

ST JAMES'S CONSERVATION TRUST

Newsletter

Spring 2004



VIEW OF ST. JAMES'S PALACE, TIME OF QUEEN ANNE. (From an Old Engraving.)

Patrons: The Hon Dominic Elliot- Lady Olga Maitland
Trustees: John Beveridge QC (Chairman)-Richard Donaldson ACIB (Vice Chairman)
Tony Hull FCA -Jeremy Vaughan- Johnny Van Haefen

Bankers: Adam & Company plc- Solicitors: Morgan Cole-Accountants: Slater Maidment
Registered Office: 7 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4JU-Registered Charity No. 1079166- Registered with the Civic Trust

Introduction to the Newsletter

The St James's Conservation Trust (Initially "Society") was founded in 1998. Notwithstanding a good deal of activity since then, this is the Trust's first news letter. It will be distributed to the Trust's principal supporters, in the hope they will be interested in learning more about the Trust and its activities. If the news letter proves to be a success, it will become a bi-annual publication.



Area of Benefit of the Trust

The area of benefit of St James's Conservation Trust is that area bounded by Green Park to the west, the Mall to the south, the east side of St James's Square to the east and the south side of Piccadilly to the north.

Objects of St James's Trust

- 1 To promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area.
- 2 To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic, or public, interest, in the area.
- 3 To maintain the character and atmosphere of the area, with its social fabric, collection of ancient shops and gentlemen's clubs.
- 4 To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area.

St James's Conservation Trust

The Hon Dominic Elliot and Mr John Beveridge QC, both of whom had lived in St James's for many years, during much of which time Mr Elliot had been the chairman of the Residents Society, founded the St James's Conservation Society in 1998. Their object was to establish a group more capable of meeting the challenges to the physical well being of the area than a resident's association.

Mr Elliot became chairman of the Society and Mr Richard Donaldson, Mr Giles Shepard CBE, Mr Anthony Spink and Mr Alan Wright became additional members. From its foundation until today, due to the generosity of Adam&Company in Pall Mall, of which Mr Richard Donaldson is the Director, all the meetings of the Trust have been held, without charge to the Trust, in one of the private rooms of Adam's Bank. In 2000, the Society was granted charitable status and became known as the St James's Conservation Trust. The Trust has been fortunate enough to give necessary hospitality, without cost to it, at Adam's Bank, the Ritz hotel and the Royal Over Seas League. It is indebted to these institutions for this invaluable generosity.

There have been several changes of the composition of the Trust. In 2000 Mr Alan Wright resigned. In 1999, Mr Tony Hull, a partner in Slater Maidment, accountants in St James's Square, who have, due to his influence, provided the Trust with accountancy services at nominal fees, became a trustee. In 2003, Lady Olga Maitland became a helpful and active patron of the Society and, in 2003, Mr Elliot moved to the West Country, resigned his chairmanship and, himself, became a patron. Mr Beveridge became chairman of the Trust. In March this year, Mr Shepard left the Ritz Hotel and resigned as a trustee, as did Mr Anthony Spink, whose representation on the Trust of the art shops was undertaken by Mr Johnny Van Haeften, who replaced him as a trustee.

From its inception, the Trust has survived, due to the generosity of a modest number of supportive individuals and the wonderful support given by Adam's Bank. A further factor, was the remarkable dedication to the cause of Mr Elliot and the fact that neither he, nor any other trustee, made any charge for the many hours of work done by them for the Trust.

In 2003, the Trust employed the services of a fund raising adviser, in the hope of establishing a capital base that would alleviate the "hand to mouth" existence of the Trust up to that time. Unfortunately, this effort was not successful, so the Trust remains dependent on its core supporters for its financial survival. It needs its money for the employment of specialist town planning and legal advice and, since last December, the employment of a part time administrator. The trustees consider themselves extremely fortunate to have gained the services of Mr Brian Woodham, as administrator, and he has already instituted a reorganisation of the Trust's records and system of operation.



Conservation of Historic St James's

To all of us who live or work in St James's, the special character of the area is of prime importance. There is a real danger that this character will be destroyed and, should that happen, the sufferers will not only be those of us who have increasingly made their places of business or their homes, in St James's, but all those who visit, or care for the quality of, London.

To strengthen its defences, in 1999 the Trust commissioned Mr Peter Heath, an architect and town planning consultant, to produce an in depth study of St James's, which, ever since, has provided the Trust with a point of reference for environmental and planning considerations. This study was entitled "Conserving Historic St James's" and contained numerous recommendations, all of which have since been accepted by Westminster City Council, the local planning authority, in their Unitary Development Plan. It has changed the playing field in respect of planning in St James's, in favour of creative conservation.

