to meet visitors. The top floor, level 7, will house another café.

In April this year, the Museum announced that it is to receive a private donation of £20 million towards the estimated cost of £80 million. It is confident that it will be successful in completing the funding in the near future, and that the "Spiral" should be completed by 2004.

Natural History Museum

In March work began on the new Darwin Centre on Queen's Gate. Designed by Cecil Denny Highton, this replacement of the old 'Spirit' building, will house a new life sciences complex in modern, environmentally controlled conditions. Completion is due by December 2000.

Royal Geographical Society

At a meeting in August, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Association met the President and Director of the Royal Geographical Society who outlined their proposals for the provision of improved storage for their valuable archives and wider public access to them. Existing basement storage facilities will be refurbished and extended under the garden terrace. Consideration is also being given to the construction of a single storey garden pavilion along part of the Exhibition Road side of the garden, to provide a display area open to the public. Members of the Association will be asked to a presentation of the plans when these have been submitted to Westminster City Council.



Interior view of the Spiral showing gallery space with mezzanine level and Auditorium.



Royal Geographical Society - garden elevation.



The south steps site taken from the Royal College of Music.

Royal Albert Hall

Work on this major project continues apace. Internally the stalls have been reconstructed to improve sight lines and eliminate the gangway steps which were of varying heights. Externally the complex underpinning and foundation works between the main building and Prince Consort Road and the superstructure are taking shape.

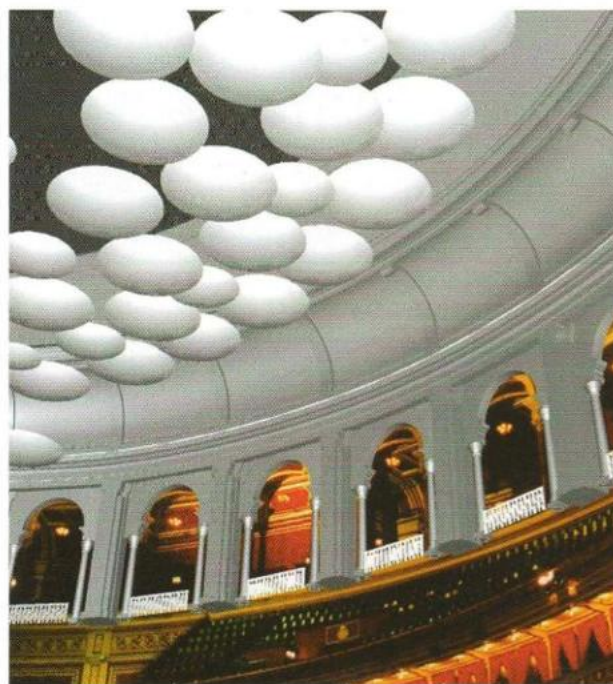
The statue of Prince Albert, with the steps, terracing and balustrades, is now being repaired and restored off site before being reinstated in 2001.

Traffic management round the Hall is receiving much attention. There is a proposal to extend the pedestrian concourse round the Hall to stop drivers cutting through between Kensington Gore and Prince Consort Road; we await a consultation

paper on this. Consultants are studying ways of improving conditions for pedestrians including traffic calming measures in Kensington Gore. They hope to strengthen links between the Hall and the Memorial, but the Association has registered its concern about narrowing such a major highway; we fear a virtual thrombosis in the Gore and the effects on Prince Consort Road. Our concern extends to coach parking since so many now couple a visit to the Hall and Memorial.



South steps landscaping proposal.

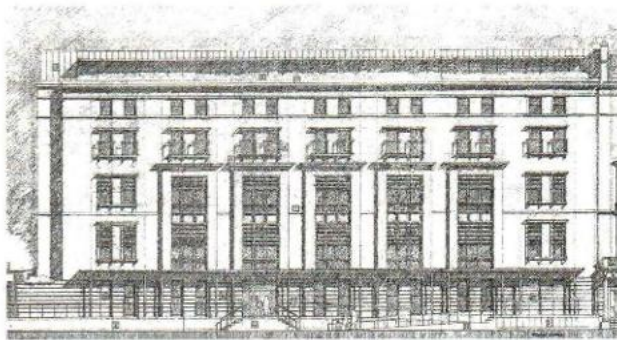


Acoustic mushrooms after reconfiguration, showing new cove.

Imperial College of Science, Technology & Medicine

Sports Hall 1-7 Princes Gardens: In 1997 the College failed to get permission for a competition-sized underground Sports Hall and Hall of Residence on the tennis court site on the east side of Princes Gardens. In March this year, the College submitted plans to enlarge and expand the existing Sports Centre at 1-7 Princes Gardens, and to provide academic flats above. In addition to the existing swimming pool, squash courts and other facilities in the basement, three floors of new building on the main frontage would accommodate fitness and dance studios and a sports medicine suite, three further floors would provide 12 flats for visiting academic staff. At the back of the site, over the swimming pool, a Sports Hall, large enough and high enough to accommodate five badminton courts is proposed.

Two meetings were held with the architects before the scheme was submitted for planning approval. The Association's sub-committee expressed concern at the height, bulk and site



Proposed Sports Hall building at 1-7 Princes Gardens.

coverage of the Sports Hall and its effect on adjoining residential property. Certain aspects of the main elevation were also criticised. Following submission of the planning application, a third sub-committee meeting was held on site, when objections already expressed were reinforced. The proposals came in for much criticism at a public meeting and the action of the Association in objecting to Westminster City Council was endorsed.

In spite of many written objections and a petition to the Council, the officer's report recommended approval of the proposals. At Westminster's Planning Committee meeting in August, chaired by Councillor Alan Bradley, a decision was deferred until after a site visit by his committee. This took place in October. At the subsequent Planning meeting the committee granted permission with a condition that certain design aspects should be looked at again and brought back to committee at a later date.

Beit Hall: The quadrangle off Prince Consort



Beit Hall

Road with its collegiate feeling was developed piecemeal between 1910 and 1931; additional floors were added between 1955 and 1965 and have emphasised the lack of unity in its design. Following relocation of the School of Biology to the recently completed Sir Alexander Fleming Building, the College plans to refurbish the east and west wings, adding an extra floor to provide extra living accommodation for students. When work is completed, some 300 students will be housed in the Hall.

Montpelier Hall: The college has submitted plans to convert Montpelier Hall into private residential flats, when the students have been relocated in Beit Hall. Built in 1896 of red brick with terracotta trimmings, the building is not listed, but by its size and striking design it dominates the west side of Montpelier Street. The front and side elevations would be retained; a rear wing of the existing building would be demolished and redeveloped to provide two floors of parking with flats above. A total of 18 flats of varying sizes would be provided, each with one parking space. The Association welcomes this proposed change of use from hostel to private residential.

Princes Gate Mews Houses: The Association's reservations about the general design, narrow frontages and lack of off-street parking for the proposed five new houses were disregarded by the Council, which will be built in the style of the 60s Southside building rather than the traditional mews style.



Montpelier Hall

Prudential Scheme

The Association has become increasingly concerned about the development of this important site. It ought to have been seen as a wonderful opportunity for a landmark development which would make a good impression on the many visitors to central London who approach it along one of its two western axes. What we now have is boarded-up mess, derelict and blighted, which could scarcely create a worse impression. The project is fraught with complications. The owners of most of it, the Prudential have sought and gained conditional approval for new buildings along the Knightsbridge frontage and on the Lancelot Place/Brompton Road corner, and are retaining and refurbishing 1 Knightsbridge Green, whilst redesigning the shop fronts.

They have now put the northern (Knightsbridge) part of the site up for sale. They were not able themselves to offer a truly comprehensive scheme since they do not own either Silver City House or the Normandie Hotel.



*Above:
Model shot of
Prudential's
proposed mixed
use development
at the corner of
Brompton Road
and Lancelot Place
part of the larger
Knightsbridge
Green
redevelopment.*

*Right:
Computer-
generated image
of Prudential's
proposed office
and shop
refurbishment at
1 Knightsbridge
Green.*



The Prudential say that work on refurbishing 1 Knightsbridge Green will begin early in the New Year, the retail units would be ready by late 2000 and the whole work be completed by early 2002. Work on the new Lancelot Place building is dependent on getting vacant possession.

City & West End Scheme

Towards the end of 1998 a comprehensive scheme was prepared by City & West End Developments who are understood to be negotiating with the owners of Silver City House and the Normandie Hotel. Their scheme would include demolition of the Normandie Hotel, moving it further west along Knightsbridge and providing blocks of flats on either side.

The Brompton Road frontage comprises shops with offices above and a large semi-circular block behind. There would be pedestrian links with Trevor Square, Knightsbridge and Brompton Road through landscaped gardens, and - most welcome - an entrance to the underground station linked to the platforms by lifts.

The Association has always expressed a preference for a comprehensive scheme to cover the whole site, and Westminster City Council is understood to hold the same view.

City & West End's initial plans have been modified in the light of criticisms by Westminster City Council, the Association and others. In November outline planning permission was granted by the Council on the revised submission. City & West End's proposals are dependent on their acquisition of the Prudential interest.

