

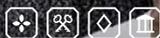


THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

ANNUAL
REPORT 2025



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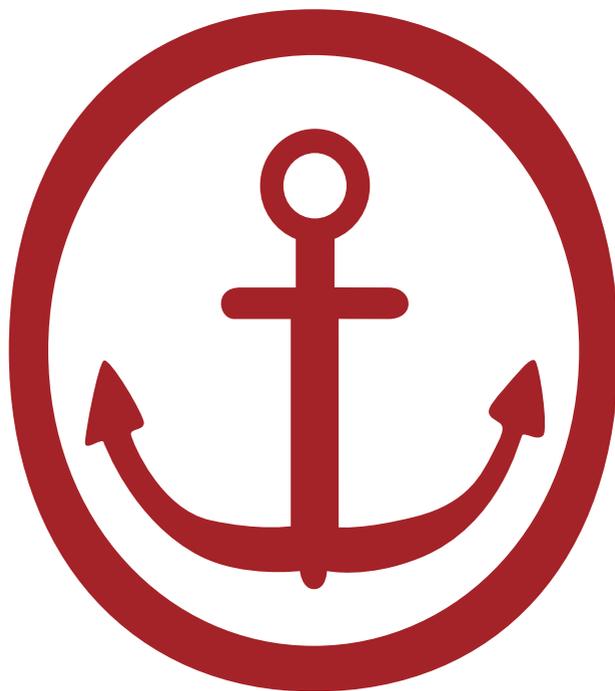
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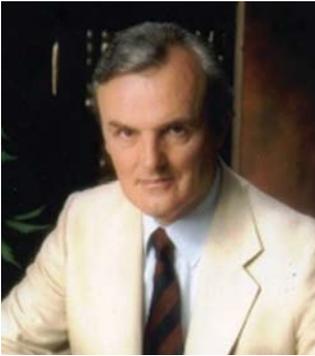


ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD



2025 has been a busy year for The Chelsea Society, as you will see from the Chairman's Report later in these pages.

The Society continues the task set by our distinguished founders in 1927 - to encourage suitable development in Chelsea, and to oppose unsuitable development - as you will see from the Report of the Planning Committee. We have also enjoyed many informative meetings on Monday evenings at Chelsea Old Town Hall, and a very successful Garden Party, and Christmas Party.

We continue to prepare to celebrate the Centenary of the Society. At the end of our first year we had 108 members – we now have 1,127. We are very pleased that the Royal Brompton charity has agreed that we may fix a commemorative plaque to the wall of their building on the east side of Dovehouse Green.

In preparation for the centenary, I have been reading the fascinating story of Chelsea as recorded in past editions of this Annual Report, and we are publishing extracts from the Second Decade in this the 2025 edition.

The front cover of this edition shows Royal Avenue, and you will find in this edition a report on the redevelopment of the north-eastern part of Royal Avenue which appeared in our Annual Report for 1965.

Michael Stephen

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity 276264

Founded in 1927

To Protect the Interests of all who Live and Work here and
to Preserve and Enhance the Unique Character of Chelsea

www.chelseasociety.org.uk

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The Constitution of the Society is at

<https://chelseasociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Constitution-21.11.16.pdf>

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Held at 6pm on Monday 17th November 2025 at
Chelsea Old Town Hall, King's Road, London SW3**

1. The CHAIRMAN, Dr. James Thompson, welcomed Members and official guests and the meeting was addressed by the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea.
2. The MINUTES of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday, 18th November 2024 were approved as published in the Society's Annual Report for that year.
3. THE COUNCIL of the Society:
Col. David Waddell and Mr. Ian Henderson retired by rotation and were re-elected
4. The meeting was addressed by MR. BEN COLEMAN MP. He mentioned that:
 - The Post Office at World's End would not be closing
 - He had assisted the Society in discussions with TfL concerning traffic on the Embankment
 - He would continue to assist the Society in relation to the houseboats
 - He would be meeting with members of the EU Parliament to try to reduce red-tape for local businesses.
5. The meeting was addressed by CLLR. EMMA WILL of RBKC. She mentioned that:
 - 1,000 thoughtlessly parked e-bikes had been seized.
 - A new park would be provided at Cremorne, and the pier and riverside walk would be opened.
 - The Council would carefully consider the Society's objections to the current proposal for redevelopment of St. Wilfrid's care home in Tite St.
 - The Council would be building a new care home in Lots Village.
 - RBKC would be losing funding of £82m over the next 3-4 years, and would find it very difficult to maintain its services. 80% of the Council's money was spent on providing statutory services.
6. The Treasurer, Mr. Chris Lenon, presented the accounts for the financial year ended 30 June 2025, which were approved subject to examination by a new External Examiner. He noted that Ms. Angela Ktistakis had very recently retired, and thanked her for examining the Society's accounts for many years.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7. Members asked questions on the following subjects:

- E-bikes and cyclists
- The crime rate in Chelsea
- The lack of public toilets in Chelsea

8. Ms. Serena Snell of the Tite St. Residents' Association thanked The Chelsea Society for its support in opposing the current proposal for the redevelopment of St. Wilfrid's.

9. The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7pm.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On 17th November 2025



Mr. Mayor, Member of Parliament for Chelsea, Chelsea Councillors, Representatives of other Amenity Societies and churches, Honoured guests, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I first want to thank our own Council members and Officers for their dedicated work in helping to preserve and improve the amenities of Chelsea for the public benefit.

I am delighted that David Waddell and Ian Henderson have been re-elected and are continuing as members of our Council.

One of our most important tasks is to protect Chelsea from unsuitable development and to encourage more suitable development. As Erskine observed: "The job of buildings is to improve human relations: architecture must ease them, not make them worse."

I have to tell you that developers have recently submitted thoroughly unacceptable plans for over-development on the St Wilfrid's care home site in Tite St. The 44 care beds the home had provided are totally ignored and they plan to build over much of the garden, cramming in as many luxury flats as possible. We have argued this should be turned down, and expect that RBKC will stoutly defend the planning policies which this application challenges.

Sir Paul Lever leads on this issue as Chairman of our Planning Committee, which also comprises David Waddell, Jules Turner Marina Murray and Michael Parkes. They deal with the major planning applications, and their report for the year 2025 will be published in our Annual Report, including a note about the Marks & Spencer building and the Royal Marsden Hospital. You will also be glad to know that we have not forgotten the houseboat community, for whom we fought so hard last year.

Where change is desirable we champion architecture which exalts the spirit, respects the history of our place and people, and our own civilisation, and rises emotionally above mere bricks and mortar to delight and inspire us for many years. Traffic continues to be a great nuisance, as it had been for our predecessors as far back as 1931.

Transport for London have improved safety at the crossing at the North end of Battersea Bridge and the Embankment, but they have put in a cycle lane - and through-traffic westwards is restricted to one lane, with predictable results. We maintain our principle that all streets should share traffic loads fairly, while recognising that main streets will always be busier than side-streets.

Our programme of talks and events, arranged by Michael Stephen and Gaye Murdoch, goes from strength to strength.

THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In January we heard the 3rd Viscount Slim talk about his grandfather, together with the historian and author Robert Lyman, and we also had a private visit to The Wallace Collection, which is quite magnificent.

In February Tamsin Perrett spoke about her book: "The Cadogans: A Chelsea Family."

In March we heard Lord Moynihan of Chelsea, on his book "Return to Growth."

In April at the London Sketch Club, their chairman Tony Cohen presented his book on the fascinating history of the Club.

In June. Lord Soames spoke about his grandfather, Sir Winston Churchill and grandmother Clementine.

Also in June. The Chelsea Arts Society held their Summer Exhibition. We awarded a £1,000 prize to Michael Alford for his painting of Chelsea Old Church from the East, and I will shortly be presenting it to him together with Life Membership of the Society.

For nearly 100 years the Society has encouraged arts and artists as part of the essential character of Chelsea.

We are working on other prizes which might attract young members to the Society.

In July we held our Summer Party in the delightful garden at Auriens, and had over 100 guests.

In September Robert Hardman spoke to us about King Charles III.

In October, Hugh Thomas told us about India.

A week ago, on Remembrance Sunday, I laid a wreath on behalf of the Society at the War Memorial in Sloane Square, and many of us attended the service at Holy Trinity church afterwards.

Still to come!

Our future events have been arranged all the way to next September.

In about a month's time, on 18th December, we will hold our Christmas Party, again at Auriens in Dovehouse Street. The wine and canapés will be of high quality, and as numbers are limited, please book early to avoid disappointment.

In January we will hear about Anglo-Russian relations; In February Andrew Lownie will talk about The Mountbattens; In March we will hear how our country made sure that there would be No More Napoleons; in May Nigel West will tell us what the Chinese intelligence services are doing here in the UK; In June we will be treated to A Room with a View in Florence.

Our Garden Party will be in June, and in July we will hear about the epic raid on St Nazaire. In September we will meet the controversial historian Dr. David Starkey.

Our well-attended talks, mostly at Chelsea Old Town Hall, make a positive contribution to our reserves; they help to recruit new members; and are an opportunity for us to meet each other and the Speakers over a glass of wine.

THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Our events are always shown on our website, which also has an indexed set of our Annual Reports, and an application form for membership. Last month we had nearly 6,000 visitors to the website from all over the world.

As you will hear from our Treasurer, Chris Lenon, we are building up good financial reserves, which we can use for planning battles, and also to celebrate our centenary in 2027. However, please still remember the Society in your Will, and remember to sign a gift-aid form so that the Society can claim 25% more from the tax man at no cost to yourself. We have some forms here today at the back of the hall. Please complete one, even if you think you may already have done it.

Despite inflation, we have kept subscriptions unchanged at £30 for individuals, and £40 for joint membership in the same household.

We now have 1,126 members, which is a huge achievement. Do please invite your friends to our events, and encourage them to join, so as to protect the essential character of Chelsea and to meet some very interesting people. You may also like to wear the Chelsea Society lapel badge, which you can find at the back of the hall.

If your neighbours need help about a planning matter, get them to join the Society and our Planning Committee will help.

I am grateful to the Vice-Chairman, Michael Stephen, for editing the Annual Report and managing the website. Also producing monthly newsletters by e-mail, and a half-yearly Bulletin.

Chelsea's rich heritage and its thriving cultural activities cannot be taken for granted, but must be respected and enhanced to ensure that anything we build, in stone or in community spirit, is of good quality, and able to stand the test of time. Above all, we must value the place where we live.

Chelsea is unique, and we aim to keep it so. Our Society has been preserving and improving Chelsea, for nearly 100 years, to be enjoyed by all who live, work and play here. May it delight them all.

Mr. Mayor, my lords ladies and gentlemen It gives me great pleasure to present this account of our activities in this the 98th year of our Society.

Dr James Thompson

THE TREASURER'S REPORT



Christopher Lenon

The Treasurer presented the Accounts for the financial year ended 30th June 2025.

