

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL REPORT 1968



Editorial

Members will be surprised to receive this Report so soon after the Report for 1967. The explanation is that we have decided to issue the Annual Report in future as soon as possible after the Annual General Meeting, in order that the contents of the Chairman's Report may reach all members of the Society while they can be read rather as news than as history. The issue of an Interim Report in April of this year was an attempt to keep members more in touch with the doings of the Council. It is realised, however, that nothing less than the measure now decided upon can satisfactorily inform the Society, in good time, of our main activities.

Here then is the Report for 1968, necessarily this year much abbreviated, being, as you will see, limited to an account of the Annual General Meeting. Next year you will receive at about the same time the Annual Report for 1969, of the normal size of our Annual Reports.

NOEL BLAKISTON

November 1968

The Annual General Meeting

of the Chelsea Society was held at
The Chelsea College of Science and Technology
on Tuesday, 8th October, 1968, by kind permission
of Dr. Gavin, the Principal.

The President, Sir Anthony Wagner, took the Chair. He thanked Dr. Gavin for putting the Hall at the disposal of the Society.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 26th October, 1967, were duly approved and signed by the President.

The President announced that there were four vacancies on the Council, and that the following names had been proposed and seconded:

- (a) Miss Joan L. Davis
Proposed by Mr. R. B. C. Ryall
Seconded by Mrs. Nigel Hogg
- (b) The Hon. Malcolm Davidson
Proposed by Mr. James Allason, M.P.
Seconded by Rt. Hon. Lord Clitheroe, P.C.
- (c) Mr. T. V. S. Durrant
Proposed by Mr. Noel Blakiston
Seconded by the Hon. Godfrey Samuel
- (d) Mr. Tom Pocock
Proposed by Mr. John Yeoman
Seconded by Mr. Tom Hancock

These candidates were duly elected.

The Chairman's Report and the Honorary Treasurer's Statement were then read and adopted.

Chairman's Report

1. *Membership*

Since the last report the membership of the Society has increased by 92 and is now 731.

2. *Summer Meeting*

Our summer meeting this year, on the evening of Saturday, 15th June, introduced many of our members to a part of Chelsea where they had not previously trodden. By the kindness of the owners we were invited to visit the settlements of houseboats moored near the Embankment above Battersea Bridge. At a convenient place in each of the moorings a bar was installed. We were given the freedom of decks and gangways and many of the residents invited us into their strange homes. The experience was immensely enjoyed by the visitors. It is thought that no less than 200 of our members attended. To say that we were favoured by the weather would be an exaggeration. It can, however, be said that the rain kept off until the moment of your Chairman's delivery of a few words of gratitude to our hosts.

He was saying in your name, I hope correctly, that we of the Chelsea Society thoroughly approve of this floating village on our southern boundary. We admire its inhabitants for their independent way of life. We thank them for their flowers and bright paint. Harmless, ornamental and quiet, their way of life cannot of course be allowed in our time. They have got to go. As you will know, their village is to be obliterated by a road. Our sympathy goes with them and our best wishes that they may find some other haven where they would be.

3. *Pier Hotel and 37 Cheyne Walk*

Many of our members will lament the passing of the Pier Hotel which this Society strove to preserve. They will have noticed, however, that No. 37 Cheyne Walk, the one of the three Ashbee houses on which in July 1966, the Minister of Housing and Local Government declined to confirm a building preservation order, has, though battered, escaped demolition as yet. For the firm that was developing the site has decided not to go ahead. We wrote to the Minister in the faint hope that the next developer might be told to stay his hand in respect of No. 37, and received the answer that there are no grounds on which this matter can be re-opened.

4. *Pedestrian Crossing in King's Road at junction with Manresa Road*

On 6th March this Society asked the Borough Surveyor whether a zebra crossing could be made at this point. The answer was that consideration was already being given to the installation of lights at the junction of King's Road and Oakley Street which would provide for safe pedestrian crossing here. The lights are now in place and we are grateful for this improvement.

5. *Nos. 39, 41 and 43 Park Walk*

The derelict condition of these three late eighteenth century houses next to St. Andrew's Church, which are Church property, led me to approach the vicar, the Rev. S. G. Newson. He explained to me that the unhappy state of these houses resulted from a conflict of opinion between himself and his Church Council on the one hand, and the London Diocesan Authorities on the other, who wish to demolish them and rebuild on the site. I thereupon wrote to the Borough Surveyor to say that in the opinion of this Society every effort should be made to preserve the houses. The reconditioning of houses of similar build and date (1790) further up the row show how attractively they can be adapted to modern living conditions. The Borough Surveyor in answer suggested that these houses might become part of a conservation area. They now, in fact, form, together with the rest of the terrace, such an area. Meanwhile Mr. Newson, alas, has died, much regretted by many. It is a satisfaction to me that he was much heartened by my approach and described my letter as "a wave of fresh air".

