

J.J. Stevenson's proposal for Kensington Court

Stevenson was employed to design No.1 Kensington Court or "Cheniston House" for Mrs. Anne Marie

Lucena. T.G. Jackson, an ex-colleague from the office of Gilbert Scott, designed a handsome corner house at 2 Kensington Court for Athelstan Riley.

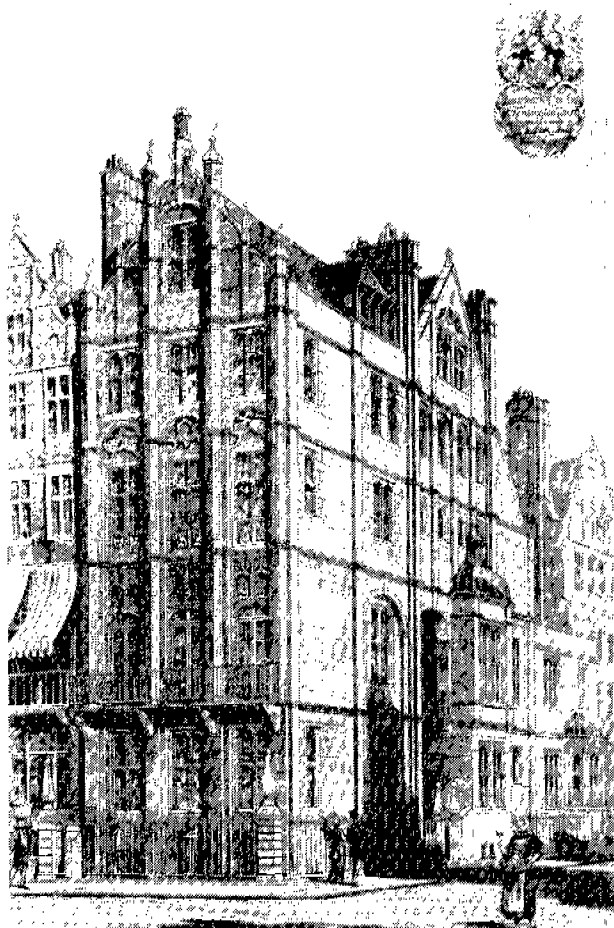
The central block of houses contains some of the largest houses of the development, with Nos.26-29 being designed by Stevenson.

By 1888, Carr was in trouble financially and seems to have disappeared from the scene leaving his shares to his creditors. Land Securities were left with the remaining sites, which were developed by a variety of local builders and developers. 1888 also saw a permanent building by J.A. Slater for the Kensington Court Electric Lighting Company erected in the north-west corner of the development.

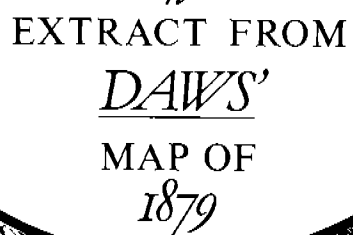
The remaining west side of Kensington Court between Palace Place Mansions and Thackeray Street was developed as mansion blocks between 1896-1902. The most interesting, Kent and Kensington House, was by R.J. Worley. In 1896-8, Roxburghe Mansions and 32 Kensington Court were built to the designs of Paul Hoffmann. A final rather crude essay in the style is Durward House, No.31 Kensington Court, by Durward Brown and dating from 1901-2.

R.E.B. Crompton

This name is still associated with the electrical industry today, and R.E.B. Crompton was an early pioneer of electrical supply. Since 1883 he had been involved in providing electric lighting at the Ring and Burg Theatres



1 Kensington Court



in Vienna, and his company did the electrical installation for Kensington Court. The architect of the electrical station J.A. Slater also designed 48 Kensington Court for Crompton, the house being named "Thriplands" and built between 1888-9. The house was interesting structurally, being built as a load-bearing steel frame supporting the brickwork. Crompton carried out many of his most important experiments in the laboratory on the upper floors.



37-47 Kensington High Street



Kensington Court Place

The history chapter was written by Martin O'Rourke, M.A., R.C.A. and he wishes to acknowledge and thank the editor of the Survey of London, Hermione Hobhouse, and her staff. Their help and permission freely to use unpublished research from the forthcoming South Kensington second volume was generously given.

KENSINGTON COURT MEWS

Now converted into flats, this mews was designed by Stevenson to provide stabling for the development and dates from 1886. An attractive composition in the ubiquitous Queen Anne style, the mews was planned like De Vere Mews with an upper floor for horses reached by a sloping ramp.

