THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL REPORT 1981

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THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

founded by Reginald Blunt in 1927
to protect and foster the amenities of Chelsea

President
THE RT. HON. THE LORD CHALFONT, P.C., O.B.E., M.C.

Vice-President
THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Council

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Vice-Chairman: ARTHUR GRIMWADE, ESQ., F.S.A.
JON BANNENBERG, ESQ.
DENIS BROODBANK, ESQ., R.I.B.A.
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IAN W. FRAZER, ESQ., F.C.A.
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MRS. BETTY WOOLF

Hon. Treasurer
WILLIAM HAYNES, ESQ.

Hon. Secretary (Administration)
MISS JOYCE KNIGHT.

Hon. Secretary (Planning)
MRS. EILEEN HARRIS, M.A., PH.D.

Assistant Hon. Secretary
MARK DORMAN, ESQ.

Hon. Membership Secretary
MISS BARBARA TOWLE, M.B.E.

Hon. Auditor
FRAZER WHITING & CO.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY
1, Tedworth House,
St. Leonard's Terrace, S.W.3.
Registered Charity 276264

CONSTITUTION

1. (1) The Chelsea Society shall be regulated by the Rules contained in this Constitution.
(2) These Rules shall come into force when the Society has adopted this constitution at a General Meeting.
(3) In these Rules the expression "existing" means existing before the Rules come into force.

OBJECTS

2. The Objects of the Society shall be to preserve and improve the amenities of Chelsea particularly —
(a) stimulating interest in the history, character and traditions of Chelsea;
(b) encouraging good architecture, town planning and civic design, the planting and care of trees, and the conservation and proper maintenance of open spaces;
(c) seeking the abatement of nuisances;
(d) making representations to the proper authorities on these subjects.

MEMBERSHIP

3. Subject to the provisions of Rule 7, membership of the Society shall be open to all who are interested in furthering the Objects of the Society.

THE COUNCIL

4. (1) There shall be a Council of the Society which shall be constituted in accordance with these Rules.
(2) The Society shall elect not more than twelve members of the Society to be members of the Council.
(3) The members of the Council so elected may co-opt not more than four other persons to be members of the Council.
(4) The Officers to be appointed under Rule 5 shall also be members of the Council.
(5) In the choice of persons for membership of the Council, regard shall be had, amongst other things, to the importance of including persons known to have expert knowledge and experience of matters relevant to Objects of the Society.
(6) The Council shall be responsible for the day-to-day work of the Society, and shall have power to take any action on behalf of the Society which the Council thinks fit to take for the purpose of furthering the Objects of the Society and shall make and publish every year a Report of the activities of the Society during the previous year.
(7) The Council shall meet at least four times in each calendar year.
(8) A member of the Council who is absent from two successive meetings of the Council without an explanation which the Council approves shall cease to be a member of the Council.
(9) Three of the elected members of the Council shall retire every second year, but may offer themselves for re-election by the Society.
(10) Retirement under the last-preceding paragraph shall be in rotation according to seniority of election. Provided that the first nine members to retire after these Rules come into force shall be chosen by agreement or, in default of agreement, by lot.
(11) Casual vacancies among the elected members may be filled as soon as practicable by election by the Society.
(12) One of the co-opted members shall retire every second year, but may be again co-opted.

OFFICERS

5. (1) The Council shall appoint the following officers of the Society, namely—
(a) a Chairman of the Council,
(b) a Vice-Chairman of the Council,
(c) an Honorary Secretary or Joint Honorary Secretaries,
(d) an Honorary Treasurer and
(e) persons to fill such other posts as may be established by the Council.
(2) The terms of office of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be three years and those of the other Officers five years from the date of appointment respectively. Provided nevertheless that the appointment of the Chairman shall be deemed to terminate immediately after the third Annual General Meeting after his appointment.
(3) The Officers shall be eligible for further appointments to their respective offices.
(4) Nothing herein contained shall detract from the Officers' right to resign during their current term.
(5) By Resolution of a majority of its members the Council may rescind the appointment of an Officer during his term of office for reasons deemed substantial.

5A As a Transitional Provision for the purpose of carrying out Rule 5 (2) the existing Officers shall continue to serve within the provisions of this sub-rule.

PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

6. (1) The Council may appoint a member of the Society to be President of the Society for a term of three years, and may re-appoint him for a further term of three years.
(2) The Council may appoint persons, who need not be members of the Society, to be Vice-Presidents.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

7. (1) The Council shall prescribe the amount of the subscriptions to be paid by members of the Society and the date on which they are due, and the period in respect of which they are payable.
(2) Membership of the Society shall lapse if the member's subscription is unpaid for six months after it is due, but may be restored by the Council.
(3) Until otherwise prescribed under this Rule, the annual subscription and the amount payable for life membership shall continue to be payable at the existing rates*.
(4) Members are invited to pay more than the prescribed minimum, if possible.
(5) Members who pay annual subscriptions are requested to pay by banker's order, unless they are unwilling to give banker's orders.

GENERAL MEETINGS

8. (1) In these Rules "General Meeting" means a meeting of the Society which all members of the Society may attend.
(2) The Council shall arrange at least one General Meeting every year, to be called the Annual General Meeting, and may arrange as many other General Meetings, in these Rules referred to as Special General Meetings, as the Council may think fit.
(3) General Meetings shall take place at such times and places as the Council may arrange.
(4) The President shall preside at any General Meeting at which he is present, and if he is not present the Chairman of the Council or some person nominated by the Chairman of the Council shall preside as Acting President.
(5) Any election to the Council shall be held at a General Meeting.
(6) No person shall be eligible for the Council unless—
(i) he or she has been proposed and seconded by other members of the Society, and has consented to serve, and
(ii) the names of the three persons concerned and the fact of the consent have reached the Hon. Secretary in writing at least two weeks before the General Meeting.
(7) If the Hon. Secretary duly receives more names for election than there are vacancies, he shall prepare voting papers for use at the General Meeting, and those persons who receive most votes shall be declared elected.
(8) The agenda for the Annual General Meeting shall include—
(a) receiving the Annual Report; and
(b) receiving the Annual Accounts.
(9) At the Annual General Meeting any member of the Society may comment on any matter mentioned in the Report or Accounts, and may, after having given at least a week's notice in writing to the Hon. Secretary, raise any matter not mentioned in the report, if it is within the Objects of the Society.
(10) The President or Acting President may limit the duration of speeches.
(11) During a speech on any question any member of the Society may move that the question be now put, without making a speech, and any other member may second that motion, without making a speech, and if the motion is carried, the President or Acting President shall put the question forthwith.
(12) If any 20 members of the Society apply to the Council in writing for a special Meeting of the Society, the Council shall consider the application, and may make it a condition of granting it that the expense should be defrayed by the applicants.

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

9. (1) The existing Council shall continue to act for the Society until a Council is formed under Rule 4.
(2) Within five months of the adoption of the constitution the existing council shall arrange an Annual or a special General Meeting at which the first election to the Council shall be held.
(3) The existing Officers of the Society shall continue to serve until Officers are appointed under Rule 5.

AMENDMENTS

10. (1) These Rules may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at an Annual or Special General Meeting, if a notice in writing of the proposed amendment has reached the Hon. Secretary at least two weeks before the General Meeting. Provided that nothing herein contained shall authorise any amendment the effect of which would be to cause the Society at any time to cease to be a Charity in Law.
(2) The Hon. Secretary shall send notices of any such amendment to the members of the Society before the General Meeting.

WINDING-UP

11. In the event of the winding-up of the Society the available funds of the Society shall be transferred to such one or more charitable institutions having objects reasonably similar to those herein before declared as shall be chosen by the Council of the Society and approved by the Meeting of the Society at which the decision to dissolve the Society is confirmed.

**The existing rate is £5 annually payable on the 1st January. The annual husband-and-wife rate is £7.*

The Annual General Meeting

of the Chelsea Society
was held at The Chelsea College
(by kind permission of the Principal)
on Thursday, 12th November, 1981 at 8.00 p.m.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Chalfont, O.B.E., M.C., President of the Society, took the Chair.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, Councillor Arnold Stevenson; the latter took the opportunity of telling everyone present how he hoped to accompany the Lord Mayor of London elect, Sir Christopher Leaver, from the Chelsea Old Town Hall to Cadogan Pier on Saturday, 14th November, at 8.30 am, from whence they would travel by water to the City, *en route* for the Mansion House ceremonies. The Mayor said that he would be accompanied by many and various representatives of Chelsea, and hoped his procession would invite public support.

The Chairman then welcomed to the meeting the Principal of Chelsea College, Dr. C. Phelps, and the Vice-Principal, Professor Tyrrell, thanking them, and the Students' Union, for the use of their hall. The College was offered the good wishes of the meeting in their present difficulties.

Following apologies for absence read out by the Secretary, the Chairman signed the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, these being approved.

The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. W. Haynes, then presented his Annual Report, and the Accounts for 1980 were adopted on the proposal of Colonel Rubens, seconded by Mr. Jeffrey Frost. (Full report appears on page 51).

The Chairman then asked members present if they agreed to the Resolution set out on the Agenda paper, with the object of amending the Constitution. This sought to perpetuate the office of Vice-Chairman and to regulate the periods of service of Officers of the Society. There being no opposition, the Resolution was carried unanimously.

The Chairman of the Society, Mrs. Lesley Lewis, then presented her first Annual Report (reproduced in full on page 15).

Immediately following this Lord Chalfont, on noting the arrival of the former Chairman, Mr. Quentin Morgan-Edwards, thanked him for all the hard work he had done for the Society during his five years in office.

The Chairman's Report drew from the floor questions and comments on the state of Chelsea Creek and on the Rectory in Old Church Street.

(a) *Chelsea Creek*

Lady Wynne-Jones asked the Chairman if he did not think that the Society should reconsider its position with regard to its support for the infilling of Chelsea Creek on the Hammersmith boundary. She considered that the use of the Creek as a recreational waterway should be established and had spoken to both the G.L.C. and the P.L.A. along these lines. Mrs. Lewis, replying, said that a recent visit to the site had shown it to be not only appallingly messy, but also dangerous; the area between the King's Road bridge and the dam was dried out and full of old car batteries, old iron, etc.; she felt that infilling of this part was the best solution in the circumstances and it was hoped that the Borough could persuade the Hammersmith Council to curb dumping in the tidal area below the dam. The Society valued the recreational possibilities here.

(b) *The Rectory Site*

Mr. John Glen enquired whether the Society's recommendation that not more than 15,000 sq. ft. of office space should be constructed on the old Rectory site had been accepted; he was told that a decision was now awaited on the original Planning Application which the Society had supported, with the proviso about the reduced office space, in its letter to the Borough Planning Department of 22nd May 1981. Mr. David Enders thought it most unlikely that the Diocesan Fund would agree to reduce the size of the office development scheme; furthermore, he understood that the Borough would be unlikely to look after the garden properly from a security point of view, or to maintain it; he envisaged it becoming a haunt of meths. drinkers and of various unsavoury characters. He deplored the scheme as it stood. Mr. Grimwade replied from the platform that he thought Mr. Enders had overstated his case: when the plans had been exhibited last May, the proposed office development on the north side was shown as being only two storeys high and narrow through; the grounds could probably be closed at night.

The Mayor, when asked where the Borough Council stood in this matter, said that in view of his position he was not able to speak on this point; he referred it to Mr. Jonathan Wheeler who, as Chairman of the Borough's Planning Committee and having a quasi-judicial function, could not go into the matter before it came before the Planning Committee on 1st December.

Mrs. Lewis pointed out that the Society had only an advisory role in this matter; she had, however, understood that the Borough would accept the garden with gratitude. Mr. Fergus Hobbs, of Glebe Place, supported Mr. Enders' argument, adding that Councillor Mrs. Hanham, the Deputy Leader of the Council, when chairing a Working Party meeting which they had both attended, had said that the Borough could not police the garden. He thought also that local residents did not need this open space, and certainly not the additional traffic that an office block would engender: for this reason they

would prefer not to see the garden taken into public ownership. Mrs. Bevan, however, a resident of Upper Cheyne Row and a member of the Glebe Place Residents' Association, spoke very much in favour of a pleasant open space being established and assured the meeting that other residents would also welcome it. Councillor Mrs. Jardine made the point that while she did not think that the Borough would provide a full-time attendant for the garden at present, that did not mean that it could not be adequately maintained. Mr. Quentin Morgan-Edwards thought that the Chelsea Society would lose all credibility if it were to oppose the establishment of a pleasant open space, and from experience, one should not always presuppose vandalism. Lady Wynne-Jones hoped that the Society would place on record its wish for the Rectory garden to remain an open space; Mr. Baden-Powell reiterated this and emphasised that the chance to make it so must be taken now as it would not recur. Councillor Neville Robinson, who lives in Old Church Street, did not feel that the traffic problem had received enough emphasis; the redeveloped cinemas brought more cars into the area and office workers would only add to the noise and congestion. He wished to see the garden retained, but did not think the Rectory entirely suitable for offices. Mrs. Pocock emphasised again the importance of limiting the office space: she considered that 15,000 sq. ft. should be the absolute maximum. To clarify the position, Mrs. Lewis read out the letter which the Society had sent to the Borough Planning Office on 22nd May 1981 containing its original representation for less office space, and by which the Society still stood. Lord Chalfont said that the points on both sides had now been thoroughly aired; members could rely on the Society to do all possible to see that this local amenity was used to the best advantage for Chelsea residents.

Mr. Arthur Grimwade, in reply to a question, said that he hoped more lectures of local interest could be arranged in the future; in the meantime, he hoped for members' support for ROUNDABOUT CHELSEA, to be held at the National Army Museum on 25th November. He thanked Lord Chalfont for taking the chair.

Lord Chalfont, in closing the meeting, paid tribute to Mr. Sam Carr's very able editorship of the Annual Report over the past seven years. Not only had it maintained a very high standard as a report of an amenity society, it was absolutely first class by any standards.

