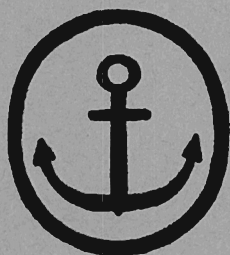
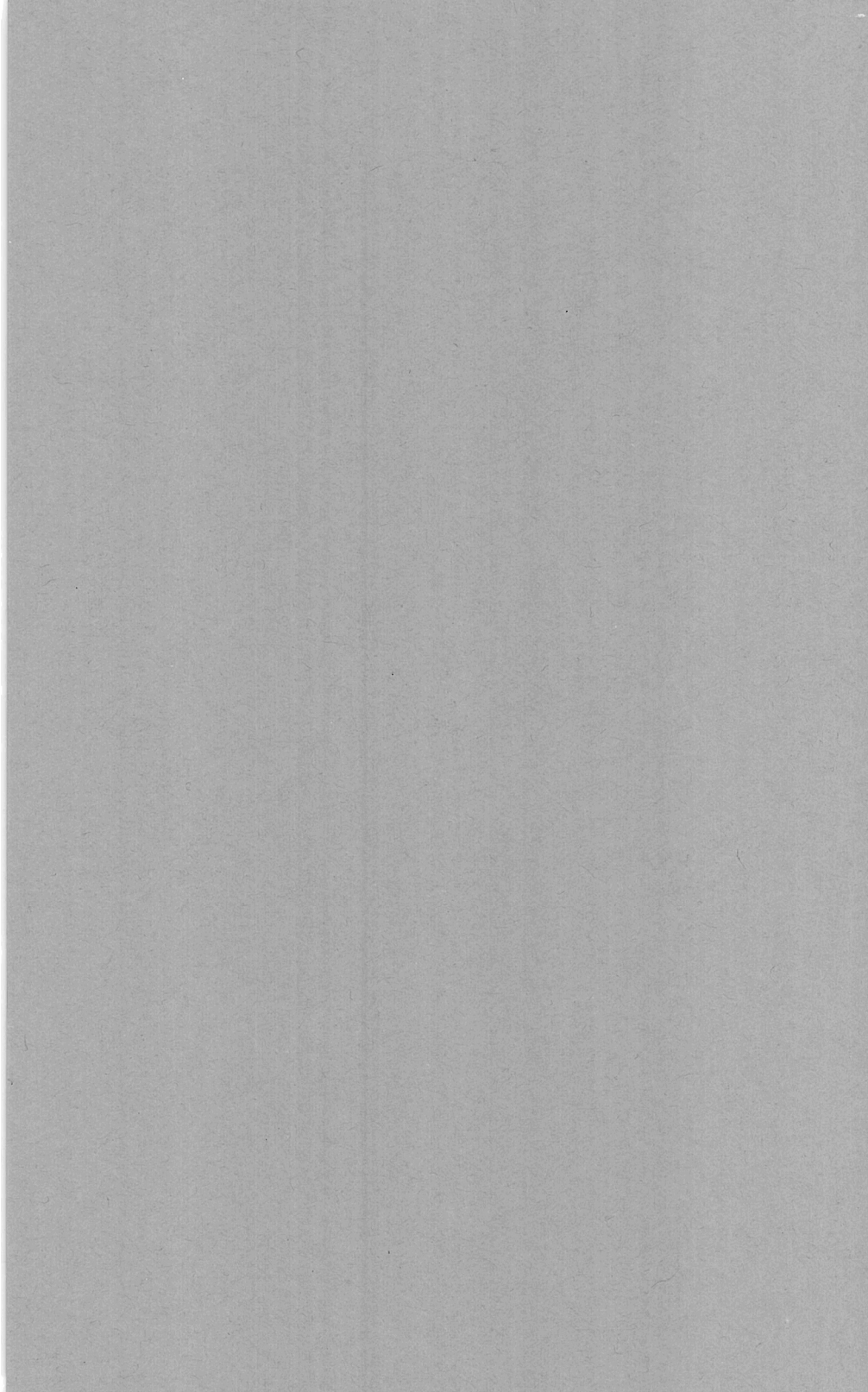


THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL REPORT 1970





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Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence



Very rare pair of Chelsea Bouquetiere Figures, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high. Unmarked, Red Anchor Period. Sold at Christies' for 950 guineas in 1970.

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THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

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

President

SIR ANTHONY WAGNER, K.C.V.O., D.LITT.

Vice-Presidents

THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
and
GENERAL SIR HARRY KNOX, K.C.B., D.S.O.

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Hon. Treasurer

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

Joint Hon. Secretaries

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MISS IRIS MEDLICOTT, B.SC. (Estate Management)
MRS. CUTHBERT ORDE, B.A.

Hon. Auditor

R. G. EDWARDS, ESQ., F.C.A.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY
MRS. ORDE, 1 DURHAM PLACE, S.W.3

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 rates are (i) for persons (other than life members) who became members before 1st July, 1961, ten shillings annually, and (ii) for persons who became members after 30th June, 1961, £1 annually payable on the 1st February or a lump sum of £10 10s. for life membership.

The Annual General Meeting

of the Chelsea Society was held at
The Chelsea College of Science and Technology
(by kind permission of the Principal)
on Friday, 23rd October, 1970 at 8.30 p.m.

The President, Sir Anthony Wagner, took the Chair and thanked the Principal for putting the hall at our disposal.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th October, 1969, were duly approved and signed by the President.

Elections to the Council. The President announced that four nominations had been received to fill the four vacancies on the Council. The candidates were Mr. Giles Best, proposed by Mr. Noel Blakiston and seconded by Mr. Roland Clarke; The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, proposed by Miss Iris Medicott and seconded by Mr. Francis Baden-Powell; Mr. James Ellis, proposed by Noel Blakiston and seconded by Roland Clarke; and Mr. James Richards, proposed by Mr. Tom Pocock, and seconded by Mr. Robin de Beaumont. The four were duly elected.

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

Chairman's Report

1. *Membership*

Our membership is 753. Since the Chairman's last Report 67 new members have been enrolled. The Treasurer has made a purge of those who have not paid their subscriptions. We are always ready for new members.

2. *Summer Meeting*

Our Summer Meeting took place on 4th July, 1970, in the grounds of the College of St. Mark and St. John by kind permission of the Principal. The Chapel and Library were open to us and an excellent tea was provided. We are most grateful to our hosts for their hospitality.

3. *Albert Bridge*

The Chairman had attended a meeting of the Albert Bridge Group, organised by Mrs. Christine Lewis, at the church of St. Mary-le-Park in Battersea on 14th July to discuss the future of the Bridge. Mr. Vigars was present. In a lively debate many opinions were expressed as to what would be the most desirable future for the Bridge; as to whether the proposed prop in the middle was necessary to sustain the Bridge for a few more years while a decision was being made as to its future; as to what was the cause of the decay of the Bridge, whether it was due to the burden of traffic or rather, as Mr. Vigars asserted, to time's corrosion; as to whether, indeed, the decay could not be arrested and the Bridge given a new life by the replacement of certain metal limbs. The upshot of the meeting was that discussion without more knowledge could not continue. Mr. Vigars promised a new engineer's report.

It might have been supposed that the Working Party of officers of the riverside boroughs studying the likely effects of the Motorways upon the Embankment would have had all we could want to know about Albert Bridge at their finger tips. Bridges above Vauxhall Bridge apparently were not a part of their terms of reference! No wonder our Borough found the Working Party's Report most disappointing.

In line with the Albert Bridge Group, our Society wrote to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government requesting that a public inquiry on Albert Bridge should be held.

4. *Cadogan Place*

We swelled the chorus of opposition to a proposal submitted in January to the Borough for the building of a 15-storey hotel on the south side of Cadogan Place. The proposal was refused. It is always a joy to our Society to become aware, as we did in this case, of the existence of a vigorous residents' association.

5. *Christchurch Terrace*

The following letter was written to the Borough concerning an application in October to replace this terrace by five new houses with garages on the ground floor:—

“We would consider it a great pity if these houses were to be demolished and replaced by those shown in the plans. On 24th February last I wrote to the Town Clerk calling his attention to certain areas which it was not possible to include in a Conservation Area owing to their isolation from the general assemblage of valuable groups of buildings, and asking that they might none-the-less be regarded as deserving of such protection as inclusion in a Conservation Area may afford. Amongst the features I mentioned was the part of Christchurch Street on the north side of the church. In the area around Christchurch there survives the greater part of an early Victorian building layout. The south side of Caversham Street has indeed been obliterated, but substantially the rest survives. The area includes Christchurch Terrace.

