

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT

Twenty-fifth Anniversary



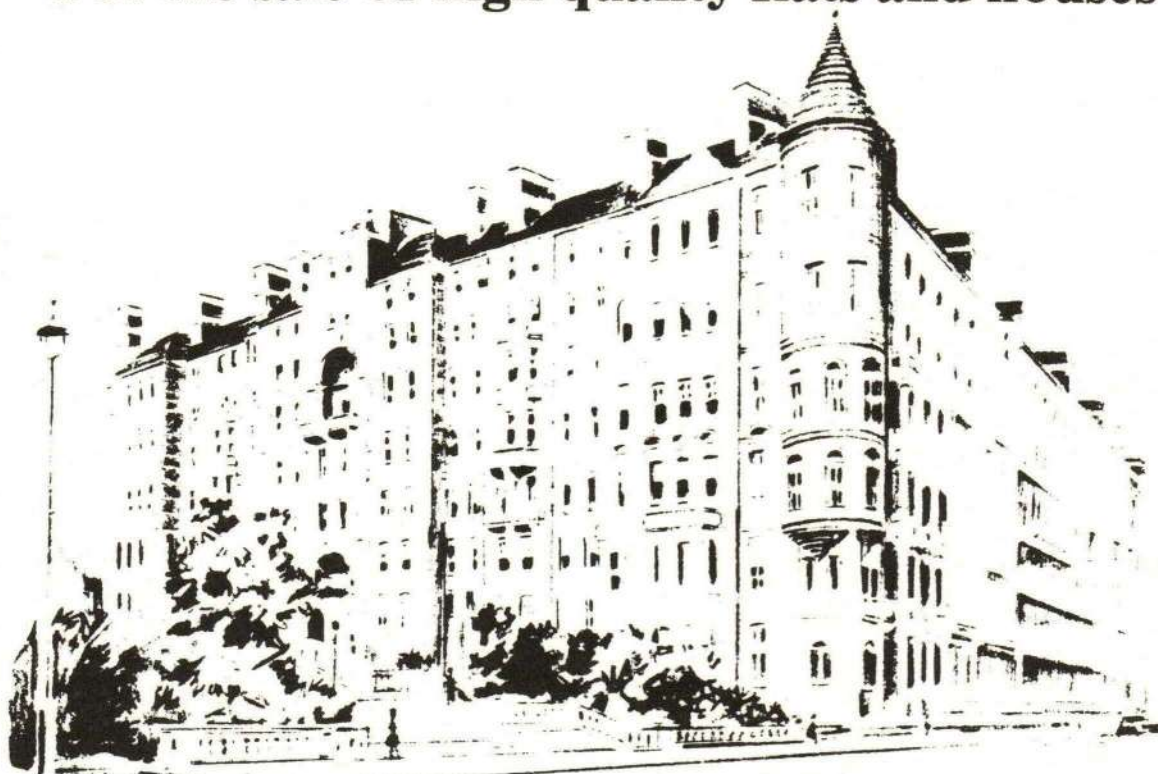
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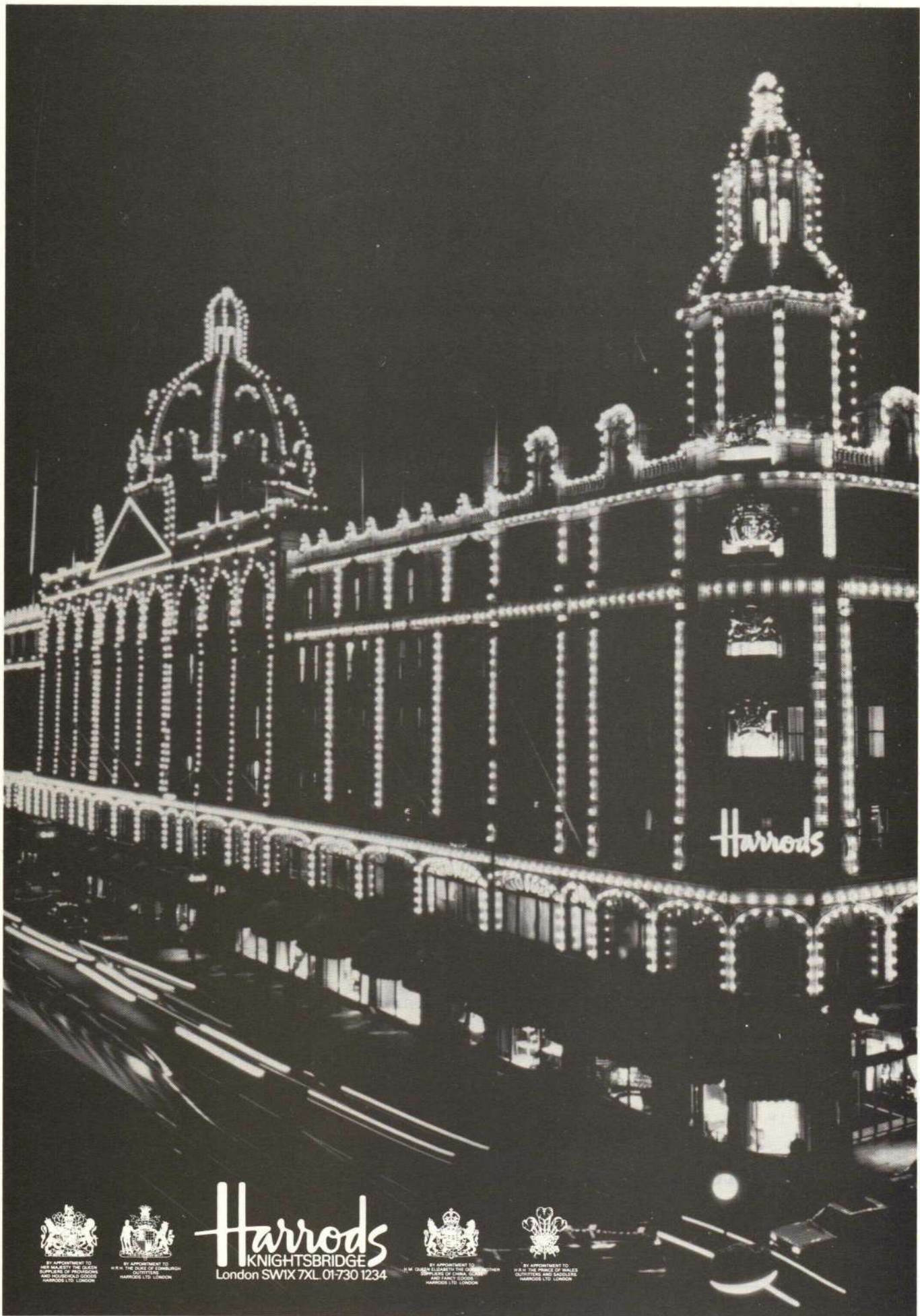
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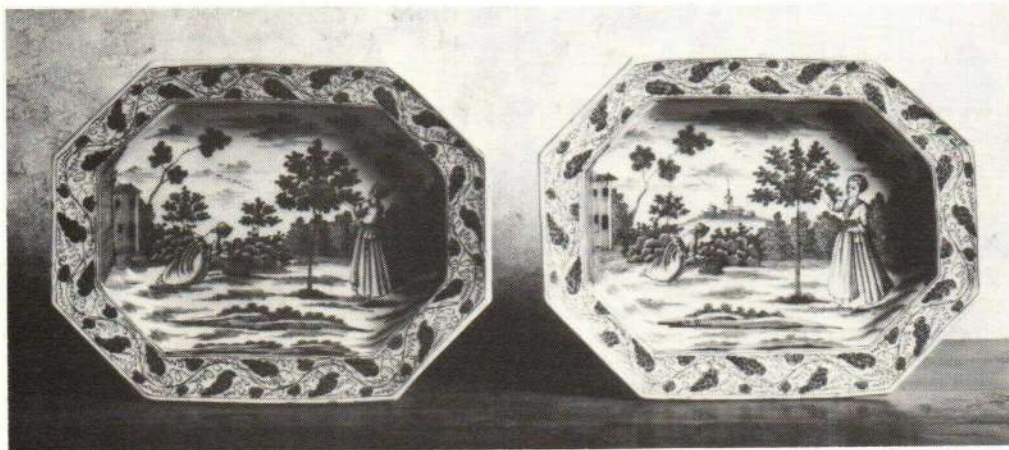
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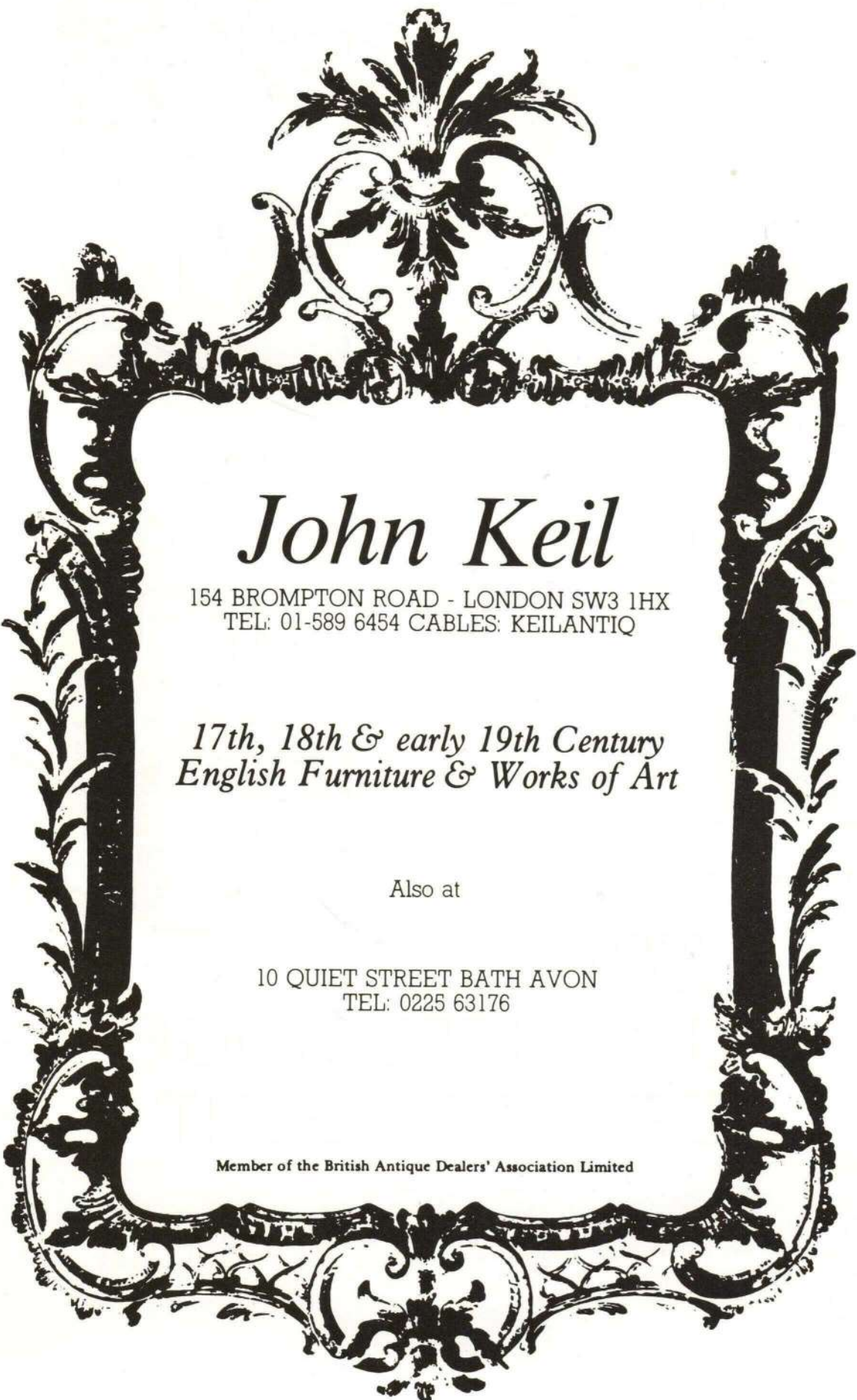
