THE
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GROUP

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HOW WE CELEBRATED THE CORONATION: THE FOUNDATION AND EARLY YEARS OF THE GEORGIAN GROUP

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'The Church; the Civil Service; the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; the hereditary landlords; the political parties; the London County Council; the local councils; the great business firms; the motorists; the heads of the national Museum – all are indicted, some with more cause than others, because of some more decency might have been hoped for, but all on the same charge. These, in the year of the coronation, 1937, are responsible for the ruin of London, for our humiliation before visitors, and for destroying without hope of recompense many of the nation's most treasured possessions; and they will answer for it by the censure of posterity.'[1]

So wrote Robert Byron in his excoriating polemic about the destruction of London's finest Georgian architecture, *How we celebrate the Coronation* (Fig. 1), published by the Architectural Press to coincide with both the crowning of King George VI in Westminster Abbey and the foundation of the Georgian Group in May 1937.

Since the beginning of the century, Georgian architecture had begun to be taken more and more seriously by certain architects and writers, yet, in the two decades since the Armistice, many of the capital's principal architectural monuments dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had been demolished. There was no statutory protection for them – the scope of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments ended in 1714 – and the lingering prejudices of the Victorians combined with sheer ignorance meant that they were generally regarded as of little historical or artistic merit, especially when they stood in the way of commercial redevelopment, road-widening and other forms of modernisation. 'The value of architecture in England, according to official and

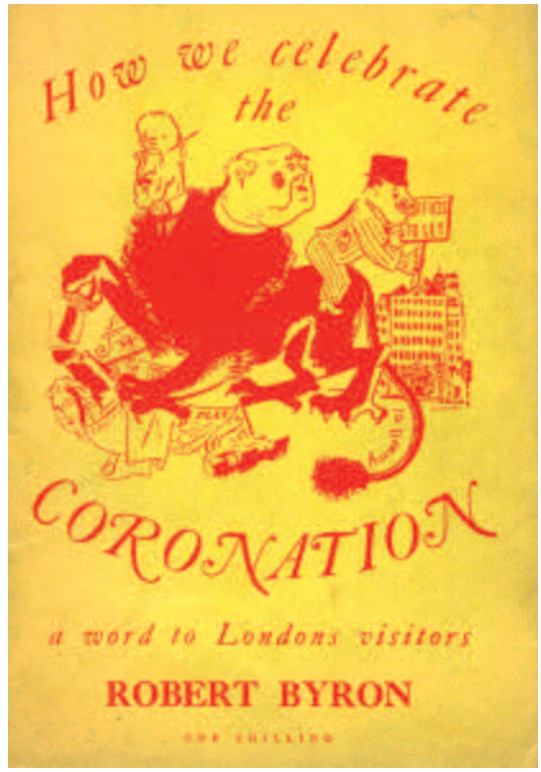

Fig. 1. The front cover, illustrated by James Boswell, of *How we celebrate the Coronation*: the polemic by Robert Byron published by the Architectural Press in May 1937.

ecclesiastical standards', complained Byron, 'varies in proportion to 1, its antiquity, 2. Its quaintness, and 3, its holiness. By these standards, a bit of the old Roman wall is of more importance than Nash's Regent Street, and one ruined pointed arch than all Wren's churches put together.'[2]

Such was the widespread attitude which John Betjeman would later categorise as 'Antiquarian Prejudice'. Hence the need for a new body to fight for them as well as to educate.

Despite the improvements of the Victorians, the squares and terraces of Georgian London survived almost intact at the beginning of the twentieth century (except in the City of London), enhanced by the presence of the grand aristocratic town houses which made the city comparable with Vienna, Paris or Rome. By the outbreak of war in 1939, however, most of these mansions had given way to large American-inspired blocks of flats, while several of the finest Georgian squares were being rebuilt or were under threat. Even before the Great War, however, the writing was on the wall for some of these grand houses. In his book on *The Private Palaces of London*, published in 1908, Beresford Chancellor noted that 'Some we know are held on leasehold tenure, and when their term has run, may be ruthlessly demolished; others stand proudly in the midst of ever-changing conditions of building development; will they be, in their turn, attacked, and if so – what then?'[3] In the event, with a few precious exceptions like Spencer House, almost all would disappear.

The post-war assault on London's historic architecture began, however, not on houses but churches. As if to celebrate the Armistice, in 1919, a report commissioned by the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, announced that no fewer than nineteen churches in the City of London – including buildings by Hawksmoor as well as by Wren – were to be demolished and the sites sold. Some Wren churches had already disappeared, one by one, under the 1860 Union of Benefices Act, but, as Byron put it, this proposal 'was too much even for a nation of shopkeepers'.[4] The London Society vigorously opposed the scheme and in 1926 it was quashed by Parliament. Even so, St Katherine Coleman, a church rebuilt in 1739–40, was demolished in 1925 and others remained in danger.[5] In 1932, that rabid enthusiast for progress, Harold P. Clunn, author of *The Face of London*, could condemn the 'extraordinary reluctance to sacrifice St Mary Woolnoth when the site must be worth something like £1,000,000, a sum with which so many new churches might be erected elsewhere.'[6]

Next came the rebuilding of Regent Street, completed in 1927. This had begun before the Great War with the erection of Norman Shaw's Piccadilly Hotel; now the H.M. Office of Woods & Forests demolished the rest of Nash's elegant street as the 99-year leases fell in. Brick and stucco gave way to taller structures of Portland stone over steel frames. Such was the Ruskinian prejudice against 'false' stucco that Nash had few defenders other than A. Trystan Edwards, the author of *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* published in 1924. 'The trouble about Regent Street and the City churches,' he wrote,

> 'is that they are not ancient. The City of London Church Commission declare that they would not dream of touching the Gothic Churches which survived the Fire. Nor would any public body presume to lay sacrilegious hands on the half-timbered Elizabethan shops left standing in Holborn. But Regent Street had not the virtue of great age. It had nothing to recommend it except incomparable beauty. And with the offence of being comparatively new it combined the still worse offence of being faced with a rather delicate material. It positively invited the pick-axe!'[7]

Douglas Goldring, the real founder of the Georgian Group, later recalled how *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture*

> 'made a profound impression on me [. . .] Mr Edward's book was the first I had come across, perhaps the first to be written, which challenged the till-then accepted view of Regency architecture and gave Nash a

> generous meed of praise [. . .] It would be impossible to over-estimate the influence on public taste which this book has exerted [. . .] Without it there would probably have been no Georgian Group'.[8]

Nash's Regent Street disappeared in one campaign; the 'private palaces' were replaced one by one. The first to go after the war was Devonshire House in Piccadilly. Many of its treasures having been moved to Chatsworth, the ninth Duke of Devonshire sold his town house and it came down in 1924, to be replaced by new Devonshire House, a steel-framed block of flats which was literally American in concept as its architects were Carrère & Hastings of New York. But London did not just lose William Kent's severe Palladian brick mansion but its forecourt and garden as well. Until the 1920s, there was green open space, albeit private, stretching all the way from Piccadilly to the top end of Berkeley Square. First the garden of Devonshire House was built over, followed by that of Lansdowne House. A little later, almost all of the east side of Berkeley Square was rebuilt with offices and motor-car showrooms. As for Lansdowne House itself, it suffered a fate possibly worse than death, for although some of its interiors survived its facade was truncated and mutilated when Robert Adam's town palace was rebuilt in 1933–35 as a sporting club and Curzon Street was cut through on one side.