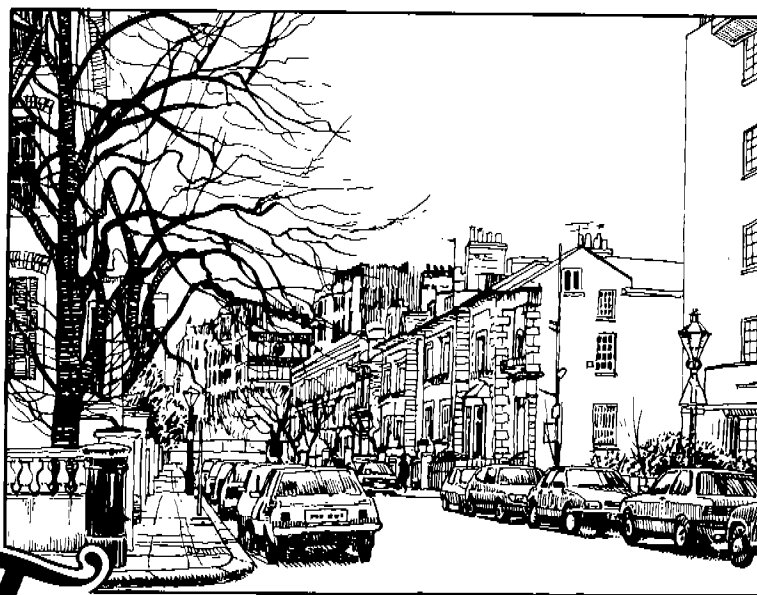
POSTSCRIPT

Kensington Court shows the extraordinary change in taste that overtook London in the 1870's and 1880's. To replace regular Italianate stucco terraces, tall gabled red brick houses became fashionable. The style was felt to derive from early 18th century or Queen Anne sources and thereby have an almost patriotic and homely quality. The style also allowed for a great measure of individuality and a free play of decorative ironwork, brickwork and tiles in keeping with the aesthetic concern with Arts and Crafts. Despite its name, the style seems to owe as much to Flemish and Dutch 17th century design as it does to Queen Anne. The multiplicity of decoration was applied to buildings of a height and scale even larger than the stucco terraces of twenty years earlier, showing the ever increasing value of land and development in Kensington.



Prince of Wales Terrace

Most of the information in this short history is taken from Survey of London material which we gratefully acknowledge. We would like to thank John Greenacombe for his endlessly generous and patient attention.



TOWNSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

The variety in the attractive townscape of this area is one of its major features — there is considerable diversity, for example, in the scale, style and age of the buildings, as well as in the use of materials. However, although the edges are rather blurred, the area divides into four sections — the tall, red-brick blocks of **Kensington Court**, the earlier formal terraces of the **De Vere Gardens** quarter, the informal grouping of substantial family houses in Kensington New Town, and finally in the south of the area, the formal terraces of **Cornwall Gardens** and the adjoining streets.

The whole area contains few buildings which are great works of art, yet the streets are undoubtedly attractive and, in most cases, the buildings are well-maintained and worth conserving for many years to come.

Kensington Court

The north west corner of the area is dominated by the solid, yet impressive red brick blocks of **Kensington Court**. This area was developed to a very high density and, with the exception of some limited open space bordering the central blocks, the substantial buildings almost completely fill their plots. The layout is irregular, with the north, east and west sides forming a misshapen square, fronting on to a central space which, instead of being given over to communal gardens, has also been built on, with more four to five storey blocks.

The buildings were all completed within a period of

about twenty years towards the end of the last century, and although the use of red brick is universal, a perhaps surprising variety of styles is found within this small area many of which deserve closer inspection.

As the buildings in Kensington High Street forming the northern boundary of this conservation area back onto Kensington Court, they are included within this section and provide a useful starting point.

