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39th ANNUAL REPORT

December 2000



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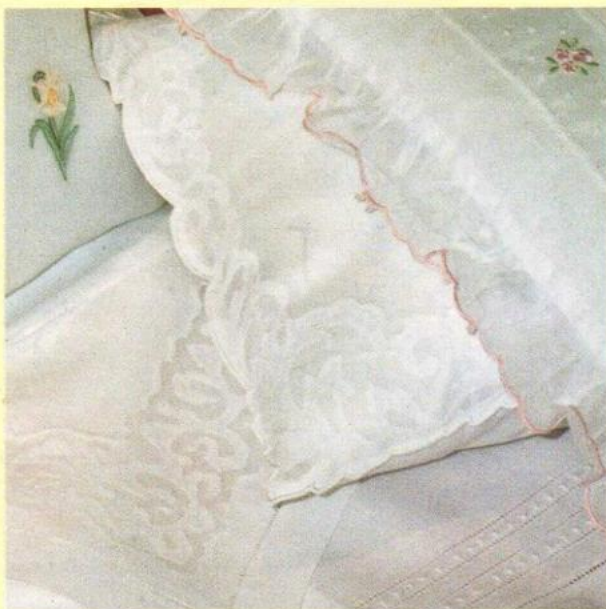
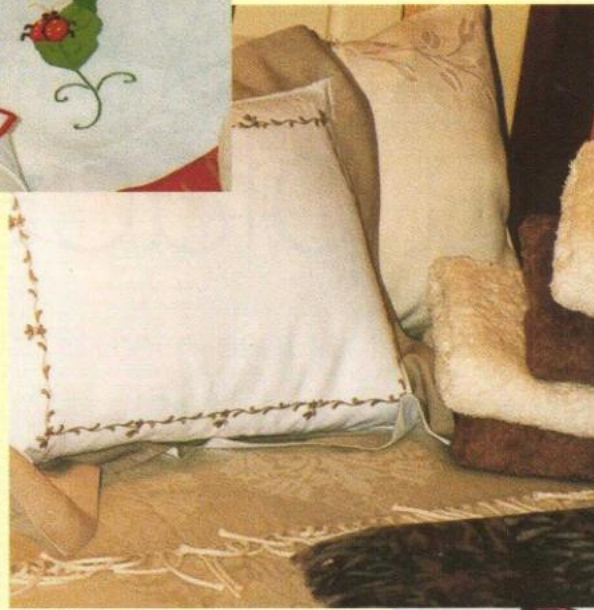
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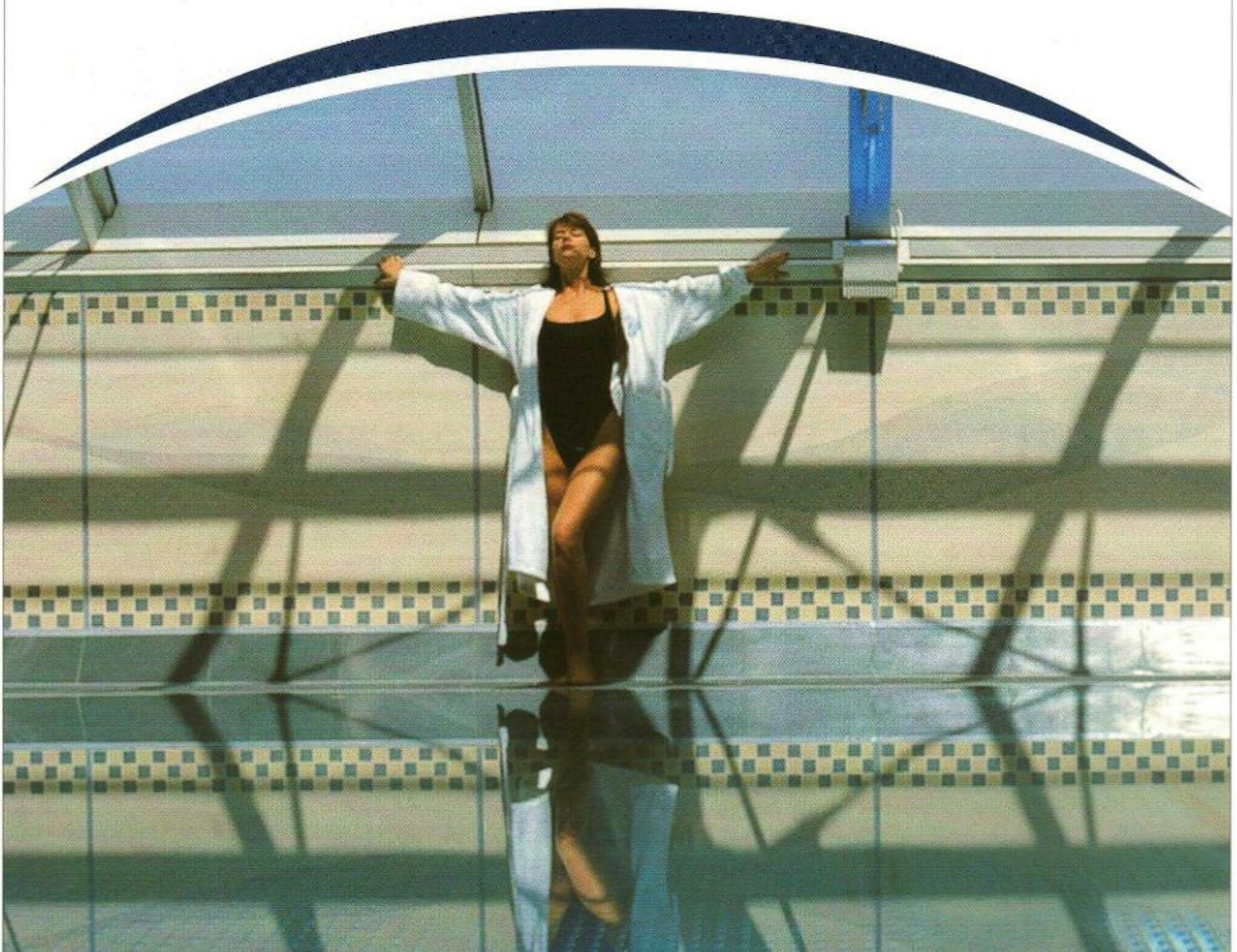
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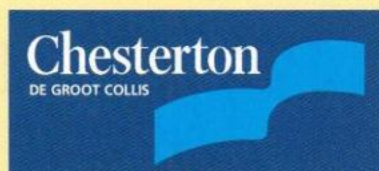
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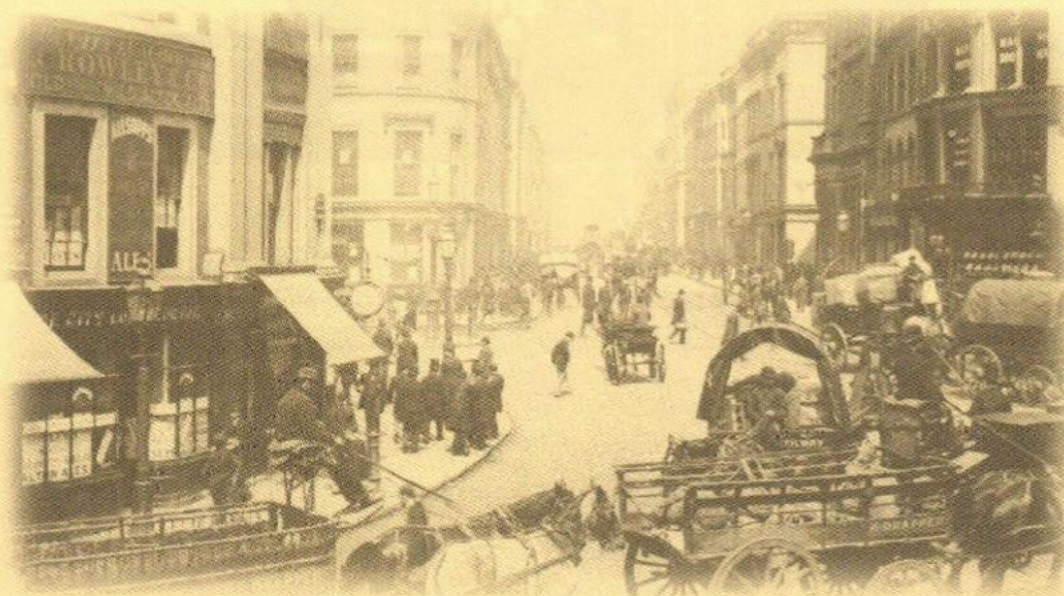