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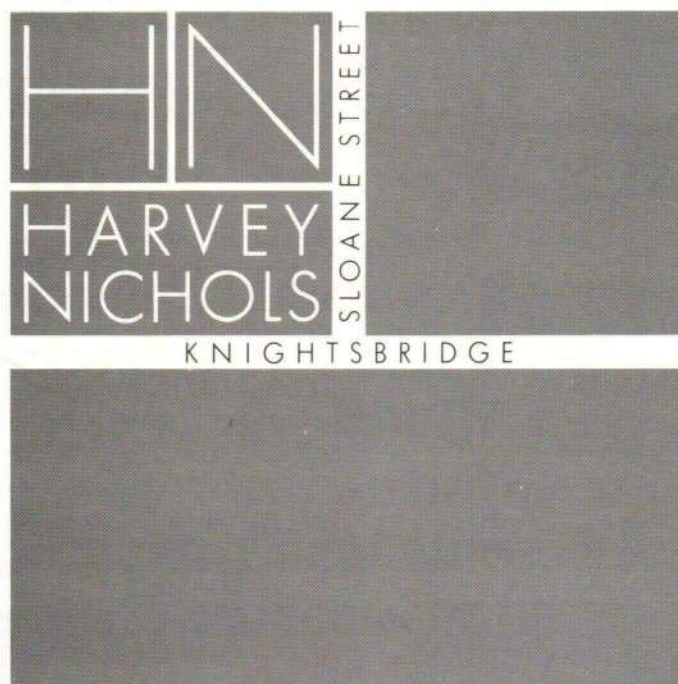
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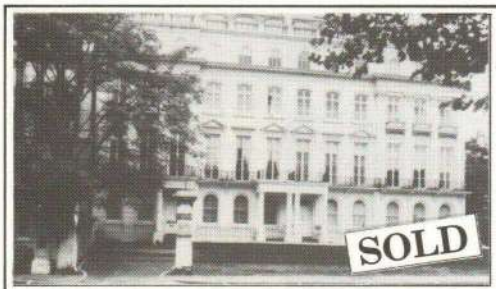
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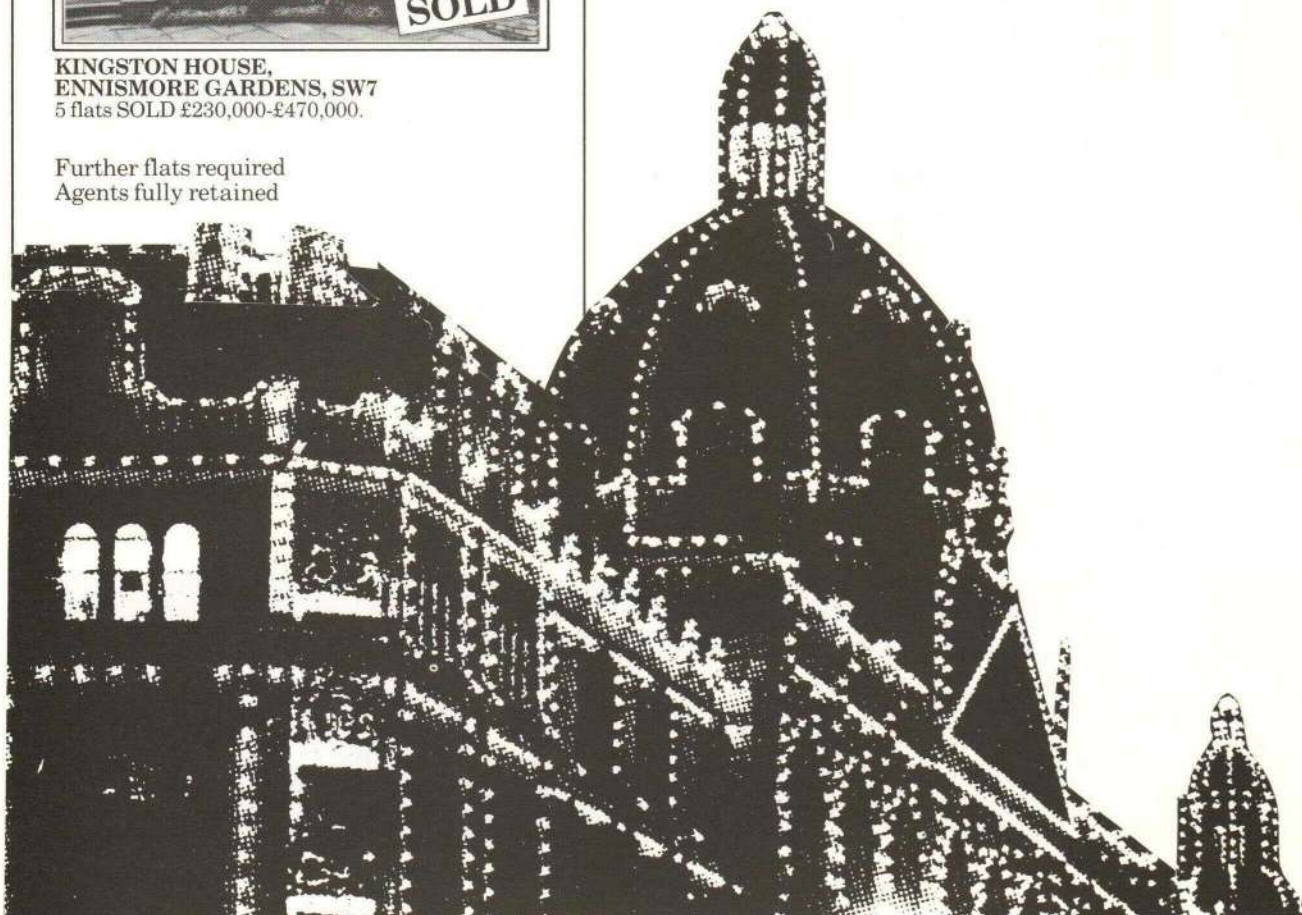
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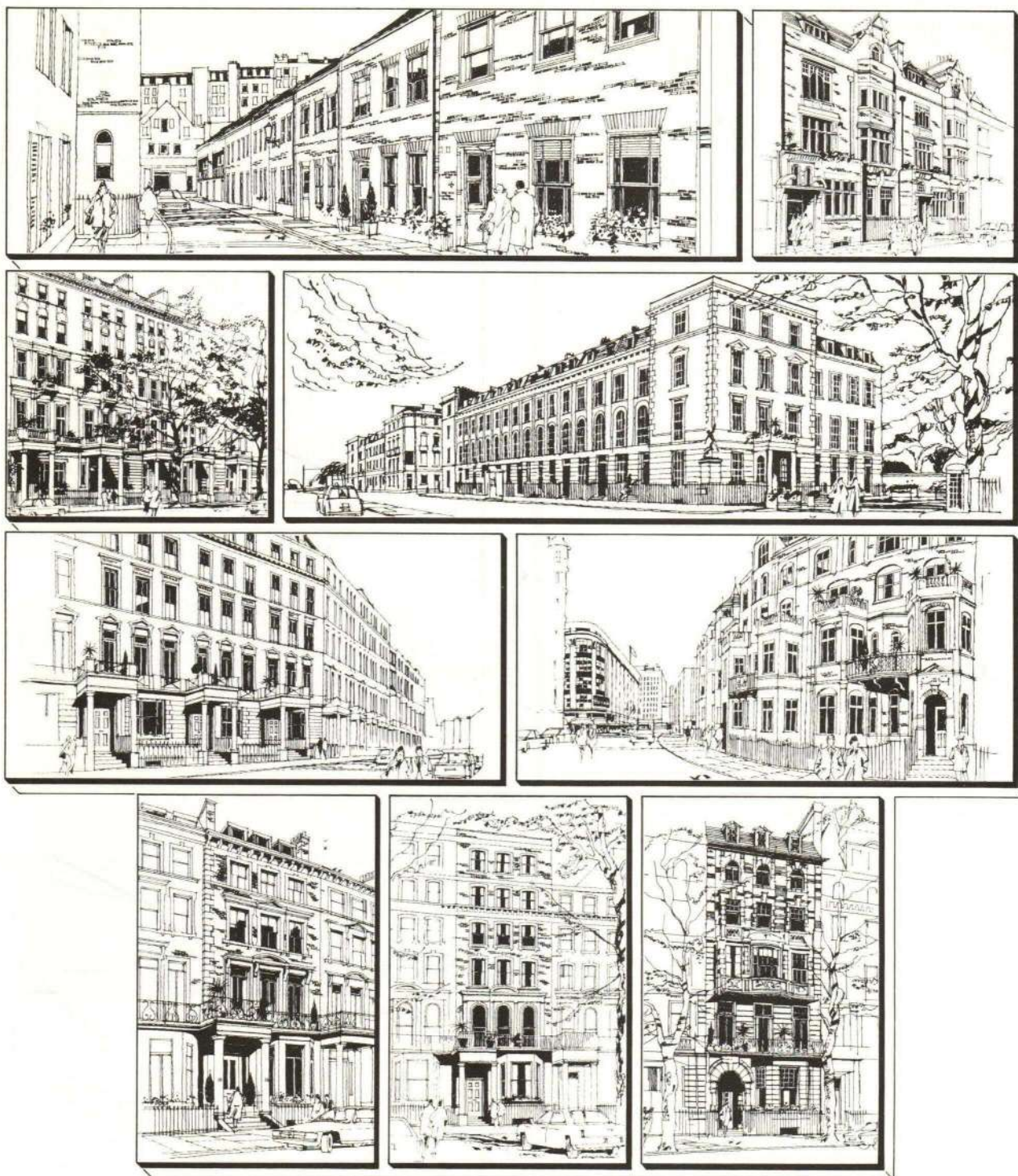
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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