Chesterfield House, designed by Isaac Ware for the fourth Earl of Chesterfield, statesman and man of letters, came down in 1937, despite having recently been the residence of the Princess Royal. Worst of all perhaps, because efforts were made by Lady Beecham to save it for public cultural use, was the destruction of Dorchester House in Park Lane, the great *palazzo* designed by Lewis Vulliamy for the collector R.S. Holford. It was demolished in 1929 to make way for the Dorchester Hotel; the marble staircase said to have cost £30,000 being knocked down at the sale for £273 (at least the chimneypieces by Alfred Stevens found their way into museums). A few years later Shane Leslie could recall how

> 'London was beset by great Houses, most of which have disappeared into service flats. Before Societies for the Destruction of Beautiful Buildings had gutted Mayfair, London could offer the attractions of a classical City. A glimpse of the most beautiful of perished buildings, Dorchester House, survives in a few words: "the staircase is that of an old Genoese Palace and was one blaze of colour and the broad landings behind the alabaster balustrades were filled with people sitting or leaning over as in old Venetian pictures".[9]

Other Georgian institutions went the way of the private palaces. The Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury, founded by the saintly Thomas Coram and begun in 1742, became redundant in the 1920s when it was decided to move the children outside central London. After much controversy and the failure of a proposal to move London University to the site, the original buildings were demolished but the grounds were eventually saved by public subscription and opened for children in 1936. Elsewhere, however, open spaces were built over as there was no legislation to protect the gardens of London squares. In the later 1920s, Endsleigh Gardens, the south half of Euston Square, was developed, leaving the noble Greek portico of St Pancras New Church facing a mediocre neo-Georgian facade. Owing to scandals like this and a campaign conducted by the London Society, the London Squares Preservation Act was passed in 1931.[10]

However, even if the gardens of London squares were now protected, the enclosing architecture was not. The squares of the West End were redeveloped by their ground landlords while London University was beginning slowly to devour the terraces of Bloomsbury. 'It may seem strange to foreigners that the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Westminster and other great landowners own enormous estates and can do whatever they like with them', wrote the Danish architect Steen Eiler Rasmussen in his classic study of *London: The Unique City*.[11] Foreign visitors had long admired the city's Georgian terraces and squares, so when the modernist Hungarian architect Ernö Goldfinger took a temporary lease on the east side of Bedford Square he was shocked to learn that

the whole terrace was under threat – not from the Bedford Estate but from the British Museum. 'The great contribution of England is Georgian', he later insisted, 'but hardly had I time to look at it they were pulling it down. There is absolutely no respect for architecture in England. My first office in London was in No.7 Bedford Square, on the east side [...] When I was there we got notices. Ignorant vandals – unbelievable!'[12] 'No one will deny that the British Museum is in urgent need of fresh accommodation', wrote Byron:

> 'But that an institution devoted to the diffusion of knowledge can contemplate an act of this description is a phenomenon so far removed from the canons of civilized behaviour that it seems at times as if the English were really as mad, as gross and as intolerant of art and culture as their foreign detractors pretend.'[13]

One foreign visitor, the great Italian sculptor Antonio Canova, had described Waterloo Bridge (Fig. 2) as 'the noblest bridge in the world [...] alone worth coming from Rome to see.' Following subsidence along part of John Rennie's magnificent Doric structure, a furious controversy erupted over whether to rebuild and widen the bridge or whether, as an alternative, to replace the Hungerford railway bridge – universally acknowledged to be hideous – with a new road bridge. Typically, the traffic-obsessed Harold P. Clunn argued that 'Waterloo Bridge has no claim, on historical grounds, to be retained' and described those who campaigned for just that – who included W.R. Lethaby and Sir Reginald Blomfield – as 'short sighted fanatics'.[14] At first, the bridge was saved by decision of the House of Commons, but in 1934, cocking a snook at Parliament, Herbert Morrison, leader of the London County Council, began its demolition so that it could be replaced by a new bridge designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

Last, but not least, there was the enlargement of the Bank of England which had begun in 1923. This involved almost all of Soane's banking halls being sacrificed to the erection of the overweening superstructure designed by Sir Herbert Baker. It was fortunate that Lutyens did not get this job as he had hoped, for this project ruined Baker's reputation.

Fig. 2. Waterloo Bridge designed by John Rennie, with the temporary bridge erected downstream in 1925 after structural problems visible through the arches: photo *c.*1925–34 by Sims & Co.

Fig. 3. No.120 Maida Vale or 'The Mutilated House': photograph published in the *Architectural Review* in 1938.

As Nikolaus Pevsner wrote later, the 'virtual rebuilding' of the Bank

> 'is – in spite of the Second World War – the worst individual loss suffered by London architecture in the first half of the twentieth century. We may mourn for many a parish church and many a town house, for whole squares, and for the Adelphi and Lansdowne House. But Soane's Bank was unique in a different way. It was the only work on the largest scale by the greatest English architect of about 1800 and one of the greatest in Europe. To preserve the screen-wall only and scoop out all the rest strikes one as peculiarly distasteful.'[15]

By the mid 1930s it was clear to those who cared that a new body was required to fight for Georgian London. Many felt that the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings could not be relied on to do this as it still reflected the anti-Classical prejudices of its founder, William Morris. 'We felt strongly that the SPAB was too Arts & Crafts and totally uninterested in, if not hostile to, Georgian architecture. The official attitude was that architecture of any importance ended in 1714', recalled James Lees-Milne, a founder-member of the Georgian Group. 'We despised the SPAB in those days; we thought they were all fuddy-duddies.'[16] This is confirmed by the recollections of Douglas Goldring, who had become exasperated with the SPAB when, in 1932, its secretary, A.R. Powys, did not defend the little shops which stood in front of St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate, 'on the grounds that they had been rebuilt not much more than a century ago and were therefore not "old".'[17]

No other amenity society was really fit for the task. The London Society, led by Percy Lovell, had done much to defend the City churches but its concerns were not primarily architectural. There was also the Londoners' League, founded in 1936 'to defend and foster the beauties and virtues of London home-life, architectural, horticultural and sociological', by Dorothy Warren Trotter, the interior decorator and gallery owner (who had exhibited the notorious paintings by D.H. Lawrence before they were seized by the police). The Londoners' League was particularly concerned with the redevelopment of the humble terraces of Portland Town north of Regent's Park, but Mrs Trotter had a particular grouse. She and her husband lived in one half of a semi-detached pair of Regency stuccoed houses in Maida Vale and then found that the other half had been bought by the shadowy Italian-born property developer Rudolph Palumbo, who replaced it with a block of flats in 1936 (Fig. 3) – despite the protests of Sir Edwin Lutyens and A.E. Richardson, amongst

Fig. 4. 'Adelphi Terrace before it goes', from *A Camera on Unknown London* by E.O. Hoppé published in 1936.

others.[18] Henceforth, her address was *The Mutilated House, Maida Vale*. However, she lacked the pugnacious spirit of Robert Byron and was 'scandalised and disgusted' by *How We Celebrate the Coronation*, particularly because of 'its irrelevant unbalanced anti-clericalism'.[19]

The final catalyst to the creation of a body dedicated to defend Georgian London was the threat to two of the very finest set pieces of Georgian domestic design. The first was to the Adelphi (Fig. 4), the coherent planned development of terraced houses between the Strand and the Thames designed and built by the Adam Brothers in the 1770s. It had first come under threat just before the Great War.[20] Despite its historical associations, famous former residents and manifest architectural distinction, there was nothing to be done when in 1933 the central part was sold to a speculator and proposed for demolition. 'Of its usefulness for the next two hundred years or so there can be no doubt,' complained A.E. Richardson, the architect whose writings had done so much to encourage interest in Georgian architecture. 'Of what advantage would be newer and taller buildings on the site, to darken the street […]? Another advantage of speculative folly perhaps.'[21] The SPAB protested, but privately, and Douglas Goldring did his best to stir up public opposition in the pages of weekly journals.