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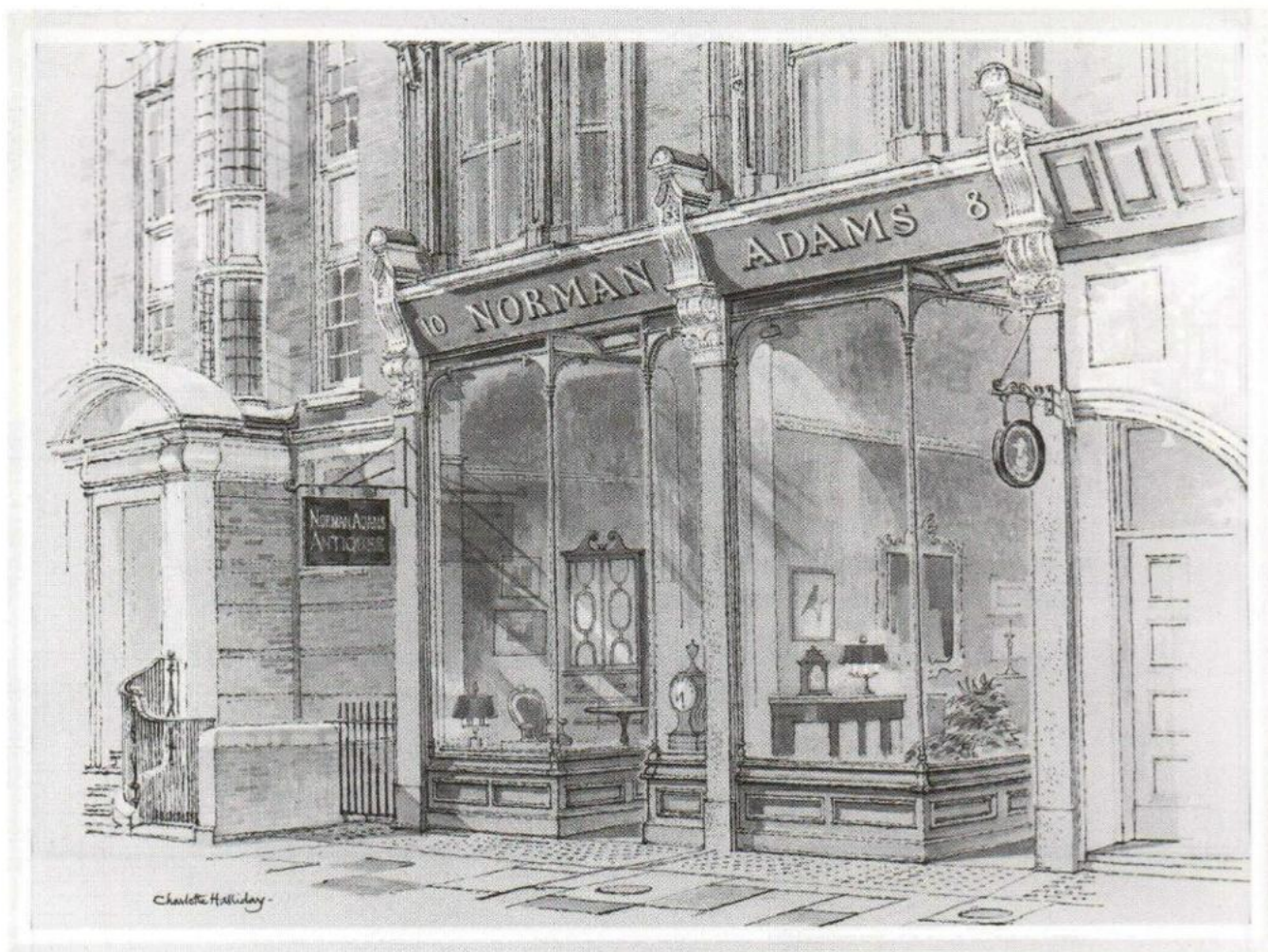
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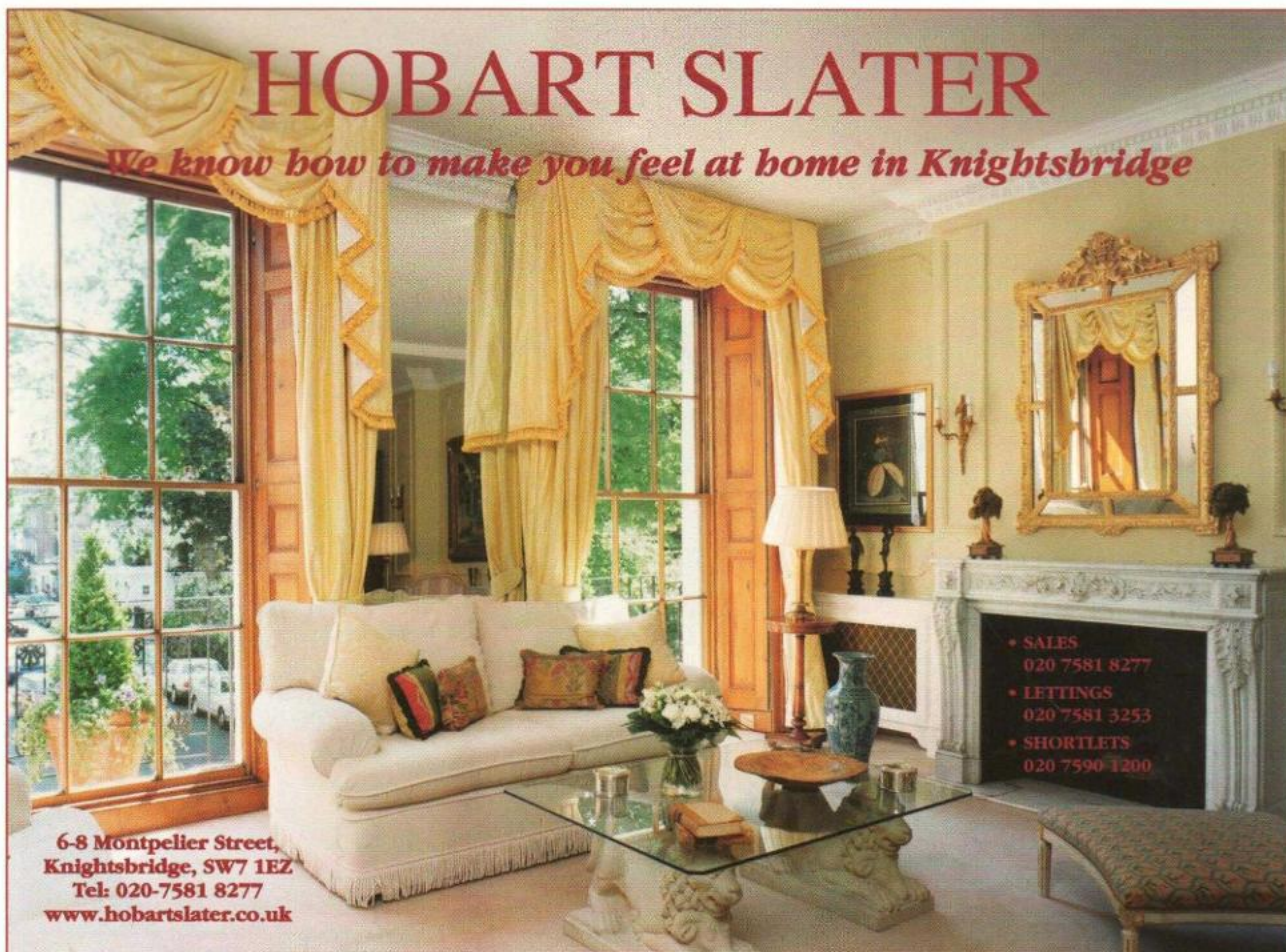
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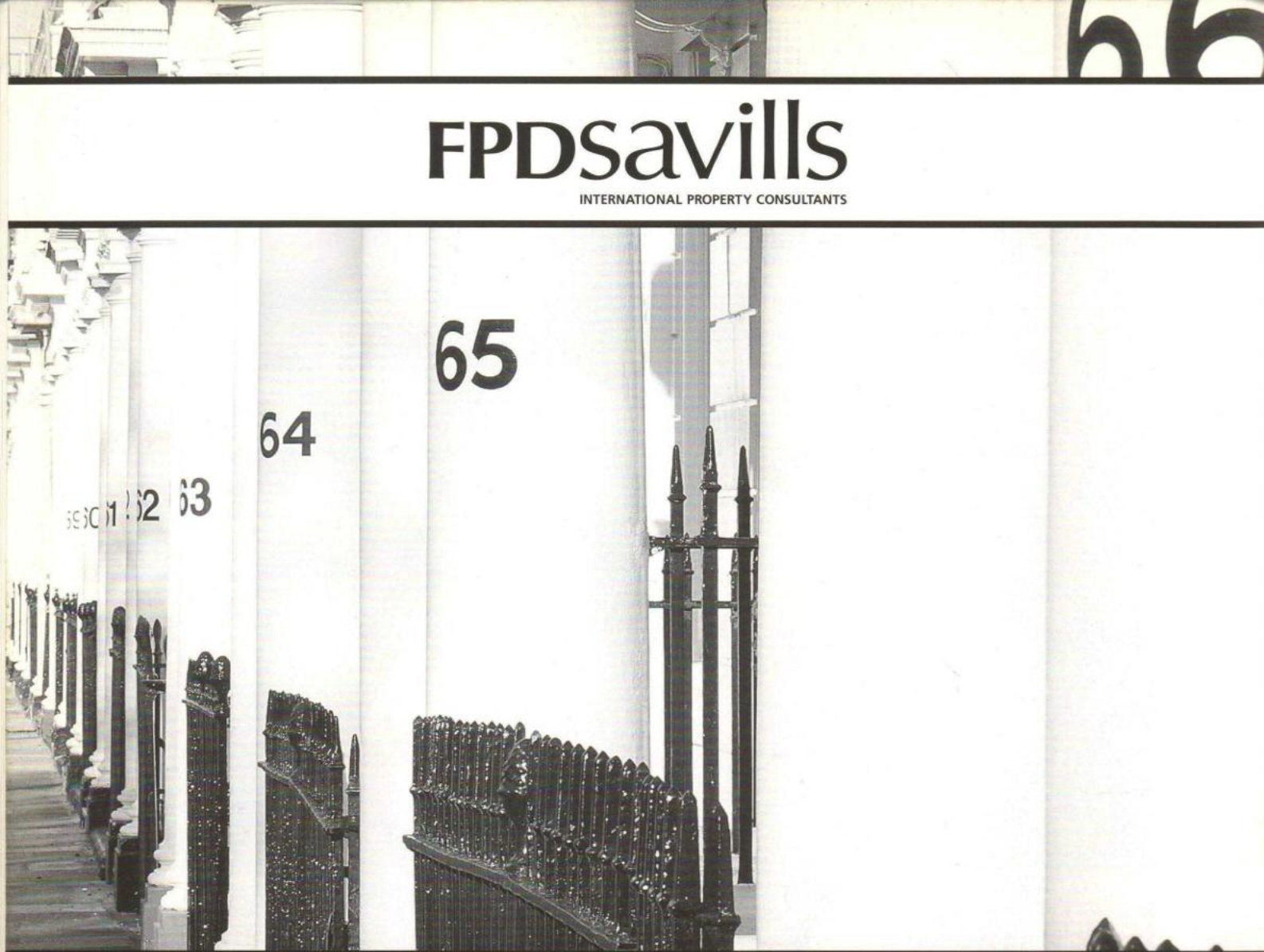
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Flooding not roadworks the problem in Knightsbridge during the October storm.

CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

The millenium opened quietly - hardly a vehicle was to be seen on the streets of Knightsbridge at breakfast time on January 1st - the photographs were too boring to include! - but that respite was atypical. Ever since one of the main topics of interest has been traffic - too much of it, on roads narrowed by endless holes dug in an uncoordinated way confounding the principle 'least said soonest mended'. Ministers should have plenty of time to contemplate solutions when they are stuck in the resulting traffic jams.

All eyes have turned in the direction of the new Mayor who understands only too well how urgently the capital's mobility problems need solving. He will attract support from all quarters if he proves able to do something about the infrastructure which has been neglected and underfunded for years, especially the underground. New projects have been gathering dust on the drawing board for a decade. But it's no use willing the ends without the means.

Congestion charging, to which we are not opposed in principle, is only one aspect. He knows only too clearly that it must go hand in hand with better public transport. The bill will be considerable, but if the government is seeking sound investments for a fraction of its surplus, improvements in public transport in London is certainly one of them.

Meanwhile the face of Knightsbridge continues

to change. Work is at last in progress on the Prudential site, though sadly we must report that ideas of having one great landmark scheme foundered.

The future of Harrods' depository is still in doubt as is that of the South Kensington Station site. On the other hand, the major improvements to the Royal Albert Hall look to be making good progress as do the new buildings at the museums - though we are still unclear about the controversial addition to the Victoria and Albert. And Brompton Road itself is being given a face-lift west of Montpelier Street as the Initiative we are helping to fund progresses, thanks to the Royal Borough. There are still too many fund raising events in the Royal Parks; a fraction of the money wasted on the Dome would have rendered them unnecessary for a century.

The issue of helicopters flying from roof-top sites in city centres has taken a considerable amount of our time. The process for reaching a decision seems flawed in that it is difficult to consider an individual application in context and to take account of the interests of all those affected.

The Association has organised a number of pleasurable social occasions and plans more.

Our part of London has an unusually high transient population but all are welcome to join the Association and participate in these events.

THE ENVIRONMENT



Illustration of precinct round the Hall.

Royal Albert Hall

The Hall was closed for 4 weeks in January to allow the stalls structure and seats to be replaced. Substantial completion of the new principal dressing rooms and sub-arena facilities were also achieved. Most of the large plant and mechanical and electrical services installation within the South Steps is now complete and preparatory work within the roof for the cove restoration is in progress. Rearrangement of the acoustic saucers will improve the natural acoustics. By 2002 the new auditorium ventilation system will be in place.

Local residents have been able to move back into the new carpark and demolition and piling for Phase 2 of the South Steps development has been carried out. Planning for the refurbishment of public areas and the roof, together with construction of the new South Porch superstructure is underway. Return of the Prince Albert monument, terracing, steps and stone balustrades has commenced. The upper gardens will incorporate parterres sculptured in box and yew with musical allusions. Flowering cherry trees will once again flank the approach to Albert Court; great care has also been taken in the selection of plants for the lower gardens. Work on the steps

and landscaping will be completed by May 2001.

The management will continue to work closely with their institutional and residential neighbours over the coming months to improve the setting of the Hall, through the introduction of a uniform surface treatment and removal of visually intrusive elements. These proposals will need approval from Westminster City Council who remain responsible for the highways either side of the Hall. The Hall's proposals maintain both access for residents and the same number of residents' parking bays. Westminster City Council and English Heritage are developing further proposals to improve the pedestrian crossing which links the Hall with the Albert Memorial following local consultations.



Colvin and Moggridge watercolour of South Steps.

Imperial College of Science, Technology & Medicine

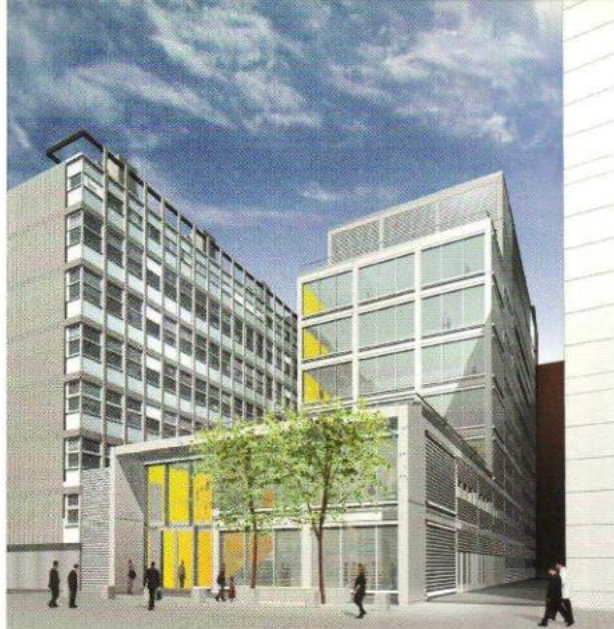
Sports Hall 1-7 Princes Gardens: This controversial scheme to extend the existing Sports Centre by the addition of a large sports hall at the rear and flats on the upper floors, on the Princes Gardens frontage, received much criticism from residents and the Association. Nevertheless it received planning approval in November 1999, subject to a number of stringent conditions designed to lessen the effect on neighbouring property. The Council is still awaiting further details and until these have been approved, work cannot commence.

Southside, Princes Gardens: Members of the Association were taken by surprise and disbelief when this much criticised and little loved Hall of Residence was listed Grade 2 in 1995, thus reducing the possibility of its demolition and redevelopment with a building more in sympathy with its neighbours.

Two years ago part of the ground floor was converted to a medical centre. Earlier this year the College announced that in order to meet the changes in student lifestyle in the 40 years since the hostel was built, a major refurbishment was to be carried out providing communal kitchens facing away from the residents and on to Princes Gardens, in association with other improvements. It should reduce some of the problems caused by a large number of 'high-spirited' students living alongside the local resident population - problems exacerbated by the poor design of the existing building. Plans recently submitted to the Council for approval show that the number of students to be accommodated will be reduced from 403 to 351. Work is scheduled to commence in 2001.

Montpelier Hall: A planning application to convert this hostel into 18 flats, was submitted in 1999 - a change of use welcomed by the Association. It is proposed to retain the front and side elevations but demolish the rear wing of the building which will be redeveloped with flats and basement parking.

