THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL REPORT 1977

JUBILEE NUMBER

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THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

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

President
THE EARL OF ANTRIM, K.B.E.

Vice-President
THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Council

Chairman: QUENTIN MORGAN EDWARDS, ESQ., M.A.
FRANCIS BADEN-POWELL, ESQ., R.I.B.A., M.A.
DENIS BROODBANK, ESQ., R.I.B.A.
RICHARD BURGESS, ESQ.
SAMUEL CARR, ESQ.
MRS. BRYAN CARVALHO
DR. JACQUELINE DAVIS
ROBIN DE BEAUMONT, ESQ., A.A.DIPL.
JAMES ELLIS, ESQ., R.I.B.A., A.A.DIPL.
LADY PICKTHORN, M.A.
IAN W. FRAZER, ESQ., F.C.A.
SIR JAMES RICHARDS, C.B.E., R.I.B.A.
DAVID ROWE, ESQ.
JONATHAN WHEELER, ESQ., M.A., B.SC., F.R.I.C.S.
JOHN YEOMAN, ESQ., M.A.

Hon. Treasurer
MRS. PATRICIA C. GELLEY

Joint Hon. Secretaries
MRS. LESLEY LEWIS, M.A., F.S.A.
MRS. JOAN HAYES

Assistant Hon. Secretary
MARK DORMAN, ESQ.

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

Hon. Auditor
R. D. CLARKE, ESQ., F.I.A.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY
23 SYDNEY STREET, CHELSEA SW3 6PU

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 by all available means and particularly—
   (a) by stimulating interest in the history, character and traditions of Chelsea;
   (b) by encouraging good architecture, town planning and civic design, the planting and care of trees, and the conservation and proper maintenance of open spaces;
   (c) by seeking the abatement of nuisances;
   (d) by promoting the interests of residents and practitioners of the fine arts, especially in regard to their enjoyment of their homes, studios and surroundings; and
   (e) by 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 the 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. The Council shall appoint the following officers of the Society, namely—
   (a) a Chairman of the Council,
   (b) an Hon. Secretary or Joint Hon. Secretaries,
   (c) an Hon. Treasurer, and
   (d) persons to fill such other posts as may be established by the Council.

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.

(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 a winding-up of the Society, the disposal of the funds shall be decided by a majority vote at a General Meeting.

**The existing rate is £3 annually payable on the 1st January, or a lump sum of £30 for life membership. The annual husband-and-wife rate is £5.*

The Annual General Meeting

of the Chelsea Society was held at The Chelsea College (by kind permission of the Principal) on Tuesday, 1st November, 1977 at 8.30 p.m.

The Worshipful, The Mayor of Chelsea, Alderman P. H. Methuen, Vice President of the Society, took the Chair.

The Mayor opened the meeting by saying how very pleased he was to chair the meeting—particularly in view of his many associations with Chelsea. He had lived here for sixteen years and represented Church Ward on the Borough Council. He was, however, very sad at the reason for his taking the Chair tonight, namely the death of Lord Antrim. He asked Members to stand for a minute's silence in memory of Lord Antrim.

1) The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 2nd November, 1976 were duly approved and signed by the Vice-President.

2) The Hon. Treasurer presented her annual Report. At the end of this Report Mrs. Mordaunt queried the cost of the Annual Report, noting that it exceeded last year's annual subscriptions. The Chairman said in view of the rise in the subscriptions for the current year these should well exceed the cost of the Report.

3) The Vice-President then called upon the Chairman to present his Annual Report. With the exception of the letters following item 7 and item 8 this was presented in full to the meeting.

4) The appointment of Mrs. Lesley Lewis as Acting Chairman from 1st November, 1977 to 28th February, 1978—as recommended by the Council of the Chelsea Society—to enable the Chairman to take sabbatical leave was agreed.
Mr. George Dobry, Q.C., then said he wished to second the tribute paid to Mrs. Lewis in the Chairman's Report. He felt well qualified to do so because over the last nine years, during her office as Joint Honorary Secretary of the Society, he had had the pleasure of seeing her in action. First the battle of the West Cross Route—what an impressive witness. He thought of that

as a model of what an expert witness should say at a Public Enquiry. More recently she had appeared at the House of Lords as a witness for the Borough in connection with the Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Bill. The best of British civilisation poured out when she came to speak. He was certain that in the nine years of work for the Society she had left it in a state which should be an example and encouragement to all of us. We were very grateful to her.

5) Mr. Ernest Beggin said he would like to thank the Members of the Chelsea Society who had been good enough to give generously to the Appeal of the new Community Centre at World's End.
6) The Vice-President then declared the meeting open for discussion.

Mrs. A. B. Reeve regretted the lack of facilities in Chelsea for artists to hold exhibitions, particularly after the closure of the Chenil Galleries. She hoped the Society would pursue further accommodation for this purpose. The Chairman said there were three possibilities in the Old Town Hall namely the main Hall, the Mayor's Parlour and the new Sports Centre. He understood that in the new Chenil Galleries there would also be space for exhibitions.

Mrs. Sheridan asked what was going to happen at the Old Burial Ground garden, and also if the Council could mend the fences in order to stop vandalism. The Chairman agreed the garden presented a desolate appearance at the moment, but gave an assurance there would be as much grass as before, that the asphalt area on the North side would be grassed over and Spring bulbs planted in the grass. The fencing was a temporary matter as when completed the York stone would lead directly on to the King's Road. However, until the garden was finished he would take up the matter of mending the fencing with the Borough Council.

Mr. Conrad Jameson asked if longer notification of Borough meetings could be given to people concerned with particular subjects. He gave as an example the public meeting on St. Leonard's Terrace traffic. Mrs. Lewis explained that mailing was so expensive that the Society could not send notices by post more than three times a year. Most of these matters were notified in the *Chelsea News* which also gave details of Planning Applications.

Mr. W. Haynes said he had two points. Firstly he was worried about the scheme affecting St. Leonard's Terrace, which was put into action rather hurriedly. He mentioned the opposition it had caused. Secondly, members might be interested to see the carving in the new World's End Church of St. John and St. Andrew which was a runner-up in the Carpenters' Company award for Joinery. The Chairman in replying congratulated the Chairman of the Works Committee for being prepared to take a second look at the scheme and give all concerned a chance to air their views at the open

meeting. He also thought it would be a splendid idea for members to take the opportunity to look at the new Church when they go to see the new Community Centre.

Mr. Eric Dugdale said with regard to the St. Leonard's Terrace traffic scheme, it did not seem to be appreciated by members that the beautiful old houses facing Royal Hospital are being shaken by traffic. 800 vehicles pass in the morning and 600 at night. The Chairman said the Society were reluctant to be advocates of a particular traffic management scheme which might well be opposed by many neighbouring residents and members.

Councillor Mrs. Jardine said she was opposing the scheme because the traffic will go into the little quiet and narrow streets. She hoped some positive conclusions would be reached at Friday's meeting, including proposals for stopping accidents in other streets as well as St. Leonard's Terrace.

Mr. Jameson said he would like to feel that the Society could have its own traffic scheme after careful study of the whole area. The Chairman said the Chelsea Society had laid down some general principles in regard to traffic management schemes—basically that there should be some particular reason for a scheme, such as damage to people or property (particularly where houses were of historic or architectural importance). However any scheme had to be balanced against the damage to people in another area equally residential, the cost to the ratepayer and, importantly, the dislocation which would be caused to other local residents, to doctors, ambulances, fire engines and the like. It was therefore considered better for the Society to speak in general terms than to say that a particular scheme was good or bad.

Mr. Michael Stephen complained of the incessant noise from burglar alarms, particularly in the King's Road. As this came under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 it was difficult to prosecute as one had to get a sufficient number of like-minded people to participate. He had written to the Department of Environment suggesting flashing lights after 20 minutes when the noise alarm should be cut off automatically. He asked all those concerned about noise pollution to do the same.

Mrs. Aschan asked if there is any hope of stopping the traffic destroying Cheyne Walk. The Chairman said he understood there was a minor scheme under consideration for closing a slip road to help the situation.

Councillor Mrs. Jardine said a petition was going ahead and the GLC were favourable to it.

Councillor Dawson confirmed that the scheme would be considered on 12th December by the Borough Council's Works Committee. The Chairman said he would like to assure members

that the Society has been concerned for years about the traffic situation on Chelsea Embankment and that was the reason why the Society fought the battle of the West Cross Route. We had even written to the EEC objecting to Heavy Goods Vehicles.

A member then mentioned a new worry for the Society: white-robed sheiks on skateboards using the Cheyne Walk footpaths as a race track.

Mrs. Hughes asked what was being done to recruit more members to the Society. The Chairman said that with all the additional work for the Society's Golden Jubilee it had not been possible this year to undertake a recruiting scheme. He would, however, be pleased to hear of any suggestions which could be carried out in the near future. This concluded the Discussion.

The Chairman warmly thanked the Vice-President for taking the meeting, and the Members for their much appreciated support and interest in the Society's Golden Jubilee Year.

The Chairman's Report

1. *Membership*

Our membership at present is 834.

Tonight as Chairman of our meeting, we are privileged to have the Mayor of the Royal Borough, Alderman Peter Methuen. It is perhaps apt that in this, our fiftieth year, the Mayor should be here, not simply as a guest but in his capacity as Vice-President of the Society. It seems that there has always been a slightly love/hate relationship between the Society and the Borough since so much of our work is taken up with trying to influence Borough decisions for, we hope, the benefit of all who live and work in Chelsea. This year has been no exception. But as far as my personal knowledge extends, and I am sure this is true of my predecessors too, we have enjoyed the friendliest relationships with many officers of the Borough, as well as with Councillors, and indeed Mr. Mayor, the holders of your office.

2. *Death of Lord Antrim*

But however warm our welcome, it must be touched with our sadness and sense of loss at the recent death of Lord Antrim. Amongst his many public services, his great achievement must be the enduring work at the National Trust and the way in which it has adapted itself to the needs of our time—an enormous expansion of its scale of operations and in particular the success of Operation Neptune. We were indeed fortunate that so distinguished a resident of Chelsea became our President. Lord Antrim's work made him particularly conscious of the importance of local societies such as our own, and I am very grateful for the help and guidance that I and the Society received from him. I discussed Chelsea Society matters with him only a very short time before his death and can confirm his very real interest in the affairs of the Society.

3. *Summer Meeting*

Lord Antrim was not sufficiently well to attend our Summer Meeting, but he was very interested in the scheme we were promoting and which we launched on that day. Fiftieth birthdays obviously require something special and I hope that those who attended enjoyed the Summer Meeting. It was held precisely to the day fifty years after our first meeting, also in Chelsea Town Hall. A full account of it prepared by Lesley Lewis, will be included in the Annual Report. We had a small exhibition of works by Chelsea artists or with Chelsea themes, and the United Kingdom Première of *The Green City*, presented personally by the Austrian Director

who came to London especially. Without Betty Carvalho this would not have been possible. Joyce Grenfell, a member of our Society, long resident in Chelsea, delighted us with a few recollections of Chelsea and her life as a supreme entertainer. As a climax to the evening, we crossed the King's Road to the Old Burial Ground where in a brief torchlight ceremony, the Rector of St. Luke's, Harold Loasby, referred to the symbolism of opening the gates and Miss Grenfell symbolically lifted the first slab (concerning which more later).

Rather than celebrate our birthday with coffee and buns, or even cheese and wine, we thought the occasion demanded something more elaborate. So, to the harm of our members' pockets, we had a buffet supper. We attempted to keep the price as low as possible, and it was for that reason that you had to pay extra for your wine and coffee. The evening was, I think, a great success and enjoyed by all.

Much of the success was due to the hard-working efforts of our Secretary, Joan Hayes, and many other officers of the Society, both past and present. I must also thank our cataloguer, Philip Hook and Tony Ashby, who arranged and hung the pictures so superbly. Our thanks are due no less to the owners for allowing us to present this small but delightful exhibition.

4. *Retiring Officers*

On the notice of the Annual General Meeting you will have seen reference to the sabbatical leave by the Chairman, so perhaps I should explain that I have some law examinations coming up which will be taking up a large part of my time. However, Lesley Lewis has very kindly agreed to take over during this period. Unfortunately this will be rather in the nature of a swan song for her. After nine years' service to the Chelsea Society, Lesley Lewis will be leaving us. Although undertaking much other work, it has been particularly on the planning side that the Society owes so much to Mrs. Lewis. This has involved an enormous amount of work dealing with Planning Applications and appearing at Public Inquiries on behalf of the Society. This year Lesley Lewis also appeared as a witness for the Borough in connection with the new Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Act, and has written a report of this to appear in our Annual Report. Thank you, Lesley, for this valuable and outstanding work. Whilst we all regret your departure, we have been fortunate in acquiring a new Secretary, Eileen Harris, who will be an able successor in this important role and will be assisted, as Lesley was, by Mark Dorman. Mrs. Harris is herself an architectural historian and is well equipped to maintain the high standards set by her predecessor. We also lose our Treasurer this year after a five year stint. The last year has meant considerably

added work in connection with our Golden Jubilee Fund. Our thanks are due to Pat Gelley for the time and care that she has devoted to the Society. In her place we welcome Bill Haynes to be our new Treasurer.

Finally, we welcome Arthur Grimwade as Vice-Chairman of the Society. We have not previously had such a post, but our work has increased enormously during these years of rapid change. We considered that a Vice-Chairman would certainly help to strengthen any team and I am delighted that he has agreed to become our first Vice-Chairman.

5. *The Fiftieth Anniversary*

The final topic of my report last year was our fiftieth anniversary. Your Council considered that the complete rehabilitation of the Old Burial Ground would be a fitting and permanent way in which to celebrate this happy event: a gesture whereby the Society could be seen to be fostering the amenities of Chelsea in the most practical way.

Though some, very few I might add, have been concerned about the detail of the scheme, there has been virtual unanimity concerning the proposal. We launched the fund with an appeal to all our members and they responded magnificently. We had three separate events, partly for fund-raising and partly to bring it to the attention of our members and the public at large.

The first of these was an illustrated talk by the architect, David Le Lay, in which he discussed the principles underlying the design of a public garden. He then showed how these had been brought to bear on this particular site. Accompanying this excellent presentation was a Chelsea Quiz presented by Bill Figg and Lesley Lewis. Old and new slides of Chelsea certainly taxed our members' knowledge. The Quiz demonstrated very forcibly how much we have suffered since the war.

We repeated this Quiz for the general public and also added to it some musical items, thanks to the skilled performers of Hill House School. We had an excellent attendance from our members, but, sadly, not so many at the second showing. Our thanks are due to David Le Lay, Bill Figg and Lesley Lewis, Richard Townend and his musicians and of course Chelsea College for their kindness in allowing the use of the principal lecture room and this hall.

