



# EARL'S COURT SQUARE 2013 edition

our history for the past 200 years ...

Our thanks to Jennifer Ware, Celia de Borchgrave and Sue Lupton for producing this booklet, Judy Head for the layout and Faron Sutaria for sponsoring the printing.

# EARL'S COURT SQUARE

our history for the past 200 years ...



Faron Sutaria are proud to be associated with the Earl's Court Square Resident Association.

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### Some Events.

There have always been surprises. In 1992 a man walking his dog fell into a collapsed coal-hole outside No 40: he was indignant but unhurt.

In 2005 buildings started to tremble as if an earthquake was imminent. This was a side-effect of audiences at Exhibition Centre concerts stomping their feet, which reverberated through the Exhibition Hall. In 2008 scaffolding collapsed suddenly outside No. 6 but no one was hurt. In 2012 there was a fire at the launderette, Suds, on the South East corner with Earl's Court Road, for the second time!

There have been happier events too. In 1999 there was a magnificent party given to celebrate ECSRA's 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday at the Poet's House (21), one of only 5 houses remaining as single dwellings in the Square. We have hosted our Members of Parliament, Michael Portillo and Sir Malcolm Rifkind at the Poet's House. In 2008 after a lot of lobbying from local residents and help from Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Thames Water finally admitted that water pressures serving top flats in the Square were too low to cope with demand at peak periods.

Life in Earl's Court Square has chugged quietly along for the last 39 years, steered by the committee of the Residents' Association. But we live in interesting times: heated discussions about the future of Earls Court Exhibition Centre are ongoing and work on the construction of CrossRail will soon start, which will have a knock-on effect on traffic further north.

The Residents' Association is manned by residents and we welcome recruits to help keep Earl's Court Square a place where we all enjoy living.



*Jennifer Ware, the author of this history, at the age of 17, sitting on the balcony of number 19.*

### USEFUL NUMBERS

**[www.ecsra.co.uk](http://www.ecsra.co.uk)**

For contact with our Chairman email [ecsrachair@talktalk.net](mailto:ecsrachair@talktalk.net)

This booklet on our history will be available for £3 a copy, or as part of a Membership Subscription to the Earl's Court Square Residents' Association (ECSRA). Membership of ECSRA is £6 per annum for individuals and £9 for families. Contact Sue Lupton on [sue@sueluptonconsulting.com](mailto:sue@sueluptonconsulting.com) for the membership form, or ring Jennifer Ware on 020 7373 4631.

The Chairman of the Garden Sub-Committee is Katrina Quinton on [katrinaquinton@gmail.com](mailto:katrinaquinton@gmail.com). For keys to the garden, refer to the garden website, [www.ecsgarden.org](http://www.ecsgarden.org), or contact the secretary, Stacy Bouvier on [stacy@abouvier.com](mailto:stacy@abouvier.com).



carefully surrounded by child-friendly planting. Over the last 25 years Newsletters record the constant care by the garden committee, working at the day to day running of the garden as well as upkeep of the paths, access, replanting, lighting, irrigation and the upwardly mobile plane trees which are regularly pollarded.

There is a popular family Christmas Party, complete with Christmas tree, Christmas lights, carols and mulled wine.

There is also a Summer Barbq which is very popular with Square families and friends.



The Square is a haven for a variety of wildlife: there were enthusiastic sightings of "our fox" in 2001, when urban foxes were more unusual and popular than they are today, there are bird feeders for a range of species

## THE HISTORY OF EARL'S COURT SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA



*1787: Earl's Court on the left - essentially rural*

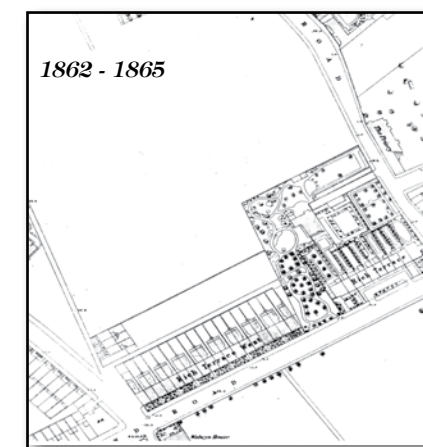
EARL'S COURT SQUARE is built on land originally occupied by Rich Lodge and its extensive grounds which were cultivated, like most of the area, as a market garden. The origins of this fairly small and modest building are unknown.

