

# THE CAMBERWELL SOCIETY

Chairman: Miss Nadine Beddington, 17 Champion Grove, S E 5  
Hon Treasurer: Brian Allsworth, 165 Grove Lane, S E 5 (274 0367)  
Hon Secretary: Ronald Watts, 19 Addington Square, S E 5  
(office 723 7030 ext 2178, home 703 7026)

NEWSLETTER No 8

February 1972

TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES

## A meeting on March 16th

A meeting has been arranged to hear about TREES and to talk about TREES on March 16th 1972 at 8.15 in the Grove Chapel schoolroom. The speakers will be Miss Susan Marsden-Smedley, who has been very active in St John's Wood and is Chairman of the Trees Group of the St John's Wood Protection Society, and Mr David Hankey, Chairman of the Dulwich Society's Trees Committee. Their experience and the discussion to follow should help us greatly to know what is involved and how to protect our trees.

ALL ARE WELCOME

## De Crespigny Park Development

After all the fuss at the end of 1970 which resulted in the withdrawal of the Council's scheme to redevelop nos 33-39 De Crespigny Park, a much revised plan has been prepared by the architects, Gordon Bowyer and Partners. This has been approved by the Council and is now going ahead; demolition of the old houses is now complete. The comments which follow are based on a new brochure which the Borough Planner has kindly supplied to us.

Although the Council has not been able to consider the retention of the four existing houses, they have now reduced the number of dwellings provided from 36 to 24 and the number of people accommodated from 114 to 96. The density of the development is now 15% below the zone density for the area; according to the architects "any density higher than this would result in a loss of environmental quality".

The reduced density has made it possible to restrict development to the two frontages on De Crespigny Park and Grove Lane, leaving more open space between the houses in Love Walk and De Crespigny Park. The two new blocks of flats and maisonettes are now separate and both are three storeys high; they have been treated with breaks in their façades so that they "express individual houses within the framework of the terrace" and "horizontal emphasis has been avoided as far as possible".

The new scheme meets a number of the objections of the Society although not its principle premise that it would have been most appropriate to restore the existing houses. At any rate it shews that vigilance and well-founded criticism do not come amiss.

## Planning applications

One aspect of the work of the Society's Committee is the careful scrutiny of planning applications and proposals in our area and then the preparation of comments to send to the Council. We receive every fortnight from the Council a complete list of planning applications; some of these are also advertised in the South London Press because they affect the conservation areas or involve historic buildings or for other reasons. In some important cases the Society is specifically invited to give its observations, and with a representative on the Council's Conservation Areas Advisory Committee we have yet another opportunity to express our views.

Recent applications which your Committee has commented on or is now considering include:

- 1-4 Grace's Mews - conversion of no 1 to two flats and the erection of six houses on the site adjoining
- 38 Camberwell Church Street - use as an amusement arcade
- 64-68 Camberwell Church Street and 13 Camberwell Grove - various proposals for supermarket or offices, some involving the demolition of no 13 Camberwell Grove
- 7 & 9 De Crespigny Park - conversion to flats
- 197 Camberwell Grove - erection of 17 garages in the rear garden
- 5 Canning Cross - change of use to shop with flat over

All these are private developments; we have also made our views known about the Council's proposals such as the De Crespigny Park Development (see above) and Lettsom Development Area.

This is an important part of the process of protecting and improving the character and amenities of our area, requiring regular attention.

#### Historic buildings grants

If the cornice of your house has fallen off or is partly missing, if your front railings were taken away during the war, if other features need repair or restoration, you may be able to get a historic buildings grant or loan; these grants or loans are not necessarily restricted to works to \*listed buildings.

Two members of the Society have recently been given grants by the Greater London Council: Nick Roskill received a substantial sum towards the cost of putting up front railings at no 56 Grove Lane, and James Elliott at no 158 Camberwell Grove received a contribution for various works of repair including the restoration of the six-panelled front door and the round-headed sashes for the ground floor windows.

If you think a grant might help you, write with details and a day-time telephone number to

or to  
The Surveyor of  
Historic Buildings  
Greater London Council  
Historic Buildings Division  
Bondway House  
3-9 Bondway, S W 8

The Borough Planner  
London Borough of Southwark  
Borough Development Department  
30-32 Peckham Road, S E 5  
(telephone enquiries to  
Mr Wills, 703 6311 ext 155)

All historic buildings grants are at the discretion of the Council making them. Unfortunately at present Southwark, with very little money allocated for this purpose, normally confines grants to works to \*listed buildings and is reluctant to give them to private owners. Perhaps more evidence of the extent of need will encourage a more generous attitude!

\*'listed buildings' are buildings on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

#### Maps, views and Christmas cards

The Society's greetings card sold very well, more than covering costs and with a good stock in hand. It was so much appreciated and well received that we will get another one ready in good time for next Christmas and hope for even bigger sales.

Meanwhile the reproduction of a selection of views is in preparation and it is expected that these will be ready during the summer.

Copies of Dewhurst's Map of Camberwell, 1842, are still available.