All in vain: the whole block between Adelphi Terrace and John Adam Street came down, so that the Royal Society of Arts in its purpose-built home by Robert Adam found itself facing a much taller block of commercial offices designed in a crude American Deco manner. As so often was the case, the whole process was shrouded in secrecy. For Robert Byron, it seemed 'hardly conceivable that a transaction of such importance to the imperial capital – a transaction which indirectly had to receive the assent of Parliament – can really be kept hid from the light of the twentieth century;' but only in 1938 was he able to 'disclose the identity of the original profit-maker on the Adelphi. It was the Earl of Ellesmere who played the middleman in a transaction that obliterated one of London's most notable eighteenth-century monuments. To such a pass is come the owner of the Bridgewater House Titians and a hereditary landlord of superlative wealth.'[22]

The second threat was to Carlton House Terrace, the two magnificent stuccoed ranges of grand houses designed by Nash towards the end of his life. In this case, which had a happier ending, the owner was known and the press took a more active role in opposition. In 1932 it was rumoured that the Commissioners for Crown Lands proposed to redevelop the sites of the two terraces. What was certain was that the lease of No.4 Carlton Gardens, a corner house at the back of the western terrace, had been sold. The house was demolished and the design submitted for its replacement was for a much

larger building, faced in Portland stone, which was clearly part of a scheme for replacing the whole of Carlton House Terrace. The architect of this, to his shame, was the aged Sir Reginald Blomfield, who thereby ruined his reputation as a defender of London's monuments. Byron took up the fight in the pages of *Country Life*, and at the beginning of 1933 J.M. Richards organised a campaign in the *Architectural Review*, quoting both informed public opinion and Blomfield's own recent public criticisms of the design for the new South Africa House in Trafalgar Square (by Herbert Baker, replacing Morley's Hotel, another fine stuccoed building of the Nash era) to expose his hypocrisy.[23]

The cause was taken up in *The Times*.[24] J.C. Squire, poet, writer and editor of *The London Mercury*, who had founded the Architecture Club in 1921, convened a defence committee and in the following year, 1933, a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons called for reform of the Commission for Crown Lands (who enjoyed privileged exemption from the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act) and for public consultation over the future of Carlton House Terrace. The Commissioners retreated, apparently owing to the intervention of the King himself (which probably reflected the influence of Queen Mary), and Carlton House Terrace was safe – for the moment.

The Carlton House Terrace defence committee helped prepare the way for the Georgian Group. The moving force behind its foundation was the novelist, journalist, poet and biographer Douglas Goldring (Fig. 5), a remarkable man who, since 1932, had been calling in the pages of *The New Statesman and Nation* for the establishment of a Vigilance Committee 'charged with the duty of giving the public full warning in advance of proposed demolition of buildings which it is in the national interest to preserve.'[25] In 1936 he published a book about the various architectural scandals that concerned him, entitled *Pot Luck in England*. 'The Georgian Group, for better or worse, is just as much a product of my

Fig. 5. Douglas Goldring in 1935: portrait photograph by Helena Thornhill, from Goldring's autobiography, *Facing the Odds*.

own brain as any of the novels, poems or travel books I have published in the past thirty years, and I am exclusively the writer of the many volumes which have my name on the title page', he later claimed, with justice, in a letter to the secretary of the SPAB, and, after the destruction of the Adelphi, 'I appealed in various letters to the press and in my books, for others, more influential than myself, to form a society to protect Georgian architecture and town planning. No one followed up my suggestion and, to my great annoyance, I found that if I wanted this done I should have to do it myself.'[26]

Goldring discussed the idea with, amongst others, John Summerson – he was annoyed at first to find that the latter was writing a life of John Nash as he was intending to do that himself – and with Philip and Dorothy Trotter. He was then introduced to

Fig. 6. Robert Byron at his desk in the 1930s.
The late Lucy Butler.

Lord Derwent, who was then preparing the motion he introduced in the House of Lords in December 1936 suggesting that the government should prepare a list, a 'complete census', of important buildings dating from between 1700 and 1830 'with a view to the eventual handing over to His Majesty's Office of Works for protection of all those that may be decided to be of sufficient importance'.[27] On that occasion Derwent told the House that,

> 'The eighteenth century and the Regency time gave the most glorious architectural heritage to the country. Having had the privilege of enjoying these beauties, we did nothing to ensure that the privilege should be handed on to our successors. Instead we were replacing these buildings with others, the majority of which were jerry-built, shoddy and an agony to the eye [. . .] (Cheers)'.

The motion was withdrawn, but it helped generate additional publicity about the threats to Georgian buildings.

'Subsequently', Goldring recorded, 'in Paris, I proposed to him that he should form "The Georgian Group", which he proceeded to do with remarkable energy and success'. Derwent managed to galvanise support – Summerson wrote to him in January 1937 that 'perhaps I am too pessimistic. But I don't see enough enthusiasm on the horizon to make a Georgian Society feasible at present' – and he agreed to be chairman of the proposed society, although he warned that he was only in London for a few months each year.[28] Lord Esher, chairman of the SPAB, was, like Goldring, worried about the proliferation of concerned societies, and he wrote to Derwent suggesting that

> 'your purpose would be more effectively served if you were to make the slight deviation in your objective which would be entailed by creating within the SPAB an active Georgian group. Such a group, while avoiding the weakness of yet another overlapping society, would have at its disposal the reputation, tradition and machinery of the SPAB and at the same time would be able to concentrate its attention upon the period in which it is interested.'[29]

The result was that the Georgian Group of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings officially came into existence in April 1937, with Derwent as chairman and Goldring as honorary secretary; at the end of the following month Robert Byron (Fig. 6)agreed to be deputy chairman, which was to be a crucial role as the chairman was abroad so often.[30]

The first committee meeting was held on 5 May in the offices of the SPAB. The editor of the *Architectural Review*, J.M. Richards, assisted the cause by commissioning Byron to write *How we celebrate the Coronation* which appeared that month. On 27 May, after the Coronation ceremonies were over, a letter was published in *The Times* announcing the advent of the group; signed by Esher, but the work of Goldring with amendments by William Palmer, secretary of the SPAB, it began by asserting that, 'In recent years what seems like a concerted attack has been made, both by private speculators and also, unfortunately, by Government departments, on the best examples of that Georgian architecture which gives to London its distinctive character',and explained that, 'The Georgian Group which has now been formed as a special branch of the present

organisation, will concern itself primarily with buildings erected from 1714 onwards. The word 'Georgian' has been adopted for convenience. Good Victorian buildings will come equally within the scope of its activities.'[31]

From on organisational point of view, the first few years of the new society were very difficult – as Charles Hind described in intriguing detail in this Journal in 1986.[32] There were the inevitable problems with money as well as with accommodation and with finding the necessary secretarial help for the Hon. Secretary. There were tensions between the strong personalities involved as well as with the parent body, the SPAB, many of whose members clearly resented this cuckoo in the nest and tried to curb the Georgian Group's activities and its desire to generate publicity. 'A lot of people regarded us as enthusiastic, upper-class amateurs', recalled Lees-Milne some four decades later. 'It was a semi-social society. That caused ill-feeling. It was thought to be rather posh. The SPAB were the good old craftsman type. Entirely different people. There was a social distinction I was very conscious of at the time.'[33] Goldring found that the second committee meeting 'had more the atmosphere of a socialite sherry party than a gathering of experts and enthusiasts engaged in fostering a national movement.'[34]

