

# THE CHELSEA SOCIETY



## EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1945

Price : HALF-A-CROWN



CHELSEA HOSPITAL.

# THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

(For protecting and fostering the amenities of Chelsea, Founded: April, 1927)

## *President:*

MAJOR THE EARL CADOGAN, M.C.

## *Vice-President:*

GENERAL SIR HARRY KNOX, K.C.B., D.S.O.

## *Council:*

*Chairman:* BASIL MARSDEN-SMEDLEY, Esq., O.B.E., L.C.C.

FREDERICK ADAM, Esq., C.M.G.

BRIG.-GEN. LIONEL BANON, C.B.

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MRS. ARCHIBALD COCKBURN, J.P.

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CAPTAIN RICHARD EDWARDS, R.N.

C. H. ST. JOHN HORNBY, Esq.

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THE LORD MOYNE

HON. SIR ALBERT NAPIER, K.C.B.

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GRAHAME B. TUBBS, Esq., A.R.I.B.A. (Chelsea Arts Club)

## *Acting Hon. Secretary:*

MISS ESTHER DARLINGTON, 50, Hasker Street, S.W.3.

## *Assistant Honorary Secretary:*

MISS DAPHNE SANGER

## *Hon Treasurer:*

R. W. ELLISTON, Esq.,

Cheyne Hospital for Children, Cheyne Walk, S.W.3.

## *Bankers:*

Barclay's Bank, 348, King's Road, S.W.3.

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## THE OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY ARE TO AID:—

- (1) in the maintenance of all features of Chelsea having beauty or historical interest, unless a proved necessity requires their removal;
- (2) in the preservation of the open spaces for the health of the community;

- (3) where clearances are necessary, in the construction of substituted buildings that will be a credit to Chelsea;
- (4) in preventing the disfigurement of streets and open spaces by ugly advertisements or otherwise;
- (5) in preserving the residents from smoke, noises and other nuisances arising from industrial premises; and generally,
- (6) in protecting and amplifying the amenities of Chelsea for all classes of its people.

Early information is of the greatest importance for any effective action, and Members are asked to inform the Council at once, through the Secretary, of any plans or proposals which seem to come within the scope of the Society, of which they may hear.

The Council would consider such matters, obtain further information, and, if thought advisable, make such suggestions or protests on behalf of the Society as might seem to them desirable.

#### MEMBERS.

Membership of the Society is open to all residents in Chelsea, and to non-residents who may, in the opinion of the Council, be qualified by official or other association with Chelsea. Members ceasing to be residents shall cease to be members, except with the approval of the Council and on such terms as they may think fit.

There is no annual subscription to the Society, but members must, on election, pay a minimum subscription of £1. Should further funds be needed to carry on the work of the Society, it is proposed to raise them from time to time by voluntary subscriptions amongst the members and others.

#### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.

Chelsea residents engaged in trade, and Chelsea art and other students are invited to join the Society as Associate Members, if they so desire.

The Entrance Fee for Associate Members is 5/-, entitling them to such membership for 3 years.

Associate Members may attend and speak at all Meetings of the Society, but are not empowered to vote.

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## *The Annual General Meeting*

THE Annual Meeting of the Society took place at 96, Cheyne Walk, on Tuesday, June 13th, 1944, at 5.30 o'clock.

Sir Edmund Phipps took the Chair.

The Chairman then moved the adoption of the Council's Seventeenth Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending March 31st. It was pointed out that though the statement showed a satisfactory position a number of members dropped out each year, and others were needed to take their place as the Society's income depended on this. Satisfactory proof of appreciation of the Society's work was shown by the number of donations sent from time to time. Since the issue of the last report £60 had come in from these and from new entrance fees.

They welcomed Lord Cadogan's acceptance of the Presidency vacated by the Duke of Atholl's death.

The body of their report dealt chiefly with planning, and they were particularly glad to welcome to-day Professor Abercrombie, joint author of the County of London Plan, to speak on its relation to Chelsea.

Major Thesiger, Deputy Mayor of Chelsea, in seconding the adoption of the Report spoke of the Borough Council's debate in regard to the proposed "A" Ring Road, and the possibility of its being tunnelled in parts.

The motion for the adoption of the Council's Report was then put and carried unanimously.

The Secretary, by leave of the Chairman, gave some account of his visit to the Chelsea Old Age Pensioners Association, and The Hat was passed round for contributions from any who might like to support this little Chelsea amenity. A collection of £16/17/0 was made.

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Professor Abercrombie was then asked to address the meeting. He said he realized some danger in coming to talk about Chelsea, which his audience knew better than he. In preparing a plan for a vast area they had to consider the broad whole. There must be give and take and susceptibilities were bound to be offended here or there. The plan was a first sketch to be investigated in the light of local feeling before reviewing statutory law. Chelsea was a community which had never lost its individuality and had well marked boundaries in the river and the Fulham Road. It contained many houses which were not good enough, and others at its eastern end which were too good and too large. It was felt in the Plan that Chelsea was not an area needing great change, nor to which they could offer much, as in other parts of London. Though vast blocks of flats had been erected there in the pre-war period there were pockets of bad houses and drab areas. The problem of population density per acre was a difficult one, and he did not want Chelsea to think the figure of 100 too low. Blocks of flats and hotels gave a higher density for the richer population, and he was against a preponderance of flat building, though flats were an essential feature of long term policy. As regards open spaces the proportion of four acres per 1,000 population was for all London, not necessarily for each individual borough, between which adjustments of air-space and playgrounds were possible.

The road plan was not the last word. In the Bressey Plan roads cut through communities, which they avoided so far as possible, but through traffic there must be.

Professor Abercrombie expressed his special admiration of the Old Church Tower as a splendid bit of architecture. A church, whether of new design or the old reconstructed should be built on its site. In general there should be some control of design in rebuilding, allowing freedom within limits.