Chairman's Report

1. *Introduction*

We are delighted that our President, Lord Chalfont, is here to chair this meeting and also that he has accepted a further three-year term of office. His time seems to have gone much too quickly and we warmly welcome his continud leadership and co-operation.

I took over from Quentin Morgan-Edwards as Chairman after last year's Annual General Meeting and I must first pay a tribute to the Officers and Council I inherited from him. They have been most helpful, as have the new members elected in 1980, and if I do not mention them all individually it is not that I do not appreciate their services. I thank them all. I must however mention Arthur Grimwade who has made himself so indispensable that in the amendments to the Constitution put before you tonight we proposed to perpetuate the office of Vice-Chairman. In addition to being at my elbow for consultation and advice he organised the excellent series of lectures we had in the Spring and has been responsible for getting our recent notices so nicely printed. Barbara Towle's work on the membership and its records goes quietly on all the time and her experience is invaluable in organising our circulations and marshalling a team to save postage by delivering as many notices as possible by hand. Bill Haynes, the Honorary Treasurer, has already spoken for himself in presenting his accounts but his job, like Barbara's, goes on all the time and he is ever philosophical whether we give him much to treasure or not. Planning matters have continued to be dealt with by our formidably experienced Eileen Harris and Mark Dorman whose crisp words I am sure are taken to heart by the Borough Planning Officer, reinforced as they often are by the expert views of our architect members Denis Broodbank and Hugh Krall. Additional work such as the preparation of Minutes has fallen on Patricia Gelley, Ian Frazer and others in the absence of an administrative secretary able to give as much time as did some in the past, and we are most grateful to them. Joan Ashton, despite other commitments, had however tided us over a difficult period and even though she felt she must resign in July has kindly continued to act as "post-box" and we warmly thank her. She is, I know, as delighted as we are that Miss Joyce Knight has now taken over from her as Honorary Administrative Secretary. We have known Joyce for a long time as a doughty fighter in Tedworth Square battles, as well as a life-member of the Society. We are indeed fortunate to have enlisted to this post someone of her professional attainments who is also experienced in the ways of amenity societies. It is with great regret that we have to relinquish the services of Sam Carr who has edited our annual reports for seven years. Their quality is the best possible testimony to him and he has remained far too anonymous. I hope he will let his name be attached to the 1981 Report which will be his last. Our new Editor, Tom Pocock, is known to us and a much wider public for his writings on Chelsea, naval history and much else besides. He and his wife Penny, who is on our Council, have for years given the Society staunch support and active help whenever needed. We can rely on Tom to maintain in our reports the professional touch which has distinguished them throughout

the Society's history and we are most grateful to him for adding this task to his own heavy schedule of writing and travel. Speaking of annual reports I have to announce a very valuable contribution. Miss Furlong, a life-member, undertook the indexing of them as a labour of love some years ago. She has now completed the index up to 1980 and I hold two neat boxes of cards which we must get translated into a form available for general consultation. Meanwhile we express our deep gratitude.

As always we have appreciated the friendly help of Borough councillors and officials. To some extent it is the duty of a Society like ours to be a nuisance to the authorities, to criticise their policies and deplore their decisions in no uncertain terms! I think however that we try to understand each others' points of view and that our interchanges remain friendly and constructive. Mr. Sanders, the Borough Planning Officer, and his staff, are untiring in explaining things to us so that we far more often agree than disagree. Mrs. Pratt and others at Chelsea Public Library are unfailingly helpful when we visit the most necessary storage bay we are allowed there. At the Information Office Mr. Erskine, before he retired this summer, and his colleague Mr. Johnson, who fortunately remains, have done us innumerable kindnesses. Whether we need enlightenment, or want Planning Applications made available at weekends, or advertisement of our activities, or a place to talk business in, Mr. Johnson is our man and if he can do nothing else for us his shoulder is there to cry on. I do not know what we should do without him.

2. *Membership*

Our membership is at present 594

3. *Planning Matters*

i. *Chelsea Rectory and Garden*

By far the most important current item is the future of the Rectory and its garden in Old Church Street. Prebendary and Mrs. Loasby have lived in and kept up this charming old house and garden at a time when clergy all over the country have been finding such commitments too much for them. They have opened their home to all kinds of good causes and Chelsea's debt to them is immense. The time has come however when Harold and Elspeth have had to move to 29 Burnsall Street, and the old Rectory and garden are to be sold for the benefit of the Diocesan Fund. The District Plan, on which local forums, the Chelsea Society and others were consulted over a long period, provides that the garden should be one of the open spaces to be brought into public use when the opportunity arises. The Council of the Chelsea Society, under my predecessor Quentin Morgan-Edwards, recognised that some degree of building on its northern boundary might have to be accepted to finance the use of most of the garden as public open space. This view was set out in a Memorandum to the Borough Council in June 1980, stating the limits which it was felt would be tolerable. This was referred to in the Chairman's Report at last year's Annual General Meeting and at this

year's Summer Meeting, while the relevant documents have been incorporated in our Council Minutes. On 16 February 1981 the first meeting was held of a Working Party convened by the Borough under the chairmanship of the Deputy Leader Mrs. Hanham. It was attended by Councillors David Collenette, Mrs. Anne Jardine and Miss Massy; Prebendary Loasby, Mr. Donald Insall, architect, Mr. David Biscoe, surveyor; Mrs. Elizabeth Hawkins, for Kensington and Chelsea National Trust Association, Mrs. Anne Scott for Chelsea Social Council, and myself for the Chelsea Society; Mr. William Bell for the GLC was unable to be present but attended on other occasions. Mr. Sanders, Borough Planning Officer and other staff were present. The purpose was to consider guidelines for a Planning Application to be submitted in due course by the Diocesan Fund with a view to the sale of the property. At later meetings evidence was taken from the organisers of the Adventure Playground and from others, including Councillor Neil Kearney, representing various interests involved in the future of the garden. On 18 March Mr. Insall showed and explained plans for an office block with 30,000 square feet of space, including the Rectory building which would be preserved. He had taken account of important trees to be retained and adapted his plans accordingly. Mr. Biscoe for the Diocesan Fund said that if permission for such a Planning Application were granted the remainder of the garden (about one and a half acres) could be dedicated to the Borough Council in perpetuity as a public open space. A Public Meeting was held at Chelsea Old Town Hall on 13 May for discussion of these proposals and much opposition to them emerged, especially on the grounds of increased traffic in Old Church Steet. The Council of the Chelsea Society, having carefully considered the whole position, decided to adhere to the terms of their 1980 memorandum, limiting proposed office space to about a half of that now applied for. We nevertheless greatly appreciated the offer of the garden to the public and saw this as guaranteeing its future as well as adding to the open space in which Chelsea was notably deficient. A letter expressing our views was sent to the Borough Planning Officer, but a decision on the Planning Application has had to be postponed. Lessees of the Church Commissioners occupying garage premises just outside the northern boundary of the Rectory garden put in a planning application for housing and this was totally incompatible with the proposals for the Rectory site. The two branches of the Church's financial establishment have now come to an agreement, resulting in the withdrawal of the Planning Application for the garage site (58 Old Church Street). We understand that the original Planning Application for the Rectory and garden can now be processed by the Borough Planning Committee and would hope that the Borough Council's decision on it would be made in the next few months.

ii. *The Stowell Site in Britten Street*

The development of this site has long been under consideration and

was referred to in last year's Report. It was hoped then that the Victorian/Edwardian brick office building on the south side could be retained but it has now been demolished. The picturesque old archway adjoining it has however survived. The Society supported the Borough's refusal of planning permission to a company, Kelejian, and presented evidence at a Public Inquiry on 24 March. The Company's Appeal was upheld but, despite the loss of the variegated brick building for which the Victorian Society pleaded eloquently, the development does not appear highly obtrusive.

iii. *The Methodist Church Site, The King's Road*

It is good news that building is soon to go ahead on the bomb-site adjoining in Chelsea Manor Street, for it has had to remain empty for a very long time. The Society welcomes the plans for flats for the elderly and for a pastoral and Welfare Centre, and we wish the Minister, Mr. David Horton, every success with the Appeal for funds which has now been launched.

iv. *The Pheasantry, The King's Road*

The emergence of the restored facade, triumphal arch, quadriga, caryatids and eagles is so spectacular that the name might well be changed to "The Phoenixry". Many younger Chelsea residents can never before have seen, and must be astonished by, the eccentric elegance which redeems the dullness of the street frontage at this point. Nearby residents are apprehensive of additional noise and parking difficulties caused by the restaurants planned for the building. I can only emphasise that the Society consistently supports the Borough in resisting late licences incompatible with the amenities of what is still a closely populated residential area. We hope that any new Pheasantry restaurant will be worthy of a welcome and distinguished piece of architectural restoration, and the work on the statuary by Timothy Whidborne.

v. *The Lots Road General Improvement Area*

Unfortunately, progress in rehabilitating housing and providing new open space has been delayed yet further by government limitations on expenditure. It is hoped that the riverside open space will be open to the public before the end of this year. The Society is keeping a watchful eye on developments and a detailed comment by Neil Kearney, one of the Councillors for South Stanley, the Ward within which the G.I.A. lies, will appear in the Annual Report. (*See p. 46*)

vi. *Chelsea Creek*

The Society has been in constant touch with the Borough on its proposal to purchase and fill in for use as depot the non-tidal part of the Creek on the Hammersmith boundary. Our visit to the site convinced us that infilling with appropriate material to a good standard was the only feasible treatment for the appalling mess and dereliction which now disfigures the area. Dumping from over the

border, which the Borough cannot control, unauthorised dumping on its own territory, the dangers of pollution from old car-batteries, and the multitude of commercial interests involved, make the Borough's job a daunting one. Nevertheless we shall continue to urge that the cleaning-up should include improvement of the condition of the banks of the tidal section and the maintenance of the flow, with a view to future recreational uses. We note too that the old lamp and signal installations of the West London Railway, and a disused conveyor, have a period character which would enhance the interest of an amenity area if they could be preserved, and we hope they will be.

vii. *The Chenil Gallery*

We received protests from some vigilant members at the announcement in February that the Borough was selling the freehold of the Gallery for £65,000. It will be remembered that a few years ago there was a reorganisation of the Borough's Chelsea properties so as to concentrate all departments as much as possible in the new Kensington Town Hall. This included the transfer of the Library building to Chelsea College, the Library's move to Chelsea Old Town Hall, and the letting of the Chenil Gallery on a 99-year-lease to a commercial concern. There were still 96 years of the Gallery's term to run so the sale of so distant a reversion might seem of mere technical interest, and we recognise the financial stringencies that dictated it. The Chelsea Society however has a duty to look far ahead, and we must register regret at the surrender for ever of a freehold in the old civic heart of Chelsea. Nevertheless we thank the present owners for providing an appropriate setting for Epstein's unfinished relief of a sun-god, a gift to the Borough from his widow and never as yet exhibited here.

4. *West London Traffic Reform*

Many members will recall our campaign in 1972 against the building of the West Cross Route motorway along Cheyne Walk and, this threat having apparently receded, our alarm at more recent proposals for a smaller West London Relief Road along much the same route. This time there was even more widespread concern not only about the effect on the riverside but also that a new road, instead of bringing local relief, might attract more traffic altogether. Instead of mounting a campaign on our own we therefore enrolled the Chelsea Society as one of the 48 constituent associations of an umbrella group called West London Traffic Reform or WLTR for short. Betty Woolf, a member of our Council, is one of its three very active co-ordinators and I represent the Chelsea Society at meetings when required. On traffic matters we were represented by WLTR's consultant at the Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and City of Westminster District Plan Inquiries. At the latter, the proposed Vauxhall Bridge Northern Approach Underpass was successfully opposed, on the grounds that it would have channelled yet more traffic on to Chelsea Embankment. This apparently rather distant threat was highly relevant to the interests of Chelsea. Its removal is a very good

example of the kind of negative success which is often the greatest triumph of an amenity society, though it tends to get little credit for something which, owing to foresight, is never allowed to happen! On the positive side however WLTR can also claim some success. Proposals for a new road being at present in abeyance, our efforts have been directed to the enforcement and extension of a night ban on heavy lorries on the Earls Court, Gunter and Edith Grove, and Chelsea Embankment corridor. The public increasingly endorses this policy and we feel that the Borough has wide support for enforcement of the ban, which now operates from 9 pm to 6 am.

5. *Activities*

The Summer Meeting was held at Hurlingham Club on 1 July with about 120 members attending, and in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress. We had the use of the ballroom, and Mr. Marcus Binney, Architectural Editor of *Country Life*, gave a talk on "Georgian Thames-side Villas." Hurlingham House was originally one of these and Mr. Binney described how prominent men, who needed to be in touch with Court and Parliament, evolved miniature country seats which were much less formal than their ancestral ones. They were carefully designed, beautifully furnished, with landscaped grounds giving delightful views of the river. They flourished mainly from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, but their history and social function have to be pieced together from contemporary sources since nearly all have now disappeared. After Mr. Binney's most interesting talk members dispersed to a Bar specially provided for us, and explored the grounds on what was fortunately a reasonably fine evening.

By kind permission of the Director, Mr. William Reid, who is also a member of our Council, three lectures were arranged at the National Army Museum by Arthur Grimwade. The first, by Mr. John Mallet of the Victoria and Albert Museum, was on "Chelsea Porcelain and the Factory Site" on 4 February. This was of great interest to Chelsea residents, particularly those who lived in Lawrence Street and had seen specimens of pottery actually dug up in gardens nearby. On 4 March Miss Hermione Hobhouse, Secretary of the Victorian Society and the author of a standard work on Thomas Cubitt, spoke on this "Victorian Master Builder and his Chelsea Neighbours." Of particular interest were her descriptions and slides of actual building operations on a scale anticipating modern times. Mr. Michael Upward, Secretary of the Metropolitan Gardens Association, on 1 April, dealt with "Trees in Towns", something which struck chords of sympathy with all those who watch over the amenities of Chelsea. His slides showed vividly where the right kinds of trees were in the right place. All the speakers answered the numerous questions most patiently.