The new society brought together almost everyone who had been concerned about Georgian architecture in the preceding decades and that gilded Oxbridge literary generation of the 1920s was well represented on the Group's executive committee as well as among the general membership: John Summerson, John Betjeman, James Lees-Milne, the Earl of Rosse as well as the architectural adviser to *Country Life*, Christopher Hussey.[35] There were also architects: Albert Richardson, Trystan Edwards, Frederick Etchells and Lord Gerald Wellesley. Others included Sir Alfred Beit, the former architect Alfred Bossom, MP, Mrs Arundell Esdaile, Margaret Jourdain, and Dame Una Pope-Hennessy. Indeed, the Georgian Group soon became rather grand as well as smart – by 1939 it could boast thirty-three peers (including one duke and three marquesses) among its four hundred or so members. Queen Mary declined to be Patron of the Group but 'was in sympathy with its work and had expressed her intention of subscribing annually to the funds (£5) and of following its proceedings. This news was received with the greatest satisfaction by the members present.'[36] The committee often met in the London home of the Baroness d'Erlanger – an unlikely setting as it was in Stratton House in Piccadilly, a new block of flats and shops by Curtis Green, adjacent to the new Devonshire House, which had replaced the town house of Baroness Burdett-Coutts demolished in 1925. Lees-Milne remembered that 'We used to sit round a large looking-glass, like a lake, in the middle of her floor. . .'[37]

Sir John Summerson recalled thinking that the Baroness was unsure whether the Georgian group committee were really gentlemen or not. She need not have worried. The tone was set by the chairman, George Harcourt Johnstone, third Baron Derwent, diplomat, poet and biographer, whose wife was a rather grand Roumanian. He was haughty and peremptory in manner and his Yorkshire seat, Hackness Hall, was, Lees-Milne recalled, 'exactly like the Ritz inside'. Unfortunately, the social standing and intimacy of many of the key members of the Group affected relations with the Hon. Sec. Goldring was clearly an independent minded man quite uninterested in being part of the smart set. He was probably difficult and touchy – at his own estimation he was 'temperamentally unfitted' for his new role, as 'nature has afflicted me with an acute and painful shyness in the presence of any strange audience'[38] – but, although a patriotic Londoner, he was quite as cosmopolitan in both experience and outlook as Lord Derwent and it is difficult not to conclude, reading the surviving correspondence and minutes, that he was effectively driven out of the society he had founded by sheer snobbery.[39] 'I do not think Mr G. will last long,' reported the Hon.

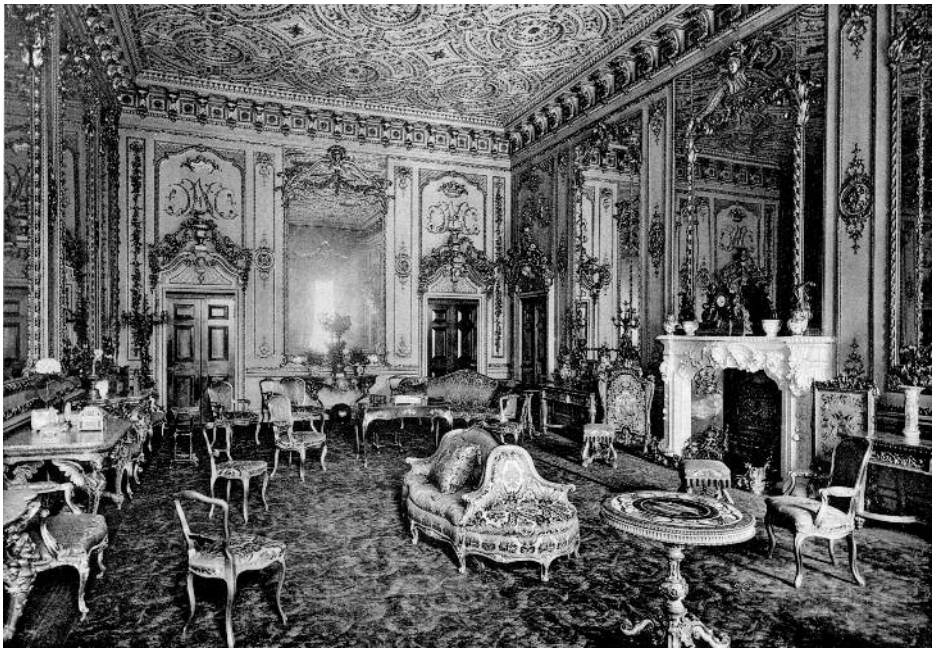

Fig. 7. The Ballroom at Norfolk House: photograph by Bedford Lemere from *The Private Palaces of London* by Beresford Chancellor, 1908.

Treasurer, Henry Everett in June 1938. 'He seems to me to have no idea of the nature and difficulty of running a preservation society.'[40] Goldring, on his part, complained that he was denied secretarial help, had to pay for everything himself, and found his proposals and ideas not acted upon. Exasperated by the constant criticisms of his conduct, he resigned on 10 January 1938 (although he remained on the committee), to be replaced as honorary secretary by Allan Oliver.

Goldring devoted a chapter to the Georgian Group in his autobiographical volume, *Facing the Odds*, published in 1940. It is worth quoting. He recounted how he was treated by the chairman and how 'I was summoned to the Ritz once or twice to receive instructions and, on one occasion, when I had to cry off an engagement to visit a house about to be demolished, as I had an article to complete, he berated me on the telephone in a 'look-here-we-can't-have-this' manner which left me speechless.'

He did, however, recognise that 'It is doubtful if the Georgian Group would have established itself as firmly as it has done if I had not been lucky enough to secure for it a titled godfather in the person of Lord Derwent. . .' And then there was the Hon. Treasurer who

> 'arrived one evening at my shabby flat in Tregunter Road in an immaculate *chapeau melon*, carrying the rolled umbrella of bureaucratic government and sternly rejected my feeble efforts at hospitality. He would not smoke, he would not have a glass of sherry. While he was explaining to me that our funds did not permit of any expenditure on paid help and I was explaining that our membership could hardly be expected to increase without it, his eye roamed over my dilapidated furniture until he was at last unable to contain himself. Putting the tips of his fingers together and smiling sub-acidly, he said: "Excuse me, Mr Goldring, but *who are you*?"'[41]

With Goldring's resignation as Hon. Secretary, the guiding hand for the Group became the pugnacious

deputy chairman, Robert Byron, the architectural and travel writer, art historian and campaigner, who used his considerable powers of invective to make it a body to be reckoned with. There was certainly much to do, as the steady attrition of Georgian London (and elsewhere: the group took up cases in Bath, Exeter and Derby) continued regardless. The next aristocratic town house to disappear was Norfolk House (Fig. 7), the magnificent mansion in St James's Square built by Matthew Brettingham in 1748–52. It was already doomed when the Georgian Group was founded; the sixteenth Duke of Norfolk, who had succeeded to the title in 1917 at the age of eight, had long wanted to sell it and he eventually did so, secretly, to the developer Rudolph Palumbo via an intermediary, the financier Mr Pybus. Plans for a Neo-Georgian block of offices to replace it by Gunton & Gunton were approved by the London County Council in 1937. The Dowager Duchess had been abroad when her London home was sold and was furious at her son's devious behaviour; she joined the Georgian Group and asked: 'would it be possible for the society to save Norfolk House from being pulled down?'[42] But the new society could do little when the name of its new owner was unknown; as Byron complained in the *New Statesman and Nation*, 'When *noblesse* ceases to oblige, it is not surprising that *richesse* should do likewise. The law not only condones the speculator; it protects him with anonymity.'[43] After a sale lasting three days, Norfolk House was demolished in 1938. The redevelopment made Palumbo's fortune; all the Georgian Group could salvage was the music room, which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It was the last of the great private palaces to perish before the Second World War.