Finally, we shared a concert with St. Luke's on 5th May. This was presented by Philip Cranmer and the newly formed Clayton Singers: a superb choir with superb music of the church year. Our thanks are due to the Rector, Dr. Cranmer and his choir.

These three events were the preliminaries to the work commenced symbolically by Miss Grenfell in the torchlight at our fiftieth birthday.

At the moment the Old Burial Ground presents a slightly desolate appearance. The reason for this is that the work has had to be undertaken by stages.

Unfortunately costs are far higher than the amount we originally had in mind when we first conceived the scheme. The total is likely to be between twelve and thirteen thousand pounds. The reason is just simply that labour and materials, particularly natural materials, are very expensive. If we wish to achieve a worthwhile scheme we have to face up to present-day costs.

Because of this cost, we have had to tackle the project stage by stage, and this first stage has accounted for something like two-thirds of the ultimate cost. We still need £4,000. Lesley Lewis, through a Trust Fund, has offered to match—£1 for £1—up to a total of £1,000, all donations received up to 31st December, 1977. We have a small balance towards the second phase and hope for some substantial donations from other Trusts with whom we are in contact. Work which will virtually complete the project should begin within the next few weeks.

Don't judge the project by its present appearance. Consider a large grassy area, sown with many bulbs and a natural progression from the pavement into the heart of a small garden in the middle of Chelsea. Betty Carvalho has led the Society's liaison team, all of whom—and particularly Betty—have contributed much time, thought and energy. I would also like to express our thanks to John Yeoman, Chairman of the Library and Amenities Committee and Mr. Hennings, the Borough Engineer. They have both been immensely enthusiastic about the scheme and have done all in their power to assist, bearing in mind the strict housekeeping that the Borough is having to exercise at this time. This has been a very heartening example of co-operation between our Society and the Borough.

6. *The Library Move*

However, before we get too carried away, all has not been entirely to the Society's liking. We made our protest concerning the move of the library, not so much as a matter of principle, but more because it seemed to us that the case for its move had not been entirely made out. There seemed to be an attempt to squeeze too much into the Chelsea Old Town Hall. The reconstruction is now underway and final judgment must be reserved. I think, though, that there was some validity in what we had to say. I have heard that the library space might be approximately two-thirds of the existing space. I also read in *The Chelsea News* that the Borough requires overflow office accommodation in flats at the World's End: indications at least that it is going to be a tight squeeze. However, on the Library move we will as I say await judgment.

7. *The Loss of the Children's Swimming Pool*

In many ways more serious is the loss of the small swimming pool. This has served many generations of Chelsea school children and was also used for club evenings and by the general public. In the summer both pools were packed to capacity. In the winter, one of the pools was closed, an excellent Canadian maple floor was laid, and the pool was leased to ILEA and used for other sports. All this is now being changed. Instead of a small pool, we will have a so-called 'Sports Centre' which can double as an exhibition hall. It is splendid to have such facilities, but at what cost. It seems undeniable that the number of visits to the small pool will have been far in excess of the numbers that will now be attracted, even by the collapsible squash court. What seems extraordinary is that none of the local schools or youth groups were consulted or informed when the possibility of change was being considered. Immediately they learnt of this, by then too late to have any influence, their protests were made known. On the question of the capital cost involved, I understand that the children's pool could have been effectively rehabilitated for £20,000 and the alternative costs of conversion which are now being carried out will be in excess of £90,000. I have no doubt that the Sports Complex will be fully let, catering for the select few at lesser cost to the Borough, and that the Centre will be useful for exhibitions, but there are at least two other places in the Old Town Hall which can house exhibitions.

We wrote to express our concern on these matters on two occasions as follows:

23 Sydney Street, SW3
11th January, 1977

John Yeoman, Esq.
Chairman, Libraries and Amenities Committee

Dear Mr. Yeoman,

Proposed Library Move and Alterations at Chelsea Old Town Hall

I have now had the opportunity of discussing your letter with the Council of the Society and also viewing the sketch plans at Chelsea Old Town Hall.

The Council of the Society do not feel they can approve of the proposed move until it can be clearly demonstrated that there is either a very definite financial advantage or the facilities at the new location will be as good as those at the present purpose-built Library. Our position is supported by all the neighbourhood amenity associations in the immediate vicinity.

Study of the current plans fills me with an even greater foreboding. It would appear from these that:

1. There is no reading room (a facility much used at the present Library).
2. The space available for virtually every public room seems to be far less than at present. Perhaps you could let us have the actual figures.
3. Storage space seems to be quite insufficient by reference to the present Library.
4. Facilities for music (library and records) seem to have been drastically reduced.
5. There seem to be some sort of raised gangways in the lending library

and the children's library. I believe these are only 3ft. wide. I do not know if they are an essential part of the scheme, but certainly they would appear to present a totally unnecessary and unacceptable hazard, as well as making operation conditions—e.g. use of trolleys—that much more difficult for the staff.

On those grounds alone, which are additional to those already raised, the Chelsea Society must continue to oppose the move from our present purpose-built Library. However, I am delighted to read in your letter that "if the final plans do not offer a significant saving to the ratepayers, there will be no point in proceeding with them".

The original idea was to *sell* the Library as a contribution to the capital costs of the New Town Hall. Since Chelsea College has no funds available this has now had to be changed to renting the Library at what will surely be a very nominal rent. The staff costs, which I assume are by far the largest part of the running costs, will be much the same whether the library is at its proper place or at the Old Town Hall. I do therefore appeal to your committee to consider whether the current set of proposals represent a good deal for the ratepayers, or indeed a fair swop for the residents.

However, I am particularly concerned at the latest possibilities concerning the small swimming pool. I understand that the cost of its rehabilitation would amount to about £25,000. The cost of its conversion might amount to about £90,000, though after this there will be a great saving on running costs. The conversion would be to a combined games parlour/temporary squash court (these are hopeless) and exhibition hall. I have already pointed out there is a purpose-built exhibition hall below the canteen. It only needs re-conversion. I suspect that none of your committee has direct experience of the use to which this small swimming pool is put. The suggestion that a part of the larger pool should be set aside for younger children and learners is quite unrealistic. It is totally unsuitable for that purpose and would merely result in even greater crowding in the very busy summer months.

Once again there is a proposal that Chelsea shall lose a much-used facility. The small pool has been used to teach generations of school-children how to swim and our local schools—to my own knowledge—have had a marvellous record. Once again, as in the case of the Library, we do not begrudge Kensington its fine and expensive pool, *with adjoining small pool*, but we do not see why our own small pool should be sacrificed.

I would imagine that all members of the Chelsea Society are ratepayers and all most conscious of the need to keep down capital and running costs. But from what we have so far learnt, it would certainly appear that far too much is being planned to be put in the Old Town Hall with the result that well-established facilities are being lost, illogical steps taken, additional conversion costs incurred and perhaps few, if any, savings being made.

Yours sincerely,
QUENTIN MORGAN EDWARDS,
Chairman, Chelsea Society.

[Considerable modifications to the original library plans have now been made.]

The Borough Planning Control Officer,
through Chelsea Old Town Hall,
King's Road, SW3.

19th January, 1977

List 31 . xii . 76

Dear Mr. Sanders,

Chelsea Old Town Hall, King's Road, SW3

The proposed alterations to the above have now been submitted as changes of use under the planning regulations and several of our Council members have considered them. The procedure is in this case a technicality

because *if* the Borough has decided on the transfer of the Library, conversion of the small swimming pool, etc. it would be inappropriate for us to object to the change of use which is necessarily implied.

We take the view, however, that the case for the proposals has not been made out on economic grounds if one takes these to include future requirements and real as opposed to strictly financial values. On the latter we have not the information to argue in any detail, but we can see the following points:

1. *Library.* The reading room and reference library would be combined. We doubt if the atmosphere of a general reading room is right for consultation of the reference section which may require considerable concentration. There would be tables for reading in the room allotted for local collections but this would not meet the same need.

Libraries inevitably grow and we fear there will be no slack to take up in the storage accommodation.

2. *Small Swimming Pool.* The provision of a special area in the bigger pool would be inadequate as it would be most needed at the times the pool is most crowded. Provision of swimming facilities for children is surely a prime requirement which should not be economised out of existence. The new pools in Kensington, excellent though they are, are really irrelevant to Chelsea children, since they are far away, near the northern boundary of the Borough, and the time and expense of getting children there would make it an occasional expedition rather than a habit. It is entirely in the public interest that as many children as possible should be able to swim competently, and this requires a lot of practice.

3. Very limited space seems to be allotted to the information centre, *Citizens' Advice Bureau*, etc. These are the sort of services which may need to expand in unforeseen ways and it is essential that they should be sited near the public they are intended to serve. It seems extraordinarily short-sighted only to give them the bare minimum of space they might require now.

4. *Planning Department.* We have had your assurance that Chelsea applications and plans would continue to be available in the Old Town Hall, but Councillor Yeoman, in a letter to the Chairman of the Chelsea Society, 30th November, 1976, seems to cast doubt on this. If such facilities are not continued it will be a practical negation of the principle of public participation to which the Borough is supposed to adhere.

We urge that the matter should be argued on the wider considerations, and in recognition of the fact that the straggling nature of the Borough, and the poor north-to-south communications, may deprive Chelsea of the services for which it pays rates, if centralisation is pursued for its own sake or for narrow financial reasons. Meanwhile the Society registers its disapproval by the only means at present open to us, an objection to the proposed changes of use.

Yours sincerely,

LESLEY LEWIS,

Joint Hon. Secretary.

[The Borough relented—an information room containing Chelsea Planning Applications is now in use at the Registry Buildings and will be incorporated in the Old Town Hall Conversion.]

A delegation of parents, Managers and teachers of primary schools presented a Petition to the Borough Council concerning the closure. Following this, it has now been recommended by the Committee concerned and I believe approved by the Council that

they should agree to replace "if feasible the small pool facilities when the financial situation is more favourable. The question of feasibility arises not only from the financial problems, but also on the location of a suitable site".

So, within months of closing down a valued small pool, the Council starts to consider its replacement. The cost of the North Kensington Pool is about £1,270,000, the cost of refurbishing the small pool would have been about £20,000.

Our distress concerning the pool and the library and the representations we were making took place at almost the precise time, and with exactly the same people, as the close co-operation over the Old Burial Ground scheme. This is how the Chelsea Society must function.

8. *Planning Matters*

Houseboats

The Society continues to maintain a close watch on the Houseboat situation. A planning application for alterations to the layout was received by the Borough. After listening to various interested parties we reached our own decision on the matter that in most cases the change would represent an improvement. However, we were particularly concerned that a start had been made on the work before planning consent was granted. We commented on the application as follows:

The Borough Planning Control Officer,
RBK & C, Dept. 705,
Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8.

23 Sydney Street, SW3
19th July, 1977
List 17th June

Dear Mr. Sanders,

Houseboats

We understand that the Cheyne Walk Residents' Association is very concerned about the application to reorganise the moorings. They say that pile driving and reorganisation were started without planning permission. We take a very serious view of this.

They also say that a larger number of boats has been applied for. This is in direct contravention to what has been agreed.

They complain, as we do, that the one plan submitted with the application was totally inadequate to explain what was proposed. We urge that more information should be produced.

The Society would like to make the following suggestions:

The removal of the Boat Coy's offices and main service depot to the West end, away from the narrow part of Cheyne Walk, is to be commended.

That organisation of access and services to the colony by way of pontoon 'main streets' is an improvement that will no doubt attract a higher rate.

That moving the larger boats to the West end is a principle to be further explored, bearing in mind planning proposals for the land adjacent. This could minimise density in the bay where the public enjoy their best view of the river—and in this connection boats 41 and 42 should be deleted from the application.

That boats should be rearranged to show an increase in the gap between colonies (even possibly the complete colony moved to the West end to allow the East half of the bay to be open)—not a closure of the gap with additional boats.

That temporary mooring facilities for residents and visiting yachts should be provided from the pontoon main street by omission of houseboats, and not in the precious gap.

That any permission granted should be conditional on prior removal of the wrecked hull at present blocking the gap.

Yours sincerely,

QUENTIN MORGAN EDWARDS,
Chairman.

Tedworth Square

A new planning application was received for the terrace on the North side of Tedworth Square. We commented as follows:

The Borough Planning Control Officer — 2nd May, 1977
RBK & C, Dept. 705
Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8 — List 15 . 4 . 1977

Dear Mr. Sanders,

50-58 Tedworth Gardens, 20-48 Tedworth Square,
33-41 St. Leonards Terrace, SW3 — CA

I have taken the advice of architect members of the Society's Council on the application to construct 61 units of accommodation, predominantly three bedroom maisonettes, on the above site. We note that 33-36 St. Leonards Terrace are to be rehabilitated and that there will be basement parking for 36 cars.

In general their view is unanimous that this is an undistinguished design for a very important site, though the height and scale are acceptable.

Specific criticisms are as follows:

1. The colour and type of brick is not specified, and grey, simulated slate suggests that the finish would be done on the cheap. A high standard of finish in the best materials should be insisted on.
2. The heavy brick projections at pavement level will be unsightly.
3. Access to the car park and out of it has been placed opposite the two roads in Tedworth Square, which is potentially hazardous as creating cross roads.
4. The very large holes in the façade for car park access destroy the scale and will not be pleasant to look at.
5. If ventilation of the car park is obtained from the rear as well as the front it could produce a noise problem for the rear of Smith Terrace.

Yours sincerely,

QUENTIN MORGAN EDWARDS,
Chairman.

9. *The Pheasantry*

"Recent years would not be complete without some reference to the Pheasantry." That is a *verbatim* quotation from last year's Report. It is equally applicable now. *The Evening News* published a series of articles concerning the Pheasantry in the summer. There is in existence outline Planning Consent covering both sites. Although this might be due to expire next year, this is not necessarily of great significance. We do not like the present Planning Consent and have

sought without success to introduce some amelioration. We do not like the density of the present proposals and in particular the tower block of housing which is quite out of scale with the surroundings. We do not like the brash finishes to the buildings, their lack of sympathy to the Pheasantry and the King's Road, and we do not like the ineffective attempt to link the new to the old. It is essential that there should be a completely new scheme. Surely the ground landlords, the developer, and our Planning Committee can do something to produce a plan worthy of the site and retrieve this blot on the Chelsea environment.