These modest houses, so characteristic of what we value as Chelsea village, do not appear to be anywhere near such a state of dilapidation as to be unsusceptible of modernisation behind their Victorian exteriors. If they are to have garages it would surely be possible on this island site to find room for them at the back of the houses. The maintenance of the Victorian quality of this terrace would surely enhance rather than debase the material value of the houses. The characterless and unsightly replacements proposed would, if admitted, be, in our view, a sorry debasement.”

6. *The Colville, King's Road*

Two plans for the redevelopment of this site have been submitted during the year. The first plan involved the removal of the whole existing building. With regard to this application we wrote:—

“Must we really give our approval to the demolition of these attractive buildings, which, in addition to their individual charm, form an integral part of a pleasing architectural composition that extends along the King's Road to the western side of Anderson Street? And may we ask, at least, that no demolition shall be allowed until a building designed to replace the Colville shall have received

full and careful approval from the Borough, and the intention of the applicants so to construct it forthwith shall have been accepted as valid by the Borough. In asking this, we of course have in our minds the case of the *Pier Hotel* where, after their destruction of an attractive Victorian pub, like the Colville much loved in its neighbourhood, the developers have receded leaving a waste land, and the case of the *Drugstore* where a new building has gone up with features never sanctioned by the Borough."

The Borough did not give its approval.

A second application was made in September for a building with shops on the ground floor and a restaurant on the first floor. The main external treatment of the first floor was to be retained, and we approved. *See illustration on page 39.*

7. *The Pheasantry, Jubilee Place*

New plans were submitted in August. Our letter to the Borough was as follows:—

"There are features of these plans to which, in the abstract, we would raise no objection. The two-storey podium with flats set back above is in itself satisfactory and the detail seems handled well enough. We have, however, serious objections to this building on this site, for the following reasons:—

- (1) It involves the tampering with one listed building (the Pheasantry), and the abolition of another (12 Jubilee Place).
- (2) It is a far higher building than we would wish to see on this site, that would cut off light to houses in Jubilee Place and Markham Street.
- (3) It carries commerce far down a residential street.
- (4) It involves the loss of many studios, and thus of a feature that gives Chelsea its particular charm.
- (5) Too much building is crowded onto the site, that would bring noise, traffic and bustle where they are not wanted.
- (6) The junction of the proposed building with the Pheasantry is very awkward.

We hope that the Borough will not give its approval to these plans."

8. *Pier Hotel Site*

In July a proposition from Messrs. Wates for a building substantially the same in its outward appearance as the block of 97 flats and a restaurant for which they had planning permission in 1967. It was to consist of 30 one-room flats, 198 two-room flats and 6 three-room flats. We expressed our fear that such a building would hardly qualify as residential. In what way would it differ from a hotel? What would prevent the proprietors from letting for one night? The proposal was not accepted by the Borough. An application for a block of flats according to the plans passed by the Borough, and by ourselves, in 1967 has now been made.

9. *Rossetti Plaque*

Two acts of vandalism on our Embankment have to be recorded. Both were thefts of bronze. The first was made by the sawing-off at the ankles of Derwent Wood's figure of the Boy David, the second by the wrenching-away of a plaque about 3 feet high figuring Rossetti's head, designed by Ford Madox Brown. Through the enthusiasm of Lady Mander and others, the Rossetti head is to be replaced by one made by Sir Charles Wheeler. Our Society has contributed £5 towards the expenses of the same.

10. *Royal Avenue*

The long promised closure of Royal Avenue to traffic off the King's Road took place this summer to the great satisfaction of the residents and the evident increase of the amenity of the area. High praise is to be given to the Borough for this imaginative and welcome improvement.

11. *Shawfield House, Shawfield Street*

Two applications were made in respect of this property, in April and September, for a change of use to a restaurant and to a shop. Both were opposed by our Society according to our principle, which is also that of the Borough, of not allowing the spread of commerce into residential streets.

12. *West London Architectural Society*

There were two activities of the W.L.A.S. to which our members were kindly invited and which many of them were glad to attend. The first, in November 1969, was an audio-

visual display based on a study of the river Thames between Barnes Railway Bridge and Chelsea Bridge. The second was a symposium on Conservation held at the Hurlingham Club on 21st March, 1970, which was addressed by Lord Esher, Raymond Andrews and other interesting speakers. We are most grateful to the W.L.A.S. for organising these occasions and inviting us to them.

13. *West Cross Route, Chelsea Embankment*

In reiterating our opinions on this question we must now recognise that the moment of decision is approaching. In the course of 1971, the building of the West Cross Route will either be sanctioned or not be sanctioned. It will be considered at the Greater London Development Plan Inquiry as part of the whole problem of London's Ringways. It will also, apparently, be considered by a special Local Inquiry concerned only with the West Cross Route. It is clear that the planning authorities of the G.L.C. would be prepared to build the West Cross Route down to the river, even if it were never to become part of a completed Ringway. It is this possibility that we mean to fight for all we are worth.

The G.L.C. divulged its latest plans at an exhibition opened in the Chelsea Public Library in January. These included projects for widening Battersea Bridge and for a slip-road down from the West Cross Route onto Chelsea Embankment which would reach the head of Battersea Bridge across a filled-in Whistler's Reach. They also included a scheme for a slip-road from the West Cross Route to Wandsworth Bridge. This last plan had our warm approval, in so far as we could hope from it for a diversion of lorry traffic from our Embankment. But the two former schemes only filled us with dismay, for they would surely bring more and more traffic onto Cheyne Walk.

Our hope from the West Cross Route is that it would reduce the traffic on our Embankment. Indeed it is only because of this hope that we give our support to the proposed Route. But the benefit therefrom can only come to us when the West Cross Route has been extended over the river. Therefore, we say, and say again, no West Cross Route without a bridge over the river. An interval of several years between the arrival of the West Cross Route onto the banks of the Thames and the making of the bridge, years during which, according to the

G.L.C.'s plans, there would be easy access for an ever increasing stream of traffic onto our Embankment, would be intolerable. We cannot favour the construction of the West Cross Route on these conditions. Moreover, when the Chairman of the G.L.C.'s. Policy and Resources Committee can suddenly say (as he is reported to have said in the *Times* of 6th June last), that he doubts if the South Cross Route will ever be built, can we not all too easily imagine an official of the G.L.C. lightly declaring, as he surveys the death agonies of Cheyne Walk, that there is no prospect of a new bridge ever being built? We were most gratified when the Planning Committee of the Royal Borough, in a critical report upon the G.L.C.'s. exhibition, showed itself to share much of our apprehension with regard to the plans.

It became time for us to think about our representation at the G.L.D.P. Inquiry. Clearly we must employ Counsel, if our voice was to make itself heard effectively. A figure of 2,500 guineas was given us for our legal expenses. There were those who shook their heads doubtfully at the prospect of having to raise that sum, but they were far outnumbered by the helpful and the generous and the optimistic. The collecting of that money, which all came out of Chelsea, was a most exhilarating experience. Chelsea, surely, was behind this cause. It was almost with embarrassment—he could not stop it coming in—that the chairman announced to the meeting that the Fund stood at £3,323 5s. 0d. Our warmest thanks go to all donors, large and small.

The case of the Chelsea Society at the G.L.D.P. Inquiry was briefly put in a memorandum handed out to the press at the meeting, as follows:—

“THE CHELSEA SOCIETY’S OBJECTIONS TO THE GREATER
LONDON DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Chelsea Society is registered as an Objector to the Greater London Development Plan and will be represented by Counsel at the Inquiry now being held in County Hall.

The Society has put forward objections on several topics which concern the amenities of Chelsea, but the matter of overriding importance, in the view of the Society, is the whole future of Chelsea Embankment. For the past thirty-five years it has made urgent representations to the various authorities, on the ever-increasing threats to the last-

remaining residential riverside area of high architectural and scenic quality near to central London.