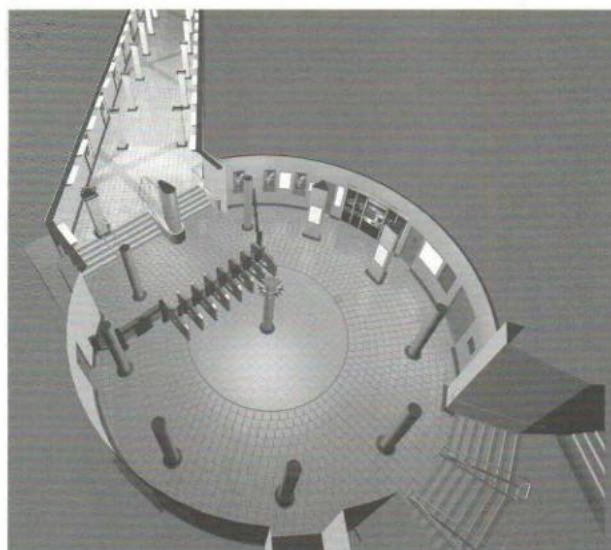


Crown Court site - building work in progress illustrating the complexity of the scheme.

Harrods Crown Court Development

When the new building on the old Crown Court site in Basil Street and Hans Crescent is completed, around mid 2001, Harrods plans to transfer the staff facilities, now located on the top floor of the Store. Plans have been submitted for the vacated area to be converted into a Function Room with associated lounge, bars and roof terraces, with a separate entrance and lift from Basil Street. The Association feels that such a use in a predominantly residential area would result in a serious loss of amenity due to traffic movement, late night noise and increased pressure on parking facilities. Although it is now proposed that the Function Room will shut at 11.30 pm, rather than 2.30 am as was originally envisaged, this concern remains. The Royal Borough is awaiting further details.

Harrods House Hotel, the planned conversion of Trevor Square depository, combined with the redevelopment of 100 Brompton Road will not commence until the Crown Court development is completed. It is however hoped that work will start before then to move the lorry entrance at the bottom of Trevor Square, eastwards towards Lancelot Place - improving the quality of life for the residents of the Square. This would enable work to go ahead on reinforcing the vaults under the pavements, and the installation of the traffic barrier.



Computer-generated image of the new ticket hall.

Knightsbridge Tube Station

The Station was opened in 1906 with exits in Brompton Road and Basil Street, and remained unchanged until two new ticket halls were built in 1934 with escalators leading down to opposite ends of the platforms. Apart from the installation of an additional escalator in 1992 to serve the western (Harrods) end of the station, the layout has remained unchanged for 65 years. The ever increasing number of tourists and visitors in recent years resulted in dangerous congestion and the Association discussed the problems with London Underground over a period of time.

In March of this year work commenced on site with the installation of temporary bridging in Brompton Road to allow a new ticket hall to be constructed beneath. In addition to the new ticket hall with a much increased circulation area, there will be improved lighting, ticket selling facilities and security measures. A key feature of the design is to move the station entrance to the western side of Hans Crescent, away from the busy corner at



The bridge along Brompton Road to allow excavation below.



Plans for the future of Bowater House are under consideration.



Princes Court, plans for an extra storey were turned down.

the junction with Brompton Road. This new entrance will open in Spring 2000 and the remainder of the works will be completed during the autumn of 2001.

After initial problems resulting from lack of co-ordination between the various authorities (exacerbated by the arbitrary closure of two roads in Hyde Park) when part of Brompton Road was closed for preliminary engineering works and, in spite of the closure of Hans Crescent, traffic arrangements have worked comparatively well.

South Kensington Station

Following their selection by London Transport as development partners, Stanhope and Hutchison Whampoa have been reviewing the approved scheme in the light of market conditions, particular

constraints relating to the site and a desire to improve the station. This process has taken longer than anticipated, but they hope to be in a position to put forward a revised scheme soon.

Bowater House

Land Securities have yet to take a decision on the long term future of Bowater House. Whilst this is under consideration, given the strong demand, tenants are being offered occupation of the premises in their present form for the next 5 years. Surplus accommodation will be marketed on this basis. Amongst the options being considered are demolition and total refurbishment.

Princes Court, Brompton Road

An application to build six flats at roof level was submitted for planning approval in April. Objections were raised on the grounds that the extra storey would add to the already excessive height of the building and do considerable damage to the character and appearance of both Brompton Road and Trevor Square. The application was withdrawn.

54 Princes Gate

There have been many applications to refurbish and alter this building over the last dozen years, none of which has been realised. The Association has consistently opposed the addition of a mansard floor as none of the buildings in this terrace has been spoilt by a roof extension. In February the Association supported an application for change of use from office to single dwelling, which incorporated a roof terrace and conservatory cleverly concealed between the front and rear roof slopes. The application was approved in May, but work has still not commenced.

61-62 Ennismore Gardens

An application to convert this pair of houses from office to educational use as a Day Study Centre was opposed by the Association and turned down by the Council. A fresh application to refurbish the building, with minor alterations, with a view to continued use as offices, was submitted in July. It is not yet known whether they will revert to diplomatic use. The Association would prefer to see a reversion to residential use, but office use has been established since the early 1960s.

Knights Arcade

The 350 seater restaurant, occupying the northern half of the former arcade under Park Mansions, and to which the Association objected, was due to open its doors in November.

CONSULTATION PAPERS



Tables and chairs can bring life to the streets, provided they leave room for pedestrians.

Westminster City Council

Review of Ward Boundaries: To meet proposed changes in the organisation of local elections, it will be necessary for the number of voters in each Ward to be as close as possible to the average. To achieve this the Knightsbridge Ward will have to be increased and the Association was asked to comment on a proposal to transfer part of Belgravia Ward to Knightsbridge.

Liquor Licensing Deregulation: In commenting on a Government paper on unlimited extensions to licensing hours on New Year's Eve the Association suggested that within residential areas no extension should be allowed beyond 1 am, though there might be a case for 2 am within the Central Activities Zone only.

Local Air Quality Management: Following public consultation, Westminster City Council issued a paper recommending that the whole of Westminster become an "Air Quality Management Area". This designation is a necessary step in the preparation of a statutory plan containing proposals to achieve national air quality standards by 2005. This would bring together those activities in which the Council is already engaged, particularly vehicular pollution, the major source of pollution.

Management of Entertainment Industry: In September the Council asked for comments on their proposed policies for the management of the Entertainment Industry as it affects Westminster. The paper includes a wide review of the problems arising from the expansion of the Entertainment Industry which has led to a dramatic increase in late night activity, excessive drinking and associated anti-social behaviour, and a series of possible actions to deal with each problem. Planning and Licensing issues are covered, also increased noise, waste and litter, the growing demand for tables and chairs on pavements, the lack of public lavatories and the growing problem of street fouling and street crime. The Association will be submitting its comments shortly; it is gratifying to know that the City Council is facing the problems head on.

Review of Sex Establishments: The Association supported the Council's overall policies set out in a consultation paper, noting that there was no intention to licence sex establishments in Knightsbridge. Prosecution of prostitutes call box "carders" continued at a high level and included injunctions against four

persistent offenders. Lobbying by the Council and other organisations for the Government to permit more effective action continues.

Unitary Development Plan: Revision of the UDP continued, the Association commenting on a number of draft chapters.

Shopping: Changes have been made as a result of alterations in the nature of retailing. Control over the introduction of restaurant use in shopping areas is to be strengthened.

Environment: A new chapter to encourage sustainable development, defined as "to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". Fresh sections of the chapter cover pollution, waste, recycling, amenity, nature conservation and energy efficiency. Sections on noise, sunlight and daylight have been strengthened.

Urban Design: Another new chapter to replace the current "Conservation and Design" chapter. The text has been edited to reduce repetition and to cover current and emerging design trends.

Transport: The many changes from the current chapter emphasise air quality, public transport and traffic restraint measures. Eight out of nine road widening schemes in the current UDP have been deleted. Commercial parking standards have been tightened and residential parking standards eased.

The Association is in general agreement with the proposed changes, but has commented on several points of detail.

Kensington and Chelsea

Unitary Development Plan: Revision of the UDP also continued throughout the year. The Association was invited to a number of meetings to discuss draft chapters. The proposed alterations have been approved by the Council and were placed "on deposit" from 6th August to 17th September for public inspection and comment.

Conservation and Development: Contains new sections on urban design, subterranean development and sense of enclosure. Existing policies on private open space and garden squares have been strengthened.

Transportation: Changes have been made to reflect the Government's transport policies and changing legislation on road traffic reduction and air quality.

Hotels: New hotel development should be directed towards locations which are not over provided with hotels, have good transport access to central London and where the impact on residential areas can be limited.

Environment: This section contains new policies on Air Quality, Environmental Impact Assessment and Waste Management.

Visitor Management Strategy: The Association took part in the development of this strategy and is a signatory of the report launched at a special meeting in June. A thorough and workmanlike document, it aims to ensure that an effective and complementary relationship can be maintained and developed between the residential environment and the tourist industry, to the economic benefit of the Royal Borough and its residents.

LAW AND ORDER

This hard working committee, under the chairmanship of Elspeth Parkes, has as always been much concerned to maintain a close relationship with the police so as to ensure a good two-way flow of information. Throughout the year we received tremendous support from crime prevention officer Dave Pullan and from home beat officers Doug Forman and Woodrow Bryan of Belgravia and from community officer Rosemary Drewery and others of Kensington and Chelsea. We greatly appreciate the time and effort they and so many colleagues give us.