The Accounts and the Trustees' Report are available on the Society's website at <https://chelseasociety.org.uk/about-us/trustees-reports-and-accounts/>

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee monitors developments in planning policy at national and local level and makes representations about them where appropriate. It seeks to influence major planning developments in Chelsea and comments on other planning applications if they have wider implications for the Borough as a whole. It responds, where possible, to requests from the Society's members for advice on planning matters.

Its members in 2025 were:

Sir Paul Lever
(Chairman)



Mrs. Marina Murray



Mr. Michael Parkes



Col. David Waddell



Mr. Jules Turner



PLANNING LEGISLATION

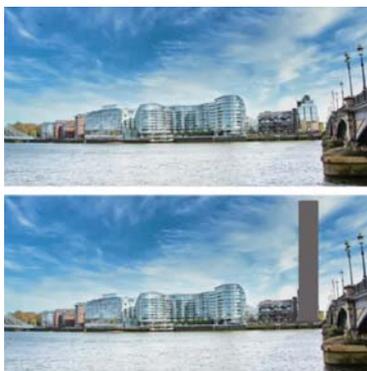
The government has introduced a Bill to Parliament which will have major implications for the way in which planning applications in Chelsea are dealt with and for the balance of responsibility between elected Councillors and Council officers. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill would require that developments of fewer than 50 homes would be decided in all instances solely by planning officers, not by Councillors in Committee. In Chelsea almost all applications would fall into this category: given the density of existing buildings there are very rarely any new projects involving more than 50 homes (Lots Road is the only one in recent years). Effectively the Bill would, if enacted in its present form, mean that there would be no involvement by Councillors in the planning process in Chelsea.

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

RBKC Council objected to the Bill during the consultation phase. So did the Chelsea Society. We did so principally on the grounds that it would constitute a denial of democracy to deprive elected Councillors of the right to call in planning applications in their area. Contested planning applications should not be decided behind closed doors but openly and in public, and by people with direct accountability to the electorate.

The current division of responsibility between Councillors and officers works well and does not result in avoidable delays (the reason the government gives for wanting to change the system). One cannot simply mechanically apply the provisions of the Local Plan, as in many cases the issues involve the interpretation of the Local Plan. Councillors are better placed to have an opinion on this than officers who do not live in the Borough.

We understand that there will be further consultations on the implementation of the Bill if and when it becomes law, and we have asked for the support of both our Members of Parliament. The Chelsea Society considers that at a very minimum it should not apply to Conservation Areas.



BATTERSEA BRIDGE/GLASSMILL

The proposal submitted by Rockwell, the developer, for the erection of a 28 storey skyscraper at the southern end of Battersea Bridge was rejected unanimously by Wandsworth Council's Planning Committee and has not been called in by the Mayor of London. We understand however that Rockwell have appealed against the rejection and the final decision will now be taken by the Planning Inspectorate.

THE KING'S ROAD

Construction work on the Gaumont building - formerly the site of the Curzon cinema, was completed in 2025 and the final fitting out is under way. The new Trafalgar pub is already open, and seems to be very popular, as are the facilities in Chelsea Manor Street and some of the retail outlets on the King's Road. We understand that the



REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

roof-top bar and the cinema will be opening in the New Year. Overall the development has resulted in a handsome and stylish addition to the façade of the King's Road. Oscar Wilde's head, in the form of Eduardo Paolozzi's sculpture, has finally been laid to rest on Dovehouse Green.

LOTS ROAD

Mount Anvil, the consultants chosen by RBKC to develop proposals for the redevelopment of the large Lots Road site which the Council owns, have now submitted their planning application. It envisages the provision of 65 care-home units to replace the Thamesbrook Care Home (which the Council sold off a few years ago) and 53 social-rent units as part of a 274-home complex. While these proposals are welcome they come at an aesthetic cost.

Some of the buildings would be too tall and their density would create canyonisation. The amount of employment space, in Chelsea's only Employment Zone, would also be inadequate. In all these respects the proposal is incompatible with the new Local Plan, the Lots Road section of which had been amended by the Planning Inspectorate.

The Chelsea Society works closely with the Lots Road Neighbourhood Forum, which has suggested ways in which these defects could be mitigated without calling into question the fundamental viability of the scheme. The Chelsea Society has supported their proposals and we hope that the Council will take account of them.



220 – 226 KINGS ROAD (THE MARKS AND SPENCER BUILDING)

Planning Permission for the demolition and redevelopment of this building was granted in 2023 but construction work has not yet started. There are reports that the owners of the site are engaged in a re-think about the scheme's viability. If it does not go ahead, this would be good news.

The Chelsea Society, along with several thousand other objectors, criticised the proposal on a number of grounds, in particular because it involved the demolition of a building which was only 40 or so years old, and would cause substantial noise, dust and disruption to life in Chelsea and traffic on the Kings Road.

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

ROYAL MARSDEN HOSPITAL

Consultations have continued on plans for the expansion and improvement of the hospital, and the Chelsea Society has attended several meetings with their planning team. We are in principle supporting the proposals, but our concern continues to be that the new building to be erected in the middle of the site should not be too dominant in relation to the surrounding streets and the Chelsea skyline.



We have suggested that the impact on Guthrie Street might be mitigated by the planting of a row of trees at the perimeter of the site and we have asked the Hospital to provide a fuller picture of the visibility of the new building from different locations in the surrounding area.



ST WILFRID'S CARE HOME, TITE STREET

The owners of the site, London Square a subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi owned Aldar Group, have now submitted a planning application for the demolition of the existing Care Home building, and its replacement by a block of 42 luxury flats. The Chelsea Society has joined the Tite Street Residents' Association in objecting to it. Although London Square has engaged in several meetings with us they have failed to take adequate account of the concerns we have raised, which accord with the pre-application advice given to them by Council officers.

Although London Square has engaged in several meetings with us they have failed to take adequate account of the concerns we have raised, which accord with the pre-application advice given to them by Council officers.

In particular they are refusing to include any element of care provision in their plans, nor any other form of on-site community use other than underground exhibition space for the neighbouring National Army Museum. They are also not proposing any on-site affordable housing, despite the fact that this is a clear Council requirement.

Their design is also unsuitable. The building is too tall, too dominant and would involve the loss of much of the existing convent garden and townscape gap. Tite Street is one of the most iconic streets in Chelsea with a unique combination of cultural and artistic heritage and architectural style. It is important that the Council is scrupulous in preserving its important heritage and should insist on the full implementation of the Local Plan and other relevant policies.

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

THAMES MOORINGS

The Thames Conservation Area and in particular the moorings at Chelsea Reach have in recent years been under great threat to their heritage character from the introduction of huge new houseboats, in some cases 3 to 4 times the volume of the smaller and very characterful boats. These smaller boats are now being pushed out with dire results for their



owners and with serious damage to river views. A significant number of members of the riverside community are under pressure of eviction from moorings where they have lived on their boats for many years.

In 2024 after a series of meetings, RBKC's planning committee decided that enforcement action should be taken to remove the mega boats because of the real harm caused by their size and their design as divided apartments.

The mooring operator, Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company, decided to appeal this decision and a public hearing was held by the Planning Inspectorate on 8th October 2024 after which the inspector surprisingly resolved to allow the appeal despite the united endorsement of the council's position by some 20 councillors, the Chelsea Society, the Cheyne Walk Trust, the Chelsea Reach Boatowners Association, the Lots Road Neighbourhood Forum and many individual Chelsea residents and friends.

It does appear quite extraordinary that an inspector with little local knowledge or understanding of Chelsea can simply impose her opinion that planning harm so strongly resisted by local councillors and residents should be permitted!!

In consequence the Leader and Councillors of RBKC have called on all riparian MPs to support an RBKC campaign for a London wide approach to ensure that mega boats are not permitted to take over London's riverfront and destroy its historic riverside and its communities.

We strongly support that proposal and will also be vigilant in monitoring and resisting further potential harm by whatever means are available to us.

This includes urging the Council to finalise and endorse the River Thames Conservation Area Management Plan (which has been in abeyance for some 4 years) as soon as possible to secure effective planning guidance and enforcement.

THE ROYAL AVENUE 1965



ROYAL AVENUE

Photograph by John Bignall

Royal Avenue - before and after

by James Knowles, F.R.I.B.A., A.M.T.P.I.

When the houses on the east flank at the north end of Royal Avenue were threatened with demolition our Society fought for their preservation. We lost and the result can now be seen.

The space between the two flanks of the Avenue is wide enough for one to be aware of the whole of the façades. The east flank had been designed with balance and contrast and the long terrace of houses presented a most happy and dignified complete façade. The tradition of Georgian architecture had survived into the 1860's and the comparatively new stucco and paint and London stock were materials which, from the beginning of the century, presented to central London the best of its present character. In the terrace details of ironwork and doors were very good indeed and the whole sculptured look

ROYAL AVENUE 1965

of the terrace was robust and splendid. There was no hesitation about the strength of the cornice. The whole complete terrace was well up to its job of containing worthily the vista to the Royal Hospital. It was an integral part of the wonderful space from the King's Road through Royal Avenue and the Royal Hospital to the River that Chelsea inherited.

As a Society we did our best at the time and we lost, I suppose, because the voices of interested speculators overcame those of disinterested advisers who had nothing but the future of Chelsea at heart.

And what is the result? I suppose a uniform skyline and the lining up of some windows and balconies. What several people have remarked is that it could be worse.

It is no good pretending that the continuity of the terrace has not been ruined, even because of the change in colour alone. The architectural whole has disappeared. There is a flat uninteresting facade of brick neo-Georgian houses, nothing to do, in fact, with the robust sculptured facades of the original houses. The balcony fronts are thin up and down bars, instead of the rich cast iron patterns. The scale of windows is changed to accommodate maisonettes. The grand cornice has gone. The rich doors and pediments and plasters are not replaced. Now there are two speculative schemes a hundred years apart.

Chelsea is graced with streets and squares of these ordered elegant houses in stucco and stock brick when builders were so busy in developing land in the middle of the last century. Margaretta Terrace and Paultons Square are of the best. The tradition of considered urban planning and building lingered and, for the simplest cottage, there was a vocabulary to which to turn.

There is the absence of this vocabulary, or a fresh one, in the design, not only in these new houses in Royal Avenue, but everywhere in new building and that is why we resist alterations, sometimes perhaps unduly.

The lime trees are just out and partly cover the tragedy of Royal Avenue. My walk home from the King's Road to St. Leonard's Terrace was always through Royal Avenue, but now I avoid it. However, for the short summer, it may be bearable with the screen of new leaves hiding what was so wrongly done.

THE SECOND TEN YEARS

The following are extracts from the Society's Annual Reports

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Founded—April, 1927

“To protect and foster the amenities of Chelsea ”

*The Council of the Chelsea Society presents
the Eleventh Annual Report, for the year
ending March 31st, 1938*

THE Coronation was celebrated in Chelsea with loyal unanimity, if with no conspicuous originality. The floral decorations at the Town Hall, and the effective “monolith” centrepiece in Sloane Square were much admired; and the spontaneous displays in many of the poorer streets were particularly noticeable; but attractive proposals for the illumination of our river front did not materialise.