6. *Street Lighting on the Boundary Roads between Westminster and Chelsea*

Thanks to information supplied by a member of this Society, Mr. R. P. G. Richards, we were able to call a halt to the elimination of all the Victorian street lamps along the boundary between Westminster and Chelsea. The following correspondence took place.

- (a) Letter from the Chairman, Chelsea Society, to the City Engineer, Westminster City Hall. 23rd June, 1968.

With regard to the old street lamps that are being replaced along the boundary of Chelsea and Westminster, I wish to put in a plea for the preservation of two of them. One of these is on the island at the junction

of Lowndes Street and Cadogan Place. At present it bears a "Meter Zone Entry" sign. This lamp was erected in 1897 and serves as one of the boundary posts between the parishes of St. Luke's, Chelsea, and St. George's, Hanover Square. It was specially designed and cast for the spot it now marks, having in large letters at the base "St. George's, Hanover Square" and a representation of St. George in relief. The other is 100 yards or more south of this, outside 26 Chesham Place, the Congolese Embassy. This standard is distinguished by its elegant square lantern of the original and very rare pattern. Our Society would be most grateful if these two lamp-posts were to be preserved; if it were not possible to adapt them to modern lighting purposes, then simply as they are for their own sake.

- (b) Reply from the Westminster City Engineer to the Chairman of the Chelsea Society. 24th June, 1968.

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd June, 1968. I note your observations and I am seeking the advice of the Council's Director of Architecture and Planning in this matter. In the meantime no steps will be taken to remove the two columns in question.

Meanwhile the residents of Chesham Street and Eaton Place have waged a vigorous campaign against the proposed new street lighting of their area, as a result of which the City of Westminster (and with it the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) has agreed to reconsider its plans. We congratulate them on their effort, and are most grateful to Mr. Richards for drawing our attention to this matter.

7. *102 Cheyne Walk*

Repair work on this house, which is in a particularly venerable part of Cheyne Walk two doors off Lindsey House, was started about a year ago but abandoned. The garden was left in an untidy state, under a heap of debris, to which, as the fencing was removed, additions accumulated from the street. A neighbour brought this matter to my attention. A letter to the Borough Surveyor and his immediate intervention resulted in the prompt clearing of the rubbish. It is hoped that the repair work, which is still evidently being held up, will soon be completed. In the meantime thanks to the local resident who complained to us and to the Borough Surveyor for his action.

8. *Town Planning (Development Plans) Sub-Committee*

Our Society warmly welcomes the setting up of this sub-committee of the Borough Council the title of which is self-explanatory, and it is most satisfactory to us to be able to record that we have been invited to send a representative to its meetings. Mr. James Ellis has agreed to be our representative. His holiday happened to coincide with the first meeting which took place on 22nd July. Mr. Robin de Beaumont took his place at the meeting. Three other local organisations, in addition to ourselves, are represented on this Committee, the Kensington Society, the Architectural Group of Kensington and the Borough Youth Committee. The initiative of the Borough Council is to be much applauded.

9. *Chelseafication*

In *The Times* of May 10th this year, in an article entitled "Changes in the French way of life", I came upon the words, *a propos* of housing conditions in the French capital, "a menace which is rapidly devouring huge areas of the city: the Chelseafication of Paris". This did not alas mean that Paris is relapsing into a riverside village where artists paint bridges seen through the mist. It meant that all the centre of the town was, as it explained, becoming inhabited by the newly posh and middle class, only the slums remaining working class, while even the most dilapidated slums in all but the most depressing *arrondissements* were being steadily bought up, tarted up, and sold for monstrous prices or let at exorbitant rents.

Such is the image of residential Chelsea, a place that is driving away its working class population, that is taking over from Mayfair and Belgravia the role of being the eastern frontier of the residential West End, the nearest well-to-do residential area to the centre of things, that is to say to the world of government and entertainment. Can we say that such an image is false?

This is not the whole picture, however. With the movement of Mayfair westwards, its satellite follows, Soho. It is widely held, I believe, that the King's Road now beats Carnaby Street at its own game.

These matters have been much debated in our Council. We regret, of course, the Mayfairisation of our streets and hope to keep alive a mixed community in Chelsea. Our opposition to the proposed skyscrapers of the Tedworth Square develop-

ment plan, was not, from the social point of view, because the skyscrapers were intended to give residence to the poorer occupants of the houses to be demolished, but because we thought that such an end would not, in that way, be achieved.