The Society objects, in chief, to the G.L.C.'s proposal to complete the West Cross Route of the Motorway Box (from Shepherd's Bush to the river) some years before a new road bridge is built near Lots Road. It will urge that the new river crossing must be built concurrently with the West Cross Route. It will represent that there is already a totally unacceptable amount of traffic, especially lorries, using the Embankment, and that while it continues at the present volume there is no hope of preserving, let alone improving, the riverside amenities envisaged in other sections of the G.L.D.P. The completion of the West Cross Route, without the new bridge, and the construction of large traffic inter-sections connecting it to the Embankment, would, in effect, make the Embankment and Cheyne Walk into the South Cross Route of the Motorway Box. The proposed inter-sections and widening of Battersea Bridgehead would irrevocably ruin the amenities of the Embankment and, as a new bridge is in any case projected, would be a total waste of money.

The riverside which is thus threatened is wholly within a Conservation Area designated by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and includes a quite remarkable number of buildings statutorily listed as being of exceptional architectural and historic interest. Crosby Hall, Chelsea Old Church, the seventeenth and eighteenth century houses of Cheyne Walk, the splendid nineteenth century houses by famous Victorian architects, built for and lived in by celebrities of the arts, would, in a very short time, be rendered unusable or uninhabitable by a torrent of heavy traffic using the Embankment as a route to the Docks. Unless the new bridge is built concurrently with the West Cross route a priceless and irreplaceable asset will be sacrificed to ephemeral traffic considerations. In the interests of Chelsea, of London, and of the nation at large, the Chelsea Society is determined to resist this to the utmost of its capacity, and to harness in its cause all the support it can attract."

Our Society sincerely hopes that in the thinking and talking that is to come it may continually find itself going along with the Borough. The large measure of agreement that exists between us already is shown by the following extract from a

support document (S.11/14) submitted by the Royal Borough to the Inquiry:—

“Ringway I is held to be of major significance in relieving Central and Inner London of unnecessary through traffic. The Borough Council agree with this but cannot accept that only parts of the Ringway system should be programmed for the next 12 years. The Council would welcome the early construction of the southern section of the western side of Ringway I as this will relieve traffic congestion within the borough, but consider it vital that the Thames bridge should be constructed concurrently with this section or programmed to follow very soon after it, together with adequate links to the road system on the south of the river. If this is not done the release of traffic onto the Embankment as a continuation of the Ringway system would be quite disastrous to the Thames-side amenities. We, therefore, strongly urge that provision for the Thames bridge should be made in the Plan. The Council has consistently informed the G.L.C. that it can only agree to the proposed link roads to the Embankment if the G.L.C. will prepare an adequate plan for the separation of pedestrians and vehicles throughout the length of the Embankment with a programme for its execution, and here again we consider that provision for this should be made in the Plan.”

The Report of the Joint Working Party Officers representing the Royal Borough, the G.L.C., the Cities of London and Westminster and the London Boroughs of Hammersmith and Wandsworth, set up in April or May to study the implications of the West Cross Route upon the full length of the Embankment, from Cheyne Walk to Blackfriars, only came before us just before this meeting. There was time enough, however, for us to come to the conclusion that the Borough Town Planning Committee's verdict that the Report was, “a most disappointing document”, was one that we could share. We entirely agree, for example, with the Planning Committee's fear that, “a heavy investment on the widening of Battersea Bridge would be likely to delay the provision of a new bridge at the south end of the West Cross Route”. How indeed could the Working Party hope to do its job when it was not permitted by its terms of reference to examine any programme for the construction of river bridges upstream of Vauxhall Bridge?

Another matter that only appeared in the news just before

our meeting was a proposal to bend the West Cross Route at its southern end directly down to Wandsworth Bridge, a scheme that might well have great attractions for Chelsea.

The Chairman briefly referred both to this matter and to the Working Party's Report, before bringing his own Report to an end. The President thanked the Chairman for his Report and congratulated him and the Society on the success of the Embankment Fund. The meeting was then declared open to discussion. Many speakers expressed a wish that the Society should have a more ambitious programme of publicity and there were several offers of help in this respect. It was felt that the recipients of our propaganda should extend from the humblest inhabitants of Chelsea to the Minister for Environment himself. We were glad to welcome Mr. Lane, the chairman of the Battersea Society, who spoke sympathetically to us about our problems. The company, which was very large, quite filling the seats in the hall, then adjourned for wine and cheese.

Embankment Background

In case anyone fancies that the Chelsea Society has only rallied to the defence of the Chelsea Embankment under the imminent threat of the building of the West Cross Route, let him peruse the back numbers of our Annual Reports. He will find that from the early days of the Society, the Chelsea riverside has been one of its principal concerns.

In 1931 the Society wrote both to the Commissioner of Police and to the Traffic Commissioner for the Metropolitan Area in the hope of obtaining a reduction of heavy traffic, and of its noise, along Cheyne Walk. "A great deal could be done," says the Report, "if the police could exercise in Chelsea, as they do to some extent elsewhere, the powers they possess under the 'Excessive Noise' clause of the Motor Regulations made by the Minister of Transport. The effectiveness of the clause, however, could become nugatory because no standard of noise which is excessive or objectionable was allowed to be promulgated. Some standard of actionable noise seems inevitable, and Berlin has already installed recording instruments for this purpose. Our Embankment is Chelsea's 'Front'. Its promenade is resorted to and enjoyed by thousands, and an effort to preserve its amenities is worthwhile, and should be made by our authorities."

In the next Report, that of 1932-33, we read, under the heading "Chelsea Embankment Traffic" as follows:

CHELSEA EMBANKMENT TRAFFIC

NOISE AND SPEED. The volume of traffic on Chelsea Embankment increases steadily. A count taken last autumn gave a total of over 1,000 heavy vehicles in an hour, of which only four were horse-drawn, and ten were eight-wheeled.

Were it not for the open river front on one side, and for the fact that the trees to some extent break and deaden the noise, residential life here would be well-nigh intolerable. Complaints are grievous, but the remedies are by no means simple; for the nuisance of noise is caused almost entirely by heavy commercial traffic, much of which should never have been diverted from the railways to the roads, but which will now be very difficult to dislodge. An instrument for recording noise-volume has been tested in various parts of London during the past year; and the Council has urged that the police should use their powers under the "Motor Cars (Excessive Noise) Regulations" of 1929.

But the effective discharge of this duty would impose a further burden upon the resources of the police force, which are already too largely diverted from their primary functions to the ever increasing work of traffic control.

"London's Daytona," as it was described by a daily paper last month, was the subject of a recent question in the House of Commons, when attention was drawn to the reckless racing of cars and motor cycles on this stretch of road, which has constantly to be crossed by Pensioners, nurses with perambulators, and children. Members will recall Mr. Birrell's humorous letter on the subject, which was read at one of the Society's meetings. "As for Chelsea Embankment itself," he wrote "that, I suppose, must be left alone for the next century, taking its annual toll of Old and Young. Perhaps, so far as the *Old* are concerned, there is no harm in preventing them from sinking into the apathy of Age, and making them run for their lives; though it is a pity that they should be compelled to keep in daily use their well-worn vocabulary of Oaths!"

A car travelling at fifty miles an hour—a speed frequently exceeded on this Embankment—covers a hundred yards in four seconds, or less time than it takes to cross the roadway, and it is quite impossible to estimate the actual rate of onset of an oncoming vehicle travelling at this speed.

In reply to the House of Commons question, Sir John Gilmour, the Home Secretary, admitted that 198 accidents on Chelsea Embankment had been reported by the police for the year ending last February, whilst 25 cases of dangerous and careless driving, and 329 cases of heavy vehicles exceeding the speed limit had also been recorded; but when asked if he would instruct the police to take further steps against this increasing danger, Sir John remained discreetly silent. An average of four accidents a week on a single road speaks for itself.

It seems that already, by 1932, the increasing traffic had pretty well destroyed the charm of our Embankment. The Report of 1933-34 reiterates the ugly facts:

EMBANKMENT TRAFFIC

Referring, in last year's Report to the growing complaints of noise and excessive speed on this stretch of road it was stated that a count, taken for the Society in the autumn of 1932, gave a total of over 1,000 vehicles (exclusive of cycles) passing a given point in an hour.