The plan was a stage only, advisory and suggestive, and local criticism was welcomed. Chelsea might have to adopt



a self sacrificing attitude, but as regards the two Ring Roads which affected the Borough, the planners must do their best to minimise their inconvenience or dangers. Now was their chance to thrash out a real Plan of London. The war had brought the opportunity and they must stick to it and improve it, but not let it slip.

Discussion being invited, questions, relating to various points including the Physic Garden, the Thames amenity and the Embankment traffic were put by Mrs. Colles, Mr. Adam, Colonel O'Gorman, Mr. Clay, Sir Albert Napier and other members, to which Professor Abercrombie replied.

The Mayor of Chelsea, Councillor G. Wharam, proposed a vote of thanks to Professor Abercrombie, and also to Mr. Richard Stewart-Jones who had placed the room at their disposal; and on behalf of the Chelsea Society presented the Professor with a copy of the Society's special edition of the Guide to Chelsea Old Church.

Tea was served in the North Room before the meeting.

There was an attendance of over 130 members and guests, and 10 new members were enrolled.

# THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Founded in April 1927 to protect and foster  
the amenities of Chelsea.

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## *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Council*

DURING the last year the Society has suffered in the death of Mr. Reginald Blunt, our Founder and Honorary Secretary, the loss of its greatest friend, universally mourned in Chelsea; and in that of General Sir Walter Braithwaite, one of our Vice-Presidents. Mr. St. John Hornby, whose retirement from the Chairmanship of the Council also calls for our keen regret, has written of Mr. Blunt and General Banon of General Braithwaite in the following pages.

We have suffered other grievous losses: Lady Phipps, whose life-long work for Chelsea will long be remembered, as will also that of Lord De L'Isle, so active in our public life for many years as Mr. William Sidney; the Marquess of Crewe; Violet, Lady Melchett, founder of the Infant Welfare Centre; and Mr. A. Curtis Brown.

I am acting as Chairman of the Council and Miss Esther Darlington has kindly consented to be Honorary Secretary during the difficult period of transition from war to peace, and the Council have co-opted eleven new members. We welcome Mr. R. W. Elliston as our Honorary Treasurer, and the Adjutant of the Royal Hospital, Captain Dean, to our Council.

With the return to peace we are faced with a new problem by the threat of the elimination of our Borough from the planned reconstruction of London. The Council of the Society have considered it necessary to lay their views before the Minister of Health in the annexed memorandum.

Signed on behalf of the Council,  
BASIL MARSDEN-SMEDLEY.

6th December, 1945.

*Letter addressed to the Minister of Health,  
October 10th, 1945.*

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	GRAHAME B. TUBBS, ESQ. (Chelsea Arts Club).

MISS ESTHER DARLINGTON, *Acting Hon. Sec.*

MISS DAPHNE SANGER, *Assistant Hon. Sec.*

All correspondence to be addressed to or c/o  
The Hon. Secretary, 50, Harker Street, Chelsea,  
S.W.3.

10th October, 1945.

Sir,

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Basil Marsden-Smedley, on His Majesty's Service, I am directed by the Council of the Chelsea Society to refer to your letter of the 1st August last, and to transmit to you herewith, for presentation to the Committee on London Government appointed by the Minister of Health under the Chairmanship of the Marquess of Reading, a Memorandum embodying the views of the Council on the importance of preserving the civic entity and autonomy of the Borough of Chelsea.

Lord Reading's Committee will find the Council's views to be substantially those expressed at the meeting at the Town Hall on the 19th September by Commander A. Noble, Mem-

ber of Parliament for the Borough, when he said: "We have a unique tradition in Chelsea. It is the centre of the arts and has many honoured associations with great people, whose names are linked for all time with the achievements of this borough."

The Rotary Club of Chelsea, at their meeting on August 23rd, 1945, unanimously decided to support the action of the Chelsea Society in opposing any measure which would lead to the merging of the Borough of Chelsea with one or more others. The Chelsea Arts Club have also signified to the Council their strong support of the views contained in this memorandum.

I am to express the grave concern with which the Council regard the present position; and to add that, if the Committee desire oral evidence in amplification of their views, representatives of the Society would willingly arrange to attend on a convenient date.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

FREDERICK ADAM.

The Secretary to the  
Committee on London Government,  
Ministry of Health,  
Whitehall, London, S.W.1.

## MEMORANDUM of the CHELSEA SOCIETY in defence of the civic autonomy of the Borough.

In view of the White Paper (Cmd. 6579) on Local Government in England and Wales during the period of reconstruction, presented by the Minister of Health to Parliament in January, 1945, and the terms of reference of the Departmental Committee set up by Mr. Willink under the Chairmanship of the Marquess of Reading, the Council of the Chelsea Society have thought it right to lay the following considerations before His Majesty's Government in regard to the corporate development of the Borough of Chelsea. In particular they desire to stress, while the matter of the boundaries of the London Boroughs is before the Committee, the grave concern with which any scheme for the annexation of Chelsea to a neighbouring borough or its partition among other boroughs would be regarded. If any such plan were adopted, the social life of our community would be disrupted and its civic entity destroyed.

The Chelsea Society has frequently had occasion to make representations to the Local Authority on matters which concern the life and fabric of Chelsea. On all these occasions, whether the Chelsea Borough Council has accepted their views or no, the Society has been assured that its proposals have received meticulous consideration. Members of the Council of the Chelsea Society connected with other Chelsea organisations know that these other organisations have similar experience. In many cases the Chelsea Borough Council has adopted suggestions from Chelsea organisations and has had the time and the local knowledge and patriotism to develop and vigorously support them to other authorities and finally to secure their adoption. No larger authority, engulfing Chelsea with other localities, it is submitted, would be able to give the same consideration to matters individual to Chelsea. The Chelsea interests would be represented by a proportion or even a minority of the larger authority and might not even be represented at all on some of the Committees. Views individual to Chelsea would be diluted with different views individual to other localities. Were Chelsea to be engulfed, therefore, its people would enjoy, in a less pure form than they do at present the precious right of local self government.