6. *The Society's Records*

Our old Minute Books, spare copies of Annual Reports, extinct files and about 200 old printing blocks long ago overflowed the houses of Chairmen and Secretaries and we had a cupboard in the old Chelsea Library in Manresa Road. When the Library moved a few years ago to the Old Town Hall we were given a new allotment of shelves for which we are most grateful. Even there

however space is at a premium, and in consultation with the Librarian, we agreed that we must part with the blocks used for illustrations to our Annual Reports. Owing to changes in printing techniques they are obsolete and are no longer asked for by people wanting reproductions made. We were reluctant to throw them out as scrap but found that the Greater London Industrial Archaeological Society could use them with old printing equipment which they rescue and preserve. Suitable arrangements as to copyright were made and a splendid enthusiast, Mr. Rule, came and took the whole very heavy load away and gave us £10. We had more old Reports than we could ever need so Joan Hayes, Patricia Gelley and Mark Dorman sorted and listed them. Our member Francis Marsden arranged for us to put them on sale with Mr. Burnard of Chelsea Rare Books, to whom we are most grateful, and the Society got about £30 and some welcome advertisement out of this. We have also been able to make up complete sets for the Society because, owing to the war, a few numbers were missing. A former Secretary, Miss Daphne Sanger, generously replaced them from her own set, and we now have bound volumes up to 1980, held by me as Chairman, and a duplicate unbound set in our filing cabinet in Chelsea Library. The Reference Library itself has complete bound and unbound sets which can be consulted there. A few miscellaneous old papers, unconnected with the Society's affairs, were sold to a well-known autograph dealer, Winifred Myers, for £10, and she has since given us £60 for a characteristic and pleasing letter from Virginia Woolf to Reginald Blunt, 1934, refusing an invitation to speak at the Summer Meeting. The Council agreed that it was advisable to sell this while it had interest rather than leave it in the files indefinitely.

7. *Crosby Hall, Cheyne Walk*

In 1975 the Directors of Crosby Hall launched an Appeal for funds to build additional study-bedrooms and improve the facilities and accommodation generally. Owing to the worsening financial climate the aims had to be restricted to forming a new lecture/dining-room in the basement, modernising and reorganising the kitchens and refurbishing the existing bedrooms. The Chairman of the Appeal Council, Lord Scarman, gave invaluable leadership and much personal effort to the fund-raising, ably supported by Mrs. Joan Heath as honorary secretary, with a splendidly active committee. The architect whose firm undertook the work was Mr. Emil Godfrey, son of the late Walter Godfrey whose distinguished name appears so often in old Chelsea Society Reports in connection particularly with Crosby Hall and the Old Church. This continuity of historical knowledge, sympathetic and generous help is something for which we in Chelsea must be truly grateful. Having raised over £100,000, the Appeal is now wound up, the building work completed, and we congratulate all those concerned in ensuring that Crosby Hall keeps abreast of the times and continues to welcome women from all over the world who are pursuing advanced studies in London. There are at present about 80 students in residence and as usual all kinds of activities flourish under this hospitable and mainly mediaeval roof.

8. *Civic Pride*

The Lord Mayor, Sir Christopher Leaver, lives in Chelsea and so does our

Mayor, Councillor Arnold Stevenson. Hence we had our own special piece of pageantry to mark the Lord Mayor's Show on 14 November. Sir Christopher, accompanied by City dignitaries, the Mace and Sword borne before him, walked in procession with the Lady Mayoress and our Mayor and Mayoress from Chelsea Old Town Hall down Oakley Street to Cadogan Pier. A military band and escort put up a fine show and our own Councillors in their blue robes stepped out smartly. Although proceedings started at 8 a.m. and the Lord Mayor embarked on his launch for his journey to the City before 9 a.m. there was a good sprinkling of loyal Chelsea Society members to wave greetings. The ascending pomp of the great day was sweetly initiated by a Guard of Honour of Girl Guides and Brownies on the steps of the Old Town Hall.

The Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea is laying particular stress on the River during his year of office. On a remarkably chilly 16 July he received at Cadogan Pier the competitors for Doggett's Coat and Badge, the first time that the end of this historic race has been celebrated in this way. It was therefore all the more suitable that in the Lord Mayor's Chelsea procession, and on board his and the escorting launches, the lovely pure scarlet of the Doggett livery should strike the most brilliant note of colour. We congratulate our Mayor on arranging these imaginative ceremonies for Chelsea and hope he enjoyed them as much as we did.

9. *Dovehouse Green*

I have kept the nicest item for the end. Mr. Reginald Grenfell has given £150 to the Borough from the Joyce Grenfell Memorial Fund to be spent on bulbs to be planted this autumn in Dovehouse Green. This is a charming and imaginative way of commemorating her and we are particularly pleased that Mr. Grenfell consulted us about the plan. Joyce Grenfell performed the opening ceremony for our Jubilee effort in 1977, when we rehabilitated the Old Burial Ground, and that will be long remembered. When the irises, daffodils, tulips and crocuses come up in the Spring we shall again be reminded of the kindly interest she and her husband took in the scheme.

The Carlyles at Cheyne Row

by Peter Quennell

The marriage of Jane and Thomas Carlyle, solemnized in October, 1826, lasted until 1866, and before they plighted their troth, both husband and wife had expressed the deepest hesitations. "Without great sacrifices on both sides", Carlyle had written, "the possibility of our union is an empty dream"; while Jane had declared in 1823, "Your Friend I will be . . . but your Wife! Never, never!"

To some extent the obstacle they confronted was social and economic. Jane was "an ex-spoilt child", brought up by an adoring mother in Scottish middle-class society, well educated, attractive, equally proud, we are told, of her Latin and her eyelashes; whereas Carlyle's father was a rustic stonemason who had later taken up farming. Thomas had made himself a historian and a writer by dint of his own laborious efforts, but in the process he had ruined his health and suffered perpetually from dyspepsia, insomnia, and a host of nervous ills. Jane admired him, but felt that she could not love him.

Yet the rough peasant-scholar and the volatile middle-class girl had somehow drifted into marriage, and as a middle-aged woman, Jane would write to a favourite cousin, explaining what she thought had happened: "In virtue of his being *the least unlikable* man in the place, I let him dance attendance on my young person, till I came to *need* him — all the same as my slippers to go to a ball in, or my bonnet to go out to walk. When I finally agreed to marry him, I *cried* excessively and felt excessively shocked — but if I had then said *no* he would have left me."

For the first few years of their marriage, she accepted the consequences of her decision bravely. In 1828 they moved from Edinburgh to the lonely farm of Craigenputtock, where the silence was so profound that they could often hear sheep cropping in the field outside. During the winter months, a deeper hush descended, and the snow piled up against the door: when they opened it, a mountainous drift would sweep like an avalanche across the flagstones of the kitchen.

Finally, in 1834, Carlyle having at last published *Sartor Resartus*, they felt rich enough to move south. The London house they chose was Number 5 Great Cheyne Row (today Number 24 Cheyne Row), a largish Queen Anne house close to the river Thames, which at that period still retained the muddy fore-shore that Whistler and Walter Greaves painted, where barges and sailing boats lay beached on its verge, amid decrepit wharves and ramshackle wooden jetties. They were to spend the rest of their lives in that house. There Jane Carlyle's body was brought after her sudden death in 1866; and there, an embittered, disconsolate sage, Carlyle died in 1881.

For me the long years they spent at Cheyne Row have a special interest. I am their next-door neighbour, and rarely a day passes when I am not somehow reminded of them. Chelsea itself has changed. It is no longer a secluded suburb, full of trees and ancient houses; late-Victorian buildings have

swamped the "hawthorn lanes", meadows, and market gardens that once extended beyond the King's Road toward Kensington and Knightsbridge.

Yet Cheyne Row keeps much of its quietude, and the Carlyles' house preserves its cloistral, somewhat gloomy atmosphere. Most of the changes it has undergone since it was erected in the year 1708 — by a speculative builder who had bought up the bowling green of a demolished manor house — were made by the Carlyles themselves. Jane was no respecter of early eighteenth-century panelling. Perhaps because she liked to think of herself as modern, or because she identified the depression that Carlyle frequently radiated with the sombre background of their old-fashioned house, or perhaps because she dreaded the bugs that often hid behind antique woodwork, she removed the panelling from many walls and substituted, if she could afford it, prettily flowered wallpaper.

From Number 26 Cheyne Row, our view of the Carlyles' house is paticularly absorbing. Just below, as we look to the right across an antiquated red-brick wall, lies the strip of garden where Carlyle, on summer evenings, used to smoke his clay pipe, which he stored in a crevice between the bricks. A photograph taken in 1857, shows him seated near the garden door, wearing the tall-crowned, large-brimmed black hat that shadowed his then grey-bearded visage; little Nero, Jane's dog, is comfortably spread-eagled beside his chair. Nero, who is buried in the garden, was an important member of the Carlyle household and appears in a series of dramatic tales. There was one occasion, Jane relates, when the intrepid animal tried to fly:

For a first attempt his success was not so bad . . . and tho' he *did* plash down on the pavement at the feet of an astonished Boy he broke no bones, was only quite *stunned*. . . . It was after breakfast, and he had been standing at the open window, watching the birds — one of his chief delights — while Elizabeth was "dusting out" for Mr. C. Lying in my bed, I heard thro' the deal partition Elizabeth scream; "oh God! oh Nero!" and rush downstairs like a strong wind out at the street door. I sat up in my bed aghast — waiting with a feeling as of the Heavens falling till I heard her reascending the stairs and then I sprang to meet her in my night shift. She was white as a sheet, ready to faint . . . "Is he killed?" I asked. . . . Mr. C. came down from his bedroom with his chin all over soap and asked, "has anything happened to Nero?" "Oh Sir he *must* have broken *all* his legs, he leapt our at *your* window!" "God bless me!" said Mr. C. and returned to finish his shaving.

His mistress adored him, and his master valued his company. Nero regularly followed Carlyle on his long crepuscular walks through Chelsea — "little dim-white speck of Life, of Love, Fidelity and Feeling; girdled by the Darkness of Night Eternal" — while the sage meditated, as he trudged the streets, upon the evils of the modern world and his own forlorn existence, or thought of the sleepless hours that awaited him once he had plodded back to his solitary bed.

In the same photograph, a clump of bushes and a small tree occupy the right-hand side. They conceal a homely domestic office. From our upper windows we look down upon a modest flat-roofed structure. This is the

household privy. The Carlyles, while they occupied Number 5, had no kind of interior sanitation; and as both of them seem to have suffered from perpetually disordered livers, and Carlyle was constantly being dispatched to the chemist's shop in search of the powerful laxative called "blue pills," the fact that they had only an unheated outdoor privy on wet and windy London days must have caused them much acute discomfort.

Another odd thought is how many of the Carlyles' troubles originated in the house we now inhabit. For them it was an almost legendary place, peopled by a series of demonic families whose principal purpose, so far as Jane could make out, was to prevent Carlyle from writing. The earliest, a rather genteel family called Lambert, arrived in 1839. With them, alas, they had brought a parrot, which, when they carried it into the garden, screeched under Carlyle's window, so that he "fairly sprang to his feet, declaring he could 'neither think nor live'." Jane then composed a diplomatic note, and the parrot was removed.

Worse came when one of the Misses Lambert started taking music lessons, both vocal and instrumental. Carlyle was working then on the first floor, and only a thin wall divided him from the sitting room — it is still our sitting room — that the Misses Lambert used. His patience was limited; his hatred of any kind of noise had already developed into an obsession; and one morning he suddenly left his table, seized the poker, and delivered a couple of tremendous blows on the wall "exactly opposite where he fancied the young Lady seated". The deep silence that followed lasted "for the next twelve hours". But neither this drastic action nor a polite exchange of notes could quite subdue the Misses Lambert, and intermittent "squallings" and tinklings continued to torment Carlyle — he was then toiling at *Past and Present* and his monumental book on Oliver Cromwell — throughout 1842 and 1843.

Even worse than the musical Lamberts were some of the families who succeeded them — the Roncas, a bohemian Irish family who, besides noisily carpentering in the back garden and hanging out their squalid household laundry, kept a parrot, dogs, and chickens. After much diplomacy and some stern threats, they were at last reduced to order. But then in 1865, the year before Jane's death, another fearful blow descended. The latest tenant, "a very mysterious 'dressmaker'," seemed a retiring, inoffensive person. But she had lodgers who proved to be more troublesome, and early one morning Mrs. Carlyle made a hideous discovery. As she wrote in a letter on December 25:

For years back there has reigned over all these gardens a heavenly quiet — thanks to my heroic exertions in exterminating nuisances. . . . Figure then my horror, my despair, on being waked one dark morning with the crowing of a cock, that seemed to issue from under my bed! . . . I lay with my heart in my mouth . . . listening for Mr. C.'s foot stamping frantically, as of old. . . . and there was a sight to see — a ragged, *irish*-looking hen house . . . and sauntering to and fro nine goodly hens, and a stunning cock!

Once again she managed to intervene and arranged "that the cock should be shut up in a cellar . . . from three in the afternoon till ten in the morning",

by which time Mr. C. would have retired to the dismal soundproof room that he had now had built on the top floor. Jane, whose character evidently included a certain touch of masochism, must somehow have relished such domestic dramas. She had thought of writing a novel, she admitted, about the "mysteries" of Number 6, and used to amuse her friend Charles Dickens with the curious stories she told him of the house and its inhabitants. Dickens believed that they would make an excellent book. He had always admired her gifts — "none of the writing women came near her at all", he said, and as a man who enjoyed the companionship of the opposite sex, he found her more than usually attractive. Not only, noted his biographer John Forster, did Mrs. Carlyle entertain him, she inspired a deeper sentiment: "there was something beyond, beyond" — an element of physical and emotional sympathy.