10. *The Proposed Cardiothoracic Centre*

In our last Annual Report we published our criticisms of the plans then proposed, in the form of a letter to the Chairman of the Planning Committee. To our disappointment and concern, the Committee then gave consent for the proposals of the hospital, subject only to minimal provisos. These provisos had been aired previously and we did not think that they were sufficient, nor did they appear to be properly incorporated in the revised Planning Application of last year. However, we subsequently understood that the scheme had been turned down by the DHSS—perhaps due to the cost involved, as we had anticipated, and perhaps also the Department themselves appreciated that attempting to cram so much on to such a site did not make sense: a point we had been trying to bring home to the Borough.

Since that time, the hospital has been preparing a revised set of plans. There have at last been negotiations concerning the purchase of the Kingsmead site so that the whole complex can be spread over a much wider area: a suggestion we ourselves made about two years ago. I now understand from Councillor McLaren, the new Chairman of the Planning Committee, that these negotiations have proved successful. Hopefully, our original suggestions concerning the use of the larger site will be taken up, thus saving a number of homes in Guthrie Street and the Convent Garden.

If our original criticisms of the scheme can now be met by the use of a far larger site, then this will represent a notable victory for commonsense. In due course, we will be able to bid goodbye to another empty building site and welcome a new Brompton Hospital, at ease with the neighbourhood and continuing its fine work in our midst.

11. *Annual Report*

I should mention at this stage that following Noel Blakiston's retirement as Chairman we have had a new Editor of the Report, Sam Carr. I think he should be commended on the continuing high standards and keeping the printing costs down. This year's

Report will be slightly larger than usual, well illustrated and—naturally enough—with the theme of fifty years of the Society. It will be available shortly before Christmas and could make an excellent present. Extra copies will be £1 so please let us know if you would like any. We can take orders after the formal meeting ends. Normal circulation to members will be after Christmas.

Conclusion

This has been a successful year for the Society, but it has meant a lot of hard work for its officers and others of the Council. I would particularly like to express all our thanks for so much that they have done and, I consider, to such great effect. Thanks are also due to Chelsea College for the loan of Lightfoot Hall, once again, to yourself Mr. Mayor, for chairing our meeting, to our members and guests for coming this evening and their support during the year.

Thank you, one and all.

Fifty Years of the Chelsea Society

by Dorothy Middleton

When the Chelsea Society was founded in 1927 the old riverside village of Carlyle and the pre-Raphaelites was still recognisable. The fifty years which have now passed have seen far-reaching changes in which the Society has been continuously involved, sometimes able to affect or retard the proposed transformation of familiar landscapes, sometimes defeated; but always concerned. Changes for the worse have included the turning of the Embankment from a riverside walk into a traffic speedway, and the degeneration of the King's Road into a modern Vanity Fair—noisy, tasteless and quite impersonal. Improvements are less easy to identify, though few will regret the demolition of the decaying houses at the World's End and their replacement by well-designed modern flats.

From the first the Chelsea Society interested itself not only with the style and use of buildings in Chelsea, but with the quality of life within the Borough. This was threatened at the outset of the Society's existence by the erection of the Battersea Power Station, a project which threatened excessive pollution of Chelsea's atmosphere. The Society lodged a protest and joined with Westminster City and Chelsea Borough Councils in a deputation to the Electricity Commissioners and later to the London Electricity Board. Though the Commissioners assured the deputation that safeguards were embodied in the Station's operating rules, the Chelsea Society did not let the matter rest. The Annual Report for 1932/33 recorded further representations to the Electricity Commissioners, as a result of sanction being given for installing an additional generator. Warmly supported by the Chelsea Borough Council, the Society obtained a conditional pledge that this generator would be kept in reserve. A similar problem came up in 1935, when there were complaints of excessive fumes from the Morgan Crucible chimney at the south end of Battersea Bridge. Friendly exchanges with the Company resulted in assurances of a taller chimney to be built to carry off the fumes, and of every endeavour to 'eliminate all cause of complaint'. In 1934/35 there were further reports from Battersea and comments on the new Fulham Power Station. In 1935/36 more pressure on the Electricity Commissioners, and through them on the London Power Company responsible for Battersea, was reported, proving that 'eternal vigilance' is the only solution to amenity problems. The matter, and others like it, have been reviewed since from time to time.

Turning to more aesthetic preoccupations, discussions on Sloane Square resulted eventually in a success which we all enjoy today. In 1929 the square was designated a traffic roundabout and

the Mayor of Chelsea invited the Chelsea Society to nominate two members to join a committee formed to consider plans for the lay-out of what was now no longer a simple crossroads (*see page 42*). But for this early attention to the subject, we might never have had the pleasing open aspect which makes of Sloane Square the only continental-type *place* in London. Trees were planted, the area was paved, and at long last a statue and fountain were erected. The Royal Fine Arts Commission, consulted at the Society's suggestion, had from the beginning proposed such a centrepiece, but the Borough could not find the money to commemorate in this way the Coronation of King George VI in 1937, as had been hoped. Eventually, in 1948, the Borough Council accepted the offer of a fountain and statue under the terms of the Leighton Trust, founded by Lord Leighton's sisters to place works of art in public sites. A competition was held, happily won by the late Gilbert Ledward, R.A., well known in Chelsea and a strong supporter of the Society. A bureaucratic hitch prevented the statue being put in place in time for Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953, but it went up soon after. For the Festival of Britain in 1951, the Society promoted a popular scheme—the temporary erection of a 'Chelsea Bun House' for refreshments in Sloane Square.

As a river borough, Chelsea has been much concerned with bridges, and the Chelsea Society has entered vigorously into the debates which have centred on the Chelsea, Albert and Battersea crossings of the Thames. The Annual Report for 1930/31 disclosed L.C.C. plans not only to rebuild Chelsea Bridge, but to move it up stream from the location of the ancient ford and to re-align the approach roads. This would have endangered trees in Ranelagh Gardens, and the Society was called upon at this stage to do no more than support the already vigorous protest of the Commissioners of Chelsea Hospital. The scheme to re-site the bridge was abandoned by the L.C.C. and in 1933 a new plan in the old position was proposed. The Chelsea Society's suggestion of reference to the Royal Fine Arts Commission was adopted, and the progress of the new bridge was followed with approval in the Annual Reports for 1933/34, 1934/35 and 1936/37. The bridge was opened to traffic in 1938, by which time the Society's attention had been drawn up stream to the Albert, which the L.C.C. proposed to rebuild, to the possible detriment of the amenities of Cheyne Walk. The outbreak of war brought a reprieve to the old bridge of which the next important mention in an Annual Report is not until 1957 when the L.C.C. sprang a ready-made scheme on the Chelsea Borough Council, the Chelsea Society and the Royal Fine Arts Commission at a meeting at County Hall. The Society protested in the strongest terms (Hilda Reid's letter is in the Annual Report for 1957) against proposals which would necessitate a roundabout at the south end of Oakley Street, and probably an underpass. In the following year,

plans for the bridge were postponed, to revive in 1962 with a scheme for tidal flow traffic controlled by lights on an ugly gantry which the Society was unable to prevent. Albert Bridge next became a problem in the 70s when it was closed to enable a strengthening pier to be inserted in mid-stream. During the period of repairs, a strong movement developed in the neighbourhood for keeping the bridge permanently closed to traffic, but the Society did not feel able to support this proposition in isolation. Until the authorities were prepared to replan the traffic for the entire area, possibly to build a new bridge at Chelsea Basin, it seemed only fair that Albert Bridge should share the nuisance with its neighbours. The third of Chelsea's bridges, Battersea, has not been directly threatened, but the Society keeps a watchful eye on the last remnant of the old river village at the north end of the bridge. In November 1951 the Society addressed to the Borough Council its recommendations on the proposed re-building of the river wall between Battersea Bridge and the Cremorne Arms. The Society, after canvassing its members, was strongly in favour of keeping the wall on or about its existing position, and equally strongly against the Borough's suggestion of building an embankment across Chelsea Reach which would obliterate the bay and boat beach. A partial victory resulted: the wall was rebuilt on its existing line, but in a style, with massive piers and unsightly concrete, of which the Society could hardly approve.

Trees have been a continuing concern of the Chelsea Society, operating as it does in an area peculiarly short of open spaces. It was a prime interest of the late Basil Marsden-Smedley who, at his death in 1964, had been a member of the Society's Council for 30 years and Chairman for 19. The preservation and care of existing trees, and the planting of new ones, recur as themes in the Annual Reports from the first. As early as the first of these, in 1928, the loss of trees in Carlyle Square, Cheyne Walk and elsewhere was lamented. Two years later representations resulted in a replanting of trees on the widened portion of the King's Road between Edith Grove and Tadema Road. The 1930/31 Report sounded a warning note, to be repeated over and over again, against inexpert pruning, liable to turn graceful growths into 'hatstands' and inhibiting further natural development. An improvement in technique was noted in the case of some Embankment plans in 1935/36, and the planting of new flowering trees welcomed. In 1938 the Society convened a meeting on 'The Treatment of Town Trees', at which several experts spoke, and which submitted a resolution to the Chelsea Borough Council. That the Society maintained its interest in the subject is shown by a note on the 'care and maintenance' of Embankment trees in the 1951 Report, by a note on pruning in that for 1962, and by the advocacy at the same time of tree planting in the newly opened Embankment Gardens. A charming photograph

appeared in the Report for 1964 of trees correctly pruned under the supervision of Marsden-Smedley, so as to preserve their elegant shape while admitting air and light. An encouraging survey of the state of Chelsea's trees was contributed to the 1976 Report by A. P. Annett, Arboriculturist for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It mentions mulberries, thought to have been originally imported into Chelsea by Sir Thomas More, discusses suitable trees for street planting, enters into the vexed question of pruning, and concludes with the surprising information that no less than 2,500 Chelsea trees are protected by Preservation Orders. All this bears witness to the Society's continual insistence on the importance of city greenery, and it is appropriate that at the Golden Jubilee party on 8th June, 1977, a film was shown, *The Green City*, explaining what had been and what could be done in this way.

Chelsea folk are keen gardeners, as befits neighbours of the famous Flower Show, and their enthusiasm is reflected in the Society's attention to the preservation of open spaces and their adornment with flowers. The ugly bomb site on Cheyne Walk between Old Church and Danvers Streets was converted into the charming sunken garden of today by the Society's zeal, first in urging the Borough to acquire the site and then in recruiting volunteer gardeners to tend it. At the request of the Society, in 1953, the Borough agreed to put up guard posts to protect the little strip of garden in front of the Church of the Holy Redeemer in Cheyne Row. Our Golden Jubilee is being marked by the initiation of a project to rehabilitate the rather derelict and overgrown space hitherto known as the 'Old Burial Ground' in King's Road near the Old Town Hall. The plan has been blessed by the Borough Council, recognised by the Civic Trust, and largely financed by funds raised by the Chelsea Society.

These instances of the Society's activities in various fields have been chosen at random from the Annual Reports of half a century. There is no room to include everything: for instance, the brief but successful campaign against the 1959 proposals originating with the Department of Education to demolish 77 houses in and around Sydney Street to make a school playground; the longer but less successful battle to make something worth while of the Pier Hotel site at the south end of Oakley Street; the continual protests on behalf of Royal Avenue and Paultons Square. Much could be written, too, about the powerful backing for the movement to rebuild Chelsea Old Church, in the face of the decision of the Diocesan Authorities, who had at best meant to defer restoration and at worst to leave the rubble where it lay. The devotion of the congregation, the countenance of learned and artistic societies and the enthusiasm of local residents, resulted in the opening of the restored church by the Queen Mother in May 1958. Great interest has also

been taken in another notable Chelsea building, Crosby Hall. In 1952 the Society, in memory of its founder the late Reginald Blunt, presented the Hall with the picture after Hans Holbein the Younger of More and his family which is such an ornament to its walls.

Apart from specific battles, the Society has been continuously aware of tendencies affecting not only the quality of life in Chelsea, but the village's actual identity. One such tendency has been the inexorable erosion of working class housing, demolished to make way for blocks of flats. An early example was the piecemeal development, in the early 30s, of the fourteen acres between Milner and Elystan Streets, Brompton and King's Roads, when a number of small houses were swept away, which had been built in Victorian times on what was then the eastern part of Chelsea Common. Though the houses themselves were not greatly to be regretted, their replacement by large, impersonal and highly priced blocks of flats was. Thirty-five years later, the threat to Chelsea Park Dwellings, built as a charitable foundation in 1885 and sold to a property development company in 1974, was the subject of an article in the Annual Report for that year. The Chelsea Society was naturally deeply interested in local authority plans for the World's End and a conducted tour of the new tower blocks there was reported, with approval, in the current Report (1976).

The 'institutionalising' of Chelsea has been another problem of increasing gravity, as hospitals and colleges have claimed more and more of the residential space of an already densely populated area. Some successes have been achieved in this field, such as the Sydney Street victory already mentioned. This same part of Chelsea is again menaced 20 years later by the proposed Cardio-Thoracic Unit, a new hospital complex which would involve sacrifice of open space and encroachment on a residential neighbourhood, not to mention interfering aesthetically with the view of St. Luke's Church. The Chelsea Society is pressing strongly for at least a modification of the plan.

All London suffers from the mounting nuisance of traffic, but this riverside borough is especially afflicted with throughways along the Embankment and on its western boundary. This became alarmingly apparent when the G.L.C. plans for a Motorway Box and West Cross Route were elaborated during the 1960s to include slip-roads onto the Embankment. Such roads would have obliterated Whistler's Reach, and, pending the construction of a new bridge, funnelled a quite unacceptable volume of through traffic onto the Embankment. The Society, under the Chairmanship of Noel Blakiston, launched a full-scale campaign against this disastrous project, also opposed by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The campaign was expensive and very hard work, but thanks to the generosity and enthusiastic participation of Chelsea

residents it achieved its ends. Our case was so effectively presented at the Public Inquiry on 28th March, 1972, that the proposed scheme for linking the West Cross Route with the Embankment, with no immediate provision for a new bridge, was abandoned and the amenity values of the Embankment and Cheyne Walk were recognised. The Society shortly afterwards assisted in thwarting a G.L.C. scheme for clearing King's Road by clogging nearby streets, narrow and fully occupied by a large mixed community including many children. Another problem to which the Society's attention is drawn from time to time is aircraft noise, particularly noticeable over south Chelsea.