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NEWSLETTER NO 9 & NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

May 1972

## Annual General Meeting - June 12th 1972

The Annual General Meeting of The Camberwell Society will be held on June 12th 1972 in the schoolroom of Grove Chapel, Camberwell Grove, at 8 o'clock.

The speaker will be Mr Arthur Percival of the Civic Trust, on the role of the local amenity society. His talk will be illustrated with slides.

### AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the previous meeting
- 3 Matters arising from the minutes
- 4 Report of the Executive Committee - the Secretary
- 5 The Accounts - the Treasurer
- 6 Election of officers and committee \*\*
  - (a) The Chairman
  - (b) The Secretary
  - (c) The Treasurer
  - (d) 10 elected members of the Executive Committee
- 7 Mr Arthur Percival
- 8 Any other business

\*\* Any paid-up member of the Society may together with a seconder nominate candidates for the officers and committee. Nominations may be made at the meeting but would be preferred in writing before the meeting to the Secretary at 19 Addington Square, S E 5.

Ronald Watts, Honorary Secretary, 19 Addington Square, S E 5 (703 7026)

## The Camberwell Society - A Report of Two Years' Work

The Camberwell Society was formed in 1970 by the Camberwell Grove and District Residents' Association and other interested people. Since its formation the Society has achieved a great deal. In some ways the area covered by the Society is a microcosm of almost everything that an amenity society should be concerned with. The Society exists to promote high standards of architecture and planning and to improve the amenities of the area. Amenities obviously include public transport and shopping facilities. With so much development being undertaken, the blight of Camberwell Green, the motorway proposals, the decline of public transport, and the increasing traffic problems, it is evident that much is happening in Camberwell requiring attention immediate and urgent.

The activities of the Society have fallen broadly into three main categories. These categories are:

- (1) influencing development undertaken by the Greater London Council and the Borough Council,

- (2) influencing private development,
- (3) attempting to improve services such as public transport and shopping.

(1) Development undertaken by the Greater London Council and by the London Borough of Southwark This category is very wide and it is unnecessary to catalogue by any means all of the matters with which the Society has been concerned: a short selection will suffice - the North Camberwell Open Space, the De Crespigny Park Development, the Lettsom Development Area, and the Camberwell Grove Development Area.

The North Camberwell Open Space is possibly a unique form of development involving carving out of a very densely populated urban area something like 130 acres of open space and then laying out that land as a park, sports centre, and so on. Massive blight and rehousing problems are always involved in such a venture. This area presented more problems because of the decisions to be made about whether such areas as Addington Square should be excluded and conserved and whether such buildings as St George's Church Wells Way should not only be excluded but used for purposes other than church use.

The Society along with many others fought an enormous campaign to secure the conservation of Addington Square. This was successful. The manner of the campaign is instructive because it indicates a little of the ways and means to be used. The campaign got off to a good start because it was supporting the local authority. Efforts were made for letters to go officially on behalf of the Society to the Prime Minister, the Minister involved, the GLC - all members of the relevant committees - and the Borough Council. Individual members of the Society were provided with information through the Newsletter and invited to write to the Chairmen of the appropriate committees. A meeting of residents affected was convened and without any pressure their support was given. All this took a great deal of time, involved expert knowledge, in obtaining widespread support but with little expense, but if the Society had been required to pay for the expert knowledge and the facilities used then the expense would have been beyond the means of the Society.

The next stage after the decision on Addington Square was the future of St George's Wells Way. This fine church has fallen into disrepair beyond the means of the Diocese to put right. So the building is empty but it may be used for orchestral rehearsals and concerts. The Society is extremely concerned about the church and its future and hopes that the local authorities will do everything possible to ensure its retention and rehabilitation.

A similar predicament affects Trinity Church. Planning permission was at one time refused for orchestra rehearsal use but given for a luxury flats/swimming pool conversion. More recently, however, an orchestral use has obtained planning permission and the choice passed to the owners, the Church Commissioners: some would say it is more properly a planning issue. The Commissioners have approved in principle the orchestral use and it is very much hoped that this venture will succeed.

The layout of the North Camberwell Open Space and what is to be put there for the benefit of its users is of crucial significance. The Society would favour an open competition to allow all interested to proffer their ideas and skills.

Three other local authority developments have raised a variety of issues. De Crespigny Park raised the questions of whether the existing houses should be rehabilitated and if not what was to be the appropriate density and how the new buildings should fit into the surrounding conservation area. The scheme was much revised in consequence of the efforts of the Society including the point that the first throw infringed the right to light of properties in Love Walk. Lettsom again raised the issue of density, also of the facing bricks on the Camberwell Grove frontage, the Harrow public house (whether it could be retained), location of shops, through road and trees. The Camberwell Grove Development Area required a compulsory purchase order and the Society objected, amongst other grounds, that the land should be used for open space and that if not so used the proposed density was too high. This objec-



tion was strongly supported by some of the adjoining residents who appeared at the inquiry together with Stephen Marks who prepared detailed evidence and appeared for the Society.