Indeed, long after she had lost her looks and had become elderly and gaunt and haggard, Jane was still charming, and many of the distinguished men who presented themselves at Number 5 Cheyne Row arrived to visit Jane alone. Both the Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini and the French exile Godefroy Cavaignac (one of the leaders of the left wing under Charles X and Louis Philippe) had undoubtedly conceived a romantic affection for their hostess, and their love was, to some extent, returned. She also had the adoration of the aging Leigh Hunt, who, with his untidy children and his feckless and difficult wife, lived in Upper Cheyne Row around the corner.

Marianne Hunt, whom Byron had once so cordially detested, had apparently taken to the bottle, and the Hunts led an improvident and harassed existence. Hunt — "a pretty man," Carlyle remembered, ". . . with the airiest kindly style of sparkling talk" — often took refuge at Number 5 from the squalid confusion of his own home. "He would lean on his elbow against the mantelpiece . . . and look around him . . . before taking leave for the night: 'as if I were a *Lar*', said he once, 'or permanent Household God here!' . . . Another time, rising from this *Lar* attitude, he repeated (voice very fine) as if in sport of parody, yet with something of very sad perceptible: 'While I to sulphurous and penal fire' — as the last thing before vanishing." Among Hunt's best-known poems is the graceful triolet "Jenny Kissed Me", which he addressed to Jane when she had surprised him by jumping from her chair to throw her arms around him as he entered.

Both the Carlyles, despite their quirks and prejudices, were fond of entertaining newcomers. Since the publication of *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle had become a literary lion, and Jane, for all her caustic asides, was pleased to see "the host of my husband's lady admirers" gathered about him in her presence. There was Harriet Martineau, the famous political economist, holding out her ear trumpet "with a pretty blushing air of coquetry", and later, the novelist Geraldine Jewsbury, lying on the carpet at the great man's feet.

Nor were the Carlyles averse to fashionable society, though Jane often criticized its arrogance and extravagance. She records in a letter to her mother, written on 7 April 1839, that a week previously "the sound of a whirlwind rushed thro' the street,' and there stopt with a prancing of steeds and footman

thunder at this door, an equipage, all resplendent with sky-blue and silver . . . whence emanated Count d'Orsay". The renowned exquisite had behaved in a particularly gracious manner, while his host, never easy to impress, had displayed a solid homespun dignity.

A sight it was to make one think the millennium actually at hand, when the lion and the lamb, and all incompatible things should consort together. Carlyle in his grey plaid suit . . . looking blandly at the Prince of Dandies; and the Prince of Dandies on an opposite chair, all resplendent as a diamond-beetle, looking blandly at *him*. D'Orsay is a really handsome man, after one has heard him speak and found that he has both wit and sense; but at first sight his beauty is of that rather disgusting sort which seems to be like genius "of no sex". And this impression is greatly helped by the fantastical finery of his dress; sky-blue satin cravat, yards of gold chain, with white French gloves, light drab greatcoat lined with velvet of the same colour, invisible inexpressibles, skin-coloured and fitting like a glove.

Number 5 was seldom a dull house yet during the last twenty years of the Carlyles' occupation, their life was darkly overshadowed. As early as 1846 Jane had begun to doubt whether she still retained her husband's love; and in the 1850's she could not help acknowledging that Mr. C., who had previously appeared indifferent to all women "*as women*", had developed a Platonic infatuation for a famous London hostess, the Junonian Lady Ashburton, and often willingly deserted Cheyne Row to spend his evenings in her company. Meanwhile Jane's health was gradually breaking down, undermined by the enormous doses of henbane and morphia that, as a remedy for her chronic sleeplessness, she had been taking night after night since she reached the age of forty-five. Sometimes she feared she might be going mad, and in 1863 a minor street accident resulted in months of excruciating pain.

It was a disastrous marriage — that is at least the conclusion we draw from the Carlyles' letters. James Anthony Froude, a close friend and the author of a four volume biography that appeared between 1882 and 1884, asserts that it was never consummated; and certainly Jane exhibited many of the traits of a disappointed and embittered woman whose emotional grievances found vent in a long succession of psychosomatic maladies. Yet was she quite so miserable as she often liked to pretend? Though she would speak of "the Valley of the Shadow of Marriage" and expatiate at length upon her daily woes, both the Carlyles, we must remember, possessed a keen dramatic sense.

For them their checkered married life was an absorbing tragicomedy. Carlyle needed something to grumble about, apart from the current evils of society and the general turpitude of modern mankind, while Jane required a constant supply of subjects on which she could exercise her sharp-edged wit. As a born novelist who had failed to write a book, she may have half enjoyed their misadventures. Her references to her remarkable husband are sometimes tartly disparaging, even downright acrimonious. Yet it is clear not only that she admired him, but that he had aroused in her a deep devotion, a

feeling that soon transcended any youthful dreams of ordinary human happiness.

Both were proud, and both were lonely. During what Carlyle afterward called their "sore life-pilgrimage", they became inseparable fellow travellers. Jane, however, did not cease to fret against his atrabilious egotism — when she was angry, observed a critical acquaintance, she had "a tongue like a cat's, which would take the skin off at a touch" — and her husband was generally far too busy to give her the attention she demanded. Not until he had finally lost her, and had opened her private papers, did he begin to understand her secret sufferings.

Thus the long marriage of Jane and Thomas Carlyle was neither happy nor unhappy. Although its moments of desperate wretchedness probably outnumbered its occasional hours of sunshine, Jane's earliest letters, in which she addresses Carlyle as her "Goody, Goody, dear Goody" and promises him — she is staying at her mother's house — "to make it all up to you in kisses" when she returns to Craigenputtock, are scarcely more affectionate in tone than the last she ever posted. Written on April 21, 1866, this letter is headed simply "Dearest."

That afternoon, she drove through Hyde Park, taking a friend's little dog, and when she put it out for a run, it was knocked over by a passing carriage. She dismounted and, finding that it was unhurt, told the coachman to complete their journey. But later he noticed that she was sitting motionless, her hands, "palm uppermost the right hand, reverse way the left", lying quietly upon her lap. She was dead, killed by a heart seizure; and her body was presently carried back to Cheyne Row, to the bed with red hangings she had inherited from her mother and in which she had herself been born. Today, the house that the Carlyles occupied still has a hushed and solemn air, but both its custodians have assured me that they have never felt that it was haunted; nor does the smallest spectral influence extend to the adjacent "house of mysteries". I have listened in vain for the sound of Thomas Carlyle's poker thundering against the sitting-room wall.

Stanley Grove

by Alex Evans

Chelsea readers of *The Times* may remember a correspondence some months ago about the buildings and the eight acres of ground between the Fulham Road and the King's Road at the west end of Chelsea which had been the home of the College of St. Mark and St. John for 130 years. With the threat of the eight-line fly-over of the proposed West Cross route over its new buildings, the College had emigrated in 1973 to Plymouth. The GLC had purchased the estate but did not know quite what to do with it and eventually sold it to Chelsea College. Situated at the far end of the King's Road and well beyond the "S" bend, the College was never very well-known to Chelsea residents, although Canon Cromwell, the then principal, was Mayor of Chelsea. He was largely instrumental in ensuring the closure of the Cremorne Gardens because of their demoralising influence and obtained an injunction against the exhibition opposite the College of a balloon used during the siege of Paris in the Franco-Prussian war. The Chelsea Society first visited the College sometime around 1960 and many members were surprised to discover such a charming house and such extensive grounds behind the high and rather forbidding wall along the King's Road, as well as the other two 'listed' buildings, the Chapel and the Library.

Stanley Grove was not, however, the first house on the site. A house called Brickills stood there in the late sixteenth century and was owned by Sir Arthur Gorges, a friend of Edmund Spenser whose poem *Daphnaida* mourns the death of Gorges' wife in 1590. Gorges commanded the *Wast Spite* on which Sir Walter Raleigh sailed as Vice-Admiral on the Islands Voyage. Knighted on his return, Gorges built Brickills on the fields of West Chelsea. Sir Arthur died in 1625, and in 1637 his house went to his daughter, the wife of Sir Robert Stanley, from which, of course, we have Stanley Grove, Stanley Bridge and the Stanley Arms. The Stanley family died out with the death of William in 1691. He had started to rebuild the house in the contemporary style but it remained uncompleted until 1696.

In 1729 it was occupied by Thomas Arundell of Wardour and then by Admiral Sir Charles Wager, enriched by his capture of part of the Spanish Treasure Fleet at Cartagena in 1708. He later became Treasurer to the Navy and died at Stanley Grove in 1743. In 1777 Stanley Grove was purchased by the Countess of Strathmore who had been widowed in the previous year. Good-looking, though somewhat inclined to stoutness, and with an annual income of £20,000, she was evidently very marriagable even though a successful suitor would have to take with her a family of five children. Certainly the Honourable George Grey and Mr. Andrew Storey, a half-pay lieutenant, thought so. Storey actually fought a duel in the Adelphi with the editor of the *Morning Post* because of the gossip recorded in the paper about the Countess and George Grey. Little knowing that she was to be the great-great-great-great grandmother of Queen Elizabeth the Second, the Countess decided to marry the half-pay lieutenant, and took up residence at Stanley Grove where, we are told, she collected cats, wrote verses, entertained

literary men and covered acres of ground with hot-houses and conservatories.

Storey took his wife's family name of Bowes but his apparent failure to secure control of her fortune exposed her to his threats and cruelty. She decided therefore to seek the greater safety of Grosvenor Square after three years in Chelsea, but her husband kidnapped her and took her to Durham. On being pursued by her would-be rescuers, her husband rode with her pillion across the countryside, only to be overtaken and caught. The Countess returned to London and Mr. Bowes died miserably in gaol.

In 1780 The Countess sold the house to a Mr. Lewis Lochie, founder of the Chelsea Military Academy and an authority on fortifications. The grounds of the Academy were laid out as a miniature fort, rather like, one would imagine, that of My Uncle Toby in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. His story ends sadly. Volunteering for the revolutionary army when the Brabancon Revolt broke out against the Austrians, he was captured and sentenced to death. He was given permission to return to England to order his affairs, leaving his son as a hostage. He returned and was executed on 8 June 1791.

Early in the nineteenth century the house was bought by William Richard Hamilton who, in 1799, had been secretary to Lord Elgin and had supervised the removal of the famous 'Elgin Marbles' from Athens to England. He had plaster casts made of some of the friezes and metopes and added a substantial wing to the house, consisting of a large drawing room (or probably a music and reception room) with rooms above. The casts were built into the walls of this room, thus adding greatly to its dignity and attractiveness. Early this century this fine room was converted into a kitchen and servants' quarters when, for convenience the catering services were removed from the basement. Later, the elegant double staircase was removed in order to afford room for the kitchen, and the 'Hamilton Room' was restored to its original appearance and functions. In 1821 Fanny Burney 'expressed her delight with the statues, casts from the frieze of the Parthenon, pictures, books and minerals, four pianofortes of different sizes and an excellent harp'. She might well have delighted in the room in 1955.

In 1838 Stanley Grove was offered for sale by Messrs. Brookes and Hedges of Bond Street with a delightful picture in the prospectus. The picture shows the east front with its classical portico as well as the west. The classical portico on the west seems to have disappeared to be replaced by a long covered walk rather like those in Cheyne Row. The lawns are quite extensive, possibly an exaggeration by the agents, or as they were before the widening of the King's Road. In 1840 the Grove was purchased by the National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, with the aim of establishing a training college for teachers in Church of England schools. Derwent Coleridge, younger son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and headmaster of Helston Grammar School, was appointed as the first principal. As he explained to Caroline Fox, the Quaker diarist, the object of the College was 'to train up a class of teachers intermediate between the present aristocratic constitution of the Church and

the extremely ignorant set who have now to fulfil its inferior offices. This link is in the way to be supplied, as this is a sort of college where they not only study but practise teaching and reading subordinate parts of the service.'

For at least two years the house was both college and the principal's house. Hamilton's drawing room served as lecture room, dining room, sitting room and music room, with the library spread along the north wall. Meanwhile the new college building was going up around a quadrangle with the southern elevation in line with and to the west of the house. The drawings, now in the College's archives, by Blore, the architect, reveal a rather magnificent plan which, however, was never fully implemented. These drawings as well as the chapel, the practising school and the teaching and residential blocks which he designed and which still exist are particularly interesting. Blore's work is chiefly in the Victorian Gothic style, but here he seems to have broken away from the fashion and attempted to initiate a 'Byzantine' or 'Italianate' style, as it was variously called. If one stands at the Fulham gate, one can still appreciate what he tried to do. The main college is a monastery with an Italianate campanile: to the left is the Basilican chapel and close at hand is the baptistry. Although not of great beauty and obviously built with an eye to the budget, the chapel has considerable charm and dignity with its romanesque apse and ambos. The octagonal practising school is quite possibly unique. It was at first a one-storey building but a second floor was added in 1848. Each segment gave sufficient room for a class of children. Each class was taught by a student, with a master-of-method/head teacher supervising them all. The roof is centrally supported by a chimney stack for the coal fire. The oven for warming up children's dinners still exists as do also the original blackboards. On the removal of St. Mark's School to Fulham and the demolition of the extensions, the 'baptistry' was restored and became the College library.

With such distinguished music teachers as Hullah and Helmore (later to become Master of the Chapel Royal Choristers) the Chapel gained a high reputation for the quality of its choral services and in 1845 her Majesty's Inspector Henry Mosely reported to the Committee of Council:

> The simple architecture of the building, of the Byzantine style, is eminently of a religious character, enhanced in its effect by coloured lights and deep shadows; and in the union of transepts with a nave, assuming something of that cathedral form which assimilates itself with the services. The morning service is choral; . . . It is the full cathedral service and is conducted by the Vice-Principal who occupies the place of Precentor. The chants are those known as Gregorian, not less remarkable for their grandeur than their antiquity. They are said not to be surpassed in their execution in this chapel by the services of any of our cathedrals.

