



Cheyne House

#### Dr. Phene

John Samuel Phene was an eccentric who owned Cheyne House which stood slightly to the east of number 16 Upper Cheyne Row and whose garden is now the site of 4-14 even Upper Cheyne Row and 47-51 Glebe Place. He studied and had a large collection of the ancient arts with which he filled Cheyne House and its garden. This house became derelict and was demolished on his death. He lived in 34 Oakley Street from where he supervised the building of a grotesque house on the corner of Upper Cheyne Row. This, his vision of a new restoration, he called 'The Chateau' but it was known locally as Gingerbread Castle. This was never completed or occupied and was pulled down on his death in 1912 at a great age. A picture of this amazing structure hangs in The Phene Arms (which he built and is named after him). His unusual collection and eccentric taste led to a belief that he was interested in the 'black arts'. This belief seems to have persisted from some time since in the 1920s the occupant of a studio designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh (which was built on Phene's garden on a spot where he had buried a favourite horse which reputedly saved his life) had trouble with servants who saw the spectre of a horse in the studio, a problem which appeared to have eventually driven him from the house.

Dr. Phene's achievements, however, show little sign of eccentricity. He built the area around Oakley Street and Phene Street including the aforementioned Phene Arms around the year 1850-51.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Cheyne House was built, backing onto number 16 (then number 4) which dates from 1767 Upper Cheyne Row. It had much bigger grounds than the other Upper Cheyne Row houses and its principal access was from the south end of Glebe Place (By 1912, at the end of the eccentric Dr. Phene's time, the house was in extreme dilapidation, and it survived few years thereafter).

Another particularly interesting eighteenth century house, one which has survived, is the former rectory, which was built in the early years of the century. It must have been a replacement building as its site had been given by the Marquis of Winchester in 1566 in exchange for the ancient Parsonage House and Glebe west of Beaufort House. Some of its outhouses have brickwork of seventeenth century appearance and the semi-circular bays on its east side were added in the late eighteenth century, so like much of Cheyne the house is an