One rather special form of local authority development is the Greater London Development Plan. The Society joined the campaign against motorway proposals; it supported the case of the London Motorway Action Group, raised money to help finance it, arranged a public meeting at Grove Chapel, and in the form of Stephen Marks appeared at the public inquiry. Stephen Marks prepared the evidence and presented the case.

The Greater London Development Plan with its proposals for Ringways 1 and 2 through inner London is one of crucial significance for London. No one concerned about life in London as a whole or the many communities which make up London can afford to neglect even for a moment these vital matters. If Ringway 1, the innermost motorway ring, is given the go-ahead much of Camberwell will be damaged or destroyed on a pattern which would be repeated all over London.

(2) Private development The Society has sought to influence private development mainly by commenting on planning applications. The Society is specially notified of applications affecting the three conservation areas and also receives regularly the lists of applications sent out by the Borough Development Department. Many applications have been commented on but two in particular need to be cited. One is the Tigeress Restaurant: the Society was concerned about possible disturbance and so objected to the application (not as such a planning application) for licences from the G L C and the Borough Council. The opening hours were restricted.

The second case is the sequence of planning applications affecting 64-68 Camberwell Church Street. The last one of the sequence involved the demolition of no 13 Camberwell Grove to provide access for rear servicing to 64-68. This would have removed an attractive house, part of a pair, and, perhaps more important, severely affected the residents of Chamberlain Cottages. A campaign was mounted with the co-operation of local residents including Chamberlain Cottages and in the end a much improved revised scheme was approved not involving so much damage to the amenity of the cottages or the demolition of no 13 Camberwell Grove.

(3) Improvement of services This category is of considerable importance. The desirability and need for improved public transport is increasingly difficult to drive home particularly with the demand for private cars being so intense. Representations to London Transport usually fall on deaf ears. The Society complained about the reduction of train services from Denmark Hill Station but the response from British Rail was nil. British Rail were advised by the Consultative Committee to review the proposal to close East Brixton Station. There are some hopeful signs that the Bakerloo Line will be extended from the Elephant and Castle down to Camberwell Green and then across to Rye Lane. On the other hand there are many complaints about the performance of the Northern Line and we are told that services on this line are to be reduced, particularly late in the evening. The introduction of large one-man-operated buses is producing justifiable protest: they are inconvenient for passengers and hold up traffic very considerably.

The shopping facilities are declining. Many local shops are giving up business; Camberwell Green is blighted and there seems little prospect of an early revival.

In all these aspects of development the efforts of the Society depend upon members having considerable planning, architectural and legal skills together with some awareness of the set up to ensure that these efforts are concentrated in the right places. The Society needs a broadly based membership throughout its whole area.

Other activities The Society has organised a number of meetings. The most important were the meeting on the Motorway through Southwark and the

more recent one on Trees. The Society has produced eight Newsletters and has published a Christmas card which sold extremely well last year; it is intended to produce another Christmas card this year. On behalf of the Society Stephen Marks has published a reproduction of Dewhurst's Map of Camberwell 1842.

At the present time amenity societies perform an invaluable and necessary function but they do so on an entirely voluntary basis which is probably right but on a shoestring budget which may not be. The Government has received a report to the effect that public funds should be made available to properly run and effective groups. At least this is a thought which may enable the residents of an area to make some impact on the apparently impassive and purblind machinery of local and central government.

#### Camberwell - a glimpse at the past

Mr Denison H Allport wrote last year to one of our members, James Elliott of 158 Camberwell Grove. Mr Allport, who was born in 1885, is a great-nephew of Douglas Allport who wrote the earliest historical work on Camberwell. His family have long links with Camberwell, as his letter shows, and he himself lived most of his life here.

He writes:

Thank you very much for your letter and the most attractive drawing of your house, which recalls many old memories of the Grove. Doubtless you are well acquainted with the history of that part of old Camberwell. Airlie House, just above you, we of course knew as the home of Wm Black, the novelist, and I always thought his description of Grove Park, in "Madcap Violet" (page 108 in the New and Revised edition) very just as we knew it in the old days. The Park Gates were across the entrance though usually kept open, with the Gatekeeper's Cottage on the left, where old Scriven the keeper lived. It was afterwards converted to the present private dwelling with the old entrance walled up. On the opposite side of the way where Rylstone now stands was a deep hollow planted with shrubs known as the ravine, and turned into cellars when the house was built. There were few houses in the Park then. The remains of Lettsom's house and where Col Henry Smith and later Dr Couper Cripps lived stood on the higher ground to the right. The centre of the Park was unbuilt on and contained the so-called Camber Well.

Dr Cripps previously occupied the house in the Grove above Rylstone (?185). He was the holder of the old and original Camberwell 'practice'. He was a keen horseman and visited his patients in fine weather, driving a high dog-cart, with his groom riding behind and in bad weather in a brougham with coachman and groom. He was always immaculately turned out. He saved my life as a boy owing to his keeping up to date. Diphtheria or lockjaw was a scourge as no antitoxin had then been introduced, but he knew of the introduction in a crude form and used it on me for the first time. He had taken on the practice from a Dr Stevenson, who succeeded three Dr Tobias Browns who had attended each generation of my family and were known by tradition to us from the first of them who went his rounds in a high curricule, wearing a wig and carrying a gold-headed cane. Among the residents around your house that I remember were Sir Perceval Nairne, so well known in local affairs and as a magistrate and Col Burne, but it was largely the centre - with Denmark Hill - for people who took the lead in Camberwell society.