Residents of Montpelier Mews houses, which are served by a very narrow entrance from Montpelier Street, have expressed great concern at the dangers of another eighteen cars using this entrance to gain access to the basement car park at the narrowest section of the mews. Residents in neighbouring roads are also concerned at the generation of additional demand for residents' parking spaces, already in short supply in this area. The Association has supported these concerns, but the Council's highways department has raised no objection to either aspect. Imperial



The new MDRB Building, tucked behind buildings on the south side of Imperial College Road, due for completion end 2000.

College appointed consultants to undertake a traffic assessment and offered to discuss the conclusions with the residents. The application had not been determined by the Council at the time of going to press.

Beit Hall, Prince Consort Road: When the extensions and alterations to Beit Hall are complete some 320 study-bedrooms, many with en suite facilities, will be provided. The building will also house the college Union, a new media centre and other social and recreational facilities in the basement. During Easter and summer vacations the Hall will be able to accommodate up to 370 conference guests.

The Royal School of Mines: Of Imperial College's plans for the future, the largest is the refurbishment of the Royal School of Mines buildings (on Prince Consort Road). Estimated to cost up to £90m it is likely to take 12 years to complete, work on the first phase (cost £2.9m) started in the Autumn.



*Above:
Southside Halls
of Residence, built
in the Sixties.*

*Right:
The Royal School
of Mines, Prince
Consort Road.*



Computer generated illustration of new shops in Brompton Rd.

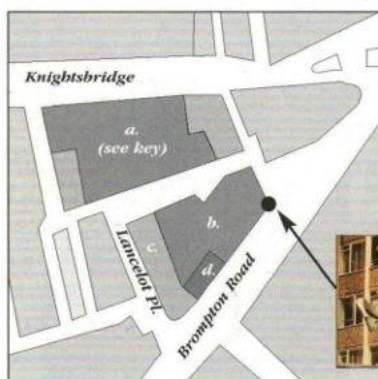
Prudential

The Association's hopes that this large area bounded by Knightsbridge, Knightsbridge Green, Brompton Road and Lancelot Place would be the site for a comprehensive development scheme were dashed when the Prudential decided to sell the northern part of the site, 195-199 Knightsbridge.

For development purposes the Prudential decided to split the remainder of the site into two parts, to the east 1 Knightsbridge Green, which includes 44-58 Brompton Road, and to the west 66-76 Brompton Road and 10 Lancelot Place.

Work on the refurbishment of 1 Knightsbridge Green is now in hand and should be complete by the end of next year. The podium which runs along Brompton Road is being redesigned to provide two-storey retail units. A new entrance to the upper floor offices will be provided from Knightsbridge Green; two retail units are planned for Raphael Street of which one, it is hoped, will replace the Post Office in Lancelot Place which is scheduled for demolition.

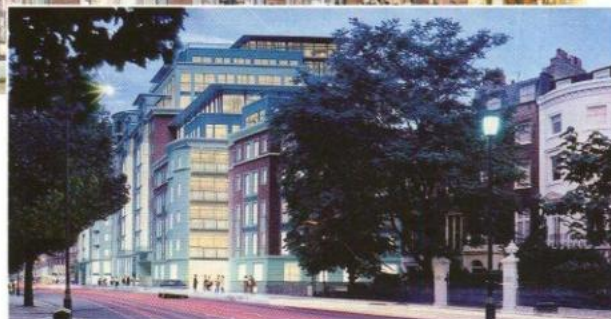
The new building on the corner of Lancelot Place will have shops and offices on the Brompton Road frontage and flats in Lancelot Place. Work cannot commence on this site until vacant possession is obtained.



Site Map Key:

- a. 195-199 Knightsbridge.
- b. 1 Knightsbridge Green
- c. 66-76 Brompton Road and 10 Lancelot Place.
- d. Silver City House, not part of the scheme.

Inset: Sea-horses on podium roof of 1 Knightsbridge Green.



195-199 Knightsbridge Green, photo montage of Prudential's approved scheme.

195-199 Knightsbridge

Earlier this year the site was acquired from the Prudential by New World Development Ltd., a Hong Kong based firm. The site was sold with planning permission; however the new owners widened their options by submitting a new application by different architects. This would replace the existing building with 190 flats, 7 mews houses, a small health club and basement parking for residents' cars plus 105 extra spaces for sale or rent to local residents. The developers organised a small exhibition and invited the views of local residents.

In submitting the application, which at this stage was limited to the principal elements of the scheme, namely height, mass and bulk of the building, car parking provision and the question of affordable housing, the developers pointed out that although they could proceed straight away with the approved plans, they would prefer to pursue the revised scheme. In August Westminster City Council gave broad support to these preliminary proposals but felt there were many areas which needed further consideration.

The Association, in its comments to the Council, expressed the view that the scheme was an improvement on its predecessor and that the height, mass and bulk were generally acceptable, but had reservations on a number of important details. In October the Environment sub-Committee were invited to view further proposals. They commented favourably to the Council. At the time of going to press the application had not been determined.



Above: The "Spiral", photomontage view from corner of Exhibition Road. The Aston Webb screen (left) would partially reappear at subway level.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Construction on The British Galleries is progressing well and is on target for completion next year. The galleries will trace the evolution of British design from 1500 to 1900. The new displays will bring together all aspects of design and decorative art.

It was in May 1996 that the trustees of the V & A announced that following a limited competition Daniel Libeskind had been selected to design a major new building for the Museum on the site of the "Boiler House" behind the Aston Webb screen in Exhibition Road. It is an original and exciting design intended to shock and so convey the message that the Museum is modern. It was greatly admired by some and heartily disliked by others who, as well as finding it difficult to accept the deconstructionist design, felt that it was unsuited to the site squeezed as it would be between the original Aston Webb building to the south and the Henry Cole building to the north. In addition it meant the removal of the listed screen, also by Aston Webb, and its partial reconstruction below ground to provide an entrance from the subway.

The Council's decision to grant planning approval in 1998, on a divided vote, was received with a considerable degree of surprise and disappointment. Since then the Museum authorities have been busy seeking the funds to meet the estimated £80m costs of the "Spiral" as it was now named. A funding package is being put together and it is hoped that work will start on the site in 2001 with completion in 2005.

Natural History Museum

Phase 1 of the Darwin Centre is sited to the north west of the main (Waterhouse) building, facing Queen's Gate. Unashamedly modern, but not over the top in its design, with symmetrical towers on the west elevation, a key feature is the juxtaposition of old with new; terracotta is used for the external facing, creating a strong reference to the original Waterhouse building. Complementing the terracotta towers will be a south-facing solar-vented façade.

The building will safeguard the Museum's 12 million zoological specimens and will enable visitors to see directly into the collection areas and appreciate the vast scale and richness of the research facilities. Tours will lead visitors in amongst the collections with guides to explain and answer questions. There will also be demonstrations by the scientific staff who will explain their research projects.

The new building is scheduled to open to the public in 2002, following transfer of the zoological specimens from their present home in the Spirit Building, which will be demolished. The Darwin Centre will continue to develop with a new building to house the Museum's entomology and botany collections. An architectural competition will be held next year and a fundraising campaign is currently underway to secure funding for the development.



Darwin Centre Phase 1 from Cromwell Road



Impression of view into the courtyard of the RGS's proposed pavilion on Exhibition Road.

Royal Geographical Society

In January members of the Environment Committee attended a presentation of the Society's proposals to extend and improve the storage facilities for their valuable archives and provide wider public access to them. The existing basement store will be air-conditioned and extended under part of the garden and a fully glazed single storey pavilion built along part of the boundary with Exhibition Road to provide a display area open to the public. The pavilion will be linked to the main building by an open court entered from Exhibition Road. The garden will be landscaped and improved; the few trees which will be lost as a result of the development will be replaced by new planting and some mature trees.

The Committee thought long and hard about the loss of trees and whether there should be any building, particularly of modern design, along the Exhibition Road frontage. In the end it was agreed that the eastern boundary would be improved by the new building which would open up a view of the garden from Exhibition Road. The Council approved the scheme in October.

Science Museum

On June 27th the Queen opened the new Wellcome Wing - so called in recognition of the generous contribution from the Wellcome Trust. The new wing, to the west of the main building which is entered off Exhibition Road, has been planned as a single large open space within which the exhibition floors and IMAX cinema are dramatically suspended. At the west end a vast blue window dominates the elevation and is so designed as to reduce bright summer sunlight to the level most suited to the exhibits.

Construction is due to commence before the end of this year - completion in 2002 - of a smaller building, on the Queen's Gate frontage, to provide rooms for seminars and lectures, offices for museum staff and a number of residential rooms for visitors. The design received a mixed reception; the Association expressed the view that while the Queen's Gate elevation was an interesting example of contemporary design, it paid little attention to its neighbours in the conservation area.

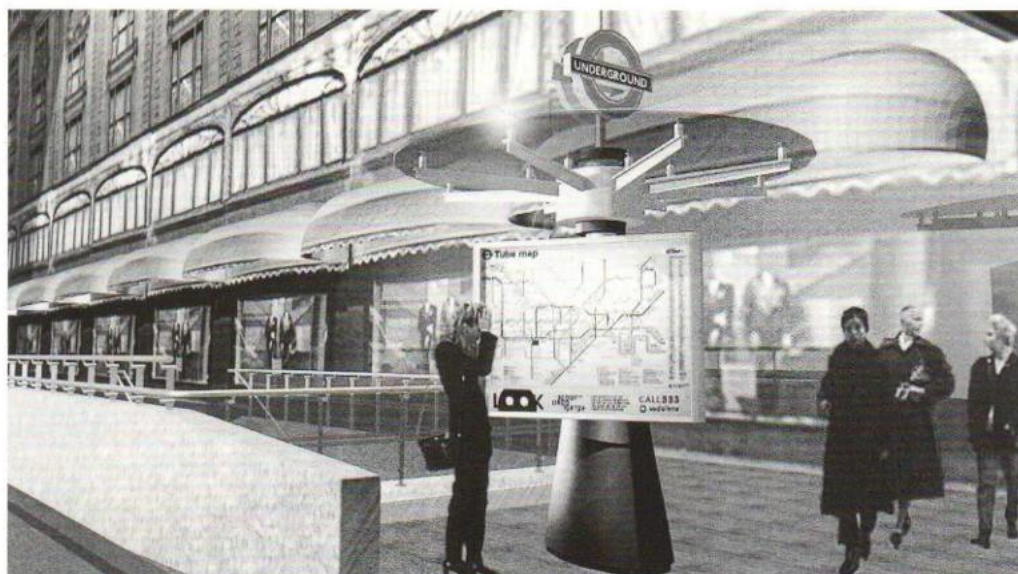


Far Left: The Princess Royal with Dr. Neil Chalmers, director of the Natural History Museum, at the reception in the Earth Galleries to launch Creating Sparks. Left: Carnival comes to Exhibition Road.

A Festival of Arts and Sciences - Creating Sparks

The British Association's "Festival of Science 2000" was opened by their President, the Princess Royal, on 6th September in the Great Hall of Imperial College. Held in the capital for only the second time in its history, it continued until 12th September with learned papers and discussions at various locations within the South Kensington campus.

At the same time the major South Kensington Museums and institutions collaborated with the British Association in a festival of Arts and Sciences called "Creating Sparks". On Sunday 10th September, as part of the celebrations, most of Exhibition Road was closed for a street carnival. This caused some problems of access for residents living in the adjacent buildings.



Visualisation of the new entrance to Knightsbridge Underground in Hans Crescent.

Harrods

The Depository & 100 Brompton Road: Planning permission was granted during the 90s for a five-star hotel involving conversion of the depository in Trevor Square and demolition, rebuilding and incorporation of Trevor House, 100 Brompton Road. Now the depository building may instead be converted into residential apartments. At the same time proposals are being put forward to replace Trevor House with a new office building.

Store Developments: Once the Crown Court development has been completed Harrods will transfer staff facilities, now located on the rooftop of the main store, to new premises, and convert the vacated area into a function room with separate entrance from Basil Street. Local residents and the Association objected to the intensification of use, particularly the proposal to have functions late into the night. Permission has been granted subject to a legal agreement restricting the use to normal store opening hours.

Concern has also been expressed over the effect on local residents of plans to convert the Georgian Restaurant on the fifth floor to a banqueting suite, remaining open until 2am. The Association objected on this point.



Trevor House, Brompton Road.

Knightsbridge Tube Station

The opening of the new entrance to the tube station on the west side of Hans Crescent, away from the busy junction with Brompton Road, should greatly improve pedestrian circulation and safety, separating those people walking down Brompton Road from Harrods' shoppers and those leaving the station.

After initial problems, traffic arrangements have worked well, in spite of the closure of Hans Crescent. It will remain closed until 2002, to allow for redevelopment of 87-91 Brompton Road, on the corner of Hans Crescent. The possibility of permanent pedestrianisation of part of Hans Crescent is under consideration by the Royal Borough. Full public consultation is scheduled to take place early in 2001.