The Chelsea Society has always voiced the sensitiveness of Chelsea people to the history and traditions of the place. It is the special theme of the Society that the history and

development of Chelsea have moulded its unique characteristics, fortuitously perhaps, but none the less providentially, into a priceless segment of modern London, which will in future, if allowed to survive, become still more prized. The characteristic of this village is that it is a quiet place and a neighbourhood of thinking people in every walk of life. Some Chelsea men and women of genius there may be, indeed are, in the fields of art and letters, economics and science, politics and administration, and these find themselves in a community which appreciates them and they it. They stimulate one another as neighbours and enjoy to the full the advantage of a close compact society near the centre of the capital. But in the main Chelsea is an area of small separate dwellings where simple men and women live who work unobtrusively in the "back rooms" of this capital of civilisation. These people like Chelsea because it provides the atmosphere of community life which suits their individuality.

There has been a continuous development of community life in Chelsea, which has survived the "sprawl" of the metropolis. It was pointed out by the Royal Commission on London Government in 1923 that there are to be found embedded places which have a long and interesting history of their own, connected with London but still such as to give them a real sense of corporate existence and civic responsibility. The Commission added the following observations on the importance of historical conditions.

"The growth of London from its core, the City, may be traced in two tendencies. First there was the erection of royal and ecclesiastical houses on attractive spots at a distance from, but in close proximity to London, and the growth of a local population round these. Examples begin at Westminster, then Chelsea and Kensington, further away Kingston, Richmond and Croydon. Besides these we have the first coaching stages, and villages having their origin in other causes. In all these cases the people intended to be out of London. On the other hand, there were the people who wanted to be in London, but owing to its crowded condition, had to live on its outer fringes. So the concurrent expansion of London and of the outside units went on, until the present condition is reached, in which many of the old townships are embraced in the continuous builded area we call Greater London. It is a natural consequence that the lamp of local patriotism burns more brightly in districts of the first class described. Probably in no part of existing London are there districts with more individuality than Kensington and Chel-

sea, while outside the county the same characteristic is observable in such places as Richmond and Croydon."

The boundaries of the London boroughs laid down in the London Government Act, 1899, were by no means all arbitrary; and in the building of roads one of the acknowledged objectives of the County Council Plan for London is the preservation of existing communities from the interference of through traffic. Indeed, the human factor which underlies the whole plan is the idea of community life; and with this object the planners began by identifying those communities which are organic units having either historical roots as the ancient villages of the London countryside or having in the course of time created characters for themselves. Both these characteristics belong peculiarly to Chelsea. "The physical organisation of a city, its industries and its markets, its lines of communication and traffic must be subservient to its social needs"; and Greater London is conceived by the plan to be a purposeful grouping of social units.

Chelsea is by its geography and its history a natural civic and social entity, and its life on the north side of the Thames began as early as the eighth and ninth centuries, when Councils were held here. In Domesday the manor is recorded as held of the King; Court rolls show that in the 14th Century it was an administrative unit; but its individuality first fully emerged in Tudor times, when all that was best in England was brought together in Sir Thomas More's house and garden. Here Erasmus met Colet and Fisher, and Holbein made his most famous drawings. It was in Chelsea that Henry VIII. established the young Princess Elizabeth, and the manor formed part of the jointure of Queen Katharine Parr.

Gradually the village by the river, with its fishing and farming, was chosen more and more by busy men seeking relaxation from the political and professional life of London. In the 17th Century, when Dorothy Osborne was describing Chelsea life to Sir William Temple, there were also many other famous people of more modest means gathered in friendly intimacy round Wren's Royal Hospital. Between 1686 and 1778 no fewer than four Presidents of the Royal Society lived in Paradise Row, and the illustrious names of Sir Isaac Newton and Sir Joseph Banks were added to the Chelsea roll. It also includes Sir Theodore Mayerne, court physician to four Kings, and Dr. Richard Mead, who persuaded Thomas Guy to found his hospital. In the eighteenth century Miss Burney was writing "Evelina," and Sir Robert Walpole spent

some twenty years in Chelsea as Prime Minister; while Arne composed "Rule Britannia" at his house in the King's Road, and Samuel Cotes painted his miniatures of the brilliant world that assembled at Ranelagh. In 1715 Thomas Doggett chose the "White Swan" at Chelsea for the finish of the Waterman's Race, which has survived to the present day.

In the 19th Century, Chelsea saw Thomas Carlyle in Cheyne Row and Dame Ellen Terry in the King's Road; the Kingsley family at the Rectory, Henry James, the novelist, at Carlyle Mansions, and Charles Keene, the great draftsman for "Punch" in Bramerton Street. Past generations of artists, from Turner to Whistler, Sargent and Steer, have found Chelsea congenial, and many still make it their home; and the alteration of its character would not be conducive to fostering this unique atmosphere, still less to encouraging the "neighbourhood" idea so strongly advocated by Sir Patrick Abercrombie in his plan for London.

Chelsea has indeed long been, and has increasingly become, in Mr. Reginald Blunt's words, not only the most favoured artists' quarter in London, but the chosen abode of a host of interesting people, literary and artistic. Its individuality and historical associations, the old-fashioned charm of its river front, the quiet spell of a less strenuous time, have preserved that character for the dwellings of the craftsmen and other members of its industrial population for whom further provision is being planned. The firm of Wedgwood and William de Morgan carried on the tradition of the famous Chelsea China factory to modern times; and the excellence of the local coach building is well-known. The modest Queen Anne houses in Cheyne Row and the pleasant streets of yet smaller houses that grew up in Georgian and Victorian times attest this tradition of peace, the sciences and the arts, enjoyed by every section of the community, on which is founded the friendly atmosphere of modern Chelsea.