BUILDING AND DEMOLITION.

The completion of Whitelands House, King's Road, and Shrewsbury House, Cheyne Walk (both very appropriately named) are the principal features of the year in Chelsea's constructive record. Whitelands House bulks rather ponderously upon its environment, and may affect the widening of King's Road; Shrewsbury House is cleverly orientated to its site; and, without entirely endorsing the claim of its builders that “harmonising perfectly with its romantic setting, it leaves the charming atmosphere of Cheyne Walk quite undisturbed,” it may at least be conceded that its texture is pleasant, its height reasonable, and its façade guiltless of the irritating horizontal bands that disfigure so many of our recent blocks.

"H.M.S. *CHELSEA*."

The American Destroyers, transferred to the British Navy in exchange for Naval bases in the Atlantic, are being re-named after home towns with namesakes in the United States; and amongst the first six so christened was H.M.S. *Chelsea*, after the Borough of Chelsea and the town of Chelsea, Boston, Massachusetts.

"It has been arranged that there shall be displayed in a prominent position in each ship a small plaque on which will be recorded something of the ties which link the two towns together, with a very short account of the towns themselves."

POSTSCRIPT.

This report was drafted to cover the Society's fourteenth year, which ended on March 31st, 1941.

It cannot, however, now be issued without reference to the double catastrophe which has since befallen our most cherished amenities. On the night of April 16-17 enemy action demolished Chelsea Old Church and the adjoining Petyt House, and also caused extensive damage to the Infirmary of the Royal Hospital.

No comment of ours is needed here, nor could any express adequately the pitiful tragedy of losses so futile, so wanton, yet so irreparable.



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Founded—April, 1927

“ To protect and foster the amenities of Chelsea ”

Fifteenth Annual Report

IN presenting their fifteenth Annual Report for the year ending March 31st, 1942, the Council of the Chelsea Society has decided to devote most of its space to the question of the future of Chelsea Old Church.

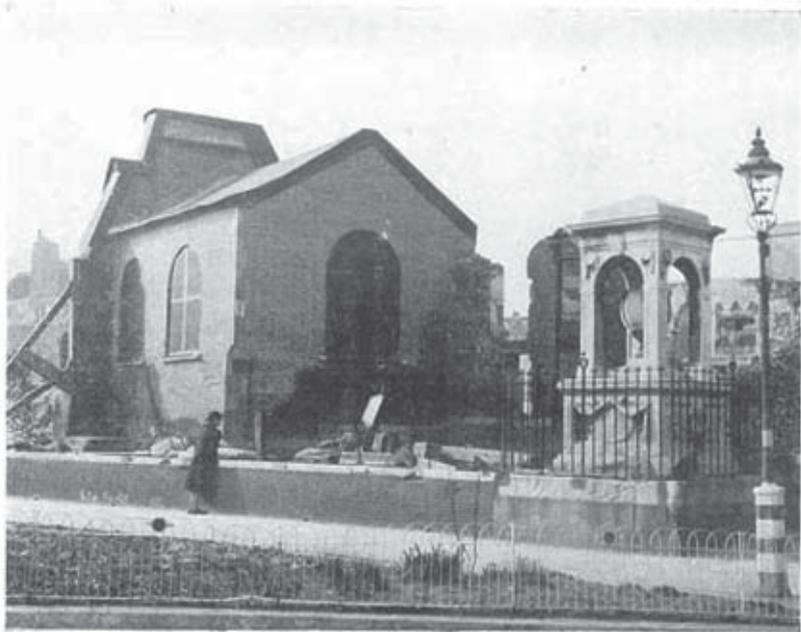
Whilst it is unlikely that any final decision in this matter will shortly be reached, it is obvious that during its consideration from various angles, the views and feelings of Chelsea as a whole, and of its congregation in particular, must be sought, heard and weighed in regard to their beloved Old Parish Church.

The Chelsea Society, as a body of Chelsea people keenly interested in the place of their abode, and pledged to the protection and preservation of its amenities, has naturally been asked to co-operate in obtaining these views for presentation if and when an Enquiry is held; and your Council feels that this Report may provide a timely and helpful means of achieving this.

The weight and value of any such verdict largely depend on a knowledge of the actual facts of the case upon which it is to be based; and it is these which your Council now proposes, so far as may be, to provide.

The walls of the Chancel stand to about half their height, and those of the Lawrence Chapel remain to nearly roof-plate level. One of the two 14th century windows in this Chapel is intact.

The arches from the Nave to the Chancel and Lawrence Chapel have fallen, but their stones are not seriously damaged and could be re-set. Little remains of the nave walling except the portion that backs on to the Dacre Tomb. The floor slabs are in position and a good deal of the constructional timbers of the roof has been preserved. The tower is practically entirely demolished.



MORE'S CHAPEL, REBUILT, AND SIR HANS SLOANE'S TOMB
from a photograph by T. Buchanan

Heavy as have been our losses there is also a credit side. Although at one time nearly two-thirds of our citizens had left London and gone to live in safer areas, those who remained, joined by many volunteers, rallied to the Civil Defence Services and carried out their duties with such devotion that even in the hours of greatest crisis Chelsea was never short of enthusiastic workers and helpers.

During the autumn and winter of 1940-41, we had indeed reason to be proud of and grateful to our Civil Defence personnel. All were severely tested and responded grandly. Wardens, police, stretcher bearers, rescue and demolition men, Red Cross, and Canteen workers—all were worthy of equal praise. Their coolness and courage were recognised by the bestowal of 19 medals and commendations; a sadder proof of devotion to duty is that nine of them 'laid down their lives for their friends.'

Perhaps during these testing days Chelsea became more of a family than ever before—a family whose life has centered in the Town Hall to a very remarkable degree. People who had previously regarded it as merely a disagreeable spot where they paid rates or came to make some complaint, have come to look upon it as the place where they are sure of help, service, and advice whenever they are in difficulty or trouble. Hundreds of families whose homes were destroyed have been comfortably re-housed. Through grants from the Lord Mayor's Fund and local generosity thousands have been re-clothed and given assistance in many ways and Members of the Council and its staff have come to be regarded as the very real friends of our citizens.

The Air Training Corps, numbers over 150 lads, and a Girls' Training Corps has now been formed—a pioneer effort which is being widely followed in other Boroughs; whilst the Sea Cadets go from strength to strength.

Several new boys' and girls' clubs have been started in Chelsea, since it is recognised that young people, between school and service ages, whose home life has been so sadly interfered with by war conditions, most urgently need the occupation and the discipline of such social activities.

RAILINGS.

The removal of railings as scrap iron has given rise to much heated controversy. The urgency of the national need has been reinforced by the opinion of many artists that civic beauty has been enhanced by their abolition. On the other hand the need for discrimination has been officially admitted, and appeals have been sympathetically considered where owners knew where and how to protest in time.

Several of the best known examples in Cheyne Walk received exemption, but the interesting panels of oriental character in the forecourt of No. 6 were only reprieved after an appeal from our Secretary made through Mr. Walter Godfrey. The railings of the forecourt of Argyll House were taken, nor was the central gateway spared. This gate, though damaged by time, was, as *The Survey* records, "of excellent design, evidently dating from 1723, when the house was built, with side panels and a good overthrow of scroll-work, the latter bearing John Perrin's initials, interlaced backwards and forwards like other monograms of that period." Argyll House was built for Perrin (or Pierene) by the Venetian architect, Giacomo Leoni.

It will probably be admitted by the majority that the Old King's Road Burial Ground and the St. Luke's Gardens have gained much, and lost nothing by the removals which have taken place there.

COUNCIL, MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCE.

The Duke of Atholl, who died at Dunkeld on March 15th, became one of the first Vice-Presidents of the Chelsea Society in 1932, and succeeded Lord Ernle as President on the death of the latter in 1936.

His interest in the Society's work was more than nominal, and though seldom able to attend its meetings, he repeatedly expressed his desire to be of service when occasion should arise; and in the negotiations concerning Lombard Terrace his help and guidance were wisely sought and freely given.

Though first and foremost a Scotsman and a soldier, these preoccupations by no means eclipsed his interest in the borough which he had chosen for his southern home.

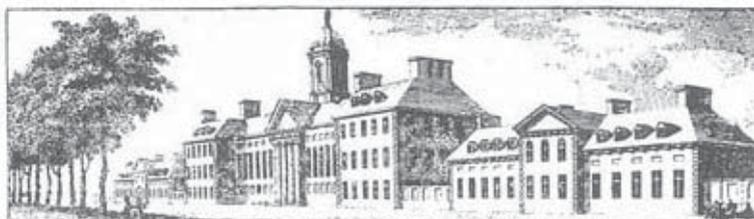
By the death last April, of Mary Countess of Lovelace the Society has lost one of its oldest supporters.

It was, indeed, at her house in Swan Walk that the first meeting to inaugurate the Chelsea Society was held in the Spring of 1927, and she continued, as an original member of its Council, to take a steadfast interest in its work and progress, lending Wentworth House for its gatherings on many occasions. Lady Lovelace bequeathed to the Chelsea Public Library an interesting little collection of pottery made for her by William de Morgan, who was amongst her life-long Chelsea friends.

Yet another valued member has just been lost to us in the death of Philip Wilson Steer, O.M., who helped the Chelsea Society both by criticism of its work and by loan of his own, and from his valuable collection of Chelsea China. World famous as an artist, Steer was also a devoted Chelsean, whom neither floods nor bombs could dislodge, and it is well that the memory of him should have been so humorously perpetuated in Henry Tonks' delightful drawings of the Cheyne Walk menage.

The increasing blindness of his last few years was borne with fine resignation, nor did it, till quite recently, prevent his being as familiar a figure along the western part of Cheyne Walk, as our blind President, Lord Ernle had been, to the last, at its eastern end.

That rarest and most coveted of our civil honours, the Order of Merit, has twice been brought to Cheyne Walk. For Henry James it was a death-bed offering of homage; but to Steer, and to the delight of his friends and colleagues, it came eleven years ago, in the ripe fulness of his powers and energies.



North Front of Chelsea Hospital.

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Founded—April, 1927

“To protect and foster the amenities of Chelsea”

Sixteenth Annual Report

IN issuing their Sixteenth Annual, and fourth war-time Report, the Council of the Chelsea Society is glad to affirm that, in spite of inactivity and the cessation of meetings and visits entailed by the dispersal and preoccupations of its members, the vitality of the Society survives. New supporters have been enrolled during the year, old members have sent donations to its funds in unexpected numbers, and many have written in sympathy and enquiry about Chelsea's war damage.

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL

The Governor, General Sir Harry Knox, has again kindly sent his report on events.

The Council desires to express its regret that this will be the last of these interesting records from his pen. His retirement this autumn is a real loss to the amenities of Chelsea, where his work and that of Lady Knox have by no means been confined to the precincts of Chelsea Hospital.

"Fortunately 1942 was a peaceful year in comparison with its predecessor; enemy action caused no further damage to the Royal Hospital.