But the problem of our Mayfairisation has been jostled into second place by that of our Soho-isation. The transformation of the King's Road in the last two or three years has raised the question not just of the cost of residing in Chelsea but whether, in the neighbourhood of the King's Road, it is any longer at all agreeable to live in Chelsea. For how can life be agreeable to those who rarely get a good night's rest? The increase of restaurants and clubs, some of which have spread into the side streets, has greatly increased the nocturnal din. The voices of merrymakers and the noises of their cars starting, pierce the stoutest of earplugs.

10. *Royal Avenue*

The subject of the disturbance of residents came to a head in relation to the abolition of the White Hart pub at the corner of Royal Avenue, and its replacement by the Chelsea Drugstore, which opened on July 8th. The advanced publicity given to this venture alarmed the dwellers in Royal Avenue, Wellington Square and the whole neighbourhood, who were at once up in arms. Commerce had pushed its way round into Royal Avenue at the east side, with a stretch of Safeway's shop window. Now, on the west side, the Royal Avenue frontage of the sleepy old White Hart was to be replaced by a building designed, in the architect's words, "to confuse and dazzle the eye", within which food and drink and all sorts of other things would be on sale for 24 hours a day.

Our Society of course supported the residents. The following letters were written to the Borough Surveyor:

17th February, 1968

The plans for this building have been examined and I have to say that this Society finds the elevation on Royal Avenue quite unacceptable. A stainless steel frontage would be most discordant in that position. Moreover, the plan shows no attempt at a harmonious juncture with the neighbouring houses.

19th March, 1968

Thank you for showing us the new planning submission for the White Hart, Royal Avenue. I have sought advice from other members of our Council and have to tell you that the elevations of the scheme both on the King's Road and on Royal Avenue are found quite unacceptable, and our view is that planning permission should be refused.

The proportions are poor and the design is amateur, giving too little care to the relationship with the neighbouring buildings. The elevations look as though made of cardboard, with no attention to the detail required for the materials envisaged. The juxtaposition of round-headed arches of varying radii is particularly unhappy.

It has been stated in print that the building is intended to be used as a drug-store, open 24 hours a day, a use which would be in complete conflict with the residential amenities of the Avenue. Access to such a building from Royal Avenue and the use of its windows for display purposes utterly offend good planning practice. We note that no provision has been made either for car parking for clients, or for loading and unloading.

On a site of such importance as this, we would expect a complete presentation of the design, including a model and perspectives showing the relationship of the proposals both to the existing buildings in Royal Avenue and King's Road, and to the upper storey of the White Hart itself.

For the foregoing reasons we must again strongly urge that planning permission be refused.

Mr. Baden-Powell, on behalf of our Society, Mr. Henry Forbes, on behalf of the Royal Avenue Residents' Association, and Miss Medlicott on behalf of both these organisations, then met a Director of Charringtons and their Estates Manager. This was done after consultation with Mr. Worsley and at his suggestion. As a result of this meeting Mr. Baden-Powell, who is this year President of the Architectural Association, made contact with the architects employed by Charringtons and examined further modifications of the plans. Whatever your opinion of the result, the building is clearly of a frivolous

and ephemeral nature. Our description of the King's Road end of Royal Avenue as an important site is now derided on both sides of the Avenue.

The local residents, though much concerned on the architectural issue, are naturally less concerned with that than with the effect of the drugstore upon their daily and nightly lives by the increased turbulence that it has brought to the neighbourhood. Their plight, of course, is now shared to a greater or less degree by the inhabitants of all the streets and squares off the King's Road. A question, as I have said, a very big question, is raised. As they are besieged ever more relentlessly by the noises of crowds and cars around them and by the ever growing roar of aeroplanes above them, how long will it be before the residents' hope of leading a happy domestic life in Chelsea will have to capitulate? And as the residents are forced out, who will take their place? Not, we must suppose, would-be homemakers, but temporary occupiers of rooms, a floating population of lodgers, such as is to be found, I believe, in areas of Earls Court. Is such a prospect one that our Borough Council, our Conservative Council, under which Chelsea has changed, and is changing, beyond recognition at such headlong speed—is such a prospect one to which the Council looks forward with satisfaction? If there is any person in this hall who believes that the King's Road is not contaminated by the drug traffic, I marvel at that person's innocence.

