

QEC - KENSINGTON WALK 2006

Meet at the Windsor Castle pub on the junction of Campden Hill Road and Peel Street (for lunch and/or a drink) from 12 noon onwards and a walk around the area starting at 2pm Sunday June 11th 2006. Nearest underground: Notting Hill Gate, Holland Park or High Street Kensington

TOUR

Starting from the Windsor Castle pub turn left and walk along Campden Hill Road and down the hill to the residences of Kensington Heights opposite Bedford Street. These houses were built in the 1850s. Just down the road is High Veld, the South African embassy. Now turn right into Campden Hill where Abuja House is the Nigerian embassy. Walking along Campden Hill there is the new luxurious housing of the Phillimore Square development. At the end of this road is the famous Holland Park School with much greenery and shrubs. Planned by LCC Architect in late 1950s for 2000 pupils, Holland Park school was the first large post-war comprehensive in West London.

Crossing back over Campden Hill Road walk up along Observatory Gardens where the opulent houses of 1883 have a French flavour. One of these award-winning buildings has a plaque recording the construction of an observatory by I K Brunet. It was the site of Sir James South's observatory - since built over - it stood for 40 years until his death in 1867. He was a founder of the Royal Astronomical Society. The blue plaque marking the spot is incorrect in stating that South's dome housed the largest telescope in the world. It was actually the biggest refractor (tens telescope); Sir William Herschel (who died in 1822) had previously constructed larger reflecting telescopes (using curved mirrors) at Slough.

John Downton (1906-1991), the artist, musician and philosopher, lived in Observatory Gardens for a while in the early 1930s and it was here he painted 'The Landlady's Daughter'. From the 1970s, Alexander Trocchi (an icon of beat literature), entertained addicts and acolytes in his penthouse flat in Observatory Gardens.

At the end of Observatory Gardens, cross over Hornton Street, the official address of Kensington Et Chelsea Town Hall. Sir Charles Stanford, (1852-1924), musician and conductor, Lived here 1894-1916 at 56 Hornton Street. His students included Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Hoist, Herbert Howells, Frank Bridge, George Butterworth, Ernst Moeran, Arthur Bliss, and Percy Grainger.

Then walk along Campden Grove where the author James Joyce (1882-1941), lived at no 28 in 1931. Kensington was too dull for Joyce, who complained that their street was full of mummies and should be renamed 'Campden Grave'. Professor Norman Collie (1859-1942) (Chemistry, UCL) a renowned mountaineer had a house at 16 Campden Grove. He made the first neon light. There is good evidence that Collie should be credited with the discovery of neon, rather than Ramsay, in whose lab he did the work. He proposed a dynamic structure for benzene and discovered the oxonium salt of dimethylpyrone, which was the first example of such a salt. He invented the term polyketide for a group of compounds which play a major role in the biosynthesis of various natural products. It was not until 1955, almost 50 years later, that this theory was finally shown to be correct. He was probably the

first to use X-ray photography for medical purposes, when a patient with a needle fragment embedded in her thumb was sent to the college.

Turn right onto Kensington Church St and down past the Catholic Church, and on the opposite side at Dunes has an elaborate doorway in the Art Nouveau style, then turn right into Holland Street. Holland Street was originally a public way from Church Street to Holland House. One of the C18 houses is Old House with a Blue Plaque for Walter Crane, the artist.

Follow Holland Street back to Campden Hill Road, and we come to Queen Elizabeth College, originally the Ladies' Department of King's College founded in 1885 but this site was established in 1915 for the Household and Social Science departments, and renamed in 1953 in honour of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. It is no longer QEC but The Phillimore. Walk along Duchess of Bedford Walk to see The Refectory which is the (Sales) reception area (and is open by appointment) where apartments can be bought for over £1 million. The full extent of the new Phillimore Square development can be glimpsed behind the end of QEC buildings. Walk along the Duchess of Bedford Walk to reach the entrance to Holland Park.

Holland Park with the peacocks, rabbits, Open Air Theatre, birds and woodland walks is a beautiful 'green lung' in Campden Hitt. Follow the path ahead which goes past the best-sited Youth Hostel in London and then walk up the steps leading to the gates (Locked) in front of the Jacobean Holland House. This house was built around 1608 but was bombed and gutted during World War Two Leaving only the East Wing worth restoring.

At the end of this path is the Cafe. But surrounding the cafe are several flower gardens including the Dutch or Formal Garden and the Rose Garden, all ablaze with colour at this summer season. The round brick C18 building – The ice House - will have an art show. There are numerous walks further away to the Arboretum, the Wildlife Pond and to see the various statues including one of the third Lord Holland - the statesman Henry Fox (and his pond). Lastly a must, the serene Kyoto Garden with a small lake, water cascade and other Japanese features.

Acknowledgments: Jo Crocker's walk plan from June 2005 and Google!

Ann Wood 11 /05/06