The outstanding event of the year was the Inspection by His Majesty The King, accompanied by Her Majesty The Queen, on the 29th May. In-Pensioners were admitted to the Royal Hospital in 1692 and Their Majesties, in recognition of our 250th Anniversary, honoured the In-Pensioners by their visit. Owing to the fact that Their Majesties' movements have to be kept secret, any considerable issue of invitations was impossible; however, many friends assembled to watch the ceremony in Figure Court; there was a large gathering of our Commissioners, The Mayor and Mayoress of Chelsea, and many Chelsea war workers and the Civil Defence Services were well represented. There was also a contingent of widows from The Royal Cambridge Home for Soldiers' Widows.

"Before the Parade began a bouquet was presented to The Queen by In-Pensioner McIlherson, late of The Queen's Bays, on behalf of the Royal Hospital. The usual ceremonial was observed, and the Band of Scots Guards played the March Past. The King then spoke as follows:--

"It gives the Queen and myself great pleasure to visit you on this 250th Anniversary of the opening of the Royal Hospital, and I congratulate you on your fine soldierly appearance on parade.

"Your Hospital has suffered from enemy action but you are still proudly in occupation of these beautiful buildings, and your gallant behaviour under war conditions is worthy of the grand traditions of your Regiments and of the standard which has been set by your predecessors in this Hospital.

"You have helped in the war effort in every way which you have found possible, and by your good conduct and cheery bearing in the streets of London you have set a fine example to all.

"I wish you all God speed and many peaceful years when victory is won."



Topical Press

IN-PENSIONER McILHERON PRESENTS A BOUQUET TO THE QUEEN
FOUNDER'S DAY, MAY 29th, 1942

THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

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

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.

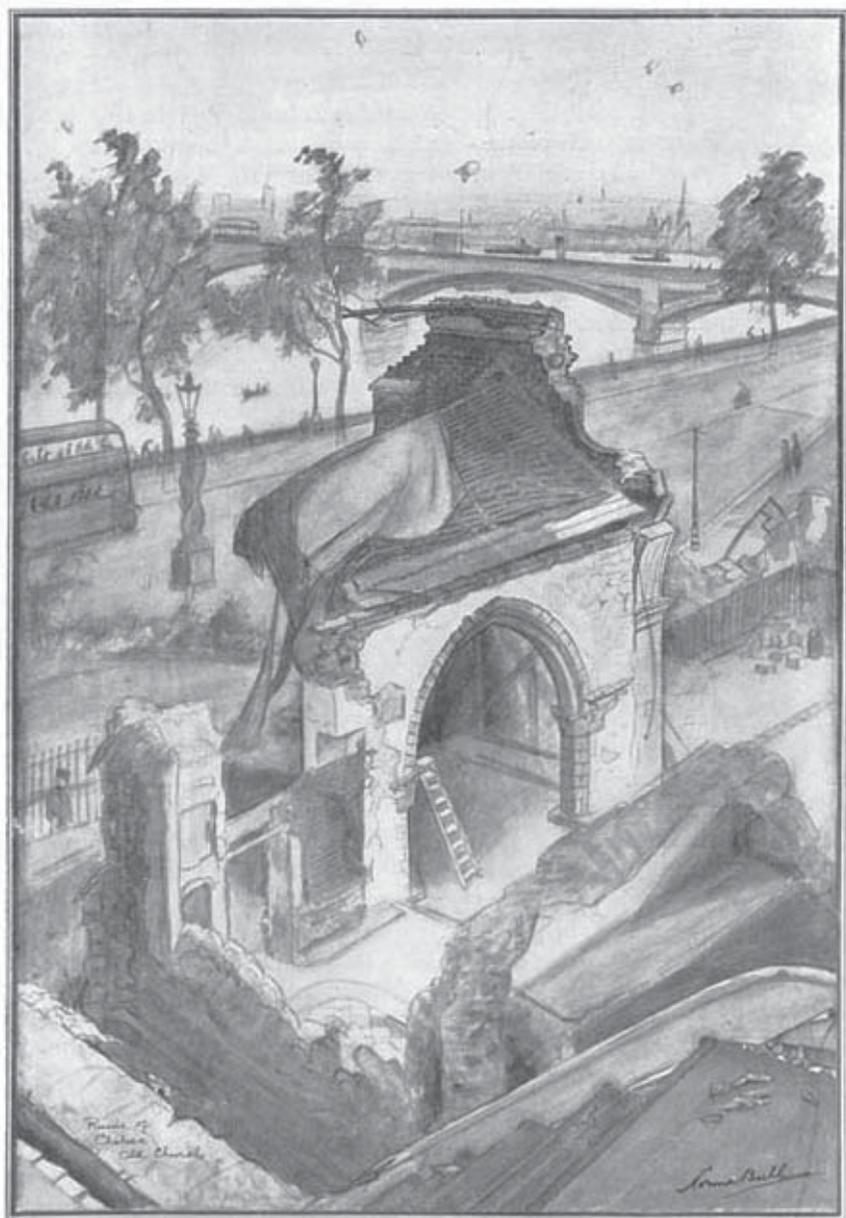
We have suffered other grievous losses: Lady Phipps, whose life-long work for Chelsea will long be remembered, as will also that of Lord De L'Isle, so active in our public life for many years as Mr. William Sidney; the Marquess of Crewe; Violet, Lady Melchett, founder of the Infant Welfare Centre; and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



RUINS OF CHELSEA OLD CHURCH BY MISS NORMA BULL, 1941
(by courtesy of Mr. Harold L. Harbour and Messrs. Machin & Son, Ltd.)

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND, KING'S ROAD. (Dovehouse Green)

In the summer of 1946, the Borough Council invited the Chelsea Society to submit its views on a proposal to fence off a section of the Old Burial Ground in the King's Road, to be used as a public garden. Thereupon the Society submitted a paper, in which it traced the history of the ground, beginning with the gift of land by Sir Hans Sloane and its consecration by the Bishop of London in 1736.

In this paper the Society drew attention to the many monuments of historical interest and good design contained in the Old Burial Ground; it reminded the Council that for many years the ground had provided the inmates of the neighbouring Institution with a quiet, shady garden from which they could watch the busy life of the King's Road; it pointed out that the Old Burial Ground, together with Argyle House and its adjoining houses, was the only remaining features of the King's Road that had survived the developments of the last 200 years. Finally the Society expressed the view that the character of the place should be preserved, but that as it had become partially derelict, certain features demanded attention.

The Society recommended that the straggling privets and evergreens should be removed; the unsightly mortuary should be abolished and grass planted wherever practicable; inscriptions on the more important monuments should be recut and steps should be taken to prevent their further deterioration; the central walk should be paved with York paving stones between the existing memorial slabs; the seats in the central walk should be arranged at the side instead of at the centre and finally that there should be more flowers. Subject to this, it raised no objection in principle to the reservation of a strip 20 feet deep along the King's Road for the purpose of a public garden.



PHOTOGRAPH OF THE OLD BURIAL GROUND IN 1947.

By W. G. Buchanan.



Dovehouse Green 2024

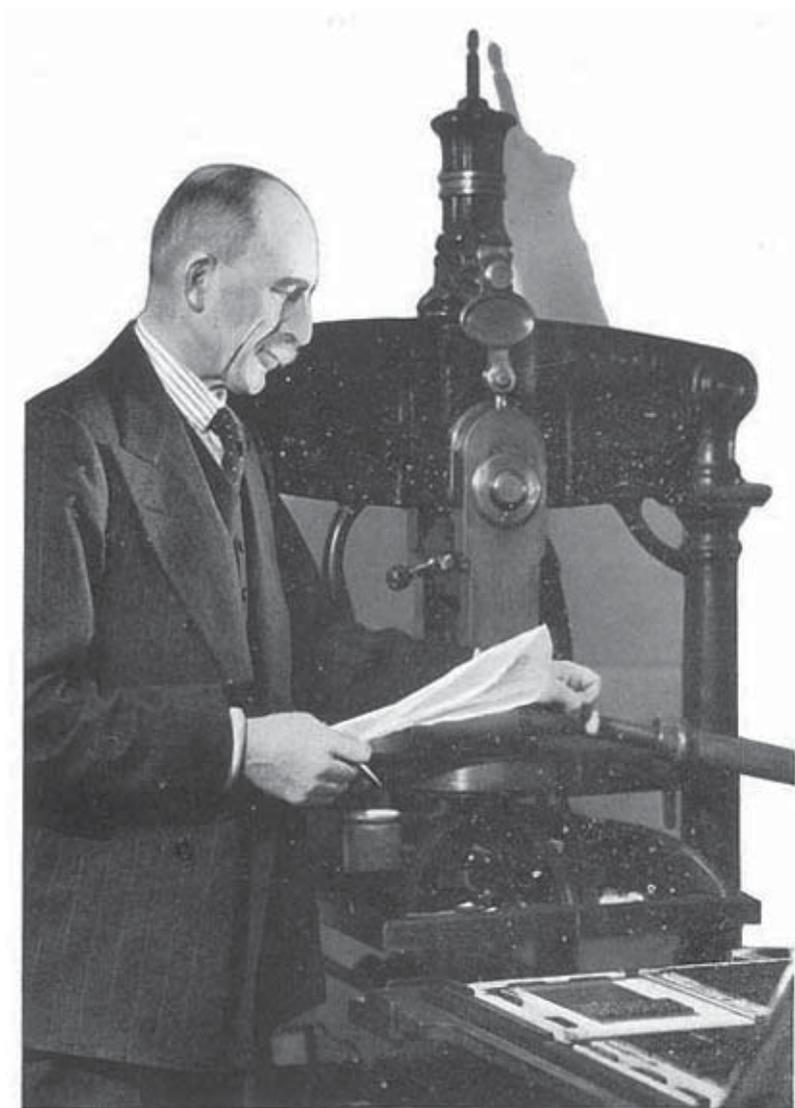
ST. JOHN HORNBY.

When Charles Harry St. John Hornby died on 26th April, 1946, aged 78, Chelsea lost a loved and honoured figure and the Chelsea Society its first Chairman.

St. John Hornby was educated at Harrow and New College, Oxford where he took a first in Honour Moderations. In 1890 he rowed in the eight which won the Boat Race for Oxford. He was called to the Bar in 1892 and two years later became a Partner in W. H. Smith & Son. He married Cicely, daughter of Charles Barclay, and she and three of their five children are members of the Chelsea Society.

The present Shelley House which St. John Hornby built in 1913 stands on Chelsea Embankment, a fine setting in its simple design for the rare books, china and pictures which he loved to collect and arrange.

Many meetings of the Chelsea Society were held there. The beauty of Shelley House and the wisdom of its owner did much to strengthen the artistic and civic foundations of the Society. St. John Hornby was a perfect chairman. He was able to present a problem in its simplest form and by clearing away all those petty considerations which sometimes complicate local affairs, lead the way to wise and tolerant discussion until a solution was found.



ST. JOHN HORNBY first Chairman of the Chelsea Society standing beside his press.