And *The Guardian* of 5 September 1855 wrote:

> St. Mark's with all its progress, its character, its beauty, is considered by High Churchmen as a production of their own and of their friends. If there is one incident of St. Mark's which they happen (wisely or not) to be proud of, and of which the success is most indisputable, it is the choral service. It is the sight which a country clergman (of a certain

class) comes to see when he passes through London — a momentary realisation of an ideal which he carries back to his parish.

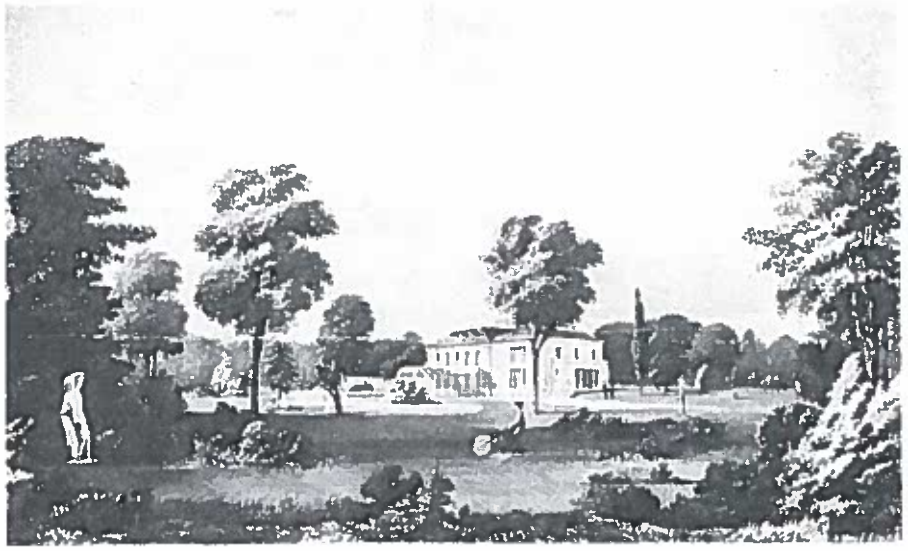
With its central position and Derwent Coleridge as its Principal the drawing-room of the Grove entertained many distinguished visitors such as Carlyle, Kingsley (whose father was Vicar of St. Luke's and a College governor), Keble, Crabbe Robinson, Macaulay, Samuel Rogers, M. Guizot, and Tolstoi who spent several days there on the recommendation of Matthew Arnold.

With the amalgamation of St. Mark's with St. John's College Battersea, additional teaching and residential accommodation was needed. The old 'Byzantine' block facing the King's Road was demolished, to be replaced by a large residential block, and this was continued with an even larger piece of building extending almost to the Creek, to give offices, lecture rooms and study-bedrooms. During the First World War the College became a military hospital. In the Second, it became an Air Raid Wardens' Centre and Reception Centre, and survived with bomb-blast and considerable vandalisation. There was much talk of the College moving out of Chelsea set as it was between two main roads and the pollution of the Fulham Gas Works and the Lots Road Power Station. But an exceptional man had been appointed as Principal, Michael Roberts, mountaineer, scientist, poet, anthologist, social philosopher. In his report to the College Council he stated:

> Good students and good lecturers are attracted by the fact that the College is in London. If the College were built elsewhere, all contact with tradition would be lost . . . There would be changes in the quality of the students and the College would become merely one among forty others . . . There were very great advantages in remaining in London: the students, many of whom came from and would return to country districts and small towns, were able to do their school practice at a wide variety of good schools within easy reach of the College, and had excellent opportunities to visit concerts, theatres, art galleries and museums, and to make use of large libraries and collegiate services. They will be used if the College remains in Chelsea.

So the College remained. In the early Sixties and the urgent need for many more teachers, the College achieved an expansion from 230 to 700 students and carried through a substantial building programme of residential blocks and new buildings, purpose-built, to accommodate Geography, Music, Art and the Sciences. Scarcely had the programme been completed than a new threat, indeed, a distinct probability, overshadowed the College — the West Cross Route the eight-line flyover of which would pass over all the new buildings. The College was no longer possible at Stanley Grove and found a new home at Plymouth. Let us hope that Stanley Grove will flourish under its new owners.

See illustrations on pages 33 and 34

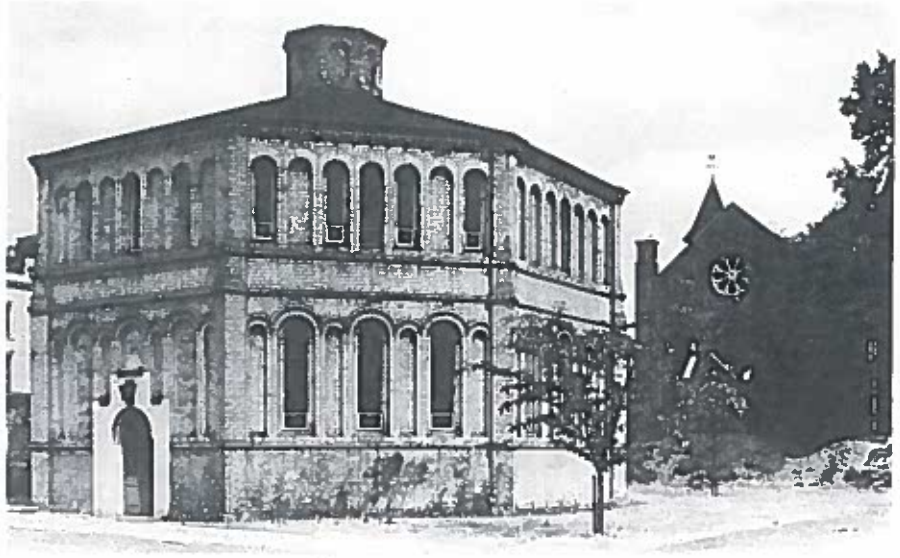


"Stanley Grove, King's Road, Chelsea", 1838. From a lithograph after G. E. Brooks. (See page 30)

"St Mark's College about 1847". (See page 31)

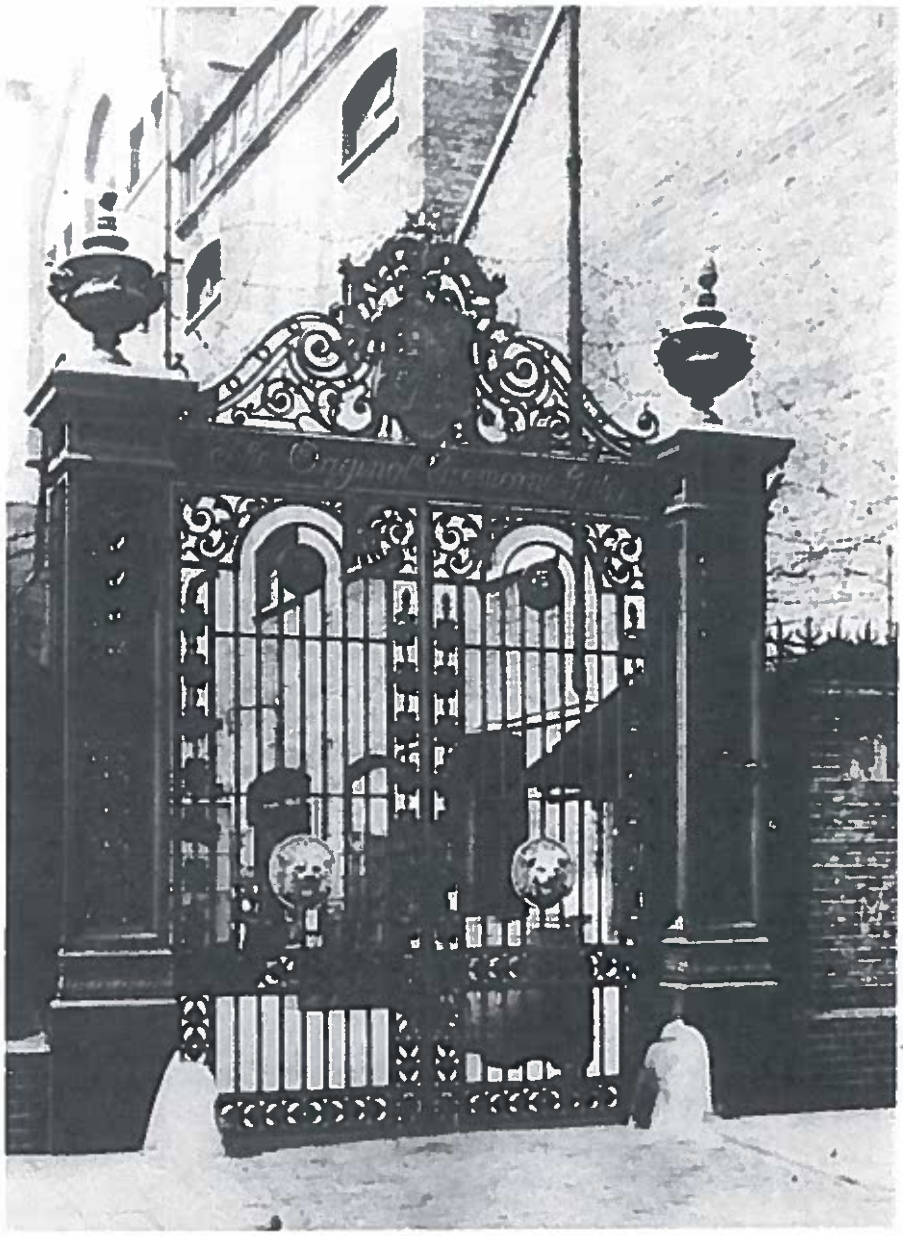
STANLEY GROVE

The Principal's House and the South Wing. (See page 32)



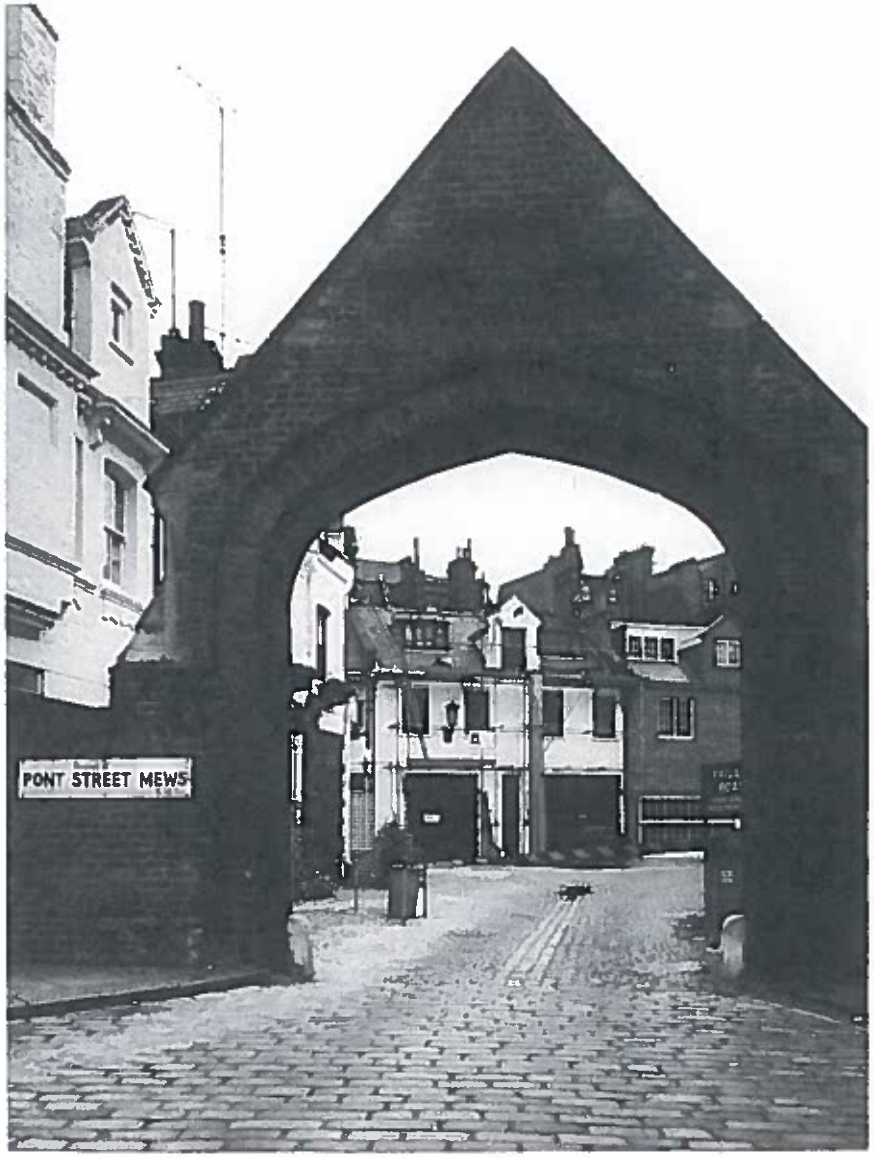
The Library and Chapel. (See page 31)

COLLEGE OF ST MARK AND ST JOHN



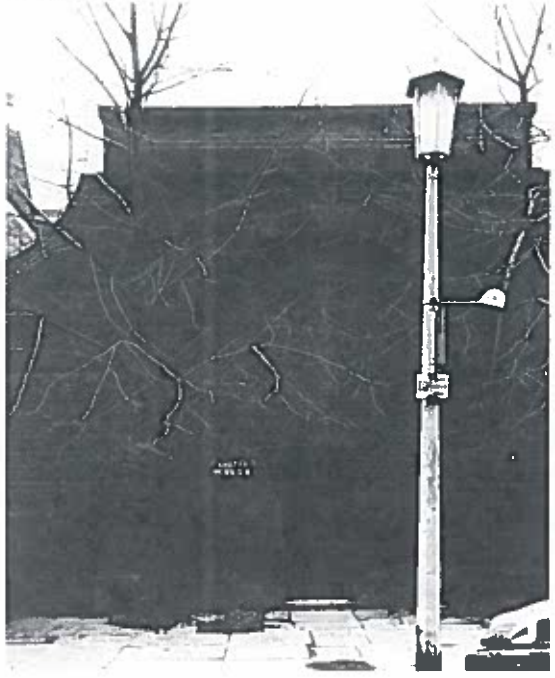
"The Original Cremorne Gates". (Photograph: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea). (See page 50)