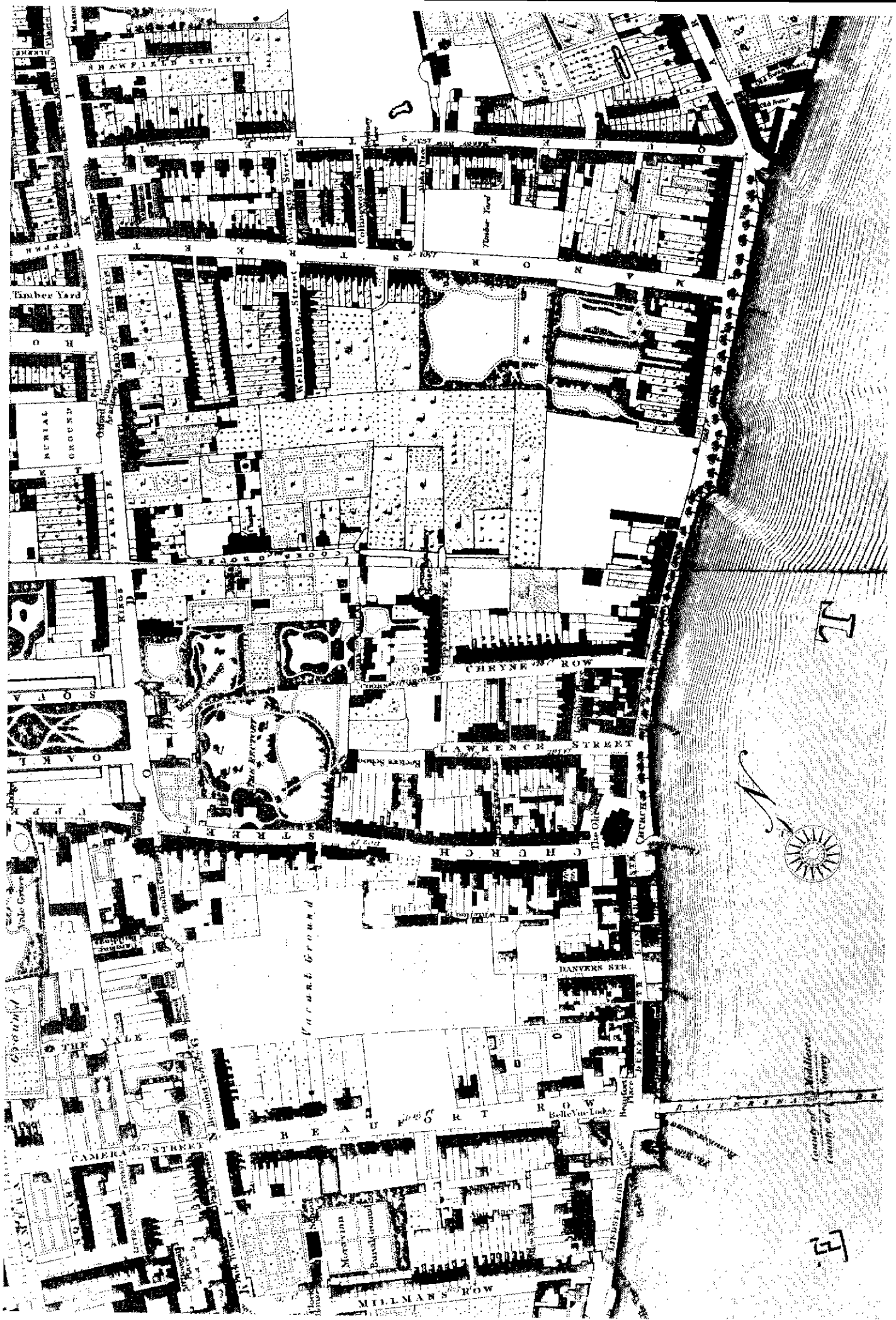
amalgam of ages. Its glebe was approximately bounded by Old Church Street, Margaretta Terrace, the King's Road, and Upper Cheyne Row.

In 1753 Sloane's death without a son was in one way to have considerable influence on the area's development, for at that time the Manor was divided between his two daughters, Sarah and Elizabeth. Sarah took the western half and married George Stanley from Paultons in Hampshire, and Elizabeth took the east and married Charles Cadogan of Oakley, a Welshman. Both families were to achieve developments of great quality.

On the Cadogan share the start of Henry Holland's development of Hans Place in 1777 foreshadowed the end of an era as London started to reach out beyond Mayfair, a process leading to the fusion of the city and the village during the nineteenth century.



Front of the former rectory



Up to this time the River's importance for transport diminished little. Hard though it is to imagine, the King's Road was of minor importance, a track or pathway used by farmers as well as a short-cut to Putney for the sovereign on journeys to Hampton Court.

Charles II had laid the road with gravel after discussions with the parishioners of Chelsea and the landowners who ditched their lands on either side. It was agreed that the Lord of the Manor and other landowners would continue to enjoy their ancient rights of way over what was now the King's private road.

In the reign of George I however, one Mr. Watkins, Surveyor to His Majesty's Private Roads, closed it against the landowners of Chelsea after carrying out repairs. After some furor, the landowners and Sir Hans Sloane petitioned successfully for restoration of their rights in 1719. Presumably without this Argyll House (1723) and numbers 213 and 215 (1720) could not have been built fronting the road.

Gates controlling access were constructed, and by 1731 copper pass tickets were in use whose holders were allowed the privilege of driving along the King's Highway. Only by 1830 did it become a public road, soon stimulating and enabling the overflowing of South Kensington, stucco and no longer brick, which was to transform the village. The transformation was completed by the opening of the Embankment in 1874.

The 70s and 80s brought some interesting replacements of eighteenth century houses in adventurous late Victorian style, and saw public and commercial buildings spread from Sloane Square along the King's Road.