South Kensington Station

No progress beyond the planning stage has ever been made on the several schemes submitted over the last 30 years for the redevelopment of this site. Kensington and Chelsea are looking afresh at the planning brief to see what further improvements can be made to the station and concourse and any new building over the platforms.

In July their proposals for a traffic management scheme for the area, taking into account the previous proposals for the station, were circulated for public consultation. Several additional issues were raised and required further study. It is expected that a final report will be ready for consideration by the Royal Borough's Highways and Traffic Committee in February. It is estimated that the station will have to cope with a 50 percent increase in demand arising from the new development and the expected rise in the number of visitors to the museums following all their new buildings and increased gallery space.

Albert Court

After several attempts to get planning permission for one or more extra storeys, the freeholder finally succeeded, at a public enquiry in 1989, in getting permission for 5 penthouse flats within the existing sloped roof. The outcome can be seen on the south elevation (Prince Consort Road) and the north elevation overlooking the back of the Albert Hall. As the Association had feared in its comments at the enquiry it is a disappointment.

The windows of the new floor do not line through with those of the lower floors and the new dormers do not fit easily into the low pitch of the existing roof; two of the chimneys, dominant and attractive features of the original design, are squashed between and partly hidden by the dormers. The integrity of the original building has been harmed and the alterations to this listed building do not enhance the conservation area.

29 Exhibition Road

A pair of houses, 29 Exhibition Road and 1 Prince Consort Road (now the Jamaican High Commission) were built in 1877 at the southern end of the garden of Lowther Lodge (now the Royal Geographical Society). Designed by J.J. Stevenson, both houses are good examples of the then popular Queen Anne style. Though not symmetrical, the brick elevations with their irregularly disposed balconies complement each other. The detailing of the entrance to 1 Prince Consort Road is especially interesting.

Until recently occupied by the Institute of Recorded Sound, plans have been approved for the conversion of 29 Exhibition Road to a single family dwelling with a free-standing garage and flat at the end of the garden.

This is one of several large properties in the area which are being converted into single family dwellings. These include 54 Princes Gate, 24 Rutland Gate, the Royal College of Organists and 2-8 Rutland Gate - the latter was redeveloped only a few years ago as a block of four luxury apartments, each with its own swimming pool.

2 Basil Street

A number of applications for change of use from Office to Hotel have been opposed by residents and the Association because of the proximity to the busy junction with Sloane Street, and the fire station, and the effect of increased traffic in Basil Street on the operation of the fire station and the comfort of residents.

An application for hotel use in 1996 failed and was followed in 1998 by a simpler scheme for use



Above and Left: Albert Court, the new penthouses spoil the roofline.



Above: 29 Exhibition Road and 1 Prince Consort Road.



*Above: 24 Rutland Gate.
Left: 2-8 Rutland Gate.*

as an annexe to an established hotel, citing a number of reasons as to why a new hotel, as opposed to an annexe to an existing one, was not viable. Permission was granted subject to various conditions and a legal agreement.

At the end of 1999 a fresh application was submitted for a "stand-alone" hotel. This was somewhat ironic in view of the non-viability of such a hotel for reasons which were cited in the previous application.

The Association opposed the application on the same grounds as it had previously given. Permission was refused by the Council, but their decision was overturned at Appeal.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE INITIATIVE



Phase 1 - Work in Progress

The first stage of the Association's long term project to give a much needed face-lift to the Knightsbridge/Brompton Road thoroughfare is expected to be completed by the end of the year. With the help of some £70,000 in pledges raised by the Association from freeholders and frontagers in Brompton Road, the Royal Borough agreed to bear the major cost of upgrading the split-level pavement on the north side of Brompton Road, between nos. 132 and 188. Initially work was delayed by the necessity to move a water main below the lower part of the pavement. This was carried out early in the Summer. By the end of June the Council's contractors were able to begin construction of a new brick-faced retaining wall to contain the extended upper level, slightly set back from the road line and topped with York stone coping to match the new paving of the raised and widened walkway.

At the same time the Royal Borough paved both sides of Brompton Road and Hans Road with York stone, replaced many of the railings by those of an improved design and installed attractive cast iron



One of the new bollards

bollards along some stretches of the footway.

This work, in addition to that on the split-level pavement, will do much to bring Brompton Road, one of London's premier shopping streets, up to the standard it deserves. The support of the Royal Borough in achieving this aim is greatly appreciated.

The Association intends to follow up this successful joint venture with a similar improvement to the split-level pavement between nos. 106-130 Brompton Road. Preliminary discussions with Westminster City Council have already taken place.



Next phase: 106-130 Brompton Road

HELIPADS IN CITY AREAS

The Association is anxiously awaiting the outcome of the appeal by Harrods against the decision by Kensington and Chelsea that planning permission is required for the chairman to be able to use the store roof as a helipad for his sole use.

The decision has been called in by John Prescott, Secretary of State for the DETR. If, as Harrods' advisers maintain, planning permission is not required, the implications will have countrywide significance, for it will mean that many buildings with suitable flat roofs might be put to similar use. The two main causes of concern are safety and noise. Residents living in adjacent areas will be subject to enormous noise as the helicopter manoeuvres for landing and take-off.

The Civil Aviation Authority issued a licence to Harrods earlier in the year for ten landings and

take-offs per week, within certain restricted hours, for a twin engine helicopter. Harrods applied to the Royal Borough for a Certificate of Lawful Use on the grounds that the helipad would be for the sole use of the chairman in connection with his day-to-day running of the store, and would be incidental to the running of his business. The Royal Borough did not accept this argument and claimed that the proposal would constitute a material change of use and therefore planning permission was required.

It seems that whatever the decision by the Secretary of State, the case is likely to go to a higher court. It is essential for local authorities to have control over these matters in order that residents living in urban areas can enjoy normal standards of peace and quiet.



Foster & Partners' visualisation of a pedestrianised Trafalgar Square, part of the World Squares For All project.

CONSULTATION PAPERS

Licensing: The old patterns are changing in terms of the amenities people want, the hours they seek them and the kind of establishment which provides them. The existing controls are complex, sometimes obscure and often resented. The White paper issued by the Government in May seeks to modernise and simplify the whole process in a series of far-reaching measures which can be summarised as follows:

a) A single "premises" licence (with operating conditions) to cover premises which sell alcohol and provide public entertainment at night. Issue of a licence will take into account the views of residents and assessments by the police and fire authority.

b) A "personal" licence, allowing holders to sell or serve alcohol for consumption on or off the premises, provided they held a "premises" licence, would be issued to those aged 18 or over without a relevant criminal record, following a test of knowledge of licensing law and social responsibilities. The licence would be for a ten year period and could be endorsed or withdrawn during that period.

c) The legal age for drinking alcohol on licensed premises or for buying it there to be 18 years. Measures to control under-age drinking to be tightened up.

d) Opening hours are proposed with potential for up to 24 hours, subject to consideration of the impact on local residents. (Whether the aim of minimising public disorder, purportedly the result of fixed closing times, will be achieved is questionable). The police will be given new powers to deal instantly with violent or disorderly behaviour by closing premises that have become the focus of such behaviour.

e) Both "premises" and "personal" licences will be issued by local authorities.

Licences will be supported by a flexible range of sanctions including reduction of opening hours, with a final sanction of complete closure. All parties will be able to appeal to the Crown Court.

Both Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough invited the Association to submit comments on the White Paper. The Association recognises that these are bold reforms. To work properly the licensing authority will have to give full attention to the needs of local residents even when the entertainment industry is at variance with them, and in particular it considers that 18 years of age is too young to hold a "personal" licence; licensees should be mature and experienced with a minimum age of 25; there may be a case for flexible (including 24 hour) open-

ing times but very strict control over the issue of licences for late night drinking must be exercised, especially in the case of premises in or near residential areas. Anti-social behaviour after excessive drinking is simply unacceptable.

Unitary Development Plans: Revision of both Westminster and the Royal Borough UDPs has continued and the drafts are approaching their final stages. Amendments to Westminster's Plan will give the Council increased power to control the location of A3 (Food and Drink) uses, one of the main reasons being to protect residential amenity - smells, noise, increased late night activity, increased traffic and demand on parking all detract from the quality of life. Within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) there will be stricter control over change of use from A1 (Office) to other uses, especially A3. These additional powers, if they are included in the final version of the UDP should eliminate some of the less desirable restaurants, bars and take-aways from residential areas.

World Squares for All: As part of a wide consultation exercise organised by Westminster City Council, members of the Association were able to study the Trafalgar Square proposals at a special exhibition. They involve the pedestrianisation of the entire roadway in front of the National Gallery and parts of the surrounding roads, necessitating a complete revamp of traffic circulation in the area. Based on current levels of traffic this would result in a significant increase in some journey times. Pedestrianisation of Parliament Square, included in the original proposals, appears to be in abeyance.

The Association's view was that the concept was worthy of support but that it should not be implemented before traffic restraint measures now under discussion had been put in place. The Association is also concerned that if the standard of management of the enlarged areas falls short they could become litter strewn and encourage crime, illegal traders, drug trafficking, noise and other anti-social behaviour. In the analysis of replies to the consultation, the public strongly supported the proposals, but the amenity societies, whilst generally supportive, expressed reservations on the effect on traffic and emphasised the need for good management.

Others: The Association also commented on several other papers including *Borough Aims*, issued by the Royal Borough, and *Management of the Entertainments Industry*, from Westminster City Council.



Photomontage of Foster & Partners' glass and steel headquarters for the GLA. It should be ready for occupation in 2002.

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY



Ken Livingstone

Ken Livingstone was elected Mayor of London on May 3rd and on the 8th he and 25 members of the Greater London Assembly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. He wasted no time in setting up his cabinet, and appointing his senior

advisers, before taking office on 3rd July when formal powers were transferred to the Mayor and Greater London Authority.

In addition to the appointment of his Cabinet - which included Judith Mayhew, a leading member of the Corporation of London Common Council and our guest speaker at the Annual General Meeting (11th December) - the Mayor set up four functional bodies - Transport for London, the Metropolitan Police Authority, the London Development Agency and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority - which will be responsible for the day to day functioning of the Authority.

From the start the Mayor has made it plain that his immediate concern is public transport and the urgent need to bring about an overall improvement so that members of the public can be persuaded to leave their cars at home and make greater use of London's buses and underground railway system. Soon after taking office the Mayor issued a paper "Hearing London's View" in which he set out his initial thoughts on congestion charges in order to take soundings prior to the issue next summer of his draft Transport Strategy which, inter alia, will include detailed proposals

for congestion charging.

In addition to this concern over public transport the Mayor strongly supports the pedestrianisation of part of Trafalgar Square and is pressing for early action, in contrast to the more cautious approach of Westminster City Council who are currently responsible for the management and cleansing of the Square. It is understood that these responsibilities are in the process of being transferred to the Greater London Authority.

London Boroughs are now required to notify the GLA of planning applications which fall within defined categories; once so notified the local authority cannot grant planning permission until the application has been considered by the Mayor who may direct refusal. However, he cannot direct a local authority to grant planning approval.

In his inauguration speech the Mayor said: "Instead of the efficient transport system we require we have gridlock on the roads, gross over-crowding on the Tube and trains and slow unreliable buses. Chronic under investment is the legacy of central government control of London Transport. As a result, escalators don't work, punctuality declines and passengers face misery. With daytime traffic speeds down to 10 mph in central London the chickens of that under-investment have come home to roost."

In October it was announced that Mr. Robert Kiley, former chief executive of New York's Metropolitan Transport Authority, had been appointed London's Transport Commissioner by Mr. Livingstone. Mr. Kiley is credited with transforming New York's run-down subway system - let us hope he can do the same for London's bus and underground systems.

SURVEY OF LONDON: KNIGHTSBRIDGE (VOLUME XLV)



Left: General view of Knightsbridge street scene circa 1900.

Above: Rutland Gate, one of the many streets and squares featured in Volume XLV.

This latest and eagerly awaited volume in the Survey of London series was published in October, and by a special arrangement with English Heritage is available to members at a substantial discount for a limited period.

Knightsbridge became unequivocally part of London during Queen Victoria's reign. Strung out along the road to Kensington and long under the influence of the capital, the hamlet had already acquired something of the character of a residential suburb. As fashionable society spread out beyond the confines of the old West End, Knightsbridge offered an unrivalled location for development. With Hyde Park and Rotten Row close at hand, it was ideally placed for life à la mode; but in the event the old hamlet proved a stubborn breakwater against the ever encroaching tide of the West End. Development after

development stalled, and even the great Thomas Cubitt came unstuck with his mansions at Albert Gate. Not until the surge of high-class building in neighbouring South Kensington in the years after the Great Exhibition was the future of Knightsbridge as an exclusive address assured.

The streets, squares and buildings resulting from this episodic process of development, and subsequent redevelopment, are the essential subject matter of this book. As well as the houses, flats, churches, hotels, shops and offices on the ground today, many now vanished structures of historical or architectural importance are described. An almost forgotten 'alternative' Knightsbridge is evoked; a world of music-halls and noisy pubs, tenements and dubious boarding-houses; the raffish crowd at Tattersalls' famous horse-mart on Knightsbridge Green.