This is a very special issue of the Annual Report in that it commemorates the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Knightsbridge Association, and records the events that took place during the year in celebration.

As we walk through the elegant squares, the quaint streets and familiar architecture of Knightsbridge it is hard to believe that at one time it was threatened by wholesale destruction. The very charm of the area which attracted the developers was destined to be the victim of their attentions. Luckily, some concerned citizens came together to form the Association and to resist massive redevelopment, to bring order and a sense



The Rt. Hon. Norman St. John Stevas, M.P. addressing members of the Association at the Annual General Meeting.

of style to what changes were inevitable, and to fight for the retention of old and loved buildings and streets.

The Association grew rapidly. In conjunction with the local authorities, many fine buildings were saved. Most of Knightsbridge was designated a Conservation Area and the Association was recognised as a statutory body for consultation for all planning matters in the Knightsbridge area.

Of course, the Association did not always see eye to eye with local government, and there were many battles in past years, but generally an harmonious relationship grew up between the Knightsbridge Association and both the City of Westminster and the

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, and a mutual respect which enabled much good work to be done.

This was particularly important as the Association's concerns expanded to include such matters as the cleanliness of the streets, in an age of litter and rubbish pollution; attempting to find some solutions to the problems of traffic and parking and the many other irritations to the local population which diminish the quality of life.

One of the great challenges of our age is to preserve the life of the inner cities. Urgent attention must, of course, be focussed on deprived and decayed areas, but it is very important to act now to retain viable residential areas with mixed communities where citizens live as well as work near the centre. In this way the finances and services of a great city can be maintained, and the Association has fortunately the support of both the great and small businesses in Knightsbridge, which recognise the mutual benefits that flow from our work.

The emergence of the civic and amenity societies has been one of the most heartening trends of latter years. Today's citizens are interested in their surroundings and their environment and want a say in their future. The true conservationist is not, however, a hidebound preservationist, but believes in organic change. The Knightsbridge Association is lucky to have distinguished architects as members, and is always happy to welcome fine modern architecture, provided that it sits as a good neighbour in well-loved and appreciated surroundings.

The work of the Association is performed entirely by busy local citizens as a voluntary task in their so-called spare time and without the benefit of regular professional assistance. Later in the Report is a note by Sir David Croom-Johnson on the early days of the Association; and a short history of Knightsbridge by one of our members, art historian Alicia Salter.

Even in our Anniversary Year there was a great amount of regular work to be tackled and no let up of the pressures on the neighbourhood, and so there is much to report in the following pages.

THE ENVIRONMENT

In Jubilee year, as in any other, the Environment Committee conducts the most important of the Association's activities. At monthly meetings under its resourceful and creative chairman, Richard Robinson, supported by his vice-chairman, Raymond Henley, and our two distinguished architects, Michael Wright and Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, the Committee examined over two hundred different planning applications referred to it by local government. It also conducted many negotiations and site meetings. An encouraging trend is the desire of architects to submit development plans for discussion before making planning applications, thus saving both time and money. Although this means extra work for the Committee it has resulted in many more acceptable solutions to the benefit of all concerned.

Pressures of the property market are such that there is constant danger of over-development. One of the most attractive features of Knightsbridge is the number of houses with their own gardens. Increasingly applications are being submitted to build over parts of these spaces, and the Association has worked hard this year to stop this trend.

It has also worked hard to ensure that roof

extensions and design to windows are in keeping with the local architecture.

Short lets, which are, in essence, unregulated hotel use, are detrimental to the amenity of the area and with the Council's help steps are being taken to eradicate them where they become apparent.

The arrival of satellite TV antennae, a new disturbance to the skyline, is becoming increasingly evident and these can look incongruous above the 18th and 19th century facades. It is not generally realised that planning permission is necessary prior to their erection.

Westminster City Council has been particularly successful in its attempt to control the proliferation of Estate Agents' Boards, which we have wholeheartedly supported. We are keen that the enforcement department of both Councils be strengthened to allow more effective correction of these abuses.

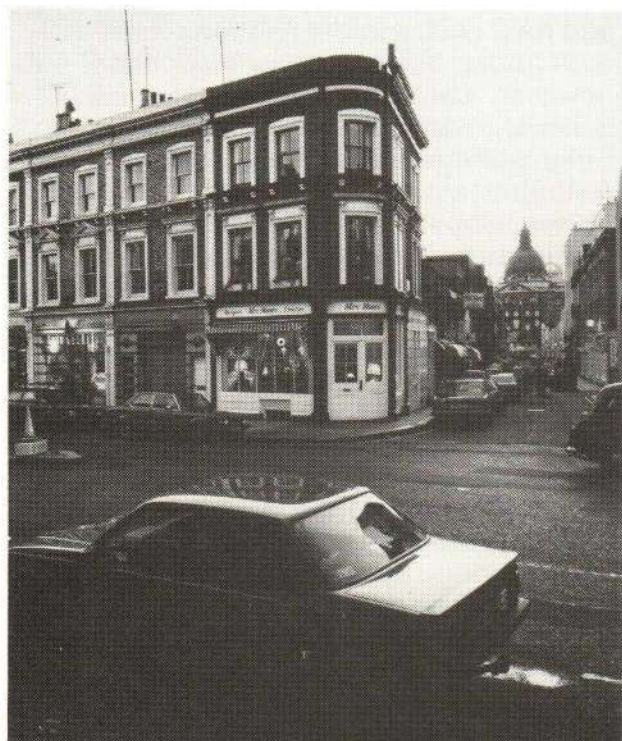
During the year 61-65 Ennismore Gardens were listed by the Department of the Environment, but sadly they felt unable to agree to our request that 9-29 Rutland Street and 1-11 Montpelier Street be added.

Diplomatic buildings — at last repairs and redecoration are being undertaken at the Afghan Embassy, 31 Princes Gate, the dilapidated state of which was causing us grave concern. There is still no progress on no. 16, the former Iranian Embassy, which continues to deteriorate.

58 Princes Gate, belonging to the Libyans, has suffered an enormous amount of internal damage at the hands of squatters, now evicted. 48 Princes Gate, part of the UAE Embassy is also in poor repair.

The Association continues to maintain that diplomatic missions should not be located in the centre of residential neighbourhoods. Not only are the buildings in many cases poorly maintained, there are also the very obvious security considerations.

In order to short-cut existing planning procedures the Government tabled a paper for discussion entitled Uses Classes Order. Together with the local authorities and other amenity and architectural societies we objected most vigorously to certain of these proposals which weakened planning controls, regarded as essential for maintaining the quality of life of residential areas. Some alterations to the paper have



Montpelier Street under threat from developers.



This "Greenhouse" received approval by Kensington planners!

been made and we are watching developments closely.

This year has seen the successful completion of both Knights Arcade and the opening of the new Opera House at the Royal College of Music, both worthwhile improvements to the area.

We are working with Kensington & Chelsea Council on plans to improve the newly designated Brompton Conservation Area.

Mansard roof extensions have continued to threaten parts of Princes Gate as well as the west side of Trevor Square. The Committee together with Westminster City Council are trying to preserve the integrity of this latter terrace in an attempt to maintain its architectural quality. The east side has, over the years, been disfigured by insensitive alterations and garishly painted woodwork.

1987 is likely to bring fuller details of the Royal College of Art's proposals for extensive redevelopment in the area of Jay



Dilapidated embassy in Princes Gate.

Mews and Queen's Gate. We are glad that the facades of 198-200 Queen's Gate are to be retained and hope that the future of 23, 24 and 25 Kensington Gore is assured.