Gordon Shingleton's efforts for so many years to raise funding for the installation of CCTV in Knightsbridge and other major shopping streets have at last paid off - with positive results in terms of deterring crime and apprehending criminals. He is still working to get the coverage complete in the first phase. Further extension to residential areas raises all the questions of the costs of installation and monitoring with which we have become familiar.

The good news is that in the last year CRIME IN THE AREA WENT DOWN. It would further decrease if people did more to help themselves, such as:

- Ensuring that scaffolding is electronically protected.
- Locking and double locking doors and windows during building works.
- Replacing locks whose keys have been handed over to builders during works.
- Avoiding walking alone in dark or quiet places.
- Not wearing visible expensive jewellery in public places.
- Not dallying between the car and the front door. Making sure to have the key in hand - looking around - moving smartly.
- Locking up the rooms which contain computer equipment.
- Being aware of telephone scams - some criminals masquerade as Bank employees and try to obtain details of Bank accounts on the pretext of solving a Year 2000 problem.

Being famous doesn't help - quite the reverse!

From this list it can be gathered that street robbery still occurs, that buildings are especially vulnerable when being renovated, that computers are regarded as a juicy target (especially in Imperial College and the Royal College of Art) - as are the contents of cars (mainly around the Albert Hall).

There have been some unusual cases of vandalism, like tyre slashings in Ennismore

Gardens (when the pop concerts were on in the Park) and one car being set on fire. There are far too many graffiti.

Unfortunately aggressive begging, particularly in the Brompton Road, has increased especially by East European immigrants. They seem highly organized. Many are children and some are asylum seekers, so lengthy legal processes are involved, even so some have been arrested and charged.

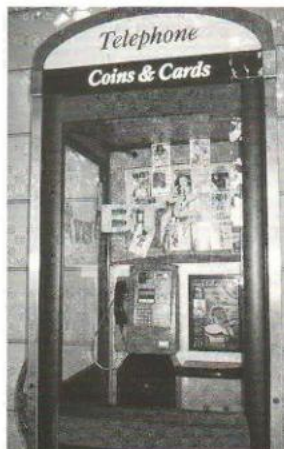
Streetlighting

Good streetlighting is recognised as a major deterrent against street crime and mugging; it is unfortunate therefore that in the residential area east of Exhibition Road there have been long delays in repairing or replacing defective street lights. It takes several months from the date of order for a replacement of the special fittings to be delivered. The Association has suggested that temporary lamps be fitted in the meantime.

This matter has been of concern to both the Environment and Law and Order Committees. In order to increase the sense of urgency of both Councils and their contractors, Klaus Leist has agreed to co-ordinate complaints and reports of faulty or missing lights.

Graffiti

There has been a significant increase in graffiti this year. Although not ideal, the simplest way to deal with graffiti on stucco buildings is to paint over it as quickly as possible. Stone or concrete faced buildings present a more serious problem. Scrubbing with a wire brush or washing with a high pressure spray needs great care to avoid damaging the facing material.



Legislation is being sought to deal with 'carding' in phone booths.



Graffiti and flyposting are on the increase.

RUBBISH AND LITTER



Left and Right: Streetsweeping with both broom and machine is necessary to obtain best results.

Please note the Hotline numbers printed in the middle of the page and keep them handy so that you are able to report any problems with rubbish dumping, dirty streets, overflowing bins, litter generally and non-collection of refuse.

The Westminster number should also be used to report problems such as faulty street lights or blocked gullies.

Westminster has recently introduced a 24 hour service on all seven days of the week identifying and dealing with all problems found on the street.

The Royal Borough showed some improvement in their sweeping of Brompton Road after they changed to sweeping to a standard rather than x times per day, but standards seem to be slipping once again, particularly at weekends. There is still a problem with overflowing litter bins because they are not emptied often enough. This is often caused by their being filled with bags of household or commercial rubbish for which they were never intended. In future as the bins are refurbished they will be equipped with lids which will not

allow larger items to be deposited.

As a result of discussions between the Royal Borough, McDonalds and the Association, McDonalds have sponsored five more bins and are extending the area covered by their litter patrols, some of which will be deployed more frequently. The Council is putting out extra bins in Brompton Road and outside the Science and Natural History Museums.

We must point out that the large increase in tourists all year round in the Knightsbridge area has made keeping the streets clean extremely difficult. There is now no tourist "season" - it is continuous. The reduction in funding by Central Government exacerbates the difficulties encountered by both Boroughs in carrying out their statutory duty on cleansing.

We make an annual plea, and do so again, that restaurants and take-aways in both Boroughs be obliged to use heavier bags to contain their refuse. The present ones leak or are torn either by animals or broken glass.

Hotline Numbers
Westminster: Tel. 641 1177
Kensington & Chelsea: Tel. 341 5781



Casually discarded cans and litter create an eyesore.

TRANSPORT, TRAFFIC AND PARKING



Hans Crescent, closed during improvements to Knightsbridge Tube Station.

Every year our members are faced with the delights of being right in the middle of the seasonal increase in traffic that afflicts central London. What a prospect for Christmas - vehicles moving at snail's pace, horrendous pollution, and, especially on a wet day - gridlock! The 'improvements' at Hyde Park Corner have been a nightmare - let us hope that the traffic will flow more freely when they are complete.

It has not been a good year. The half closure of Beauchamp Place plus the total closure of Hans Crescent has gummed up many adjacent roads. North Carriage Drive in Hyde Park was shut for weeks to service pop concerts which would have been better staged elsewhere. At least the closure of Hans Crescent was in a good cause - a welcome improvement to Knightsbridge station which should make it safer and easier to use; we are pressing LUL to extend the hours that entrance is open. Even good causes need careful planning. This was not evident during the weekend when Brompton Road was totally shut to set up the bridge to enable works to commence at the station, and at the same time the Parks closed both West and South Carriage Drive. Ministers to whom we wrote did not want to know! Let us hope the Mayor of London will do better.

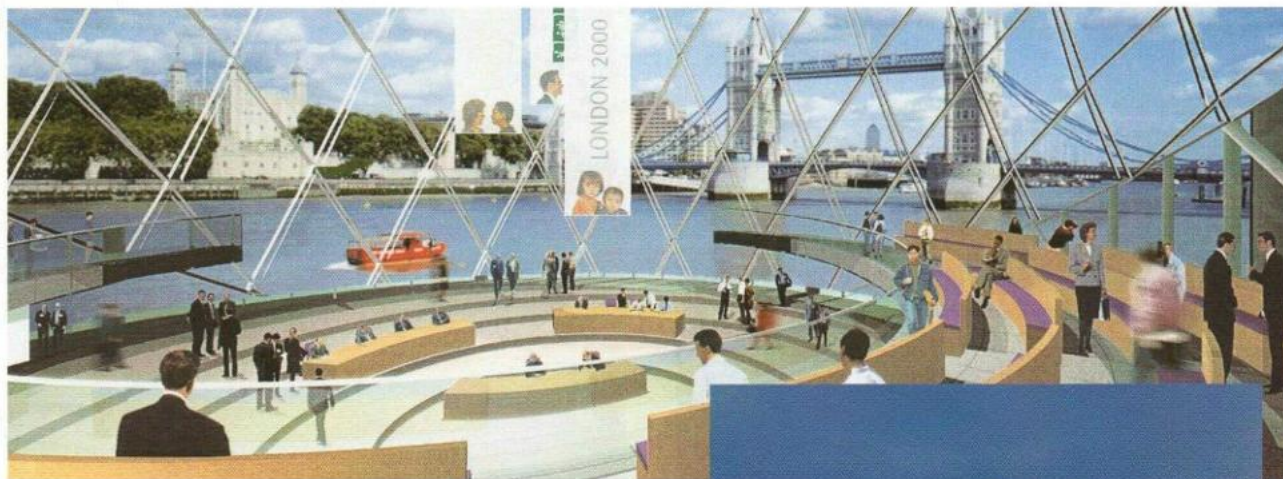
Pedestrians are seeing their plight receive higher priority, with many improved crossings and better treatment of the junctions of main and side roads. The new lights at Hyde Park Corner should help them too. They should also be among the beneficiaries if the experimental scheme involving traffic barriers ever gets off the ground. The idea

is to reduce or stop the rat runs through the Trevors and Montpeliers, but progress is held up until work can begin on the first phase of the redevelopment of Harrods depository (moving the lorry entrance further west towards Lancelot Place) has been done, enabling strengthening of vaults under the pavement.



The collapse of two houses in Beauchamp Place during building works at the end of 1998 necessitated the introduction of a one-way system. Coinciding with the complete closure of Hans Crescent during works to Knightsbridge Tube Station, this had an unfortunate knock on effect in the neighbouring residential streets.

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY



Interior view of Assembly Chamber looking towards the River Thames.

Elections and Location

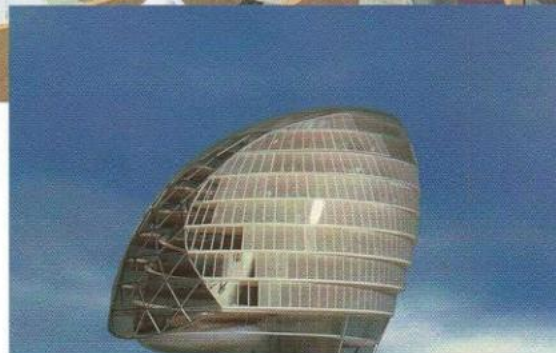
The elections for the Mayor and the Greater London Assembly (GLA) will take place on 4th May 2000. The 25 members will be drawn from the London boroughs (14) and political party lists of candidates plus independents (11). Elections for the Mayor and the GLA will take place every four years. Both will be located on the South Bank in the spectacular new Norman Foster building, pictured above. Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea will be part of an enlarged constituency which also includes Hammersmith & Fulham.