Before leaving Royal Avenue, there is one further matter I must mention, the proposed closure of the King's Road end by the extension of the pavement across the two entrances from the Road to the Avenue. The plan has been approved by the Borough and we wrote in February asking that the closure be made to take effect at the same time as the parking regulations scheduled for the end of this year. We were answered that "a token sum will remain in the estimates so that this scheme does not die". However much, I ask, do they estimate for this work? At least £4,000 I am told. Heavens! A little job, you would think, that one of us, any Chelsea Society paterfamilias, could polish off single-handed in a couple of weekends.

11. Meeting at the Old Town Hall

The future of the King's Road was the main subject of discussion at a meeting held at Chelsea Old Town Hall on 14th May at the suggestion of Mr. Marcus Worsley, M.P..

for whose initiative in this matter we are most grateful. There were present at the meeting Mr. Worsley, Alderman Mrs. John Paul, Chairman of the Borough Planning Committee, Councillor R. M. Brew, Chairman of the Works and Highways Committee, Mr. Clinch, the Borough Surveyor, Mr. Goldring, his Associate, Mr. Sanders, Chief Planning Assistant, and Mr. Pearson, representing the Legal and Parliamentary Office, and, on behalf of the Chelsea Society, myself and the two secretaries, and Mr. de Beaumont and Mr. Ehrman.

With regard to the type of shops in the King's Road the following correspondence had taken place early in the year:

25th February, 1968. Chairman to the Borough Surveyor.

Our Council has asked me to express our concern at the disappearance from the King's Road of so many of the kinds of shops that are necessary to any residential neighbourhood. Bakers, ironmongers and dairies are being ousted to make way for "boutiques", antique dealers and restaurants. In the last year or two this process has gone on with such speed that the character of the road has been transformed. In our opinion, further change of this nature should be halted.

I do not know what power the Borough has in the matter, but exhort you to do what you can to preserve the residential character of Chelsea, remembering that the primary needs of residents are for such things as bread, nails and milk.

27th February, 1968. Borough Surveyor to the Chairman.

I thank you for your letter of the 25th February drawing attention to the change in character which appears to be taking place in the King's Road shopping centre. I know that this change has been disturbing your Society and I discussed it recently with one of your joint Honorary Secretaries, Miss Medicott.

I, personally, agree with the Society that the changes are by no means for the better as far as amenity is concerned. In general, however, the type of business conducted in individual shops is something which is not subject to planning control and in view of this there is nothing my Committee can do to influence the matter.

That it seems, is that. Yet let us, so long as we have freedom of speech, continue to raise our voices, however ineffectually, against the replacement in our town of the shops that we need and use by shops that cater principally for visitors, I had almost said invaders. And surely our Borough Council can do something to conserve, I repeat, conserve, the side streets and restrict such shops to the King's Road? What are boutiques doing in Radnor Walk?

If the multiplication of boutiques will provoke our continual protest, the increase of restaurants and places of entertainment is an even more serious matter. For it is these, rather than the boutiques, that bring with them such late night noise as is making the lives of the inhabitants unbearable. Over the multiplication of restaurants the Borough has a certain limited control, in that it can, for instance, refuse permission for a dwelling house to be turned into a restaurant. Any kind of a shop, however, can be so turned without permission. At our Town Hall meeting the Borough deplored its impotence with regard to the spread of boutiques, and of restaurants, in areas unsuitable for them. Since our meeting Mr. Worsley has brought up the matter of restaurants in the House of Commons and asked for legislation to empower a Council to refuse change of use from shop to restaurant. The Minister of Housing and Local Government asked Mr. Worsley for evidence to support his request. The Council is supplying it. Thanks to Mr. Worsley. Thanks to the Council.

Amongst other matters raised by us at the meeting was the question of the Borough's plan for the development of Chelsea. Our Society's opinion had been asked only a short while before the meeting on a proposed tower block, 130 feet high, on the Granada site.

On 5th May I had written to the Borough:

We have examined the outline plans submitted to the Royal Borough for planning approval for the Granada Site. It is difficult to make sensible comments on an isolated proposal such as this, in ignorance of the Borough's Development Plan for the locality, and its policy towards high buildings. We presume that the Borough has prepared such a policy in relation to the Development Plan which it has to publish shortly, and would be glad to hear from you what your policy is.

We have no objection to the proposed development at this particular position, at the junction of the King's Road and Sydney Street, provided that it is not regarded as a precedent for the creation of tall buildings in Chelsea in the future. We are specially concerned at the proliferation of high buildings, several of which have been, or are being built near the King's Road. We would particularly resist any further proposals to erect tall buildings lining the King's Road.