JAMES II

Chelsea lost the struggle for the Grinling Gibbons statue of James II. Shortly before the Society's Annual General Meeting in October, 1947, it was learnt that the Ministry of Works proposed to re-site the displaced statue of James II on a small plot outside the National Gallery. Captain Dean, Adjutant to the Royal Hospital, addressed the meeting and stressed the importance of the part James II played in building the Hospital.

It is often assumed that Charles II, who founded the Hospital in 1682, also built it. In fact, owing to the shortage of funds, little had actually been accomplished before his death. Not only was it unfinished, but it was without any endowment or source of revenue. On succeeding to the throne, James II, faced with more projects on hand than money to pay for them, might well have abandoned the Royal Hospital. He did not do this, but cut down expenditure on other buildings, notably Winchester Palace, which had also been begun by Charles II.

CHELSEA THEN AND NOW

One of our members, Simon de Maré, has an amazing collection of postcards showing Chelsea as it was at the end of the 19th century.

With his permission The Chelsea Society is sharing them with its members.

Old Chelsea Bridge



Old Chelsea Bridge with Royal Hospital in the distance

CHELSEA THEN AND NOW

Chelsea Bridge, Old & New



CHELSEA THEN AND NOW

**Royal Hospital, Chelsea
Royal Hospital Road**



CHELSEA THEN AND NOW

Embankment Gardens



CHELSEA THEN AND NOW

Embankment



ASTON MARTIN – MADE IN CHELSEA

Aston Martin was founded in 1913 in Chelsea by Lionel Martin and Robert Bamford in a small workshop at 16 Henniker Mews.



Martin and Bamford initially sold and serviced cars for Singer, but their passion for racing led them to develop their own vehicle. The first car to bear the Aston Martin name was built in 1915, and was known as the “Coal Scuttle.” The vehicle was based on a 1908 Isotta Fraschini chassis, with a 1.4-litre Coventry-Simplex engine. Only one Coal Scuttle was ever made.

The name “Aston Martin” was inspired by Lionel Martin’s success at the Aston Clinton Hill Climb in Buckinghamshire.

World War I interrupted their plans, and production ceased as both founders enlisted in the military. After the war, they resumed operations, but financial problems plagued the company. Bamford soon left, and Lionel Martin continued with new backers. By the 1920s, Aston Martin had moved out of Chelsea, first to Kensington and later to Feltham.

In 1934, the brand’s designer, Claude Hill, had a budget of £10,000 to develop a new 2.0-litre engine. Mounted in a modernised chassis of existing models, the Aston Martin 2-Litre was entered in competitions and had a successful career as a sedan, coupe and convertible 2 and 4 seater with a 98 horsepower version of its engine. A total of 175 different examples were built until 1939 and the beginning of the Second World War.

David Brown (1904-93) was a passionate engineer and innovator, and was MD of his family company, which specialized in gears and machine tools. He purchased Aston Martin in 1947 for £20,500, having been impressed by the potential of its latest prototype.

ASTON MARTIN – MADE IN CHELSEA

At the 1949 24-hours race at Le Mans, Aston Martin entered three examples of a new prototype that would become the DB2 the following year. The 2.6-litre 6-cylinder in-line engine developing 105 horsepower was borrowed from Lagonda.

In 1953, the DB2 was succeeded by the DB2/4 which, thanks to an elongated body, could offer four seats. Its 6-cylinder engine was increased to 2.9 litres, developing 141 horsepower. In seven years, 410 examples of the DB2 and 761 examples of the DB2/4 were produced.

In 1972, Aston Martin changed hands and came under the control of American investors. The same year, they launched a largely reworked version of the V8-powered DBS, called the AMV8. The convertible variant was marketed from 1978 and this model, as it evolved, remained in the catalogue until 1989. It was, at the time, and by far, the brand's most produced model with 2,560 units.

Launched in 1993, the new Vantage was the "sporty" version of the Virage and soon became the only choice in the catalogue, where it remained until 2000, with 288 units produced. The engine acquired compressors to develop 557 horsepower and 745 Nm of torque. As a result, the maximum speed is 300 km/h!

The 1999 Le Mans version (created in 40 units to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their 1959 victory at Le Mans) went up to 612 horsepower and 820 Nm. Offered as a Volante coupe and convertible, the DB7 Vantage sold 6,477 units, making the DB7 the most popular Aston Martin in history.

From its humble beginnings in a Chelsea mews, Aston Martin grew to become one of the world's most iconic luxury car brands, renowned for its association with performance, craftsmanship, and elegance.



A commemorative plaque on the wall of 12-16 Henniker Mews

FIELD MARSHAL THE VISCOUNT SLIM MY GRANDFATHER

*A talk to the Society on 13th January 2025
by his grandson the 3rd Viscount Slim*



William Joseph Slim was born in 1891 in Bishopston, a small village outside Bristol and now a suburb of Bristol. When he was created Viscount in 1960, he included Bishopston as part of his title. He was brought up in a caring and close family environment but his father's wholesale hardware business hit hard times and in 1903 the family moved to Birmingham where his father set up a new hardware business.

The young Bill went to St. Philip's, Edgbaston a Catholic school. His mother brought up her children in the Catholic faith but after Bill left home, he became disenchanted with Catholicism and in due course married a Presbyterian and brought up his own children in the Protestant faith. He did attend church when duty called but he never took communion again.

In 1908 Bill transferred to King Edward's School from where he qualified as a teacher as he needed a job quickly to help support his family, his father's business having failed again. But it was also at King Edward's where he was able to at last follow his dreams and start soldiering. He joined the cadet force, reaching the rank of Lance Corporal. With his family financial situation now in worse straits, any prospect of going to Sandhurst had to wait, and his career in teaching commenced.

This role was to give him good background and experience for future command. He taught severely deprived children from the poorest parts of Birmingham, but after two years of the low wages of a teacher, Bill went into industry, working as a junior clerk for a manufacturer of metal tubes. According to those who knew him in those days, his mind was always on military matters, and despite not being a student at Birmingham University where his brother was studying medicine, he somehow managed to join the University's Officers' Training Corps.

His position in the Cadets meant he was well placed to join the Army when war broke out in 1914 and he became one of many young subalterns, gazetted to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. By coincidence, Bernard Montgomery was in the same Regiment albeit a different battalion already serving on the Western Front.

Slim was not posted to the Western Front but instead to Gallipoli where he was wounded (and nearly died) during an attempt to take Chunuk Bair. The bullet missed his heart by a whisker and went through a lung before smashing his shoulder. A painful journey by hospital ship back to England ensued, followed by an even longer period of recovery and convalescence before he was ready for active service again.

Eventually he was posted to Mesopotamia, joining up with his old battalion the 9th Royal Warwicks where he fought his old foe the Turks, this time in Iraq. He was wounded for a second time by shrapnel in his right arm, but it was not life threatening and his second voyage on a hospital ship took him to Bombay. He spent the rest of the War in India, joined the Indian Army and in 1920 he became a Captain in the 1/6th Gurkha Rifles. He became Adjutant of the Regiment - a post he held until the end of 1924.

In that year Slim took his first leave to England for six years and when returning to India by ship met and soon married Aileen Robertson, whose father was a

minister of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. They had two children: my father, John born in 1927 and my aunt Una in 1930.

As always, money was tight and now with two children to educate, Slim used an as yet unknown talent to raise enough money for school fees. Under the pseudonym Anthony Mills (Slim spelt backwards) he wrote short stories published in England in various newspapers and also in the Illustrated Weekly of India. Some of these stories he used in *Unofficial History*, which he published in 1959 and all of them have recently been published as *Tales of Empire* edited by Robert Lyman who found the original manuscripts in the Slim archive at Churchill College, Cambridge. Slim's autobiography *Defeat into Victory* written in the 1950s went on to be an international best seller and is said by some critics to be the best 'General's book' of WW2.

In the years leading up to WW2, Slim took part in several operations with the Gurkhas on the North-West Frontier before attending Staff College in Quetta where he passed out top. He then went to England to be an instructor at the Staff College at Camberley before going on to the Imperial Defence College before returning to India to command 2/7th Gurkhas.

In the early days of WW2 Slim commanded 10 Indian Brigade in Eritrea, fighting the Italians and was again severely wounded – this time by several spent shots from an Italian fighter plane resulting in another long hospital stay this time in Khartoum, followed by a long convalescence in Simla. He then took command of 10 Indian Division fighting in Syria and Persia before returning to Iraq.

In 1942 Slim received instructions to fly immediately to Burma to take command of Burcorps which was already struggling against the Japanese invasion. Following some very challenging encounters, the situation became hopeless to the undersupplied and inadequately trained Allied forces and a retreat was undertaken back to India – a total of 950 miles. This was without question a defeat but the men of Burcorps did re-enter India in fighting formation despite their scarecrow appearance. The fact that they managed this feat was in itself no small miracle and much of the credit for this belongs to Slim, with his calm leadership and crisis management.

He had gained a lot of firsthand knowledge about Japanese fighting tactics and also about the inadequate response the Allies had offered. He was well aware that things had to change, and as the new commander of 15 Corps he spent much time planning how to win, while instigating vigorous training exercises. He never wavered from his view that if the Army was well trained, well supplied and remained healthy (tropical disease was prevalent) while utilising the new tactics he was developing, then the Japanese could be beaten. He understood fully the

importance of raising morale which had hit a low point and this became an important focus for him.

The second phase of the Burma campaign began in 1943 under General Irwin and was an abject failure. Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Commander of Southeast Asia in late 1943 and selected Slim as Commander of what was to become the 14th Army. The Japanese invasion of India was defeated in 1944 with the tremendous battles at Imphal and Kohima which resulted in two Japanese Armies being completely destroyed, with estimates suggesting they lost 60,000 men. Slim was knighted with two of his divisional commanders on the Imphal Plain.

14th Army then advanced into Burma culminating in Operation Extended Capital which resulted in the defeat of another Japanese Army and is credited by some historians as the finest piece of military strategy enacted in WW2. The Japanese surrendered in Southeast Asia on 12th September, 1945 in Singapore. The Burma Campaign had been the largest and longest British led campaign of WW2 -beginning in late 1941, ending in August 1945 and at its peak involving 1.3 million service personnel. It is ironic that they were known as the Forgotten Army.

After WW2, Slim was first Commandant of the Imperial Defence College, then Deputy Chairman of the British Railways Executive before coming out of retirement to be Atlee's CIGS (promoted Field Marshal). He then became Governor-General of Australia from 1953-1960 and on return to England he moved into Windsor Castle as its Governor.

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN

Immediately after the 3rd Viscount Slim had spoken about the Field Marshal as his grandfather, Robert Lyman FRHistS spoke to us about Slim as the Army Commander who defeated the Imperial Japanese army and drove them out of Burma.

“Today I’m going to talk to you about Slim’s command primarily of the 14th Army in India and Burma between August 1943 and the end of the war in Asia exactly two years later. What I want to do is to give you some reasons for thinking that he was Britain’s greatest general.