Powers

Members of the Association will be anxious to know how the new Authority, with its various boards and agencies, will affect them after it starts work on 3rd July 2000. It is still too early to be precise, not least because much will depend on how the new Mayor (and the various bodies) choose to exercise their powers, patronage and influence.

What will matter to us and to all Londoners is that the new institutions should produce better results - not just the old results with the addition of more layers of bureaucracy and cost. There is plenty to be done. We ourselves this last year have seen examples of lack of co-ordination between various interests which resulted in unnecessary chaos. Perhaps, if we get a Mayor who really cares about London and is not just on an ego trip, we will all see an improvement. London needs it. The Government has provided an opportunity. Let us hope it is put to good use. What we do know are the areas in which the GLA's powers will be important. Here they are:

Economic development and regeneration: This covers the integration of plans for transport, land use, the environment and culture, the



Model view of the new GLA Headquarters building.

implementation of tourist policy, the problems of deprived areas, and the promotion of London's competitiveness in international markets.

Transport: This covers the management of the underground and buses, the major road network, the policy on charging - for instance for using designated roads or for workplace parking facilities.

The GLA will also manage Trafalgar and Parliament Squares.

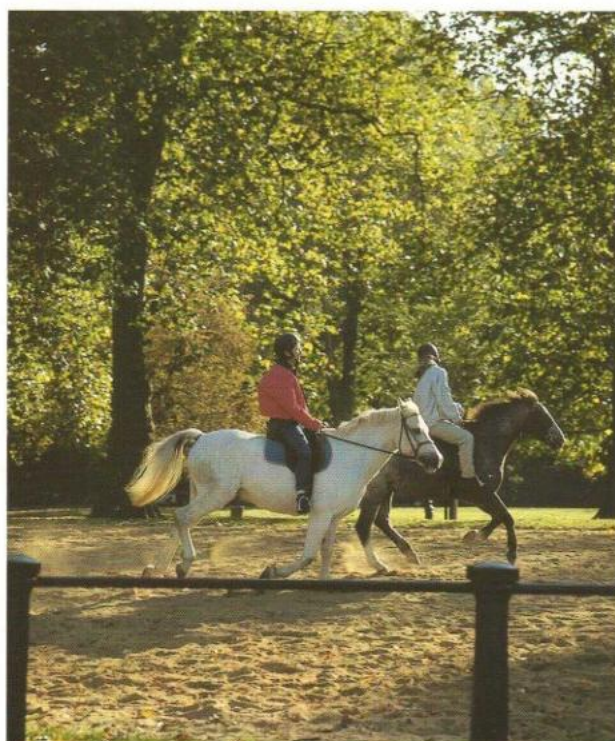
Planning: The Mayor will be responsible for strategic planning via a 'Spatial Development Strategy' (SDS) with which the boroughs' Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) will have to conform - replacing the current regional planning guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The Mayor and boroughs will monitor its implementation. It will be the Mayor's task to define the types of planning application that have to be referred to him - they will normally be of genuine strategic importance - and he will have the power to refuse permission. Otherwise boroughs will still produce UDPs and deal with planning applications.

The Environment: The Mayor will be responsible for strategy on air quality, waste management and ambient noise. He will prepare a plan on biodiversity action and a four yearly report on the state of London's environment.

Culture: The GLA advised by a strategy group will devise and deliver a strategy for London for the arts, sports and tourism.



The Meadow, Hyde Park.



Riding in Rotten Row.



Evening relaxation in Kensington Gardens.



Spring display in Hyde Park.



Kensington Gardens, looking towards the Italian garden.

THE ROYAL PARKS

The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Committee consulted widely about the form a memorial should take, and when it had opted for a memorial walk and the extension and enhancement of the playground in Kensington Gardens, on the detailed plans for it. The Association was amongst a large group of organisations consulted at both stages, and supported both schemes. The Walk comprises in effect three smaller linked walks, each a little over two miles long, through Kensington Gardens, through Hyde Park and through St. James's and Green Parks. Each will include a number of focal points to which attention will be drawn in a booklet, which will included historical notes. There will be some splendid views of the Serpentine, across to Kensington Palace and from St. James's Park lake to Buckingham Palace and Whitehall. Improvements to the playground north

of Kensington Palace will include an area where disabled and able-bodied children can play together. The idea of a memorial fountain seems to have been revived. The Association will comment on proposals when it sees them.

During the year the Association, along with others, has fought strenuously against what appeared to be an open-ended policy to commercialise the Parks, particularly Hyde Park, in order to gain extra revenue. A further review of policy was conducted during the autumn, with some element of consultation - a slight improvement on the major policy switch which was made without any substantive consultation at all. The Association readily accepts some commercial activity, like catering establishments which are designed to enhance people's normal enjoyment of the Parks, and the two new tennis

courts currently being added to the sports club facilities on South Carriage Drive. The occasional charitable occasion is tolerable (though even these impinge on peace and quiet). But it seems perverse to encourage a whole series of events which impair the very purpose for which the Parks exist. They stand as a haven in our noisy and vigorously commercial capital, to which all can repair, visitor and Londoners alike. They are unique. There are dozens of venues which could house summer pop concerts. Why choose Hyde Park? Anyone who seriously contends that it is necessary to broaden the range from which visitors are drawn cannot have wandered around them very often. The Parks do need money. They are an important part of the attraction of our capital city which derives serious economic benefit from those who come here. Keeping them in good shape is an investment which governments should make for economic and social reasons.



Conceptual sketch showing proposed improvements to the split level pavement along 132-188 Brompton Road.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE INITIATIVE

The scheme to give a much needed facelift to the Knightsbridge/Brompton thoroughfare was first mooted by the Association several years ago, and found enthusiastic support from Westminster City Council, the Royal Borough and the Knightsbridge Group. A great deal of work was put into drawing up the scheme, but due to all the major redevelopments in the pipeline, progress was hamstrung. Earlier on this year it was decided to settle on a pilot scheme which would not be affected by major planning proposals - the split level pavement on the north side of Brompton Road between nos. 132 and 188.

The Royal Borough approved the scheme and whilst agreeing to bear the major part of the cost, asked the Association to raise in the region of £70,000. The Association is grateful to the major freeholders and frontagers, not all with property on this side of the road, who have pledged sums in support of the scheme. Royal Borough officers were able to report to their Highways Committee in September that most of the monies were pledged, and the Committee agreed that the scheme should go ahead. Work is due to begin early in the New Year when the Association will be calling in the pledges.

Knightsbridge Initiative Pledges

*Aroma * Austravel * Banco Bilbao Vizcaya
Café Montpeliano * Cheval Apartments
Cheval Property Management Limited
Club Blueroom * WA Ellis * Equus
FPD (Savills) * Gianmilano * John Keil
Jose Cuervo International * Just Kitchens
London Merchant Securities Group
McDonalds * NatWest Bank
O & H Properties * Paul Costelloe
Threadneedle * Sanrizz
Searcy Imperial Co. Ltd.
The Wellcome Trust*

SOCIAL EVENTS AND THE AGM



Record turn out at the 1998 AGM.

The AGM, December 1998

There was another excellent turn out for the Annual General Meeting, held for the second time in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music. Guests, who included the Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke CH MP, Councillor David Harvey, the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Tony Holt, Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, heard Nick Raynsford, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the DETR, and Minister for London, describing the plans for the setting up of the Greater London Authority.

Visit to the Lord Chancellor's Apartments

In April, thirty members of the Association had a most interesting guided tour of the Lord Chancellor's Apartments at the House of Lords and were able to admire the meticulous restoration work that had been carried out in recent years.

Dinner at the House of Lords

Sixty members of the Association attended a dinner at the House of Lords in May, hosted for us by Lord Strathcarron, one of our members. It was an excellent dinner and a most convivial and successful occasion.

Annual General Meeting

Monday 13th December, 1999

The meeting will again be held in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music. The reception at 6pm will be followed by the meeting. Our guest this year, which has seen so much turmoil over the uses and commercialisation of the Royal Parks, is

Dame Jennifer Jenkins who chaired the comprehensive Review of the Royal Parks for the last Government, and who cares deeply about their future.

Visit to Hyde Park Barracks

Events at the Barracks are popular. The Social Committee is currently arranging a visit in April, which will include a Parade Rehearsal by the Household Cavalry, a tour of the Barracks and a three course lunch. Details will be sent to members in the new year.



Nick Raynsford MP, Minister for London speaking at the AGM.



House of Lords Dinner - host Lord Strathcarron with the Hon. Sarah Wills and Brownie, Countess of Northesk.

RECEPTION BEFORE THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING *December 1998*



Iain Walker, the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr. David Harvey, and Jonathan Charkham.



Lady Marshall and the Rev. Ulla Monberg.



Phyllis Howard-Harrison, Nina Wallis, Paul and Dee Carr.



Jim Butler, Christine Gilbertson and Dr. Stanley Steel.