An official record taken at Swan Walk last October from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. gave a total of 13,738 vehicles in the 12 hours, or about 1,145 per hour, including cycles. The disregard of their speed limit by heavy commercial vehicles is here habitual. The noise and the vibration are causing serious depreciation of property values. Three fatal accidents have occurred here in the last four months, and the Chelsea Borough Council has asked the Minister of Transport to consider the advisability of imposing a speed limit on this Embankment; and has itself installed high power central gas lighting. This may possibly make for safety, but is unlikely to reduce speed.

Your Council, after prolonged discussion of various suggestions, and realising that there might at present be valid objections to the imposition of a general speed limit on this thoroughfare, or to the diversion of certain classes of traffic to other routes—save as part of some agreed general plan for all London—addressed a letter last February to the Minister of Transport, urging:—

First, the more effective enforcement of the existing regulations in regard to:—

- (a) Constructional defects in vehicles and improper and insufficient loading (notably as regards noise);
- (b) Ineffective exhaust silencers, particularly on motor cycles; and
- (c) The speed limit for heavy commercial vehicles.

Secondly, the provision of marked pedestrian crossing places at, or near, Battersea, Albert and Chelsea Bridges, and also at certain intermediate points to be selected, with the approved Crossing Indicators where such crossings are not under Traffic Signal or Police Control.

The reply (dated 18th April, 1934) stated that:—

“The Minister has been in consultation with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis in the matter, and is advised that the noise on the Chelsea Embankment is due mainly to the heavy volume of commercial vehicles rather than to defective vehicles, improper loading or noisy exhausts. These last named matters, however, are continually under observation by the police, and, where any infringements of the law are observed, suitable action is taken.”

The question of the diversion of certain classes of traffic from Chelsea Embankment to other routes has been considered, but the Minister is advised that any such diversions would be quite impracticable.

As you are doubtless aware, the question of the speed of motor vehicles is now under the consideration of Parliament in connection with the Road Traffic Bill.

With regard to the suggestion made that pedestrian crossing places should be provided in certain localities I am to inform you that an experiment is about to be made with such crossing places in various selected streets in Westminster, Holborn, St. Pancras, Poplar and Stepney.

After experience has been gained as to the merits of the experiment the Minister would be prepared to consider the question of extending the system of marked pedestrian crossings to other points in the Metropolis including the Chelsea Embankment.

At this point, in a sentence that we cannot but accept, the Report goes to the root of the mischief, back to the seventies:

The hard fact is that the creation of Chelsea Embankment gave sentence of death to the seclusion of Chelsea and has presented us in its place with a great arterial highway and all its concomitant disadvantages. But pressure may at least be brought to bear on the authorities concerned to enforce existing regulations, which are at present practically a dead letter; and the reduced speed limit in the new Road Traffic Bill will be of real value here, if, and in so far as it can be respected or enforced.

The hard fact having been admitted, the Society responded to an invitation from the Borough Council for Town Planning suggestions in a manner that is today of much interest. The following is extracted from the tenth Annual Report, 1936-37:

EXTENSION OF CHELSEA EMBANKMENT

In its "Town Planning Suggestions" (November 1934), the Chelsea Society wrote:—

"In regard to the extension of the Chelsea Embankment between Battersea Bridge and Cremorne Road, whilst we conceive that such western extension may eventually form part of a comprehensive scheme of roadway and embankment linking up Wandsworth Bridge with the Chelsea riverside, we do not feel that a short prolongation from Battersea Bridge to the Cremorne Arms, whilst destroying the one remaining stretch of Chelsea's old river front, would serve any useful purpose, unless the main traffic road was formed along the extended river front. In this case Cheyne Walk could be closed to through traffic."

After joint conferences between representatives of the Chelsea, Fulham and Wandsworth Councils a recommendation was adopted last year, approving the proposal to extend the Chelsea Embankment to link up with Wandsworth Bridge via Townmead Road; and it was agreed to urge the London County Council to adopt the scheme as a Metropolitan Improvement, and to take steps to protect the route of the proposed new road.

Ever since the Chelsea Embankment was formed in the seventies and an arterial highway created along our river front eastward from Oakley Street, it has become increasingly evident that Chelsea's riverside seclusion was ended, and that this western extension of the Embankment and its traffic route was sooner or later inevitable.

The mills of municipal achievement grind slowly, and it will doubtless be several years before this big scheme is accomplished. Meanwhile it is for Chelsea to envisage how the considerable stretch of land that will be reclaimed from the river at its western end can best be preserved and utilised.

At present a position of deadlock appears to have been reached in regard to the barriers temporarily formed a year and a half ago at the

south-eastern ends of Church Street and Oakley Street with the object of diverting heavy traffic from Cheyne Walk to the main Embankment Road. The "bulges" certainly seem to have had some good effect; and a strong deputation from residents last summer in favour of their retention emboldened the Borough Council to rescind a motion for their removal.

It may be a surprise to many to learn that as long ago as 1934 the Chelsea Society had contemplated the extension into the river of the embankment front at Whistler's Reach and the consequent closing of that part of Cheyne Walk to through traffic.

We now move to 1951 when the Chelsea Borough Council held a test of public opinion by putting out various schemes for the future alignment of the Waterfront at Whistler's Reach. The Chelsea Society shared the view of all the other bodies which expressed opinions on the proposals, that the alignment should remain as it was. The matter is so relevant to the decisions that the Chelsea Society has had to make in 1970 that the recommendations then made by the Society are here given in full from its Annual Report, 1951:

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROPOSED
RE-BUILDING OF THE RIVER WALL

BETWEEN

BATTERSEA BRIDGE AND THE CREMORNE ARMS

Note submitted to the Chelsea Borough Council on 24th November, 1951.

On 27th June, 1951, in order to test public opinion, the Chelsea Council decided to rebuild the river wall across the bay and boat beach 171 feet riverwards from the existing line between Battersea Bridge and Old Ferry Wharf, Scheme (b) below. The "test" has indeed caught public opinion and roused national and local interest. Of the very large number of individual or corporate representations, and commentaries in the national and local press, virtually every one is opposed to the first tentative proposals of the Chelsea Council.—The Chelsea Society has very carefully considered many aspects of this problem and is also opposed to Scheme (b) and in favour of rebuilding the wall along its present line or a few feet riverwards, Scheme (a).

2. The Society has proceeded on the assumption that the Authorities have determined that it is not necessary to rebuild the Embankment in exactly its present position. The following possible positions have therefore been considered.

Scheme (a) Along its present line or a few feet riverwards.

Scheme (b) Over the bay and boat beach 171 feet riverwards, ending at the outer edge of Old Ferry Wharf (by the Cremorne Arms).

Scheme (c) Still further riverwards so as to form eventually a new continuous Embankment between Battersea and Wandsworth Bridges in front of the wharfs and Lots Road Power Station, and along a great length of the now inaccessible Fulham riverside.

Scheme (d) Scheme (a) plus a plan to preserve the possibility of a public river footpath to provide extended river access for Chelsea and Fulham people and visitors. The footpath would be planned to skirt the bay and continue from Old Ferry Wharf to Wandsworth and on to Putney Bridges in Fulham, and would be constructed by the appropriate Authorities when circumstances permit.

Scheme (e) Scheme (a) plus a plan to develop the beach for river use and river recreation, including a base for small craft and boat clubs and also a reasonable number of house-boats.

Scheme (a)

REBUILDING RIVER WALL ON PRESENT LINE

3. Members of the Society have expressed views along the lines of the rest of the public and the London Society. They favour rebuilding the wall in its present position or a few feet riverwards, Scheme (a). The following are among their reasons for doing so.

4. *River Use and Enjoyment.* By Scheme (b) the Council would put an end to the twenty or more house-boats, some of which are used as housing accommodation, and the various craft and base-craft of the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company. The picturesque scene, the marine character of the little harbour, and the friendly riverfolk would all be swept away. There is no other suitable boat bay for these craft in London. All sections of the community are interested in boats and sightseers tend to gravitate towards this part of the river front. They enjoy the scene and share the enthusiasm of the river folk for boats.

A substantial weight of public opinion has urged the adoption of a plan to preserve the possibility of providing extended river access for Chelsea and Fulham people and visitors by a footpath between Old Ferry Wharf and Wandsworth and Putney Bridges, Scheme (d). Others are actively interested in the promotion of better boat and river enjoyment facilities on this reach of the Thames and have put forward suggestions to develop the beach for use and recreation as soon as circumstances permit, Scheme (e). There is a strong feeling that there could and should be a far greater use of this beach by river-going boats of all types and purposes. All that need be said at this present stage is that river-facility schemes depend on the preservation of the existing bay and boat beach by the adoption of Scheme (a).