I therefore look forward to hearing from you on your policy for high buildings in Chelsea.

The Borough's answer, repeated verbally at the meeting, was that the Greater London Council and the London Boroughs are at present in consultation with regard to policies for high building in London, and the views of our Society will be sought when policies for high building come to be considered at local level as a part of the preparation of the local development plan.

There is, in fact, at present no local development plan. We could not help regretting the consequent vacuum in which architectural opinions have, in the meantime, to be expressed.

On the matter of Conservation Areas, Mr. Clinch said that the Borough was engaged in listing such areas to submit to the G.L.C. as were required by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. The Borough had accepted almost entirely the Conservation Areas recommended by our Society in our Annual Report for 1965.

To Councillor Brew I said at the time (and again in a letter) that I believed our Society to be overwhelmingly in favour of the parking control that has already been instituted in the eastern area of Chelsea and urged him to speed the extension of such control.

We cordially thank both Mr. Worsley and our hosts at the Old Town Hall for arranging this meeting which was most interesting and, we believe, profitable.

12. *High Buildings*

To the general satisfaction of this Society the proposed plans of the Cadogan Estate for the development of the Tedworth Square area were, after a Public Enquiry, rejected by the Minister of Housing and Local Government. I feel obliged to say a word about the minority opinion of our Council in

respect of the proposed skyscrapers, for I belonged to that minority. I do not believe that anybody on our Council positively wanted to see skyscrapers go up. We all would have liked, and still would like, to see no new buildings rise on the site of greater height than those already there. Nor do I believe that any of us had much faith in the achievement of the avowed sociological purpose of the skyscrapers. On aesthetic grounds, and those alone, some of us, however, felt that skyscrapers were not the worst thing. If the human density of the area had indeed to be greatly increased, we felt that anything would be better than more Swan Courts. An elephant blocks out more light than a giraffe. While rejecting giraffes let us see that we do not let in more elephants. If we were now to get another Sloane Avenue in Flood Street I would think we had got the worst of the bargain.

With regard to high buildings I wrote the following letter on 12th June to Mr. B. T. Collins, the Director of Planning at the G.L.C.

This Society is much concerned with the Town Planning of Chelsea. For we believe Chelsea still to be a residential area of rare domestic charm, which we are determined to preserve to the best of our power, both from the destructive effects of traffic and from ill-considered building development.

The Town Planning Committee of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea informs me that it cannot proceed in the making of a plan for the Borough until the G.L.C. has issued its overall plan. I would be extremely grateful if this Society could be told when the G.L.C. plan is complete and available for inspection. (In his answer the Director of Planning told me that the G.L.C. plan is to be submitted to the Minister of Housing and Local Government by 31st July, 1969 and will then be available for inspection.)

In the meantime this Society would like to record its attitude towards high buildings. We would object to high buildings (above say four or five storeys) wherever they impinged on any of the residential areas defined in a report made by this Society on areas of special architectural value. (I enclose a copy of this report, to be found in our Annual Report for 1965, pp. 32-45.) In other areas we would not necessarily object. Requested recently for our opinion upon a proposed thirteen

storey tower block on the Granada Site at the junction of the King's Road and Sydney Street, we raised no objection to such a plan for such a nodal point. Our acquiescence, however, carried a strong qualification, namely that it was extremely hard to give a valid opinion in a vacuum. Our final approval would be dependent, of course, upon the quality of the design and of the material used in the construction (which were not apparent in the outline plan), but equally upon the Borough's plan for the neighbourhood, and at present there is no such plan.

We would now be glad to see the whole length of the King's Road made into a Conservation Area, with a strict control of the height of buildings to a limit conformable with such a narrow street, and a street on to which so many residential quarters open.

The Granada Site is probably the one site not only in the King's Road but in Chelsea, where we would countenance a tower block, in addition to those already sanctioned, viz. at the bend in the Kings Road and at the World's End.

A kind of building to which we are in all cases opposed is the block of nine or ten storeys, with a broad lateral extension from whichever way you look at it. Such blocks—I instance Swan Court, between Chelsea Manor Street and Flood Street, and Whitelands House, on the King's Road between Cheltenham Terrace and Walpole Street—are at least as destructive of our street architecture as tower blocks might be.

13. *Traffic: Chelsea Embankment*

What news, you will ask, about plans for the Chelsea Embankment? You will remember that, in my Report of last year, we left things with two link roads from the West Cross Route converging, after the obliteration of our friends in the houseboats, at the head of Battersea Bridge, about to discharge their deafening cannonade along our Embankment. There, so far as we can find out, they remain poised. The following correspondence shows our efforts to find out.