Imperial College continues to work on its proposals for the swimming pool site in Princes Gardens, and we look forward to an early view of those plans.

St. George's Hospital, on Hyde Park Corner, is deteriorating whilst the future of the buildings behind it is decided.

We are at present awaiting the Council's decision on yet another application to build additional flats at roof level on Albert Court, which we hope will be turned down for the same reason as on previous occasions, namely overdevelopment.

The Committee also awaits the decision in respect of nos. 112-120 Brompton Road. We have argued strenuously that some of these buildings are worth retaining and that the office building proposed on the site is out of character with the terrace.



Five houses in this terrace in Brompton Road are under threat of demolition.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

When the previous Chairman of the Traffic and Parking Committee moved away from the area, Dr. Stanley Steel agreed to take temporary charge of this important Committee.

The problems of traffic and parking are of great concern to residents, but their solutions are inevitably slow since so many different interests and authorities have to be consulted.

The Police have agreed that there should be signs in both Rutland Gate and Ennismore Gardens saying "no through way to Brompton Road", and the Committee will pursue this point with Westminster City Council.

With the continued rise in the value of property, the constantly changing ownership and the resultant increase in the number of building works, considerable aggravation has been caused to local residents by the number of skips taking up respark spaces. The Council has agreed, wherever possible, to avoid giving licences for the use of these spaces by skips and there is a special telephone number for the reporting of unauthorised use.

Timing of pedestrian crossings is being kept under constant review by the Committee, although the Council at present considers this to be satisfactory.

Double yellow lines have been painted alongside the Barracks, primarily as a security measure, and offending cars are being towed away. The number of clampings has increased since responsibility was handed over to private firms, and it is certainly an effective deterrent to errant parkers.

The Police are also increasing their efforts to tow away illegally parked cars in Cheval Place.

The timing of the lights at Prince of Wales Gate has been altered to improve the flow of traffic exiting from the Park.

The Trevors suffer from particularly intractable traffic problems. Their parking spaces continue to be filled, and their nights disturbed by customers from local restaurants, and the Committee is taking this up with the Council.

The state of the roads and pavements continues to cause concern. In many cases the trouble is caused by the poor standard of work by the statutory authorities. The Committee continues to press this matter with the Council and also to report the large number of broken and damaged street lamps and to press for their repair.

The Chairman of the Traffic and Works Sub-Committee at Westminster, Councillor Michael Dutt, has been most helpful in trying to solve the problems of our area.

LITTER AND REFUSE

The litter and refuse committee under Frances Rice continued its thankless task of keeping the streets of Knightsbridge from being overwhelmed by the modern disease of discarded rubbish, both domestic and commercial. The work is not only educational, making sure that everyone is aware of the proper times for collections in different areas, and the many and varied services offered by the local authorities, but also calls for constant contact with the cleansing officers and their staffs at both Councils.

During the year, Frances Rice featured in an amusing television film, "Boys from the Smelly Stuff", detailing the work of Westminster City Council's Cleansing Department, including its activities in Knightsbridge.

The Association sponsored a dozen litter bins during the year and has agreed to renew their sponsorship for a further year.

The Committee is most grateful for the particular help it receives from the whole of Westminster's Cleansing Department. Periodic meetings with the Director, Mr. Ian Cooper, are invaluable since all problems may be taken to him with the assurance that they will be heard. This co-operation is reflected through the entire department and its officers, Mr. Robert Seear, who heads the section concerned with sweeping, and Mr. Ian Ross, the chief of refuse collection, and continues down the line to the local cleansing depot and each individual sweeper. It is essential, though, that residents and shopkeepers ensure that refuse is put out at collection times only.

In the coming year the Committee's aim is to seek co-operation of local traders in cleaning up and hopefully improving the general appearance of our local shopping area, particularly Brompton Road.



At the Annual General Meeting: Miss Peggy Lanpher, Miss Georgina Mary Greene, Mrs Kai Leslie, Mr. John Wallis, Mr. Paul Carr, Mr. T. Brenchley.



LOCAL AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

The relationship between the Association and Westminster City Council has grown over the years into a close and fruitful collaboration. This is not to say that the Association is sparing in criticism where it feels that the Council is wrong in its judgements, but all our Committees work well with both officers and members for the benefit of the area.

We have been, and are, lucky to have worked with a group of dedicated and enthusiastic officers who have received our representations with sympathy and understanding, and the ward of Knightsbridge has continuously been represented by active and helpful Councillors.

Outstanding amongst these has always been Councillor Anthony Prendergast, who has himself recently completed 25 years on Westminster City Council. His current colleague is Dr. Michael Dutt, and before him Arthur Johnston, Patrick Gleeson, and John Browe have all represented the ward, and we are grateful to all of them for their work during the past 25 years.

A part of our area lies within the borders of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, and I am pleased to say that we have now come together with them to tackle problems in a co-operative and creative spirit. We are much closer today in our views on the future of residential neighbourhoods and their conservation.

Here too, we are grateful for the co-operation of the officers of the Council and we have been greatly helped by our Councillors, until very recently, Mrs. Joan Fitzwilliams and Charles Pender. Both have now retired from the Council and we look forward to working closely with our two new Councillors for Brompton Ward, Melinda

Libby and David Hudson.

Our relations with central Government have been greatly smoothed during recent years by the interest shown in the Association's work by our Member of Parliament, the Hon. Peter Brooke. As M.P. for Westminster and the City of London, and a busy Minister, Mr. Brooke yet manages to attend many of our public occasions as well as regularly giving help and encouragement to the Association.

The Police, particularly at Gerald Road Police Station, have always been of considerable help and assistance to the Association, particularly in traffic matters, and advice on home protection. Members will recall that in 1981 the Association was addressed at a special meeting by the Commissioner of Police.

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A corner of the Garden Party in Ennismore Gardens.

SOCIAL AND EVENTS

Last year's Annual General Meeting was addressed by one of our distinguished members, the Rt. Hon. Norman St. John-Stevas, M.P. Since Mr. St. John-Stevas had recently been appointed Chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission, it was a great treat to hear his views on matters which affect the work of the Association so closely.

The public events of the past year have been dominated by the celebrations of the Association's twenty-fifth Anniversary. As I reported last year, a special Committee was set up consisting of certain Committee members and other members of the Association and the local community.

As outlined in the paragraph on Heritage, it was decided to mark the occasion by replacing the ornamental lights opposite the Park as a contribution to the environment, and it was also felt that there should be some public celebrations in which members could, if they wished, take part.

Accordingly, in June the Association joined forces with EGRA, which was holding its final garden party in Ennismore Gardens to raise money for the Railings Appeal, and a large marquee was erected beside all the small structures raised for the party. A reception was held for members, friends and guests of the Association, headed by the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea.

The company was treated to a delightful speech by Mrs. Mary Baker, who was formerly Chairman of the London Tourist Board.

Later the marquee was to serve as a wet weather refuge, which is in the tradition of British open air events.

The climax of the year's celebrations was a Reception for members and guests which was held at Hyde Park Barracks in Knightsbridge, and attended by His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales.

Before meeting members and guests, His Royal Highness switched on the first of the ornamental lamps at the Northern entrances to Knightsbridge which the Association had arranged to be restored.

The Reception was attended by several hundred people including the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, and the Chairman of the Civic Trust, Lord Duncan-Sandys, Committee members and former Committee members of the Association, officers and members of the two local Councils, members of the Jubilee Committee, sponsors of the lamp restoration project and many other members and guests. It was an impressive and glittering occasion greatly enjoyed by our members who were most appreciative of the interest which the Prince of Wales has taken in the affairs of the Association.



RECEPTION

in the presence of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales
to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of
the Knightsbridge Association
at Hyde Park Barracks Knightsbridge



The Prince is received by the Chairman of the Knightsbridge Association and the Commanding Officer of Hyde Park Barracks.



The Prince meets the Lord Mayor of Westminster, and Mr. Terence Mallinson and the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea.



The Prince of Wales, Mrs. Carol Seymour-Newton, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Robinson, Mr. A. Brenta.



Prince Charles meeting Mr. and Mrs. John Wallis.



Dr. and Mrs. Julius Grant, Mr. David Duthoit.



The Prince of Wales, Mrs. Joyce Goodman, Mrs. Jean Lyell, Mrs. Rosalie Digby-Seymour.



The Bailiff of the Royal Parks, Mr. Ashley Stephenson, the Mayor and Mayoress of Kensington and Chelsea.



Miss Mary Carson, Mrs. Brownie Heimann, Lieutenant Colonel Seymour Gilbert-Denham, Miss Sarah Wills.



Mr. and Mrs. W. Macpherson, Mr. and Mrs. Crolla.



Miss Ursula Grim, Mrs. Kay Lee-Wright, Mr. Ian Cooper, Mrs. Joyce Goodman.





Mr. Raymond Henley, Miss Sarah Wills, The Prince of Wales, Mr. Neville Labovitch.



H.R.H., Mrs. Jean Lyell, Mr. and Mrs. Terence Digby-Seymour.



Prince Charles, Mr. Jeremy Mackay-Lewis, Miss Diana Jenkins.



The Prince of Wales, Miss Christine Gilbertson, Mrs. Frances Rice.



H.R.H., Mr. A. Brenta, The Marquis Claverino, Miss Zanetti.



The Prince of Wales, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lewis, Mr. A. Kalo, Mr. Jonathan Grey, Mr. Nigel Pollard.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION

By David Croom-Johnson

The Rt. Hon Lord Justice Croom-Johnson, KT, DSC, VRD, was the second Chairman of the Knightsbridge Association.