Cllr. Melvyn Caplan, Leader of Westminster City Council and Cllr. Barry Phelps.



Iona Grant and Rebecca Churchward-Viggars.



PC Clive Coleman, Peter and Virginia Yates.



Dr. Shura Holesh and Jean Lyell.



The Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Cllr. Dr. Jonathan Munday and Neville Labovitch.



Avril Cox and Cllr. John Cox.



Jonathan Steele and Phyllis Howard-Harrison.



Vanessa Churchward-Steele and Joanna Moody.



Cllr Melvyn Caplan, Leader of Westminster City Council, Cllr. Shireen Ritchie and Cllr. Nicholas Paget-Brown.



Richard Rice and Michael Wright.



CPO Dave Pullan and Elspeth Parkes.



Elizabeth Leist, Pierre and Claudia Chamorel.



Loaye Agabani, Pippa Thornton and Peggy Walmsley.



Jayne and Professor Tony Ralston.



Ray Sberning and Cllr. Tony Holt, Chairman of Kensington and Chelsea's Highways & Traffic Committee.



Cllr John Cox, Lady Lowson and Lord Strathearn.



David and Carol Mappin.



Moir Charkham and Anna Birkett.



Jill and Hugh Pagan.



Norman Cook, Carol Seymour-Newton, Bob Read and June Stubbs.

GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES



*Keith Hill, MP,
Minister for London
at the DETR.*



*Cllr. the Baroness
Hanham, Leader of
Kensington and
Chelsea.*



*Cllr. Louise St John
Howe JP, chairman
of Westminster's
Planning and
Transportation
Committee.*



*Carl Powell,
Director of
Planning and
Transportation at
Westminster.*



*Cllr. Adrian
FitzGerald, chairman
of Kensington and
Chelsea's Highways
and Traffic
Committee.*



*Cllr. Jonathan
Djanogly, chairman
of Westminster's
Environment and
Leisure
Committee.*

Peter Brooke MP has been a good friend to the Association for many years, and we learn with sadness that he intends to stand down at the next General Election; we must make the best of the years remaining! Alan Clark was not at Kensington and Chelsea long enough for us to get to know him, but we greatly regret his sad passing, and await his successor with keen interest.

At the Ministerial level we note that Keith Hill MP has been appointed Minister for London at the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions.

At Westminster City Council, Alex Segal is Lord Mayor; Melvyn Caplan remains Leader but several of the committee chairmen have changed. Louise St. John Howe takes over from Alan Bradley as chairman of Planning & Transportation. Both Knightsbridge Ward Councillors have been

appointed to senior positions, Gillian Rees-Mogg becoming vice chairman of Planning & Transportation, and chairman of the its Sub-Committee responsible for Highways and Traffic. John Cox becomes vice chairman to Jonathan Djanogly at the Environment and Leisure Committee. Carl Powell has been appointed Director of Planning and Transportation. Environmental matters will be split off into a new Department for which a Director is being sought.

In Kensington and Chelsea, Priscilla Frazer is Mayor and Joan Hanham, the long time Leader, has been given a life peerage - for which we warmly congratulate her. Several committee chairmen have changed - Tony Holt has moved to Environmental Services, Adrian FitzGerald to Highways and Traffic and Bryan Levitt to Environmental Health & Leisure.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Membership

It is a vital part of the Association's work to maintain a strong membership. Knightsbridge, like many areas of central London, has a volatile and shifting population, and this means that we are constantly in need of new members to keep up and if possible increase the numbers. This year our thanks go to Lorraine Buckland and her team who have undertaken a membership drive resulting in 75 new members, including six corporate members and several Life members. We are also grateful to membership secretary Elizabeth Leist for her work in keeping membership records and subscriptions up to date.

Finance

The Executive Committee took the decision in January to increase subscriptions from 1st April 1999. We had managed to keep them stable for several years, but due to rising costs they had to

go up. The committee watches expenditure carefully, and is reluctant to commit the Association's slender resources other than for significant projects or problems. Its costs would be substantially greater were it not for the services its officers, committees and members provide gratis. The new subscriptions are £10 for a single person, £15 for couples and families and £40 for corporate membership. It would be appreciated if members could check that they are paying the new rates.

Appreciations

We were all sad to learn of the death of Lord Grade - Lew - shortly before Christmas last year. He was not only a figure of national and international reputation, but also a generous supporter of the Association. Kathy continues to work with us as she has done for many years and her role in helping to organise our Annual General Meetings is greatly appreciated.

Gordon Shingleton, who served for many years as chairman of the Law & Order Committee and led the project for the installation of CCTV with great success, has retired from both the Executive and the Law & Order Committees. It is a comfort to know that his wise counsel will still be available to the Association.

Elsbeth Parkes, chairman of the Law & Order Committee and Lorraine Buckland have both joined the Executive Committee. After many fruitful years, Archie Yuill has retired from the Law and Order Committee, which has now been joined by Sally Butcher, Moira Charkham, Horton Kennedy, Virginia Yates and Iain Walker.

Sadly, due to pressure of work, AT Langford had to relinquish vice chairmanship of the Environment Committee and Stuart Corbyn, chairman of the Knightsbridge Group and Director of the Cadogan Estate also resigned from this committee for the same reason.

Finally, members will know what a huge debt we all owe to Carol Seymour-Newton our tireless honorary Secretary. She covers so much ground with great efficiency and good humour - even under provocation! She is ably supported by Michael Wright whose masterly leadership of the Environment Committee means that our most time consuming business is dealt with quickly and effectively. All our committee Chairmen and members pull their weight and we have had some excellent contributions from newer members this year as well as our stalwarts. Grateful thanks to all of them and to our honorary Treasurer Christine Gilbertson and honorary Auditor Jim Butler.

Jonathan Charkham
December 1999

MEMBERSHIP

to join

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE
ASSOCIATION

please contact

Carol Seymour-Newton

on

Tel: 020 7823 9103

to ask for details.

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Kevin Gardner
Lady Grade
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Lady Riches

SOCIAL AND EVENTS COMMITTEE

Joint Chairmen: Lady Grade Peggy Walmsley
Jean Lyell
Pippa Thornton



Duke of York's Headquarters, part of the Cadogan Estate's redevelopment proposals for this major site.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

April Fool's day might not seem an auspicious date for the launch of one of the country's first amenity societies, but since that Spring in 1927 the Chelsea Society has never looked back.

At present there are about 1,200 members with an elected Council of 24. The President is Sir Simon Hornby, Vice-presidents are the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea and the Earl Cadogan DL. The Chairman, the architect David Le Lay, has served for 12 years and is credited with organising in 1985, what has become an annual tradition, a meeting where representatives of local residents' associations have the opportunity to put questions to the Chief Borough Planning Officer and the Chairman of the Borough Planning Committee on issues which give rise to concern.

Planning and transport usually top the list.

The Society has a sub-committee which meets every two to three weeks to vet planning applications and if necessary, to make comments and representations to the Borough. This year major schemes in the pipeline include the Cadogan Estate's redevelopment of the Duke of York's HQ in the King's Road, the King's College site in Manresa Road and the future of Lots Road Power Station, to say nothing of the two Lords of architecture, Foster and Rogers, whose grandiose ideas for the Battersea side of the river will be only too visible from Chelsea.

There is an enjoyable social side to the Society. As well as the Winter AGM there is a Summer Meeting which takes the form of an evening garden party - with supper. This is usually held in an historic place not generally open to the public. There is a programme of lectures - this year they were about the Chelsea houseboats, Peter Jones and Chelsea china. Throughout the year visits are arranged to houses of local historical interest,

which, again, are places not often open to the public. An important contribution to the Chelsea Festival is the exhibition the Society mounts every year in the Chelsea Town Hall. In 1999 it was of Chelsea china, it was the first such exhibition since the early 50s and included pieces lent by the Queen and the Queen Mother.

In 1998 an all-day Conference was held on the Future of Chelsea. Speakers included the Rt. Hon. Alan Clark MP, planning and traffic gurus and local heroes such as Mary Quant and Terence Conran. A follow-up conference is planned for Autumn 2000.

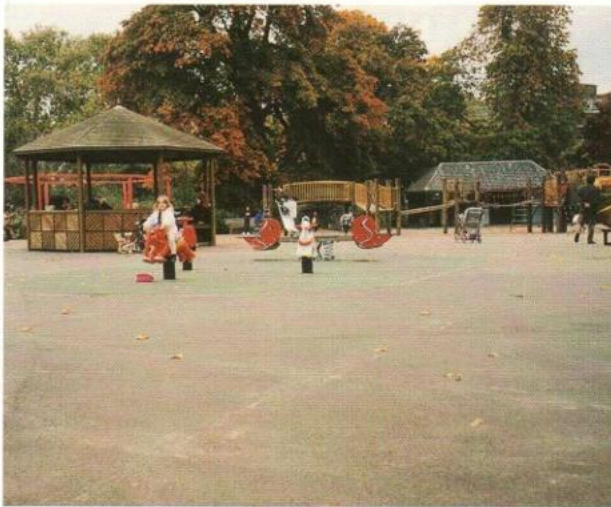
Two newsletters are sent out every year as well as the Annual Report, which has been published without a break since 1927. A complete indexed run of this is in the Chelsea Public Library and it is a fascinating record of Chelsea in the last 70 years.

Finally, it is astonishing that a borough so rich in history has no museum. Plans are afoot to remedy this.