The history of the Chelsea Society has not, however, been a mere record of pitched battles with authority. The repute in which it stands today, the affection with which it is regarded and the confidence it inspires, stem from something more than its nuisance value. From the first the Society has sought co-operation with statutory bodies and impressed voluntary organisations concerned with the preservation of amenities. The Civic Trust, founded in 1957, lost no time in adding the Chelsea Society to its register. A long and amicable relationship existed with the Chelsea Borough Council which has now been succeeded by similar contacts with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It was, incidentally, largely due to the energetic action by our Council, under the Chairmanship of Basil Marsden-Smedley, that secured the retention of Chelsea's name. The Society is invited regularly to give its opinion on planning applications to the Borough, at the rate of some 250 a year. In 1975/76, of the 56 objected to by the Society the RBKC rejected 25. There are, of course, points at issue with our masters at Kensington, currently being pressed to reconsider the move of the Manresa Road library, at great expense, to less convenient premises at the Old Town Hall. But we maintain our identity, justifying the words of Basil Marsden-Smedley when the amalgamation went through in 1963, the year before his death: 'The Chelsea Society will now be more important than ever. Chelsea will have no other voice with which to speak.' That this voice will continue to be heard, loud and clear, may be confidently expected in this Golden Jubilee year.

The Jubilee Meeting of the Chelsea Society, 8 June 1977

by Lesley Lewis

This year's Summer Meeting was a very special event to celebrate, on the actual anniversary of the opening of the inaugural exhibition in the Old Town Hall, the founding of the Chelsea Society fifty years ago. The fortunate coincidence that 1977 is also the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II enabled us to commemorate both events at the same time. Our birthday was noted in the national press, since 'Peterborough', in his *Daily Telegraph* column, devoted a pleasant paragraph to the Society and its history.

A Reception was held in Chelsea Old Town Hall, kindly lent to us rent-free by the Council of the Royal Borough, and Mrs. Gilbert Russell, Deputy Mayor, was a most welcome guest. Our thanks go out to the Council for the wonderful setting and facilities provided in the complete set of public rooms, which the 280 members and guests occupied to the full.

The Chairman, in a brief opening speech, thanked all those concerned in the organisation of the party, and made special reference to the beautiful pink roses flown over from Chelsea's twin town of Cannes as part of a contribution from its Mayor and City to adorn the Royal Borough's celebration events. The Society's President, Lord Antrim, had regrettably not sufficiently recovered from a recent illness to be with us, but Mr. Noel Blakiston, who modestly described himself as coming down from the shelf as ex-Chairman, was enthusiastically applauded when he introduced "the one and only Joyce Grenfell" as the speaker of the evening. She, in her inimitable way, amused the company with stories about the kind of things people said to her when they recognised, or mis-recognised her, as a stage or television performer. No one can tell a story against herself so amusingly and with such modesty and good humour as Miss Joyce Grenfell, O.B.E., who to her other attainments has recently added the authorship of a most successful book of reminiscences. Throughout her words ran the theme of her long association with Chelsea, where she has lived since she was eight years old, and she recalled some of the personalities and small shops which made it a place of unique flavour in her youth. She ended on a more serious note by referring to the Royal Jubilee, and put her finger on the very special quality it has because the charming impression given by the Queen in public so exactly matches the private reality of her character.

A buffet supper then followed, and those who had not seen the first showing at 7.15 adjourned to the second session of a film,

The Green City. This was the English première of a multi-media slide show with sound effects, personally presented by Dr. Bernard Lötsch, Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute in Vienna and a Professor of Salzburg University. We are indebted to Mrs. Carvalho, who had seen the film at a Europa Nostra Conference, for most energetically effecting its showing here through the assistance of the Austrian Institute.

Throughout the evening guests had been able to enjoy a loan exhibition of works of art by Chelsea artists and of the Chelsea scene; the catalogue with full annotations, shows what a choice selection was generously lent. The hanging, which all had to be done on the morning of the party, was most ably done by Mr. David Enders and Mr. Tony Ashby. The architect, Mr. David Le Lay, exhibited his designs for the Society's Jubilee project, with interesting historical notes on the Old Burial Ground in the King's Road which is to be rehabilitated in co-operation with the Borough. The final event, at 10.15, was an adjournment across the road to inaugurate this scheme. Prebendary Harold Loasby, as a symbolic gesture, opened the garden gates and then Joyce Grenfell raised with a pickaxe one of the flagstones in the centre. The contractors were about to start work so her act with the pickaxe was rather more than just symbolic. Suggestions for a name for the garden were deposited in a box at the party and, judging from the numbers submitted, there will be no lack of choice.

Although she would be the first to claim that help came from may other people, the real mastermind behind this most successful party was that of Mrs. Joan Hayes, our honorary secretary, who worked tirelessly before the day, on the day and even clearing up after the day. We had a most enjoyable celebration of the Queen's Silver and our Golden Jubilee. Now begins the second phase of the long haul to raise money for the satisfactory completion of the garden project the Society has undertaken. May it all end as auspiciously as it has begun.

Reginald Blunt

by Hester Marsden-Smedley

Reginald Blunt (1857-1944), Founder and first Hon. Secretary of the Chelsea Society came to Chelsea at the age of 3. His father, the Reverend Gerald Blunt, was Rector of Chelsea, and the child Reginald grew up in that lovely Rectory with its fine garden, playing, too, in the meadow adjoining where 'grazed a couple of cows, discreetly tethered by collars and chains to long anchor pins'.

All around him were the delights of a riverside village. The Thames with its barges and boats, terraced houses, gardens, trees, open lands and people of all kinds who from his earliest youth inspired him with a strong feeling of neighbourliness and a love of beauty. For, then as now, so many in all walks of life in Chelsea were associated with the arts.

He did varied jobs including railway engineering in which he always maintained an interest. But he was for ever writing, 'scribbling' he'd call it, in diaries, notes, accounts of people and places mainly in Chelsea. In an unpublished memoir he wrote: "To my credit (or otherwise) I have also to be chronicled fourteen volumes —eleven on Chelsea."

He had two absorbing interests—Chelsea and children, and he wrote about both. His devoted love of children made him at the age of 33 take over much committee and fund raising work for the Cheyne Hospital for Children, then next to the Old Church. He had a way with the shyest child and almost a healing power with the sick.

But a later job, brought him into closer contact with the world of art. He became Manager of the de Morgan Pottery in Fulham. William de Morgan, author, artist and inventor as well as potter was a close friend, as was his partner Halsey Ricardo. Reginald's three years at the Pottery strengthened his delight and appreciation of art. He would say that the brilliant colours of de Morgan's pottery caused rejoicing in a world that was so often drab and dull.

He was a practical man. His work at the Pottery and his continued absorbing interest in the sick children of Cheyne Hospital opened his eyes to the surroundings of both. He saw that the lovely riverside village of Chelsea was threatened. Its quiet peace centuries earlier had brought Thomas More from the busy city to build himself a home where the body might rest and the mind and spirit develop. This charm still drew people to Chelsea to build and alter not always with the same intentions as Thomas More!

Reginald Blunt considered this all very carefully in the first two decades of the present century. In fact his devotion to the Cheyne Hospital and its protection from encroachment gave him an idea for money raising and at the same time to emphasise the inherent beauty of Chelsea.

He thought out and organised the Exhibition of Chelsea China and Pottery at Chelsea Town Hall in June 1924. This brought together for the first time specimens of the priceless Chelsea china made by Nicholas Sprimont in Lawrence Street from about 1745 to 1770, Wedgwood's Staffordshire ware decorated in Chelsea by Bentley and the brilliant pieces of de Morgan with which Reginald had so much to do. Other potters, too, were then working at kilns in Chelsea influenced by its traditions. Their pieces were also shown.

The Exhibition was a brilliant success and is magnificently recorded in the Cheyne Book of Chelsea China and Pottery dedicated to Queen Mary and edited by Reginald Blunt, published by Geoffrey Bles in 1924. Another edition with added information and commentary by John Mallett came out in 1973, republished by EP Publishing Ltd.

The Cheyne Book alone might serve as a fitting memorial to a great man, but from it sprang another idea. A Society to proclaim the past, enlighten the present and protect the future—of Chelsea, the place where so much beauty has begun and flourished, and where so many men and women of talent have lived and worked.

And that is how the Chelsea Society, which is now celebrating its Golden Jubilee came into being. Its Reports down the years show its successes, its ambitions and disappointments, its occasional failures and its firm determination to carry on what its Founder Reginald Blunt began. As part of the Society's objects is the aim "To preserve and improve the amenities of Chelsea."

The Society's work is the finest tribute he could wish.

But with changes all around in bricks and mortar and in the minds of man, it seems fitting to quote lines that appeared on the Title page of some earlier Reports:

> "AMENITY." Tell us, whose is it, and what?
> Do we own, or inherit, or choose it?
> It's something you often don't know that you've got
> Till you lose it!

The Sloane Monument

by Constance M. Hayward

> "A magnificent Monument is erected by Mr. Wilton, statuary at the south-east corner of the churchyard. It is composed of Portland stone on the top of which, covered with a portico supported by four pillars is placed a beautiful Vase of finest white marble with four serpents entwined round it and inimitably executed all out of one piece."

The above is quoted from a precious portfolio of cuttings normally kept in the strongroom of the Chelsea Library. The name of the magazine from which it is taken is not given but the librarian has dated it 1763. It is obviously contemporaneous with the monument, the sculptor is referred to as 'statuary' and as 'Mr.' Wilton, and in the printing the long S is used.

Sir Hans died in January 1753 and was buried in accordance with his wishes. "That my body shall be buried in a decent manner, in the churchyard at Chelsea, about noon, or at a convenient time of the day." It was his daughters, Eliza Cadogan and Sarah Stanley who later decided that a worthy monument should be erected on top of the tomb. For a man of Sloane's standing, this necessarily meant a monument in the eighteenth century classical tradition.

Eighteenth-century Chelsea was renowned for its gatherings of great men, some of whom lived here. Smollett refers to 'Messrs. Wilton and Russell and all our brethren at the Swan', and it would appear that Joseph Wilton was the only sculptor in this distinguished company. It is not surprising, therefore, that to Wilton fell the honour of designing the Sloane monument.

Wilton had already made a name for himself since his return to England in 1755 after seven or eight years in Italy. The idea of a funerary urn under a portico must surely have been his. From his studies during his sojourn abroad and from the many books of engravings that were being widely circulated, he could make his design by combining these two classical features. An urn carved in marble and decorated with entwined serpents to symbolise the medical profession should stand under a Portland stone portico. The different materials would act as foils to each other and the stone of the portico would afford some protection to the more delicate marble.

When the monument was unveiled it must indeed have been a dazzling sight and completely satisfying to the worshipper of classical antiquity. But in antiquity the purpose of the funerary urn was to preserve the ashes of the deceased, and it would always have been

hidden away either in a columbarium or mausoleum. To suit his own purpose Wilton here displayed it in an open portico and so brought together two classical features which could never have co-existed. The result was no mere pastiche of any one ancient monument, but an original work by an inspired English eighteenth century artist.

It is also worth noting that, in this instance, the funerary urn only makes sense symbolically as the mortal remains of Sir Hans, his wife, and possibly one or two other people are concealed in the tomb below.

By this time the funerary urn was firmly established as a symbol of mortality, but as the century wore on it frequently assumed the role of representing the deceased. Later in his career Wilton himself used it in this way in the marble memorial to his two young daughters, Lucy Smith and Anne Wilton, who both died in 1781. The relief occupies an important position on the east wall of the chancel of the Old Church and consists chiefly of two slightly overlapping urns. Compared with the Sloane monument it is romantic both in conception and execution. The younger daughter's urn is a little smaller than her sister's and has a spray of flowers near the top and a posy at the foot. The urns are linked by looped-up drapery and each is inscribed with commemorative name and date. At the base is the simple signature: J. Wilton, fecit.

Some time during the first half of last century memorial tablets to two other members of the family were fixed to the west wall of the church under the gallery. One commemorated Mary Anne Bayley, grand-daughter of the sculptor, and was placed there by her uncle, John Wilton, who duly recorded all the virtues she inherited from her mother Lucy Smith and her aunt Anne Wilton.

The other tablet is still in existence and is 'Sacred to the memory of John Wilton whose remains are interred with those of his relatives whose virtues he has affectionately recorded on monumental tablets in this Church'.

These plain tablets confirm the Wilton family's connection with the parish but are of minor importance compared with the work an eminent Georgian sculptor has bequeathed to Chelsea.

Illustrations on pages 50, 51.

Chelsea from Old Photographs

by Tom Pocock

Only in the last decade or so has the memory of riverside Chelsea—of Cheyne Walk before the building of the Embankment—slipped over the horizon. Already, the wide Thames reflecting the Old Church, a wooden Battersea Bridge and the lights of Cremorne Gardens could seem a figment of artists' imagination were it not for the proof of past reality in photographs.

Looking first at the prints of James Hedderley (illustrations pp. 39, 41) there is a sense of delighted recognition. So the riverside street of little shops, gas-lit pubs and horse-traffic *did* look just as Walter Greaves drew them with his pencil. And how envious one becomes of the ability of those Victorians to walk down the middle of empty streets and lean on the river-wall to watch the skiffs and paddle-steamers.

Since Hedderley, other photographers—mostly unknown by name—have recorded the changing—and usually diminishing charms of Chelsea. The selection on these pages has been chosen from the files of the contemporary Chelsea photographer John Bignell, who is collecting such rarities for a book of local history as seen by the camera.

Not all these long-vanished scenes are beyond living memory. The elderly could remember Dr. Phené's (illustration p. 44) fantastic house in Oakley Street built in 1906 and even, perhaps, Paradise Row in Royal Hospital Road, which was destroyed in 1888. Certainly they can remember the maze of little streets of Georgian cottages to the north of King's Road before the mass evictions of 1909 and 1929.

Looking at these photographs, each Chelsea person will feel the tug of mortality when recognising a vanished scene and putting a date to it. Here is Lombard Terrace (illustration p. 40)—that *I* can remember—before it was demolished after one of the most tragic defeats of conservationists in the late nineteen-thirties—but, with rough justice, the houses that replaced it were destroyed with the Old Church in the bombing two years later. I can also remember the Victorian Whitelands House—where the flats of that name now stand—when it was the headquarters of Mosley's Blackshirts, the *second* Peter Jones store and the brief life of Sir Edwin Lutyen's mansion on the site of the present Shrewbury House flats in the early 'thirties.