14th July, 1968. Letter to the Traffic Commissioner and Director of Transportation, County Hall, from the Secretary, the Chelsea Society.

The Chelsea Society is particularly anxious to know the possible effects of the proposed link road between the West Cross Route and Chelsea Embankment.

Are you yet in a position to let us know:

1. What new river crossings are likely to be required in this scheme, where they are to be sited, and at what phase in the operations they will be introduced.
2. What changes are likely to occur to Chelsea Embankment as we know it, and particularly to the existing gardens and trees.
3. The likelihood and nature of any alterations to the bridgeheads at Battersea, Albert and Chelsea Bridges.

I have consulted the Borough Engineer who tells me that there are no firm proposals as yet but suggested that you might be able to supply me with further information.

Since we understand that work is due to commence on the West Cross Route in 1970, we imagine that you are considering these points with some urgency, and we would be most grateful for any information you can furnish.

16th July, 1968. Letter from the Traffic Commissioner and Director of Transportation, County Hall, to the Secretary, the Chelsea Society.

Thank you for your letter of 14th July, 1968, about the West Cross Route and Chelsea Embankment.

The only new river crossing we contemplate at present is the direct continuation of the West Cross Route over the river to Battersea; this was part of our original proposals for the motorway box.

Together with the Borough Engineer we are starting a general investigation into the traffic situation on the Chelsea Embankment and in the hinterland. It is too early to predict the outcome but the need to preserve as far as possible the amenities of the Embankment will be very much in our minds.

The precise line of the West Cross Route from Holland Park Avenue to the river is still being investigated by the consulting engineers and there are as yet

no firm proposals. For the moment only two lanes in each direction may be constructed, so that the main immediate effect will be to take the longer distance traffic which must at present use the one-way system. This should help to relieve the residential areas of some, at least, of the vehicles which now pass through them.

22nd August, 1968. Letter to Robert Vigers, Esq., Chairman of the Planning and Transportation Committee, G.L.C., from the Chairman, the Chelsea Society.

I am beginning to think about my Annual Report for the Chelsea Society which has to be delivered at the beginning of October and am wondering whether there is anything further for me to report on the subject of the Chelsea Embankment Development. What I said last year is to be found on pages 25 to 27 of the Annual Report for 1967, of which I enclose a copy. If you were able to divulge any new information on the plans for the Embankment road, I would be extremely grateful.

10th September, 1968. Reply from Robert Vigers, Esq., to the Chairman, the Chelsea Society.

During the past year, the Council has announced its objectives for the period up to 1983, which include the whole of the West Cross Route. The section of this route between Holland Park Avenue and river has been included in the "preparation list" of schemes from which programmes for the years immediately following 1970/71 will be drawn. The links to the Embankment referred to in your report for 1967 are included in this route. The exact level of these link roads is being worked out by the engineers as they proceed with detailed design, but the one nearest to the World's End Site will probably fall to about ground level where it reaches the junction of Cremorne Road with Cheyne Walk.

The preparation list also includes a project for improvement at the Battersea Northern Bridgehead. No details are available yet of the form that this improvement will take as work on planning the scheme is still at a fairly early stage, but it will almost certainly include an east/west route sunk in cutting.

I am sorry that I am not yet able to let you have any further information, but can assure you that the views of the Chelsea Society will be given very careful con-

sideration at the appropriate stages of our consideration of the project.

12th September, 1968. Further letter to Robert Vigers, Esq., from the Chairman, the Chelsea Society.

Thank you very much for your letter of 10th September. As I understand you, then, 1983 is the year at which it is planned that the West Cross Route shall reach its junction with the South Cross Route. May I ask whether it is intended that the South Cross Route shall then be complete or that the arrival of the West Cross Route to the point of junction will merely be the signal to start work upon the South Cross Route? You will understand that we in Chelsea are much concerned to see the Box Road finished and serving its purpose of conveying through traffic round, instead of through, the centre of London.

4th October, 1968. Letter from Robert Vigers, Esq., to the Chairman, the Chelsea Society.

The position with regard to the timing of the West Cross Route is that the section between Holland Park Avenue and the Embankment is in the preparation list approved by the Ministry of Transport with a view to works starting shortly after 1970/71. The remainder of the West Cross Route including the new river crossing, together with the South Cross Route and the motorway links to the C-ring Road, is in the primary road network the whole of which the Council has proposed should be built by 1983. . .