LONDON GARDEN SQUARES DAY



Sir Robin Day, Patricia Tudor and Pamela Paterson, chairman London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, in Ennismore Gardens.

Following the success of the first three London Garden Squares Days, which attract ever increasing numbers of visitors, it has been made into an annual event. Next year it will take place on Sunday 10th June. Day tickets are £5 (children under 12: free) at the first garden to be visited, entrance to all subsequent gardens is free. A joint initiative between the London Historic Parks and

Gardens Trust and English Heritage, the aim is to raise awareness of the diversity and beauty of garden squares and draw attention to the great contribution which these green spaces make to the capital and the importance attached to their conservation. It is the only occasion when the public can explore many of London's hidden oases of green. In 2000 the initiative was supported by 63 garden squares across London including Ennismore Gardens and Lower Garden Rutland Gate in Knightsbridge. Visitors from as far as Australia and the United States came to admire this quintessentially British contribution to the city environment. The proceeds are divided between the Trust, the National Council for the Protection of Plants and Gardens and the participating squares.

MONCORVO HOUSE AND THE FREE FRENCH



Left: Members of the *Volontaires Françaises Féminines* marching through Ennismore Gardens.

Below: Moncorvo House in 1888.



Some sixty years ago anyone going up Ennismore Gardens towards Hyde Park, past what is now Bolney Gate, might have found his way impeded by a bevy of young women. The women would be French or half-French, uniformed, and drilling in the street; and on the left there would be, not a terrace of modern houses, but three grand mansions.

One of these, Moncorvo House, was the home from 8th May 1941 of the *Volontaires Françaises Féminines* (originally the *Corps Féminin*!), the women volunteers of the Free French.

Their first base until they were bombed out, with casualties, had been in Mayfair. As their second home, Moncorvo House was indeed appropriate, for it had once been occupied by the duc d'Aumale, fourth son of Louis Philippe.

In June 1940, while France was seeking an armistice following the successful Nazi invasion, General de Gaulle had broadcast from London asking all Frenchmen in Britain to join him in resistance to the German occupation.

The first women to respond were French or Anglo-French girls living, studying or working in Britain. They were soon joined by others who came from France and its overseas territories by sometimes dangerous routes. Their first experience on arrival could be an interrogation - to ensure they were not enemy agents. Initially none bore any indication that they were French, for, had the Nazis invaded Britain, they could have been shot outright.

The *Volontaires* who passed through Moncorvo House took on many of the routine army duties normally performed by men, including, later, ambulance driving. As the resistance grew, many were used to decipher messages from clandestine radio operators in France. Many also volunteered to become special agents, but only a few were

chosen. The first was parachuted into France in February 1944.

With the advance of the allied armies into Europe, the *Volontaires* played a vital role in administration and liaison and the handling of the vast numbers of refugees in the liberated territories.

Moncorvo House was not the only French base in Ennismore Gardens. One of the terrace houses (number unknown) was a dormitory, the *Caserne Hakin*, named after an outstanding officer who, with her husband, was torpedoed in February 1941 on board the *Jonathan Holt*.

Spacious and elegant, the House was demolished in 1964. It had been built between 1877 and 1880 on a lease from the Listowel family for Arthur George Sandeman, great nephew of the founder of the famous port firm, whose wife was a daughter of Viscount Moncorvo, for many years Portuguese ambassador in London.

When the duc d'Aumale acquired the lease in 1876 he brought with him at least one Raphael and his library, with the famous Book of Hours, *Les très riches heures du duc de Berri*. Surrounded by these and other treasures he entertained the heads of many European royal families.

Three years later the lease passed to the Grettons, a famous family of brewers, and then, after a spell as a rest home for Canadian nurses in the First World War, to an American engineer, Arthur G. Glasgow, a founder of *Humphreys and Glasgow*. Leased by the ATS after the war, then by Canadians and fleetingly by the American Embassy, it never returned to private occupation.

By Elspeth Parkes; additional material supplied by the Survey of London.



Kensington Palace: a starting point for the Memorial Walk.



One of the Memorial Walk plaques.



Diana, goddess of hunting, near the Rose Garden.

The opening ceremony of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Playground was performed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown (chairman of the Memorial Committee), the Arts Minister, Alan Howarth, Rosa Monckton and her daughter, five year old Domenica Lawson, the late Princess's goddaughter. The innovative Playground has six play areas, the centre piece being a 50ft long pirate ship with mast and rigging reminiscent of the story of Peter Pan - a tribute to J.M. Barrie, creator of the children's classic, who funded the original playground in 1906. Children up to the age of 12, including the disabled, can play in different settings.

The creation of the Memorial Walk, linking Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Green Park and St. James's Park, has enabled the Royal Parks' Agency to undertake a number of improvements, some fresh planting and major refurbishment of gates, statues and fountains along the route. New

HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS



Opening of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial playground.



The Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother gate.



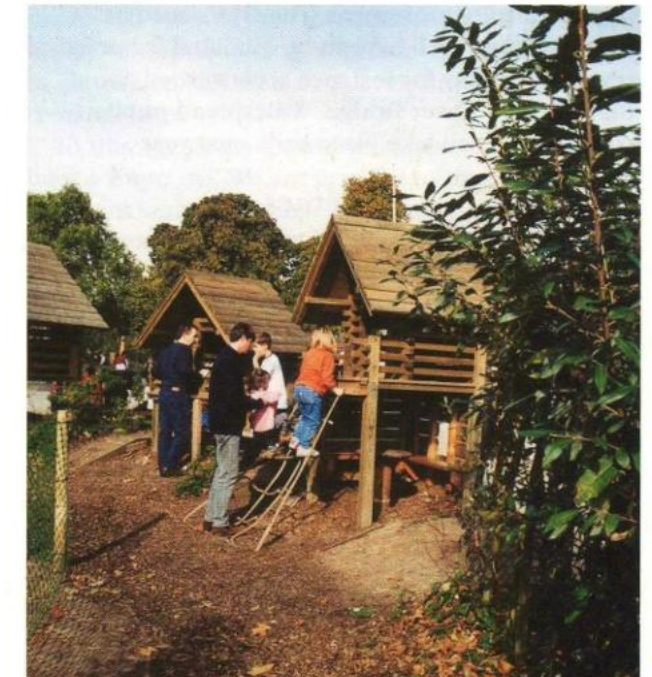
The Dell - a quiet oasis far from the noise and bustle of urban life.



Teepees in the new playground.



Sheep in the new playground.



Wendy Houses in the new playground

pedestrian crossings at Hyde Park Corner mean pedestrians no longer have to use the subways.

These two projects provide a happy outcome to the search for some fitting memorial within the Parks to the late Princess who spent many happy hours there.

Elsewhere, the Sports Club at the southern corner of West Carriage Drive has been extended and beautifully landscaped with a large and attractive sitting out area. There are now six tennis courts, two new 'basins' for pétanque - the popular French game - a new putting area, which will be ready next year, and a bowling green.

The Association is concerned that it may appear alarmist about the future of the Parks, but anyone who uses them regularly will be struck by the increasing prevalence of wheels on the pathways - bicycles, rollerblades, skateboards and now scooters. This happens not only in Hyde Park, where there are some designated paths, but also in

Kensington Gardens where, save for rollerbladers, at present there are none.

In 1995 it was decided to continue the ban on cycling in Kensington Gardens, a ban more honoured in the breach than the observance. Sadly this is to be reversed for a trial period of twelve months on a specific route yet to be agreed. The Association, along with many others, has objected strongly to the proposal and has drawn attention to the danger to those, especially the elderly and children, who enjoy the traditional peace and quiet of Kensington Gardens.

This will inevitably lead to more misuse and a further erosion of the traditional nature of the Parks. Whilst most of those 'on wheels' are reasonably considerate, the danger of accidents has increased greatly and will continue to do so unless enforcement is stepped up.

Last year the Association fought hard against what appeared to be a policy to commercialise the

Parks, particularly Hyde Park, because of a shortfall in funding and the need to generate additional revenue. There was a slight reduction in the number of commercial concerts this year. The programme for 2001 has not yet been finalised.

One of the reasons that people care so much about the Parks is that, thanks in great measure to the devoted staff who tend them, they give so much pleasure and delight. It was a great sadness to learn of David Welch's untimely death in September after a long illness. His leadership, as chief executive of the Royal Parks' Agency, raised standards in many areas despite the lack of adequate funding.

We wish his successor, William Weston, every success and the necessary increase in government funding to achieve it, so that the concerts which are so disruptive to the Parks and those who live around them, can be relocated to more suitable stadia elsewhere.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

Policy

The Association is deeply concerned with the policies now under consideration to alleviate the worsening traffic congestion affecting our main roads along with so many others throughout the capital. We are not unsympathetic to the principle of congestion charges, but will need to study the small print. It matters greatly to us where the boundaries will be drawn, what the charges will be, and the hours in which they will operate. We suspect that most of our members will prefer to remain outside the area, but this is a personal matter, depending on their pattern of movement. The GLA's current proposals may well have to be modified for practical reasons; the City for instance is concerned about the effect on Tower Bridge. Widespread public consultation will take place early next year.

Schemes

The building and dismantling of the bridge in Brompton Road mercifully caused little disruption, but Hans Crescent remains closed to traffic. Little progress can be made with the barriers designed to stop the rat-run through the Montpeliers and Trevors. Both barriers need to be installed at the same time, and this cannot take place until the depository vaults in Trevor Square have been strengthened. The committee has examined the Royal Borough's scheme to improve traffic flow

and the environment around South Kensington Station but questions whether the results would justify the costs.

Parking

There has been some pressure from members especially in the Montpeliers, Trevors and Ennismores to have the hours of residents' parking bays extended (in parts of Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea they are much longer). In September we sent a questionnaire to our members to sound out their preferred options on change. Roughly 200 replies were received of which a substantial majority were in favour of extending the hours, although opinion was fairly evenly divided between extending the hours to 8.30pm, 10pm or having 24 hour controls. A summary of the responses has been passed to Westminster City Council who are currently reviewing parking controls.

Westminster has a policy requiring all new residential developments to provide off-street parking. Even so, pressure increases on existing residents' spaces as the newcomers are entitled to apply for residents' permits. We have raised this issue with the Council. There are also problems with coach parking, particularly around the Royal Albert Hall. As part of their redevelopment plans it may be possible to provide some coach bays that will not interfere with traffic flow or residents' parking.

LAW AND ORDER



Conspicuous jewellery attracts the attention of muggers.

"I was terrified but I couldn't scream". A line in a thriller? No. A quiet Knightsbridge resident describing how she felt one Spring afternoon. On the way home she had passed a man in the street and both had stopped to watch some car claspers at work.

She walked the short distance home and had just gone down the steps to her basement when she was seized from behind. Her ring and watch were snatched from her, she was forced to hand over money, then pushed into the kitchen and told not to come out.

Such an experience is never forgotten. Sadly nowhere in the world can the police guarantee total security but *with the co-operation of the public* attempted robberies can often be foiled:

Lesson no 1: Don't go walking in quiet streets, especially if shopping, with expensive jewellery visible. It's an invitation.

Lesson no 2: Be suspicious. (The victim referred to above said she could have locked herself in before the robber got to her, but she wasn't suspicious enough).

Lesson no 3: Keep an eye open for people hanging around, or following you.

Lesson no 4: Carry a "screamer" - robbers hate noise, and light.

This year's special safety tips:

- a) If you live in a communal building, make sure you have a strong street door with a key-operated lock.
- b) If you have a skylight, put a grid underneath.
- c) If you are approached by a stranger asking for money for the Knightsbridge, or any other Association, don't pay up! Report the matter to the police and the hon. secretary. (A resident recently handed over £60 to such a fraudster).
- d) Don't leave windows open - even if it's hot.

Such incidents are rare and the police and the Law and Order Committee try to minimise them by giving advice. See previous Reports and always read (and act on) police notices put through your door. It is in everyone's own interest to forestall crime. Your turn might be next.

Members of the Committee, which Barry Thorn of Harrods' Security has joined, have throughout the year attended police sector meetings concerned with the immediate vicinity, covered by Belgravia and Brompton stations. They also participate in the very active SW Westminster Consultative Committee, addressing questions relating to the wider area. Local concerns (begging, street lighting, car theft and security in some of the squares) have been raised and proposals have been put forward in particular over co-operation with surveillance following a recent series of car thefts (all relating to German cars).

The police have taken action to deal with beggars and to identify and address various problems in accordance with programmes drawn up by each sector to set up specific targets for achievement. Overall local crime has *decreased* during the year and offenders have been caught thanks to Knightsbridge CCTV. The police are to be congratulated on this reduction, particularly in view of their diminished manpower.

The Committee learned recently with concern of the low rates of pay (Royal Parks police earn even less). Subsequent wide publicity, together with the expressed view of the Commissioner, has brought about an improvement. Whether this is sufficient to restore recruitment to the required level remains to be seen.

In this age of drugs and terrorists, the police have a lot to do. We are grateful to them for their excellent support, which includes much sacrifice of their spare time.

RUBBISH AND LITTER



Rubbish in Brompton Road.