Rich is one of the family names of the Earls of Warwick and Holland (another is de Vere); their estate was inherited in the early 1800s by William Edwardes, first Baron Kensington, and was known thereafter as the Edwardes Estate.

### EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The first recorded development in the conservation area was a row of 10 houses called Rich Terrace constructed in 1830 on the north side of Old Brompton Road (the stretch west of Earl's Court Road was then named Richmond Road). The Mansions and Richmond

Mansions now stand on the site of those 10 houses. Further houses were added to the terrace in 1850-3 where now stands Redcliffe Close. The parallel terrace, built 1866-8, on the south side of Old Brompton (Richmond) Road, still stands.



Three small houses, demolished when the south side of the Square was developed, were built behind Rich Terrace and fronting onto Rich Lane which still exists as a service road between the south side of the Square and the mansion blocks on Old Brompton Road.

#### ST. MATTHIAS' CHURCH

The earliest development in the conservation area to survive into the 20th century was the High Anglican Church of St. Matthias in Warwick Road, built in 1869-72. Two schools, infant and primary, were erected to the south of it in 1873 but proved too small and were replaced by one larger school in 1898-9. A new wing was added to the southern flank of the school in 1977. The church was damaged by incendiary bombs in the Second World War and never reopened. It was demolished in 1958 and made space for the school caretaker's bungalow and garden, built in 1962.

There were three terrace houses on the south corner of the site facing onto Warwick Road, no clear record of which now exists, although they are on the map of 1879. People who remember them say they were of the same style as the houses opposite, which leads to the assumption that they were the first phase of a terrace, probably planned to run from Old Brompton Road, which was never completed. A bomb in the Second World War demolished these houses.

#### THE NORTH, EAST AND WEST TERRACES

The first building of the Square was the construction of No. 1, which was known as Earl's Court Lodge\*, built in 1873-5 by a builder/property developer, Edward Francis, in conjunction with nos. 280-288 and 292-302 Earl's Court Road.

At the same period Edward Francis commenced building the two rows of houses, which are now nos. 3-11 and 2-10 on the north-east arm of the Square,\*\*\* along a road on the north eastern side of the grounds of Rich Lodge, which was intended



1894 - 1896

\*Earl's Court Lodge, no. 1 Earl's Court Square, is not to be confused with the much larger Earl's Court Lodge which had previously stood opposite on the east side of Earl's Court Road, or with Earl's Court House, an imposing mansion occupying what is now Barkston Gardens, or Earl's Court (Farm) House, sited in the area to the south of the present station, or Earl's Court Manor, sited to the north of the station, where the Manorial Courts \*\* of the Earls and subsequent Lords of the Manor had been held (the last recorded in 1856) and from which the district acquired its name.

However those who are interested are on the police email alerts.

#### Traffic and parking.

Throughout the '80s there were problems with traffic and parking in the Square. Buses parking in the Square after bringing visitors to the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre were a source of great irritation, as was the sheer volume of traffic using the Square as a rat-run from Earl's Court Road to Warwick Road.

Various experiments were tried: traffic was routed and re-routed; humps rose and fell; bike racks and motorbike bays appeared. In '92 the problem of through traffic was solved by limiting access, closing the SE arm of the Square for a six-month trial period in the teeth of opposition from taxi drivers and the majority of Square residents. Happily at the end of the six-month trial and full consultation, with Council Officers knocking on doors to ensure maximum response, a substantial majority of residents approved the scheme. It was then permanently put in place and a one-way system instituted.



In 2011 a yellow box was added to the Earl's Court Road to assist access from the north-east arm of

the Square. Double-parking parents outside St Cuthbert's with St Mathias are still a problem for residents who find their cars boxed in twice a day, and the yellow lines recently installed by RBKC are generally ignored by parents.

