

THE GRANGE, FULHAM AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD 1713-1957

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THE case of the Grange, Fulham, became a *cause célèbre* among those who profess an interest in the preservation of historic buildings. Several times in recent years it figured prominently in the national press, and there were times when passions ran high, both for and against preservation. This being the case, it seems appropriate that some account should be given, not only of the building and its famous occupants, but also of the changes that have taken place in its surroundings, particularly in the course of the past century. It is our belief that most of the problems associated with the preservation of old buildings are illustrated by the recent history of the Grange, and some account of the building in relation to its setting in Fulham may prove for this reason to be of general interest. It is in this belief that the following account has been compiled.

The great Fire of London and economic developments of the latter part of the seventeenth century had the effect of loosening the ties which bound members of the mercantile community to the City. From the beginning of the eighteenth century there was an increased tendency for City merchants and substantial tradesmen to move with their families into the surrounding country where, following the lead of the aristocracy, they acquired, or built for themselves, a new type of house or villa where they could enjoy the advantages of living in the country whilst remaining near enough to town for the daily conduct of business. Among the places favoured by this respectable class of citizen at the time was the parish of Fulham, lying athwart the King's Road at a distance of about five miles from Temple Bar.

As was the case in most parishes near London, the greater part of the arable lands of Fulham, though not enclosed, were already at this time occupied in severalty, whilst remains of its common pasture were still to be seen at Walham Green, Parson's Green and Eelbrook Common.

Situated as it was to the south-west of the cities of London and Westminster, the atmosphere of Fulham was less prone to pollution by the clouds of sea-coal smoke emitted from the countless hearths of the metropolis than that of Stepney or Hackney, which became places of residence for City merchants somewhat earlier than Fulham; and its sub-soil, being composed of valley gravels, was lighter and better drained than that of some of its neighbours lying on the heavy London clay.

The pair of houses later known as the Grange and numbered 38 and 40, North End Crescent (note A) were built by a certain John Smith, a native of Devizes.¹ It is not known when he came to London but he became a freeman of the Armourers' Company and in 1703 was elected Master.² He perhaps owed this election to his position as brazier to Queen Anne, who confirmed an appointment which he originally owed to William III.³ Having made his fortune in London, Smith was not forgetful of his native town. By his will he founded a charity school there⁴ besides leaving some £100 to aged men and women and poor boys.¹ He also bequeathed £40 to eight freemen of the Company of Armourers and Braziers⁵ for whose charter he was one of the petitioners.² As witness to his success, the total sum of money bequeathed by Smith amounted to almost £5,000, shared out in small amounts to numerous relatives and friends.

In April, 1713, Smith had been admitted tenant to two cottages and three acres of land at North End, being copyhold land held of the Manor of Fulham.⁶ On part of this land he proceeded in the following year⁷ to erect a pair of houses which from the road had the appearance of a single house of uniform design. In so doing he was responsible for one of the earliest examples (we know of only one dated example that is earlier, that of Bridge House, Bermondsey, built in 1706) of a building type that has since become only too well-known in this country—the semi-detached house. Smith's object in building in this way is not clear. It may be that from the first he thought in terms of financial speculation; or he may originally have intended the second house for one of his cousins or nephews, with whom he seems to have been on intimate terms, he and his wife being childless. (Note B).

NOTE A. These numbers were assigned in 1938, on the completion of the road improvement which left what is now called North End Crescent as a loop off the North End Road. Before that No. 38 was No. 113 and No. 40 was No. 111 North End Road. They had previously been Nos. 51 and 49 North End Road respectively. Before these last numbers were given in 1884 both houses were named *The Grange*, but in 1938 when the last change of number was made only No. 40 was so called.

NOTE B. A cottage on part of his estate at Fulham, in which they were already living, was devised by Smith to his nephew, Thomas Mathews, and his wife, Grace.⁸



NO. 38 NORTH END CRESCENT, FULHAM
Staircase at first floor



NO. 111 NORTH END ROAD (now NO. 40 NORTH END CRESCENT)
North-west elevation

However that may be, Smith, whose name was added to the Commission of the Peace for Middlesex in 1714,⁹ himself occupied the south-easterly house of the pair (No. 38) until his death in 1724; and from 1717 until her death in 1728, the north-westerly house (No. 40) was occupied by Margaret, Dowager Countess of Ranelagh, widow of the first Earl⁷. The Earl had occupied No. 13 and later No. 7 St. James's Square¹⁰ and after his death in 1712 his widow had moved to a house in St. James's Street¹¹ and from there, presumably, to Fulham. Lady Ranelagh was buried in Chiswick¹² having nominated Thomas Smith and Samuel Vanderplank, John Smith's cousin,¹ as executors to her will.¹³