This area of the environment continues to be of major concern to all those interested in improving the quality of life, not only urban but rural. At least two generations have now been brought up in the throwaway world. Habits have changed and eating

and drinking on public transport, along the streets, and in all public places is now widespread. Unfortunately the willingness to carry the resulting litter to a litter bin, appears to be lacking.

Other problems with dumped rubbish piling up on the streets or in quiet corners are also legion. Some householders put their rubbish out the day before collection, commercial waste is often left on the pavements for hours at a time, attracting additional litter. There seems to be a general lack of civic pride. The Councils have a duty to keep the streets clear of rubbish and litter, and safe for the public - the public too have their part to play.

Simon Milton the new Leader of Westminster City Council at a recent meeting of the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum, on which we are represented, put Environment and Enforcement at the top of his priorities. He announced further funding and that Onyx (their contractors) had agreed to spend £500,000 on the upgrading of their fleet of vehicles. This should help to reduce delays in collections caused by breakdowns.

Members can help by reporting to the Councils when dumped rubbish, faulty lights, broken pavements and other problems occur. The following numbers should be used:

● **Westminster City Council hotline: 7641 2000**

The Council has adopted a system which enables you to receive information or to have your queries or complaints dealing with street environment answered, by calling the direct line given above. The areas covered are street sweeping, refuse collection, litter, rubbish dumping, hazardous defects in the road or pavements, blocked gutters, faulty street lighting, fly posting, overflowing litter bins.

The Street Environment Manager or Assistant Manager should deal promptly with any complaints. This service operates on a 24-hour basis. Please use it and help to keep our environment clean and well ordered. Street managers and monitors cannot be everywhere at once and the pressures on the Knightsbridge area seem to increase annually.

● **The Royal Borough hotline: 7341-5284**

Kensington and Chelsea operate a different system. The direct telephone number for waste management (rubbish and litter) is 7341 5284. Other services such as highways, pavement, lighting etc. should be contacted individually via the switchboard - 7937 5464.

The Royal Borough's cleansing department and the Association have recently formed a liaison group to meet at regular intervals to pinpoint and tackle particular problems.

SOCIAL EVENTS AND THE AGM



Jing Jang Aarons, Colonel George Cauchi and Graeme Aarons at the Old Bailey dinner.



Chairman and Members of the Association at the Old Bailey dinner.

The AGM, December 1999

The Annual General Meeting was again held in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music. Guests, including the Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke CH MP Councillor Alex Segal, Lord Mayor of Westminster, Melvyn Caplan, Leader of Westminster City Council, Councillor Tony Holt, Deputy Mayor and Councillor David Campion, Chairman of Planning & Conservation at the Royal Borough, listened to Dame Jennifer Jenkins DBE discussing the future of the Royal Parks.

Tour and Lunch at Hyde Park Barracks

Members enjoyed a tour behind the scenes at the Household Cavalry Barracks including a special demonstration of the musical ride in the manège followed by an excellent luncheon in the NCO's mess overlooking the parade ground at Hyde Park Barracks. They were joined by Colonel Mark Ridley and other senior officers.

Tour and Black Tie Dinner at the Old Bailey

The chairman, Jonathan Charkham, former Sheriff of the City of London, helped Peggy Walmsley arrange for over forty of our members to visit the Old Bailey, where they listened in famous Court no. 1 to a lecture on its history by Colonel George Cauchi, the Secondary of London and Under Sheriff, who is responsible for administration at the Old Bailey.

A guided tour was followed by a champagne reception. Members enjoyed a delicious dinner in the Judges' dining room and were safely delivered back to Knightsbridge by coach.

Kuoni Receptions at Austin Reed and Bonhams

Members enjoyed a 100th Anniversary Celebration at Austin Reed in October and a private sale pre-

view at Bonhams & Brooks in November. Both events were sponsored by Kuoni Travel.

Annual General Meeting Monday 11th December 2000

The Meeting will again be in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music on Prince Consort Road, opposite the steps to the Albert Hall. The reception with wine and sandwiches begins at 6 pm followed by the meeting. Our guest this year will be Judith Mayhew, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee of the Corporation of London, who earlier this year was appointed City and Business Advisor to Ken Livingstone's Cabinet.

Forthcoming Events

Arrangements have been made to hold a reception and private viewing of some of the exhibits at the Natural History Museum in the spring of 2001, at a date to be agreed. Discussions are also being held with the Kensington Society with a view to holding some joint social events with their members. We are anxious to plan as many events as possible to cater for all the interests of our members, and we welcome any suggestions or comments you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your ideas.



Judith Mayhew, guest speaker at this year's AGM.



Dame Jennifer Jenkins, speaker at last year's AGM.

RECEPTION BEFORE THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING *December 1999*



Dame Jennifer Jenkins and Cllr. Melvyn Caplan, Leader of Westminster City Council.



Superintendent Peter Greenwood, Gordon Shingleton and Jonathan Charkham.



David Mawdsley, Inspector Nick Bennett and PC Elaine Nicholas.



Pippa Agabani-Thornton and Maddie Elsdon.



Michael Morgan and Avril Cox.



Steve Greene and Gary O'Hagan.



Cllr. Tony Holt, Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, and David Caruth.



Cllr. Adrian Fitzgerald, Chairman of Kensington and Chelsea's Highways & Traffic Committee, and Craig Wilson.



Cllr. Alex Segal, Lord Mayor of Westminster and Neville Labovitch.



Frances and Richard Rice and Jean Lyell.



Noel Keating, John Morley and Michael Wright.



Professor Peter Grootenhuys and Dr. Stanley Steel.



Cllr David Campion, Chairman of Kensington and Chelsea's Planning & Conservation Committee and Councillor Bryan Levitt.



Elspeth Parkes and Arlette Shenkan.



Rosemary Lomax-Simpson and Maurice Lambert.



PC Dave Pullan and PC Bryan Woodrow.



June Stubbs and Christine Gilbertson.



Archie Yuill and PC Clive Coleman.



Robert and Rosa Morris.



Peter Scott and Carolyn Sands.



Lady Sharp, Bernard Asber and Cllr. John Cox.



Alys Rickett and Pendleton Campbell.



Inspector Chris Davers and Mike Butler.



Captain Robert Peasgood and Graham Cutler.

GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES



*The Rt. Hon.
Michael Portillo
MP for Kensington
and Chelsea.*



*Cllr. Angela
Hooper, Chairman
of Westminster's
Planning and
Licensing
Committee.*



*Cllr. Simon Milton,
Leader of
Westminster City
Council.*



*Cllr. Merrick
Cockell, Leader of
the Royal Borough.*



*Cllr. Barry Phelps,
Chairman of
Kensington and
Chelsea's Planning
and Conservation
Committee.*



*Angie Bray, GLA
Assembly member
for West Central
(includes
Westminster and
Kensington &
Chelsea).*

John Prescott remains in charge at the Department of the Environment (DETR) with Chris Smith at National Heritage. Other Ministers with whom we have been in touch include Lord Macdonald, Minister for Transport, Lord Whitty and Chris Mullin, all at the DETR.

We extend a warm welcome to Michael Portillo who, following the untimely death of Alan Clark, was elected MP for Kensington and Chelsea. Peter Brooke, MP for the Cities of London and Westminster, who has supported the Association and the interests of local residents for many years, will not be standing again - he will be sorely missed. Mark Field, a local Councillor for the Royal Borough has been selected to stand in his place.

In local government, Councillor Michael

Brahams is Lord Mayor of Westminster City Council, Councillor Simon Milton has taken over from Melvyn Caplan as Leader, Councillor Angela Hooper is the Chairman of Planning & Licensing, Councillor Louise St. John Howe chairs Transport & Highways and Councillor Judith Warner is in the chair at Environment & Leisure.

At Kensington and Chelsea, Councillor Richard Walker-Arnott is this year's Mayor, Councillor Merrick Cockell succeeded Joan Hanham as Leader, Councillor Barry Phelps took over from David Campion at Planning & Conservation, Councillor Daniel Moylan became chairman of Environmental Services and Councillor Adrian FitzGerald is chairman of Highways & Traffic.

The Greater London Authority and mayoral election are discussed elsewhere.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Membership

The constant turnover in the population means that there is always a need to increase and strengthen the membership. A successful drive for new members was pursued in the Autumn.

Members are reminded that subscriptions were increased in 1999. Some have not yet increased their banker's orders. We do ask everyone to ensure that they are paying at the new rates and that they have paid this year. Sending out several reminders puts a heavy burden on our voluntary administration.

Finance

Our finances remain in a healthy state thanks to receipts from advertising and the increased membership subscriptions introduced last year. This means that the funds are there when we need to campaign for changes to the law, or to take professional advice on some major developments.

Appreciations

It is pleasing to report that the team remains largely unchanged. Sadly Carol Seymour-Newton, our indefatigable hon. secretary lost her husband Cyril at the end of last year, but her sterling efforts on the Association's behalf have never flagged. Her encyclopaedic knowledge and immense efforts are beyond all praise. She has been ably supported by Michael Wright and Christine Gilbertson and the chairmen and members of the other committees. Due to pressure of other commitments, Elspeth Parkes is relinquishing chairmanship of Law and Order, but will remain on the committee. We thank her for her dedication and extend a welcome to Iain Walker who has agreed to take it on. Robert Morris, who chairs the Traffic and Parking Committee, has been unwell; we wish him a speedy recovery. Professor Tony Ralston has ably deputised. Our thanks go to Ellie Brook who, after many years retired from this committee, but

happily remains on Law and Order, and to Noel Keating of the Environment Committee who has retired to Ireland. Sadly due to ill health Dr. Yoram Goren has also left Environment and our good wishes go to him. We welcome Peter Sugden to Environment; he will be responsible for commenting on licensing and proposed changes to the law. Dr Klaus Leist liaises with both Councils on lighting, and we are grateful also to his wife, Elizabeth, our membership secretary.

Jonathan Charkham
December 2000

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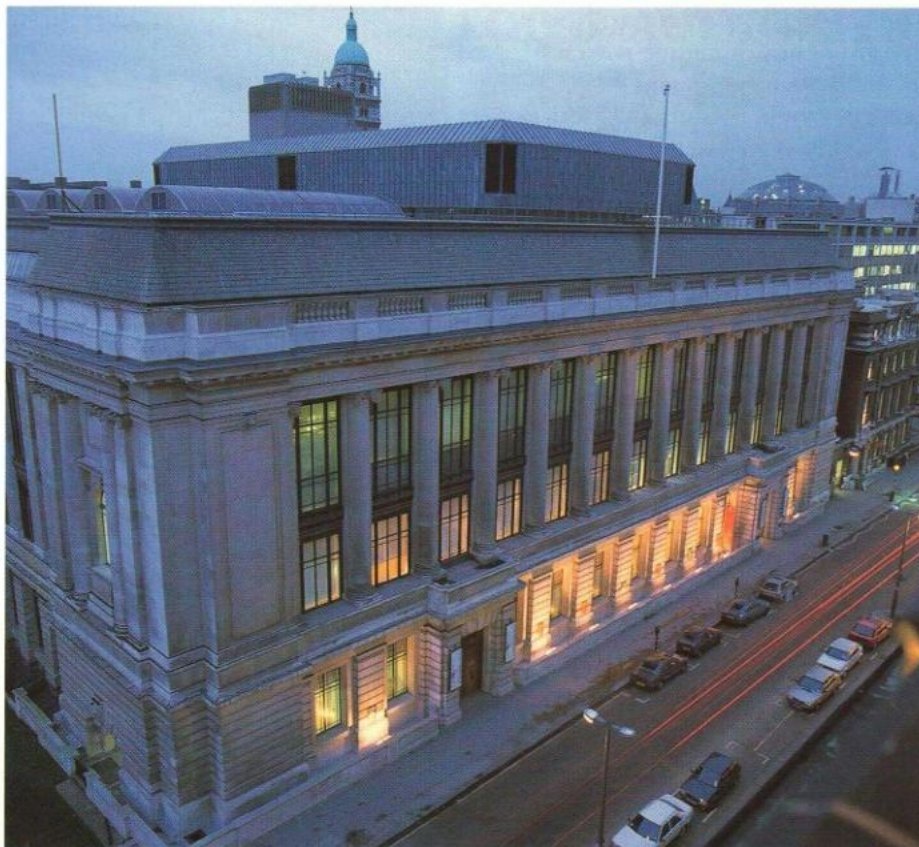
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SCIENCE MUSEUM

Science Museum at night, viewed from the upper balcony of the V & A's Henry Cole building.

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM AND THE WELLCOME WING

by Xerxes Mazda

This summer, the Science Museum completed the largest project in its 150-year history. This comprised both the brand new Wellcome Wing building and the Making the Modern World gallery.

Prince Albert, the unofficial father of the Science Museum, was the driving force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851, held in Joseph Paxton's iron and glass pavilion on Hyde Park. Just as the Wellcome Wing, with its contemporary displays, has attracted new visitors to South Kensington, so 150 years ago people flocked to the 'Crystal Palace', which provided the high-tech backdrop for a display of industrial products of all nations. During the four and a half months it was open, over 6 million people marvelled at the fantastical wares on show. Yet what was partly intended as a celebration of Empire was unsettling for British industrialists, who were surprised at the superior quality and refinement of many of the foreign products exhibited. Industry abroad appeared to be more advanced than they had previously realised, and alarm bells began to ring.