In early 1945 Lance Corporal George Fraser of the Border Regiment was resting after hard fighting in Burma when occurred one of the defining moments in his life. His battalion had crossed the Chindwin river, and had been fighting against a tenacious and skilful enemy on its way towards the mighty Irrawaddy river. His battalion had a visitor, none other than the Army Commander, Lt. General Sir William Slim, known to them as Uncle Bill. This is how he described it:

“The biggest boost to our morale was the burly man who came to talk to the battalion by the lake shore. Slim was the only man I’ve ever seen who had a force that came out of him, a strength of personality that I’ve puzzled over ever since... His appearance was plain enough: large, heavily built, grim-faced with that hard mouth and bulldog chin; the rakish Gurkha hat was at odds with the slung carbine and untidy trouser bottoms... Nor was he an orator... His delivery was blunt, matter-of-fact, without gestures or mannerisms, only a lack of them.

Slim emerged from under the trees by the lake shore, there was no nonsense of “gather round” or jumping on boxes; he just stood with his thumb hooked in his carbine sling and talked about how we had caught the Japs off-balance and were going to annihilate them in the open. There was no exhortation or ringing clichés, no jokes or self-conscious use of barrack-room slang. He was telling us informally what would be, in the reflective way of intimate conversation. and we believed every word – and it all came true. When he talked of smashing the Japs, that to him it meant not only arrows on a map but clearing bunkers and going in under shell-fire. He had the head of a general with the heart of a private soldier.”

Bill Slim was a born leader of soldiers. He inspired confidence because he knew instinctively that the strength of an army lay not in its equipment, traditions or even doctrine, but in the training and morale of its soldiers and the personal competence and leadership of its officers. During the retreat from Burma in 1942 he visited a unit that he had been told was in a bad way. He soon found out why, observing that the officers were looking after themselves, rather than their men.

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN

This was, to him, entirely unacceptable. Officers existed to lead, and the interests of their men came well ahead of their own. "I tell you, therefore, Slim told an audience of officers joining 14th Army in 1944, 'that you will neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, nor smoke, nor even sit down until you have personally seen that your men have done those things. If you will do this for them, they will follow you to the end of the world. And, if you do not, I will break you.'"

He was the antithesis of the 'châteaux general' who never ventured far from the comfort of his headquarters. He brought his men into his confidence in a way that was very unusual at the time, the result of the complete absence in his personal makeup of any social pretention.

Slim knew his men and could communicate with them because he was one of them. From the bloody days in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia during the First World War, and in the inter-war years on the North West Frontier, he had experienced their bitterest trials. Not for him the aristocratic or privileged middle-class upbringing of many of his peers, but an early life in industrial Birmingham.

As a result of his character, the men of the 14th Army – British, Indian, African and Gurkha – gave him their loyalty in a way rarely seen in the annals of command. It would be inconceivable to think of Field Marshal Montgomery as 'Uncle Bernard', but it was to 'Uncle Bill' that soldiers in Burma, from the dark days of 1942 and 1943, through to the great victories over the Japanese in 1944 and 1945, gave their confidence. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten declared that the entire 14th Army became 'his devoted slaves'. He was surely right.

Slim was able to cope with defeat, and learn from it. Between March and May 1942 he ensured that the one hundred day, one thousand mile retreat from Burma to India - the longest in the history of the British Army - was not a rout. He managed the withdrawal through dust-bowl, jungle and mountain alike so deftly that the Japanese, though undoubtedly victorious, were utterly exhausted and unable to mount offensive operations into India for a further year.

The British defeat in Burma in 1942 marked him out as a commander of considerable mental stamina, a man who was tough and tenacious in the face of almost overwhelming adversity, who refused to give up when all the facts seemed to indicate that there was no hope for his bedraggled and defeated forces. 'He was not afraid of anything,' recorded the American General 'Vinegar Joe' Stilwell, 'and he looked it.' He remained calm and level-headed in public, controlling his emotions with iron discipline.

Slim then demonstrated how to rebuild an army conditioned to defeat. In 1943 he was given the opportunity no British officer has been given since the days of Wellington: the chance to train an army from scratch and single-handedly mould

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN

it into something of his own making - an army of extraordinary spirit and power against which nothing could stand, and which would sweep to victory against the Japanese in 1944 and 1945. By 1945 Slim's 14th Army, at 606,000 men the largest ever assembled by Britain, had decisively and successively defeated two formidable Japanese armies, the first at Imphal and Kohima in India in 1944 and the second on the banks of the mighty Irrawaddy along the infamous 'Road to Mandalay' in 1945.

In Burma, Slim wrote, "We fought for the clean, the decent, the free things of life.... We fought only because the powers of evil had attacked these things."

By the 'intellectual' principle he meant that soldiers had to be convinced that the object could be attained. The task was to destroy the notion that the Japanese soldier was invincible. Equally, each soldier had also to know that the organisation to which he belonged was an efficient one. Slim knew that the physical care of a soldier in the field has a direct bearing on his performance in battle: lack of food, water, medical support or contact with home works to weaken the resolve, over time, of even the stoutest man.

Slim was phenomenally successful in battle. First, he prevented the invasion of India in 1942 by a Japanese Army exulting in its omnipotence after the collapse of Singapore and the rest of East Asia and the Pacific rim. Next, he removed forever any further Japanese ambitions to invade India by his defeat of their invasion in the Naga Hills around Kohima and the Manipur Plain around Imphal in the spring and early summer of 1944. In so doing he decisively shattered the myth of Japanese invincibility that had for so long crippled the Allied cause.

Despite the worries of many in Delhi and London, and subtly influencing Mountbatten to accept his, Slim drove his armoured, foot and mule-borne and air-transported troops deep into Burma in late 1944 and 1945, across two of the world's mightiest rivers, to outwit and outfight the 250,000 strong Army of General Kimura and in so doing engineer the complete collapse of the Japanese.

Slim was also a remarkable coalition commander, because his Army was a thoroughly imperial one, 90% Indian, Gurkha and African. Even in the British Empire of the time it was not self-evident that a British officer would secure the commitment of the diverse nationalities he commanded: indeed, many did not. Slim did so at a time of social and political unrest in India with the anti-colonial 'Quit India' campaign, and in the face of some early desertions to the Japanese-sponsored 'Indian National Army,' makes his achievements even the more remarkable.

He was not a theoretician, although after the war he became for a short time Commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies. Rather, he was an

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN

intensely practical strategist. At his heart he was a proponent of the maxim taught to him when he was a young officer by an old Sergeant Major: 'Hit the other fellow as quick as you can and as hard as you can, where it hurts him most, when he ain't looking.'

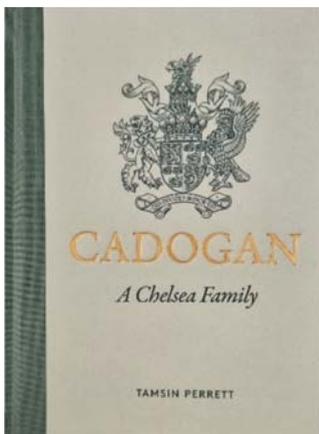
Slim prized above all the virtues of cunning and guile, and he sought opportunities at every turn to deceive his enemy. This required realistic, physically demanding training; the use of air power to supply forward troops; the delegation of command to the lowest levels; a self-help approach to logistical deficiencies and a relentless exploitation of the pursuit, to ensure that an enemy caught off guard had limited opportunity to recover its equilibrium.

In 1944 he allowed General Mutaguchi's 100,000 strong 15th Japanese Army to extend itself deep into India, there to be met by a ruthlessly determined 4 Corps, supplied by air and attacking at every opportunity their tenuous lines of communication back to the Chindwin river. It was high risk strategy, and more than one senior officer in Delhi and London despaired of success, but in the climatic battles of Imphal and Kohima he succeeded in shattering the cohesion of a whole Japanese Army and destroying its will to fight. He had moulded the Japanese offensive to suit his own plans, and step-by-step, he decisively broke it in the hills of eastern Assam and the Imphal plain.

He was convinced that real victory required an aggressive pursuit, not just to the Chindwin but into the heart of Burma itself. Single-handedly he worked to put in place all the ingredients of a bold offensive to seize Mandalay at a time when every inclination in London and Washington was to seek an amphibious solution to the problem of Burma and thus avoid the entanglements of a land offensive. Slim believed, however, that it could be done.

Virtually alone he drove his plans forward, winning agreement and acceptance to his ideas as he went, particularly from Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander in the Far East. He went on to execute in Burma in 1945 one of the most brilliant expositions of the strategic art that warfare has ever seen. He did this in the face of difficulties of every sort and degree. Employing his strategic initiative to the full, he succeeded in outwitting and destroying an even larger army under General Kimura along the Irrawaddy river between Meiktila and Mandalay in the spring of 1945, Kimura himself described Slim's operation as the 'masterstroke of allied strategy'.

CADOGAN - A CHELSEA FAMILY



The Author of this new book, Tamsin Perrett spoke to the Chelsea Society about it on Thursday, 13 February 2025

She said “This new book is the first history of the Cadogan family to look back over a thousand years. I was asked to write it, having previously worked with them on smaller projects. The Cadogans will be well known to you, not least through their 300-year association with Chelsea, and stewardship of 93 acres of central London. Did you know that many of Chelsea’s street names have family connections?”



Street names of Chelsea with family connections

The book opens, ‘We begin a thousand years ago with a king.’ That’s Elystan Glodrydd (c.975–1010, Elystan ‘the Renowned’), founder of the 5th Royal Tribe of Wales. Tales of how he came by this sobriquet have been lost in the intervening millennium, but it is the lions rampant from his coat of arms that emblazon the

CADOGAN – A CHELSEA FAMILY

shirts of today's Chelsea football team. His son Cadwgan is where we get the name Cadogan, meaning 'battle-keen'. So yes, the early Cadogans are Welsh; they are also Irish – true Celts.

Major William Cadogan (1601–1661), was Governor of Castle Trim during the Irish rebellion of the mid seventeenth century. His natural intelligence had taken him to Ireland as Private Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He fought throughout the English Civil War and came out on top, rewarded with a 665-acre estate in County Meath. The family settled in Dublin and Major William's grandson, also William, became the first 1st Earl Cadogan (there are two). As Charles Moore says in his introduction to the book, 'You need to bear in mind that almost every man in this saga is called William, George, Edward, Henry or Charles – none of the quirky names often popular with the aristocracy.'



William Cadogan, first 1st Earl Cadogan, studio of Hans Hysing, c.1726, oil on canvas. This portrait hangs in the office of Edward, 9th Earl Cadogan]

General Sir William, 1st Earl Cadogan (1672–1726), is best known as Quartermaster General and right-hand man to the 1st Duke of Marlborough during the War of the Spanish Succession. A physically imposing soldier and exceptional logistician, he possessed an equally natural flair for languages and diplomacy: a round peg in a round hole at a time when these skills were a key to rapid social advancement and huge wealth. He led the fighting from the front. The book – which is full of pictures – reproduces the order of battle for the Battle of Blenheim, with the name 'Cadogan' inked second from left along the cavalry on the front line. At Mons he was shot in the neck. Marlborough wrote to his wife, 'As he is very

fatt there greatest apprehension is growing feaverish.' [sic]

He went on to become commander-in-chief of the Army during his mentor's decline and was ennobled by King George I as Baron Cadogan of Reading (1716); Baron Cadogan of Oakley (remember Oakley Street?), Viscount Caversham and Earl Cadogan (1718). In the end it was a surfeit of good living that led to his demise. He left two daughters, one of whom he had married rather successfully to the 2nd Duke of Richmond – but a huge pile of debt and no sons. During his final illness he was treated by the King's physician, Sir Hans Sloane (see Sloane Square, Sloane Street). As the Georgians settle in, the story of the Cadogans is taken up by William's brother Charles and his bride Elizabeth Sloane (1701–1768), Sir Hans's daughter.