Also doomed was another City church by Sir Christopher Wren. After the defeat of the 1919 proposal to remove nineteen City churches, 'The Church had drawn in its claws, Byron noted. 'Now, in 1937, it has suddenly begun to show them again. If this time it has been more cautious; if no actual holocaust is mooted; if the victims are to be chosen one by one, over a succession of years, so that their disappearance may pass unnoticed – such a strategy may prove more successful. . .'[44] The victim selected was All Hallows' Lombard Street (Fig. 8), tucked away behind the junction with Gracechurch Street. The cult of Wren had reached its apogee between 1923, the bicentenary of his death, and 1932, the tercentenary of his death, yet this church, unaltered and intact with all its fittings, could still be proposed for destruction. It was the fourth attempt made to close it, the grounds this time being the partial settlement of the east wall.[45] Neither the SPAB nor the Georgian Group could do much to stop this. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council supported the decision which meant that, in 1938, the church was taken down and the site sold to

Fig. 8. Wren's All Hallows' Church, Lombard Street, in 1938 after it had been exposed by the clearance of the site on the corner of Lombard Street and Gracechurch Street for the new headquarters of Barclay's Bank. *English Heritage/National Monuments Record.*

Barclay's Bank for a building designed – yet again – by Byron's *bête noire*, Sir Herbert Baker. There was, however, a positive outcome to this vandalism as a new suburban church with the same dedication was built in Twickenham with the proceeds. Wren's tower was re-erected while the new building by Robert Atkinson incorporated many of the fittings of the old church.

There were other cases in which the new society could, and did, put up a successful fight, but these victories ultimately proved hollow. One was that of the Euston 'Arch', the magnificent Doric *propylaeum* by Hardwick erected in 1837 to announce the terminus of the London & Birmingham Railway. A century later the London Midland & Scottish Railway marked the centenary of the opening of the line by announcing ambitious plans to rebuild the muddle that Euston Station had become. The architect was Percy Thomas, then President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, who came up with a design for a massive hotel with flanking office wings in a stripped Classical style with American Deco overtones. Realising it required the removal of Hardwick's 'Arch' as well as the destruction of his noble Great Hall, the Georgian Group objected and argued that the Arch could be re-erected closer to the Euston Road. Although Thomas insisted that it could not be moved 'without smashing it to bits', the chairman of the L.M.S., Sir Josiah Stamp, was impressed by the argument and indicated there was hope of saving it.[46] Albert Richardson and Lord Gerald Wellesley then had a positive meeting with the railway company's architects. But financial stringency led to the postponement of the rebuilding at the end of 1938 and it was left to the post-war nationalised railways, abetted by a cynical prime minister, finally to do away with the greatest monument of the Railway Age in 1961–62 despite the strenuous opposition of the newly founded Victorian Society as well as the Georgian Group.

Another hollow victory was that of saving the façade of the Pantheon in Oxford Street (Fig. 9). James Wyatt's celebrated exhibition hall had long disappeared and the building was now to be replaced by a new shop for Messrs. Marks & Spencer with a façade of black granite designed by Robert Lutyens. The Georgian Group argued that Wyatt's surviving stone front elevation could be taken down and re-erected elsewhere, and Mr Seiff of Marks & Spencer agreed – even offering £200 for that purpose. Edward James offered to take it and in 1938 his architect Christopher Nicholson – then engaged in transforming Lutyens's Monkton House into a Surrealist fantasy – prepared a scheme for using it as the front of a new brick country house to be built on the West Dean estate.[47] But then the war came, Edward James departed for the safer side of the Atlantic, and the stored stones of Wyatt's façade were eventually discarded and used as hard core.

Fig. 9. The facade of the Pantheon in Oxford Street by James Wyatt in the mid-1930s. *English Heritage/National Monuments Record.*

Fig. 10. The stone-fronted house by John Vardy and the other threatened 18th-century house at the corner of Old Palace Yard and Abingdon Street in 1938. *Georgian Group archives*.

The Georgian Group generated most publicity with its defence of the terrace of Georgian houses in Abingdon Street opposite the New Palace of Westminster which were facing a two-pronged attack. The first was the project to erect a memorial to the late King George V in the centre of an enlarged open space in the precincts of Westminster Abbey south of Henry VII's Chapel. This required the demolition of the stone-fronted houses by John Vardy which closed the southward vista down Old Palace Yard (Fig. 10) as well as the first two of the brick houses around the corner in Abingdon Street (other Georgian houses in Old Palace Yard had long been cleared away to expose the restored Chapter House). As for the memorial, it was to be a Gothic canopy designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott enclosing a statue of the late king by William Reid Dick. The sponsor was a committee known as the Lord Mayor's Committee, supported by Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury. With that passion for clearing open spaces and opening up vistas, however, pointless, which characterises twentieth-century English taste, it was then decided to sweep away the rest of Abingdon Street (as the Archbishop had long wished), but two freeholders declined to oblige by parting with their houses.

Douglas Goldring had objected to the Memorial scheme back in May 1936, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* that 'At the present rate of progress, relics of Georgian London will be almost as rare in ten years time as relics of Tudor London are to-day.'[48] In July 1937 he proposed that the Georgian Group should campaign against the destruction of the houses in Abingdon Street and Old Palace Yard, but, to his dismay, the executive committee (including Byron) decided nothing could be done to stop it. Goldring then protested in the papers under his own name. Later, the committee changed its mind, and

Fig. 11. Abingdon Street in 1943 after bomb damage: photograph by Dell & Wainwright. *Royal Institute of British Architects.*

Byron exposed the futility of this clearance – not necessarily required for the erection of the memorial – when he wrote how, as a result,

> 'out of its now decent oblivion there emerges a thing called the Jewel House, an octagonal structure quaintly restored in the last century, but Gothic and therefore righteous. What crimes King George ever committed to deserve a memorial so horrifying to its subscribers, so opposed to public interest, and so provocative of lasting execration, is a mystery to which the Primate may hold the solution but which can only fill the man in the street with a still deeper distaste at the interference of his National Church in matters which do not concern it.'[49]

The Royal Fine Art Commission also opposed the idea of exposing the Jewel House and demolishing Nos. 6 & 7 Old Palace Yard.[50]

The second part of the attack came later when the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, 'with their habitual business acumen, saw a convenient opportunity for profitable speculation where the Memorial Committee had failed.' Announcing that the Abingdon Street houses which they owned (and had tried to redevelop back in 1933) were structurally unsound, they and the National Association of Local Government Officers submitted to the London County Council designs for two blocks of offices in the Neo-Georgian style to go on the site. These were the work of E.G. Culpin who, as Byron pointed out, 'chances to be the present chairman of the London County Council and whose plans, therefore, will have to pass the withering test of his own approval.'[51] But the Group's counter-strategy was effective. In June 1938, it opened a special office in No.27 Abingdon Street, one of the privately owned houses, to collect signatures for a petition against the whole scheme resulting in 'a memorial certainly unfitting to commemorate his late Majesty and unlikely, in our view, to have met with his approval.' The surviving visitors' book contains the signatures of, amongst many others, Duncan Grant, H.M. Colvin, the Earl

of Wemyss & March, Oliver Messel, Sacheverell Sitwell, G.M. Young, Arthur Oswald, Osbert Lancaster, Quentin Bell and Catherine d'Erlanger.

These tactics worked: after only two days the Memorial Committee announced it would proceed no further, confessing that 'nothing could be more unfitting or ungracious than that the Memorial to a revered Sovereign should become the subject of public controversy' – which was precisely what Goldring had publicly argued.[52] Scott then produced a more modest scheme, no longer Gothic but influenced by Lutyens, with a statue of George V, by Reid Dick, on a tall pedestal (eventually unveiled in 1947). But – as with the Euston Arch – it was ultimately a hollow victory: bomb damage resulted in the demolition of several houses in Abingdon Street in 1943 (Fig. 11) and after the war the rest were cleared, exposing the wretched Jewel House. Only the stone-fronted houses by Vardy survive today.