The Commissioners of the overwhelmingly successful Exhibition sought to improve the quality of British industry, and suggested that the Exhibition profits of £186,436 should be used to 'increase the means of Industrial Education and

extend the influence of Science and Art upon Productive Industry'. They bought 86 acres of land south of Kensington Gore and in 1857, on the part of this land which is now occupied by the Victoria and Albert Museum, they opened the South Kensington Museum. The Museum was made out of corrugated iron, and locals soon gave it the rather unflattering name the 'Brompton Boilers'.

The collections of the South Kensington Museum were a mixture of science and art, containing everything from models of classical buildings to examples of school desks. Today, teachers and pupils flock to the Science Museum to see parts of the National Curriculum brought to life. But in the mid-nineteenth century the purpose of the Museum was more commercial. Artisans and their teachers were supposed to study the seemingly eclectic mixture of objects so they could improve the quality of their own products. The idea was that builders and architects might be able to use the Museum to research the latest in materials and learn from classical building techniques, whereas teachers could find out the latest thinking in classroom design.

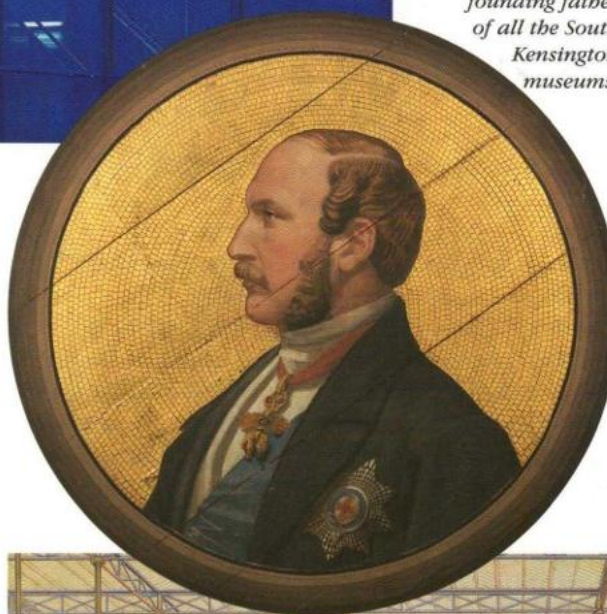
From the moment the South Kensington Museum opened, the curators battled continuously to keep the displays relevant and up-to-date.

The Wellcome Wing, seen from the entrance to the 'Making the Modern World Gallery'.



SCIENCE MUSEUM

Prince Albert the founding father of all the South Kensington museums.



Y W A HILL 40 STEELSBRIE HILL

Collecting historical material was comparatively easy and the collections expanded rapidly, often by combining with other museums, such as the Patent Museum, which gave us some of the more popular exhibits now on display in Making the Modern World, including Stephenson's Rocket. In contrast, contemporary exhibits have to be continuously sought and replaced. Today's contemporary artefacts become tomorrow's historic exhibits, and the South Kensington Museum rapidly filled up with historical material to the detriment of contemporary objects. Space was at a premium, and the Museum badly needed to expand

Fortunately, other buildings were appearing on the South Kensington estate, including a rectangle of arcades on the west side of Exhibition Road, where the science Museum and Imperial College stand today. These arcades had been used for some exhibitions, and the grounds were leased to the Royal Horticultural Society. As the South Kensington Museum's collections outgrew the modest 'Brompton Boilers', some of the more industrial collections were relocated to these arcades.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this process caused the South Kensington



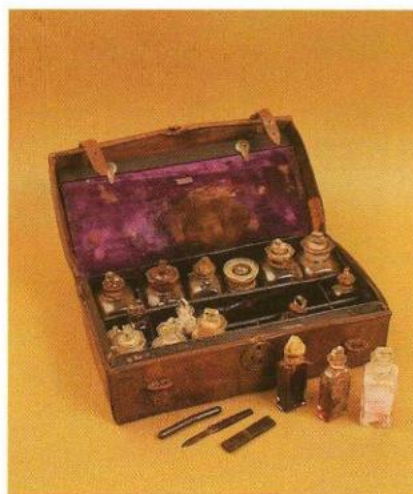
SCIENCE MUSEUM

Interior of the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851.

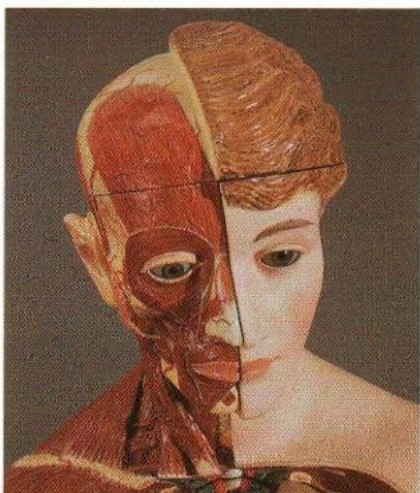
Arkwright's spinning jenny, circa 1769, which led to rapid mechanisation of the production of yarn.



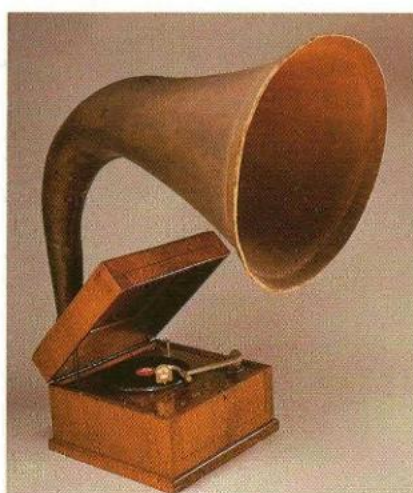
Dr. David Livingstone's medicine chest, circa 1860.



Detail of life size anatomical female figure, circa 1900.



Handmade gramophone, circa 1934.



Museum to divide naturally into two separate institutions based on opposite sides of Exhibition Road: industrial art on the east side, and science and industry on the west. The foundation stone of the new buildings for displaying industrial art was laid by Queen Victoria in 1899, at whose wish the buildings were named the Victoria and Albert Museum. Meanwhile the science and industry collections were cooped up in the jerry-built arcades on the site now occupied by the Science Museum.

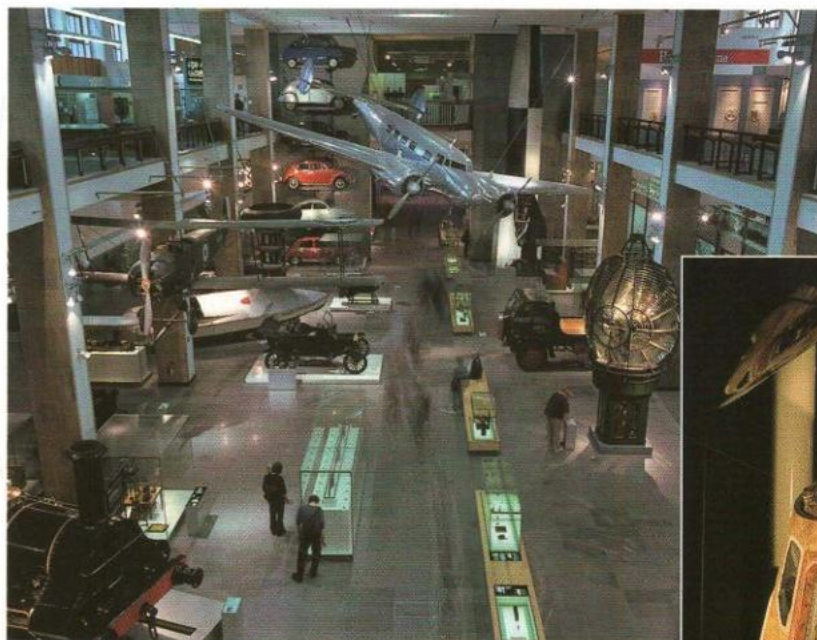
As the situation worsened, a committee was set up to investigate the science collections and in 1912 they published their recommendations in the Bell Report. These recommendations have remained at the heart of the Science Museum's history, and in many respects the Wellcome Wing project has developed directly from them. What did this report say that has kept it so relevant, even 85 years after it was produced?

The Bell Report prophetically set out a vision for the Science Museum's building. It recommended that the Museum should occupy three buildings stretching from Exhibition Road through to

Queen's Gate: the east, centre and west blocks. It suggested that the East Block should be built immediately, and the Centre Block designed a few years later, once experience had been gained in the building and use of the East Block. The West Block was to be built when the need arose.

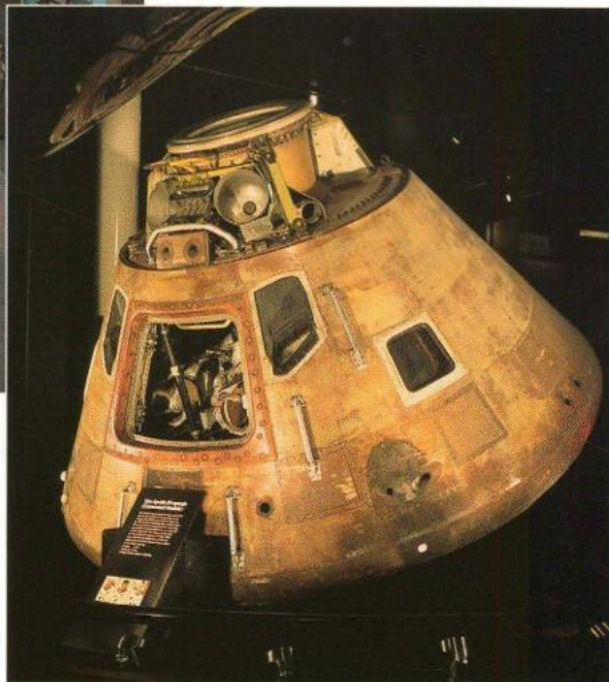
This was not to be. Because of the First World War, the East Block, which should have been completed by 1915, was only opened by King George V in 1928. By this time, the galleries were full to bursting point and no new exhibits could be shown. Although the Museum was severely pushed for space, and the Centre Block was well overdue, the economic upheavals and rearmament programme of the thirties prevented any further expansion work from taking place. Indeed, by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Museum was still only occupying the East Block as well as part of the old 'temporary' arcade buildings, which had been erected over seventy years before.

Although the East Block emerged from the war with only minor bomb damage, the old temporary galleries were completely unusable. Fortunately the decision was soon taken to proceed with the



Left: General overhead view of the 'Making the Modern World Gallery'.

Right: Apollo 10 Command Module, USA, 1969, seen here in the Science Museum Exploration Gallery.



ROTH PICTURES SCIENCE MUSEUM

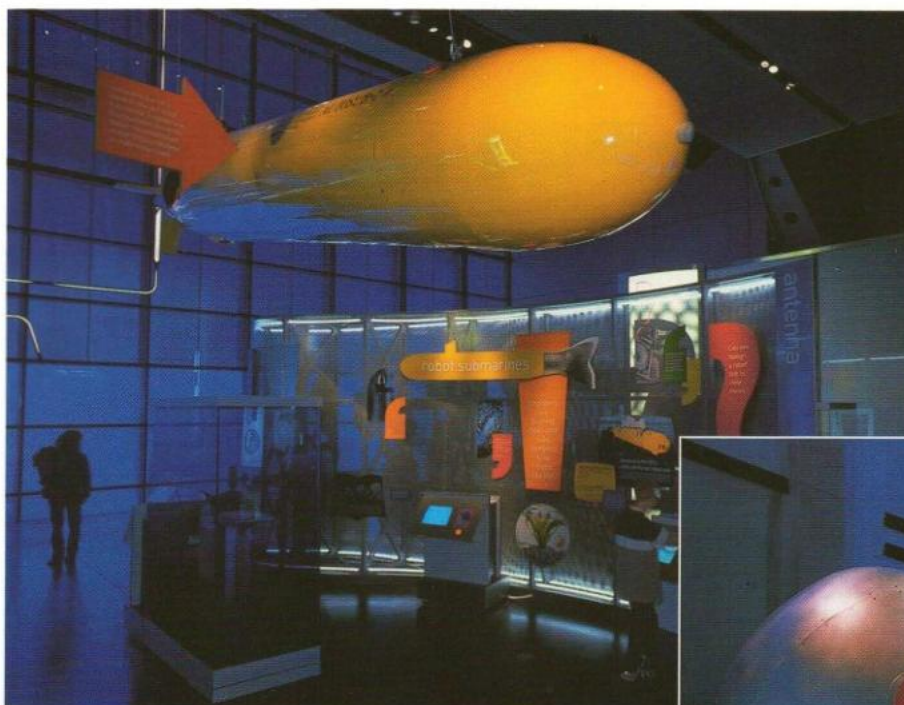
construction of the Centre Block. The ground floor was built first, and was completed by 1951, in time to house the science section of the Festival of Britain. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II opened the completed Centre Block ten years later, in 1961.