In our century new larger 20s and 30s blocks of flats replaced earlier houses, and examples of houses and studios in the modern style were introduced to the area. Lutyens' short-lived house on the site of Shrewsbury House was a great change from the area's character. Charles Rennie Mackintosh lived for some time at 43a Glebe Place, where the studio house at number 48 is to his design though much altered.

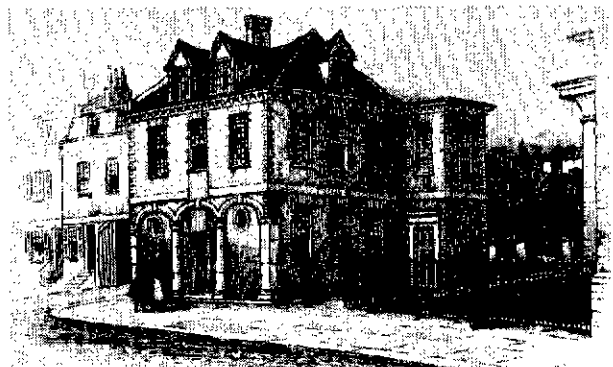
Through the centuries of Cheyne's history the one factor which has continued is the riverside church. The earliest part of the existing building dates from the late 13th century, the north and south chapels were added about thirty years later, and with the increase of the village population the church was extended westwards in 1667-1674. Although Chelsea Old Church was severely damaged by bombing in 1941, the congregation held firmly together and the successful rebuilding during the 1950's has incorporated such a wealth of monuments that the long history of the village is woven into its fabric.

The old village centre at the point where Cheyne Walk meets Church Lane, Chelsea's oldest thoroughfare (now

named after the church), may be seen and felt as one enters the Church and walks around to Lawrence Street, Chelsea's next oldest street, where the Chelsea China Works was patronized by Royalty, and along Upper Cheyne Row to Cheyne Row.

To the west of the Church stands the fifteenth century Crosby Hall which was removed from Bishopsgate and erected in its present position in 1910 under the direction of Walter H. Godfrey who was also architect of Chelsea Old Church from before the Second World War, and to whose zeal is owed in large measure the salvaging and subsequent restoration of the monuments. These commemorate the families who lived in Chelsea's great houses, and include such notable names as Bray, Sloane, More, Lawrence, Stanley and Cheyne.

The spirit of the Old Church may seem to belong to the past but those who visit it and its parish from all over the world enjoy the feeling of a continuing story.