I cannot pretend to find any comfort whatever from this correspondence. It is clear that the completion of the Box Road, and our enjoyment of any benefits resulting therefrom, are envisaged only in a distant future. We shall have had at least ten years "enjoyment" of the Chelsea Interchange before that event. It would be my bet that, by that time, all possibility of our riverside becoming an agreeable resort will have become a mere memory. Both our Embankment and its hinterland will have become a waste land.

And this is not just a local matter. The monster will pound on eastwards along the Embankment to Pimlico and Westminster. What happens when it meets the Houses of Parliament? Is it part of the G.L.C. plan to obliterate that establish-

ment? If so, surely the threatened Members should make common cause with us and insist on the completion of the Box before all else?

“Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.” Now, now, is the time for work to start on the bridge that will take the West Cross Route over the Thames. How gladly we will endure, borne on the west wind, the noise of those piles being hammered in!

Such is not the plan. It is to be goodbye to the Thames for Chelsea, as I see it. Sweet Thames.

Discussion

After the Chairman's Report and the Honorary Treasurer's Statement had been adopted, the meeting was opened for discussion. The invitation of the Chairman to would-be speakers to write to him beforehand of their intention had brought a good response.

Mr. John Blakeway. Mr. Blakeway, representing the owners of the Houseboats, said that they had been very happy to welcome our Society for the Summer Meeting, and hoped that we might come again. On the future of the Houseboat colony he had nothing to say of a comforting nature.

Mr. Francis Brown, Chairman of the Sydney Street and District Residents' Association, spoke about the proposed Hospital development between the King's Road and the Fulham Road. He said that in 1961 the Ministry of Health announced plans for a vast post-Graduate Teaching Hospital complex covering the whole area bounded by Sydney Street, King's Road, Dovehouse Street, South Parade and Fulham Road, and beyond Fulham Road into an area not represented by this Association. Ever since the scheme was first announced much publicity has been given to it by the Press, both national and local, but none by the Ministry. Opposition to it has been repeatedly expressed by our Members of Parliament, the Old Chelsea and the new Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council, the Chelsea Society, our Association and the Press.

Requests to see the plans and the model have been repeatedly refused on the grounds that planning had not yet reached a stage where it would be proper for any publication of details. The present position, in October 1968, is that it would appear that the Ministry may possibly be abandoning its original scheme, or deferring it, whilst allowing or assisting individual Hospitals to develop along independent lines.

In the not so distant future it may well be that almost all the new lands, if ever required by the Ministry for the post-Graduate Hospital scheme, will already be in the possession of one of the hospitals concerned. There will then only remain a dozen or so private houses scattered around the perimeter of the area, compulsory purchase of which might all the more easily be obtained by the Ministry.

The present situation and its attendant secrecy is a matter of great concern to the members of our Association, particularly those living in Guthrie Street, Stewart's Grove and on the west side of Sydney Street.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Brown for putting his case so clearly. The Chelsea Society, as Mr. Brown states, has already declared, and now again declares its sympathy with his Association and once more calls upon the Ministry of Health to divulge its plans.

Mr. Julian Chisholm, a post-graduate economist, spoke in some detail about the development of shops in the King's Road. The Chairman, in thanking him, welcomed youth on the platform and expressed pleasure at the identity of view between Mr. Chisholm and himself.

Mr. A. P. Ryan spoke forcibly on the daily and nightly nuisance of aeroplane noise in Chelsea. In endorsing Mr. Ryan's words, the Chairman paid a tribute to the admirable energies of Margot Eates, the Chairman of the *Chelsea and Kensington Action Committee on Aircraft Noise*.