Younger people will remember with a pang the Pier Hotel and the Blue Cockatoo and the Georgian houses on the corner of

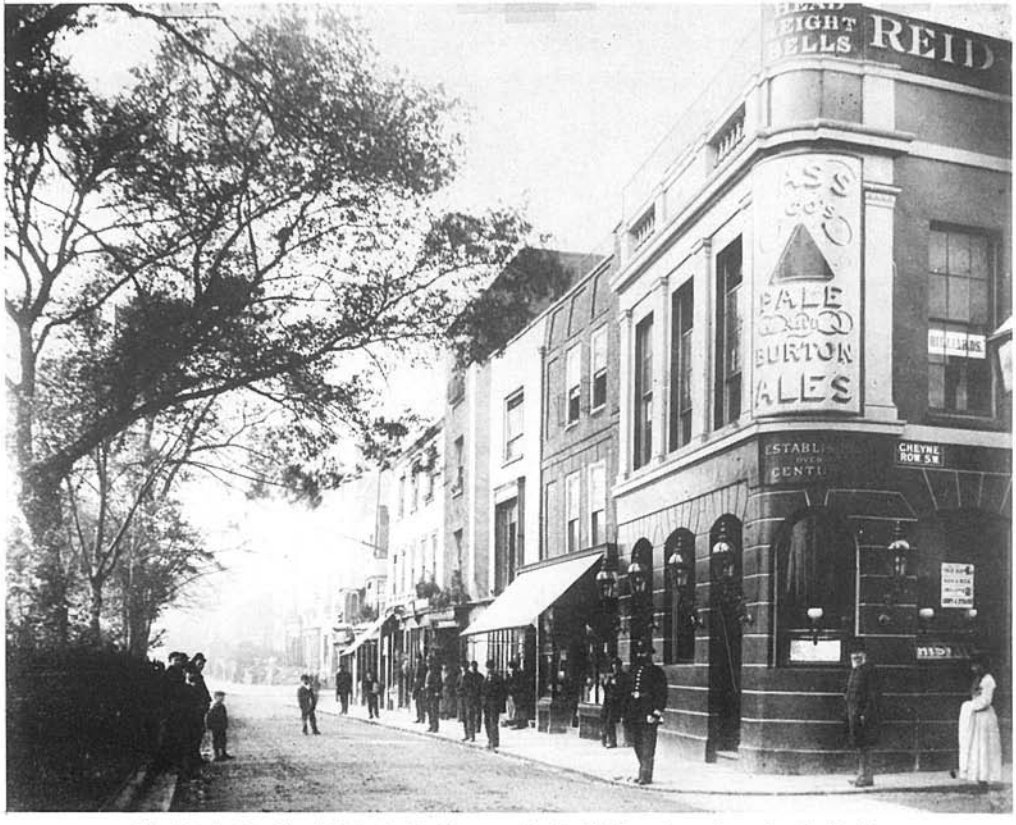
Cheyne Walk and Oakley Street, and when Lot's Road power station had four chimneys and Seymour Haden's house at 62 Sloane Street, where Whistler first painted in Chelsea, and the Pheasantry before it was laid waste.

The changes in Chelsea—as illustrated in these photographs—have not all been bad. There were until quite recently slum areas and much that might seem to have been picturesque was, in fact, unkempt. And yet it is by seeing what has been lost that we, the inheritors, can be spurred to keep with more care what we still have.

See pages 37-45.

The old Vestry Hall, that was the present Old Town Hall's predecessor, decorated for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897

The Old Church, the great survivor, photographed by James Hedderley from the east around 1870



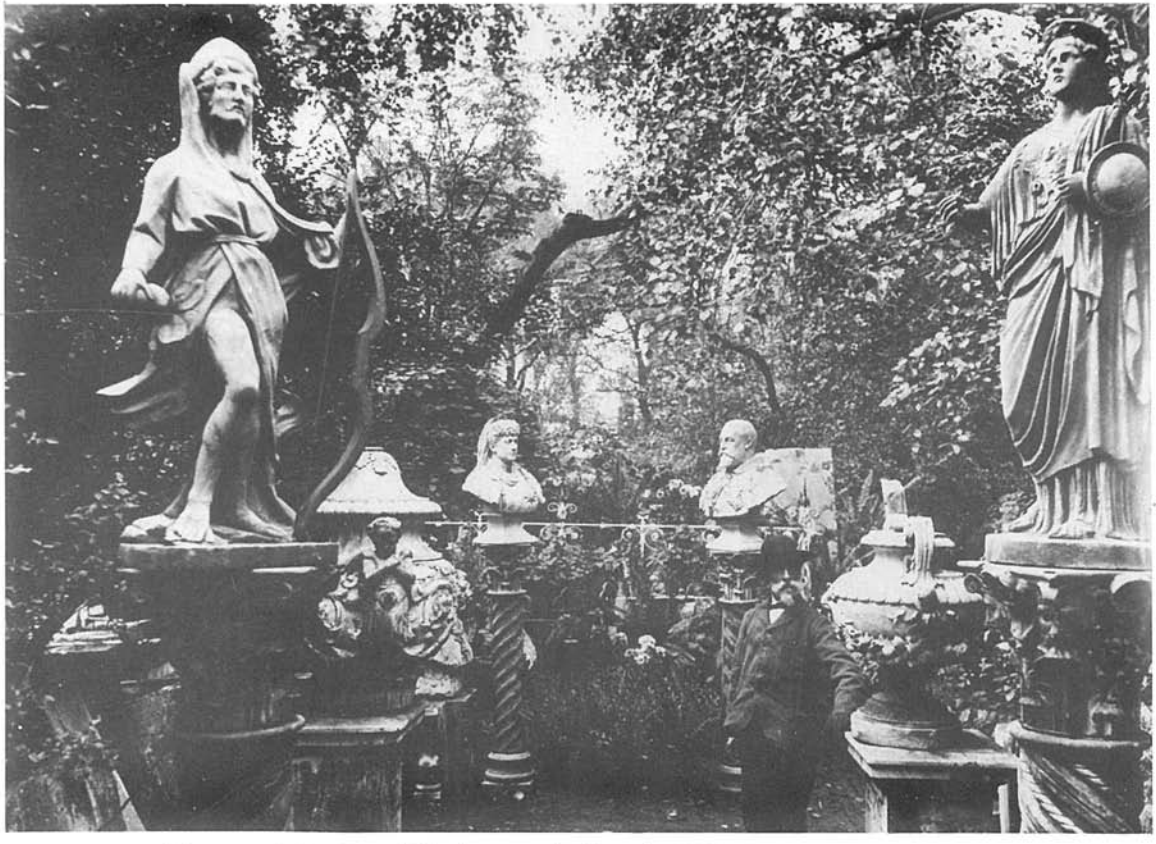
The King's Head and Eight Bells photographed in 1880 or thereabouts by Hedderley. Beyond stand the row of shops and the Cricketers Tavern that were demolished to make way for Carlyle Mansions

The tower of the Old Church, and the Lombard Terrace café awaiting demolition, seen in 1938. Bombs claimed them both, but the Church of course rose again

A Hedderley photograph of Danvers Street, taken about 1870

The King's Road. Sloane Square at the turn of the century, when the road ran diagonally across the Square past buildings still mostly recognisable

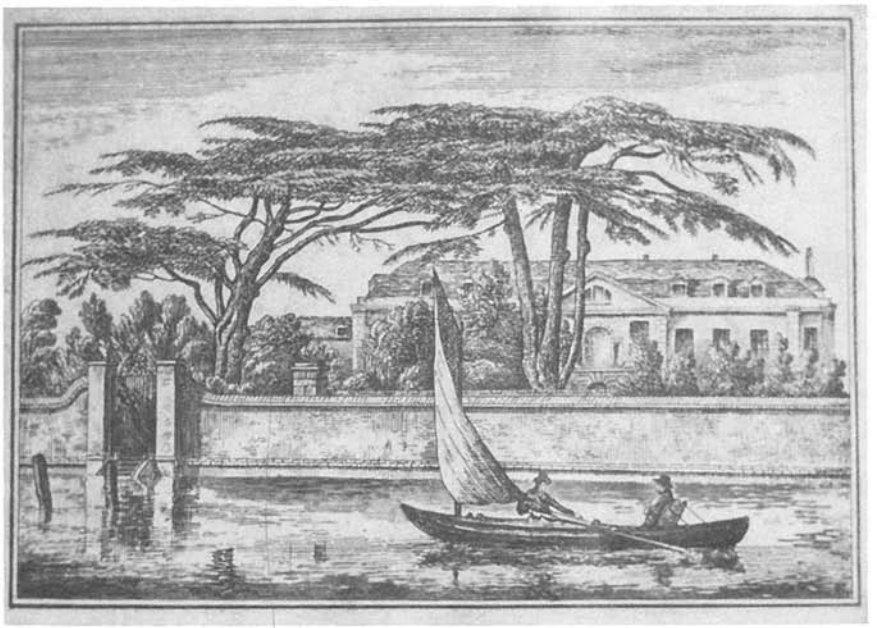
The King's Road. The Six Bells and the Town Hall before the rebuilding of the latter that began in 1906



CHELSEA PEOPLE. *The eccentric Dr. Samuel Phené, creator (in the early 1900s) of an extraordinary* palazzo *in Oakley Street and the source of many legends, in his garden*

Belowstairs citizens crowd the Town Hall for Queen Mary's Maidservants' Tea Party to celebrate the coronation in 1911

In the Physic Garden: the palm tree (Trachycarpus fortuneis). (See page 63)



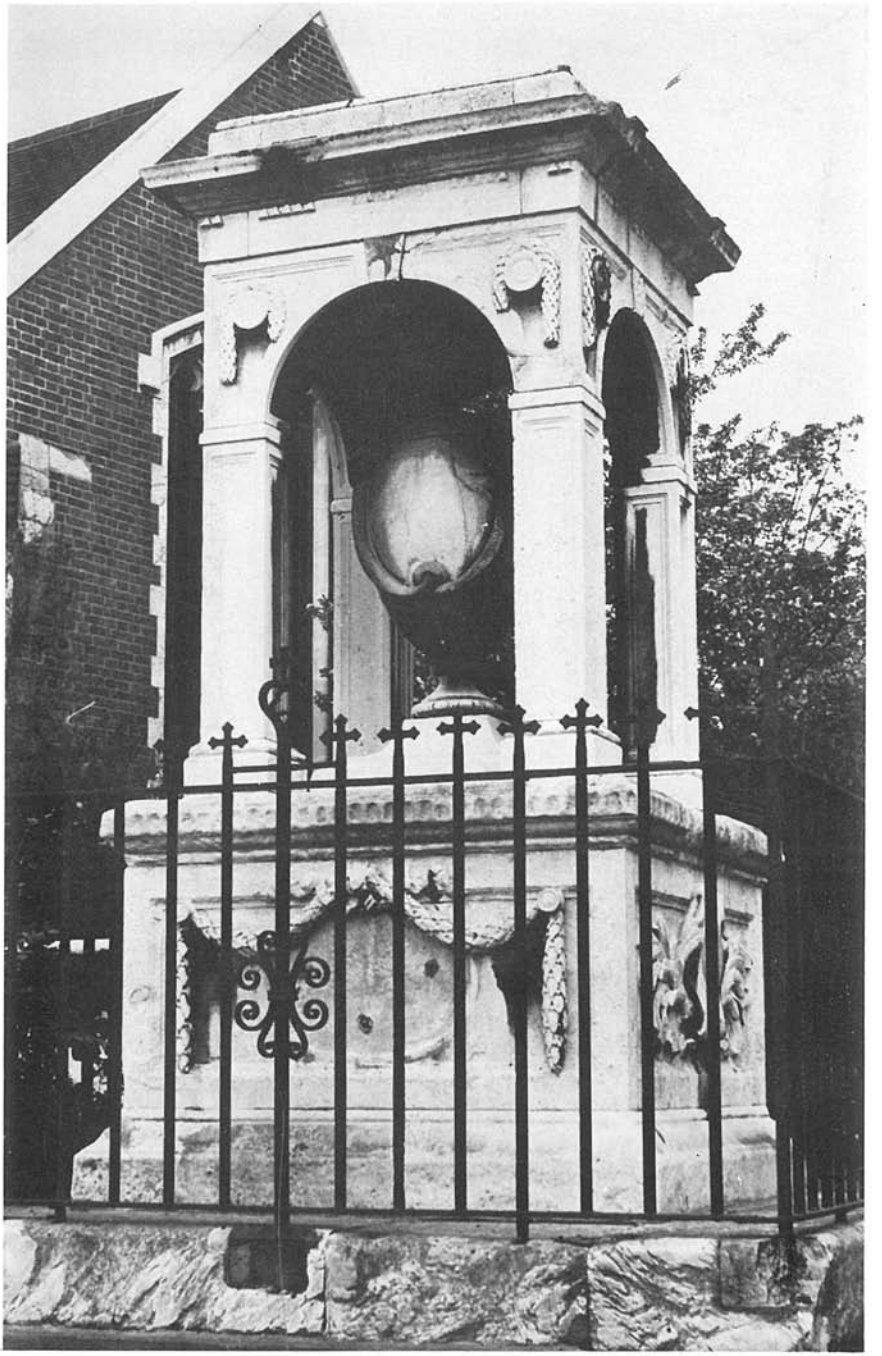
The Physic Garden in the late eighteenth century. The fine Orangery was demolished a century later

The Physic Garden: the Herb Garden, where plants are grouped according to their uses. In the distance may be descried Rysbrack's statue (1737) of Sir Hans Sloane

The Physic Garden

The Palm tree in flower

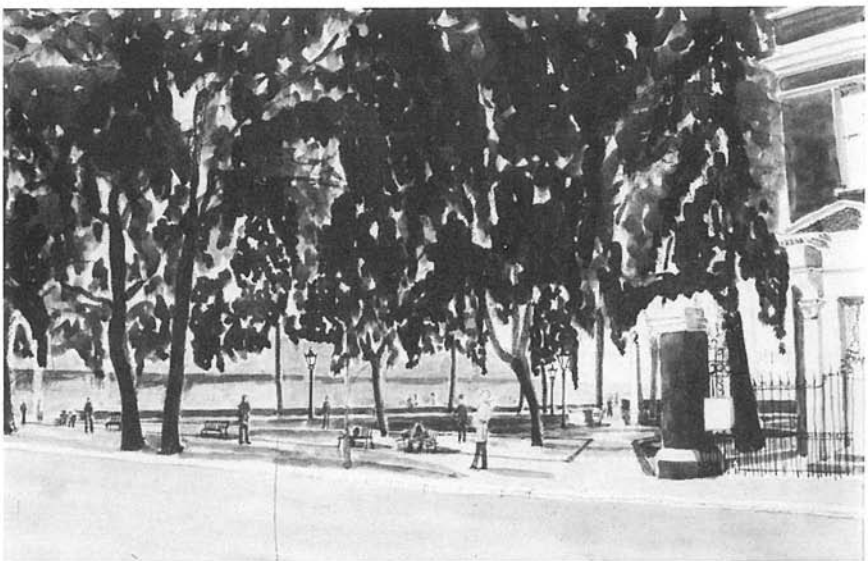
Miss Joyce Grenfell and the Chairman at the Old Burial Ground on the evening of the Jubilee Party. (Photograph: David Williamson)



The Sloane Monument (1763) outside the Old Church. Sculptor: Joseph Wilton, R.A. (1722-1863). (See page 33)

Wilton's own memorial to his Daughters (1781) in the Old Church

The Old Burial Ground in 1976



A sketch from the same viewpoint of the Chelsea Society's scheme, designed by David Le Lay, R.I.B.A. (See page 53)

The Old Burial Ground, King's Road

by David Le Lay, R.I.B.A.

