



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity 276264

Draft/PROPOSAL UNDER SECTION 1 OF THE PLANNING (Listed
Buildings and Conservation Areas) ACT 1990
FOR GRADE II LISTING OF TWO CABMAN'S SHELTERS IN CHELSEA

The Chelsea Society was founded in 1927 to preserve and improve the amenities of Chelsea for the public benefit, and today has nearly 1,000 members.

The Cabmen's Shelter Fund was established in London in 1875 to provide shelters for the drivers of hansom cabs and later hackney carriages. Between 1875 and 1914, 61 shelters were built in London. There are now only 13 left, of which three are in Chelsea.

Shelter A below is listed Grade II but Shelters B and C are not listed. The Chelsea Society considers that all three should be listed Grade II by virtue of their historical interest, in order to protect them from inappropriate alteration or demolition.

By law, cab drivers could not leave the cab-stand while their cab was parked there. This made it very difficult for them to obtain hot meals and could be unpleasant in bad weather. If they drove to a pub to buy food then they would have to pay somebody to look after their cab while they were inside, otherwise it was likely to be stolen. In addition they would be tempted to drink alcohol on the job. Newspaper editor George Armstrong and the Earl of Shaftesbury took it upon themselves to set up a charity to construct and run shelters at major cab stands. The idea allegedly came to Armstrong when all the cabbies were seeking refuge and warmth in a pub on a snowy night in St. John's Wood and left him unable to hire a cab there.

These shelters were small green huts, which were not allowed to be larger than a horse and cart, as they stood on the public highway - the first being on Acacia Road in St John's Wood near Armstrong's home. Most were staffed by an attendant who sold food and (non-alcoholic) drink to the cabbies and were provided with a kitchen in which the attendant could cook this food and also food provided by the cabbies themselves. The attendant was generally not paid, but was expected to make an income from the sales. The shelters were also provided with seats and tables and books and newspapers, most of them donated by the publishers or other benefactors. Most could accommodate ten to thirteen men. Gambling, drinking and swearing were strictly forbidden.

REFERENCES:

- "Cabman's shelters, London – Victorian survivors on London's streets", Urban75, April 2006.
- Tom Skipp, "Where London cabbies spend time off the clock", photo gallery, BBC, 29 November 2016.
- Will Self, "Fare Grounds", blog, Travel, The New York Times, 28 November 2012.
- <https://hidden-london.com/nuggets/cabmens-shelters/>
- Wilson, Vicky (2018). London's Oddities. Metro Publications Ltd. p. 306. ISBN 978-1-902910-53-6. Retrieved 29 November 2020.
- Illustrated London News, January 1975.
- "The Cabmen's Shelters: Inside London's secret 'green sheds'". BBC. 7 August 2013. Retrieved 7 November 2014.
- Kate Phillimore (4 September 2014). "Cabmen's Shelters: London's Secret Architectural Gems". Heritage Open Days. Retrieved 7 November 20

THE THREE SHELTERS IN CHELSEA ARE:

A. THURLOE PLACE LONDON SW7



This Shelter is Listed Grade II (UID: 1265389) and is located opposite the Grade I listed Victoria & Albert Museum. The listing contains the following description: "Cabmen's shelter. Erected in 1897 to design of 1882 by the architect Maximilian Clarke. Timber frame, with timber cladding and overlapping timber boards to low pitched half-hipped roof, with overhanging eaves. 1 storey. 7 main bays by 3 bays. Entrance to south-west end. Horizontal and vertical members of frame expressed with panels of vertical boarding set between 3 square headed 6 pane windows to sides, with glazing bars; pivoting lights above, with fretwork panels between below eaves. Louvred gablets to ends and to each side, and square louvre to centre of roof with tented rooflet. A rare intact surviving example of this design."

B. CHELSEA EMBANKMENT, LONDON SW3.



This shelter is currently unlisted, and stands in the Thames Conservation Area. It is immediately adjacent to the Cheyne Conservation Area.