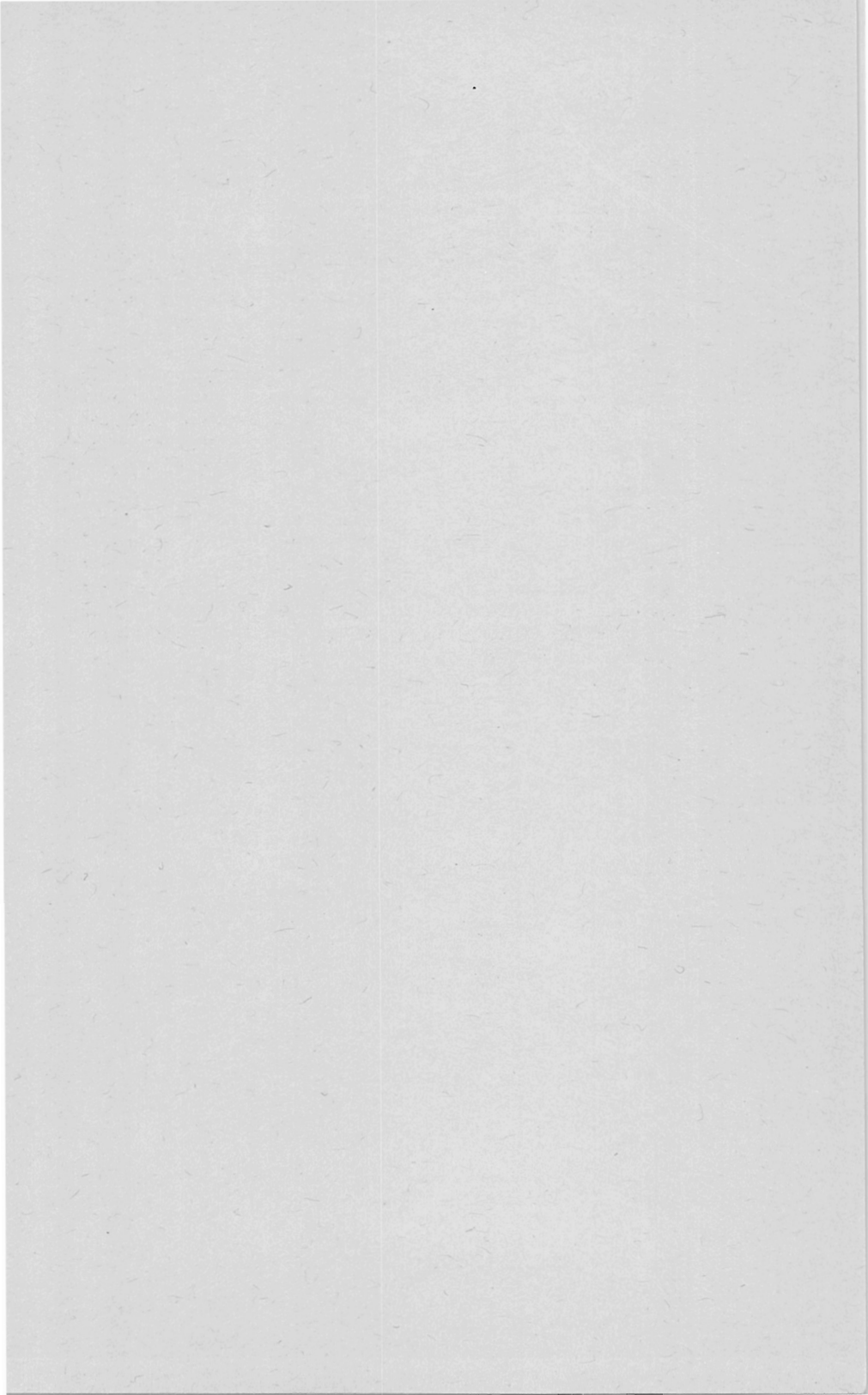
Mr. T. A. D. Sainsbury, *à propos* of criticisms expressed in our Report for 1967 of the proposed Army Museum, said that he did not consider it was part of the business of our Society to express opinions on architecture. We might well air views on such matters as the general bulk of a building or on the wisdom of siting a particular kind of building in a particular place. But aesthetic judgments on the details of architectural style were out of place from a body such as ours. The Chairman said that Mr. Sainsbury had raised a matter on which there could obviously be prolonged debate, for which at this meeting we had no time. For himself he was all for the Council of the Society maintaining its right to make criticisms of the kind of which Mr. Sainsbury complained, at least on the occasions when the Council found itself able, more or less, to speak with one voice. There is a leaven of professional architects

in our Council and "encouraging good architecture" is one of the objects of our Society. The Borough does us the honour continually of asking our opinion on plans for new buildings in Chelsea. We cannot surely say that the Council of the Chelsea Society does not have an opinion? If we have so little confidence in ourselves, what confidence can the members of the Society have in us?

Mr. Francis Marsden said that our biggest enemy is the motor car and if we can control that, we can determine the quality of our environment. The present and proposed parking arrangements do not cover the periods of greatest congestion, viz. 7.30 p.m. to midnight, and on Saturdays, 1.30 p.m. to midnight. We must press for parking control during these periods.

Finally *Mr. Steve Wells*, a student of the Chelsea College of Science and Technology, welcomed us to the College and confessed that during the evening he had felt for the first time that he was making contact with the life of the real inhabitants of Chelsea, which is so different from that seen in the King's Road. His speech was greeted with hearty applause and laughter.

The meeting then adjourned for wine and cheese.



Printed by
J. B. SHEARS & SONS LTD.
191 New King's Road,
London S.W.6