The expansion of the village of Chelsea early in the eighteenth century meant that the small churchyard of the parish church became full. The church and its churchyard were hemmed in on all sides so a suitable piece of land in the surrounding fields was sought. Eventually the parish council decided, in 1727, to accept a generous offer from the lord of the manor, Sir Hans Sloane, of a parcel of land on his estate situated on the north side of the King's private road.

Legend has it that Sir Hans originally intended to build on this land but excavations revealed the foundations of an ancient church and some human bones. It was decided that this should instead become the new burial ground. At about the same time Sir Hans also donated land immediately to the north for use as a parish workhouse.

Chelsea's population continued to increase throughout the century and it was necessary to enlarge the new cemetery in 1790; this was paid for by Sir Hans Sloane's principal heir, Lord Cadogan. The area of the enlarged cemetery was two-thirds of an acre.

Records of the tombstones indicate that Chelsea at this time consisted predominantly of middle class, well-to-do professional people.

One of the artists interred in the burial ground in 1785 had some of his work displayed to the millions of people who recently saw the Queen ride to St. Paul's Cathedral on the day of her Silver Jubilee. This was G. B. Cipriani who painted the fine panels on the state coach. He was born in Tuscany and came to England with Sir William Chambers, the architect, in 1755; Sir William designed the new state coach for George III and his obvious choice of artist to paint the panels was his protégé. Cipriani went on to have a successful career in this country, becoming a founder member of the Royal Academy. His tomb, which is unfortunately lost, was inscribed by his friend Bartolozzi, the famous engraver.

Undoubtedly the most striking monument in the Old Burial Ground is the obelisk near to the centre of the burial ground. It was erected to the memory of Andrew Millar, a famous bookseller and publisher who died in 1785.

The continued expansion of the village meant that the church council was yet again having to consider how to provide additional burying space in the parish. In 1810 a piece of ground amounting to four acres was purchased from Lord Cadogan for this purpose;

so the new burial ground of 1736 became in 1812, the old burial ground; this being the year that the new large cemetery was opened. Burials continued after 1812, but only in existing family tombs. In 1825 a new parish church dedicated to St. Luke was built in the middle of the new cemetery and all the property and assets of the parish, including the old burial ground, were transferred to the new church.

By the 1880's the old burial ground became, like most disused cemeteries, uncared for and a subject of controversy. Complaints were made to the parish council about its condition and the dwarf wall on the boundary with Dovehouse Street (then Arthur Street) was in such a poor state of repair that it had to be re-built at a cost of £160. The boundary with King's Road was also re-built, but was set back about 11 feet so that the roadway could be widened. Fortunately the three plane trees which had been within the burial ground were retained and still stand on the edge of the present pavement.

When the workhouse found it necessary to expand its premises it seemed obvious to make use of the burial ground for this purpose. The Metropolitan Public Gardens and Playground Association, however, requested that it should instead be opened to the public as a place for recreation, but despite their offer of six ornamental seats, the workhouse obtained consent to build a gothic-styled mortuary chapel to the north east of the obelisk with a pathway to it from Dovehouse Street along the northern boundary. The remaining area was used for recreation by workhouse residents only.

In 1911 the Chelsea Borough Council proposed building public conveniences on the site; this was greeted by a storm of protest. The founder of The Chelsea Society, Reginald Blunt, wrote a letter of protest to *The Times* and a local paper which stated: "Undoubtedly we are old-fashioned and somewhat negligent of that scarcely lovable thing called the modern spirit; but we resent the construction of a convenience as a ghoulish, basely materialistic and unfeeling intrusion." This shows how the sentiments of protest were remarkably similar to those of today.

The condition of the burial ground was made even worse by bomb damage during the last war and in 1947 the Borough Council proposed that it be laid out as a garden, a small part of which would be open to the public. This scheme, which entailed removing most of the tomb stones and demolishing the mortuary chapel, was eventually completed in 1950 at a cost of £4,500. A new lease of 21 years on the new garden was granted by St. Luke's Church to the L.C.C.

When this lease ended St. Luke's parish council applied to the Borough for planning permission to develop the site with shops and

flats. This proposal, which the Rector later explained had been only to test the Council's reaction, was greeted with protests similar to those of 1911 and the application was soon withdrawn. In 1970 a new 21-year lease was granted to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Following the completion of the new Thamesbrook old people's home, the Royal Borough has been anxious that the whole of the burial ground should be accessible to the public (which would also be to the advantage of the residents at Thamesbrook). The layout completed in 1950 would not readily adapt to this new pattern of use and there had been numerous complaints to the Council about the condition of the garden, including some from The Chelsea Society. The layout was an uneasy compromise between a public and private garden; it had become untidy, was mis-used, badly maintained and potentially dangerous at night.

1977 being the year of its Golden Jubilee and also the Silver Jubilee of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, The Chelsea Society decided that the improvement of this garden would be a suitable tribute for both occasions. They have been joined in the venture by the Royal Borough, who were also anxious to mark the Royal Jubilee by a scheme that would be a permanent improvement to the environment. However, due to cut-backs in public expenditure, the Borough could provide only a part of the necessary finance; the larger proportion is being raised by The Chelsea Society.

The design of the new garden relies for its effect simply upon the two major existing elements—the fine mature trees and the remaining stone monuments—with a third and necessary element—street lighting. It is planned that old cast-iron columns which the Borough still has in store will be renovated and re-used with new copper lanterns of traditional design.

The main aim of the project is to encourage the public to use this garden far more; the diagonal paths will provide short-cuts for pedestrians and the new York stone paving directly off the King's Road will encourage people into the garden from the main thoroughfare. It has also been suggested that sculpture exhibitions might be staged on this new paved area. The majority of the seats will be along the north and east boundaries where there is most sun.

So what was once a new cemetery on the edge of an expanding village, and which had grown into a neglected old burial ground in the middle of the metropolis, is now a public garden providing a new focus for the community life of Chelsea to be enjoyed by all.

See page 52.

Fifty Years of the King's Road 1927/1977

by Hester Marsden-Smedley

It was pleasant to step into the King's Road one bright September day fifty years ago. Basil and I had been married in Dorset the previous month, and were about to set up our first home in Chelsea.

The King's Road then was a delightful place to saunter and to shop. Almost everything could be found—including personal service. Grocers would proffer favourite cheeses, a taster being first given in a long scoop. George Evans was one of these; his shop stood near Wellington Square; his family had been part of the 'Welsh Invasions' which brought Joneses and Evanses, Howells and Lloyds to Chelsea, starting over two hundred years ago. The Welsh Chapel in Radnor Walk still echoes with wonderful singing. 'Jones the Milk' lived down Radnor Walk (formerly Radnor Street, until all the street-name changing of the 1930's). He had a fund of local stories, and even as long ago as 1927 regretted that the good old days were passing from the King's Road. Alas, he died a short time ago.

The King's Road stretches from the Five Fields of Westminster to where Chelsea Creek (into which Nell Gwynn's mother fell) divides Chelsea from Fulham. Every part of it echoes with history. We knew it all, but our own area lay between Oakley Street and Sloane Square. Shopping was certainly cheaper as one travelled west, but penny bus tickets or shoe leather added to cost, so we shopped in our bit, but had friends along its whole length.

Very few names remain in 'our bit' fifty years later, and only two on their old sites—Beatons and Sidney Smith. Beatons still bake Chelsea buns to the original recipe. Mr. Beaton, a Borough Councillor, disapproved of Sunday baking, so we depended on the Muffin Man who rang his bell as he carried his wares in a green-cloth-covered basket, all fresh and ready for Sunday tea.

Sidney Smith, Draper, had one of the last of the overhead 'railways' which carried oblong containers from counter to cash desk, returning with the change.

Two other firms remain from those days, but have changed positions—Blake, the florist, and Andrews, the butcher. Nearly every other shop or business we knew then has gone, and the gaudy boutiques which took their place have changed too, many of them with greater rapidity.

A great charm of King's Road fifty years ago was the premises behind the shops. Friese-Greene, a pioneer of the cinema, had dark rooms and studios where Martins of Chelsea now stands. We explored these fully. I do not remember which of the Friese-Greene family was there then, but we certainly heard our first 'talkies' from a hand-wound machine which seemed like magic and was a great deal more harmonious than early 'talkies' in the local cinemas.

Further along, beyond Smith Street, were the workshops and sheds of Hoopers, the Coachbuilders, where the bodies of Queen Mary's Daimlers were constructed. We would often see them emerging; they were specially designed to be tall, so that the Queen could sit bolt upright wearing her splendid hats. When Queen Mary opened the Violet Melchett Centre in 1931, she told a member of the Reception Committee that she intended calling in on her way home to see where her fine cars came from.

A little further on, horses took the place of motors—in Carter Paterson's yards, offices and stables. The stables remained long after that admirable transport service was motorised, and were used by the many horses and ponies which drew milk floats and carts up and down the King's Road. The best known of these was Daisy, a placid, beautiful bay mare, who took her master, Mr. Stanton, very early every morning to Covent Garden to fetch the fresh fruit and vegetables for his barrow outside the 'Commercial' (now the 'Chelsea Potter').

The Stantons were loved Chelsea characters. He had been batman to Lawrence of Arabia, and held him in greatest admiration and esteem. He firmly believed (and was not alone in this) that Lawrence had not died in Dorset, but had been spirited away by 'them' as another war loomed. "Fall off a motor-bike!" he said. "What a liberty—when you think he could ride a camel!"

Mrs. Stanton—Rose—had come as a very young girl to service in Chelsea, and had been accustomed to severe discipline—only allowed out till 8.30 one evening a week, and escorted to church every other Sunday. But a greengrocer's boy came a-courting none the less, and they married and set up their barrow. Rose always used to tell us, "For the first eighteen years of my life, I hardly went out, and afterwards, I've hardly been in." Wet or fine, early and late she sat at that barrow, and set aside apples for my children. "As good as Daisy gets," she'd say.

Space does not permit descriptions of all Chelsea's excellent barrows, but Mr. Hillsden's, the flowerstall in Wellington Square, holds a place in Chelsea history. In the 1960's, he organised a petition against the dropping out of Chelsea's name in the Borough amalgamation. Signatures ran into thousands; when the police said he was obstructing traffic, he asked the officers to sign too.

It was largely due to the success of this Petition, which so clearly showed the strength of local public opinion, that the name of Chelsea was incorporated in the final title of the Royal Borough.

Further along the King's Road were the labyrinths of Chapman's, the Frame-makers. This was a fascinating place to visit, and be told tales of the preparations for Varnishing Day at the Royal Academy. We also learned that the kindly Chapmans would often lend frames to struggling young artists, and even, sometimes, later redeemed pictures and frames from Tuson, the pawnbroker—now also gone. The Chapman of our young days was a Borough Councillor. It is interesting to recall how many local tradesmen were then deeply concerned with civic affairs. Their influence was largely responsible for keeping the King's Road as a worthy Chelsea highway, from which it has sadly deteriorated.

On the other side of the road was a forge where Laffeaty's bicycles were actually constructed. Chelsea children delight in the exciting toyshop by Moravian Close where the brothers Laffeaty (all born in Chelsea) now have their shop. Bicycles still form part of their business and are their device on vans and letter-headings, but are no longer made on the premises.

There was another forge just off the King's Road in Arthur (now Dovehouse) Street, that of E. T. Margrie the blacksmith. One often saw the Carter Paterson horses (and Daisy) being led there for shoeing. The pleasant hot, crisp smell from the anvil drifted across to the King's Road Gardens, now transformed as the Chelsea Society's Jubilee effort.

The King's Road has always been famous for good cheap eating. The World's End Tea Garden was well before our time, but Humphries, baker, Cake Shop and Restaurant, at the top of Flood Street, was renowned for the excellent and very un-English cooking of fresh green vegetables. Mr. Stanton used to say that he hardly liked trusting his cabbages other than to Mrs. Lewis, Humphries' manageress. Opposite Paultons Square the 'Good Intent' had a fresco painted by Edward Halliday, then a Chelsea artist living in Fernshaw Road. This restaurant also prided itself on selling tea specially blended for London water, at 6½d. the quarter pound.

In our part of King's Road, Bassi's was the favourite. This later became Caletta's, and then 'The Unity'. Signor Bassi was a burly Italian who made his own pasta, miles of it, drying it in a large shed at the back. He once gave us some for a birthday party, but he maintained that pasta should be eaten where it was made. He would not have approved today's 'Takeaway' habits. The Bolognese recipe I still use came from his instructions.

The pubs served excellent bread and cheese and pickled onions. Bowls went with beer in the garden behind the 'Six Bells and Bowling Green' (now the 'Beehive'—the bowling green long since built over). 'The Man in the Moon' had superb pork pies, and its proprietress always made a large collection for Christmas presents and other local charities. 'The White Hart', at the corner of Royal Avenue (now replaced by The Drug Store) made a speciality of jellied eels. The live wiggly creatures came from a fishmonger at World's End. There are two Eel-Pots in the collection of Chelsea china at the Library. A local fishmonger was most interested in these, and often said that his father owned just such an ornament, long since broken and thrown away.

It is tantalising to think how easily beautiful Chelsea treasures could be found those years ago. Arthur Dixon, whose auction rooms stood at the corner of Limerston Street, had innumerable pictures by the Greaves brothers, as did many other tradesmen. These had often been given in lieu of cash by the boatmen artists. The picture of the Old Church, by Walter Greaves, which I gave to the Library in memory of Basil, had been found by Reginald Blunt when a shop near World's End was demolished.

Another treasure—'borrowed', alas, and never returned, was bought by me for 6d. from a stall near Lots Road. This was a first edition of *Sesame and Lilies* autographed by Ruskin for a May Queen at Whitelands College. This splendid Teachers' Training College was still at the corner of Cheltenham Terrace when we came to Chelsea, and its May Day Revels, in which Ruskin delighted, are still, I understand, held at its fine establishment on West Hill, Putney. When the College moved away, between the wars, and before the building was pulled down to make way for Whitelands Court, a very different collection of people were there for a while—William Joyce and his black-shirted British Fascists, not my favourite memory of the King's Road (down which they stridently marched) about forty years ago.