The shelter is located at an important point on the Chelsea Embankment where the north-south route to and from Albert Bridge (listed Grade II*(UID: 1358138)) crosses the linear east-west axis of

the embankment itself, flanked by the more fluid path of Cheyne Walk. The Embankment (itself listed grade II UID: 1294183) is part of London's iconic river esplanade running east from here into the heart of the city. Its firm engineering lines are softened in Chelsea by the narrow but lushly planted embankment gardens which, as here, from time to time open out into small parklets.

The shelter sits on the north west margin of one of these small open spaces which curves around the landing point of the bridge. When viewed from the north it has a pleasant backdrop of trees and bushes, with glimpses of the river beyond. To one side there is the span of Albert Bridge, and to the other a Grade II listed K2 telephone box (UID: 1265487) set next to one of the bridge's unique surviving toll booths and the listed lamp standard in the garden East of Albert Bridge (UID: 1294182). It emerges into view from the bridge itself looking west along the Embankment footway either from the underpass or the top of the bridge stairs with their ornate cast-iron balustrade.

Nearby, at the west end of the garden area is the striking Frances Derwent Wood memorial gardens (UID: 1189638) with the naked bronze Atlanta. This highly listed grouping is pulled together by features such as York stone paving, traditionally designed bollards, and the regular rhythm of traditional lamp standards along the Embankment. It is a highly picturesque area of historic townscape, with the solidity of the Embankment offset by the delicate cabled gothic design of the bridge, complemented by the planting studded with individual items of aesthetic interest.

In this context, the pleasingly rustic visual qualities of the small, timber-framed and green-painted shelter make it a very positive feature, which sits comfortably within the planted area and enhances by contrast the more formal structures nearby, providing a visual cue to the small respite available from the otherwise unremitting flow of traffic. The shelter also confirms the historic character of this nexus point as an area of concentrated activity, including through-travel but also focused on the paying of bridge tolls and the comings and goings of the cabmen.

The Chelsea Society proposes that this Shelter be listed Grade II, and suggests the following description:

"Cabmen's shelter. Timber frame, with timber cladding and overlapping timber boards to low pitched hipped roof, with overhanging eaves. 1 storey. 9 main bays by 2 bays. Entrance on northern elevation. Horizontal and vertical members of frame expressed with panels of vertical boarding set between. 2 square-headed 4 pane windows on northern side, with glazing bars; and tented rooflet. One high-level widow at eastern and western ends."

The Shelter is in a neglected condition, and a Notice was served on the owners under s. 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 by the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea on 12th August 2020.

C. PONT ST. LONDON SW1



This Shelter is located on Pont St. between Sloane Street and Cadogan Place, in the Hans Town Conservation Area and within the Cadogan Place Registered Garden (Grade II). It seems to be in good condition and in use.

The shelter sits between the northern and southern sections of the Cadogan Place Registered Park, the site of the late C18 London Botanic Garden. The northern part of which was originally laid out by Humphrey Repton. By the early C19, this park had evolved into a public promenade, and, by the time the shelter was built, had become the private garden of the newly redeveloped residences of Cadogan Place. The simple rustic character of the shelter pleasingly complements the lush planting and mature trees around it to form an additional picturesque element within the registered landscape.

Viewed from the west, it has a backdrop of the early listed townhouses of Cadogan Place, and from the east a glimpse of the striking Flemish gables of the grand houses to the north of Cadogan Square. The shelter forms a positive element in this significant area of historic townscape, and serves as a reminder of the activities of the cabmen servicing the comings and goings of its well-to-do inhabitants.

The Chelsea Society proposes that it be listed Grade II, and suggests the following description:

“Cabmen's shelter. Timber frame, with timber cladding and overlapping timber boards to pitched hipped roof, with overhanging eaves. 1 storey. 9 main bays by 4 bays. Entrance door on northern side and serving-hatch on western side. Horizontal and vertical members of frame expressed with panels of vertical boarding set between. 2 square-headed 4 pane windows on northern side, with glazing bars; and tented rooflet. 2 square-headed rectangular windows on southern, and western elevations.”