The houses have been referred to as "twin houses" but that is perhaps not strictly correct. From the first, the block seems to have been L-shaped, with No. 38 (Smith's own house) occupying the greater frontage, and No. 40 having the greater depth from the road. The entrance to No. 38 appears originally to have been in the centre of the road front, and that to No. 40 near the centre of the north-west façade. Each house had three floors and a cellar, but the floor levels were not the same. No. 38 appeared to have had four rooms, and No. 40 three somewhat larger ones to each floor, excluding the closets projecting on the ground and first floors at each end of the principal front. Both houses were subsequently enlarged at the rear, No. 38 on the ground floor only.

The fact that the original entrance to No. 40 was off-centre, the windows to the left of it being more widely spaced than those to the right, coupled with the fact that the basement did not extend under the whole of the original house from front to back but stopped short at the back, raises the question of whether there may not have been a change of intention during the progress of building. If the back wall of the basement had been carried up as the back wall of the original house the north-west façade would have been reduced in length by between four and five feet, and the entrance would then have been almost central. Considering that Lady Ranelagh entered into occupation of her house only in 1717, whereas Smith occupied No. 38 about two years earlier, it seems at least possible that it was decided to increase the size of Lady Ranelagh's house after the start of building operations in order to satisfy her requirements as prospective tenant.

From the road, as we have already said, the houses originally had the appearance of a single house of uniform design. They were built of brown brick, with red gauged arches and dressings to the

window openings and boxed sash windows set flush with the face of the wall. The front was terminated at each end by the two-storey projecting closets already mentioned, between which were seven uniform windows to each floor. The centre bay, in which was the main entrance to No. 38, with its bracketed hood and its architrave swept upwards in the middle, projected slightly to form a slender central feature. The whole was crowned by a plain brick parapet. The engraving by T. Rickards used as the frontispiece to Volume IV of Mrs. Barbauld's *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* flatters the house by "extending" it an extra two bays in width but otherwise gives a fair impression of its original appearance. The north-west front was similar, but of five bays and without projections other than the pilaster strip at the north-west corner.

Internally, the rooms of No. 38, and presumably also those of No. 40, were panelled with simple ovolo-moulded panels. The staircase, which existed, though in a very dilapidated condition, until shortly before 1956 in No. 38, was contemporary with the building of the house, though there are some grounds for doubting that it was the original one; or at least that it retained its original form. Three of the original marble chimney pieces belonging to No. 38 were intact in 1949.