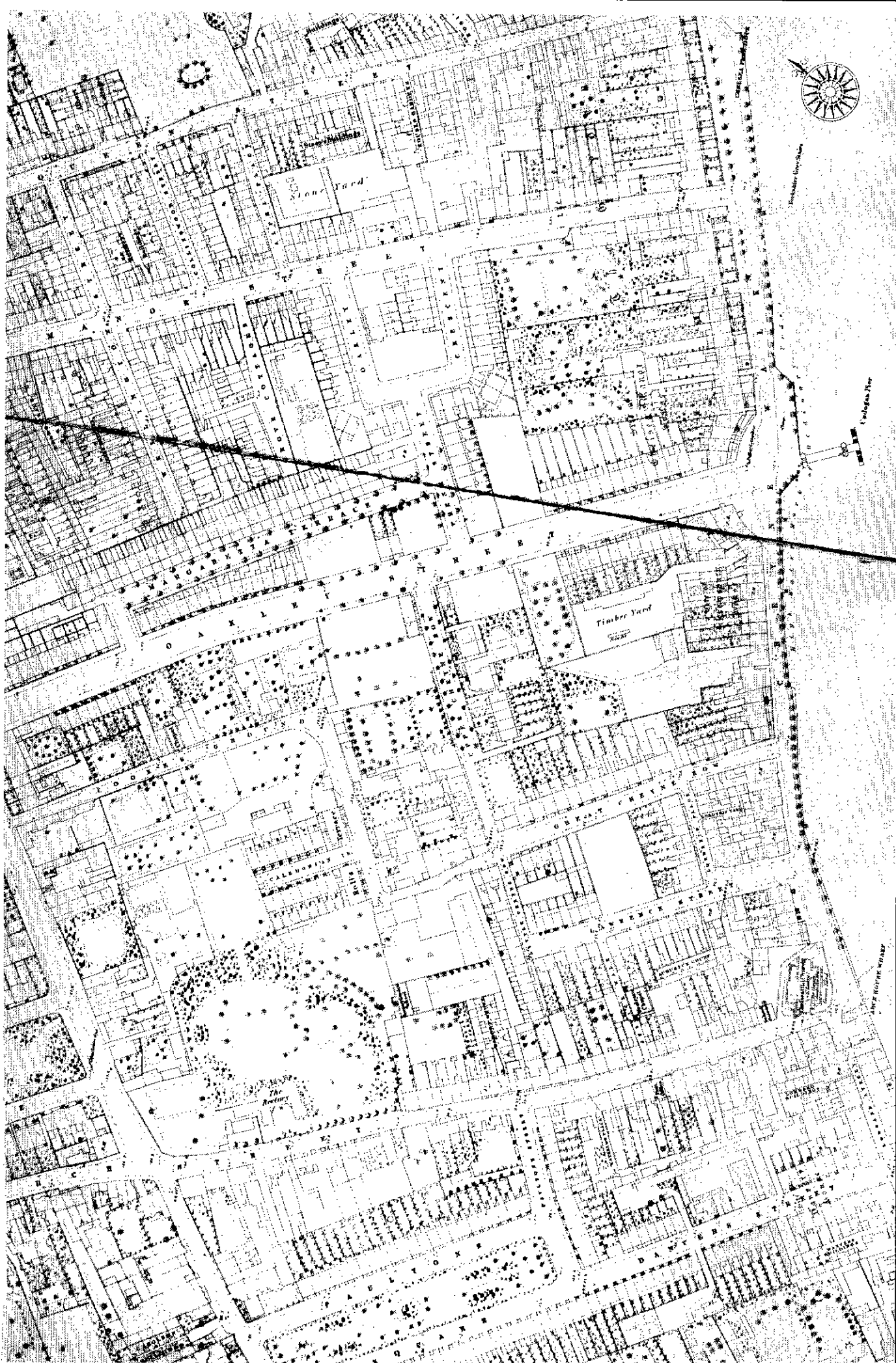


The former Petyt House

The building to the north of the Church, Petyt School, was replaced in the third redevelopment of the site. The ground was wasteland in 1603 when the Earl of Nottingham, Lord of the Manor, allowed the erection of a building for the Parish Clerk and for the school which was founded and paid for by Dr. Richard Ward, the Rector, helped by money left by Bishop Fletcher. A century later William Petyt, resident of Chelsea and Keeper of the Records at the Tower of London rebuilt the two major rooms on the ground and first floors and the schoolmaster's lodgings in the roof. In 1890 the buildings were reconstructed again, to remain a shorter time until wiped away by the 1941 bomb.

Other post-war buildings are few in number, and it seems that the ferment of change and even transformation which created Cheyne's character is coming to an end. In 1969 the conservation area was designated.

Population changes have been almost as dramatic. According to Pevsner there were no more than 300 houses in Chelsea in 1705. At the first census, in 1801, the population of the parish was 12,000, growing to 40,000 in 1841; 88,000 in 1881; an amazing 95,000 in 1901; and declining again to 51,000 in 1951. At the most recent census the population of the old Chelsea borough area was about 30,000.



## Archaeological Remains

It is probably that there are more traces of medieval and earlier history hidden below Cheyne than under any other part of the Royal Borough.

The Council is mindful of this heritage, and its officers have undertaken to inform the Department of the Environment Inner London Archaeological Unit when it is apparent that possible sites could become available for excavation.