The merging of Chelsea in any large community would be an anti-social act, since it would destroy not only our whole tradition, but the neighbourliness which is its chief characteristic. The Chelsea Society agrees strongly with the statement in the Penguin summary of the County of London plan, just published: "London is alive, it has present and historical reasons for being what it is." The map on page 16 of that summary shows London and the surrounding villages, including Chelsea, in 1755 and their growth between 1755 and 1820, with the comment: "Many distinct villages have been engulf-



ed and to-day form part of London; some of them have retained their individuality. The County Plan aims at retaining and encouraging the life of these communities." Chelsea, while retaining these characteristics, has long outgrown the status of an agricultural village, and the Borough possesses features which are unique in London life.

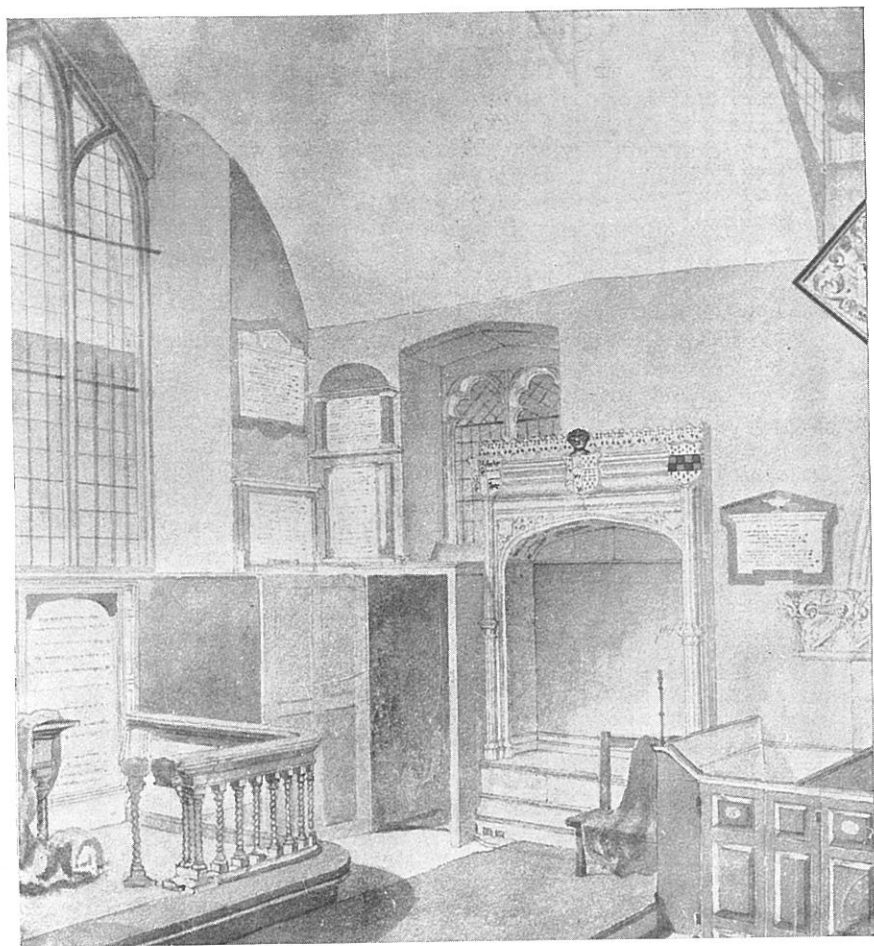
The famous Physic Garden of the Apothecaries' Society, described by Evelyn in 1685, fostered by Sir Hans Sloane, and tended from 1722 to 1770 by Philip Miller, who wrote the "Gardeners' Dictionary," took a new lease of life at the beginning of this century, when Darwin's Library was brought to its new laboratory. Here John Lindley was Professor of Botany and Elizabeth Blackwell wrote the "Curious Herbal." This garden was threatened with destruction half a century ago, but was saved for the students of the present and the future by the support given by His Majesty's Treasury to local patriotism.

The Royal Hospital of Charles II., shaken by enemy action, is preserved as part of the national history for the veterans of past wars; while the Military Headquarters in the Duke of York's School and the early organisation of the Air Training Corps and Sea Scouts reflect the continuity of the long military tradition of Chelsea.

The Old Church, that forms one landmark, will, we hope, rise again from the ground round the tomb built by Sir Thomas More; while an extension of the Chelsea embankment is planned to remodel the riverside. When all this has been accomplished by the citizens of Chelsea, is it to be their reward that they should be deprived of their historic consciousness and continuity, of their modern Town Hall, their civic entity and the traditional neighbourliness of their riverside, the district of London which most preserves its individuality and gives its inhabitants a feeling of real pride and affection?

It is the essence of that Chelsea which history has forged into its present characteristics that it has always had its own self-government. Local government matters which would be better administered in larger areas or on a wider basis are or ought to be dealt with by the London County Council. It is the firm view of the Chelsea Society that if Chelsea loses the right to have its local affairs ordered and governed in the way it likes, it will lose its individuality and London will lose a unique quarter and the capital of civilisation will lose a cardinal component.

10th October, 1945.



SIR THOMAS MORE'S TOMB, CHELSEA OLD CHURCH, 1833

## SIR THOMAS MORE.

War has passed over Chelsea; but there still stands, like a sentinel in the ruin of the Old Church, the chapel built by Sir Thomas More, a symbol of our fight for freedom; for it is essentially as the champion of freedom of thought that More is remembered, and in resistance to the tyrant he laid down his life.