So much has vanished, not only shops, but places of entertainment, too. The Chelsea Palace was one of the rip-roaring old Music-halls well into our day. It put on good plays, too. We saw a revival of *The Bells* with a dramatic actor following the Irving tradition. Then, on a soberer but spectacularly beautiful note, was *The Joyous Pageant of the Nativity* every Christmastide. Many Chelsea citizens played in it, maturing from babes about to be massacred by Herod, to Wise Men and Centurions as they grew older.

The Classic Cinema was a joy. However hard up, no film-lover ever needed to despair, for sooner or later, every worthwhile film would arrive at the Classic. At one time, the seats were all 1/–.

The Pheasantry need not be recorded here, as this has been done so admirably in last year's Report. It was certainly one of the most important centres for all the arts in Chelsea, not only for those who could paint or dance or sing or write, but for many who, living in Chelsea, felt that this gave them a passport to every kind of art, if only as spectators. The Pheasantry Club, its restaurant, the friendly famous artists who lived and worked there, were amongst the brightest lights of a then genuinely bright King's Road.

Basil soon became a Councillor, and the Town Hall was, to us, a second home. It was indeed a focal centre. The staff welcomed those calling, even people with the most tiresome and irrelevant questions. It would be invidious to list names, but two women stand out in happy memories across the years: Miss Rose Renton, in the Letting Department, who knew everyone, and advised and helped as well as just entering bookings, and Mrs. Olive Burke, in charge of Old People's Welfare. One did not talk of 'Senior Citizens' then—now the new term may add dignity—but how Olive Burke on her bicycle is missed.

A very interesting venture, which only came to an end a few years ago, started in the Town Hall during the war years, when the Canteen was kept going, and was used by many war workers as well as by the staff. Lunch time snacks became a happy excuse for meeting in those grim pleasureless days. From this grew the Chelsea Social Workers' Lunch Club, which attracted speakers on every possible topic, and long after hostilities had come to an end, the camaraderie of the war years was maintained—one of the war's good bequests.

Chelsea is, and is likely always to remain, a place for the artist and the writer. But the so-called 'Chelsea Set' which appeared constantly in the papers in the 1950's had little or nothing to do with any literary or artistic expression. I well remember the first time I heard the words. One lunch time, a young woman who had certainly written one novel, but was also well known for less worthy reasons, got locked in the cloakroom at the 'Lord Nelson' (now the 'Trafalgar') and the Fire Brigade had to get her out. It was a noisy and uncomfortable incident for all concerned, and the Press reported it as a happening of 'The Chelsea Set'. This term swung into general usage, and was quite unrepresentative, but it caught the popular fancy.

Chelsea has always been famed for its 'originals'. Many such abounded and walked unselfconsciously along the King's Road. Wide hats and flowing cloaks, longer and shorter hair on men and women respectively, before this had become universal. Many famous actors lived in Chelsea, and might occasionally be heard declaiming their lines as they walked about. Writers and artists,

too—Lady Eleanor Smith (who lived opposite the Duke of York's) would always go to the Fair and Circus in Riley Street, and said she got copy for her excellent books from this. Cyril Connolly might be observed scribbling away on a bench. Of course, Augustus John was often around until he went to Hampshire, and his children, too. Epstein lived for a while in that lovely terrace between Manresa Road and Carlyle Square, which was pulled down for the Chelsea College buildings. There was Paul, the pub pianist, wearing his kilt, open-necked shirt, and dangling crucifix.

Street musicians were a feature of every part of London. Chelsea had a good variety. Not just the 'ex-Service Mens' Band' (it was rather difficult not to be an ex-serviceman in between the wars) but some very distinctive and quite tuneful characters. There was Mr. Veaser, who played the harp superbly, and a man who shall be nameless, who played the cornet outside pubs on Saturday evenings. He consulted Basil as Poor Man's Lawyer—about his Income Tax!

Another 'character' was Jack Peters, Hairdresser, whose daughter still carries on the business in King's Road. Mr. Peters was one of those who firmly believed that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, and was prepared to prove it in between waves and sets. He was also a great supporter of the Chelsea Arts Ball at the Albert Hall, and part-time organiser of it with Loris Rey (another famous figure). He could get you a ticket when all else failed, and supply some daring hairdo as well.

Students have always been a feature of the King's Road. Vanished since the outbreak of the war, when they were banished to Borth, were the members of Chelsea College of Physical Education, then part of the Polytechnic in Manresa Road. They sometimes appeared in navy-blue 'academic' gowns, which covered up the oddest of scanty athletic garments—sometimes in reasonably ordinary top-coats, with thick brown stockings, being forbidden to venture forth in their black ones, for some reason no one could ever divine.

A very different figure often seen between the wars, taking a constitutional, was the Member for Chelsea, Sir Samuel Hoare, who was much more approachable there than on official occasions.

'Our' part of the King's Road has changed more than the rest.

Though there has been much pulling down and rebuilding further west, much of its close-knit community feeling remains. This is apparent in the Cremorne Estate. One hopes that it may spread in the big brown blocks of World's End. (The Community Centre will soon move from the Old Police Station to the shopping area of this vast new complex.)

The students of the College of St. Mark and St. John, at lovely Stanley Grove, on the very frontier of Chelsea, have moved to Plymouth. This was one of the first Teacher Training Colleges, and was mentioned by Sherlock Holmes to Watson as they travelled along the old West London Railway (later used also by Winston Churchill, on his secret journeys overseas).

The new and newer look has come to Chelsea. 'Granny takes a Trip' and a live lion have been and gone; young and old dressed or undressed in every fashion, or none.

Looking back over these fifty years, it seems as if this last stage may be the most transitory, and could vanish, with all its blatant show, before long. But the very pavingstones (uneven as many are) cry out with history, and above and beyond the staggering changes of places and people, the King's Road is Chelsea's High Street, and so will remain.

The Chelsea Physic Garden

by A. P. Paterson, N.D.H., M.Ed., F.L.S. (Curator)

The first botanic gardens in Western Europe, and as we know them, in the world, were set up in the rich High Renaissance city-states of Northern Italy. Pisa had the first, in 1543. Two years later gardens in Padua and Florence were opened and the predominant university schools of medicine followed at Bologna, Leiden, Montpellier, Oxford and Edinburgh, in little over a century. Their titles varied: Hortus medicus, Hortus botanicus, Giardina dei Simplici, Jardin des Plantes or, in this country, Physic Garden. But their roles were similar, which were to grow plants for recognition and study for medicinal and general scientific use.

The Chelsea Physic Garden is unusual and perhaps unique amongst the numerous and varied institutions in Britain devoted to the scientific study of plants. Most botanists know it as the second oldest physic garden in England, about fifty years younger than the one at Oxford and nearly a hundred years older than the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

The name needs at first to be clarified, since, amongst the early botanic gardens, Chelsea only has retained its original epithet. This gives rise to a confusion about its aims which is heightened by the knowledge that the garden was founded by and for the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London. Moreover, that was in 1673 when the word physic still had its original meaning of 'pertaining to things natural' as distinct from the metaphysical. The modern use of the word seems to refer only to the physic of doctors and hence visitors are apt to expect a garden devoted solely to the culture of medicinal herbs.

Here then, only two and a half miles from Piccadilly Circus lies, like an oasis, rather under four acres of some of the most intensively cultivated ground in the country. Since the Garden's inception the roles have been twofold: educational and scientific. These hold good today and a continuum of botany, medicine and related subjects can be traced through good times and bad for over 300 years.

Of course, the particular interest of apothecaries was with officinal plants. But in a period when Paracelcian ideas were still alive—that every plant would cure something, if only antidote and disorder could be brought together, every plant species was a potential remedy. Hence plants grown extended beyond those known (or currently believed) to be efficacious and were continually being added to by new species from new worlds.

It was not, however, at the beginning, in 1673, all plain sailing and clearly not all the early Gardeners (as the Curators were then termed) were up to the job of promoting a new botanic garden. Nevertheless within ten years from its foundation, and now in the care of John Watts, himself an Apothecary, its importance was sufficient for Paul Hermann, the Professor of Botany of Leiden University, to visit it. Watts returned his visit in 1683 to exchange seeds and plants with Leiden. So began a mutual exchange with other botanic gardens throughout the world, a process which has continued ever since (in 1975 for example, over 2,500 packets of seeds were sent out and 1,500 species received). Amongst the plants brought back by Watts from Leiden were four young *Cedrus libani.*

These were among the first to be planted in England and surprised the contemporary world by succeeding so well. The Chelsea cedars dominate all post seventeenth century illustrations of the Garden: they took up so much space in the garden that two were felled in 1771. (The last, weakened by London's increasing atmospheric pollution, survived until 1904.)

John Evelyn, diarist and author of the famous *Sylva* came to Chelsea in 1685 and writes of plants he saw. He was particularly impressed by the 'subterraneous heat conveyed by a stove' which heated the conservatory. Unfortunately, in the 1690's, Watts appears to have lost interest and with his enthusiasm the Garden declined as well. Incomplete records of the next thirty years tell a confused story of monetary troubles and lack of direction. But help was at hand.

Having bought the Manor of Chelsea from Charles Cheyne in 1712, Dr. Hans Sloane had become owner of the Garden's freehold. By fortunate chance, Sloane, now a wealthy and influential man (he was created a baronet in 1716), had studied at the Garden. Now the Apothecaries appealed to him and in 1722 he virtually re-founded the Garden by granting a lease to the Society at £5 a year in perpetuity, laying out in legal terms conditions to guarantee the Garden's existence, "on condition that it be for ever kept up and maintained by the Company as a physick garden". To make sure that it was so kept, Sloane's Conveyance required fifty plant specimens from the Garden to be delivered annually to the Royal Society, until 2,000 pressed and mounted species had been received. In fact by 1795, when the flow ceased, the total reached 3,700.

Cheyne and Sloane are names well commemorated in this area, but the latter's memorials more truly lie in the Garden and with the British Museum which was founded with his collections and which included the herbarium sheets of the Garden's plants, now housed at the British Museum (Natural History) in South Kensington. They provide a valuable source of information about plants in cultivation during the eighteenth century.

Sloane's commensurate benefit to Chelsea was instigating the appointment of Philip Miller as Gardener in 1722. Miller became the greatest botanical horticulturist of his century, developing Chelsea as the finest Botanic Garden in the world; superlatives seem to become the order of the day when this man is discussed.

Miller's reign at Chelsea extended for nearly fifty years, during which time his famed *Dictionary of Gardening* ("Non erit Lexicon Hortulanorum, sed etiam Botanicorum" Linnaeus is reputed to have said of it), ran through eight editions during his lifetime. Carl von Linné, the great Swedish botanist, had paid a visit here in 1733 recording in his diary that "Miller of Chelsea permitted me to collect many plants in the garden." He was, however somewhat scornful of Miller's cautious approach to botanical innovation. Conservative by nature, Miller was slow to change his normal practice but in the seventh edition of his Dictionary he adopted Linnaeus' botanical classification and in the eighth the binomial nomenclature which Linnaeus had introduced nearly twenty years before. These innovations make it the first modern encyclopaedia of horticulture and it is still of value today.

For the time, Chelsea's facilities were good: in 1732, Sloane laid the foundation stone of a fine new greenhouse designed in the classical orangery mode and it was in use the following year. There were library and meeting rooms above and the main block was flanked by lean-to houses which were heated both by stoves and by beds of fermenting tan-bark. Sadly, his elegant structure was demolished in the middle of the nineteenth century when sewer construction undermined the foundations. This is the building shown on all the eighteenth and early nineteenth century prints of the garden.

Rysbrack's white marble statue of Sir Hans commissioned at this time by the Apothecaries, was originally erected here but moved to the present dominating position a few years later.

Miller was succeeded at Chelsea in 1770 by William Forsyth (after whom *Forsythia* is named). As Demonstrator of Plants, in 1773, Forsyth was joined by William Curtis, who was author of the *Flora Londinensis* "one of the most beautiful and accurate works on British plants" and originator of the *Botanical Magazine* which is still published and bears his name to this day.

In the next few decades, the Garden continued to flourish, though some of its activities had to be curtailed during the Napoleonic Wars (though these merely accentuated rather than caused the difficulties of obtaining new plants from abroad: Miller's correspondence, years before, is peppered with references to lost and delayed shipments and arrival of dead specimens. It is easy to forget now the problems of transport then experienced).

Subsequently a nineteenth century associate of the Garden, Nathaniel Bagshawe Ward, was of great importance in this context of transferring plant species across the world. The invention of 'Wardian Cases', like small, sealed, mobile greenhouses made possible the introduction of countless tropical plants to Europe and notably the transference of rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) to Ceylon and then Malaya from its South American home.

As the nineteenth century waxed, so the importance of the Garden waned, despite the extremely successful and well-attended lectures delivered by Professor John Lindley over 17 years from his appointment as Lecturer in Botany in 1836.

During the latter half of the century the Garden fell on hard times. There came another of the recurring financial crises. The Society of Apothecaries retrenched, dispensed with Lindley and his lectures, sacked its labourers, sold one glass-house and discontinued heating another, and appealed for money; by such drastic measures they just managed to keep the Garden going. The Physic Garden was, however, but one of their concerns. The Society played an important part in medical education, most of its members exchanging the old title of apothecary for that of general practitioner of medicine, while others became trading pharmacists, and during the century the importance of medical botany in their training grew less and less.

The Garden was certainly a financial strain, and the Society alleged that it was no longer suitable for the purposes of a botanic garden, because of the deleterious effects of increasing atmospheric pollution in London and the impoverished state of the soil, whose water table had been greatly lowered by the building of the Chelsea Embankment in 1874 which cut the Garden off from the river.

However, final closure was averted. As on earlier occasions, a few men of enterprise and vision realised its potentialities, notably the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Professor of Botany at the Imperial College of Science; they urged upon the Treasury its continuing importance for botanical study. These men had been alerted by what can only be described as a local residents' pressure group who feared, with good reason, that this historic garden would disappear under bricks and mortar as had so much of old Chelsea. (The beautiful Paradise Row opposite was razed at about this time.) The group can clearly be seen as a precursor of our own Society which has to be just as vigilant today, as we all know.

Their combined efforts in 1898 to save the Garden for posterity succeeded.

Accordingly, in 1899 the Chelsea Physic Garden passed into the administration of the London Parochial Charities. They appoint-

ed a Committee of Management, with representatives from the Royal Society, the Royal College of Physicians, the Society of Apothecaries and London University and other bodies and a new Curator, William Hales, to whom, with Professor Farmer of Imperial College, much of the present layout is due.