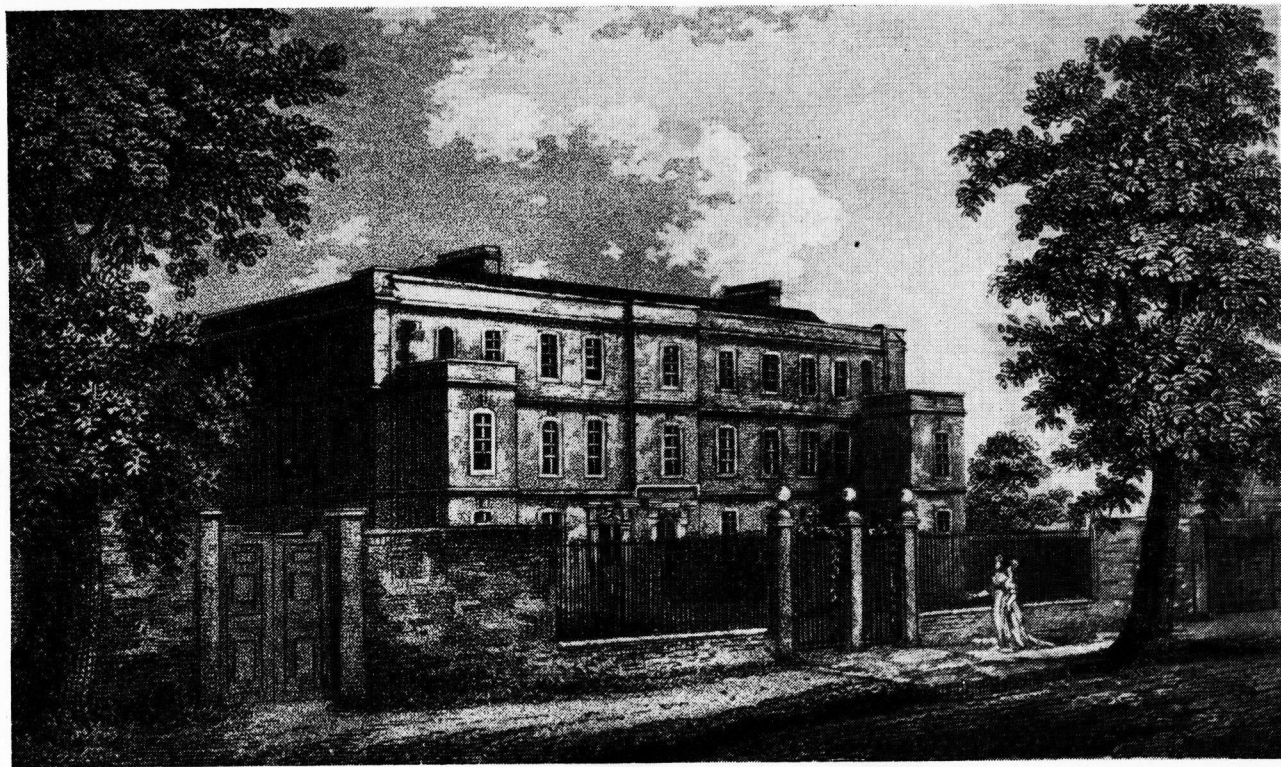
Smith was succeeded as owner of both houses¹⁴ and occupant of No. 38 by his cousin, Samuel Vanderplank, a Turkey merchant who died in 1750.¹⁵ Thereafter, none of the occupants of this house was particularly noteworthy. In fact, the historical as distinct from the architectural, interest of the pair centres mainly on No. 40, which after the death of Lady Ranelagh, was let to a Mr. Sherrard for part of the next ten years⁷ and then, from Lady Day 1738, to Samuel Richardson,⁷ stationer and printer, of Salisbury Court in the parish of St. Bride's, Fleet Street. Richardson used it as a country house for weekends¹⁶ until the 30th October, 1754, when he left it for another at Parson's Green.¹⁷ His famous novels *Pamela* (1739-40), *Clarissa Harlowe* (1744-47) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1751-53) were all written during the period of his tenancy of the house at North End. According to Mrs. Barbauld he "used to write in a little summer-house, or grotto, as it was called, within his garden, before the family were up; and, when they met at breakfast, he communicated the progress of his story, which, by that means, had every day a fresh and lively interest".¹⁸ The summer house, which appears to have been situated on the boundary between Nos. 40 and 38, had a tool house beneath it. After 1791 when the two houses ceased to be owned jointly, the tool house went to the owner of No. 40 and the summer house to the owner of

No. 38.¹⁹ By 1803 both had disappeared²⁰ leaving no trace. Indeed, the only part of the building, in its final state, that bore any resemblance to the house that Richardson knew was the north-west façade, though even here the character had presumably been altered by the enlarging of the ground and first floor windows and the setting back of the sash frames, which were almost invariably flush with the face of the wall at the period when the house was built. It seems reasonable to suppose that this alteration was made shortly after 1803, when a merchant named William Ludlam, of Earl's Court²⁰ and Broad Street,²¹ became the owner, and completely remodelled the house, extending it at the rear and blocking up windows on the road front, inserting a new staircase and rendering front and back elevations with stucco. The staircase was again altered by Messrs. Crowther in 1920 by the substitution of a wrought-iron balustrade for the original.²² In the British Museum is an ink sketch made by J. C. Nattes in 1810, showing the garden front as altered by Ludlam. These alterations had the effect of destroying the architectural unity of John Smith's pair of houses, and making No. 40 into, virtually, a new house.