Part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (which provides for the designation of areas of archaeological importance and for their investigation) is now in force.

The GLC, with its Historic Buildings Division, is most likely the best authority to implement its provisions. Cheyne will be one of the obvious choices for immediate consideration.

## Important Building Groups

Just as buildings in a conservation area are in general both more important and subject to more protection than those outside it, so within the area some are of more value than others.

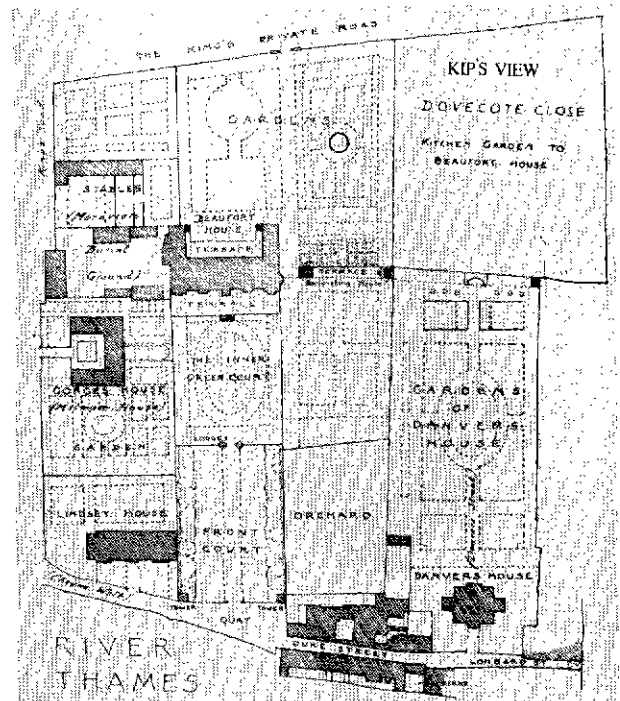
"Listed buildings" are those recognised by the Secretary of State as being "of special architectural or historic interest", and are listed in an appendix. It is known that others in the conservation area are being recommended for inclusion in the list.

Special rules govern the partial demolition of ecclesiastical buildings in use for ecclesiastical purposes and unique procedures may apply to churches of the Church of England. Normal development control procedures apply to them all, however.



*Listed buildings and anything in their grounds are subject to special protection and procedure. Listed Building Consent is required, whether or not they are in a conservation area, to demolish them, or any part of them, or to carry out any work affecting their character (including their interior), or their setting, even where such work might not be "development" requiring planning permission.*

*The Council also has statutory powers under ss.101f and 114/5 of the 1971 Act, and under s.27 of the Public Health Act 1961 as applied by the Corporation Act 1972, to ensure that listed buildings are preserved in good order, although in practice this only extends to repairs sufficient to keep the structure standing and to exclude the wind and the rain.*



Recent recommendations by the Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council have resulted in a comprehensive review of the list of buildings of architectural or historic interest in the Royal Borough.

The buildings proposed to be included in the new list are shown on map 5, P75 and scheduled on P74

In lists compiled before 1970 some buildings are shown as grade III, which is no longer used. They were all evaluated before the new list was completed, and most were added to it. Those that were not, but which are in a conservation area, are subject to control over demolition anyway.

† as substituted by the Town and Country Amenities Act, 1974.

\* Circulars and Acts can be obtained from Her Majesty's Stationery Office, retail counter 49, High Holborn, W.C.1. (01-928 6977)

Full references:

Department of the Environment Circular 23/77  
Department of the Environment Circular 12/81  
Town and Country Planning Act 1971  
Public Health Act 1961  
Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Act 1972  
Town and Country Planning General Development Orders 1977 to 1981

(See also Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea publication, Lists and Maps of Protected Areas and Buildings, "The Yellow Book".)

## Chelsea China

To echo Reginald Blunt's paraphrase of Dickens. 'Everybody knows Chelsea: Buns, Pensioners and China'. It was the latter that during the 18th century brought international repute to the small village.