#### Rubbish

The situation is a great deal better than it was in the '80s, thanks to efforts made by the Association and to more regular rubbish collections, but there are still black-spots.

In '88 the unsightly street-sweepers bins on the north side of the Square were moved and although a sizeable percentage of the buildings have communal bins where rubbish can be stored between Council rubbish collections, some of the buildings do not have such storage facilities and this, combined with the Council's recent cutback of collections to twice a week and the rapid turnover of tenants and visitors, results in unsightly bags of rubbish being dumped under random lampposts, irrespective of notices indicating collection days and threatening dumpers with dire consequences.

#### Garden

The garden is the jewel in our crown. Run by the Garden Sub-committee and assisted by stalwart residents, ours is one of the most delightful gardens in the Borough, yet the cost per household is one of the lowest. (PIC 6)

Over the years the Square garden has won numerous trophies, while residents enjoy daily access to the lawns and their children frolic in the play area installed in 1990 and

embellished with gold decoration in keeping with the grand period entrance next door; the concrete balls on the plinths outside 13-35 Wetherby Mansions have been returned to their original diameter and Farnell Mews has been elegantly restored.

On rare occasions ECSRA is able to use extraordinary funding to help to achieve its aims, such as in 2002, when the old Chelsea hotel, which had caused social problems over many years, was redeveloped: Nos. 33-43 were reborn as Matière Place and one of the conditions for the development was a donation to the Association for restoration work.



As a result the upper windows of No. 33 which had been destroyed in '74, were restored and uniform house numbers were painted on pillars around the square.



At first the Conservation Area only covered the original houses built or planned by Edward Francis and Sir William Palliser, plus Herbert Court and Langham Mansions, but between 1997 and 2002 it was extended to embrace 304-326 Earl's Court Road, Wetherby Mansions, 248-252 Old Brompton Road, 266-302 Earl's Court Road, 16-38 Warwick Road and, most recently Penywern Road.

### Security

In the '80s and '90s constant and largely successful campaigns were waged against burglary, crime, noisy and noisome bars, clubs and restaurants, street crime and the prostitution and drug dealing that afflicted the area generally. Cooperation with police and the town hall resulted in a gradual clean up of the Square. In '98 CCTV was installed and in 2003 Police netted 25 drug dealers in the area; the same year saw the welcome introduction of Community Support Officers, and Neighbourhood Watch help galvanise the community to fight crime together, but enthusiasm for this gradually waned since no one local resident to head it up has come forward.



to be an extension of Kempsford Gardens (this road was then also called Kempsford Gardens).

The drainage was also laid for a new road, which was to be called Farnell Road, running off 'Kempsford Gardens' to the north to join Rich Lane to the south: this is why the houses on the east side of the Square all have their drains running into a sewer at the back, not the front as is usual.

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**\*\*The Manorial Lands of the Earls of Oxford stretched, roughly, from Kensington High Street to Fulham Road and from the Railway Line in the west nearly to Gloucester Rd. The Manorial Court House was roughly where Old Manor Yard is now. The Manorial Court was never the residence of any of the successive Earls. It was a Court in the sense of a Magistrates' Court: a place where disputes were settled, fines handed out and rents paid. Unlike a Magistrates' Court, where the apostrophe goes after the 's' because there are several who sit there, with only one Earl (or his agent) sitting at any one time the apostrophe goes before the 's'. Earl's has been the correct and official spelling for three centuries.**

The mews for Farnell Road (Farnell Mews) was built but the houses which were planned to line the road were never started. Instead, there was a complete change of plan.

Sir William Palliser, the first occupant of Earl's Court Lodge (1 Earl's Court Square), together with Edward Francis conceived the idea for a far grander design: the creation of Earl's Court Square. Sir William provided a considerable amount of finance for the scheme and the east side of the Square was commenced in 1875 followed by the west side in 1876. Nos. 25-37 followed and the whole of the north side was under way by 1878.