The Group succeeded over Abingdon Street partly because of the unorthodox tactics it used. But the SPAB increasingly resented its wayward child's ability to generate publicity and promote its aims, although its chairman, Lord Esher, tried to be emollient. All the Group's members were at first asked to sign the S.P.A.B. manifesto and William Palmer argued that he should approve all letters sent to the newspapers in the Group's name. The committee discussed the matter in July 1937, when Byron

> 'pointed out that in many cases the Georgian Group might wish to adopt a more aggressive attitude than would be suitable for the SPAB. There was general discussion on this point, Mr Palmer, Professor Richardson and others, recommending that tactful methods were most likely to prove effective.'[53] Byron subsequently wrote to Derwent that 'what is not to be borne is Palmer's censorship of every announcement we wish to put out. This must surely be put an end to, as otherwise our technique will be exactly the same as theirs, which is the last thing we want.'[54]

It was a cultural difference, but the Group's young and enthusiastic members were wrong to think that the older society was supine. 'The SPAB worked energetically behind the scenes' over the Adelphi, as Goldring knew well, 'as it did later, in the case of All Hallows, Lombard Street, but as it never bothered to let the man-in-the-street know of its activities it acquired little kudos for them.'[55]

The early Georgian Group was certainly innovative in its tactics. In September 1937 Lord Rosse had suggested that sandwich men should parade up and down Abingdon Street when Parliament reassembled (it was ascertained that sandwich boards cost 5s 6d per man) but, in the event, 'the committee decided that this would not be a dignified form of publicity for the group.'[56] Later, apparently, Nancy Mitford, threatened to chain herself to the railings to resist demolition (which would have been an early example of conservation direct action). At the Annual General Meeting in May 1939 at St Bartholemew's Hospital (whose eighteenth-century entrance was then threatened), the first Annual Report stated that

> 'It is not only the purpose of the group which has attracted attention. Its methods have varied considerably from the accepted canons of amenity propaganda, even going so far as to provoke serious threats of libel. For the group is no respecter of persons. It argues, in short, that so long as responsible public bodies and old-established landlords are prepared to obliterate the national architecture when it suits their convenience, speculators in real estate and the personnel of local government must be expected to follow the example thus held up to them. The more powerful or more sanctified therefore are the interests that threaten a monument, the more vehement is the group's determination to expose those interests to the execration they deserve.'[57]

The Group even considered exploiting the new medium of television and, at the suggestion of Geoffrey Allen, they did succeed in getting their arguments across to the nation on the radio. On 4 January 1938 the BBC broadcast a programme entitled 'Farewell Brunswick Square' because the north side of the square was to be demolished to make way for premises for the Pharmaceutical Society. In the broadcast, Byron and John Summerson

Fig. 12. The south side of Mecklenburgh Square in 1936. *English Heritage/National Monuments Record*.

debated the preservation of Georgian London with W. Craven-Ellis, MP, and W. Stanley Edgson, an estate agent. The usual arguments about the necessity of slum clearance, modernisation and the importance of the building industry were aired while Summerson argued that preservation should be considered as an aspect of town-planning and needed to be conducted in a systematic manner. It was in this debate that Byron delivered his powerful, eloquent defence of the cultural value of the plain urban buildings so many still dismissed as unimportant; 'it's only Georgian architecture that really *suits* London', he insisted:

> 'The Georgian style commemorates a great period, when English taste and English political ideas had suddenly become the admiration of Europe. And it corresponds, almost to the point of dinginess, with our national character. Its reserve and dislike of outward show, its reliance on the virtue and dignity of proportions only, and its rare bursts of exquisite detail, all express as no other style has ever done that indifference to self-advertisement, that quiet assumption of our own worth, and that sudden vein of lyric affection, which have given us our part in civilisation. These are exactly the characteristics that London *ought* to express.'[58]

The day after the broadcast, Byron wrote to Summerson that 'I thought Edgson had a pleasant & companionable way with him. As for Ellis – I can only wonder he isn't in prison.'[59]

This was a topical subject because so many examples of Georgian domestic architecture were threatened: not just the humble stuccoed houses of Munster Square, for instance, but some of the major set pieces of Georgian urban planning, like the east side of Bedford Square and Mecklenburgh Square. In October 1937 a letter signed by Esher and Goldring (who had drafted it) was published in *The Times* to draw attention to the danger, pointing out that

> 'Such squares as Bedford Square, Fitzroy Square, and Mecklenburgh Square have acquired a national importance, and, as they are justly admired by Continental students of Georgian domestic architecture, they constitute a national asset. In no other civilized country would their destruction be permitted. If the city of Bath can get a bill passed by Parliament for its protection, surely it should be possible to do something for London on similar lines [. . .] The fight in which we are engaged is a fight to preserve the English cultural tradition against unrestrained vandalism masquerading as "progress".'[60]

Fig. 13. The west side of Brunswick Square in 1938. *English Heritage/National Monuments Record*.

(No doubt S.E. Rasmussen, whose book, *London the Unique City*, had just become available to English readers, was one of the 'Continental students' they had in mind.)

Goldring later recalled that this letter 'evoked an astonishing response from the public. Cheques and applications for membership came pouring into the office. The press took up the campaign and the inhabitants of [Mecklenburgh] Square formed a Committee of their own to fight for its preservation.'[61] This square (Fig. 12), one of the two three-sided squares flanking Coram's Fields (the other being Brunswick Square), with its stuccoed Soanian end-pieces by Joseph Kay, was threatened principally by a plan by the Dominion Students Hall Trust to replace the southern side with the second phase of a vaguely Neo-Georgian hostel called London House. Of the already executed first portion in Guildford Street, Byron succinctly remarked in the press that, 'It was designed by Sir Herbert Baker, and other than this comment is hardly necessary, except to remark on his new whim of introducing flints into London architecture and on his sudden deviation from the horizontal towards the Guildford Street

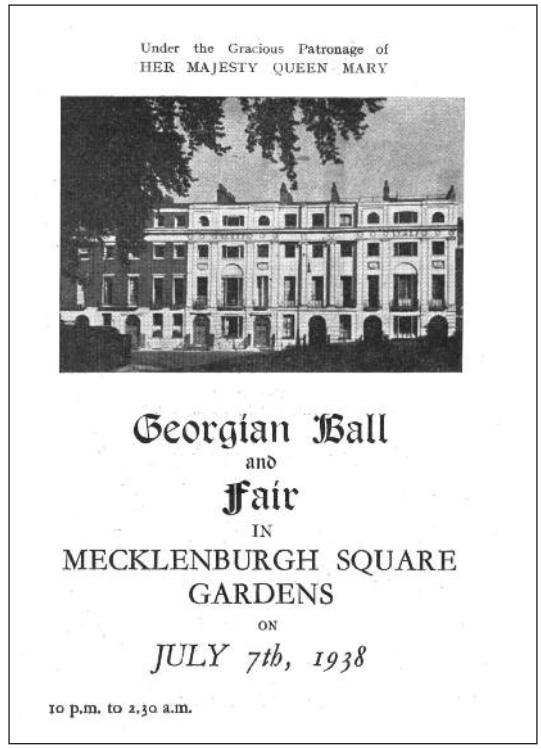

Fig. 14. The programme for the 1938 Georgian Ball and Fair in Mecklenburgh Square gardens. *Georgian Group archives*.