Many writers have laid stress on the paradox of More's life. As Speaker he defended the privilege of the Commons against Wolsey; and as a member of Henry VIII.'s Council he was jealous to defend the King's rights against the temporal power of the Pope. He was both the upholder of law and order and the dreamer of great dreams; the champion of mediæval Church and State and the victim of a bloodthirsty tyrant; the patron of classical scholarship and the herald of modern economic thought; the Latin correspondent of Erasmus and a master of English prose; the stern opposer of religious reform, who was martyred for his own faith "protesting that he died the King's good servant but God's first."

More is the last great English figure of the Middle Ages, rather than a son of the Renaissance; and we can only follow his great mind to the extent that we visualize the last phase of the Middle Age, when the impact of ancient Greek thought was first felt in England. The tradition of Socrates and Plato was then still blended with the monastic ideal; and the result is reflected in More's Utopia. For More, the friend of Colet and Fisher, who had himself hesitated between law and holy orders, lived and died for the doctrine that the State is the wordly complement of the Church; and he was intolerant of any doctrine that he regarded as heresy. Freedom of speech was unknown to his generation; he knew only freedom of thought, and for that he died.

To the mediæval scholar this attitude was not inconsistent. The laws of Utopia show that the future Lord Chancellor

THOMAS MORUS Urbe Londinensi Famule non celebri, sed honesta natus in Literis utrinque  
versatus quam Causas atqueq; Juvenis egisset in Foro & in Urbe sua pro Shivero jus  
dixisset ab invictissimæ Regis Henrico Octavo cui uni Regum omnium gloria prius, inaudita  
contigit, ut fidei Defensor, qualem & gloriose se calumpia vere præstavit, merito vocaretur  
abscondit in Asiem ossi, desectusque in consilium Et creatus Eques Proquestor primam post Cancellarius  
Lancastrie, tandem Angliæ, missus Principis favore factus est sed interim in publico Regni  
Senatu lectus est Orator Populi præterea legatus Regis nonnumquam fuit, alias alibi postremo  
vero Cameraci Comes et Collega junctus Principi legationis *Gulberto Tansillo* Tum  
Londinensi, mox Dunelmensi Episcopo, quo viro vix habet orbis, hodie quicquam eruditius prudentius  
melius. Ibi intersummus Orbis Christiani Monarchas rursus referta sedena reddiditq; mundo  
Diu desideratam pacem belissimus videt & legatus interfuit.

Quam superi pacem firment facitque Perennem  
In hoc officiorum & honorum cursu, quam ita versaretur ut neque Princeps optinere operam  
ejus improbaret neque nobilibus esset invidus nec injucundus populo, Turibus autem &  
Homicidis molestus. Pater ejus tandem *Johannes Morus* Eques in eum Judicium Ordinem  
a Principe Cooptatus, qui Regius concessus vocatur, homo civitatis suavis in omni muneris misericors  
æquus & integerrimus annis quidem gravis, sed corpore plusquam pro ætate vivido, postquam  
eo productam sibi vitam videt, ut filium videt et Angliæ Cancellarium satis in terra jam  
se moratum ratus libens emigravit in Cælum As Filices, defuncto, Patre cui quandiu  
supererat, comparatus et juvenis vocari consueverat: & ipse quoque sibi videbatur  
Amisum jam Patrem requirens et Aditos, ex se liberos quatuor A nepotes undecim  
respicens apud animum suum cepit per senescere, auxit hunc affectum animi subsecuta  
statim Velut ad potentis senii signum, Pectoris valetudo deterior, Itaque mortalium  
harum rerum, Satur, quam rema puero pene semper optulerat ut ultimos aliquot Vite  
sue Annos obtineret liberos quibus hujus vite negotiis paulatim se seducens future posset  
immortalitatem meditari Eam rem tandem (si ceptis annuat Deus) indulgentissimi Principis  
incomparabili beneficio, resignatus honoribus impetrabit atque hoc Sepulchrum sibi quod  
mortis eum nunquam cessantis adrepere quotidie commonefaceret (translati hoc prioris  
uxoris ossibus) extruendum curavit. Quod nē superstes frustra sibi fecerit neve  
ingruentem trepidus mortem horreat, sed desiderio Christi libens oppetat mortem  
ut sibi non omnino mortem, sed januam vite felicioris inveniat Precibus eum piis  
Lector optime spirantem precor, defunctumque prosequere

*Chara Thomæ jacet hic Johanna Uxorcula Mori  
Qui tamulatum Alitæ hunc distinxit quique mihi  
Una mihi dedit hoc conjuncta virantibus Annis  
Me vacet ut puer & Irina puella patrem  
Altera Privignis (quæ Gloria rara Noverca est)  
Jam pia quam natis vix fuit ulla suis  
Altera sic mecum vixit sic altera vivit  
Charior, incertum est hac sit, an illa fuit  
O simul, O juncti poteramus vivere nos tres  
Quam bene, si salum Religioque sinant  
At faciet tumulus, sciet nos, obsecro, Cælum  
Sic mors non potuit quod dare vita dabit.*

saw little difference between heresy and sedition, and that he shared the severence of political science from practical policy, the rock on which the free City States of Italy foundered. Yet his upright character saved him from the doctrine with which Machiavelli shook all Europe, that the ends of Princes justified their means.

Nor did More's zeal in the service of the masses lead him to endorse the idealistic communism of his Utopians. "For how can there be abundance of goods, or of anything, where every man withdraweth his hand from labour? Whom the regard for his own gains driveth not to work, but the hope that he hath in other men's travails maketh him slothful. Then when they be pricked with poverty, and yet no man can by any law or right defend that for his own, which he hath gotten with the labour of his own hands, shall there not of necessity be continual sedition and bloodshed? Specially the authority and reverence of magistrates being taken away, which, what place it may have with such men among whom is no difference, I cannot devise." Nevertheless More inveighed against the conspiracy of rich men of his own time "procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth." He is the protagonist of "freedom from want." His political economy is in advance of his political science.