The building leases were granted to Edward Francis and Sir William Palliser by Lord Kensington and no. 12, which was of a particularly grand design and interior finish, was earmarked as a residence for one of Lord Kensington's close female relatives; it still retains a conservatory on its porch.





*Looking north in 1908 with quite probably Winsom and Haywood Gambell as children standing outside their house, number 16.*

The south side of the Square was left open giving a view down to the river from the top floors of the houses in the north side of the Square. The houses were numbered incorporating Earl's Court Lodge as no. 1, allowing for even numbers to be continued later on the south side. For the record, Sr William Palliser invented the Palliser gun and was buried in Brompton Cemetery.

### STYLE & USAGE

The north, east and west sides of the Square are in the late Italianate style, with Doric porticos and bath stone features which were initially unpainted. All the houses were large and no cost was spared in the quality

of the building work or materials used. The architect incorporated metal girders, an innovation in the construction of domestic architecture. The master joiner in charge of the work, however, did not trust in the durability of iron, which he suspected might rust or crack, as against the proven qualities of wood and the main girders supporting the floors above the large front bays have companion wood beams installed alongside the metal ones.

Superior lead damp courses under the footings of the main walls have withstood movement. The Square became gradually gloomier and gloomier as the stone became

the buildings above the ground floor and developing high-density flats. At the same time the garden, which had been bought by speculators, was marked down for development as an underground carpark.

Horried by these proposed developments, a group of concerned residents leapt into action to create the Earl's Court Square Residents' Association, which not only obtained an emergency Provisional Conservation Order to halt the demolition but also managed to get the Square granted full Conservation Area status in 1975.

In the 38 years of its existence ECSRA has done battle on behalf of residents over all aspects of life in the square from heritage to rubbish, taking in traffic, parking, bike racks, motorbike bays, security, pollution, anti-social behaviour and liaison with external bodies such as the Earl's Court Neighbourhood Association, the Kensington Society and St Cuthbert's with St Mathias School.

The garden sub-committee, created in '75, has been equally active and effective, bringing the garden under the 1851 Kensington Improvement Act which put jurisdiction over above-ground construction in the garden into the hands of the residents, thus effectively scuppering plans to build an underground car-park, a process completed by the later purchase of a controlling interest in the freehold.

### HERITAGE.



Although the Square is now in the comparatively happy position of having full Conservation Area status, ECSRA continues to fight for the conservation and, where necessary, replacement of original features, such as the Victorian chequer and mosaic black and white patterned entrance steps, capitals, dental friezes, cornices, mouldings, finials and other architectural features of the Square.



Most recently Chepstow Hall has benefited from the provision of new steps; the unappealing wooden side-gate of Wetherby Mansions A-L has been replaced with a metal gate,

## EARL'S COURT SQUARE: *the last 25 years.*



In 2011 our Residents' Association was awarded a Gold Standard by the Royal Borough. This distinction, awarded to Residents' Associations which have performed outstandingly, was formally presented by the Mayor on 28 November to our Chairman, Christine Powell, and representative Committee members.

What a contrast with the post-war years, when the houses in the Square were nearly all hotels, hostels, rooming houses or poorly converted flats.

The Square and the area around it were extremely run down: buildings were dilapidated, the garden was surrounded by wire fencing and

used largely as a rubbish dump. In the 1970's there were two squalid brothels which were eventually closed down by the Borough's Health Inspector, a murder at No. 4 and asylum seekers housed at 2 and 4 were ousted by the police for drug dealing. Nos. 51-55, which had been a nurses' hostel, were occupied by squatters and virtually unsellable, London County Council having designated the western arm of the square for demolition to make way for an expansion of St Cuthbert's with St Mathias School.

The tide began to turn in 1974, when a property development company acquired Nos. 45-47 and No. 33 with the intention of demolishing

blackened in the smoky London air until after the First World War when nos. 15, 17 and 19 were painted white, to be followed by others until all were finally painted after the Second World War.