In 1947 Raphael Street was still a street of terraced two-storey houses, mostly empty, with some small shops. The developments which replaced it destroyed the character of one-seventh of the old Hamlet of Knightsbridge, as it was called in the voting list. (There was none of the modern re-christening by estate agents of "Montpelier Village"). The next event was the idea of Harrods to move their auction to the large block which is now Cheval House, at the corner of Montpelier Walk and Cheval Place. The idea of pantechnicons loading and unloading daily was fearsome. Harrods even suggested that the cars of the customers could be safely accommodated in their existing car park.

The local residents banded together and forced a public enquiry at Westminster City Hall. Our objections were successful. I was always convinced that what turned the scales in the inspector's mind was that at lunch time on the first day one of the objectors' wives went out and bought a pretty hat! The only puzzle was where she bought it in Charing Cross Road, which is where the City Hall then was.

After that, we formed the Association, as

the obvious thing to do. Its area was restricted then to the old hamlet. It was not until 1977 at the invitation of Westminster City Council, we agreed to spread through to the other side of the Hole in the Wall.

Next, we were threatened with having the Basil Street fire station moved either to the Cheval Place site or to Bonhams. We successfully resisted that. Leonard Bonham had made his premises available for large meetings and had become our first Chairman.

After that the City Council recognised us as a force to be reckoned with, and our relationship became excellent. We were in particular consulted about the introduction of controlled parking.

My chief regret is that we could do nothing to prevent the erection of that monstrous eyesore, the tower of Knightsbridge Barracks, known to me as Spence's Folly. That was because planning restrictions do not apply to the Crown. Perhaps one day they will. Perhaps one day the tower, which shuts off the sunlight from an appreciable area of the Park, and ruins the sense of being in the country when one is in the Park, will come down.

HERITAGE

It is the Association's endeavour not only to protect the neighbourhood, but also to restore some of the lost embellishments of the area and to encourage others to do so.

During the past years it has promoted the planting of trees, given grants to Garden Committees in the squares and offered advice to property owners on where to obtain replacements for lost finials and railings.

One of the most enterprising restoration schemes was undertaken by the Ennismore Gardens Railings Appeal Committee, led by Terence Digby-Seymour and John Wallis, which set out to restore the railings round

Ennismore Gardens which were removed during the war, and which has been contained by chicken wire for so many years. This enterprising group raised the necessary money from residents and well-wishers and with a final generous grant from Westminster City Council, has been able to complete the restoration during the year.

As its 25th Anniversary Project, the Association adopted John Wallis's original dream of replacing the ornamental lamps which had once graced the pillars opposite the Park along Knightsbridge and Kensington Road.

AT THE GARDEN PARTY



Mr. Pen Campbell, Professor and Mrs. Martin Battestin.



Mrs. McClure-Smith, Lady Gillett, Mrs. Bartosik, Rear Admiral Bartosik, Sir Robin Gillett.



Mrs. Mary Baker and Mr. Jocelyn Stevens.



Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Burton and Mrs. Cooke.

These were the original gas lamps at the northern entrances to Knightsbridge. However, with the change over to the use of electricity for street lighting, they were removed from the pillars and replaced by tall, modern free standing lamps at the kerbside.

A crash programme was put into effect with the help of Mr. Nigel Pollard, head of Westminster's street lighting department; the original manufacturers of the lamps were found, and old drawings and photographs examined. Approaches were made to those responsible for buildings along the frontage, including South Lodge Flats Ltd., Graceplan Property Co. Ltd., Brenta AB Construction Ltd., Yunak Corporation NV through their architects YRM Associates, and St. Anselm Development, and these companies generously agreed to contribute to the restoration of the lights which will, we believe, enhance their properties and the neighbourhood.

The first lights were ready to be switched on by His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, on December 10th and final work will be undertaken to complete them in the next few months.

FINANCES

Our finances, under the watchful eye of our new honorary treasurer, Christine Gilbertson, remain stable and after a slight dip in the previous year our membership subscriptions in the current year are up. Expenditure has been heavy during the past twelve months due to our increased activities, but it is hoped that renewed efforts will continue to keep the funds in a satisfactory condition to meet any eventualities. We should be particularly grateful to hear of new residents who might be interested in joining the Association.

The Committee is grateful to all those who have supported the 25th Anniversary project, especially

South Lodge Flats Ltd., Graceplan Property Co. Ltd., Brenta AB Construction Ltd., Yunak Corporation NV, St. Anselm Development Co. Ltd., YRM Associates, Mr. N.E. Pollard & Westminster City Council, Coutts & Co, Harvey Nichols and Harrods.

APPRECIATIONS

It is usual to end my Report with thanks to those helpful individuals who have not already been mentioned in the different sections. This being a special year, there are so many people and organisations to whom the Committee would like to express their grateful thanks. Since it is impossible to include them all, it is hoped that any omissions will be forgiven.

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Seymour Gilbert-Denham, kindly allowed the Association to hold its Reception at Hyde Park Barracks. The party owed much of its success to the efforts of Mrs. Nina Wallis and we are grateful to all those who agreed to serve on the special Anniversary Committee.

The business houses of Knightsbridge have, as usual, been generous in their appreciation of the Association's work; in particular we thank Harrods and Harvey Nichols for their exceptional support.

Raymond Burton and Joyce Goodman have been even more generous with their time and expertise in helping to produce this expanded Annual Report and I am most grateful to our contributors whose articles have enhanced this document and provided such interesting reading.

In this special edition I would like to thank my Committee and the Chairmen of the sub-committees for their great contribution of time and talent to the Association, and



Carol Seymour Newton, Hon. Secretary, and Richard Robinson, Chairman of the Environment Committee, answering questions at the A.G.M.

they, I know, join with me in expressing deep appreciation to our Honorary Secretary, Carol Seymour-Newton, who not only provides all the administration for the normal working of the Association, but also made possible by her work and devotion the extra activities of this anniversary year.

For 25 years, the Committee has been sustained by the support and enthusiasm of the members of the Knightsbridge Association. We are grateful to all those public spirited people, the residents and business houses of Knightsbridge, whose membership makes it possible for the Association to continue its work.

Neville Labovitch
December, 1986

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SOME ASPECTS OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE

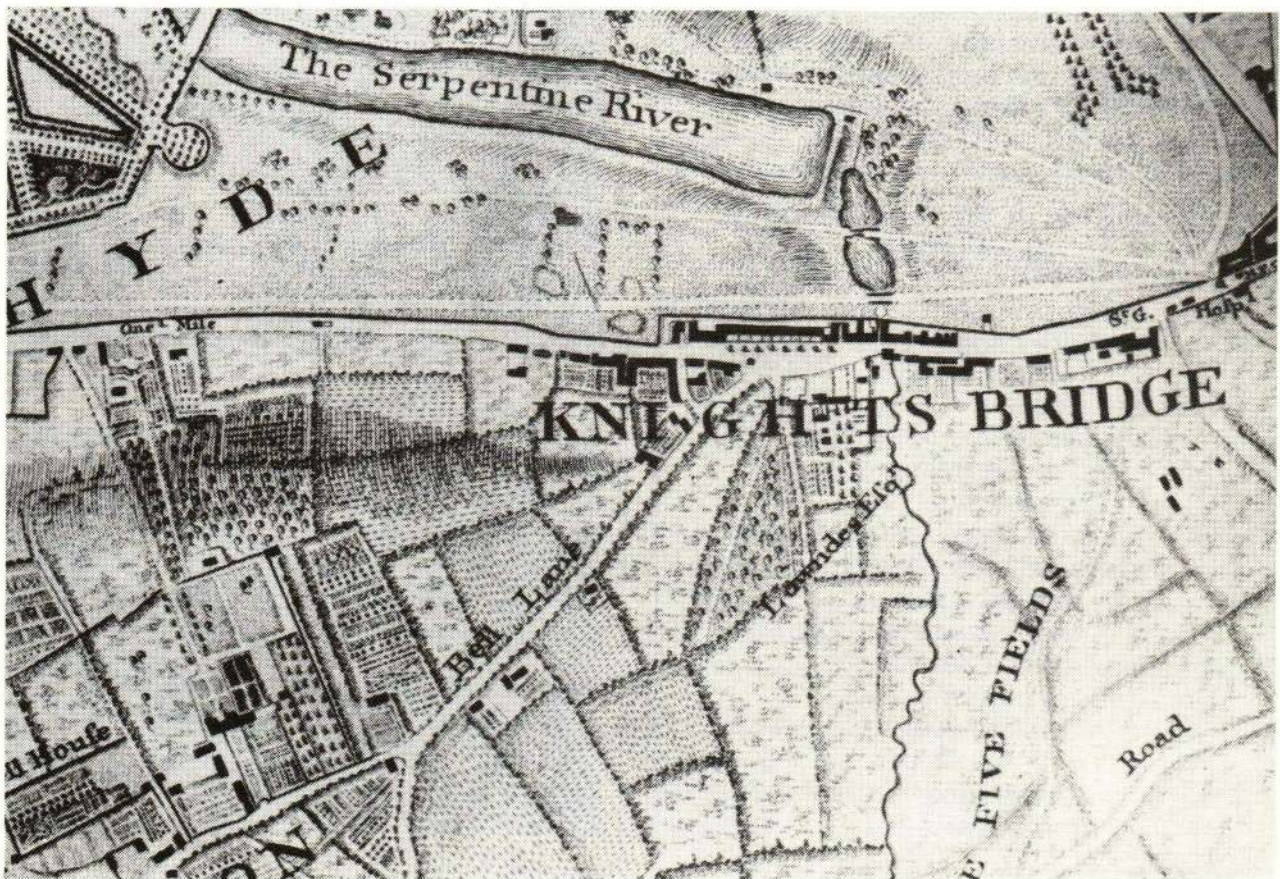
by
ALICIA SALTER

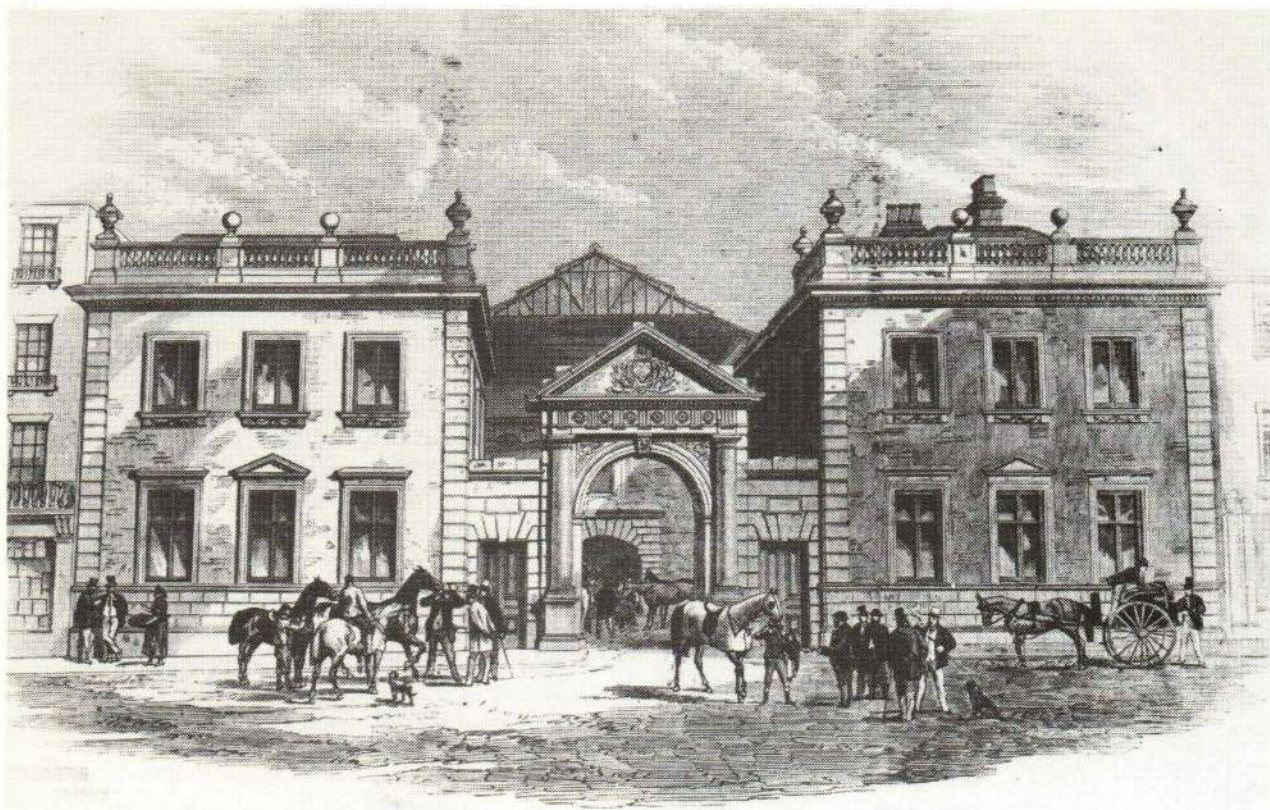
*Alicia Salter, M.A., is a lecturer and art historian
and a member of the Knightsbridge Association.*

The area now known to the world as Knightsbridge, was originally but a small part of the great forest which ringed the old city of London and of which the Royal Parks are the vestigial remains. Teeming with wild life, the forest provided both Saxon and Norman Kings with a limitless supply of animals for the chase. So much so that when Henry VIII confiscated this small area from the Abbey of Westminster at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, he kept the Manor of Hyde for his own use.

The Manor of Eia, of which the hamlet of Knightsbridge was a part, was bounded on the north by the Via Trinobantia (now Oxford St.) on the south by the River Thames, on the east by the Tyburn and on the west by the Westbourne. This small rivulet which rose in what is now Paddington, proved to be one of the dominant influences on the formation of Knightsbridge, the point at which it crossed the rough track running west to the village of Fulham, giving its name to the surrounding area.

Rocque's map of Knightsbridge 1750, showing the River Westbourne where it crosses the Knightsbridge Road, winding its way through the Five Fields. Bell Lane is the present day Brompton Road and Halfway House is the small dot in the middle of the top road.





The new "Tattershall's" at Knightsbridge-Green 1865.

The name Knightsbridge has two possible origins: either, it simply describes the rough stone bridge known ever since Edward the Confessor's time as KYNESBYRIG or it recalls the quarrel of two knights who were on their way to visit the Bishop of Fulham before setting out on the Crusades, who had a misunderstanding and fought a duel to settle their differences.

This point is now marked by Albert Gate and it was here that Thomas Cubitt, in 1841, spent £20,000 of his own private money to cover up the open sewer (as the Westbourne had become) and erect a pair of handsome gate piers to form the grand entrance to his new development of Belgrave Square.

To right and left of this gate he built two of the largest mansions Londoners had ever seen. Because they failed to attract tenants immediately, i.e. 'be taken' they were irreverently dubbed 'Malta' and 'Gibraltar' by the Music Halls. One of these houses still exists to-day as the French Embassy, bought for £25,000. It was the first embassy to buy its own freehold in London.

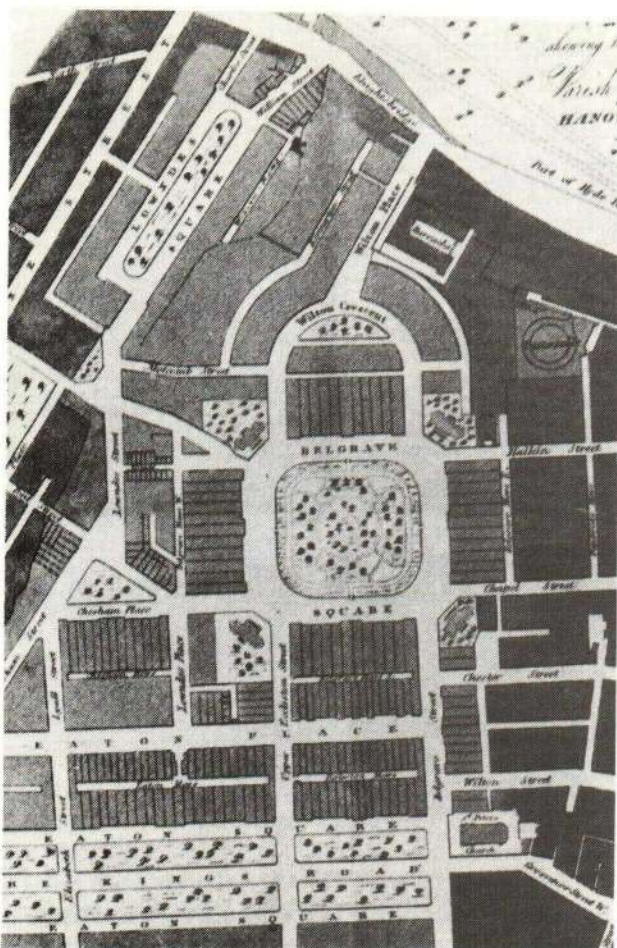
By the Nineteenth Century this same river Westbourne had become no more than an open ditch carrying waste and surface water along a circuitous route before discharging its effluent into the Thames in the grounds of Chelsea Hospital. Now known as the Ranelagh Sewer the Commissioners of

Sewers inspected it once a year by walking its entire length. Just south of the Knights' Bridge it skirted a marsh desolate area called 'Five Fields' which belonged to Lord Grosvenor and formed part of the Manor of Ebury.

George III when rebuilding Buckingham Palace as his principal family home in 1762, had wished to buy a strip of land on the eastern perimeter to prevent the Royal Gardens from being overlooked. His request was refused but the proximity of the Royal Family added 'cachet' to the neighbourhood and in the late Eighteenth Century a single row of houses were built along its outer edge — bordering the lane we now know as Grosvenor Place.

Halkin Street, Chapel Street and Chester Street all ran way into these Fields, but were blocked off at the western end, not only to stop stock escaping but also to put a halt to urban traffic trying to by-pass the tolls levied at Hyde Park Corner. The only route across the Five Fields was a dirt track — the Kings' Road — originally a private royal route running from St. James' Palace to Hampton Court. An essential to any development was the rerouting of this track.

In the second half of the year 1824, an agreement was worked out with the Grosvenor Estate. Thomas Cubitt acquired the major portion of the land to be



Belgravia.

developed on a long lease while Seth-Smith, a builder on the Grosvenor Estate, retained responsibility for the north side of the square and the area between it and the Knightsbridge Road, present day Wilton Crescent, Wilton Street, Motcomb St. and Kinnerton Street.

The name given to the new development was 'Belgrave', this being the second title of the Earl of Grosvenor and came from a small village near Leicester.

Of the three major developers of the Estate only Cubitt emerged solvent. No mean businessman, he arranged for his financial liabilities to be underwritten by a syndicate headed by a Swiss financier and Director of the Bank of England, William Haldimand. This arrangement also had the happy effect of solving any design or planning problems because he thereby had access to the services of their very able architect George Basevi Jnr. (1794-1840).

Basevi was a pupil of John Soane and eventually became overall architect and planner to the whole project. His signature is on the entrance porch of No. 31. The houses on the entire Estate were designed in a strictly hierarchical order, the grandest to be in the Square the next in Eaton Place (now

Eaton Square) and the smaller ones in the adjoining streets.

All four terraces in Belgrave Square have elaborate central sections, with three-quarter attached Corinthian columns at first and second storey level. Above a heavy cornice the attic storey is topped by a balustrade and urns; sculpture in Coade stone adds to the decorative ensemble. The Duchess of Kent, Queen Victoria's mother, lived at No. 36 for a time and requested from Cubitt a porch so that members of the Royal Family could alight from their carriages in secrecy. The four free-standing corner villas, placed most unusually at an angle of 45 degrees to the terraces, were independent commissions.