CADOGAN – A CHELSEA FAMILY

It was their marriage, on 25 July 1717 at the church of St George the Martyr, Holborn, that brought the Chelsea estate into the Cadogan family. Elizabeth herself had an interest in medicine and the book includes a letter outlining her method of infusing bark in a tonic for the relief of fever (the liquid was largely brandy). Today we know that willow bark contains the same active ingredient as aspirin.



Charles, 2nd Baron Cadogan of Oakley (1685–1776), and his wife Elizabeth Sloane (1701–1768), studio of Michael Dahl, oil on canvas; and top left Sir Hans Sloane, attr. Jonathan Richardson, c.1720, oil on canvas]

Charles Sloane Cadogan (1728–1807), their eldest son, was rewarded for unwavering support to William Pitt the Younger from the House of Lords. He was elevated to Viscount Chelsea and provided with a new creation of the earldom, becoming the second 1st Earl Cadogan in 1800.

What did Charles do? He had many children – fourteen in total, by two wives. From the first set of seven, five survived childhood, of which three military sons were lost before the age of thirty unmarried and apparently childless, and not one to military action. ('Apparently' is a clue to an intriguing side-story.) His second eldest was a thundering clergyman, who became vicar of Chelsea Old Church in 1775, and of St Giles's, Reading, less than a mile from the family seat at Caversham. (If you look around Chelsea's churches you will find a host of plaques and memorials to Cadogans.) As his father and grandfather before him, the present earl maintains a keen interest in clerical appointments.

The second marriage was to Mary Churchill, granddaughter of Britain's first prime minister (Sir Robert Walpole) and great-grandniece to the 1st Duke of Marlborough. The transcript of her trial for 'criminal conversation' (adultery) is a fascinating glimpse into daily life at the turn of the nineteenth century and the sometimes comic subterfuge involved in the case, through witness statements:

CADOGAN – A CHELSEA FAMILY

'The coast being thus clear, [Mary's maidservant] Farley Bull immediately came down the stairs, and looking towards the passage, she said, Hem! Hem! twice, aloud. She was looking towards the other stairs, where, if any body had been coming, she must have seen them...the witness saw Mr. Cooper run down the stone stairs very quick.'

Mary's main role was in providing the second set of seven children, through whom the Cadogan line of descent continues.

The year of her marriage, 1777, has a double significance for the Cadogan family. It is the year they approved Henry Holland's proposal to layout out Hans Town. Bollards from the boundaries of Hans Town still stand around Chelsea; the streets follow the same Georgian street grid. Holland's own grand house, known as 'the Pavillion' is no more, but is remembered in Pavillion Road. Also under Charles Sloane Cadogan, the Royal Military Asylum for Children of Soldiers of the Regular Army was built on the site of old Chelsea/Cadogan House in 1801. Duke of York's Square and Pavilion Road have, as you will know, both seen significant reimagining in recent years.



Sir William Hamilton leading a tour to Vesuvius, Pietro Fabris, 1776, etching with gouache]

Back to the line of succession. Charles Henry, 2nd Earl Cadogan (1749–1832), the eldest son of the 1st Earl (NC), was the only one of his siblings to outlive his father. and he was quite mad. He is one of my favourites. Charles Henry set off on a fashionable Grand Tour that lasted seven years, staying with aristocrats and crowned heads of Europe. He enjoyed a dinner in the crater of Mount Vesuvius, while staying with Sir William Hamilton of the infamous ménage à trois with his second wife Emma and Horatio, Lord Nelson. (Naturally, Lord Nelson is a distant cousin of the Cadogans.) Original research undertaken during the course of writing this book means we are pretty confident that it was during this extended gap year that he picked up syphilis, which presented at a tertiary stage of the disease as altered behaviour and dementia. His incapacity led to a sort of regency.

CADOGAN – A CHELSEA FAMILY

So we come to Camilla's favourite (Camilla Mountain, who many of you will know, is the editor of this book). There is so much to say about him, we ended up with two chapters.

George, 3rd Earl Cadogan (1783–1864), had greatness thrust upon him. On 21 June 1813, after nearly twenty years in the Royal Navy, Charles Sloane Cadogan's eleventh child found himself next in line to inherit the earldom. He had gone away to sea during the Napoleonic Wars. This was the Golden Age of Sail, when life at sea was dangerous and exciting. His first captain was Sir Edward Pellew, familiar from C.S. Forester's Hornblower novels (fictionalized, but a real person). With just a year's experience at sea, thirteen-year-old George Cadogan stuck to his station on the quarterdeck during HMS *Indefatigable's* most famous engagement: the destruction of the French warship *Droits de l'homme*, in 1797.

There are descriptions of life in the Navy, the lashings and tots, and the crews assembled from a ragbag of sailors, newly pressed or recruited men, and convicts. Mutinies were not unusual and George faced one down himself. 'In the most exciting version, "George then appeared at the gunroom door, naked, with a pistol in one hand a cutlass in the other."' Another discovery during our research was an eighteenth-century sword, with a note to the effect that George had relieved it from a Spanish Admiral after having destroyed his fleet. It was a joy to look through the family's archives throughout the course of putting this book together.

George certainly fits the bill as a swashbuckling hero. One bright spring morning in 1809 (30 May, a Tuesday), at 7 am, he marked out the agreed number of paces across Wimbledon Common, turned to face his opponent and fired a pistol. His opponent was Lord Henry Paget, later 1st Marquess of Anglesey – his sister Lady Charlotte's lover. The story of their affair (both were married) reached the pages of *The Times* and was lampooned by caricaturist George Cruickshank. Lady Charlotte wasn't the only wayward child – two sisters had married two Wellesley brothers and Lady Emily separated from her husband Reverend Gerald Valerian Wellesley, rector of Chelsea from 1805 to 1832, a few years later.

'The significance of the tumultuous personal lives of Cha, Car, three Henrys and Argyll would be felt not just by their families, but on the world stage. "In 1809 there was an event that caused a great scandal at the time, and affecting as it did the relations between the greatest military commander and the greatest cavalry leader of the day, had its effect upon history." Sir Arthur Wellesley, brother of Cha's first husband, would object to her second husband's presence on the field.'

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It is not the only time Wellington appears. There are family trees to help, showing the Cadogans' connections to other aristocratic families throughout (though of course these had to be selective for reasons of space). This one story is a good illustration of how the book goes from micro to macro elements of history, telling the detailed experience of this single family in the context of a broader history.

George inherited the other half of Sir Hans Sloane's Chelsea estate, 'the Stanley moiety', when the last surviving child of Sarah Stanley, his great aunt, died childless. Sarah Sloane (1696–1764, Elizabeth's older sister) had married George Stanley, a Hampshire landowner – an estate called Paultons (remember Paulton Square?). Other changes in Chelsea around that time included the opening of the King's Road as a public highway, in 1830; by the 1850s work had begun on Chelsea Embankment. George lived through the abolition of slavery, the Poor Laws, and the publications of Charles Dickens.

We wanted to give space to family members off the main line, especially women. George's daughters provided us with an excellent opportunity.



Lady Augusta Cadogan (1811–1882) and Lady Honoria Cadogan (1813–1904), after Sir John Hayter, stipple and etching on chine collé by John Henry Robinson, 1849. Illustrations to Finden's Female Aristocracy of the Court of Queen Victoria (1849).]

These two ladies never married. Camilla and I enjoyed a trip to Windsor Castle, where several of their paintings are held in the Royal Collection, and where a self-portrait may provide us with a partial clue; it became clear that they lacked any vanity. They were well known at Court and we have this gossipy little snippet from Queen Victoria's diaries:

'21 July 1838... Lord Melbourne... spoke of the Ladies Cadogan not being married, which he said was their Father's fault, who prevented peopole's coming, and said they must either declare or cease coming: "No man should interfere with those things" said Lord Melbourne...'

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Poor old Augusta and Honoria. Their brother Henry (1812–1873), born the year between them, inherited the title and became 4th Earl, though after a long apprenticeship he enjoyed it for less than a decade. His story involves the diplomatic service and stints as an MP. He did more than some.

The next big character is George Henry, 5th Earl Cadogan (1840–1915), the creator of modern Chelsea. Like his namesake the 3rd Earl, he has two chapters.



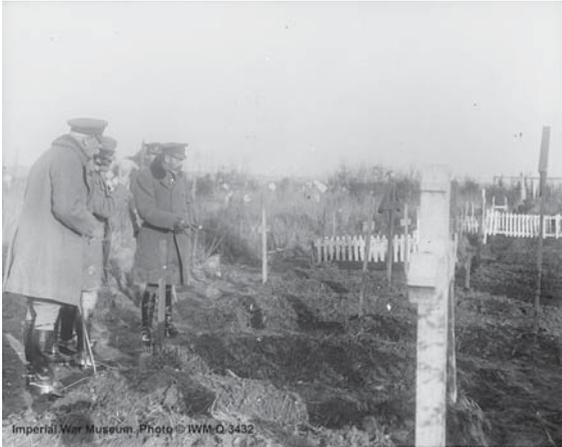
George Henry's letters patent appointing him Knight Commander of the Order of the Garter, with its huge red seal showing St George slaying the dragon, and blue leather case, 5 August 1891]

His legacy is visible in the tall, red-brick, gabled buildings that characterize much of Chelsea today. He lived at Chelsea House, on the corner of Cadogan Place, since demolished and occupied by the eponymous block of flats since the 1930s. He was the classic aristocratic Victorian, serving in the Cabinets of Disraeli and Salisbury; a consummate courtier and keen sportsman (cricket, racing, shooting). The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) was a friend from boyhood. It is rumoured that George Henry paid off Bertie's gambling debts; he certainly advised Queen Victoria during the infamous Baccarat scandal of 1891. Appointment to the Order of the Garter followed as well as Lord Lieutenantcy of Ireland.

Culford, the Suffolk estate he bought, was the scene of several royal house parties; at Christmas in 1904 four hundred tenants lined the drive waving Union flags. A photograph of the shooting party of nearly thirty includes King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and the Hon. Mrs Keppel, alongside their hosts.

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A final act involves a second wife. In 1911, seventy-year-old George Henry took everybody – perhaps even himself – by surprise, by getting married again – in Italy. There is so much to say, that we are currently working on a new book devoted to the life and times of the 5th Earl Cadogan.