My last surviving cousin in Camberwell who lived on Champion Hill died just recently. My wife and I were at her funeral. Her going brings to an end 165 years of the family's residence. I retired 23 years ago, and I could not leave without calling on the Mayor to take leave and we mutually drank each other's health, though I could only then claim 142 years' blameless rate-paying!

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NEWSLETTER No 10

October 1972

CAMBERWELL GREEN - TRAFFIC - CAMBERWELL GREEN - SHOPS - CAMBERWELL GREEN

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE GREEN ?

A public meeting on Thursday October 19th

Wren Road Congregational Church, Love Walk, S E 5, at 8 p m

(see separate notice for details)

ALL ARE WELCOME

## Open space

In November the Society will hold an open meeting about the provision and use of open spaces and their amenities. An announcement will be made at the Camberwell Green meeting and details will be given in the next Newsletter.

## Subscriptions

The subscription is 50 pence a year, due on June 1st. A large number of the members on the books of the Society have not paid for the current year and several owe for the year ending last May. Each year for which your subscription has not been paid is ringed in red: please let the Hon Treasurer have it promptly so that you don't rely on others to keep your Society going!

1971 (June 71 - May 72)

1972 (June 72 - May 73)

## Christmas cards

A greetings card is now being prepared and will be ready well before the end of this month. It will have a reproduction of an eighteenth-century view of Camberwell from the Grove, and with only the word 'Greetings' inside will serve for other occasions as well as for Christmas. With envelope it will cost 4 pence; there are also still plenty of last year's card of Fountain Cottage available at the same price.

As soon as the new cards are ready a circular (or another Newsletter) will be sent round to say where they can be bought; please wait for the announcement before enquiring for them.

## Views of Old Camberwell

Also imminent is a set of fourteen views of Camberwell, ranging from 1750 to about 1900, and a Plan of Grove Hill (Dr Lettsom's estate) in 1792. These will be publicised by leaflet at the same time as the new Christmas cards. At prices from 10 to 30 pence each (or a set of views for £2) they will be worth bearing in mind for Christmas too.

## Annual General Meeting June 12th 1972 - Report

The Annual General Meeting of The Camberwell Society was held on June 12th 1972 in the schoolroom of Grove Chapel and was attended by some seventy people. The Secretary presented the written report on the first two years' work of

the Society (printed in Newsletter no 9) and in his comments referred to

- (1) the Motorway Box which is a matter of vital importance requiring constant vigilance;
- (2) the Dockland development along the riverside which though not immediately relevant to the Society's area nonetheless could ultimately have a considerable impact;
- (3) the North Camberwell Open Space about which the Society had expressed considerable reservations particularly on the problems created by the protracted clearance and then the proposals for the layout; and
- (4) buildings of Special Architectural Interest which were fast disappearing mainly through the activities of local authorities and private developers. Much effort was required to counteract these undesirable happenings.

The retiring Chairman, Hon Treasurer, and Hon Secretary were re-elected, and the following were elected as the Executive Committee, Mrs Pugh being a new member this year:

Joshua Brook, 1 Champion Grove  
James Elliott, 158 Camberwell Grove (274 6991)  
Philip Hugh-Jones, 167 Camberwell Grove ( 274 9351)  
Michael Ivan, 24 Grove Lane (703 4564)  
Stephen Marks, 50 Grove Lane (703 2719)  
Cliff Potter, 51 Grove Park (733 3792)  
Diana Pugh, 26 Langford Green (733 0340)  
Jim Tanner,  
Shirley Tanner, 107 Camberwell Grove (703 8624)  
Bruin Wooster, 92 Camberwell Grove (703 2454)

Arthur Percival of the Civic Trust gave a fascinating illustrated talk on amenity societies, their history and achievements. He introduced his talk with a brief description of the Civic Trust. It was started by Duncan Sandys in 1957 when he was Minister of Housing and Local Government. He realised that there was a real need for a voluntary and independent body supporting and co-ordinating the work of local societies. The Civic Trust has shewn a particular interest in the reclamation of derelict land, it has a good library of books, photographs, and films, and it makes annual awards for buildings and other works which enhance the environment.

Local amenity societies are in a real sense the front line striking force of the Civic Trust. They must be concerned with much broader issues than rate-payers' and residents' associations. The first known society was founded in 1847; in 1900 there were 6, all in London; by 1939 there were 100, 215 in 1957, whilst today there are 950 amenity societies registered with the Civic Trust. Some are now so influential that there have been attempts to blackmail their officers.

After the talk the Secretary proposed a well-deserved vote of thanks to the speaker.