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

In 1953 two attractive 18th Century houses in Young Street, just opposite Barkers, were threatened by demolition to make way for a multi-storey car park. Mrs. Gay Christiansen, a resident of Kensington Square, started a petition to try and stop the demolition. She stood on the corner of Kensington High Street and Young street, gathering signatures. She got well over one thousand, but to no avail. The demolition went ahead and instead of two pretty 18th century houses, there is now a multi-storey car park.

The experience led to her founding the Kensington Society. Under her leadership the Society prospered and became what it is now, an important factor in protecting the Royal Borough



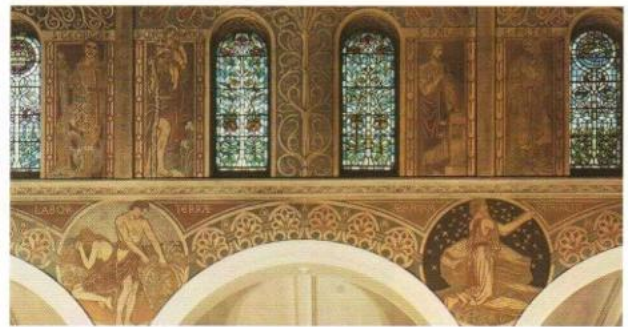
The rather stark playground which will be extended and greatly improved as part of the Memorial to Princess Diana.

from developers, vandalism and the general tendency these days to allow amenities of the great residential districts of London to deteriorate.

The Royal Borough of Kensington does not have many outstanding historic buildings. What it does have, however, is a remarkable domestic environment, being a primary example of high quality Victorian residential development. The mission of the Kensington Society, therefore, is not so much conservation of individual buildings, as the safeguarding of the Kensington environment as a whole.

In its near 50 years of existence, the Society has had its success and failures. It was undoubtedly the Society which prevented the building in Palace Gardens by the Russian Embassy of a Kremlin like citadel which would have disfigured this most important part of the Kensington heritage. It failed however to achieve the preservation of the old Town Hall. Having arranged for a meeting at County Hall on a Monday for the building to be put under a conservation order, it was cheated of success by the appalling action of a certain individual in power at the time, who moved in the bulldozers at 4 am on the previous Saturday morning.

More recently, the Society achieved remarkable success in the matter of the Princess Diana Memorial Garden. This proposal, which was to build formal gardens over a 27 acre site carved out of the present gardens, was the subject of much local protest. The role of the Society was to act as a channel for this protest to make itself felt. It was an example of how local opinion, given an organised channel of communication, can become an effective force in bringing pressure to bear in the public arena. The Kensington Society's role is to help local residents protect unique local environment. The work that was started with the determination and commitment of Mrs. Gay Christiansen is going to be carried forward with equal commitment into the 21st Century.



The Russian Orthodox Church in Ennismore Gardens, a former Anglican church famed for its Lombardic-style architecture and Arts & Crafts sgraffito work.



The garden fronts of nos. 14-26 Princes Gate, built by John Elger, 1846-50.

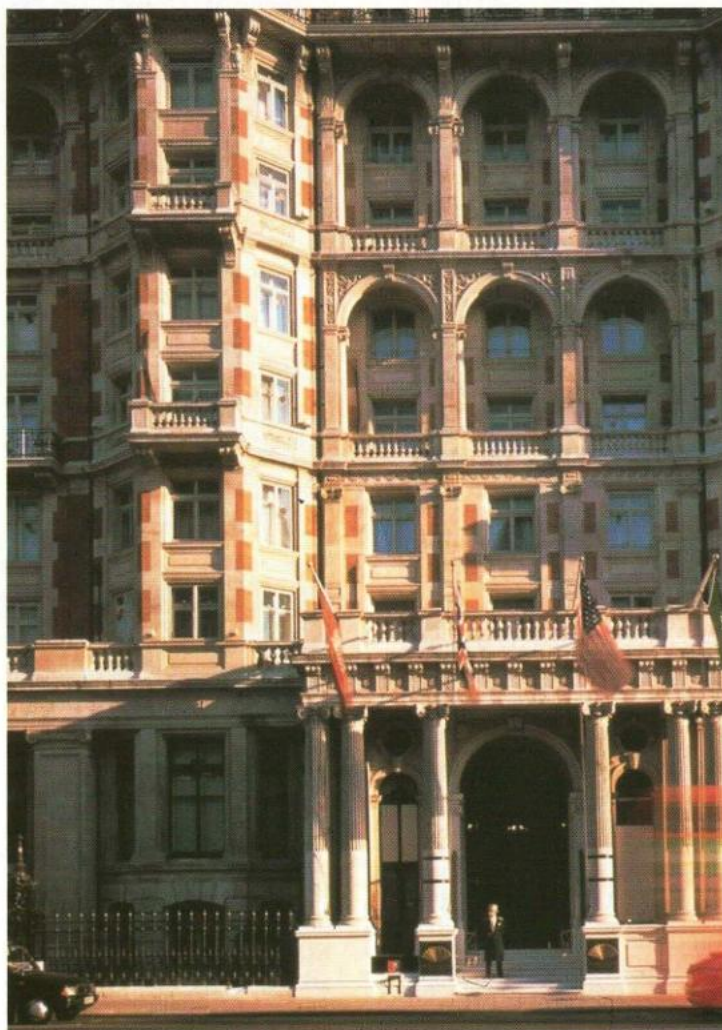
SURVEY OF LONDON Knightsbridge Volume

Due for publication early in 2000, the latest volume in the renowned Survey of London series - volume XIV - is devoted to Knightsbridge, and by a special arrangement with English Heritage members of the Association will be able to buy this long-awaited book at a substantial discount. Details should be available soon.

Intended for the general reader as much as the specialist, *Knightsbridge* contains a wealth of historical and architectural information about the district, much of it new or not readily available elsewhere. Far from being just another guide, it gives a coherent account of the development of the area, tracing the process by which the land has been built over, and describes the design and planning of the buildings themselves - including several remarkable structures long since demolished.

As well as the length of Knightsbridge itself, the book takes in all the streets and squares between Scotch House and Exhibition Road, (excluding those in the Royal Borough, which are covered in earlier volumes of the Survey). The creation of some of the finest speculative houses in Victorian London is recounted, including those in Princes Gate and Ennismore Gardens, built on the grounds of old Kingston House. Remarkably, the eighteenth century mansion itself, home of the notorious Elizabeth Chudleigh, soi-distant Duchess of Kingston, survived until the 1930s - to be swept unsentimentally away for flats in the new International Style.

THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL HYDE PARK



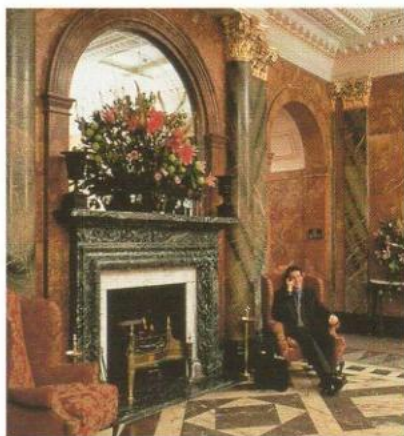
The site on which the hotel now stands has had an interesting history. It was very nearly devoted to a palatial town residence for Lord Rosebery in the late 1870s and designs were produced, but he changed his mind and the whole grandiose scheme was abandoned. Part of the site was sold and the rest leased in 1886 for the 'Hyde Park Court' project described as a 'residential club or buildings'.

The next two years were troubled by objections to the proposed height and frontage of the building. It was to be the tallest building in London and residents were up in arms about it. Tatton Egerton MP even went to the trouble of trying to introduce a Bill to restrict the height of London buildings generally to 60 feet. Building got under way in 1888 as an expensive apartment block to a design by architects Archer and Green - complete with turrets, balconies and pillared porticos. Considerable skill was deployed in the creation of a dramatically picturesque skyline using red brick and Portland stone in an eclectic

Franco-Flemish style. Loggias were built overlooking the Park to provide space for agreeable relaxation.

Inside it had lavishly furnished drawing and dining rooms, a billiard room and a smoking room. Much use was made of coloured marbles and gilding. The hall, entered from Knightsbridge through swinging doors of carved walnut, was itself lined with marble and had a frescoed ceiling as well as a marble chimney piece complete with marble clock. Each of the first three floors contained four family suites and a bachelor's suite. The upper floors were planned as single residences of various sizes and contained four family suites and a bachelor's suite. More than half the tenants occupied at least two or more suites and a certain dowager had six!

In 1899 there was a dramatic fire which, watched by thousands, destroyed part of the roof including the central iron and glass turret, and damaged the top three floors. All the residents escaped although the fire brigade's ladders only



*Right:
The Ballroom.*

*Far right:
The Queen Mother
dancing at a
ball circa 1950.*



*Far left:
The newly
refurbished lobby.*

*Left:
The reading room,
Hyde Park Court
circa 1890s.*



reached halfway up the building. The Hyde Park Club was closed formally in December 1901 and the business put on a new footing in 1902 with the creation of Hyde Park Hotel Ltd.

Renovations took time, and it was not until 1908 that the building re-opened as London's newest and grandest hotel with 268 rooms. Period fireplaces were installed in the style of Louis XV and XVI; furnishings echoed the earlier styles of Sheraton and Hepplewhite. In 1911/12 the ballroom was redecorated in Louis XVI style when remodelling some of the principal rooms and building the Palm Court.