5. *The River Scene.* This is Whistler's Reach. For artists it has always been, and remains, the most picturesque view on the Thames. Compared with the solid utility of a boatless embankment, the scene is fascinating and full of life and interest. It is famous the world over. The little harbour is an essential part of this view, with its boats, barges, masts and swans. If Schemes (b) or (c) were adopted, all these would go. Scheme (a) would, of course, preserve the little harbour, the boats and the existing scene.

6. *Minimising Immediate Work.* By the adoption of Scheme (a) little in the way of widening the road works need be done at the present time. This would enable extravagant expenditure of labour, materials and money to be postponed to better times. Further road works could be considered when the economic situation was more favourable.

Scheme (b)

EMBANKMENT ACROSS THE BAY AND BOAT BEACH

7. The Chelsea Council, in preferring Scheme (b) have been much influenced by traffic considerations and the possibility of making a narrow garden like the Embankment Garden by Cheyne Row. They have also been led to believe that Scheme (b) is the only one which would carry grant and that this would make the more expensive scheme cheaper for Chelsea ratepayers. For the reasons given in paragraphs 8, 9, 22, 23 and 24 below it is possible, however, to lend undue weight to these considerations.

8. *Traffic.* Heavy through traffic or at any rate more of such traffic than exists at present ought not to be encouraged by wider roads to take the Embankment route where it spoils Chelsea's riverside amenities. The normal width of Chelsea Embankment is 40 feet. The Chelsea Council felt that the roadway west of Battersea Bridge should be widened to 44 feet and a further 4 feet added for a central strip.

The direct result of this would be that more traffic would be attracted to the riverside, and it would move with far greater speed and noise. However, even if a decision were taken to widen, to conform with the remainder of the Embankment route, it could be managed within the limits of Scheme (a) without having recourse to Scheme (b). Public opinion would not favour spoiling amenities to construct a short length of *autobahn* which could never be carried through at either end.

9. *Garden Strip.* The proposed garden strip in Scheme (b) would, of course, be very narrow. Admittedly, it adjoins an area which, at present, is remarkably deficient in open space. At the same time the entire hinterland is in course of development as a Chelsea Council Housing Scheme in which very adequate reservations have been made for open space and children's playgrounds away from the main traffic route.

10. *Previous Objections.* In the past, proposals along the lines of Scheme (b) have from time to time been put forward and turned down as serving no useful purpose commensurate with the loss of amenity. In 1896 when a Bill to extend the Embankment along the lines of Scheme (b) was before Parliament, the Select Committee, after visiting the site and hearing the views of Chelsea people, unanimously found that part of the preamble to the Bill which referred to Scheme (b) not proved. In 1934 the Society forwarded suggestions to the Council for a plan for Chelsea. In regard to the proposed extension of the Embankment, they said:—

“We do not feel that a short prolongation of the Embankment from Battersea Bridge to the Cremorne Arms, whilst destroying the one surviving stretch of Chelsea's old river front, would serve any useful purpose.”

Scheme (c)

EMBANKMENT IN FRONT OF WHARVES TO FULHAM RIVERSIDE

11. There is a great deal to be said for Scheme (c). This Scheme is part of a plan for a continuous Embankment along a great length of the now inaccessible Fulham riverside.

12. *River Access Combined with Traffic Artery.* The public have shown a strong desire to make provision for greater river access, albeit not in conjunction with a traffic improvement scheme. In Scheme (c), the Embankment would have to be built still further into the river along an entirely

different alignment from Scheme (b). The Bressey Report (*Highway Development Survey, Greater London*, 1937) recommended an embankment further out into the river along the lines of Scheme (c). An unrescinded Resolution of the Chelsea Council of 1936 which was not referred to in their Report of 27th June, 1951, invited the London County Council to adopt Scheme (c) as a metropolitan improvement. In both these suggestions traffic considerations predominated. It would be hard for anyone who had studied and absorbed Sir Patrick Abercrombie's proposals in the *County of London Plan* 1943 for improving the banks of the river for the benefit of the community as a whole and bringing this magnificent feature more into the life of the metropolis, to support the obsolete pre-war plans to couple riverside access with a traffic artery.

13. *Effect on Schemes (a) and (b).* Although it may be academic it should be noted that the adoption of Scheme (b) would prevent for ever the construction of Scheme (c); for once an Embankment had been built in one place it would not be practical for an Authority to decide to scrap and rebuild in another. If, however, the less expensive Scheme (a) were adopted, it would be a "mend and make-do Scheme" which would not really preclude the consideration of Scheme (c) should public finances and other considerations ever make Scheme (c) a practicable proposition.

14. *Qualified Advantages.* It is true that it has the same defect as Scheme (b), namely, that it destroys Chelsea's bay and boat beach. It has, however, much more to recommend it, as it would provide public access to the river along the whole length between Battersea and Wandsworth Bridges, the longest stretch in London, and afford a much larger garden in front of Cheyne Walk. In 1934 the Chelsea Society, in commenting on this Scheme, acknowledged that it had something to be said for it, but added that the money for so costly an undertaking would probably be more profitably spent on the acquisition of land for playgrounds in this and other areas. The playgrounds have now been included in the World's End Housing Scheme.

15. *Impracticability.* It is inescapable, however, that at the present time Scheme (c) is impracticable, and that it is undesirable because it would be immensely costly, obstructive to river flow and unacceptable on amenity grounds. River access would be more fittingly achieved by Scheme (d) below.

Scheme (d)

SCHEME (A) PLUS A PLAN TO ALLOW FOR A FUTURE PUBLIC RIVER FOOTPATH TO THE FULHAM RIVERSIDE

16. *River Access for the Benefit of the Community.* Proposals to provide access to these long riverside stretches which at present cannot be approached by the public have caught the interest and support of all sections of the community. Although this urge to put the river to better community use sprang spontaneously to the minds of many who have so deeply interested themselves in this plan, it may have owed something to the clear reasoning and influence of Sir Patrick Abercrombie's *County of London Plan*, 1943. Sir Patrick there refers to the river as "London's most beautiful and most neglected open space." It was the aim of the *County of London Plan* to "improve the banks of the river for the benefit of the community". This approach to the problem of river access was a great step forward from the era of the Bressey Report of 1937. It has been followed by the Chelsea Society.

17. *The Public River Footpath.* The Chelsea Society advocate planning a public river footpath to skirt, but not to cross, the bay. It would follow the line of the river wall in Scheme (a) up to its western end. From there, beginning at Old Ferry Wharf, it would continue in front of the wharfs to Chelsea Creek. On this stretch the path would be carried on stilts with a footbridge crossing the Creek to Fulham. It would then follow the Fulham riverside for as far west as possible. It should be planned to go sometimes on the river bank, sometimes in front of wharfs or docks on stilts and sometimes, when this is impossible, behind river buildings, rejoining the river on the other side.

18. *Riverside Open Spaces.* At intervals, there should be open spaces adjoining the footpath, and not severed from it by a traffic artery. These open spaces would, of course, be different in each case, according to the nature of the ground; the London County Council, however, might well be reminded of the suggestion in the *County of London Plan 1943* that "a river-side open space should be equipped with facilities for rest and recreation in the form of cafes, bathing pools, gardens, and riverside walks". In the plan for a riverside walk, with open spaces at intervals, facilities for using and enjoying the river should also be included.

19. *The Chelsea Interest.* It may be thought that river access as proposed above is largely a matter for the people of Fulham. The Chelsea Society, however, has ventured to bring the proposal forward principally because it had loomed so large in the representations by the public and also because the short distance in Chelsea west of Old Ferry Wharf is a link in the chain, and because a public river pathway, as proposed above, would not only provide Fulham communities with river access, but would provide Chelsea, and those who would come to Chelsea expressly for the purpose, with an incomparable traffic-free river walk.