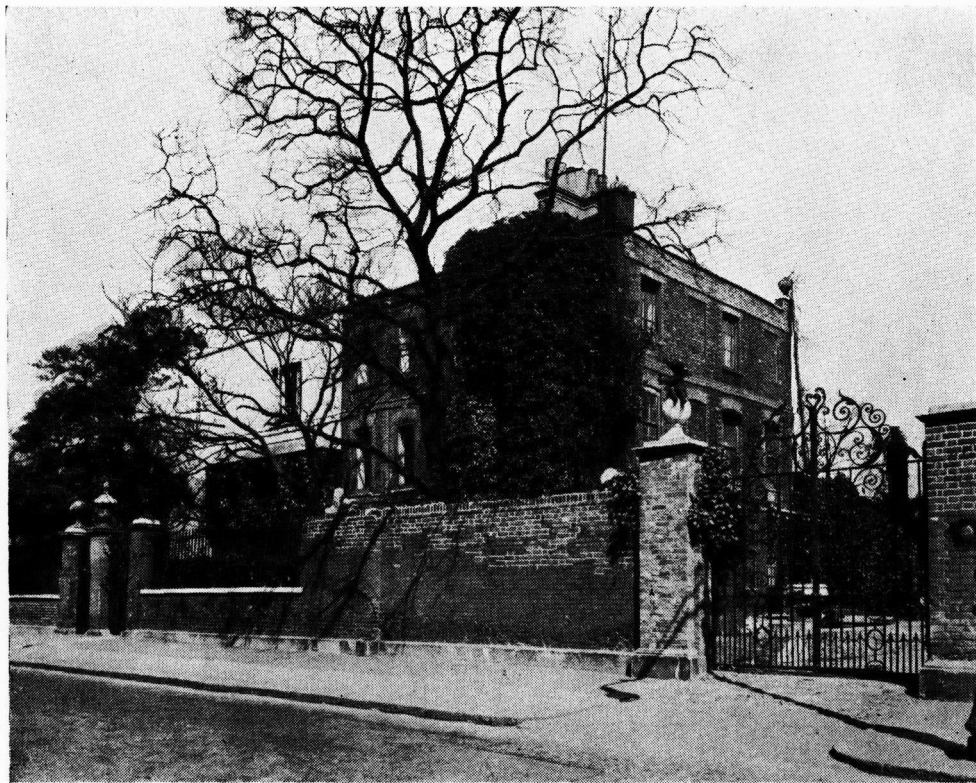
It is possible that the name *The Grange* was first given to No. 40 by Ludlam or at least by his widow. Fèret²³ says the houses came to be known by the name about 1836, when she was still living there. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1868 the name is applied to both houses. The earliest contemporary evidence we have been able to find for the name occurs in the Post Office Directory for 1845.

In November, 1867, when Edward Burne-Jones went to live at No. 40, there were still, to quote Lady Burne-Jones²⁴, "large elms growing in the roadway of North End, and wild roses could be gathered in a turning out of it. The space at the end of our garden was all fields, and two trees flourishing there were worth many of the houses that displaced them. One was a walnut, and the other a large elm, through whose branches we saw the high moon shine as we paced to and fro on summer evenings."

The room at the back of the house with the big window shown in Nattes's sketch became Burne-Jones's studio, and a large room known as the garden-studio was built at the end of the garden for the storage of paintings and equipment not wanted in the house. During the Burne-Jones's time the Grange became once more a centre of artistic and literary life. William Morris and Phillip Webb made a regular habit of breakfasting there on Sunday mornings, and among the illustrious ones who visited the Burne-Jones's from time to time were Ruskin, Rossetti, George Eliot, Edward Fitzgerald, G. F. Watts



RICHARDSON'S HOUSE AT NORTH END, HAMMERSMITH, by T. Rickard (*see page 96*)



NOS. 111 and 113 NORTH END ROAD (NOW NOS. 38 and 40 NORTH END CRESCENT)