Designated a charity, the object of the Garden was stated as being concerned with education, scientific research and technical pharmacology. Hence its original interests were continued and embodied in a scheme which reflected the roles of many botanic gardens at the beginning of this century.

Links with education in the succeeding 75 years are obvious; the continual availability of the Garden to students of all ages and in the copious flow of the teaching specimens through schools and colleges in London and beyond, are noteworthy. Those with research are implicit in the papers produced from work done on the Garden; perhaps the most important being that on photoperiodism and vernalisation in plants by Professor Gregory in the '30's and '40's. In fulfilling the third role the Garden (while emphasising again the fact that it is not a herb garden *per se*) cultivates a wide range of officinal plants and maintains links with teaching hospitals and departments of pharmacognosy.

In the past, visitors entered the Garden by the old Students' Gate in Swan Walk. Though no longer used for entry this is still a viewing point for many people. Here a glimpse is obtained of a wide, formal, gravelled walk, the vista closed by a figure on a high plinth, the whole arched with trees. The profusion of plant growth in summer, far from overflowing the Garden seems to extend its bounds and also clothes the basically seventeenth century rectilinear plan. On each side paths branch off at right angles, that to the left down towards the river (now sadly cut off by the traffic-ridden Chelsea Embankment) while that to the right passes the culinary and officinal plants en route to the glass-house range.

Present-day students now come in by the West Gate in Royal Hospital Road but still find it useful to orientate themselves upon Rysbrack's statue of Sir Hans Sloane from where the cruciform ground-plan is apparent. From this point the main walk slopes down to the Embankment Gates. On either side, comprising therefore nearly a third of the whole area, are botanical order beds. It might be thought that this is a visually arid method of displaying plants, but it can clearly be seen not to be so. Nonetheless, aesthetic considerations, though not neglected (staff still use the eighteenth-century phrase "dressing the beds" when planting is being done) cannot be a prime concern. Here are around a hundred plant families proceeding like a great flora spread out page by page on the ground from (north to south, east to west) *Ranunculaceae* to *Saxifragaceae*,

Onagraceae to *Labiatae* and *Plantaginaceae* to *Gramineae*. Except where a family possesses only woody members, the representative plants are mainly herbaceous.

To a keen plantsman these order beds are of perennial interest: to observe so graphically the relationships, diversity of form, structure and range within a plant family adds considerably to one's conceptual understanding of that group. They also show many fine species which, although eminently garden-worthy, are not generally available.

Any Botanic Garden must demonstrate plants from a wide range of habitats, and so below the eastern dicotyledon families is a long rock bed, a moist border and a pool. Many good plants can be found here in the pool, butomus (the flowering rush, a lovely British native) and *Pontederia cordata* flourish.

Around a huge Quercus ilex nearby is a small ericaceous collection of heathers, dwarf rhododendrons and associated plants. Summer drought is a problem and Himalayan primulas have perforce been planted in polythene lined beds.

Returning back up the Garden along the old wall by Swan Walk, visitors, at whatever time of the year they come, get an idea of this part of London's extraordinary mild microclimate, by the plants which succeed here. *Correa backhousiana* and *Dodonaea viscosa purpurea* flourish: there is a fine old *Styrax officinalis* and opposite, the loveliest tree in the whole garden, a magnificent *Koelreuteria paniculata*. This is perhaps the best specimen of the 'willow pattern tree' in this country.

Towards the glasshouses is a remarkable 30ft. high olive tree; no doubt the biggest in Britain. After last year's remarkable summer 71 lbs. of ripe olives were picked on 3rd December: this London crop (which we are currently eating) must be unique in the annals of English horticulture. In this north-east corner of the garden the culinary, current medicinal, and historical officinal herbs have recently been rearranged into beds which, it is hoped, will facilitate their study. To design a satisfactory herb garden is not easy if as wide a range of species as possible is required, as it is here. But a huge clipped bay offers a focal point from which the divisions, paved and grassed, can proceed. Certain plants appear in more than one category, especially as other groups are included: dye plants and species used in perfumery.

Along the north boundary run the glasshouses, Curator's house, and laboratory. These date mainly from 1900. The glasshouses again hold as representative a collection of species as possible for demonstration and teaching and offer controlled environments for research. In parallel with the wide availability of plant species for

demonstration and study the research aspect of the garden continues. Several colleges of the University of London, Hospitals, the Botany Department of the British Museum (Natural History) have programmes of work in train. These include enquiry into production of D.N.A., cytological investigation of ferns (particularly Dryopteris), work on Mediterranean composites, especially Anacyclus, *Potamogeton spp* (pondweeds) and so on. Further research programmes are currently being planned.

Another important aspect is the growing of various cereals, rye, barley and wheat, to be injected with the fungus *Claviceps purpurea*. This is ergot, once greatly feared as a poisonous adulterant in flour, now a source of a valued drug: here new strains are being cultivated.

In the international botanical field, the Garden's Seed List goes out to some 300 other gardens; thus the exchange of species, as begun with Leiden almost 300 years ago, continues to flourish. Closer home, teaching specimens are supplied to schools and colleges and series of lectures are held here. Thus those reasons for which the Garden was founded, are still valid and still in use. And hence the 1899 scheme is still thought viable. Even in these vastly changed and changing times the availability of some 5,000 species of plants for study in Central London is truly remarkable. But clearly the Garden cannot be opened to the public at large for the pressures on a research establishment would make that research impossible.

Nonetheless, since 1974 open days have been made available for Fellows of the Royal Horticultural Society and, also by ticket, a couple of days each year for which persons other than students of subjects associated with the Garden's aims and work (to whom it is always available) may apply. It is hoped that these notes on the Garden's history (which everybody at least half knows) and current role (which nobody seems to know) will help to explain to Chelsea residents the reason for this somewhat unavailable place in their midst.

Illustrations on pages 46-48.

Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Act 1977

by Lesley Lewis

The Borough introduced a Bill in Parliament this year seeking additional powers for repairs to dilapidated buildings, and recovery of expenses thereby incurred; abolition of compensation payments under the 10% extension rule; serving of emergency stop notices in unauthorised development; control over types of shops; removal of refuse, control of dogs on roads, serving of instant parking penalty notices and some other miscellaneous matters. All the clauses reflected the serious concern of residents, but Parliament had to be persuaded not only that the proposals were socially desirable and legally enforceable but that there were sufficient reasons for the Borough being given special powers not applicable to the country as a whole.

The Bill had to pass both Houses in the ordinary way and also to satisfy a House of Lords Committee before which Petitioners against any clauses were entitled to appear in proceedings of a formal judicial nature. Mr. George Dobry, Q.C., who acted for the Chelsea Society in the West Cross Route Public Inquiry, asked that I should give evidence to this Committee based on the records of the Society in planning and conservation matters. Mr. Ian Grant, F.R.I.B.A., performed the same function for the Kensington Society and it is gratifying that the views of local amenity societies should be taken so seriously at the national level. Regrettably, only eight of the original nineteen clauses in the Bill have survived to become law, but the Borough has achieved some useful results and has probably strengthened the case for general legislation on several points which were sympathetically received although not passed.

I first attended two long sessions at the offices of the Parliamentary Agents, who are solicitors specialising in parliamentary business. Their exalted function entitles them to require barristers to come to them, instead of vice versa, so we saw Mr. Dobry there, working through the day and lunching on sandwiches sent in for us. The House of Lords Committee proceedings started on 3rd May in a beautiful room on the first floor overlooking the river. Earl Alexander of Tunis, the Earl of Ilchester, Lord Jacques and Lord Reigate, with Baroness Wootton of Abinger in the Chair, sat at one end of the room. On each side were solicitors and officials, while Mr. Peter Boydell, Q.C. for the Petitioners and Mr. Dobry for the Borough, with their Juniors, were at the other end. Behind them were members of the public and witnesses waiting to be called. The space in the middle contained a table for the witness and the

shorthand writers, who worked in shifts to produce full transcripts which were made quickly available. The witness, who had the panel of Lords on his left and examining Counsel on his right, was advised to address the right ear of the stenographer opposite him across the table. My turn came on 9th and 10th May, after Mr. Sanders and other Borough witnesses, and I was duly sworn in the corner of the room. Since a witness is only speaking of facts well known to him and is not personally implicated there should be nothing to be afraid of. I must, however, admit that I was slightly unnerved by the Olympian atmosphere, the impassivity of their Lordships apart from a sympathetic Chairman, the difficulty of listening to Counsel's questions from the right while addressing the panel on the left, and not forgetting about the stenographer's ear. One would have to be a very hardened expert witness, I think, not to feel a tremor when opposing Counsel rises to his full height, adjusts his wig, grasps the front edges of his gown and asks you exactly what you meant in a passage from yesterday's transcript. I was certainly quite ready for a substantial lunch in the Strangers' cafeteria. On balance, I enjoyed the whole experience, treading the soft carpets of the Corridors of Power while recognising many old favourites among the Victorian historical paintings with which the walls are lined. Thank you, Mr. Dobry.

Chelsea Booklist

A selective list of published sources on Chelsea's history, compiled by the Chelsea Library staff and based on books in the library's Local Studies collection.

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FIELD, HENRY. Memoirs, historical and illustrative, of the Botanick garden at Chelsea. 1820. (Revised edition, 1878.)

Pleasure Gardens

FITZGERALD, CYRIL. Ranelagh and its times. 1913.

SANDS, MOLLIE. Invitation to Ranelagh, 1742-1803. 1946.

WROTH, WARWICK. Cremorne and later London gardens. 1907.

Royal Court

BROWNE, TERRY. Playwright's theatre: English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre. 1975.

MACCARTHY, DESMOND. The Court Theatre, 1904-1907. 1907.

Royal Hospital

ASCOLI, DAVID. A village in Chelsea: an informal account of the Royal Hospital. 1974.

DEAN, CAPTAIN C. G. T. The Royal Hospital Chelsea, 1681-1950. 1950.

GLEIG, G. R. Chelsea Hospital and its traditions. 3 vols. 1838.

St. Mark's College

GENT, GEORGE W. Memorials of St. Mark's college. 1891.

Smith's Charity

STROUD, DOROTHY. The South Kensington estate of Henry Smith's charity; its history and development. 1975.

Street Names

CURLE, B. R. Kensington and Chelsea street names. 1968.

Veitch's Nursery

VEITCH, JAMES H. HORTUS VEITCHII: a history of the rise and progress of the nurseries of Messrs. James Veitch and sons. 1906.

Famous Residents

Chelsea Library has a good collection of biographical material relating to famous residents of Chelsea, e.g. Whistler, Rossetti, Thomas More; as well as literary works by notable inhabitants, e.g. Henry James, Thomas Carlyle, etc.

The books listed above may all be consulted in the Reference Library, and some titles are also available for loan from the Lending Library. In addition to these titles Chelsea Library has a wide range of official records such as Council and Vestry minutes, Registers of Voters, etc.; and also has files of publications produced by local organisations, e.g. Parish magazines, Chelsea Society Annual Reports, etc.

Obituary

THE EARL OF ANTRIM

The death of Lord Antrim has dealt a most serious blow to the Chelsea Society. For in Lord Antrim we have lost an excellent President.

He became a member of the Society in 1970 and attended the Annual General Meetings forthwith. The evident interest in our affairs of such a busy man—particularly in his chairmanship of the National Trust—impressed me, and when Sir Anthony Wagner stood down after completing two terms as President, we asked Lord Antrim whether he would succeed him. To our great satisfaction he agreed.

He was a first-rate chairman of our meetings, in wisdom, patience and good humour. He kept himself informed about the doings of the Society, and his advice on policy was always welcomed. Among the most important matters during his period of office were the G.L.C. scheme for pedestrianising the King's Road, plans for Architectural Heritage year in 1975, the Houseboats, the Pheasantry, the Katyn Memorial, the Cardiothoracic Hospital, and the new lay-out of the Dovehouse Street graveyard, now nearing completion. In all these affairs our President's support was much valued by the Society. He will be greatly missed both as a President and as a charming personality.

NOEL BLAKISTON

Treasurer's Report

This is my last year as Treasurer and although there is a small deficit, I am happy to report that the deficit between income and expenditure for 1976 is considerably reduced at £13·03 against £166·80 for the previous year.

We were loth to increase the subscription when just about everything else in our lives had increased and therefore held off until January 1977, when the minimum annual subscription was increased from £1 to £3. I very much hope this will make our overall position healthier for some time, although costs are still increasing. May I take this opportunity to thank Life Members who send a donation from time to time; this is always welcome.

Jubilee Fund: The response to our appeal has been generous indeed and I would like to thank everyone for their contributions. We still have a long way to go, but at the moment we have raised over £6,000; with the £3,000 contribution from the Borough, this has enabled us to complete Phase I of the garden rehabilitation. We have a further generous promise of up to £1,000 from Mrs. Lesley Lewis and we hope to start Phase II very shortly. The Chairman will speak on this in his Report.

Finally, may I thank our new Hon. Auditor, Mr. Ian Frazer, for his kindness and help in producing these accounts.

PATRICIA GELLEY,
Hon. Treasurer.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Balance Sheet at 31st December, 1976

LIABILITIES	£	£	ASSETS	£
General Fund at 31st December, 1975	11·07		Balance in Post Office Account	2410·06
Less Deficit for 1976 in Income and Expenditure Account	13·03		Balance at Bank	376·39
General Fund at 31st December, 1976		(1·96)		
1977 subscriptions paid in advance ...		153·00		
Sundry creditors		1020·60		
Life membership fund 31st December, 1976		1614·81		
		£2786·45		£2786·45

General Fund: Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st December, 1976

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Annual subscriptions	714·25	Cost of annual report	1097·20
Transfer from life membership fund	950·00	Stationery, postage and miscellaneous	590·16
Donations received	56·50	Cost of annual general meeting	25·84
Net surplus on sale of Christmas cards ...	39·55	Donations to other organisations	25·00
Deficit for year carried to balance sheet ...	13·03	Cost of film shows	35·13
	£1773·33		£1773·33

Life Membership Fund Account for the year ended 31st December, 1976

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Life Membership Fund 31st December, 1975 ...	2185·93	Transfer to General Fund towards current expenses	950·00
Life membership fees for 1976	240·00	Income tax 1974/75	82·83
Interest on Post Office account for 1976 ...	221·71	Life membership fund 31st December, 1976 ...	1614·81
	£2647·64		£2647·64

P. C. GELLEY, *Hon. Treasurer*

REPORT OF THE HONORARY AUDITOR to the Members of THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

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

28th October, 1977
LONDON EC2A 1EP

I. W. FRAZER,
Chartered Accountant

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An asterisk denotes a life member. The Hon. Membership Secretary should be informed of correction or changes in name, address or title

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