Jill Phillips asked whether any members were interested in the Camberwell Beauty and other local nature activity. It was suggested that the Borough Council might produce a glossary of the more interesting local street names. Some members considered that full meetings of the Society should be held more often to discuss local developments and the social implications of what was happening.

#### 64-68 Camberwell Church Street

After much correspondence from the Society and from individual members and much good work by the Council's officers in negotiating an office development scheme which left 13 Camberwell Grove intact and should have kept the façade of the houses on Church Street with their ground storey restored, the developers found it 'impracticable' to hold up the front wall on its own, so it was demolished after all; however, we are assured that it is going to be rebuilt in replica.



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NEWSLETTER No 11

November 1972

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## PARKS & OPEN SPACES IN CAMBERWELL

We've got St Giles Churchyard, Brunswick Park, Lucas Gardens, and Ruskin Park, and the GLC is, very slowly, forming a new park of the North Camberwell Open Space.

Is this what you want? What else should there be?

A public meeting on Wednesday November 29th

Wren Road Congregational Church, Love Walk, S E 5, at 8 p m

ALL ARE WELCOME

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

The Society's Christmas card this year is a reproduction of an engraved view of Camberwell from the Grove; it was printed in Walter Harrison's Universal history, description and survey of London, Westminster and Southwark, which was published in 1776. The view shews the lower part of Camberwell Grove as it was originally laid out as an avenue behind a mansion facing Camberwell Church Street, before the development of the Grove; included in the view is the old church of St Giles destroyed by fire in 1841.

There are also plenty of last year's card of Dr Lettsom's Fountain Cottage, from an engraving of 1797.

Both these cards have only the word 'Greetings' inside so that they can be used for other occasions as well as at Christmas.

The cards are expected to be ready by November 4th and will be available (to members only) from:

James Elliott, 158 Camberwell Grove (274 6991)  
Michael Ivan, 24 Grove Lane (703 4564)  
Judi Bratt, 3 Queen's Court, 6/7 Grove Park (733 3537)  
Brian Allsworth, 165 Grove Lane (274 0367)

and, after its opening on November 20th, from:

The Passage Bookshop, 5 Canning Cross, S E 5 (in the mews behind the George Canning pub, 123 Grove Lane)

Price, including envelope: 4 pence each, by post 10 pence extra per 10

Views of Old Camberwell: see page 11.6 and separate leaflet

## CAMBERWELL GREEN

"We can't wish the traffic away" Miss Betty Haran, Southwark's assistant borough planner, told us at a packed meeting of the Society on October 19th. It was evident that the keynote to Council thinking is that plans must first be prepared which make the traffic flow more easily as the means to alleviating the present unpleasantness of traffic at Camberwell Green.

She told us that Camberwell Green is a very important road junction, unsatisfactory for all, people, shopping, and for buses as well as for other traffic trying to use it; she agreed that lack of development and the blight and uncertainty were due to the delay in forming road proposals which have to be agreed between the Greater London Council and Borough Council. There is a long history of



abortive schemes going back thirty years, but now there is an outline proposal in the Ministry's 'preparation list' which means that £1 million will be available when details of the scheme have been agreed and worked out.

Mr Clifford Jones, from the GLC's Planning Transportation Department, thought that we were lucky to have the Green in the preparation list, as there were only two or three other schemes in Southwark on it. He too referred to the blight of the area and said "Camberwell Green is a mess and is in need of improvement"; he said that he had been working on the 'improvement' at Camberwell Green for three years and that the GLC and Southwark had been talking for 18 months, that when the GLC had a scheme agreed in principle by their own Council it would then be put to the Borough Council, then publicised for local consultation: he expected that the scheme would go to the GLC committee in 4 to 6 months' time.

It was quite clear that no one at the meeting was prepared to believe any dates that were given, and even clearer that everyone was convinced that priority should be given to planning for people and their homes instead of to schemes for roads. Scepticism, dissatisfaction, and distress were foremost among those who live in the Wren Road and Daneville Road area, worst sufferers of the blight, who have given up the maintenance of their houses and the care of their gardens, confused by conflicting dates for rehousing given or hinted at by different sources of information. There was a buzz of sensation when Miss Haran said that nothing would happen in the Selborne area for at least three or four years. The delay and uncertainty bring misery to many people's lives, misery with no escape, outrageously imposed because no plans can be agreed for roads, and degeneration and closing of shops because there is no viability in improvement and maintenance for uncertain short-term occupation.

One consolation only, but a big one, is that if 'improvements' had been carried out five or ten years ago there might have been an elevated road on the west side of Camberwell Green, a flyover to Denmark Hill with links galore, resulting in another anonymous modern development with expensive shops and dominating roads. Proposals are now, it seems, confined to ground level, but will still mean widenings, extra roads, easier flows which inevitably lead to increased traffic.

It may be that the longer it takes to build, the smaller the destruction will be, but in the fifteen or twenty years of indecision much could have been done to improve the existing houses and shops and to avoid the present rampant distress. Perhaps the time really has come to put people first, go for small-scale piecemeal improvement or redevelopment of property within a sensitive framework, and let the traffic be restricted to give decent conditions on the existing roads.