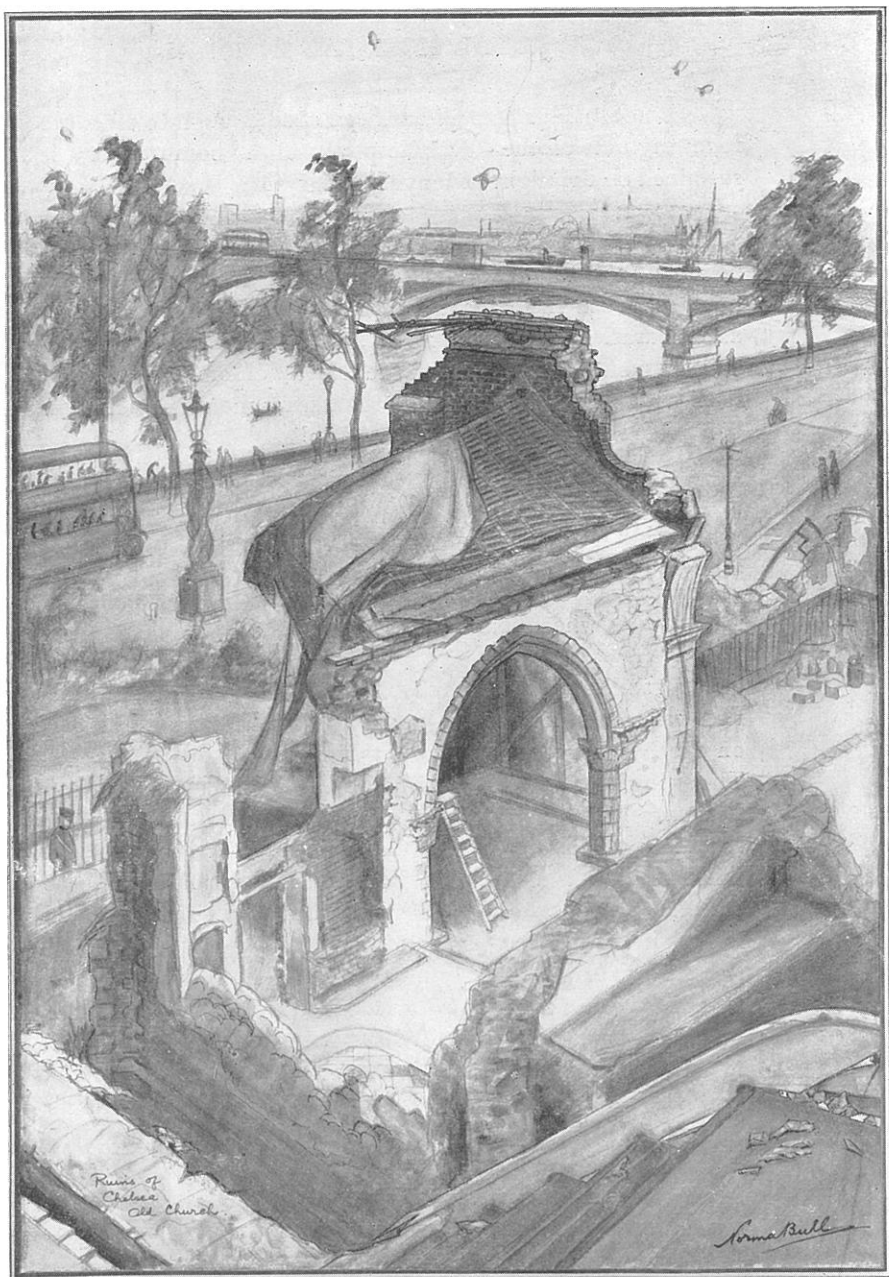
It is significant to a modern world that Sir Thomas More clung to the political structure of the Middle Ages deliberately as an instrument for world peace. The mantle of ancient Rome had fallen on the mediæval Empire; and he regarded the Kingdoms of Europe as sharing the civil authority in an organization of which the Emperor was still the titular head. More was a lover of peace and a good European, who, no doubt for these reasons, laid stress in the inscription he wrote for his tomb on his mission to Charles V. Wearied by a hundred years of French wars, he thought in terms of a Concert of Europe and of United Nations. This is one reason for his steadfast loyalty to Katharine of Aragon and to the marriage on which all his foreign policy was later based.

Sir Thomas More was in deep sympathy with the new learning. His approach to it was no doubt that of his friend Erasmus, whose aim in reviving the knowledge of Greek in Northern Europe was to speed the knowledge of the New Testament. His early admiration was for Pico della Mirandola, who sought like More himself to harmonize the philosophy of the ancients with the Christian faith; and More's English friends included such Hellenists as William Grocyn and Thomas Linacre, who had sat at the feet of Politian, and William Lilly, who learned his Greek in Rhodes.

There are passages in both books of the *Utopia*, but especially in the first, which show More responsive to the call of the West, awakened by the great discoveries of his age. When Raphael Hythlodaye (who "is a Portugal born") is left by Vespucci somewhere in South America, he makes his way home westwards to Ceylon; and this was written in 1516, six years before Elcano brought Magellan's ship "*Victoria*" home from the Philippines. Six months later More's brother-in-law set out in the "*Barbara*" of Greenwich to explore the New Lands for which the first charter of the British Empire had been given to John Cabot. The Utopians moreover attached great importance to colonization.

Sir Thomas More was the greatest Englishman of his age; and his wisdom and sense of justice as magistrate and statesman made him, even in the Tower, a standing menace to Henry VIII. At the end of six years' struggle against organized tyranny in Europe it is therefore well to note his example. His last written words were from the Tower to his daughter Margaret for his family in Chelsea; and at Chelsea in the Old Church and the garden by the river we shall remember him.