One of its recommendations was to establish defined limits on A3 use and occupancy, with defined management and licensing conditions, to be prepared as part of the UDP review. In January this year, Mr Heath, together with specialist associates, was commissioned to carry out a study into A3 use in the St James's area (A3 use is a planning term which includes food and drink uses such as restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaways.)

There will be three parts to the study, which we intend to use in objections to future licensing applications, as follows:-

1. The compiling of a database of information on existing A3 use in the St James's area. There are already 16,000 restaurant/bar seats in St James's and we urgently need to protect the area from the blight which is affecting neighbouring areas, such as Leicester Square, and creeping our way.
2. To prepare descriptions of the change of A3 uses over the last 5 to 10 years.
3. To assess whether conditions attached to planning consent, either by the City of Westminster, or by Inspectors on appeal decisions, are complied with.

It is intended that our A3 retail study report should be ready by the end of April, in time both to support our representations during the City of Westminster's forthcoming licensing consultation period and during consultations on their revised Unitary Development Plan.



The Licensing Act 2003

Because of the potential for restaurants and other licensed premises to degrade the character of an area (for example Leicester Square and the far end of Jermyn Street) , the St James's Conservation Trust has been keeping a special eye on the changes which will flow from the new Licensing Act. In the past, the Westminster City Council has been responsible for granting Public Entertainment Licences and Horseferry Magistrates Court for Justices licences for the sale of alcohol in pubs, clubs, restaurants and bars. These arrangements will change, once the Act comes into force.

The main changes will be:-

- The function of the Justices in relation to licensing applications will be taken over by Westminster City Council.
- Flexible opening hours, with the potential for **24 hour** opening.
- A new type of licence, called a **Premises** licence, to replace licences for alcohol, public entertainment, cinema, theatres, late night refreshment houses and night cafes.
- A new system of **Personal** licences, relating to the sale of alcohol, allowing easier movement of licensees from one set of premises to another.

On 23rd March, draft *guidance notes to Licensing Authorities* were laid before Parliament for debate and approval. It is not known when approval will be achieved, but it could be in the next few weeks. Westminster City Council Licensing Authority will then have about 6 months to prepare its *licensing policy statements* in consultation with local bodies, such as the Police and groups such as the St James's Conservation Trust. Our Trust intends to be fully represented during this important consultation period.

The Trust welcomes the fact that Westminster City Council will be responsible for licensing policy and practice, but is concerned that the Act unduly limits the grounds on which the Council may base refusals of applications for licences. The Trust is also concerned by other aspects of the new regime, such as the potential for 24 hour opening. It has engaged Morgan Cole, solicitors, to provide advice in relation to the new provisions.

We understand that there will be a nine months transitional period, during which holders of existing licences will be expected to apply for the new types of premises and personal licences and the new system is expected to be fully implemented by mid-June 2005.



The History of St James's

St James's is an important historic and architectural asset at the heart of Westminster, which has evolved over the last four centuries, within a physical and social framework which reflects its historic importance. It is apparent from the many wall plaques that many illustrious personalities have resided in St James's. On this page, we give an example of those important links with the past. Below are the contents of the plaque at No. 10 St James's. .

CHATHAM HOUSE

HERE LIVED 3 PRIME MINISTERS

**WILLIAM PITT
EARL OF CHATHAM
1708-1778**

**EDWARD GEOFFREY STANSBY
EARL OF DERBY
1799-1869**

**WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE
1809-1898**

Financial Support for the St James's Conservation Trust

You who care for St James's are all too aware that this unique area is a fragile treasure which is under intense threat from destructive influences. The energies of the Trust are actively spent preserving St James's for future generations to enjoy. In running the Trust, the Trustees give their time free and, apart from a part time paid administrator, the overheads of the Trust are tiny. Most of the donations it receives are devoted to meeting the costs of essential planning and legal advice.

There are many calls on the Trust's funds. Some are predictable, but most occur on an *Ad Hoc* basis, in response to events. For example, the implications of the new Licensing Act will lead to more expenditure in fighting unwelcome licensing applications.

Over the past seven years, the Trust has received many generous donations from its friends and these funds have been used sparingly and wisely. The Trust only has small reserves and a recent fund raising campaign, started nearly a year ago by a professional fund raising adviser has, regrettably, cost the Trust more than it raised, so we are now once more appealing to our old friends for help. It is estimated that our annual expenditure will be about £ 50,000-00 and we look forward to the day when we have accumulated sufficient reserves to go some way towards producing an adequate annual income.

The Trustees of the St James's Conservation Trust would, therefore, welcome donations. All donations will be formally acknowledged and the value of donations from private individuals would be greatly enhanced if donors completed the Gift Aid form enclosed. Cheques should be made out to the St James's Conservation Trust and sent to:-

The Administrator
St James's Conservation Trust
7 St James's Square
London, SW1Y 4JU