Scheme (e)

SCHEME (A) PLUS A PLAN TO DEVELOP IN FUTURE THE BAY AND BOAT BEACH FOR RIVER USE AND RIVER RECREATION

20. *River Use and Recreation.* The Beach is already used for many river purposes, including the house-boats and the various craft and base-craft of the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company. Enterprising proposals for the use and enjoyment of the river have been shelved until better times arrive. Others have been advocated by individuals or by clubs and youth organisations. Some others would like to see a Chelsea seaside like Tower Beach. This Beach is illustrated in the *County of London Plan 1943*, crowded with children, as an example of what could and should be done. Again, there are more ambitious suggestions for boat piers and pleasure piers.

21. *Freedom to Enjoy the River.* The Chelsea Society beg the Chelsea Council to give encouragement and aid, if necessary, to those who enjoy the little harbour, whether it be the house-boaters, the river users, the boat clubs, the artists, the beach boys, the frontagers, the interested visitors and residents, or the swans. What is wanted is little or no public expenditure, fewer prohibitions by public Authorities and more freedom for ordinary people to say how they should enjoy themselves.

FINANCE

22. *Rate Charge Responsibility.* When Scheme (b) was proposed in 1896, as described in paragraph 10 above, it was to be a metropolitan improvement, borne on County of London rates. When Chelsea people

successfully opposed the proposed act of vandalism, the Chelsea Vestry was made responsible for rebuilding the river wall along its present alignment. It seems most illogical for the Chelsea Council, now that it has reverted to the former London County Council improvement scheme, itself to shoulder the burden.

23. *Government Grant.* As between Schemes (a) and (b), obviously Scheme (b) is much more expensive. The Chelsea Council, however, are understood to believe that Scheme (b) would carry grant, and Scheme (a) none.* As a result, Scheme (b) may be the cheaper for Chelsea ratepayers. Since, however, the existing wall has been battered down by heavy transit traffic, and since it holds up the road, it would seem very unjust for grant to be withheld from Scheme (a), if indeed this be the case. The Chelsea Society protests against the principle that it is preferable to spend larger sums upon a major scheme of doubtful merit, heavily subsidised from central Government funds, rather than meet the lesser cost of essential repairs out of Chelsea rates.

24. *Comparable Cost.* The Chelsea Council have made a rough estimate of the cost of Scheme (b) at £210,000 to £230,000. In Scheme (a), the wall alone might cost £30,000.† Much of the remaining expenditure on road works might be postponed.

TREES

25. One outstanding feature in the vista west from the Battersea Bridge end of the little harbour is the fine row of large plane trees at the western end of Cheyne Walk. These trees, which so fittingly fringe the waterfront are also an admirable set-off and contrast to the buildings in the Lots Road area. Scheme (b) envisages their destruction. It would take 75 years at least to fill again the resulting blank in the vista. In the little public garden at the Battersea Bridge end, which would be sacrificed for any widening, there is a gnarled old mulberry tree. This tree is the only feature of interest in the rather unattractive garden. The view, however, from this garden is superb. It is probably more frequently sketched than any other view in the world. The gnarled mulberry tree forms the foreground in innumerable paintings. It is a picturesque tree of considerable age. It would indeed be a pity to lose it, but it would be less of a calamity than the loss of the plane trees mentioned above. It would be sacrificed, together with the garden, in any widening at the Battersea Bridge end.

PRESERVATION

26. It is the considered view of the Chelsea Society, in common with the vast majority of Chelsea people who have expressed their views, the London Society and London lovers from all over the world, that no step should be taken to obliterate this picturesque, useful, historic and pleasure-giving waterfront. This little harbour is now the only remaining stretch of the old river's edge. Chelsea people call upon the Chelsea Council as their representative Authority to give effect to the views which have emerged, with hardly an exception, as a result of the Chelsea Council's

* On 4th January, 1952, the Minister of Transport stated that he was not empowered to make any grant towards rebuilding the river wall on the same or different line.

† It seems probable that the Chelsea Council's first rough estimate of £30,000 for the wall alone was far too low and should have been nearer £80,000.

‡ It now appears that only 8 out of 16 trees would be destroyed.

"test of public opinion" and to preserve, and not destroy, this great Chelsea amenity.

CONCLUSION

27. The Chelsea Society are steadfastly opposed to Scheme (b) and, for that matter, to Scheme (c). They have no hesitation whatever in recommending the adoption of Scheme (a). They warmly support Schemes (d) and (e) as future projects deserving serious further consideration.

Next we come to the Report of 1961. At the Annual General Meeting of that year, Mr. Richard Edmonds, a member of the Society and, at that time, Chairman of the L.C.C. Town planning Committee, gave an address on 'West London in the Motor Age'. He began by saying that he hoped that Chelsea's life as a community would in no way be disrupted by major road development plans which were then looming large in West London. He described the pattern of these plans, coming presently to what is known as the 'West Cross Route'. This will be another limited access way coming south from the Westway viaduct in North Kensington, hugging the line of the railway down to Shepherd's Bush, and thereafter along the old Kensington canal line towards the marshalling yards in Chelsea's South Stanley area. This road may well cross the Thames by a new bridge somewhere in the vicinity of the Lots Road power station, and this in turn can link up with the South Circular Road and another link through Armoury Lane, Wandsworth, with the heights of Putney and Wimbledon.

Much debate evidently took place in Chelsea concerning this momentous proposal and the matter was discussed at the Annual General Meeting in October 1963. Mr. R. P. G. Richards said that a road roughly along the line of the West Cross Route had been proposed in the Abercrombie plan, "but that the present proposals had a grave defect in that they were not carried on over the river along the lines of the Abercrombie 'ring road'. This would mean that the traffic content would be set down in the Lots Road area and add even more congestion in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea Embankment and the bridges. Without a new bridge, the increased volume of traffic seeking to cross the river would have to use the right turn over Battersea Bridge and cause considerable delays." Amongst others who spoke was the Chairman of the Society, Basil Marsden-Smedley, who said that the proper solution was to try to separate the through traffic from the local traffic. The road along the railway was a good plan, but he did not think it should descend anywhere in Chelsea. The use of the

Embankment as a traffic route was bad town planning. Unfortunately the failure by the traffic authorities to tackle the problem of up-to-date scientific traffic planning had spoilt the magnificent amenity concept of a riverside esplanade.

Mr. Edmonds of the L.C.C. wound up the discussion by saying that the north-south cross route was the beginning of an urban motorway system for London. It was based on a clear policy of avoiding as far as possible the severance of residential areas. He thought that this could be done by following the old lines of severance by the railways. He guessed that there would be an interchange west of Lots Road power station. He expected that this would connect with Wandsworth Bridge. He undertook that the L.C.C. would not proceed without consultation with the Chelsea Borough Council, the Chelsea Society, Mr. Evans (Principal of the College of St. Mark and St. John) and other interested parties.

It was surely becoming apparent by this time (1963) that the Chelsea Society's acquiescence in the plan for the West Cross Route was dependent upon the fulfilment of the Chairman of the L.C.C.'s Town-planning Committee's tentative promise of the Route being carried over the river on a new bridge; nor did that acquiescence include connecting roads down from the West Cross Route 'anywhere in Chelsea'.

In 1966 the Consulting Engineers of the Greater London Council issued a Report on the West Cross Route which, while it certainly promised, in a later phase, an extension over the river to the South Cross Route, showed a Chelsea Interchange, consisting of slip-roads down to our Embankment, to be built, and in operation, before work had even started on a new bridge. It was from this moment that the present agitation to save Chelsea Embankment began.

The Search for the Chelsea Porcelain Manufactory

by Tom Pocock

There is a peculiar excitement about gardening in Chelsea. Almost anywhere within half a mile of the Old Church the spade can turn up reminders of Victorian and Georgian Chelsea. In the sooty earth lie oyster shells and clay pipes, ginger-beer bottles and broken china. Sometimes there will be a barrier of brick, rosy when chipped, to mark the site of a lost mansion or its stables, or perhaps one of those underground chambers and tunnels that riddle Chelsea mythology.

But nowhere is more exciting than the few small gardens behind the houses bounded by Lawrence Street, Justice Walk and Old Church Street. For here flourished and vanished the most magical and mysterious of Chelsea legends: the Porcelain Manufactory.

It is magical because of the extreme beauty of the porcelain fired here for much of the 18th century, when, as its proprietor advertised, "A Display of Elegance and Taste reigns almost uninterrupted." It is mysterious because, when it was demolished in 1784, it disappeared totally, leaving no record of its appearance or even of its exact site. Letters, advertisements and rate-books show that it was here.