F. E. F. A.



RUINS OF CHELSEA OLD CHURCH BY MISS NORMA BULL, 1941

(by courtesy of Mr. Harold L. Harbour and Messrs. Matchim & Son, Ltd.)

## THE ROYAL HOSPITAL IN 1944-45.

General Sir Clive Liddell has been good enough to send the following note on the Royal Hospital and the bombardment it sustained on the night of January 3rd, 1945:

Last December, with the end of the war in sight, it seemed possible that the Royal Hospital might be spared further damage. Such incidents as had occurred in 1944 had been of a comparatively trivial character. Thus in January a bomb had fortunately just missed the Nurses' Home and buried itself without exploding; and the following month some incendiary bombs had burned out harmlessly in the southern part of the grounds. In March a faulty anti-aircraft shell exploded in Ranelagh Gardens, while in June another wrecked the cloakroom and adjoining premises of my own house. Flying bombs luckily missed us, though their blast broke windows and did other minor damage on several occasions, notably on the 3rd July, when Sloane Court East was hit.

Our good fortune did not extend into 1945, as great devastation was caused on the 3rd January by a rocket bomb that fell on the North Front within a few feet of the north-east wing. This wing had been damaged so badly by a 500 lb. bomb in February 1918 that two-thirds of it had had to be rebuilt. The rocket completely wrecked the remainder of the original building as well as most of the reconstructed portion. Two officers and two ladies were killed outright, as was also an In-Pensioner who happened to be in the Chapel at the time. A third officer was severely wounded, and there were eighteen other casualties, some of whom had miraculous escapes. The death roll would undoubtedly have been higher had not some of the residents in this wing been away, attending the funeral of another officer who had overstrained himself during the air raids of 1941.

The work of rescue was carried out most efficiently by the Civil Defence of the Borough, assisted by American soldiers





WRECKED WING OF ROYAL HOSPITAL, CHELSEA, 1944

*(by Sport and General Press Agency, Ltd.)*

and others who happened to be in the neighbourhood and volunteered their aid. All the buildings in Light Horse Court were damaged to a greater or less extent, and it proved necessary to evacuate all the pensioners from the East Wing. Some went on furlough, while others were sent to the two country houses at Ross-on-Wye that had been taken over some years earlier. As a temporary measure, in view of the shortage of accommodation, no more old soldiers are being admitted to the Royal Hospital, and our numbers are now about one hundred less than in normal times.

Apart from the grievous loss of life this untoward incident has robbed the Royal Hospital of two of its historic residences. Some of the rooms destroyed had retained their original Wren panelling, while others had been redecorated by Robert Adam or Sir John Soane. One house had been occupied at different times by Dr. Bland, a friend of Walpole and later Provost of Eton, by the Rev. W. Barnard, father of Dr. Johnson's friend, the Bishop of Limerick, and in 1787-98 by Dr. Charles Burney. There the celebrated musician wrote the final volumes of his *History of Music*, and there his daughter Fanny lived for two years before her marriage. The flat on the second floor of the adjoining building which Dr. Burney occupied from 1798 until his death, is badly damaged, but it is hoped that it may be restored. Repairs are being effected gradually as labour becomes available, but some years must necessarily elapse before the Royal Hospital is completely reconstructed and refurnished.

## CHELSEA PUBLIC LIBRARY.

The Librarian, Mr. S. Kirby, writes:—

The past year has seen a great increase in the use made of the Public Library by local residents, an increase which continues to grow rapidly month by month.

The most notable event during the year, however, has been one of particular interest to the members of this Society. Although the legal formalities have still to be completed it is now known that the collection of local pictures, prints, drawings, books and pamphlets has been considerably enriched by many interesting and unique items bequeathed to the Library by our late Honorary Secretary, Mr. Reginald Blunt, who was himself a member of the Libraries Committee from 1932 until his death.

## MR. REGINALD BLUNT.

Mr. C. H. St. John Hornby writes:—

During this past year our Society has suffered a sad loss through the death of its Founder, Reginald Blunt. Of few men can it be said with truth that they are irreplaceable; but in the case of the Chelsea Society, Reginald Blunt most certainly merits that title of honour. For not only was he the Society's founder: he was its life and soul for 17 years and gave to it a whole-hearted devotion for which every lover of Chelsea owes him a debt of gratitude which can with difficulty be expressed in words.

Born 88 years ago, the son of the Rector of Chelsea, he was brought up in the old Rectory, and can remember being taken by his father as a small boy to visit Thomas Carlyle in Cheyne Row. He could call to mind the Chelsea of the days before the Embankment was built, when the river came up to the wharves and houses along its banks; when it still retained



MR. REGINALD BLUNT

some vestiges of its old village character—something apart from the great metropolis which was gradually encroaching upon it and obliterating one by one its old-world features and robbing it of its old-world charm. In those early years he must have imbibed that love of the place which never left him through all his long life, and that intimate knowledge of its buildings and its history which was truly remarkable in its variety and range. As the years went by he could not help looking with a sad eye on the passing away of many an ancient land-mark and cherished building. For to him Chelsea was something almost sacred, and though he realised that changes must come and that some destruction of what was old was inevitable—for he was in no sense narrow-minded—he was, so far as Chelsea was concerned, like a jealous lover with his mistress, and could not bear to see wanton hands laid upon

her. Like a knight of old he sprang at once to arms when she was threatened and waged a doughty fight for her deliverance.

So it was that in 1927 the idea seems to have occurred to him that it was time that Chelsea had a Society of its own to defend its interests, on the lines of The London Society which had already done so much good work for London as a whole. In April of that year a Meeting was held at Wentworth House, Lady Lovelace's house on the Embankment, at which Lord Ernle presided. By general agreement of those present the Society was duly founded and a Council elected, Blunt himself undertaking to act as Secretary, an office which he held from that day until his death.