West Eaton Place Mews. (Photograph: Betty Naggar). (See page 41)



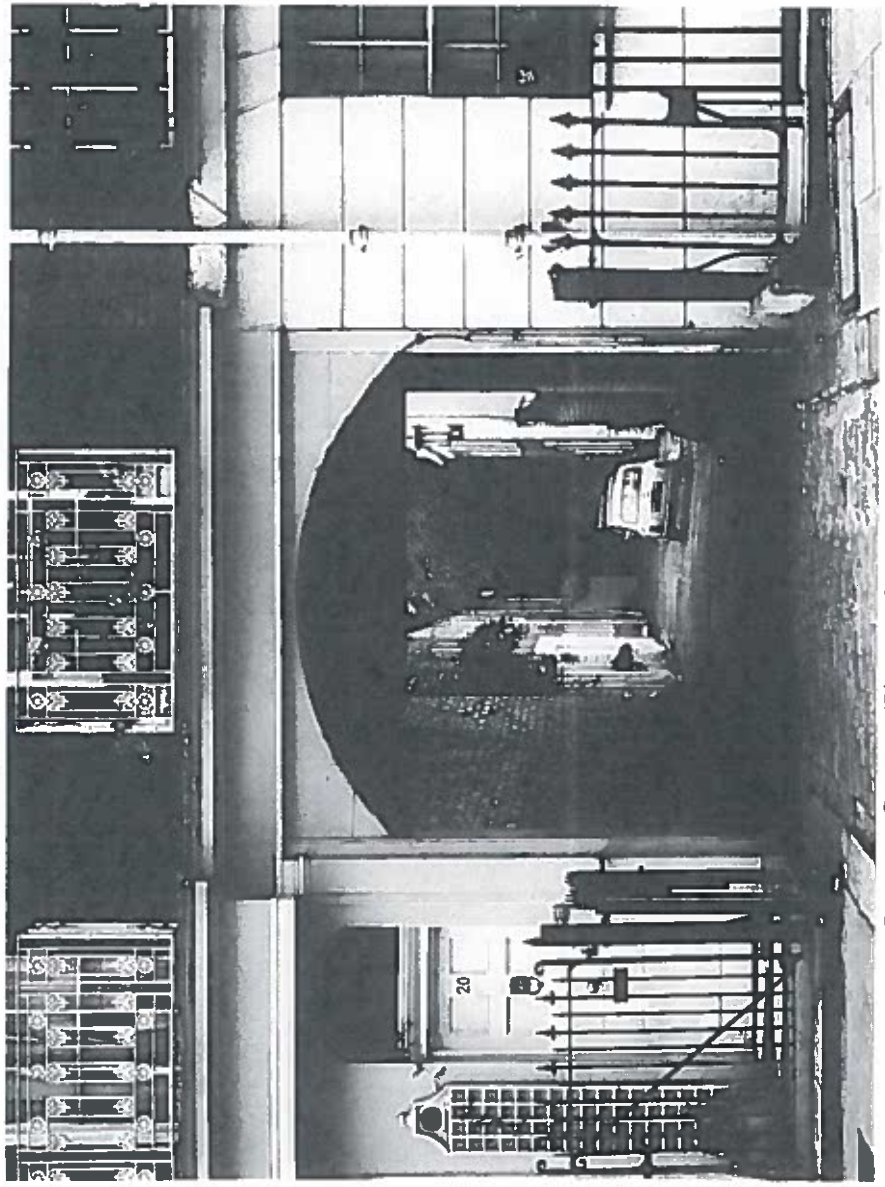
Pont Street Mews, 1879. (Photograph: Betty Naggar). (See page 41)

Grosvenor Cottages.
(Photograph: Betty Naggar).
(See page 41)



Shafto Mews.
(Photograph: Betty Naggar)
(See page 41)

Shafto Mews. (Photograph: Betty Naggar). (See page 41)



Grosvenor Cottages. (Photograph: Betty Naggar). (See page 41)

Chelsea Mews Arches

by Betty Naggar

When mews were first built they were generally approached through arches. These arches served three purposes: they provided an architectural link between the houses on either side of the entrance; they partially hid the mews from the street; and they provided support for iron gates which could be closed at night.

In Chelsea there survive three such arches: those of Pont Street Mews (which, according to a convenient inscription, was erected in 1879), Shafto Mews, and West Eaton Place Mews.

Pont Street Mews arch is brick-built and its form is echoed in the house which is joined to it. Originally there were two arches, but now only one remains. In addition to the date, its name has been incorporated in the design.

Shafto Mews, which is late Victorian, is built in that Flemish-Revival manner which Sir John Betjeman christened Pont Street Dutch. Stylistically, it is closely linked to the mews houses on either side. As in the case of Pont Street Mews, there were once arches at either end, but one has been blocked up.

The arch of West Eaton Place Mews is in a stuccoed rustication more often found in Kensington arches. It is different from them, however, in that it links the *backs* of the houses on either side of it. Its fenders are exceptionally large and they have therefore been built against the houses rather than in the customary manner on either side of the arch. This arrangement may have been dictated by a combination of the sharp turn and the slope which would have caused carriages to swing round when they were entering or leaving the Mews.

A second type of mews is sometimes created by an opening between buildings, but these, being purely functional, seldom have any decoration. A Chelsea example of this type is Grosvenor Cottages, where an unusual feature is a second arch leading to an inner mews. Here what seem to be the original gates are still in position.

As a footnote may be mentioned the surviving (but surely repainted?) notice on the entrance to the mews in Cheyne Walk:

CAUTION
All drivers of
Vehicles are
Directed to Walk
their Horses while
passing under the
Archway

See illustrations on pages 36-40

The Kingsley School Site and the Chelsea Porcelain Factory

by J. V. G. Mallet, Keeper of the Department of Ceramics, Victoria and Albert Museum

A cover with a strange device, an anchor surrounded by an oval line, has for many years been used for the Chelsea Society's *Annual Report*; I doubt whether all members are aware that their Society's symbol is based on the so-called "raised anchor mark", one of the distinguishing emblems used, for a short time between about 1749 and 1752, by the famous eighteenth-century Chelsea porcelain factory. For much of the brief span of its existence, between about 1745 and 1784, this factory dominated ceramic fashion in Great Britain from its site at the northern end of Lawrence Street.

The Lawrence Street site of the Chelsea factory received brief mention in last year's *Annual Report* in the course of a charming article on Lawrence Street by Tom Pocock. The 1980 *Report* also contained anxious mentions of the Kingsley School site in Glebe Place, in the Minutes of the Annual General meeting, in the Chairman's Report, and in a disquieting article, "A chapter in the Life of Kingsley School" by Fergus Hobbs. Oddly enough, however, in none of these places was it mentioned that part of the site of the Chelsea factory probably lies beneath a corner of the Kingsley School site. While local residents were understandably becoming concerned at the possible effects of different types of redevelopment on their neighbourhood, those of us who care for Chelsea porcelain were becoming worried lest vital information concerning the site and its marvellous ceramic products should fall victim to the bulldozer and the concrete-mixer before archaeologists had had the opportunity to investigate.

While negotiations for the sale of the site proceeded, the Inner London Archaeological Group stood on the alert, ready to begin a rapid rescue dig during the short interval that seemed likely to occur between sale and redevelopment. Secretiveness on the part of the GLC, whether justified or not, served to increase fears and made it impossible for the Archaeologists to plan their programme of work. In the event, as we know, the Kingsley School site was bought by a Libyan Government Organisation, and is to be used as an Islamic school, without radical redevelopment of the buildings. Alarm concerning development of the site without proper archaeological investigation had proved premature, but that is not to say that the threat never existed, nor that it might not suddenly arise in future.

With this danger in mind it may be worth trying to awaken public interest in the ceramic aspect of the Kingsley School site by summarising the history of the factory as it affects the site. The Chelsea factory is believed to have been started in about 1745 by a silversmith from Liège, Nicholas Sprimont, after whom Sprimont Place takes its name, though he had no connection with its site, which was developed long after his death. With the help of a chemist Sprimont evolved a beautiful soft-paste or artificial porcelain body, which

underwent various modifications throughout the factory's existence. The different periods of the factory's production are usually designated by the names of the different marks employed. Thus the "triangle period", distinguished by the use of an incised triangle mark, is thought to have lasted from about 1745-49. The "raised anchor" mark already mentioned in connection with the Chelsea Society's emblem was a small oval pad of clay embossed with an anchor and applied to the ware, in use from about 1749-52. The succeeding period from about 1752-58 is designated the "red anchor" period after the enamelled anchor, usually in red, that was then employed. However, a red or reddish-brown anchor continued in occasional use during the succeeding two periods of the factory. During the "gold anchor period", from about 1758-70, an anchor in gilding was used on most pieces, though it should be remembered that this mark continued in occasional use during the next phase, known as the Chelsea-Derby period (1770-84), when the factory had been taken over by William Duesbury of the Derby factory and was producing wares and figures seemingly indistinguishable from those of Derby. During the Chelsea-Derby period a more common mark was, however, the old anchor and "D" conjoined.

The wares of the earliest, or "triangle period" (1745-49) are rare and seldom consist of pieces that could make up a service. Production was clearly increasing and becoming more diverse during the raised anchor period (1749-52) and reached a peak during the red anchor period. Surviving sale catalogues from the years 1755 and 1756 make it possible to identify a wide range of wares, figures and tureens shaped as animals or vegetables as dating from this time. For various reasons, including probably the declining health of Sprimont, production diminished during the gold anchor period, though the quality of the work was often elaborate to the point of fussiness. The sale of the factory by Sprimont to Duesbury of Derby coincided with the advent of the neo-classical style, but Duesbury also long continued to sell wares and figures in the rococo taste of his predecessor.

We can gain some idea of what the factory was like at this time from the insurance policies taken out in 1760, 1761, 1765 and 1771 with the Sun Insurance Company, published by Elizabeth Adams in the *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle* for 1973 and 1976. From the first three policies it is clear that Sprimont had a brick dwelling house in Lawrence Street. His works are described in 1760 and 1761 as a "Kiln House and Shed Only adjoining each other/Brick Timber and Tiled" valued at £300 as well as a "Back Kiln House Mill and Painters Room only adjoining each other/Brick Timber and Tiled" valued at £200. The description in 1765 is somewhat different, but the valuation still totals £500: "On his Kiln House Woodhouse Millhouse Painters Gallery Workshop and Stables only adjoining each other near the aforesaid" (i.e. near the Dwelling House). In 1771, under the new Derby management, the insurance value of the factory buildings was reduced to £200 and there is no mention of a separate painters' gallery and workshop, merely of a "Painters' workshop".

None of this is much help in pin-pointing the site of the factory, and the present-day plaque commemorating the site, placed on No. 16 Lawrence

Street, is presumably an approximation arrived at after consulting the Rate-Books. It could, with equal justification, have been placed on several other houses in the street. None of the houses standing in Lawrence Street today was built at the time when the porcelain factory was in existence, nor do the ground plots seem very much to correspond with those of their predecessors from Sprimont's time. The houses were not then numbered, and maps of the time are not detailed enough to be of much help. The Rate Books, therefore, need a good deal of interpretation, a difficult and tedious job which I attempted in an article on the Chelsea site published in the *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle* for 1973. To sum up the conclusions I then reached, the factory seems to have occupied at different times and in varying combinations, five different plots of ground: three in Lawrence Street and two opening on to Church Lane, the present-day Old Church Street. Lawrence Street in the eighteenth century was a cul-de-sac, closed at its nothernmost end by a building known as Monmouth House, in reality four different houses bonded together to look like a single house with two wings projecting southwards on either side of Lawrence Street. It was probably in the western half of Monmouth House and in its grounds that Sprimont began to conduct his porcelain factory by 1747, or probably (though the rate books for these years are missing) by 1745. He continued to occupy this site until 1764. Meanwhile he spread further south along the west side of Lawrence Street, occupying one site there from 1750 to 1759 and again from 1765 to 1769. A further site on the west side of Lawrence Street was occupied by Sprimont from 1755 to 1759, later, during the Chelsea-Derby period, becoming the sole site. Leases surviving from 1769 and 1770 seem to suggest that at that period the factory site measured 90 ft by 85 ft. The two properties in Old Church Street were occupied only in the 1750s, at the height of the factory's activity, and probably backed onto the Lawrence Street sites.

At various times fragments of porcelain, mostly unglazed wasters, have emerged from the soil in the vicinity of Lawrence Street. Some fragments found in the garden of No 14 were presented to Chelsea Public Library and were, before its move, displayed there along with some complete specimens acquired through the antique trade. It would be pleasant if these could once again be exhibited. I was myself concerned a decade ago in the 'limited excavation' at No 15 Lawrence Street, referred to by Tom Pocock in last year's *Annual Report*. But though the gardens of Nos 14 and 15 yielded quantities of fragments ranging from the red anchor period to the Chelsea-Derby periods, none seemed to belong to the period prior to 1750.

Wasters from the early or "triangle" period have, however, been discovered in the past on two sites. The first occasion was in 1842 or 1843 when, as a contemporary wrote, "workmen were digging the foundations of the new houses, now called Cheyne Row West". I have not discovered any record of the address "Cheyne Row West", but possibly it was originally intended that the stretch of Upper Cheyne Row that now forms a right-angle with the north end of Lawrence Street, and which was constructed around this time, should be so named. The other occasion on which a waster of the "triangle" period was recovered was in 1906 or 1907 when the Carlyle

Laundry was being built at No 32 Old Church Street, the eastern end of whose site extended into what must once have been the end of the garden of No 16 Lawrence Street. It is likely, then, that both these finds of early "triangle" ware occurred at places adjoining the former Monmouth House, which the rate books tell us was the earliest site occupied by Sprimont.