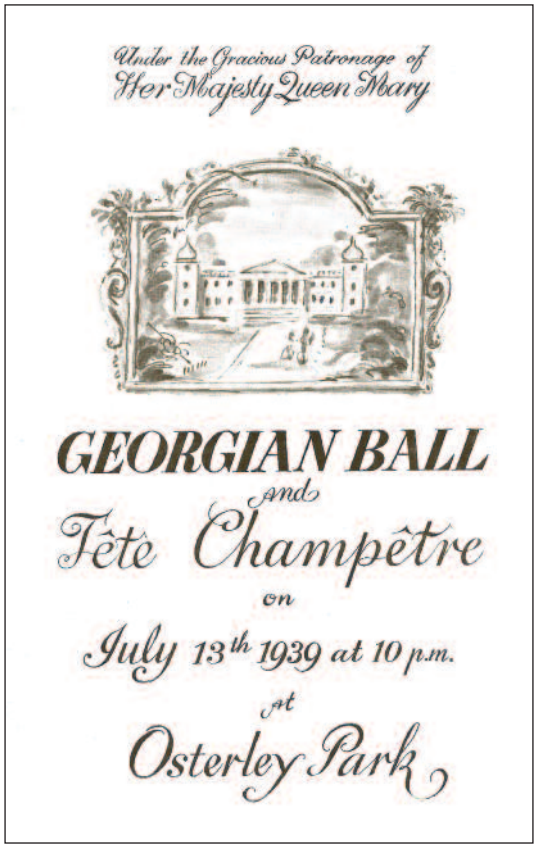

Fig. 15. The programme for the 1939 Georgian Ball and Fête Champêtre at Osterley Park. *Georgian Group archives*.

corner, an ineptitude which would damn an unknighted architect for the rest of his career.'[62] In the end Baker had a posthumous triumph over the terraced houses on the south side of Mecklenburgh Square, while of the plain dignified terraces of Brunswick Square (Fig. 13) not a brick remains today.

The Group held a 'Georgian Ball and Fair' in its gardens on 7 July 1938 (Fig. 14), 'in order that as many people as possible may see Mecklenburgh Square as it is now: one of the last perfect examples of Georgian architecture in London.' The gardens were floodlit and hung with lanterns and a marquee and other decorations were designed by Oliver Messel (brother of Lady Rosse) to create 'a baroque fantasy'.[63] The entertainments included performances of ballets by members of London Boys Clubs. Tickets were kept at a low price – 30s, including supper and drinks – and nearly two thousand people attended, including Lady Diana Cooper, the Countess of Oxford & Asquith and the Pearly King and Queen. The following year the group hoped to repeat this success but the gardens were found to be unavailable owing to objections from some residents. It was reported that, 'The Georgian Group has been equally unsuccessful in its attempt to get permission for the ball in Brunswick Square a few hundred yards or so away. So discouraged are they that, temporarily at least, they have decided to abandon the project altogether. So we may see more Georgian squares going the way of Russell Square. . .'[64]

Happily, the Earl and Countess of Jersey came to the rescue and offered Osterley Park for the event, so a Georgian Ball & Fête Champêtre was held in the splendid country house by Robert Adam and in the grounds at 10 pm on 13 July 1939 (Fig. 15). Over a thousand tickets were sold at 25s. As with the Mecklenburgh Square ball, Queen Mary agreed to be Ball patron. The event was organised by Elizabeth Lindsell (later Corbett), who had been involved with the first Georgian Ball. The décor was again the creation of Oliver Messel, assisted by Felix Harbord. Many of the guests, like Cecil Beaton and Nancy Mitford, wore eighteenth-century dress – Messel designed Lady Jersey's gown (Fig. 16) – and the entertainments included fireworks to evoke the Vauxhall Gardens, wrestling matches and Handel's Water Music being played on a raft on the lake. Free beer was offered in an eighteenth-century beer garden. Unfortunately, a certain cloud was cast over the event after Lady Jersey, the American actress Virginia Cherrill (who had formerly been married to Cary Grant), lost her diamond bracelet, worth £250, at some point during the Ball. The press made much of this, giving the group much unwelcome satirical publicity. Goldring thought that 'these jibes were unfair and undeserved. Not only are the younger

Fig. 16. Lord and Lady Jersey at the Georgian Ball in their home Osterley Park: from *The Sketch* 19th July 1939.

socialite members of the Georgian Group Committee blamelessly respectable, energetic and competent; but the "Mayfair" element, if such it can be called, is subsidiary to the solid professional majority.'[65]

Three weeks later, Britain was at war with Germany, and both partying and the fight for Georgian architecture had to be put on one side. The Georgian Group had achieved a great deal in its two years of existence, but there was still no legislative framework to protect the best Georgian buildings from destruction. Paradoxically, however, the Second World War advanced its aims. When the Church of England, or local authorities, or speculators like Rudolph Palumbo demolished buildings, it was often seen as a necessary consequence of desirable progress, but when the Luftwaffe achieved the same it was barbarism; the Bishop of London should have waited a couple of years with All Hallows' for German bombs might then have achieved the desired end result. In consequence, the listing and protection of historic buildings dating from before 1850 was introduced by the Town & Country Planning Act of 1947.

By then, the Georgian Group had changed a little in character. To the dismay of Lord Derwent and others, Robert Byron had found his role as deputy chairman too much of a burden and he resigned in May 1939 to devote his energies to alerting the public to the menace of Nazism. There can be no doubt that Byron had made the group influential and powerful. Lord Rosse wrote to him that he knew that 'the burden of almost every decision has for a long time past rested on you. . . I have serious fears even for the continued existence of the society, once your guiding hand is removed.'[66] Two years later Byron was drowned by enemy action. Had he lived, he would surely have prevented certain more traditional architects in the Group trying to use its influence to promote a modern Georgian architecture. J.M. Richards later recalled his misgivings – as a modernist – that 'its aims might be confused with those of the neo-Georgian architects, who dominated the more conservative end of the profession in the 1930s. It is difficult to appreciate now how deadening an influence theirs was.[. . .] We were suspicious that people like Richardson, McMorran and Hyslop would use the Georgian Group not only to save old buildings but to give authority to the Georgian treatment of new [. . .].'[67]

The last word should perhaps go to Douglas Goldring, who wrote in 1940 that although his struggles with the Georgian Group had brought him 'to the verge of what rich people call "a nervous breakdown" [. . .] on the whole, the struggle was worth it. If Nazi bombs do not destroy what the private speculator has so far spared, future generations may have reason to be grateful for that the Georgian Group came into existence and rescued for them a portion of their heritage [. . .] There are few episodes in my life that I regret less than my share in its foundation.'[68]