Yet that is not all the evidence. Occasionally, in this century and the last, owners of houses on the west side of Lawrence Street and at the west end of Upper Cheyne Row have found in their gardens fragments of porcelain. This summer the most important discovery of all has been made.

At the beginning of 1970, one of the charming terrace of Georgian houses known to have been on or near the site of the porcelain factory—15 Lawrence Street—was bought by Mr. John Casson on his return to Chelsea after many years living in Australia and serving in the Royal Navy.

Soon afterwards, while inspecting the flower beds in the seventy-foot garden behind the house, the Cassons picked up what appeared to be a small white stone or fragment of bone. Its shape was curious, so they washed it and found that it was



The site of the Porcelain Manufactory. Georgian houses at the north-west corner of Lawrence Street.



The 1970 'Dig'. Mr. J. V. G. Mallett of the Victoria and Albert Museum supervising excavations in the garden of 15 Lawrence Street.

porcelain. Prettily patterned, it proved to be part of a knife-handle. From that moment the search for the Chelsea porcelain factory began again.

Among the alterations Mr. Casson was making to his house was the building of a small extension into the garden for the use of his mother, Dame Sybil Thorndike. The building workers who arrived to excavate for its foundations were asked to look out for fragments of china and to put aside whatever they found.

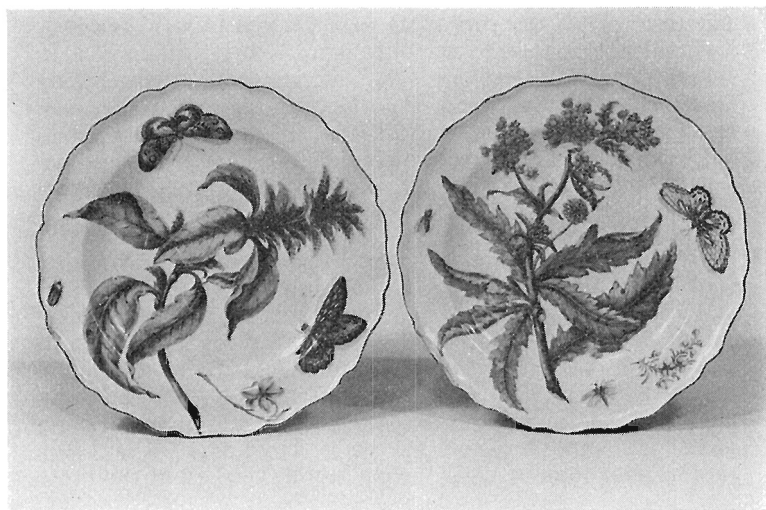
The first day's digging produced a mass of finds. There were pieces of Victorian plates, dishes and chamber-pots. There were glazed tiles and broken cups. But there were also the exquisite shapes of porcelain fragments which had lain in the earth for two centuries. The workmen were quick to learn the look and feel of Chelsea porcelain and, in a day or two, were accurately sorting the 18th century from the 19th.

Out of the muddy soil came caked pieces of porcelain to be washed and to reveal parts of dishes, tureens, figures, tea-pots, cups, saucers and plates. An Irish workman discovered parts of a magnificent porcelain ice-bucket, fired in about 1755, and a West Indian unearthed a rose-water ewer, almost complete. There were parts of tureens shaped like fruit and vegetables; an elaborate dish for the display of a boar's head; fragile little tea-bowls.

The Cassons got in touch with the Victoria and Albert Museum and a team from its Ceramics Department, led by Mr. J. V. G. Mallet, an authority on Chelsea porcelain, undertook to supervise the excavations and later extend them.

During the summer and early autumn hundreds of "wasters"—as these fragments are known—were discovered. Some were handsome pieces of the grandest and most elegant work, others small chips of the moulded rims of plates. Most important to the diggers were pieces of porcelain which appeared faulty—some had collapsed in the kilns, others seemed to have burst—and those which provided an unexpected clue to the development of manufacture and design. That this garden was not merely a dumping ground but part of the factory site was proved by the discovering of a mass of "kiln furniture"—the equipment that went into the kiln with the porcelain—and bricks from the kilns themselves.

It was hoped, particularly, to be able to site the Manufactory with some accuracy. Since 1784 many theories had been put forward. Some said that the site extended all the way down Lawrence Street to Cheyne Walk, others that it had only been in a wing of Monmouth House which stood across the top of Lawrence Street until the Eighteen-Thirties. It was said that the remains of kilns had been discovered in the cellar of 'The Prince of Wales' public house—now a small studio-house—on the corner of Justice Walk and there were almost no clues to the whereabouts of a satellite factory where the



Fine Chelsea Botanical Plate, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " diam., Red Anchor Period inspired by Sir Hans Sloane and the Apothecaries' Garden.

famous "Girl in a Swing" group had been made. It was not even known when the Georgian terrace, which includes 15 Lawrence Street, was built: some said as early as 1740, others not until 1785 when the factory was gone.

More however, was known about the porcelain itself both from the consistency of the paste and the marks it bore—although these may not always be conclusive. Generally Chelsea porcelain is said to belong to one of six periods. The earliest (1745-49) was the Triangle Period marked with a small triangle incised into the paste. From that date until 1752 was the Raised-Anchor Period marked with an anchor on a small raised lozenge of paste. Running parallel with this from 1749-54 was the period of the mysterious "Girl in a Swing" figures made by craftsmen trained at the Lawrence Street factory.

Then followed the great periods of Chelsea porcelain: Red Anchor (1752-58), Gold Anchor (1758-69) and Chelsea-Derby (1770-84). It was then that the factory closed, finally moving to Derby where porcelain is still made in the Chelsea tradition.

The names of the proprietors and some of their craftsmen and artists are known although some are shadowy figures.

The three principal proprietors were Charles Gouyn, formerly a jeweller, Nicholas Sprimont, whose early training as a silversmith influenced his style in porcelain, and William Duesbury, who finally moved to Derby. These Georgians can be seen across two centuries like figures in a fog, sometimes only in outline, sometimes with full, rounded clarity, sometimes totally hidden. Letters, catalogues, journals, accounts and tradition all help build up their portraits.

Sometimes the history is based on half-forgotten memories. One such is the story of Dr. Samuel Johnson's supposed visits to Lawrence Street where he liked to try his hand at mixing and modelling. Given access to every part of the factory except the mixing-room, he never succeeded in making a suitable paste and all his efforts collapsed in the kilns. A charming story, handed down with whimsical detail—but, it is now being asked, was this Dr. Johnson, the lexicographer? There was another, less famous Dr. Johnson, about Chelsea at the time.

But sometimes the actuality of the factory and its workers seems to jump out of a printed page with Georgian gusto. An account-book lists with bluff disregard for spelling some of the delicate works just on sale: "A Groop of figars; 1 pr. of Britanyas; a bote; 4 Chellsey playts; 1 pr. of tewlips; a large pugg dogg, a tea kett, a hartychoak. . . ."

Those coming upon Chelsea porcelain for the first time—notably, in London, at the Victoria and Albert Museum—will inevitably be struck by its astonishing variety. In the output of this one small factory is something for every taste, indeed the range is so great that a short comprehensive list is impossible to compile.

There is the milky, translucent simplicity of the early porcelain; the work inspired by Continental and Oriental taste; the elaborate tureens fashioned like vegetables, fruit or birds; the exquisitely soft colours of flowers painted on simple plates and the bold vigour of the botanical designs, inspired by Sir Hans Sloane and the Apothecaries' Garden in Chelsea; the lightness and gaiety of the figures and groups; the elaborate ostentation and rich colours of "Gold Anchor" vases.

At its best, Chelsea was certainly the finest porcelain manufactured for the luxury market in this country and, perhaps, in Europe. Today it can command enormous prices—



*Chelsea Blue Ground, Pot Pourri Vase and Cover. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high. Gold Anchor Mark.
Attractive pair of Chelsea Two Handled Bowls and Covers. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ " high. Gold
Anchor Marks.*

sometimes thousands of pounds for a single small piece—but a charming plate or bowl can occasionally be bought for as little as twenty pounds. The porcelain sales at Christie's and Sotheby's often include magnificent specimens of Chelsea and it is oddly moving to suddenly recognise in some prized piece a whole example of fragments found in the earth at Lawrence Street.