According to the Bell Report's proposed scheme, there was still a third block to be built: the West Block. Today this West Block, the Wellcome Wing, has finally been completed, and the plan for the Museum has been realised. But the Bell Report did not just concentrate on the buildings of the Science Museum. It also prescribed the Museum's mission. Unfortunately, in doing so, the Report only exacerbated the problems the Museum faced in displaying both contemporary and historical material.

The Report recommended that the Science Museum should have two separate remits - education and heritage. Its educational remit was to show 'scientific instruments and apparatus, machines and other objects' in order to 'afford illustration and exposition of the various branches of Science within its field and of their applications in the Arts and Industries.' Its heritage remit was to 'preserve appliances which hold honoured place in the progress of Science or in the history of invention.' Ever since the Bell Report first

articulated these two aims, the Science Museum has continuously tried to sustain both. Curators have achieved its educational objectives by using a mixture of historical and contemporary material alongside working models and hands-on exhibits, although the proportions of this mixture have varied over time. As always, continuously updating the contemporary exhibits proved difficult. From the 1920s onwards, the Museum partly solved this problem by inviting scientific companies and associations to hold exhibitions in the Museum, but staff discontinued this approach in recent years. By 1986, when Neil Cossons (later Sir Neil) became Director, it was clear that the Museum was losing the battle to represent contemporary science and industry alongside historical artefacts.

Sir Neil set out to rectify this. By the mid-1990s the Museum was once again looking at building a new wing, the fabled West Block. But this wing was not simply to contain more exhibitions like those in the rest of the Museum. The galleries were to focus specifically on contemporary science, and the entire wing was to place the visitor at its centre: to highlight how science and technology affect our lives today, and to give visitors an opportunity to express their opinions and concerns. This vision would allow the Science Museum to display contemporary science whilst



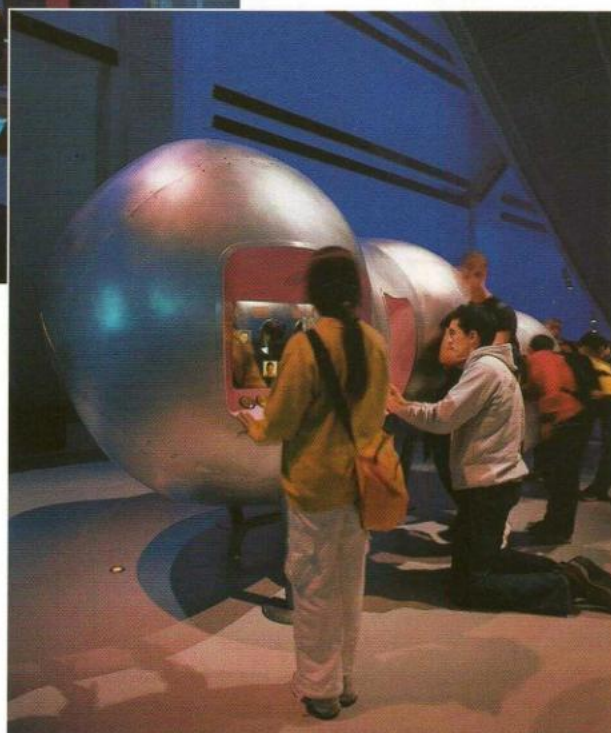
SCIENCE MUSEUM

Left: Autosub, the UK's state-of-the-art robot, in the Antenna area, Wellcome Wing.



Right: Bloids in the Who Am I? gallery, Wellcome Wing.

Left: The Queen, welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress of Kensington and Chelsea, arriving to open the Wellcome Wing of the Science Museum in June.



SCIENCE MUSEUM

freeing up more gallery space for the Museum's growing historical collections.

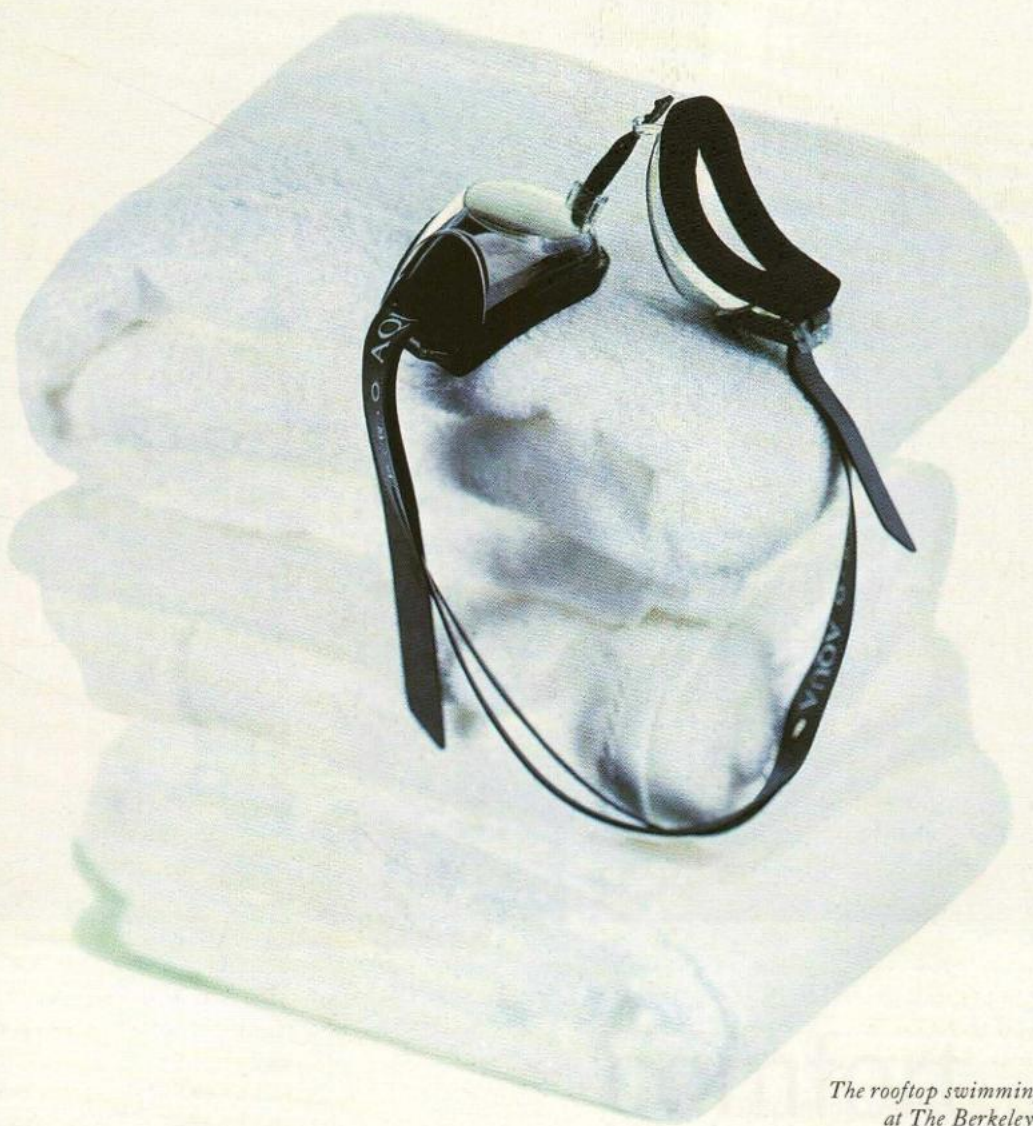
This looked fine on paper; all it needed was tens of millions of pounds. At the beginning of the 1990s few people in the Museum could see where this would come from. It was only with the Wellcome Trust's initial generous grant of £15m (later increased to £17.75m), that the Museum was able to progress the proposal, as it was then in a strong position to go to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £23m. Without the support and trust of these two organisations, together with funding and sponsorship from 24 organisations, the Wellcome Wing would still exist only on paper.

Now it had been given the go-ahead, the content of the Wing crystallised rapidly; four floors of themed exhibitions, complemented by a café, large screen IMAX® theatre, and simulator. The focus is entirely on contemporary science and technology with three floors devoted to recent

advances in digital technology, biomedical science and possible futures for technology. The ground floor exhibition, Antenna, has a 'Science Piazza' environment, where rapidly changing exhibitions break science news stories into the public arena, as well as exploring the background to recent stories featured in the press. Behind the scenes, a team of Museum staff works continuously to keep the Wing up-to-date.

So on 27th June this year, the Queen marked the culmination of four years' work by the Science Museum, by opening both the Wellcome Wing and the Making the Modern World gallery. The Queen was accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke of Kent, who is a Trustee of the Science Museum, the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, and the MP for Kensington and Chelsea, Michael Portillo. Prince Albert, the Queen's great, great grandfather, would surely have approved of this latest realisation of his vision.

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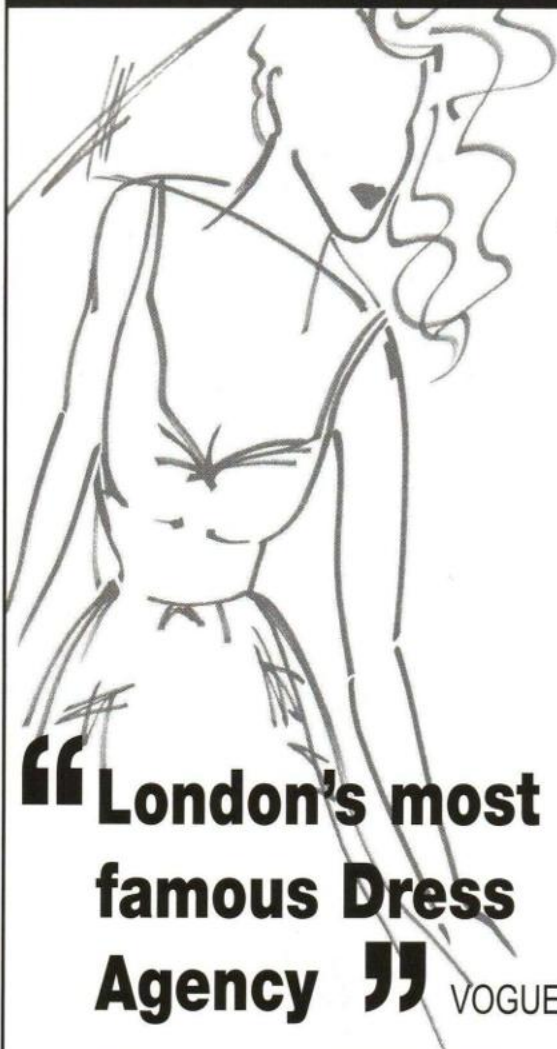
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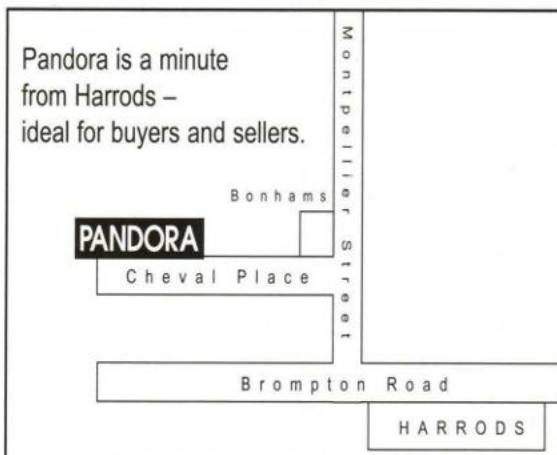
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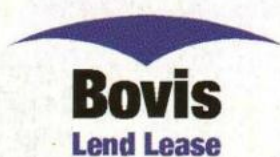


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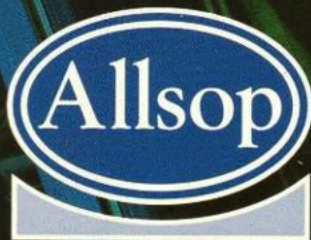


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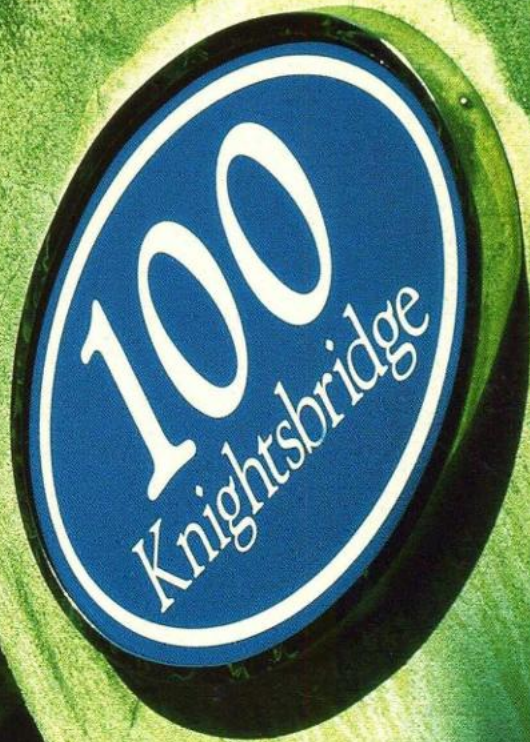
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