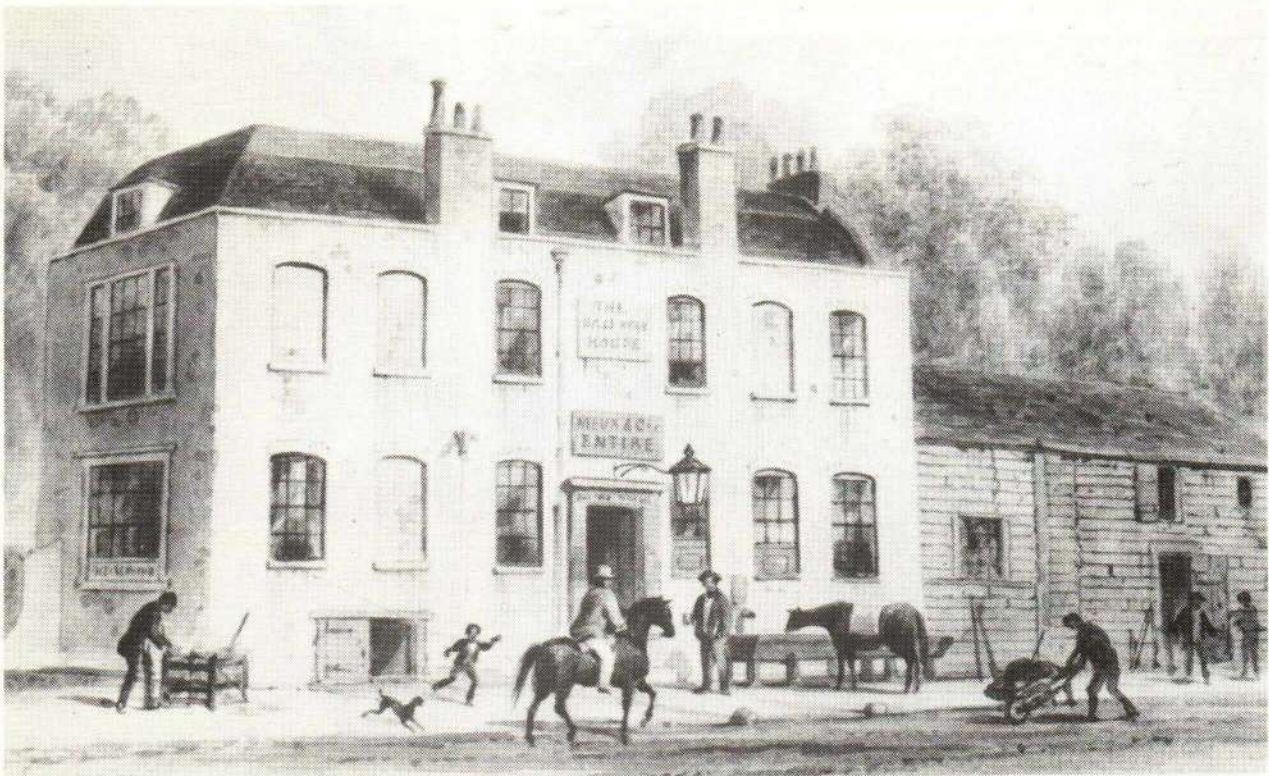
Leading architects such as Kendall, Smirke and Hardwicke designed them and to this day they have some of London's finest interiors. The Estate was an immediate success, attracting the most fashionable in society. It had the unique distinction of being the subject of some eighty lines of heroic verse by one of Cubitt's tenants: a Mrs. Gascoigne:

Such was Belgravia once — a waste
unknown
Behold that desert now — a gorgeous
town.
Thine be the praise O Cubitt — thine the
hand
That being gave to what thy mind had
planned,
That caused Belgravia from the dust to
rise
Thy might to prove — thy name
t'immortalise.

Knightsbridge begins at Hyde Park Corner. Two simple lodges, each with a turnstile, either side of a large branched oil lamp marked the Hyde Park Corner Turnpike in 1721. To the north stood the wall bordering Hyde Park and to the south that of Green Park.

Always a focal point as London's most westerly entrance, Hyde Park Corner became even more important after the Duke of Wellington made Apsley House his official residence.

Numerous grandiose designs had already appeared in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century. Robert Adam proposed two separate entrances to each of the Royal Parks, to be set opposite each other and each comprising a screen and arch. John Soane designed an enormous new palace for George IV in the north west corner of Green Park, with a triumphal arch as its entrance.



Halfway House, Kensington Road, T. H. Shepherd (1793-1859).

Hyde Park Corner today has both a Screen and a Triumphal Arch, but both designed by Decimus Burton in 1825 and 1846 respectively. In 1912 The Quadriga, now above the Triumphal Arch at the top of Constitution Hill, replaced a huge equestrian statue of the 'Iron Duke' which was banished to Aldershot.

St George's Hospital has always been a landmark. Originally a 'country house' built by the Earl of Lanesborough in the early Eighteenth Century, it boasted the distinguished address of 'No. 1 Knightsbridge'. After a disagreement over the proposed move to Pimlico, many of the Subscribers and Physicians of the Westminster Infirmary took out a long lease on Lanesborough House, renaming it St. George's Hospital in 1733. It was remodelled by William Wilkins in 1831.

Tattersalls stood just behind the Hospital, attracting huge crowds on 'Settling Days'. An open gateway led into a garden like enclosure with a single tree in the centre of a gravel path. Just beyond was the Subscription Room and stabling for a hundred horses, for it was also the headquarters of the Jockey Club which held twice weekly sales in winter. Here the experts in horseflesh came to buy and sell, exchange information and hear the latest racing gossip. The Prince Regent was one of its earliest and most influential patrons.

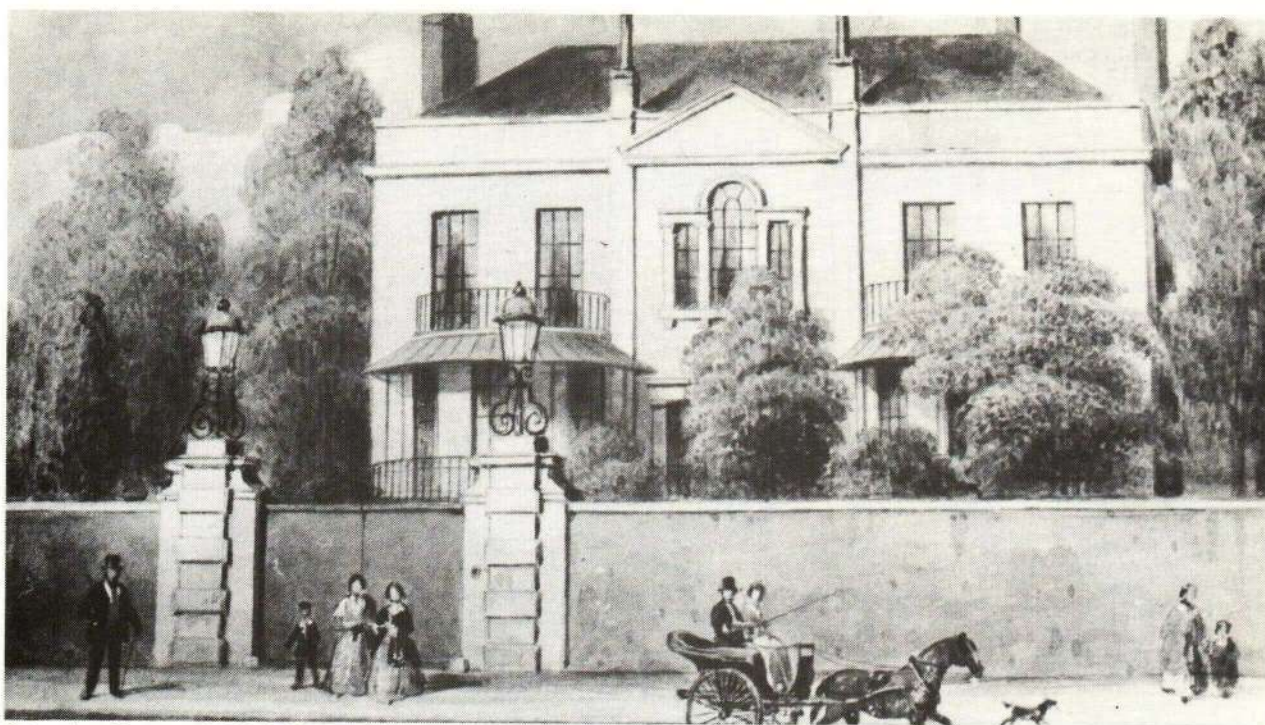
The founder was Richard Tattershall who

started life as a stud groom to the second Duke of Kingston who lived at Kingston House, 'No 3 Knights bridge'.

After the Duke's death in 1774, Tattershall disposed of the stud very profitably but was stopped by an injunction taken out by the Duke's family from paying its results to the Duke's widow, Elisabeth Chudleigh, one of the great beauties of her day who, after the death of her husband in 1773, was accused of bigamy and stood trial in Westminster Hall in front of the Queen, the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family.

Eight years earlier he had obtained a 99 year lease on the land behind St George's Hospital. When this lease was up in 1865 Tattersalls moved to Knightsbridge Green, where they had a two acre plot which it was rumoured had been an old plague pit, which probably explains why it was then still undeveloped. Today the same Rostrum and Rotunda which once graced Tattersalls in Knightsbridge now stand in their third home in Newmarket.

When the Great Exhibition was set up in 1851, the two mile stretch between Knightsbridge Green and Kensington remained predominantly rural, most of it being under cultivation as Nurseries and Market Gardens. The road was extremely dangerous and as late as 1830 travellers would wait until a large enough group had assembled before making the hazardous journey.