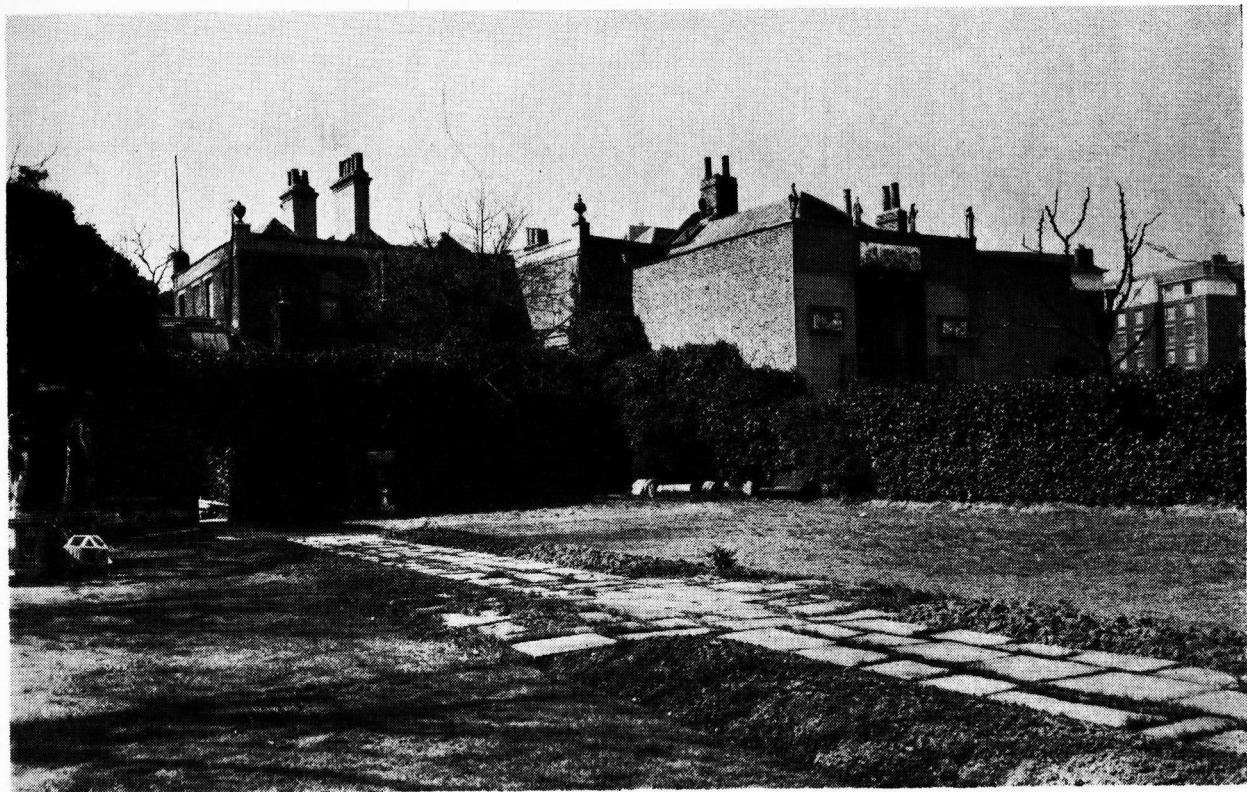


NO. 38 NORTH END CRESCENT, FULHAM
South-east flank

and Swinburne. Other frequent visitors in their young days were Stanley Baldwin and Rudyard Kipling. It was Kipling who in later life remembered "the open-work iron bell-pull on the wonderful gate that let (him) into all felicity".²⁵ The garden, with its mulberry tree, cut down for allotments during the war, its peaches, plums and apricots, and its twenty-foot long bed of lilies-of-the-valley, was a delight to visitors, particularly those, like Kipling, of the younger generation. Many years later, after the death of Burne-Jones, Kipling described the Grange as being "emptied of meaning".²⁶

It is clear from the Ordnance Survey map of 1868, corroborated by the remarks of those who knew it, that the Grange was surrounded by fields and market gardens when Burne-Jones went to live there. North End Road, as it is now called, was then North End Lane; and indeed still retained, along its whole length from Walham Green to Hammersmith Road, something of the character of a country lane, with frequent views of fields, orchards and gardens between the clusters of houses and cottages that had grown up at the junctions of side roads. Beyond the houses on either side of the lane all the way from Walham Green to Hammersmith Road the land was given up, for the most part, to market gardens. Though Walham Green itself had lost the character of a village green, Eelbrook or Hellbrook Common to the south of it was still open land, and eastward were the remains of the Fulham Common Fields (Map No. 1).