It would occupy far too much space to recount the various activities of the Society between 1927 and the present time. Are they not enshrined in that admirable series of Annual Reports, which are models of their kind and all of them from the hand of Blunt himself? Not only did he compile the Reports: he was himself the originator of most of the Society's endeavours to preserve the amenities of Chelsea. Like a faithful watch-dog, he was always on the alert to detect any unwarranted attempt to interfere with those amenities and was ever ready with voice and pen to champion what he and the Council thought were the true interests of the dwellers in his beloved "village." He attended on our behalf numerous conferences and wrote countless letters to property owners and others, putting forward in cogent language our point of view. Both his pen and his voice were persuasive, and he had a real diplomatic flair in dealing with individuals and Public Bodies, from whom, and especially the Chelsea Borough Council, he received much help and sympathy. It is not an overstatement to say that for 17 years he was the Society's moving spirit; and under his wise guidance and leadership it has accomplished a large amount of good and useful work in a quiet and unobtrusive way, so that it now has a host of friends and, it may fairly be said, not a single enemy. Reginald Blunt wrote a number of books, mostly connected

with Chelsea and its inhabitants at various periods. His knowledge of its old buildings and sites, and of its many worthies, was encyclopædic. It seemed almost impossible to "stump" him on any point of Chelsea history. The interesting Exhibitions which he organised from time to time of Chelsea pictures and drawings, Chelsea china, etc., will be fresh in the memory of most of our members. He would also generally contrive to arrange interesting visits on the occasion of our Annual Meetings, which he always greatly enjoyed and at which he was in his element. Anything he could do for his beloved Chelsea was a real source of happiness to him.

In addition to the books on Chelsea subjects, Blunt was no mean writer of light verse, of which he published a small volume, entitled "Random Rhymes" in 1940. And to those who were privileged to receive them his Christmas Cards were an annually recurring joy. They are the expression of a very lovable character which those who came under its spell will not easily forget. The following lines of his may fittingly end them. Note:

And when at length our voyage-day comes, and we  
Must slip earth's anchorage, from what better beach  
could we set out r'ward that uncharted sea  
Than Chelsea Reach?

*Requiescat in pace.* He leaves behind him a bright memory in the hearts of his friends, and his name deserves a place upon the long Roll of Chelsea Worthies whom we hold in honour.

#### GENERAL SIR WALTER BRAITHWAITE.

Brigadier General Banon writes:—

The sudden death on 8th September of General Sir Walter Braithwaite, G.C.B., a Vice-President of our Society will cause sorrow to his friends in Chelsea.

After a distinguished army career Sir Walter was appointed Governor of the Royal Hospital in 1931 and soon showed

his gifts as an administrator in the improvements he made for the benefit of the In-Pensioners and the care of the Wren buildings. Among these may be noted the new organ in the Chapel and the restoration of the frescos in the Great Hall—a new wing to the Nurses' Home, the provision of electric light in the men's bunks, the restoration of the quarters of the Captains of Invalids, a hard tennis court and a pavilion and the returfing of the bowling green, the recutting of many inscriptions in the graveyard, and the provision of a cenotaph and planting of trees in the Royal Hospital Burial Ground at Brookwood, improvements in the kitchen, the roll of Battle Honours in the Great Hall and the addition of 2 fine 17th century bronze cannon from the Tower, and alteration in the grounds and shubberies and in the Governor's house necessitated by the appointment being no longer one for life.

Sir Walter took on other Chelsea interests and was a Vice-President and an active member of the Committee of the Cheyne Hospital and to the delight of the children often came to their Christmas dinners in uniform after going round the In-Pensioners' Christmas meal.

## NOTES.

*Members are particularly asked to advise the Secretary of any change of address, in order that Reports and Notices may not go astray.*

Small Requests to the funds of THE CHELSEA SOCIETY would be welcomed, and would help to consolidate its position.

Chelsea Old Church—An illustrated Historical Guide Book by Archdeacon Stewart, edited with various additional matter by the late Mr. Reginald Blunt, can be obtained from the Secretary, Post free, 1s. 4d., or at Chelsea Public Library.

Copies of the Society's Annual Report (1928-43)—except the 3rd and 4th, out of print. Post free, 1s. each.

It is suggested that Members who do not wish to file or keep their Reports should hand them on to friends who might desire to be enrolled as Members of the Society.

# THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

*Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the year ended March 31st, 1945*

RECEIPTS.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Balance brought forward						
1st April, 1944				64	4	7
„ Entrance Fees—						
New Members	58	16	0			
Associates		15	0			
				59	11	0
„ Donations—	37	19	6			
„ “The Hat” (for Chelsea						
O.A.P. Association	16	17	0			
				54	16	6
„ Interest on £200 3½% War Stock				7	0	0
„ Sales—						
Reports		13	8			
Old Church Guide	6	6	0			
Apollo Magazines	4	5	0			
				11	4	8
				£196	16	9

PAYMENTS.	£	s.	d.
By Printing Annual Reports	26	13	4
„ Annual Meeting Notices and Tea	9	2	6
„ Stationery and Typing	5	8	0
„ Postages	3	0	0
„ Apollo Magazine Ltd.	4	10	0
„ Sundries	1	0	9
„ Donation to Chelsea Old Age Pensioners' Association	20	0	0
„ Balance at Bank 31st March, 1945	127	2	2
	£196	16	9

The Certificates for £200 War Stock 3½% in the name of The Chelsea Society are held by Barclays Bank Ltd., 348, King's Road, Chelsea, S.W.3.

WILFRED ELLISTON,  
Honorary Treasurer.

28th November, 1945.



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