'The King, the Prince of Wales, and Prince Albert devoted yesterday to visiting a series of places made memorable in the continuous fighting around Ypres...[they] visited two cemeteries, in one of which were the graves of Lord Charles Nairn and Major Cadogan,' The Times, (9)10 December 1918. Lt Ernest Brooks, 8 December]

One of the 5th Earl's most promising sons was another Major William Cadogan. The tragedy of Willie (1879–1914) is a tale of what might have been. He was ADC to King George V when Prince of Wales during the 3rd Delhi Durbar, before becoming Equerry to the future Edward VIII during his time at Oxford. They were close. Among the personal possessions of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor auctioned at Sotheby's New York in 1998 was a small leather-bound wallet encasing a photograph of Willie with the gold inscription 'Major the Hon. William George Sydney Cadogan, M.V.O., 10th Royal Hussars, killed in action near Ypres'.

Baby of the bunch Sir Alexander 'Alec' Cadogan lived out his potential, as a career diplomat of wonderful dry humour. We see him at the League of Nations in 1924, at the signing of the Locarno Pact in 1925, changing the course of British foreign policy away from appeasement in the 1930s, at the Yalta Conference of 1945, a Member of the Security Council at the UN in 1948. He was also – almost a throwaway line – Chairman of the BBC when the corporation televised the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

There were three heirs in line before Gerald ('Jerry', 1869–1933), who became 6th Earl Cadogan. Four daughters of Haggy, the middle one, were fashionable 'it-girls' who became known as the 'Cadogan Square'. They wrote letters about parties and dances to their Uncle Eddie while he was under fire at Galipoli during the First World War.

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Jerry, 6th Earl Cadogan at home at Culford Hall with his son William ('Bill', later 7th Earl Cadogan) and daughter, c.1920s]

Jerry himself had a bumpy couple of starts in the Army, before pulling himself together. He fought and distinguished himself in the Boer War alongside several family members. But when it looked like he might inherit, his father tied him and the Estate up with trustees. They dealt with the fallout from the First World War and made the decisions to clear slums; the Minute Books survive to this day. Jerry finally found a niche for himself as Chairman of the British Olympic Association at the Chariots of Fire games (Paris, 1924).

The young 7th Earl, William, was just nineteen when he inherited the earldom. He faced a large inheritance tax bill at a time when it stood at fifty per cent. Culford Hall was sold and is now a school; the Forestry Commission purchased thousands of acres of the Suffolk estate, which today forms part of the King's Forest and is open to the public. Bill had trusted the lone voice of one of his trustees encouraging him to prioritize and preserve the estate in Chelsea. This would prove to be an invaluable piece of advice.

Bill returned from active service in the Second World War with the Military Cross and what would commonly be termed PTSD. He found solace in Scotland, on the family estate at Snaigow. ' "Having done a lot of blowing up in the Army, he loved blowing up tree stumps," his son Charles, 8th Earl, remembered.'

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'Bill himself is a figure of such recent history that his name can bring a smile not just to family members, but to longstanding residents of Chelsea and beyond. Pink gin in hand, tapping out the bowl of his pipe on an enormous snake ring...'

It was a condition of Charles Cadogan's that his own time as Earl, which began in 1997, should not appear in this book. Charles Moore's foreword and an afterword by Edward, 9th Earl Cadogan, instead pay fitting tribute.

There are many more stories within the pages of this colossal tome. Told with affection and humour – I had so much fun making this book – interweaving world events and private dramas over a thousand years, this book brings to life the story of one family that is also to the story of the British Isles."

Cadogan: A Chelsea Family, by Tamsin Perrett, published by Unicorn, is available from all good bookshops and online retailers.

A CHELSEA SCULPTOR

Julian Murray

1939-2025



It is with profound sadness that the Chelsea Society notes the passing on 2nd October 2025 of our member, Julian Murray, a sculptor and painter of exceptional sensitivity whose work graced many exhibitions and enriched our community.

Julian was a London-based artist with roots in West Cornwall.

Before dedicating himself fully to the arts, Julian pursued a career in industry. Later he studied portraiture and sculpture at Heatherley's School of Fine Art in Chelsea, and then developed a distinctive practice in wood, stone and bronze. Up to the last he was an active and valued member of the Heatherley's company, for many years as a trustee and member of the School Board.

His sculpture, often figurative in origin, increasingly embraced abstraction. He was drawn to the female form, to mood and emotion, and to the tactile potential of his materials. He believed that a sculpture must speak not only visually but through textures and surfaces.

He joined the Chelsea Art Society as a valued contributor, and in 2009 he won the Jackson Sculpture Prize.

He exhibited with the Society of Portrait Sculptors (for example, in the Garrison Chapel, Chelsea) and continued to build a reputation for works that stand between representation and abstraction. Julian was a man of many parts, as an artist, enthusiastic sailor and golfer and much-loved parent.

His widow Marina is a member of the Council of The Chelsea Society, and we offer our deepest sympathy to her and her family.

Julian will be greatly missed, but his sculptures will remain - speaking in quiet form, emotion, and light.

FLEUR'S POEMS

*Fleur de Villiers was a member of the council of the Chelsea Society
until her death on 7th February 2023*



Tupelo Tree

*'Nyssa Sylvatica' -
nothing in the name hints at this flame
that fills the chilling sky.
The Latin susurration, precise, dry,
traps the sound, but not the sight
of leaves alight with the stored heat of summer.
Ruby and amber - the fire flares
against the cool, blue bowl of air.
Leaves, like stars, glow and seem to grow
before they die.
Life is light;
in stars, in trees - in you,
it burns and blazes forth
before the night.*

Untitled

*You will not cut me down
Though you take away the trappings of my pride.
Though commonplace disasters haunt
The sunlit place where I once belonged
Though the unspoken taunt
Strips me of the rags of self esteem,
I will not hide,
I will not change the nightmare for the dream.
The chin-lift eye-lit swagger of my walk
Will still be there
And fear
Will not snatch away the gown
Of Stubborn will.
You may have your fill – you have the right
And when my night is passed and you are finished
I have not diminished
And you shall not cut me down.*

FLEUR'S POEMS

The Beach

*We will walk upon the sun-bleached shore
Beside the ashen stretching sea
While at our feet
Two meaningless expanses meet
Where the yellow threads of foam Curdle home.*

*And while we wait upon this line of time
Punctured only by the sun
Unthinking you will take me by the hand
And nerve-endings throbbing to a half-heard rhyme
We will be one.*

*Not within the trodden streets at night,
Where there are other lights
To glimmer palely through the curtain folds
But here beside this undiscovered sea
We can extend the banner of our souls
And love because we wish to be.*

Fleur's thoughts on Covid

At my age when death could be just around the next corner there is no such thing as a risk free life and the sad delusion that one should cling to it, no matter how diminished that life may be, is not only illogical, but pointless and an affront to life itself.

A risk free existence is a fallacy and those who believe it impoverish themselves and sap the vigour out of society. Life in and of itself is a poor excuse for not living.

Love, *Fleur*
(20th June 2020)

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*As at 31st December 2025 the Society had 1,127 members
An asterisk denotes a life member. Should any amendments be necessary,
please advise secretary@chelseasociety.org.uk
To join the Society please visit www.chelseasociety.org.uk/join-us/*

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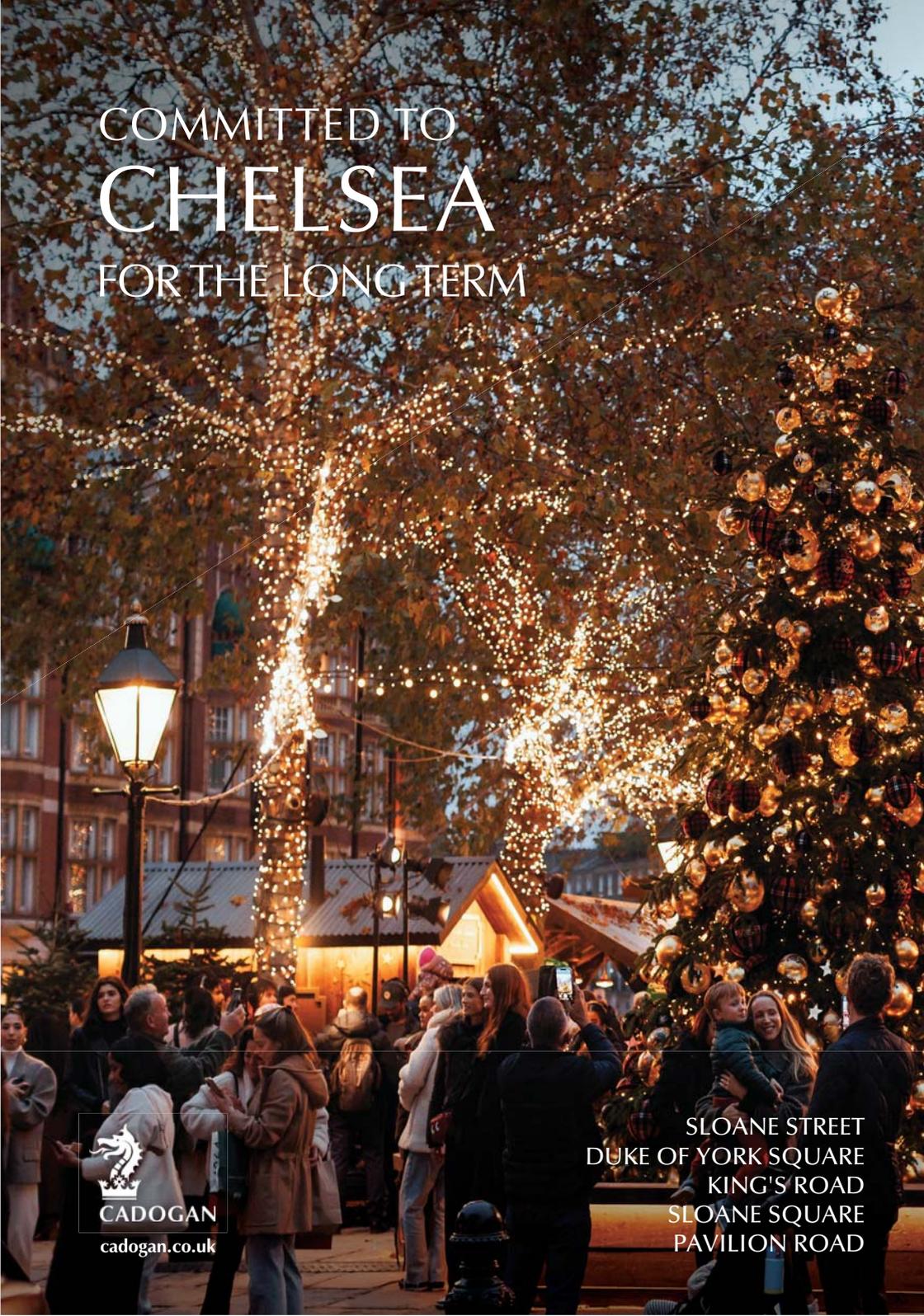
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