No answers were given to questions from the floor about the long-term effect of oil shortage pushing up fuel prices and reducing car demand, about the scale of restrictions which would be needed and which must be accepted in the future, or about the need to define essential traffic instead of assuming that increased volumes or even the present amount had some inalienable right to be accommodated.

People in London and everywhere else are at last realising that all improvements for traffic are at the expense of every other aspect of their lives, housing, shopping, townscape, and amenity of every kind, and the demand is growing for very much stricter control of traffic, not merely to control its growth, but to stem and turn the tide, to reduce the traffic to the capacity of the existing network with full regard to amenity. This is not 'wishing it away' but urging positive steps, however difficult, to achieve the right kind of improvement.

The convenience of the proposed extension of the Bakerloo line to Camberwell and Peckham would make a great difference to the traffic demand at the Green, but at present it is in the London Transport programme after the Fleet Line and there is no government commitment to provide funds for it; Miss Haran mentioned 1980 as a date for opening but the meeting was most sceptical of any date.

Mr Sutherland of the Borough's Highways and Works Department, explained the 'experimental contra-flow bus lane' at Camberwell Green, initiated by the GLC; he said that the scheme had achieved its aim of helping to improve bus movement, but it appeared that this was at the expense of east-west movement. Two other

(continued on page 11.4)

# ROW IS EXPECTED OVER TWO COUNCILLORS WHO BACK CAMBERWELL GREEN PROTESTS

A ROW is expected at Southwark's next Planning Committee meeting following the backing given by two councillors to Camberwell residents who have attacked members and officials of both the borough council and the GLC for their slowness in planning a new Camberwell Green.

And the two councillors, Cliff Potter and Ron Watts, who say they are "frequently in a minority" when decisions are taken by the Planning Committee, on which they sit, have pledged themselves to fight for people who want to live in traditional-style terraced houses and not "stacked up in little boxes."

At a packed meeting called by the Camberwell Society, of which Mr. Watts is secretary, last week at the Congregational Hall in Love-walk, Camberwell, some 400 people heard both Southwark and GLC planners admit they were still not in a position to say how the Green and its surrounds will be developed despite years of argument.

While Clifford Jones, the GLC's highways engineer dealing with the project, offered hope of some sort of acceptable traffic scheme appearing in four to six months, the two Southwark officials who spoke, would not be drawn on a date at all.

## PROMISE

Angry residents complained that some people, mostly those living in Wren-rd., had been promised as long as three years ago that they were to be moved "at anytime."

While some wanted to move, others said they were quite happy to remain where they were, but uncertainty about development meant they were neglecting the painting and decorating of their homes and not bothering to turn over the garden.

As Miss Betty Haran, assistant borough planner for Southwark, followed by Mr. Donald Sutherland, senior assistant engineer in the highways department, explained that the whole future of the area depended on the traffic problem being sorted out, shouts of, "Aren't people more important than cars?" were rife.

Miss Haran said the planners were anxious not to create a second "white elephant" in the borough—a reference to the Elephant and Castle shopping centre — and that careful thought had to be given to the mix of shops, flats and offices to be built.

Miss Haran outlined all the problems involved in drawing up a plan for the Green—the traffic flow, pro-

viding for the 13 bus routes, shopping facilities, and the amenity value — and Mr. Sutherland tried to explain the new bus lanes. People claimed that by the time the plans were announced, it would be too late to change much.

Mr. Jones said the agreement of no less than 36 organisations had to be achieved on the plans.

The scheme, though not yet fully drawn up, had been placed on the Department of the Environment's preparation list, which meant that when a scheme is agreed, more than £1 million will be available for it.

## BLIGHTED

"Camberwell Green is a mess and it needs improving," he said. "It has been blighted for a long time and the air of uncertainty makes it worse."

He said pressure from local residents would push it forward.

One young woman complained she had been given an old house "in an appalling condition" as a stop-gap measure under Southwark's scheme for young couples who want to buy their own homes.

She said she had been given no hope of a better place to live and could soon become homeless.

Her argument was taken up by Councillor Watts who said, "We should express grave concern over the way in which young people are living in the area in which they have lived all their lives."

It was wrong that young people promised that sooner or later they would be given the opportunity to buy a house were now being told this was not possible, he said.

The residents, many of whom are now to join the Camberwell Society in a campaign over the Green, agreed that Cllrs. Watts and Potter should tell the authorities to get the Underground extended to Camberwell Green as soon as possible — a move which could reduce the traffic problem in the area.

Cllr. Watts said, "As so many of you have said, you

are sick and tired of living in large estates or concrete boxes, and you would much prefer, where possible, terraced houses of the kind we have all been accustomed to in the past and which are being taken away as quickly as possible."

He said he would also pass on the view of the residents that they would prefer modest development rather than comprehensive development, and that they condemned the GLC's motorway box proposals.

Cllr. Potter told the meeting, "Ron and I have been hitting our heads against a brick wall at the Planning Committee on the question of large estates. When it comes to these matters we are frequently in the minority."