It is around this earliest period of Chelsea porcelain that one of the unresolved puzzles concerning the factory revolves. A class of porcelains known to specialists as "Girl-in-a-Swing", after a figure in the Victoria and Albert Museum, of a girl seated on a swing, has a number of resemblances to early Chelsea porcelain. It has very plausibly been suggested that the "Girl-in-a-Swing" factory was founded by workmen who broke away from Sprimont's factory to set up on their own, with other financial backing. Certainly no Girl-in-a-Swing fragments have yet been dug up near Lawrence Street, but it is possible that the discovery of further wasters from the earliest period of the Chelsea factory might throw light on this mystery. Somewhere in the vicinity of the former Monmouth House, very possibly beneath the asphalted yard of the Kingsley School, such fragments are likely to be lying. I would in any case be sad if the Kingsley School site were ever to be redeveloped without some exploration of what may be beneath its southern primeter.

The author of the above article is collecting materials for a book on Chelsea porcelain and would welcome information concerning the factory's site, history or products.

Chelsea Beyond the World's End

Councillor Neil J. Kearney

In April 1878, auctioneers Messrs. Furber & Price announced a five-day sale of the buildings, fabric and effects contained in Cremorne Gardens in West Chelsea. The gardens, after a period of considerable notoriety, had been closed for six months. They did not present a cheerful sight. An unkind winter had severely damaged the canvas coverings of the theatre and ballroom. The gardens were unkempt and overgrown. The site was sold for building purposes. Writing about Chelsea two years later L'Estrange, referring to Cremorne Gardens says, ". . . nothing remains but a desolation of broken ground, a wildernes of trenches and gravel pits".

Nearly one hundred years on, Kensington & Chelsea Council, in 1976 declared the development that sprang up on the Cremorne Gardens site a General Improvement Area. It too did not present a cheerful sight. Less than a quarter of a mile from the trendiest parts of the Kings Road and a similar distance from some of the most desirable and expensive parts of Chelsea the Lots Road area displayed all the symptoms of an inner-city twilight zone. The housing was poorly maintained. Business premises were run down or abandoned. There were a number of derelict sites, evidence of vandalism and environmental decline. Unpointed brickwork, cracked lintels, leaking gutters and drainpipes, rotten window and door frames, roofs in poor repair and broken window panes were commonplace.

Equally sad was the fact that on the site that had once accommodated Chelsea Farm and later Cremorne House and Ashburnham House with their fine lawns and abundance of trees and shrubs of every description there remained, in 1976, not a single piece of open space and no more than a couple of trees.

The Lots Road General Improvement Area occupies a 23-acre site roughly bounded by the World's End Estate to the east, Chelsea Creek and the river to the south and west and Kings Road to the north. Zoned for residential, industry and open space purposes it comprises streets laid out in grid fashion, containing brick-built Victorian terraced houses of mostly two, three and four storeys. Interspersed throughout the area are a number of premises used for light industrial purposes.

In declaring West Chelsea a general improvement area the Council's aims were:

a) to lift the blight that had existed in the area and had brought about its decline;

b) to improve its own fairly substantial housing stock mainly through rehabilitation;

c) to encourage private owners to upgrade their properties;

d) to bring about an environmental transformation through the creation of six acres of open space including a riverside park, planting of trees, eliminating incompatible land uses and better traffic management;

e) to provide community facilities badly needed locally — a health centre, a day nursery and an adventure playground.

The historic past of the Lots Road area is often forgotten when we indulge ourselves in memories of old Chelsea. Though perhaps not as dignified as the rest of Chelsea, its past is no less colourful.

Around about 1740 Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon, built a villa known as Chelsea Farm virtually on the site of what will become the new riverside park. Chelsea Farm became a centre of Methodism. Huntingdon's widow, Lady Selina Shirley played an important part in John Wesley's movement and was even sometimes called the "Queen of Methodists". She remained at Chelsea Farm until 1748 and was the principal patron of George Whitfield, who preached to noble gatherings there on many occasions. How noble is demonstrated in a letter from Horace Walpole to his friend Montagu:

> "Whitfield preaches constantly at my Lady Huntingdon's at Chelsea; my Lord Chesterfield, my Lord Bath, my Lady Townshend, my Lady Thanet, and others, have been to hear him."

Chelsea Farm had a number of owners after the departure of Lady Huntingdon including Viscount Powerscourt, the Countess-Dowager of Exeter and Sir Richard Lyttleton. Thomas Dawson, Baron Dartrey and later Viscount Cremorne enlarged the house from the designs of James Wyatt, an architect of neo-classic taste. Following this Chelsea Farm became known as Cremorne House or Villa. It had little claim to beauty, though the surrounding grounds were fine and richly wooded with an abundance of elm, ash and oak trees.

Lady Cremorne was the great grand-daughter of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. She maintained a large staff and enjoyed great popularity in the area not least because her household had strict orders to patronise the local traders. She was especially friendly with Queen Charlotte and Chelsea Farm was often visited by the Queen and sometimes by George III and the Prince of Wales. Queen Charlotte usually visited with her six daughters and on those occasions all the children in the Sunday and Charity Schools were marched to Cremorne and lined up to give three cheers for her Majesty.

On the deaths of Lord and Lady Cremorne the estate passed to Grenville Penn, her cousin, who later sold it to Charles Random de Berenger, Baron de Beaufair. The Baron established a sporting club on the site which became known as the Stadium and which later gave Stadium Street its name. The Baron is remembered too, though on the more modern Berenger Tower on the World's End Estate. The Stadium was intended to encourage various skilful and manly exercises such as shooting, sailing, rowing, swimming and fishing. Fencing, archery, skating, riding and racing were also catered for. A handbook published in 1841 stated, 'galas are likewise given here on a most magnificent scale which are patronised by most of the nobility'.

When the Baron died the estate was taken over by Thomas Bartlett Simpson, who had experience of the entertainment business, having once worked in the Albion Tavern, opposite Drury Lane Theatre. He realised there was more money to be made from a pleasure garden than from a sporting

centre with its limited appeal. Simpson raised the then enormous sum of £6,000 to spend on preparations for the creation and opening of the Cremorne Pleasure Gardens. His aim was to bring the aristocratic reputation and pursuits of Ranelagh Gardens in the previous century to a wider audience. Artistic and respectable attractions were planned to appeal to the whole family. These included wining and dining, balloon ascents, shooting competitions and exhibitions.

Unfortunately the gardens began to acquire an unsavoury reputation. According to William Acton, writing in 1870, there were two aspects of Cremorne. In the afternoons, the family parties filled the gardens, and all was innocent enjoyment. But at sunset, "calico and merry respectability tailed off eastward by penny steamers", and the Grand Entrance in the King's Road hansom cabs drew up, "freighted with demure immorality in silk and fine linen". At the pay box under its great illuminated star the top-hatted toffs streamed in, ogling and appraising. "By about ten o'clock", said Acton, "age and inocence had seemingly all retired", and now the grottoes and arbours shaded from the gaslight filled up with couples and quartets, and waiters ran to and fro, serving drinks.

The gardens were frequented by some of the best-known Chelsea names. Whistler and the Greaves brothers, Henry and Walter, were frequent visitors. But Victorian London was outraged as they saw the gardens gradually becoming the resort of all the rowdies in the neighbourhood. Prostitution was rife, which hardly helped the image. Colourful decriptions at the time labelled the gardens a centre of depravity, a den of drinking, dancing and devilry. Opposition mounted not only from the Church but also from residents of Kings Road and Cheyne Walk annoyed at the drunken singing and brawling they had to endure when the gates shut each night. When a new license was refused in 1877 Cremorne Gates were shut on the gardens for the last time.

The following year's report of the Vestry of the Parish of Chelsea records that sanction had been given by the Metropolitan Board of Works for 14 new streets in the area. In only a few years the gardens had vanished under the rows of terraced houses that now make up the Lots Road GIA.

Lots Road, itself running parallel to the river, retains in its name a memory of the four lots of meadowland between the river and Ashburnham House which were the allotment of Sir Arthur Gorges and alloted to him in lieu of his general right of common on Chelsea Common. Burnaby Street is named after a brother of Admiral Sir William Burnaby who lived in the area. Meek Street, now almost totally demolished, is probably named after Mary Meek Simpson, a daughter of Mrs. J. Simpson, who obtained sanction for building development after the closure of Cremorne Gardens. Ashburnham Road took its name from Ashburnham House built by Dr. Benjamin Hoadley in 1747 to the west of Chelsea Farm. This later became the home of the Earl of Ashburnham.

Given the area's history, it is interesting that not a single public house remains. The last such establishment, the Balloon Tavern in Lots Road, closed some years ago. Its name commemorated the famous captive balloon that had once graced the adjoining grounds.

The best-known local landmark, the Lots Road power station, was opened in 1904 to supply the underground system. It was the target of several German

air attacks during the Second World War and the surrounding area consequently suffered a considerable amount of bomb damage, with the result that as early as 1947 the Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea had agreed, in principle, to partial redevelopment of the Lots Road area.

In the meantime, the former London County Council was putting forward plans for the construction of a ring road, to relieve traffic problems in West London. The proposed route passed along Lots Road, and consequently threatened the future of the area. Later on, in 1971, the Greater London Council submitted proposals for a 'West Cross Route' that would necessitate the making of a large number of compulsory Purchase Orders in the vicinity of Lots Road. The Minister, however, refused permission for the Orders.

In the interim, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea had submitted an outline planning permission to develop the 15-acre site known as the Meek Street area — a part of what was later to become the Lots Road G.I.A. In December 1973, outline planning permission was granted for a revised scheme involving nine acres of housing and six acres of open space, though this permission was not acted upon, and in September 1974 a further scheme was submitted, this time for redevelopment for residential purposes at 100 persons per acre.

The Department of the Environment ordered a Public Local Inquiry into the scheme, basing this decision on the fact that the land was zoned for education, industry and open space, and the Secretary of State had to be satisfied that a departure from the Development Plan was in all ways reasonable.

The outcome of the Inquiry was a refusal of planning permission for the proposed scheme, and resulted in the Council pursuing the possibility of declaring an Action Area for the district. Subsequent to the Inquiry, the Council's Environmental Health Department carried out a survey of houses in the area, and the decision to declare the Lots Road G.I.A. was taken.

This decision was almost certainly wrong. Housing Action Area status would have enabled the Council and local home-owners to proceed much quicker with the rehabilitation of the area. Whilst accepting that Lots Road was seriously blighted environmentally and that increased grants for environmental improvement were available, all evidence from the area indicated that Housing Action Area status was most appropriate. Much of the housing was in the hands of the GLC or the local Council, and much of the remainder consisted of either furnished or unfurnished tenancies. G.I.A.'s rely on their success to a large extent on voluntary action by owners. And the limited number of home-owners in the area just did not have the means to proceed quickly with costly improvements.

The area obviously suffered from housing stress. Many households lacked the basic amenities. About two-thirds did not have a bath, many were overcrowded and others were receiving social services support. All the indications were that this was a deprived inner city area. The declaration of a Housing Action Area would have allowed a holding operation to take place to make living conditions less intolerable and retain the stability of the existing

community. At the end of a couple of years the area could have switched to G.I.A. status to enable the necessary environmental improvements to be carried out. However, it is easy, with hindsight, to identify the mistakes of the past. It is much less easy to identify them in advance.

Progress on the housing front has been extremely slow and piecemeal with many derelict properties still blighting the neighbourhood. Where rehabilitation has taken place the architectural character of the area has survived. The few stone features, brick corbels and ornamental lintels which have an impact out of all proportion to their number have largely been retained.

On the broader environmental front the picture is very much brighter. Though the original intention to provide six acres of open space has been eroded, a little determined local vigilance has prevented any major reduction. Recently a proposal to use some of the land allocated for open space to create a public car park was overturned in the face of united local opposition.

Two main areas of open space are to be laid out. The central area, bounded by Lots Road to the west, Tadema Road to the east and Kings Road to the south, will include provision for young children, a rose garden and a slightly contoured area with lawn suitable for bowls and other games. All of the open space will be landscaped and provision will be made for quiet sitting-out areas.

The second area of open space will take the form of a riverside park. This is to be named Cremorne Gardens and will be constructed in the south east of the G.I.A. next to the houseboats and fronting onto the Thames. It is to be designated a 'quiet' area suitable for fishing, canoeing, sailing and picnicing and will include a paddling pool and kayak pit. Accordingly, a riverside boating facility will be an important part of the Lots Road area rehabilitation. The boating centre facilities will basically consist of the kayak/canoe training pool, a jetty with access bridge, a floating pontoon to rise and fall with the tide and linked to the jetty with a hinged gangway and a davit to launch larger craft that cannot pass down the gangway. It is hoped that these facilities will form the dual purpose of allowing groups of young people to gain access to the river to further their boating instruction as well as providing a public-boat launching-facility generally. The mooring of boats alongside the wharves and river wall would also be possible.

It is indeed appropriate that this new riverside park should take the name of the old Cremorne Gardens. Local residents are also delighted that pride of place within the new park is to be given to the original Cremorne Gates. After the closure of the first Cremorne Gardens the gates were re-erected at Bowdens Brewery near Stanley Bridge. They were recently rescued from one of the Council's depots, where they had lain for a number of years, and are currently being restored.

The new Cremorne Gardens will hardly be as lively or as boisterous as the old, but it will open up the riverside for the first time in over a hundred years, making it possible for many more Chelsea residents, and particularly the young, to enjoy the beauty and pleasures of the Thames.

All in all, Chelsea beyond the World's End is slowly coming alive again. And not before time! *See illustration on page 35*

Treasurer's Report

I am happy to report that during the year ending 31 December, 1980 the Society accounts show a surplus of £1,596.89 against a loss of £131.53 in the previous year. When the overall deficit for the years 1978 and 1979 totalling £160.31 have been set against this surplus for 1980 the net surplus becomes £1,436.58.