The development was intended to provide family houses for the expanding wealthy classes who could afford a retinue of servants housed on the top floors. The extra servants' floor on nos. 25-37 was very likely added after the houses were completed.

The 1891 census shows that in those houses which were in single family ownership the households were large, with servants considerably outnumbering the owning family. The houses on the north side vary in width but not in depth.

It is known that some houses were bought 'off plan' with features and alterations added by the prospective owners. Some houses had the newfangled electric light installed whilst others relied on the standard gas 'carcasses' for lighting. The latest and most sophisticated kitchen ranges were installed, handsome pieces with back boilers to supply constant hot bath water. No. 15 had an extension to the rear ground floor to accommodate a billiard table for a rich young banker and his bride and the salon, or 'ballroom', was decorated with gold leaf finish on the Italian plaster work. Some houses were furnished with fireplaces in all the servants' rooms and even in the sculleries, and with bathrooms and flush lavatories at top and bottom of the house, to make the lives of

the household staff as tolerable as possible. Other prospective owners skimped on such amenities for servants, or perhaps the houses were completed with the minimum of features because Francis' and Palliser had misjudged an oversupplied market and many were not sold.

In 1879 Edward Francis went into liquidation. In 1881 28 houses were still empty, with only six of these sold by 1885 and some still on the market in 1890. In the end not many were used as family houses, most were turned into boarding houses, hotels, schools and academies or split up into rudimentary flats.

The streets and squares west of the Earl's Court Rd, from Cromwell Rd. to Old Brompton Rd., never 'took off' as other addresses east of Earl's Court Rd. did. Values were held down by the proximity of a popular entertainment park followed by the building in 1937 on its site of Earl's Court Exhibition. Indeed the Exhibition blighted the area after the Second World War, even though it brought a certain amount of commercial benefit.

Earl's Court was not a salubrious address until the property boom began tentatively to change people's perceptions in the 90s and money began to seek out 19th century architecture. Earl's Court had escaped the hands of developers, it had been saved by its seediness!

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\*\*\*It is to be noted that a 1879 map of the area, which is much copied, is inaccurate in this and several other respects. It conflicts with building records which are almost certainly more accurate.



*No. 23. the elaborate and romantic plaster work*

### SOME OCCUPANTS

No. 23 was bought by Lord North in which to install his mistress; he commissioned the very elaborate and romantic plaster work which still adorns the ground and first floors, but it is not certain how many of the paintings which fill the panels in the plaster work and adorn the pallisters were done then or whether they were all the work of the next owner, Mrs. Elizabeth Stannus, who was an artist. Mrs. Stannus was also a designer of glassware, a pursuit she followed in a workshop at the bottom of her garden. Her daughter, Barbara, later known as Ninette de Valois, spent her early years at 23 and ran dancing classes in the large salon/ballroom on the first floor.

No. 21 eventually became a very discreet and high class 'house of ill-repute' with gambling and supper rooms, before being bought by a respectable family who sold it to the Polish Air Force Club at the beginning of the 1939-45 war; Polish airmen's voices singing their native songs and anthems filled the Square on summer evenings. The Polish Air Force Club also bought no. 10 for use as a hostel and built a chapel in the back garden, which remains as a

ground floor extension. In 1963 no. 21 became the home of the National Poetry Society and most of the famous poets of the day read their works in the salon whilst, next door, actors and actresses, from Charlton Heston, John Gielgud, Margaret Rutherford, Alec Guinness, to Cliff Richard and many others equally famous, rehearsed in the ballroom of the White House Hotel.

In 1964 no. 6 was bought by Rupert Murdoch for a family retainer to run as a rooming house where she would earn her income in her retirement.



*The south side - the Flemish style.*

When the demolition crew resumed work the following week, they were met by an enforcement officer and were told they could not proceed further. Unfortunately, powers did not exist to force the reinstatement of the upper floors. Nos. 45-47 were sold to the Family Housing Association and developed as affordable housing. The upper windows of no. 33 were restored to their original design when Nicholson Estates redeveloped nos. 33-43 as flats, Matiere Place, completed in 2002.