"Tell your councillors that you like living in terraced houses, and keep telling them, and then Ron and I will get somewhere."

Only a small plea on behalf of the Green's most well-known residents — the dossers — was made at the meeting.

Shirley Otto of the Camberwell Council on Alcoholism asked that this problem should not be swept under the carpet.

The accommodation for dossers and other single people was disappearing in the north of the borough and this increased the problem in areas like Camberwell.

## DISGRACE

She appealed for residents and planners to take the dossers into account, along with all single people. Planners, she said, should have a greater social conscience.

To complaints that the "scandalous delay" in drawing up plans meant that property values were affected and houses could not be sold, Cllr. Watts commented that the matter was "a public disgrace."

"We wanted this meeting so that we can go back and knock hell out of the authorities."

He said he felt that hold-ups were not always the fault of council members. He asked that the officials should get a move on.

by Peter Kinsella

bus lanes are also under discussion, one for evening westward buses in Camberwell Church Street (when the main traffic is eastwards!) and one for eastbound buses west of Camberwell Green.

Miss Shirley Otto, a research worker for the Camberwell Council on Alcoholism, appealed to people to try to have sympathy for the 'natives' of Camberwell Green, the dossers, whose problems were being severely increased by the loss of accommodation for single people which is one of the consequences of redevelopment, especially in the northern part of the borough; single people have the added problem that they are not normally eligible for the housing list. This is the social side of planning and it is indeed difficult to know what to do, but, regardless of whose responsibility it is, we are urged not to try to push the dossers, and the problem, away from us and forget about them.

Concluding an extremely lively meeting at which many other matters were discussed, Ron Watts asked the speakers to take our views back to the Town Hall and County Hall: they could not fail to have more to take back than they had brought since we learnt primarily that they could not tell us about their plans. He also enthusiastically took up Miss Otto's suggestion of a steering committee of Camberwell residents to tell the Councils what we want.

In summing up the points discussed he said that we wanted better information sooner about the Green and the Daneville Road area; the motorway is still not acceptable (see separate report on page 11.5); the existing traffic should be severely curtailed so that it is safe to walk about the Green now without waiting indefinitely for the 'improvements' which are being discussed; and the tube line should be constructed earlier, before the Fleet Line in central London to reduce congestion at the Green, and should be extended to Lewisham; the lives and homes of people should rank much higher than other planning aims such as road improvement; people are sick and tired of large estates and would prefer to live in terrace or other houses with gardens; development of Camberwell Green should be modest in form and should not follow the typical comprehensive pattern which would tear to bits everything with which we are familiar.

An excellent report of this meeting by Peter Kinsella appeared in the South London Press and is reprinted as part of this Newsletter.

#### Trees - a report of the meeting on March 16th 1972 at Grove Chapel schoolroom

The Society was addressed by Miss Susan Marsden-Smedley, Chairman of the Trees Group of the St John's Wood Protection Society, and Mr David Hankey, Chairman of the Dulwich Society Trees Committee.

Miss Marsden-Smedley described how her Trees Group, a group of amateurs, had undertaken a tree survey in their area. They had plotted all the private trees in front and back gardens on a 1:250 Ordnance Survey map. She then shewed slides of how to prune and how not to prune, stressing the disastrous results of allowing indiscriminate lopping and pollarding of trees, work on which should always be entrusted to qualified tree surgeons. She also described how her Society now had a group of 'tree watchdogs' with explicit instructions as to what to do if they saw a tree being mutilated or felled.

Mr Hankey described how his committee had carried out the very complex task of surveying Lapse Wood. They had been amazed at the number of species of trees, birds (36 different species), and animals which they had discovered. Mr Hankey felt more confident that the Borough might look more favourably on the idea of retaining Lapse Wood as a public open space, partly as a result of the interest shewn in it by the Dulwich Society, and also through their action in holding a press conference to publicise their views and activities.

Mr Hankey made a plea for the planting of slower growing forest and other larger trees rather than the ornamental cherries and similar flowering trees which are so often out of scale with their locations.

It was evident from the ensuing discussion that both speakers had given tremendous encouragement to members of The Camberwell Society to embark on their own long-heralded tree survey, however ill-prepared they might feel at the beginning of the venture, and this impression was borne out by the number of members who volunteered to join our tree sub-committee.

## The motorway - GLDP inquiry and after

After nearly two years of hearings, submissions, cross-examinations, the inquiry into the Greater London Development Plan came to an end earlier this year. The Plan covers the whole range of London's future but a large part of it was devoted to the most specific and most contentious proposals, the motorways, comprising Ringways 1 and 2 entirely within the GLC area, Ringway 3 on the edge, partly in and partly outside, and radial routes linking them and the national motorway system.

More than 20,000 objections were put in against the motorways, especially the inner ringways, 1 and 2, which would pass through densely populated, tight-knit, urban areas where the construction and use of these roads would create devastation and destruction, disruption of communities, and indeed encourage such an increase of traffic that it would reach at least the same frustrating crush as before on other roads, and before construction leave large areas afflicted with the worst effects of planning blight.