The present excavations at 15 Lawrence Street are complete and the experts are preparing a paper on their discoveries. Details must await publication but it is clear that more about the lost factory is now known. Fragments of porcelain found here were all from the later Red Anchor, Gold Anchor and Chelsea-Derby periods, indicating that this part of the factory was an extension of the earlier works, which had probably been in Monmouth House or its outbuildings. It would seem that when the factory was razed, the present row of houses on the west side of Lawrence Street was built and broken porcelain used as rubble to pack against their back walls.

It is tantalizing to guess at the riches still uncovered in the earth beneath the houses here and in Upper Cheyne Row. As gardens are dug and buildings altered more of this may come to light. Much of the history of the Porcelain Manufactory is likely to remain in the field of informed speculation or whimsical tradition and that is, for the source of such ethereal delights, perhaps as it should be.

UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL

“Where did you say Hilda was this evening?”

“She’s at a meeting of the Chelsea Preservation Society.”

“Hilda has so much energy. I feel I have enough to do to preserve myself without preserving Chelsea.”

A Fairly Honourable Defeat by Iris Murdoch, Chapter 7, page 75.

Reviews

Chelsea Reach

By Tom Pocock. Hodder and Stoughton. 1970. 45/-

The sub-title, 'The Brutal Friendship of Whistler and Walter Greaves', is the clue to a main theme giving unity and excitement to what is also a valuable study in the social history of Chelsea, and a notable addition to its bibliography. The book is packed with curious and entertaining detail, and the reviewer would do the author a disservice by trying to summarise the story of a relationship as subtle as that between the two painters. Brutal, yes, in the sense that Whistler ruthlessly trampled upon feelings and aspirations which he himself had aroused, yet creative too, in that Greaves might have been a lesser man had he not been so rudely awakened to a wider world. Leaving the friendship, therefore, to be described in the author's own words, we will consider topographical and historical aspects which are particularly interesting for the Chelsea Society.

Greaves lived from 1846 to 1930, and so had his early youth in Chelsea before 1871, when the continuation of the Thames embankment from Westminster made the old suburb part of London itself. His father was a boat-builder, with a house and yard just upstream of Lindsey House, and had plenty of work, with which his three sons helped him. The Greaves built rowing boats, looked after the City's ceremonial barges, which were berthed at Chelsea, moved goods by water and ferried passengers to Battersea, perhaps to the tea gardens near the church, or to shoot duck and snipe. Old Battersea Bridge provided plenty of thrills, for the water which sluiced dangerously between its narrow spans encouraged young watermen to feats of daring, damaged and sometimes overturned barges with tragic results. This bridge, built in 1771, had turned Chelsea from a market-gardening village into a major trading centre for a wide area. When Walter Greaves was born, its population had grown to about 40,000 and commonland, orchards and gardens were covered by streets of plain little houses. The author refers to incidents of the earlier Chelsea, of which there is a reminder in the great names on the monuments of the Old Church. He describes the various riverside gardens which had preceded the opening, in 1845, of Cremorne

gardens. These flourished for forty years and provided an infinite amount of colourful entertainment.

Carlyle, a newcomer to Chelsea in 1834, was able to sum up its characteristics, and said it was "a singular, heterogeneous kind of spot, very dirty and confused in some places, quite beautiful in others, abounding with antiquities and traces of great men." Its special attractions for painters seem first to have been spotted by Turner, who took one of the old riverside cottages in 1840 and, remaining as far as possible incognito, used it for painting from until his death. He was followed to Chelsea by John Martin to whom some thunderstorm over Putney may well have suggested the skies in his extraordinary apocalyptic visions. It was, however, Whistler, first setting up house in Chelsea in 1863, who took it as the main subject-matter of work very different to the tentative and naive efforts of Walter Greaves, captivated by the bright paints of his father's shipyard. Whistler changed Chelsea as drastically in the spiritual sense, as had Battersea Bridge in the physical, and as the Embankment would again in the future. Other young artists followed him, and a kind of fashionable bohemianism, with echoes of Paris, swamped the old robustness, already somewhat eroded by the vagaries of Rossetti and Swinburne.

A great influx of artists coincided with the making of the Embankment in the 'seventies, and a splendid row of houses by famous Victorian architects grew up along it. No more, however, was the actual riverside the only attraction, and Whistler built his White House in Tite Street. North of the King's Road, the Vale housed Ricketts and Shannon, de Morgan and Sickert, and studios spread throughout Chelsea, built as such or contrived in back gardens. In the 'nineties some eighty Chelsea artists were exhibiting annually in the Royal Academy, and in 1891 the Chelsea Arts Club was founded, growing out of informal gatherings at the 'Six Bells'.

When the new century opened, Whistler was a sick man and Walter Greaves, who had long lost touch with him, had become a familiar, lonely figure, dressed in a travesty of Whistler's dandified attire of many years before, devotedly drawing and painting the river and occasionally selling work for a few shillings. He had his Indian summer of success, a sad eclipse and, finally, handsome recognition and a serene end in the Charterhouse. Augustus John was to set the new artistic tune

for Chelsea, and the pace of change accelerated in all directions. The trees and lawns of Cremorne vanished under rows of houses and in 1904 Lots Road Power Station obliterated the last bit of wooded bank. Bright red brick pseudo-Dutch houses replaced the neat Georgian of Hans Town, and everywhere little old shops, public houses and cottages disappeared under blocks of flats and new streets. Except for Cheyne Walk, the Old Church and its immediate neighbourhood, old Chelsea survived only in isolated patches. Mr. Pocock's book so vividly evokes the scenes of the past that it will certainly strengthen the determination of those who think Chelsea must lose no more of the physical background to its very special history.

LESLEY LEWIS



The 'Colville' Public House.



Crapper and his employees in front of the original Marlboro' Works in Marlborough Road now incorporated in Draycott Avenue.

Flushed with Pride: The Story of Thomas Crapper

By Wallace Reyburn. Macdonald Unit 75, London (1969) 15/-

This interesting and amusing little book pays a worthy tribute to an unsung Chelsea hero. When so many lords and commoners have given their names to personal or domestic amenities—chesterfield, davenport, cardigan, wellington, macintosh, bowler, bloomer, gladstone, hoover, stetson—how is it that “crapper” has not (so felicitously) become a household word? The story of Thomas Crapper’s life and work is here told, from his walking at the age of eleven in 1848 from Yorkshire to London, where he got a job with a master plumber in Robert Street, Chelsea, to his performance as the

Royal Plumber at Sandringham and the provider of a royal blue velvet seat for Lily Langtry. The chapter headings include '*Pull and Let go*' is *Born, By Royal Appointment, Inventor at Work, Seating Accommodation*. There are many illustrations, showing Thomas Crapper, his works in Chelsea, mechanistic diagrams, Lily Langtry and some lovely decorated pans.

The disappearance of Crapper's at No. 120 King's Road in 1966 is a date in Chelsea's history, and citizens of Chelsea, who keep this entertaining book in a certain place, will flush with pride.

N. B.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Balance Sheet as at 31st December, 1969

LIABILITIES				ASSETS			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
General Fund at 31.12.68	540	4	6	Investments:—			
Deduct Amount written off 3½% War Stock	199	0	6	£500 3½% War Stock	...	210	0
	341	4	0	Balance in Post Office Account	...	934	11
				Balance at Bank	...	307	19
				Cash in hand	9
Add Surplus for 1969 in Income and Expenditure Account	72	13	6				
Life Membership Fund at 31.12.69							
...							
Sundry Creditors							
			</				

Life Membership Fund Account for the year ended 31st December, 1969

INCOME			£	s.	d.
Life Membership Fund 31.12.68	...	641	1	5	
Life Membership Fees in 1969	...	157	10	0	
Interest on Post Office Account	...	34	0	10	
					<hr/>
					£832 12 3

EXPENDITURE			£	s.	d.
Transferred to General Fund towards current expenses	62 8 11
Life Membership Fund 31.12.69	770 3 4
					<hr/>
					£832 12 3

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.

R. D. CLARKE,
Hon. Treasurer.

R. G. EDWARDS, F.C.A.,
Hon. Auditor.

NOTE—The certificates for £500 3¼% War Stock in the name of the Chelsea Society are deposited with Messrs. Barclays Bank Limited, 348 King's Road, S.W.3.

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

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