After considerable work by the Residents' Association the Square was granted full Conservation Area status by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 1975. One of its stipulations is that the buildings on the west, north and east sides must be painted magnolia.

At first the Conservation area only covered the original houses built or planned by Edward Francis and Sir William Palliser, plus Herbert Court and Langham Mansions, but it was extended in 1997 to embrace 304-326 Earl's Court Road, Wetherby Mansions and 248-252 Old Brompton Road. In 1998 266-302 Earl's Court Road, no. 1 and Northgate House Earl's Court Square, and 16-38 Warwick Road were added and all these properties were brought within the embrace of Earl's Court Square Residents' Association. Additionally Penywern Road was brought within the Earl's Court Square Conservation Area in the year 2002, and its history is not covered in this paper.

The officers of the Residents' Association in those days who saved



*Jennifer Ware, the author of this history, at the age of 17, sitting on the balcony of number 19.*

the Square and saved the buildings were David Ware, Chairman, Mr. and Mrs. Davis, Pam Case, Donald Fair, Jo Warwick, Melvyn Jeremiah. Following on, Melvyn Jeremiah undertook the purchase of the central garden and started the Earl's Court Square Garden Sub-Committee.

## RECENT TIMES

Until the 1920s the area was patrolled by a Beadle, employed by the Edwardes Estate, who maintained propriety and environmental standards (shades of the present Police Community Support Officers, PCSOs) and enforced conditions contained in the initial leases such as not permitting washing to be hung out either at the front or backs of houses. In the early 1970s the Edwardes Estate sold the freeholds it owned in the Square, which were still the majority, to property speculating companies owned by the brothers Kirsch.

The houses in the Square were nearly all hotels, hostels or rooming houses or were poorly converted into flats; they were painted in a variety of bizarre colours. Earl's Court Square was now extremely run down, with dilapidated buildings and a steeply rising crime rate.

There were two squalid brothels; they were at no. 9 and in the A-Z block of Wetherby Mansions that were eventually evicted by the boroughs Health Inspector. A sordid murder occurred at no. 4. Vietnam boat people (Asylum Seekers) were housed in nos. 2 and 4 until they were ousted, under police pressure, for supporting themselves by hard drug dealing.

Nos. 51-55, which had been a nurses' hostel, Cumberland House, were occupied by squatters; they suffered from planning blight which rendered the block virtually unsaleable because the London County Council (forerunner of the Greater London

Council, now Greater London Authority) had designated that side of the square for eventual demolition to make way for an expansion of St. Cuthbert's with St. Matthias School.

Cumberland House was developed into flats in 1983-4 after the planning blight was eventually lifted in 1981.

Property was cheap to buy but expensive to maintain. Many freeholds were sold to Housing Associations, which had government funds to convert them into flats as affordable housing, with subsidised maintenance, for London's lower income working population. These developments improved the appearance of the Square considerably.

Thirteen houses in the Square are now owned by Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations) whilst the great majority of the rest have been converted into high quality flats for owner occupation, with the last vestige of 'seediness' gone. At the time of writing three of the large houses and three of the 'Dutch' houses are single-family residences.

In 1974 a property development company acquired nos. 45-47 and no. 33 with the intention of demolishing the buildings above the ground floor and developing high-density flats. This demolition was halted at second floor level by the Greater London Council, under an emergency Provisional Conservation Order, requested by the newly formed Earl's Court Square Residents' Association.

## THE SOUTH SIDE

Unlike Edward Francis, Sir William Palliser, who had moved to no. 19 in 1877 and then to no. 21, appears to have done fairly well out of his involvement and already in 1877, was laying plans for developing the south side of the Square in the now fashionable Flemish style. Building was eventually started on nos. 30-34 in 1888, using the same unknown architect who was clearly influenced by Norman Shaw.

But the development faltered with the remainder of the terrace as a succession of builders succumbed financially. These smaller houses sold well and the first person to move into the 'Dutch houses', as they have come to be known, was a Mr. Frank Gielgud who bought no. 36 and where his son, John Gielgud, was possibly conceived before the family moved in 1904. The 'Dutch houses' were designated Listed Grade II\* by the Greater London Council in 1965.