In 1996 the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group bought and renamed the hotel and embarked on a major programme of renovation. They have brought to light once again many of the finest features of an earlier epoch, which have been obscured for generations.

From its earliest days the hotel has welcomed visitors of the highest rank, such as Queen Mary, who used to visit the soldiers on leave who occupied the main rooms in the Great War. It was also patronised by the King of Sweden, Winston Churchill and Mahatma Gandhi - not to mention a plethora of film stars including Valentino. Here Mme Vacani taught Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret how to dance and Edward, Prince of Wales came for society balls and semi-official engagements. Prince Philip held polo cocktail

parties here and often brought Prince Charles and Princess Anne to tea when they were children.

As a safety measure, doors overlooking the Park were added in 1926. In practice they were reserved for the Royal family as well as a handful of others of great distinction including members of the Japanese Imperial family. They were used with the permission of the Crown for its guests during the Coronation and, most recently, by the President of the People's Republic of China. Nowadays guests of the hotel can take part in this tradition by seeking permission of the Royal family to use the 'Royal Entrance' on a special occasion.

Many spectacular parties have been held in the hotel, for instance Lady Vyer's silver wedding party in 1947 with the King and Queen as guests of honour; the legendary Balaclava Ball attended by the Queen, the Queen Mother and Prince Philip. This was hosted by the five cavalry regiments which had taken part in the Charge of the Light Brigade.

Recent celebrations include the 1992 'Pavarotti in the Park' concert attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales. In 1995 during the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of VE day, seven heads of State and their delegations took up residence. The hotel will be temporarily closed from December to early Spring 2000 to allow for the final stage of renovation.

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



Alfred Waterhouse's magnificent Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road

The Building

In 1753 Sir Hans Sloane, a physician and collector, suggested in his will that the government might wish to buy for £20,000 his works of art, antiquities and natural history collection. The offer was accepted and to raise the money for the purchase, housing and maintenance of this and other collections, a sum of £300,000 was raised through a public lottery.

In 1757, a museum - later to become the British Museum - was opened in Montagu House, Bloomsbury.

In 1860 the trustees decided that the natural history collection should be removed to make way for other acquisitions and a competition was held for the design of a new building in South Kensington. To the surprise of many, it was won by a Captain Francis Fowke of the Royal Engineers, thanks to the support of Sir Henry Cole. Fowke, arts patron and public servant, had already designed a vast glass and iron building, larger than the Crystal Palace, for an international exhibition to be held in South Kensington. He was also responsible for the design of the Royal Albert Hall, but he died in 1865 and both the Museum and the Albert Hall were

taken over by other architects. In the case of the Museum, a relatively unknown architect from Manchester, Alfred Waterhouse, was appointed.

Waterhouse was permitted to revise the Fowke design. This was the era of the battle of the styles - between those who supported the classical revival and those who supported the gothic revival. Fowke was a classicist, Waterhouse a gothicist. Waterhouse retained much of Fowke's plan including a Central Hall and grand staircase, but replaced Fowke's early renaissance exterior with his own version of Romanesque faced in terra cotta. By turning to Romanesque he was able to decorate the building, inside as well as outside, with figures of animals, birds and plants - a form of decoration quite alien to classical architecture. Facing the building with terra cotta greatly simplified the casting of the decorative panels that he used with so much effect.

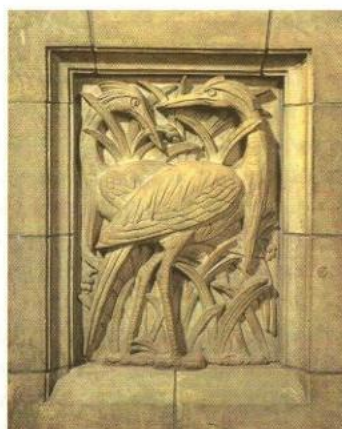
Waterhouse was fortunate in the siting of his building. Well set back from Cromwell Road, he was able to provide a sweeping semi-circular drive with a wide staircase on the centre line of the symmetrical building. The design has all the elegance and grandeur of the entrance to a medieval cathedral, with its recessed portal and



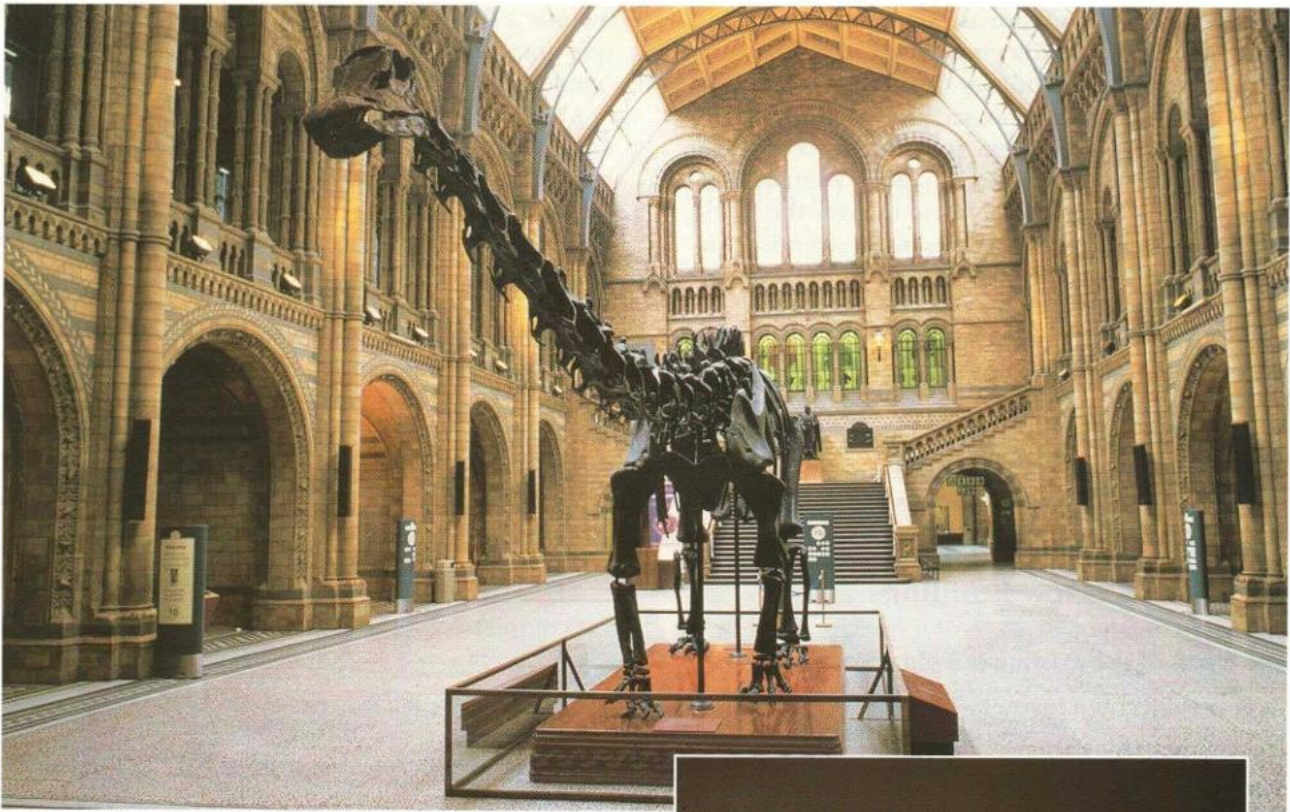
Sir Hans Sloane, eminent physician and naturalist.



Fish specimens preserved in the Spirit Building.



One of Alfred Waterhouse's decorative panels for the Museum.



The Central Hall with dinosaur skeleton.

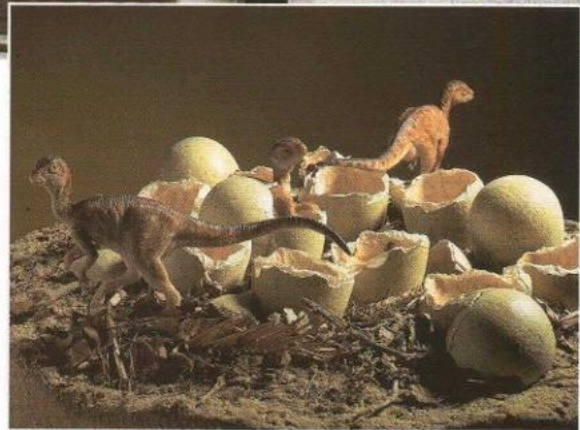
decorated columns under a semi-circular arch framed by a pair of towers. In keeping is the vast rectangular Central Hall reminiscent of a cathedral's arcaded nave with triforium galleries on the first floor. These lead to a second stair, equally grand in its setting, at the opposite end of the Hall.

Waterhouse did not overlook the importance of the exhibition galleries and he paid particular attention to the two front galleries. Divided by double rows of square terra cotta faced columns supporting a decorated plaster ceiling, of special interest is the treatment of the columns. The lower part of each column is decorated with low relief marine life "swimming" through incised waves, while the upper part is finished with panels of foliage.

To conclude this note on the design of the Museum, mention should be made of the two semi-detached houses for members of the staff sited between the Museum and Queen's Gate. They are designed in a style to complement the Museum building and show how Waterhouse was able to adapt the grand treatment of the Cromwell Road frontage to a small domestic building.