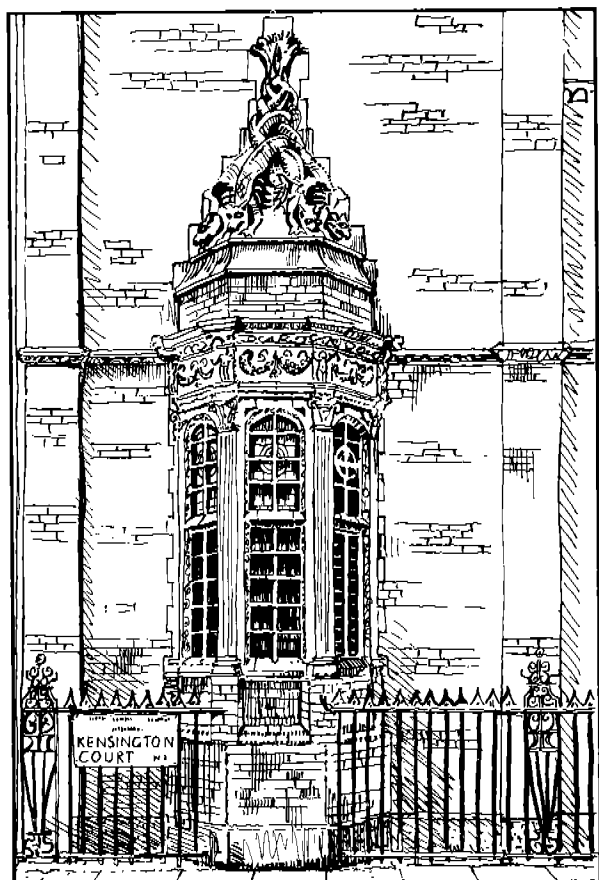
Kensington High Street

With the exception of the passage leading into Kensington Court, an unbroken building line is presented to **Kensington High Street**. The section between Young Street and the Kensington Court passage comprises three blocks, the most ornate being the bank building [Numbers 55-61] standing on the corner with Young Street. This late Victorian red brick building is richly dressed with red stone carvings and the angular tourelle and crow-stepped dormer are prominent features. Sadly the mosaic frieze running above the first floor windows is now missing in places, and its presumably once glittering appearance has been dulled by the accumulation of dust and dirt.

Adjoining the above the facade of Kensington Market, especially above ground floor level, is now clean, simple and uncluttered. The third block retains six console brackets and marble faced pilasters in a largely unspoilt condition, yet regrettably, the very dirty condition of the facade conceals these attractive features.

The second group of buildings, from Kensington Court

passage to the former Milestone Hotel, is much more varied in character and ranges in scale from the massive red brick mansion block of Cumberland House to the small, almost domestic, scale of The Goat public house. There is no particular architectural style or period uniting this frontage and the diversity of buildings is further reflected in the range of shop fronts and building uses. The existing variety allows the new building at Number 5 to sit comfortably between its older neighbours.



Decorative work on Number 2 Kensington Court

Kensington Court

Numbers 1 and 2 Kensington Court the former Milestone Hotel (which was presumably named after the milestone which still stands unobtrusively behind the front railings) front onto Kensington Road and well deserve their location facing Kensington Gardens. These four storey buildings reveal Dutch influence in their decorative gables, and in the painted pink terra cotta dressings surrounding the windows. Number 2 turns the corner into Kensington Court proper and the long side wall also deserves mention with such distinctive features as the ground storey bay window capped with a sculptured group of entwined mythical monsters. Both are listed buildings.

Numbers 3 to 25 run along the eastern boundary of Kensington Court, and the whole group is listed. **Numbers 3 to 15** form a Queen Anne red brick terrace, with the middle and end properties stepped forward – a

frequently found technique originating from the Georgian period, used to emphasise the unity of the terrace and to break the monotony of the facade. The symmetry of the group is further accentuated with the addition of gables to the middle and end properties, the intervening buildings having two storey of dormers in the roof. The vertical emphasis is balanced by rich stucco horizontal detailing especially by the continuous frieze above the first floor and the scroll brackets which support the cast iron balcony at first floor level, but it is a pity that the balcony is not all painted in the same colour to emphasise the unity of the group.

Numbers 17 to 25 follow a similar architectural style, but numbers 16 and 17 do not conform with the rest of the terrace and appear squeezed in to turn the corner. Number 16 is quite simple but number 17 is more ornate with a crow stepped gable, stone dressings and gothic detailing.



Kensington Court

Numbers 47 to 67 contain the tall, four to five storey terrace on the northern side of **Kensington Court** which is perhaps, architecturally, the least interesting of the building groups. The red brick facades appear unrelieved, save for the white painted brackets to the continuous cast iron balcony. Closer inspection reveals additional detailing in the form of window aprons and the terra cotta panels, but since they merge with the brickwork, from a distance they do little to enliven the terrace.

Of particular historic interest as one of the earliest surviving electric generating stations is number **46**

Kensington Court, a listed building, which is hidden behind the main frontage on the north side of Kensington Court, and opens onto **Kensington Court Passage**. The only indication now of the former use of this red brick building with its stone, brick and terra cotta dressings, is a stone block over the main entrance, inscribed "Electric Lighting Station". The building was badly in need of refurbishment and a new use, and its rather dismal appearance only accentuated the run-down state of the passage-way itself.

Numbers 31 to 36 are five substantial mansion blocks lining the western side of **Kensington Court**, the largest and most striking of which is Kent and Kensington House with its towers adorned with turrets and battlements. The castellated appearance of this red-brick mansion block is mellowed by the pink stone dressings to the mullioned windows. A third block to the south was originally proposed to complete the symmetry of the group, but in its place stands Cornwall Mansions, which with its white stucco decoration appears less overbearing than the blocks on either side.