## THE MANSION BLOCKS

Herbert Court Mansions was the next development, in 1891-2, followed by Langham Mansions in 1894-6, originally with a billiard room and a reading room (euphemism for smoking room) in the basement.

In 1890-2 George Whitaker, the architect, was responsible for demolishing what remained of Rich Lodge together with the old Bolton Beer House on the corner of Earl's Court Road and Old Brompton (Richmond) Road and designing a new public house known for the next hundred years as The Boltons (after that briefly called Whitaker's and now O'Neill's) together with nos. 304-322 Earl's Court Road and The Mansions in Old Brompton Road.



*Herbert Court Mansions, nominated for an architectural award in its day*

Four blocks of Wetherby Mansions were built in 1892-4 on both sides of what was then called Wetherby Road West. The fifth block of Wetherby Mansions was built in 1895-7 together with Richmond Mansions which replaced the eastern end of Rich Terrace. Part of Richmond Mansions was severely damaged by a bomb during the war. The rest of Rich Terrace remained until it was demolished to make way for Redcliffe Close in 1936. Building in the Square

the Square was completed in 1965 with the erection of Northgate House between nos. 1 and 3 on the site of a garage belonging to no. 3.

Redcliffe Close was granted planning permission for a further storey in 2003, thus spoiling the view of the elegant roofs of the Dutch houses, as seen from the square.

### THE SQUARE GARDEN

The Square Garden, under the control of the Edwardes Estate, although dull and somewhat dreary, was well managed with an almost full-time gardener until 1939 who was the scourge of the children who played in the Square. However, in the 2nd World War the handsome cast iron railings were taken away for scrap metal and five huge emergency water tanks filled the southern half of the garden. An Anderson shelter was erected in the road opposite nos. 20-28 but was only ever used as a



*Earl's Court Square garden in 1965 - rough grass, no railings, dumped rubbish. Compare the garden as it is today - a prize winning achievement.*

handy WC. The water tanks were removed in 1945 but the concrete bases remained in place for several years after.

The freehold of the garden was purchased from the Edwardes Estate by a property speculator after the war. The railings were replaced by green wire netting which soon acquired gaps and the garden was rarely, if ever, tended: it became an overgrown area and a dump for broken bottles and unwanted objects which made it too dangerous for smaller children to play in, although it was sometimes used by older boys as a rough football pitch.

In 1971-2 a group of residents took it in hand, a voluntary working party was formed and it began to look more like its original self. In 1975 the newly formed Residents' Association brought the garden under the 1851 Kensington Improvement Act and



a landscape gardener and resident, Christopher Fair, designed the present layout and planned tree and shrub planting.

The established London Plane trees were left, however, and have now grown to dominate the square; one on the South side, was blown down in the 1989 gale, allowing in a little more sun.

The 1851 Act gave jurisdiction over any above-ground construction in the garden area to the residents and so effectively brought to an end the oft-mooted plans to build an underground car park since access to it would not be possible without their consent.

New iron railings were purchased in 1977 and further improvements followed their installation: we now have a garden, which regularly wins top awards.



*The Square in the summer of 1945 and the winter of 1945/6 taken from the 2nd floor of number 19 when the houses opposite could be seen over the trees.*

### THE BOMB

The only bomb which dropped in the Square proper was in 1942. It demolished nos. 25-27, Queen's Court, (then serviced rooms) behind the facade which remained standing.

The lower parts of the two staircases with some of the main walls, together with the front basement rooms (where fortunately the 20 -30 occupants had taken shelter), remained intact.

The round pillars to the front portico were seriously weakened and had to be replaced by 'temporary' square ones.

The bomb blew out the majority of windows in the Square and brought down much plaster work in adjacent houses but the original structure of the buildings was such that the damage was minimal for the size of bomb. Queen's Court was rebuilt as flats in the late 1940's.