Porcelain, a highly translucent ceramic substance had been known in Europe from the 16th century when supplies from the mysterious east began to reach the west, but the secret of its manufacture remained elusive. In Saxony, Johann Botlger had promised the Elector the secret of turning base metal to gold, but when unable to deliver, saved himself by producing a true porcelain – his reward being a life of luxury imprisonment lest the secret should escape. The result was the famous Meissen China which captivated Europe during the first half of the 18th century. Other European factories followed, mostly using formulae smuggled out by defecting workmen but the secret did not reach our shores. As an alternative to the true or hard paste porcelain, English experiments concentrated upon the production of an artificial (or soft paste) porcelain having most of the visual properties of the real thing.

The first successful English manufacture was c1745 at Chelsea, when Nicholas Sprimont a Huguenot silversmith succeeded in producing porcelain using facilities and money provided by Sir Everard Falkner. The factory was sited in the grounds of Monmouth House, Sir Everard's mansion. The exact site and size of the factory has puzzled many researchers but it is generally agreed to have been at the north end of Lawrence Street. Should any excavation work in the area be planned it is of importance that facilities be given for archeological excavation which is the only means of establishing fully the history of the enterprise, and possibly solving the mystery of the fabled second Chelsea factory which is believed to have been a breakaway from the main factory and to have produced a distinctive range of figures including the famous 'Girl on a Swing' after which the group is named.

Chelsea China flourished throughout the 1750s and 60s, the products being designed for the top end of the market. By the 1770's the factory was suffering from competition from rivals which concentrated more upon producing wares for a wider market. In 1770 the business was acquired by William Duesbury, the Proprietor of the successful Derby China Works and for a while the two factories ran in parallel, the famous anchor mark of Chelsea being conjoined with the 'D'.

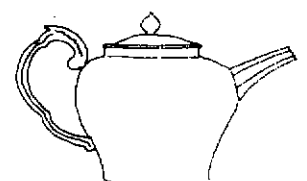
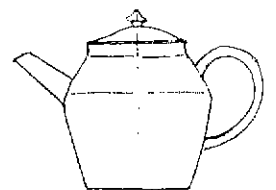
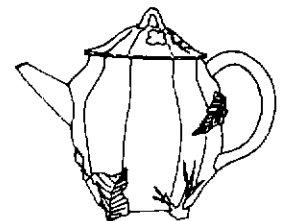
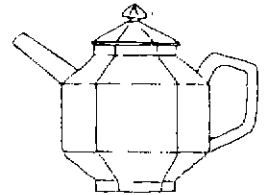
The Chelsea factory was during the last years concerned with decorating wares sent from its sister factory as the problems of transporting fragile wares made it more economic to carry out the costly decorating stage near to the London market. This factor and the availability of skilled artists to work part-time as china painters caused the great Staffordshire potter Josiah Wedgwood to open a decorating works in Chelsea, where amongst other work the great dinner service of over 1000 pieces each painted with a different view was decorated before dispatch to Catherine the Great in Russia.