You may well wonder how this has occurred. The answer lies entirely in the Revenue from advertising in the Annual Report, which rose from £325 in the 1978 report, the first year this medium was used to £1,030 for the 1979 report, and then dropped to £850 for the 1980 report. I have included both 1979 and 1980 report figures in this year's accounts and I will now explain why this has come about.

Our Annual Report for each calendar year is published in the following January, the new financial year. The cost of this report is always included as a debtor for the previous year's accounts i.e. the cost of the 1980 report published in January 1981 is included in these accounts for 1980 as a debtor. It is therefore correct to do the same thing for the Revenue from advertising and offset this against the cost of the respective report, even though the money may not be received until the next financial year. Up to the 1980 report this did not happen and we always trailed a year behind with the advertising. I therefore decided, together with our Auditors, to correct this situation in the 1980 accounts with the result that there are two income entries under this heading.

The Revenue from advertising in the next report to be published in January will be less than 1980 and to date amounts to only £720. This fall is due undoubtedly to firms cutting back as a result of the recession. On the credit side we do have the advantage of the increased subscription rates in the current financial year which came into force in January, 1981 and this increase will considerably boost our finances. I am happy to report that I am able to put back into the Life Fund during the current financial year some of the money drawn off in recent years in order to restore the account.

I would now like to thank all the Life Members who sent the Society donations in 1980 and also the much larger number of you who responded to the appeal sent out with last year's Annual General Meeting notices. The sum received including a special large donation amounted to £720. A direct appeal has not been made to Life Members this year but anyone who is able to send a donation to me may be assured that it will be very gratefully received.

The three lectures which the Society introduced for the first time in 1980 at the National Army Museum were all well attended and resulted in a profit of £42.22 and this is shown in these accounts. The 1981 lectures also showed a profit.

Turning to the future, I hope the accounts will remain showing a surplus for the next two years but after that it is very difficult to foretell what might happen as a result of inflation and the recession. One way of helping to ensure that the accounts remain healthy is for more members to pay by covenant and also to introduce a larger membership. *Continued on page 54*

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1980

Income and Expenditure Account — General Fund

			1980
		£	£
Income	Annual subscriptions		1,188.15
	Donations received		359.00
	Donations received from Jubilee Fund ...		316.25
	Surplus of receipts from meetings over costs of meetings		42.22
	Income tax recovered on covenants		63.86
	Advertising revenue in 1979 annual report ...		1,030.00
	Advertising revenue in 1980 annual report ...		850.00
			3,849.48
Less:	*Expenditure*		
	Cost of Annual Report	1,598.71	
	Stationery, postage and miscellaneous expenses	64.44	
	Cost of annual general meeting	142.50	
	Donations to other organisations	13.50	
	Cost of summer meeting	117.19	
	Cost of lightfitting on Dovehouse Green ...	316.25	
			2,252.59
Excess of income over expenditure for the year ...			1,596.89

Income and Expenditure Account — Life Membership Fund

Balance of Fund at 1 January 1980		1,144.65
Income	Life membership fees	60.00
	National Savings Bank account interest ...	290.20
		1,494.85
Less:	*Expenditure*	
	Income Tax	28.83
Balance of fund at 31 December 1980		1,466.02

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 1980

Current Assets				
	Debtors			1,304.06
	Balance in National Savings Bank accounts ...			1,981.63
	Balance at Bank			1,269.91
				4,555.60
Less:	*Current liabilities*			
	Creditors		1,385.00	
	Subscriptions received in advance		268.00	
				1,653.00
	Net assets			2,902.60
	Represented by:			
	Balance of Life Membership Fund			1,466.02
Less:	Adverse balance on General Fund 1 January 1980		(160.31)	
	Surplus for the year		1,596.89	
				1,436.58
				2,902.60

W.S. HAYNES, *Hon. Treasurer*

REPORT OF THE HONORARY AUDITORS
to the members of THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

We have examined the above Balance Sheet and Accounts and we certify them to be in accordance with the books and vouchers of the Society.

12 November 1981
London EC2A 1EP

FRAZER WHITING & Co
Chartered Accountants

May I please ask all members who pay their subscription direct to me each year to do so as soon as possible as this avoids additional work in sending out reminders with subsequent extra costs falling upon the Society. I would like to receive all subscriptions by the end of February and at that point I would be sending out final reminders. In past years I have delayed this until April/May time.

Finally, I would like once again to thank our Honorary Auditors Frazer Whiting & Co. very much indeed for auditing and preparing the accounts for us. They always carry out this task most efficiently and swiftly. The Council and I are extremely grateful to them.

WILLIAM HAYNES
Hon. Treasurer

Recollections of Chelsea in the Early Years of the Century

by Ruth Dunlop

Mrs. Edgard Palamountain has sent us the following note by her cousin, Ruth Dunlop (née Haslam), who was born about 1885. Her home, Park Lodge, Church Street, was demolished when the Vale Estate was built.

We went to live in Chelsea in 1895. Park Lodge (in Church Street) was a charming little house, white stucco with a Georgian porch with pillars but french windows upstairs and down. I know nothing of its history nor why it was called Park Lodge, but old maps I believe show a park thereabouts; there were park-sized trees in the garden, a very big elm and two white poplars where the pigeons cooed. We were surrounded by gardens. The one at the bottom of our garden extended as far as the eye could see and belonged to the big house next door, the original Vale House. The Vale ran at the bottom of their garden and was a country lane with cottages and gardens. Our house faced the backs of Carlyle Square. On the corner there was a mysterious house, windows filthy and boarded up, but it was occupied and of course the centre of endless gossip. There was a gate from our garden into the garden of The Greeting (corner of Elm Park Road and Church Street). Two artists lived there; a German Jew, Felix Moscheles, a godson of Mendelssohn and fellow student with George du Maurier in a Paris atelier, and his Dutch Jewish wife. They carried on the Chelsea tradition of notables and had a salon every Sunday in their fine studio. They were the kindest neighbours and always sent for us when specially interesting people were expected. I can't now remember half of them, but I do remember Maxim Gorki, Mark Hambourg and his mother and sister, Prince Kropotkin, the revolutionary, and his daughter Sasha with whom I was good friends till we both married, and Sir Thomas Beecham.

I wonder what the Old Church looks like now it is rebuilt. I used to have a little pew in it all on my own, *not* when I was a child, and loved it dearly. I wish I could tell you more, but cannot think of anything which would be of real interest to you.

Obituary

MISS MAY FOUNTAIN

by Nesta Macdonald

Miss May Fountain, Principal of Chelsea College of Physical Education from 1929 to 1950, died on February 6, at the age of 92. She was born on May 3, 1888, the fifth daughter of Joseph Septimus Fountain and his wife Margaret (née Allan), of Greenwich.

Educated there at a private school, it was probably the proximity of Dartford, the first of the Physical Training Colleges for Women (founded in 1885), which gave her the idea of taking up this then very unusual career. Typically, she looked about, and found the courses available in the younger Chelsea, founded in 1898, attractive.

Her training lasted from 1906-1908. It is amusing to recall that her father stipulated that she had to have lodgings as close as possible to the polytechnic, in which the College functioned, and never to go out unless accompanied by a maid. She kept this promise, even to cross from Glebe Place, traversing the horse-bus-ridden King's Road to arrive a couple of hundred yards away in Manresa Road!

Tall, slim, quiet and modest, May Fountain early displayed initiative in seeking to enlarge her professional horizons. She lectured for two years in the Teachers' Training College at Truro, and at the same time took the qualifying examinations of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics. After this she spent two years at the heart of the world of gymnastics — the Royal Central Gymnastic Institute in Stockholm, where she concentrated on studying their methods of training teachers. She became proficient in the Swedish language, and translated a number of difficult technical works.

Joining the staff of her own college in 1912, May Fountain travelled constantly in vacations and on sabbatical leaves to study the varied methods being developed abroad. Thanks to such contacts she became in demand to serve on committees so numerous that they could never be listed. Lecturing mainly on anatomy and theory of movement, she succeeded the College's founder, Dorette Wilke, in 1929.

Warmly supported by her staff, May Fountain proceeded to deepen and open the training offered. She was largely instrumental in getting London University to set up a diploma for students in three-years' colleges in the theory and practice of physical education. She also inaugurated a one-year course for teachers from training colleges.

She admired the supple, rhythmic work for women emanating from Finland, but found greater satisfaction in the "natural" theories of body weight, gravity, extension and impetus to be found in what became known as "Austrian Gymnastics". Although she did not dispense with the traditional Swedish methods, Chelsea students learned to assimilate both, and became less dependent on "isms" than is common.

Miss Fountain's character was noteworthy for extraordinary "rightness": her nature, for kindness and generosity. These personal qualities earned her the collaboration of colleagues, and it is to such trust in her judgment that the college owes its continued existence today. On the outbreak of war in 1939 it looked as if it would simply have to disintegrate; the building was scheduled for the use of the ARP.

It was May Fountain who, in the space of no more than three weeks, explored Wales, found the Grand Hotel at Borth, persuaded the proprietor to run it for the college instead of only for the summer season, persuaded the Ministry of Education and the LCC to agree — in which effort she was nobly backed up by Dr Harlow, principal of the Polytechnic, who rushed to Wales with her despite all his other problems. Having settled the essential details, and seen the college's equipment off in two buses with the seats taken out, she and the vice-principal, Ruth Clark, personally wrote to every student, giving them details of the new venue. Not one failed to arrive.

For nine years May Fountain adapted from running a day college in London to a boarding establishment in Wales: the students, who went out teaching practice classes all over each district, were sorely missed when they left each of these places. In 1948, however, the college was moved to Eastbourne. At this point Miss Fountain would have liked to retire, but she stayed on to see it safely established.

Retiring in 1950 to Cornwall, she never lost touch with Chelsea-in-Eastbourne, which she visited as recently as 1979, when she was as keenly interested as ever in the work it could demonstrate. She had belonged to the second wave of pioneers in her profession, all of whom stood for the training of teachers who would spread the excellence of their ideas to thousands of children in schools, rather than to coaching of a few star performers.

The generations of students yet to be trained at "Chelsea" will be the result of her good work, which she will not see.

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New Books About Chelsea

Images of Chelsea by Elizabeth Longford (St. Helena Press, Richmond-upon-Thames, 1980, £70. Limited Edition).

This handsome book is Volume I of a series in preparation under the general title of *Images of London*, based on prints of the separate areas of Greater London. It is a welcome addition to the abundant literature of Chelsea and conveniently sums up much information from numerous sources. About half the 270 quarto pages are devoted to five chapters of text entitled A Village of Palaces; Hyde Park on the River; Chelsea Reach; Worship and Work: the Parishes; Chelsea and the Arts. These are illustrated by selections from the Gallery of Prints (Harriet O'Keeffe) which with a Catalogue (Jonathan Ditchburn), bibliographies and indices fills the remainder of the volume. These chapters are readable and entertaining, but perhaps the last wanders somewhat far from topography into over-familiar anecdotes of such characters as Ruskin and Carlyle. Nevertheless they are good stories which can bear re-telling and a great merit of the text is the way in which it relates the physical aspect of Chelsea at different periods to what remains today and brings its history down to the present. The illustrations are all from prints the different varieties of which are identified in a foreword to the Catalogue. Arrangement is by topics and the prints, several to a page, are "placed in whatever grouping makes the most of their topographical content", without strict chronological order. The latter was perhaps found impracticable since engravings may well be from originals of earlier date. In tracing the history of buildings and scenes it is essential to study the catalogue entries carefully. Not all the pictures are what they seem for they include fantasies such as a Design for the Improvement of Cheyne Walk (never carried out), some prints in reverse and a good deal of artistic licence. Whistler's contribution is perhaps slightly over-emphasisd.

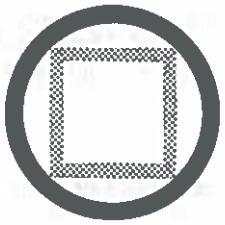
Inevitably some details are misleading. For instance, Pott's etching of Cheyne Walk (573), dated 1900, shows the river as it was before the building of the Embankment in 1874 and is after a painting by "R. P. Bonninton" whom one suspects to have been Richard Parkes Bonington 1801-1828. Crosby Hall, long before it left Bishopsgate, was approached by a ramp to an upper level of the oriel window, the ground having risen around it over the centuries, and No. 436, 1816, is (as noted in the catalogue) a restoration to what it should have looked like. It has looked like that only since it was rebuilt in Chelsea in 1910. From caution therefore, as well as interest, the illustrations need careful study and are printed with such beautiful sharpness that they will stand up to a magnifying glass. We are shown such vanished delights as the Chelsea Bunhouse, Ranelagh and Cremorne pleasure gardens, with occasional figures in period dress to bring them to life. Riverside Chelsea is not allowed to hog the show and due attention is paid to the different Chelsea which grew up lustily along the King's Road after this became a public highway. It is pleasant to be reminded of the nursery gardens which gave rise to the street-name "Butterfly Alley", now revived for a footway beside Sainsburys' store; to follow the building of the nineteenth-century churches for congregations which had long

outgrown the Old Church on the river, and to see how the first Hans Place looked as designed by Henry Holland. There is excellent value in all this for the admittedly steep price of the book and many hours of enjoyment are guaranteed.

Lesley Lewis

The following list, of publications of Chelsea interest which have appeared during the past twelvemonth, has been kindly supplied by Mrs P. K. Pratt, Chelsea Branch Librarian:

BYRON, Arthur — *London Statues*, Constable, 1981, £5.95
COLE, Malcolm — *Whitelands College May Queen Festival*, Whitelands College Monographs No. 1, 1981
DARRACOTT, Joseph — *The World of Charles Ricketts*, Eyre Methuen, 1980. £12.95
FINDLATER, Richared (Editor) — *At the Royal Court: 25 Years of the English Stage Company*, Amber Lane Press, 1981, £12.95
GUY, John — *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More*, Harvester Press, 1980, £20.00
WILLIAMS, Guy — *London Walks*, Constable, 1981, £5.50 (includes a walk round Chelsea)



Jon Bannenberg

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