The Exhibits

In the building are to be found exhibits of all the main classes of animal and plant life as well as fossils, minerals and meteorites. The main attractions are the mammals, birds and fish and, in



Orodromeus, model of a nest of the dinosaur with young.

recent years, the dinosaurs. The Museum has developed a lively programme of temporary exhibitions while the Earth Galleries, in what used to be the Geological Museum, explore in a most spectacular manner, the power of volcanoes, earthquakes and other natural forces that have shaped, and continue to shape, this planet.

There is much in the Museum to interest adults. There were nearly two million visitors last year - mainly families and children - a tribute to the exhibition designers. It now reaches out to countless others around the world through the Internet, providing scientific data and information. The aim is to promote the discovery, understanding and enjoyment of the natural world.

Research

The Museum has an extensive general library of books and periodicals on all aspects of natural

history. In addition there are specialist collections of manuscripts and drawings in each of the five departments - paleontology (fossils), zoology (animals), entomology (insects), mineralogy (rocks and minerals) and biology (plants). It possesses over 68 million specimens of plants, animals, fossils, rocks and minerals from all over the world which are available to the Museum's scientists for their research work.

Education

In addition to research the Museum runs its own educational courses including an MSc in Advanced Methods in Taxonomy (principles of classification) and Biodiversity, it provides supervision for PhDs and lecturers for Masters and undergraduate degree courses.

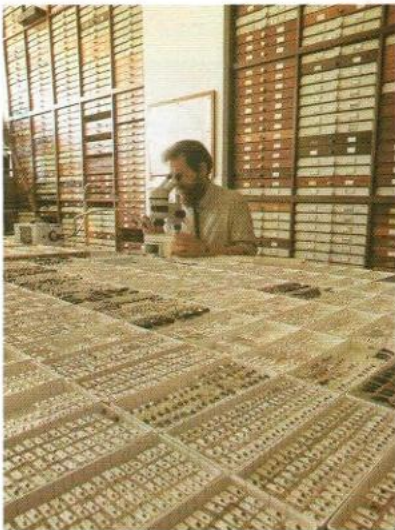
New buildings

In the 1950s the first stage of a major extension to the north of the existing building was built to

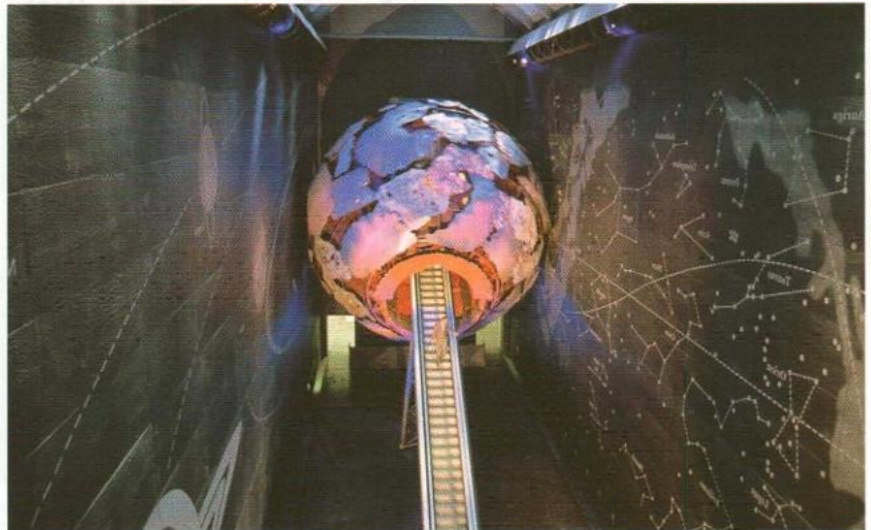
include a General Library and Lecture Theatre. It was opened in 1959 and a second stage was opened in 1973.

Also in 1973, an L-shaped East Wing designed by G.A. Pearce of the Department of the Environment, was planned for the fossil collection and paleontology department. It was linked to the classical front of the Geological Museum in Exhibition and the Romanesque front of the Waterhouse building in Cromwell Road. The architect solved with a fair measure of success the difficult problem of designing a contemporary building which does not draw attention to itself. The proposed "Spiral" building for the V & A on the opposite side of Exhibition Road will be a marked contrast! The most recent refurbishment was that of the Earth Gallery which was completed at a cost of £13 million.

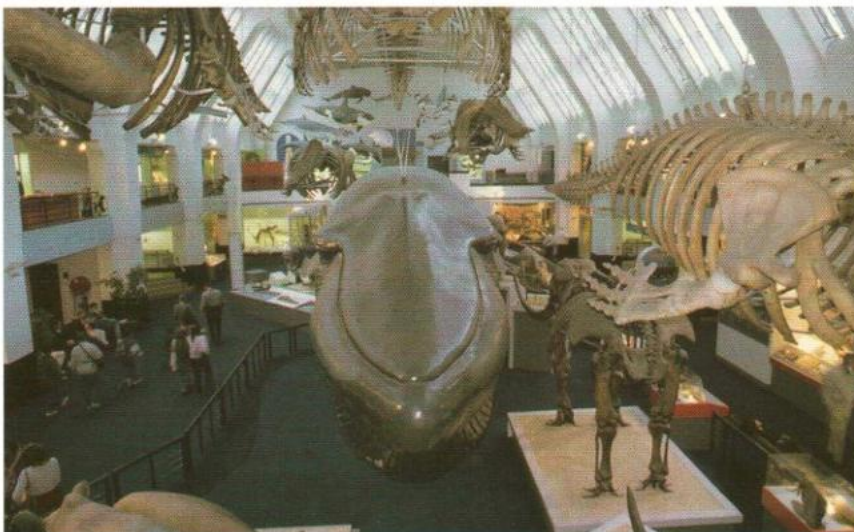
The new Darwin Centre on Queen's Gate is due for completion at the end of 2000.



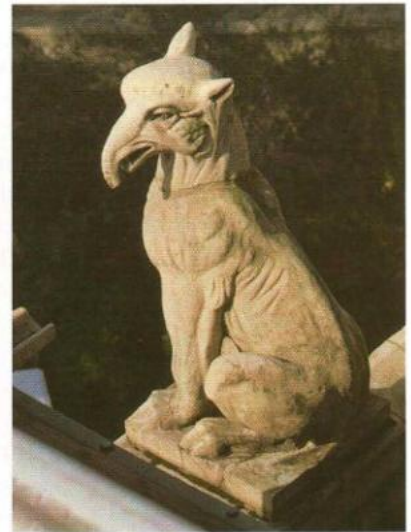
Entomologist with insect specimens.



Escalator passing through a revolving globe in the atrium of the Earth Galleries.



Model of the blue whale in the Life Galleries' Mammals Hall.



Beast on parapet of the Waterhouse Building.

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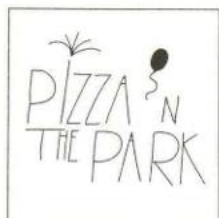
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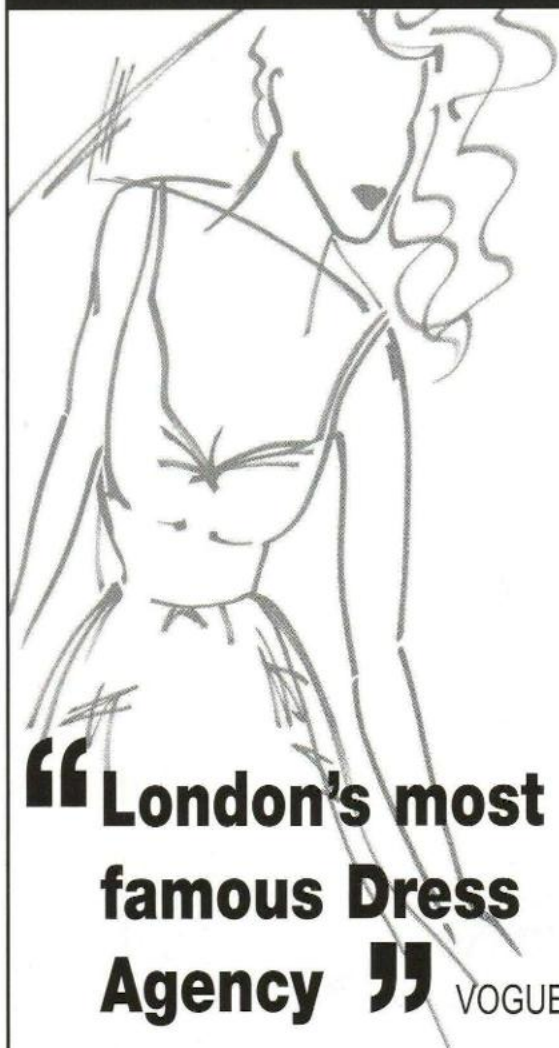
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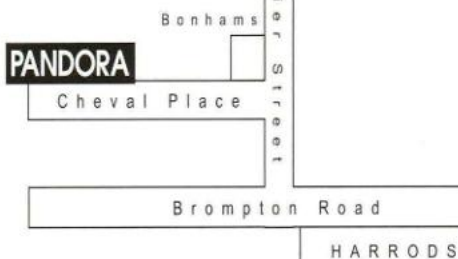
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