The western side is completed by Roxburghe Mansions and Durward House, both being undistinguished except for their impressive and ornate stucco entrances, especially the one to Durward House.

The central area is divided in two — the main development being Kensington Court Mansions, a soaring five-storey, red-brick mansion block, its vertical emphasis being increased by the full length windows to some of

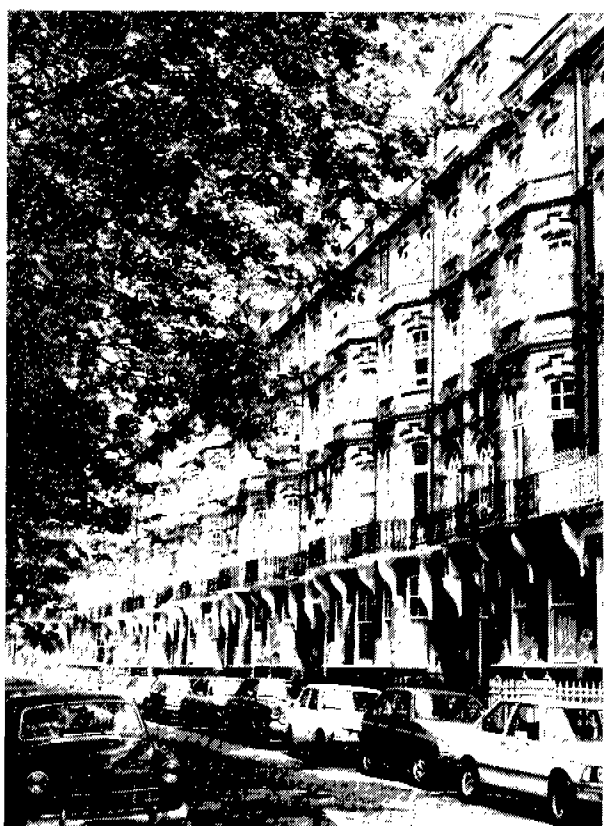
the floors. Despite being open to view on all four sides, the main facades face to the east and south. The north and west sides are unimpressive but fortunately attention is diverted away towards the well-tended gardens they overlook.

Numbers 26-29 form the other central block. This four square block faces to the south and north and the houses have raised basements, two main storeys and further accommodation in the roofs. The flats are linked by walkways running around three sides of the development.

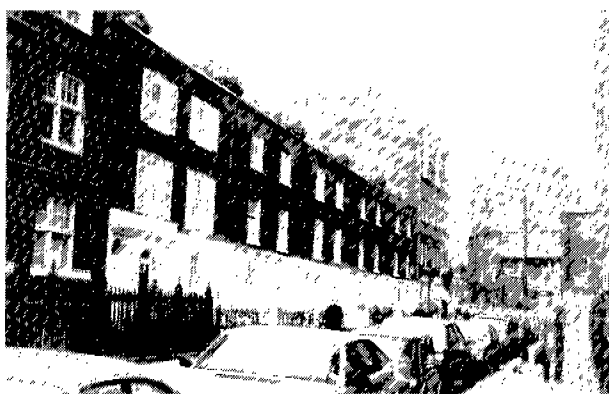
At the southern end of Kensington Court is **Kensington Court Mews**, an unusual and attractive multi-storey stable block, which was the only one built of the two originally proposed to serve the development. These buildings now house garages on the ground floor (formerly stables), with two tiers of flats above and further accommodation in the roofs. Angled bays, tourelles and broad gables add interest to this asymmetrical composition.

Kensington Court Place

The architectural style of Kensington Court continues down the east side of Kensington Court Place with the two mansion blocks of **Kensington Court Gardens** and **St. Albans Mansions**. The five to six storey block of



Kensington Court



Kensington Court Place (west side)

Kensington Court Gardens presents a rather overbearing and unbroken frontage to the street, dwarfing most of the buildings on the other side. Adjoining is St. Albans Mansions which turns the corner into **St. Albans Grove**. This five storey mansion block almost appears fussy and over-decorative alongside the plain facade of Kensington Court Gardens. The vertical emphasis is balanced by white stucco horizontal courses, which give the building a red and white striped effect.

The bulk of the west side is made up of an attractive terrace of early nineteenth-century cottages, with the ground floor stuccoed and surmounted by a cornice, and the upper floors in brown brick. The paired round-headed doorcases are an attractive feature, as are the garden railings on a low wall at the front and the profuse