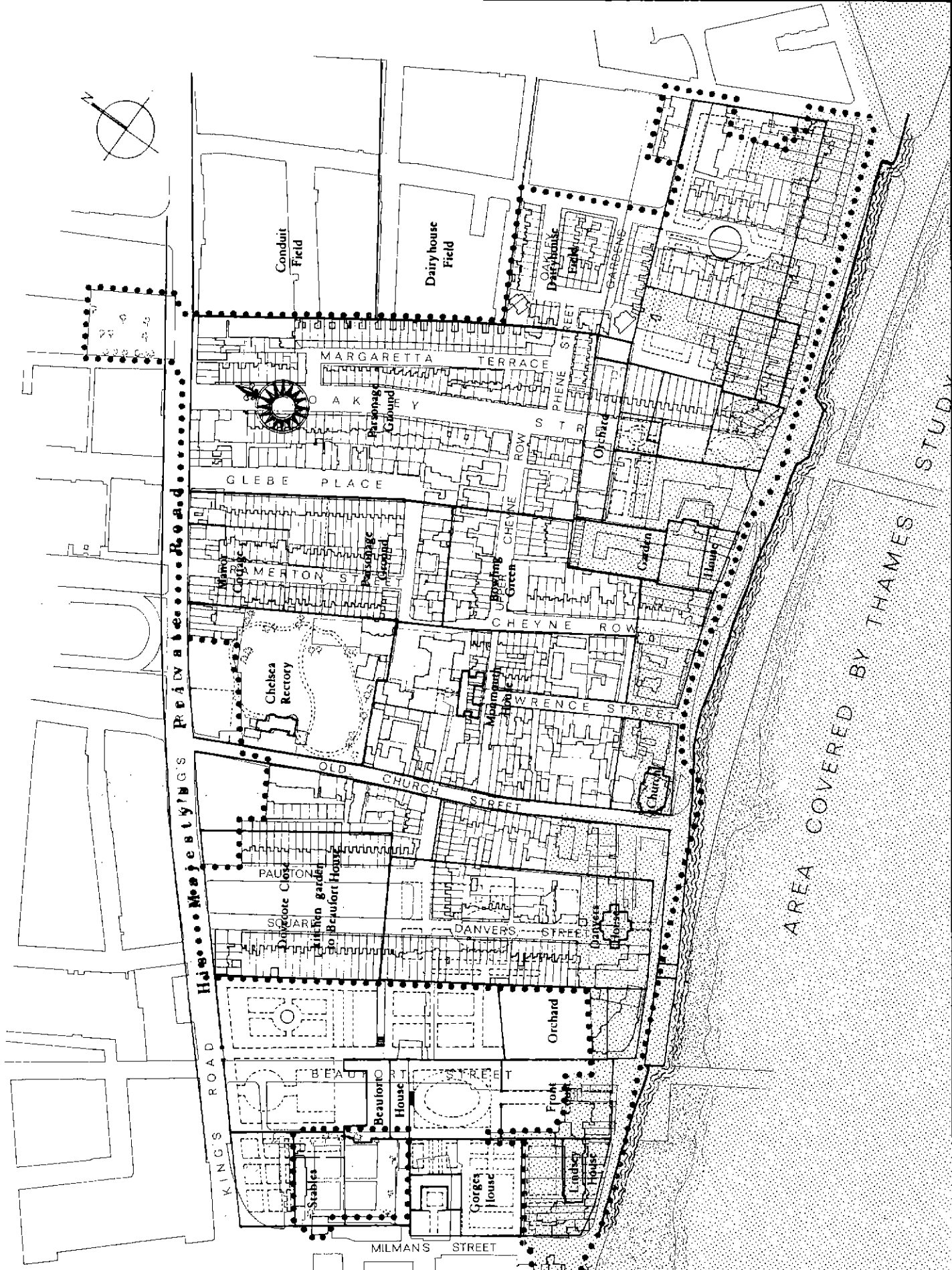
Recent research has thrown more light upon the pottery operated by Hemple and Ruel in Cheyne Row during the 1780s. This made wares of a useful as well as scientific nature including Hemples Patent footwarmers, and crucibles which were the best available.

By the end of the 18th Century the improved canal system had made the proximity to London less important for the ceramic industry and potting at Chelsea ceased, leaving the area to revert to a residential peace.

The art was however revived during the last part of the 19th century when as part of the Arts and Crafts Movement studio pottery became fashionable. William de Morgan friend and collaborator of William Morris, and the most distinguished of the 'new' Chelsea Potters had a kiln at his house in Cheyne Row.

The importance of the potteries in the life of Chelsea was shown by the major exhibition on the subject held by the Chelsea Society in 1921, the catalogue of which is still a standard work of reference.





map 2  
 THE GREAT HOUSES OF CHELSEA