NOTES

1 Robert Byron, *How we celebrate the Coronation: a word to London's visitors*, London 1937, p. 24, reprinted from the *Architectural Review* for May 1937.
2 Byron, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
3 E. Beresford Chancellor, *The Private Palaces of London*, London 1908, p. xiv.
4 Byron, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
5 The sale of the site of St Katherine's paid for a new church of the same dedication on Westway in Hammersmith, a remarkable building by Robert Atkinson (destroyed in the Second World War).
6 Harold P. Clunn, *The Face of London* (London, 1932), p. 40.
7 A. Trystan Edwards, *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (London, 1924), p.106.
8 Douglas Goldring, *Facing the Odds* (London, 1940), pp. 47–48.
9 Shane Leslie, 'Augustus Hare' in *Men Were Different*, Michael Joseph (London, 1937), p. 120.
10 See *London Squares and how to save them*, issued by the London Society, *c.*1927.
11 Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *London: The Unique City* (London 1937), pp. 195–8.
12 Gavin Stamp, 'Conversation with Ernö Goldfinger', *Thirties Society Journal* 2 (1982), p. 20.
13 Byron, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24.
14 Clunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 482 & 112.
15 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London I: The Cities of London and Westminster* (Harmondsworth 1957), p. 164.
16 Lees-Milne to the author 10 February 1982, and interview with the author for the article, 'Origins of the group' in *The Architects' Journal,* 31 March 1982.
17 Goldring to William Palmer, 30 July 1937 (SPAB archives).
18 Douglas Goldring, *Pot Luck in England* (London, 1936), pp. 264–5; *Architect & Building News*, 17 January 1936, p. 89. For the mutilation of Nos.120–122 Maida Vale, see Dorothy Warren Trotter's letter in *Country Life*, 25 January 1936, p. 103, and 'Obituaries of Buildings No.45' in the *Architect & Building News*, 3 January 1936, pp. 4–5.
19 Mrs Philip Trotter, 'Notes on Review of Robert Byron's pamphlet, "How We Celebrate the Coronation"', n.d., (SPAB. archives); letter in *Kilburn Times*, 3 September 1937.
20 See Max Beerbohm, *And Even Now* (London 1920), p. 91.
21 A.E. Richardson, 'Must the Adelphi Go?', *Architectural Review* 73 (March 1933), p. 100. Richardson had published *London Houses of 1660 to 1820* (with Gill, 1911), *Monumental Classic Architecture in Great Britain & Ireland during the XVIIIth & XIXth Centuries* (1914), *Regional Architecture of the West of England* (with Gill, 1924), *The Smaller English House of the Later Renaissance* (with Eberlein, 1925) and *Georgian England* (1931), as well as many articles on Classical architecture.
22 Byron, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Robert Byron, 'The Secrets of Abingdon Street' in *The New Statesman and Nation*, 4 June 1938, p. 949.
23 Lord Clonmore, 'A "Partner with the Enemy"' & 'What Public Opinion Says', *Architectural Review* 73 (January 1933), pp. 9 & 11; Osbert Burdett, 'Carlton House Terrace: The Chance for the Defence' and correspondence: *ibid.*, February 1933, pp. 49 & 98, etc.
24 J. Knox, *Robert Byron* (London 2003), pp. 263–265; *Architectural Review.*
25 Douglas Goldring, *Facing the Odds* (London 1940), p. 50; *New Statesman and Nation*, 27 August 1932.
26 Goldring to William Palmer, secretary of the SPAB, 30 July 1937 (SPAB archives).
27 *The Times*, 3 December 1936, p. 7.
28 Goldring to William Palmer, 30 July 1937; Summerson to Derwent 8 January 1937 (Georgian Group archives).
29 Esher to Derwent, 5 February 1937 (SPAB archives).
30 For more on the Georgian Group and its early history, see Gavin Stamp, 'Origins of the group' in the New Georgian number of *The Architects' Journal*, 175 (31 March 1982), pp. 35–38; Charles Hind, 'Sound and Fury – the Early Days of the Georgian Group' in *The Georgian Group Report and Journal 1986*, pp. 45–54; and James Knox, *Robert Byron*, *op. cit.* Also see the chapter on 'A Georgian revival' in Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns* (London 2010).
31 *The Times*, 27 May 1937, p. 12.
32 Charles Hind, *loc. cit.*, pp. 45–54.
33 Lees-Milne 1982*, op. cit.*
34 Goldring 1940*, op. cit.*, p. 72.
35 The early membership of the Georgian Group would seem to have included almost every contemporary artistic, literary and social figure; the main committee alone numbered Gerald Barry, Lord Berners, the Marquess of Bute, Sir Kenneth Clark, Roger Fulford, H.S. Goodhart-Rendel, Hubert de Cronin Hastings, Edward Knoblock, Sir Edwin

Lutyens, Sir Edward Marsh, Lord Methuen, Edward Sackville-West, Osbert Sitwell G.M. Trevelyan and Clough Williams-Ellis, amongst others.

36 Georgian Group executive committee minutes for 23 February 1938.

37 Lees-Milne to the author, 28 January 1982. Elizabeth Corbett recalled 'a rather Turkish sort of grand flat in Piccadilly' (letter to the author 8 January 1987). H.S. Goodhart-Rendel considered that 'The virtues of Stratton House in Piccadilly (1927) are positive and exceptional, and, if many of our new street buildings were as good as this, London would soon become a handsome city indeed.'

38 Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

39 It was perhaps typical that the young Billa Cresswell (later Lady Harrod), brought in as assistant secretary over Goldring's head by her several friends on the committee, should then refer to him as 'such a beastly man' and 'a bloody man': letters to Roy Harrod 12 & 15 October 1937.

40 Everett to William Palmer, n.d. (SPAB archives). There is a file of correspondence in the Georgian Group archives labelled 'Mr Goldring – and all that!'

41 Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 90 & 75. Lees-Milne recalled Henry Everitt as a 'rather dim man'.

42 James Knox, *Robert Byron*, *op. cit.*, p. 383. Clunn, in *The Face of London*, 1932, p. 191, recorded that 'This mansion has recently been put up for sale and it seems probable that its site will eventually be covered with modern flats and business premises […].'

43 Robert Byron, 'The secrets of Abingdon Street' in *The New Statesman and Nation*, 4 June 1938, p. 949.

44 Byron, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

45 Editiorial, *Architect & Building News*, 17 January 1936, p. 89; Barclay's Bank, whose branch was next door, had long wanted to buy the site for expansion.

46 See Gavin Stamp, 'Early Twentieth-Century Stations' in Julian Holder & Steven Parissien, (eds,) *The Architecture of British Transport in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven & London 2004), pp. 42–43.

47 Georgian Group minutes for 22 December 1937 and 2 March 1938; *Architectural Review* 84 (October 1938), p.199.

48 *Daily Telegraph* 28 May 1936, quoted in Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

49 Byron, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

50 Sir Campbell Stuart, *Memorial to a King* (London 1954), p. 37, etc.; the author made no mention of the opposition of the Georgian Group.

51 Robert Byron, 'The Secrets of Abingdon Street, *New Statesman & Nation*, 4 June 1938, p. 949.

52 Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

53 Georgian Group executive committee minutes for 28 July 1937.

54 Byron to Derwent 23 July 1937.

55 Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

56 Georgian Group executive committee minutes for 27 October 1937.

57 Georgian Group 1st *Annual Report* 1939

58 'Farewell Brunswick Square', typescript from the late Sir John Summerson; the debate was broadcast at 8.30 p.m. on 4 January 1938.

59 Byron to Summerson, 5 January 1938 (Sir John Summerson).

60 *The Times*, 29 October 1937, p. 12.

61 Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 84. The campaign seems to have generated other bodies formed to defend the squares of Bloomsbury: there was the Standing Joint Committee on London Squares and in 1939 the Bloomsbury Society was founded. Correspondence collected by Elizabeth Lindsell (later Corbett) concerning the foundation in 1939 of what was first called the Bloomsbury Protection Society is now in the Georgian Group archives.

62 Robert Byron, 'The Destruction of Georgian London' in *The New Statesman and Nation*, 11 December 1937, p. 1009.

63 *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1938, and other cuttings in a scrapbook in the Georgian Group archives. The ball was proposed by the residents of Mecklenburgh Square to raise awareness, and in aid of the London Boys' Hostel. For an account of it by one of the organisers, Elizabeth Lindsell, explaining how the Georgian Group became involved, see *Richard Stewart-Jones: as remembered by his friends* (Ilkley, 1980), p.34.

64 *Liverpool Post*, 27 May 1939.

65 Goldring 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

66 Rosse to Byron, 10 May 1939 (Georgian Group archives).

67 Sir James Richards to the author, 18 April 1982. The Georgian Group's current practice of giving awards to modern Classical designs as well as to exemplary restorations of Georgian buildings might well revive such anxieties.

68 Douglas Goldring, *Facing the Odds* (London 1940), pp. 44, 92.