Kingston House, c1855 built 1770 water colour by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd.

The owners of the notorious inn — Halfway House — a group of shabby buildings, water troughs and stables, had by tradition been sympathetic to footpads and highwaymen, giving them shelter and an escape route. When the inn was finally pulled down in 1846 to make way for a new entrance into the Park, the present Prince of Wales Gate, a secret staircase was found in the thickness of the walls leading from a small room into the stables behind.

Knightsbridge Barracks dominates the road today. The unusual dimensions of the site have always determined the design and even now account for the unpopular tower block. There used to be two sets of barracks in this small area, that of the Foot Guards just behind Tattersalls (on demolition the Parade Ground became the site of St. Pauls Church) and the Horse Guards.

Association with the army goes back to the Eighteenth Century when soldiers were billeted in the Hamlet adding a noisy and boisterous note to village life. They would sit on the long benches on the edge of the Park to have their wigs powdered daily. In 1795 it was decided they should have proper accommodation and barracks were built to house 600 men and 500 horses.

Sixty two years later a new Riding School and Stables were added by Philip Hardwicke. The pediment and clock were retained by Sir Basil Spence when he rebuilt the complex in 1966, and look sadly out of scale on their modern base.

Kingston House occupied one of the finest sites in Knightsbridge, opposite Halfway House and overlooking the Park; it marked the most westerly point of the hamlet. It was built by Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston.

William, Lord Listowel bought the property after her death and continued to buy up parcels of land eventually owning twenty-one acres. His heirs leased a large section of this land to John Elger (1801-88) a successful developer who had worked on the Grosvenor Estates in the 1830's. Like Cubitt he periodically employed an architect.

Though he died before their completion, Harvery Lonsdale Elmes (1814-47) was very probably involved in the planning and design of Princes Gate and Princes Terrace (now the eastern side of Ennismore Gardens).

The mid Nineteenth Century therefore saw two interesting and carefully planned developments in Knightsbridge, one on its eastern and one on its western extremity. Such was their success that even today they command high prices on the property market.

Lack of space has forced many omissions from this brief account while much historical research remains to be done on this extraordinary little corner of London which, in spite of its consistent popularity, belongs to no one parish, and therefore remains outside the official fields of research.

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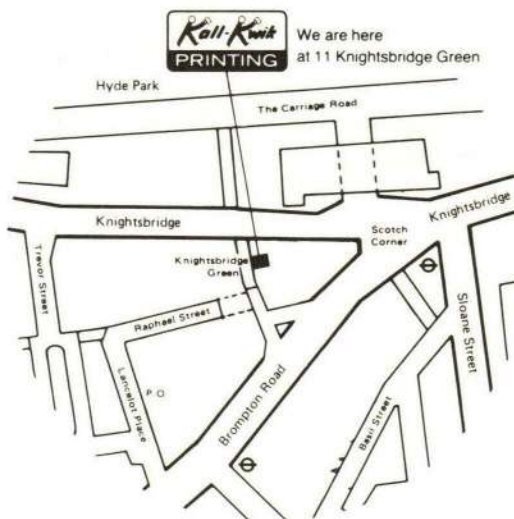
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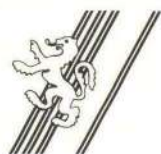
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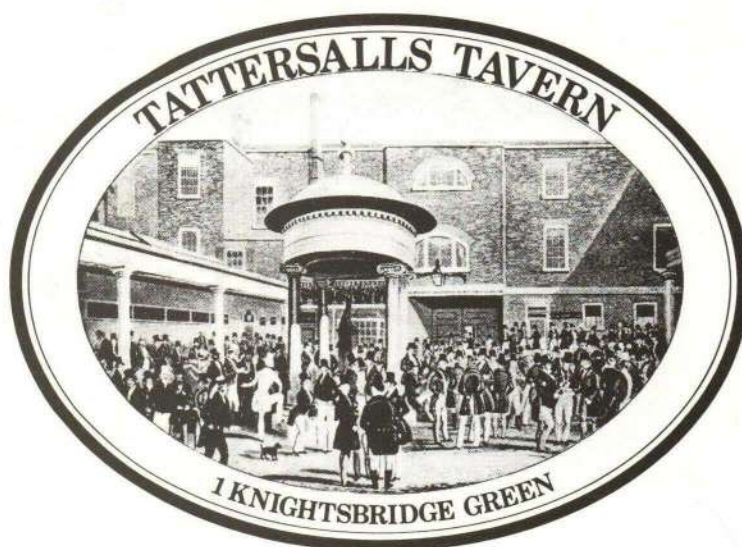
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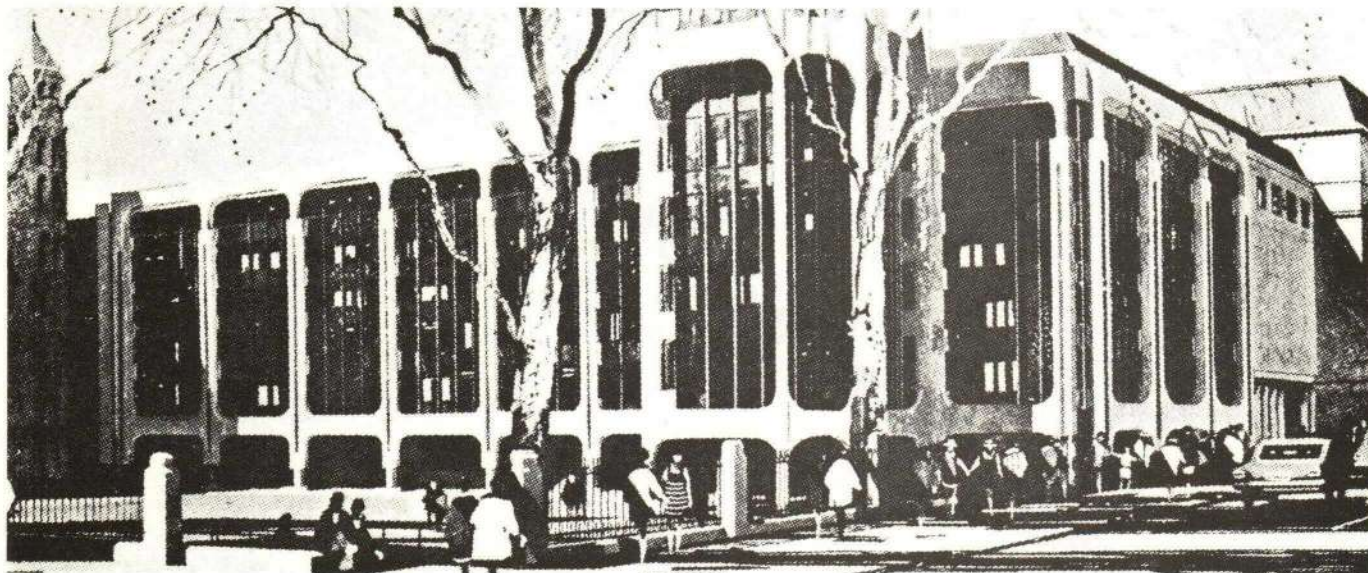
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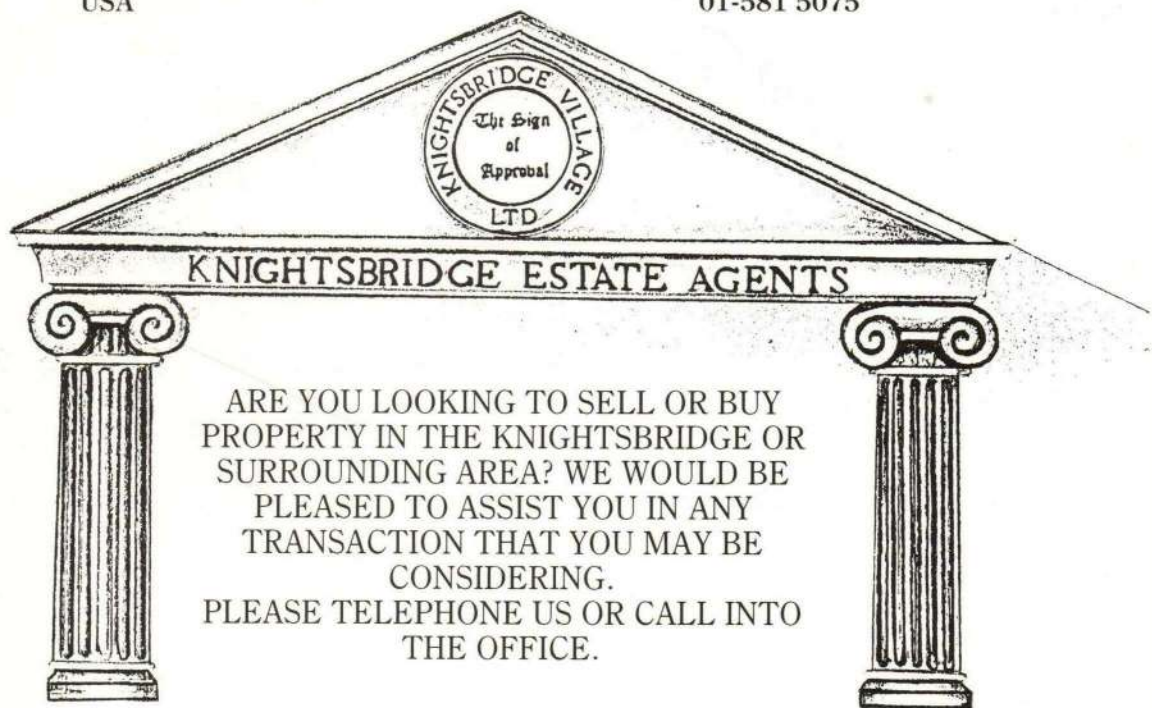
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