The main objector was the London Motorway Action Group, a non-party body set up specially to oppose the inner ringways, with Douglas Jay MP as Chairman and Duncan Sandys MP as Vice-chairman. This group, still active and watchful, is composed mainly of representatives from local societies including The Camberwell Society.

An extremely skilled, knowledgeable, and dedicated team of experts headed by J Michael Thomson (Research Fellow in Transport at LSE) prepared as the principal evidence of the LMAG a 300-page document entitled Transport strategy for London and eight days of the inquiry in March and April last year were needed for the LMAG case which was argued on the strategic aspects and the overall consequences of the motorway proposals. The LMAG felt that it had cause to be reasonably pleased with the conduct of its case and had managed to extract substantial admissions and concessions from the GLC during questioning.

The Camberwell Society as an objector relied entirely on the LMAG for the presentation of the strategic case, but one of the grounds of objection put in by the latter refers to 'damage to living conditions and amenities in the neighbourhood of the proposed motorway': it is this aspect of the proposals about which evidence was presented on behalf of the Society by Stephen Marks. His written evidence of some seven and a half thousand words, with map and sketches, was based on surveys of the whole route through Southwark carried out by a small working party of members of the Society. This evidence was presented to the inquiry on February 1st 1972 on the 212th of the inquiry. While the case of an individual area may not seem very much to put in the scales against the whole proposal, the cumulative effect of so many societies has been considerable and our Society feels that, especially in this part of south London, it has made a useful contribution in highlighting the local problems.

Since the end of the inquiry the Panel have been preparing their report for the Secretary of State for the Environment. Earlier in the year it was expected that this would be ready for him in August, but so far there is no sign that it has been submitted. The LMAG is pressing for publication of the report in advance of the decisions, as was the case with the Roskill Commission on the third London airport, but it has had no success so far in obtaining any commitment to such publication.

In September great publicity was given to proposals for amending the GLC motorway plans. The announcement from the GLC Press Office in fact merely made public an instruction from Mr Brew, Chairman of the GLC's Environmental Planning Committee, to his officers to prepare for the Council a report on these amendments.

Unfortunately many people including a large number of journalists have been taken in by phrases about 'shelving', 'deferment', and 'looking again'. The plain fact is that with the suggested amendments there is little change except the switch in timing of Ringway 1 and Ringway 2 in south London and the formation at an early stage of a composite ring from parts of Ringways 1 and 2, so that the South Cross Route through Camberwell and Peckham would be brought



forward. Talk of deferment of some stretches for twenty years is grossly misleading since the last phase of the motorway construction was not due to be started till 1991 anyway, and as the motorway network still comprises everything already planned the same areas are still threatened and blighted.

Since the South Cross Route passes through solidly-held Labour constituencies and the 'deferred' routes through Hampstead, Streatham, and Bromley, the amendments are clearly inspired by political not technical considerations, but no doubt we can expect the changes to be suitably supported by technical argument which hitherto has been in favour of the plan submitted to the public inquiry.

Those who read the South London Press - and everyone who cares for their community should see their local paper - will have seen on September 29th one of those insidious, clever, letters from a Mr Plumley of the British Road Federation, many of whose members are involved in the road construction industry. Towards the end of his letter he says 'It is up to the GLC to ensure that the new road causes the least possible disruption and that no one living on or near the route is left materially or environmentally worse off once the motorway is built'.

Mr Plumley suffers, like so many champions of urban motorways, from the sad illusion that it is possible to do this but his own Federation's study, Motorways in the urban environment, presented as evidence to the GLDP inquiry, makes it quite clear that hitherto urban motorways have been devastating in their effect on the environment and that it is necessary in order to overcome the environmental problems to propose large scale redevelopment of the areas through which they run, i.e. to remove the environment affected! And what faith can we have in the Council which perpetrated the horrors of Westway? The South London Press published on October 20th a letter from Stephen Marks answering some of Mr Plumley's points, including the claim that there was a 55 per cent majority in favour of the ringway plan.

An article in the Observer of October 22nd should give us considerable encouragement in our fight against the domination of the motor vehicle: headed 'No more cars in the high street' Jeremy Bugler's report on the anti-motorway revolution gave prominence to Nottingham's abandonment of a £100 million road programme and its proposals, instead, to build up public transport and very severely to restrict the motor car. London must follow: when it comes to the GLC elections next year make sure your candidates pledge themselves to abandon motorways in inner London, so that London can get on with the business of humane life at a human scale.

#### Views of Old Camberwell & Plan of Grove Hill

The accompanying leaflet gives full details of two new publications relating to Camberwell. These are now available from:

Stephen Marks, 50 Grove Lane, S E 5 (703 2719)

and, after November 20th, for personal shoppers at:

The Passage Bookshop, 5 Canning Cross, S E 5

The Camberwell Society is your local society for the improvement of planning and the protection of amenity.

If you are not already a member please support by joining: subscription 50p a year to the Hon Treasurer, Brian Allsworth, 165 Grove Lane S E 5, or to Michael Ivan, 24 Grove Lane.

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