The transformation which has since taken place received its greatest impetus, a few years after Burne-Jones's arrival, with the opening, in September 1874, of the Hammersmith Branch of the District Railway, with stations at West Kensington on North End Lane, and at Hammersmith Broadway. From that time the obliteration of Fulham's market gardens, fields and commons proceeded rapidly. Broadly speaking the laying out of new streets on either side of North End Lane began at the Walham Green end and proceeded northwards until, about 1880, the immediate neighbourhood of the Grange was being engulfed. Lady Burne-Jones, in her *Memorials*, gives a vivid description of the changes that had occurred up to the year 1882. "Our London home", she says, "had for some years past been suffering many changes. The District Railway had been brought near us and the speculative builder followed; the old elms in the roadway were cut down and several acres of garden ground belonging to neighbouring houses laid waste as a beginning, while the respectable old name of Fulham was taken from us, and 'West Kensington' given in exchange. It was long before Edward could bring himself to use this without protest. The narrow lane into



NO. 38 NORTH END CRESCENT, AND NO. 40 BEYOND



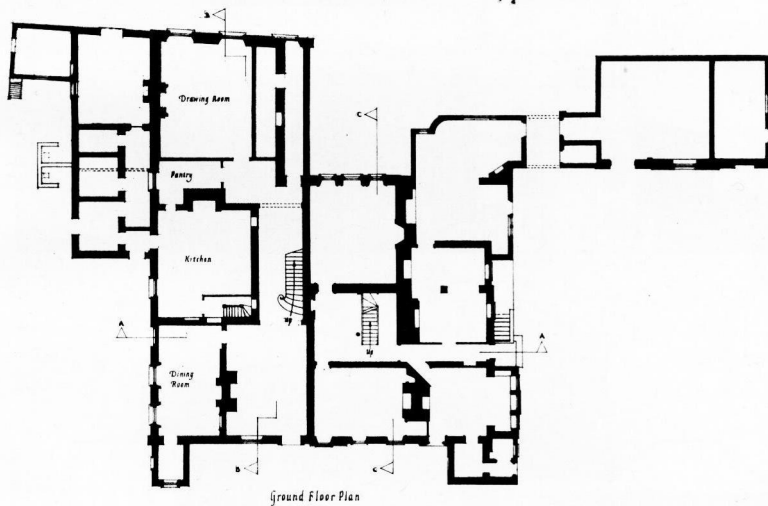
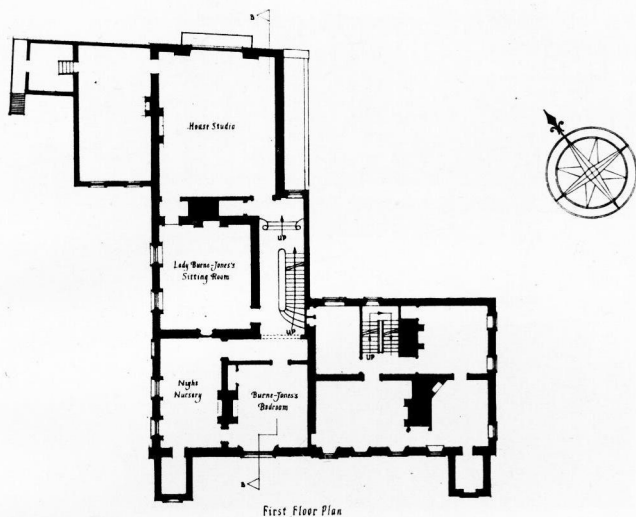
NO. 38 NORTH END CRESCENT, FULHAM. First floor front room (south-east)

which our garden opened became a street (the street was formed in 1875) and a row of houses instead of the walnut tree soon showed above our wall. This fact helped Edward to decide upon building a large room across the end of the garden, which would serve both as a screen from the houses and as a place where he could put unfinished work and anything he did not want in his house-studio²⁷". The houses in question were those in Lisgar Terrace, which are three storeys high.

Great as were the changes that took place in the first fifteen years of the Burne-Jones's residence at the Grange, its surroundings were still, about 1895, such as could provide Mrs. Thirkell many years later with the memory of having "walked along past early eighteenth-century houses, each in its own garden of elms and cedars and mulberries" on her way to visit her grandfather²⁸. The houses in question must have been Otto House and North End Villa, which were still standing (though neither was in fact earlier than the late eighteenth century) one on either side of North End Lane, with their gardens intact, when Burne-Jones died in 1898. Map No. 2 shows the stage reached at that time in the encirclement of the Grange.

It was not long before the area of garden ground was still further reduced. Between 1900 and 1905 the land to the north of the present Fitzjames Avenue was built upon, after which there was a lull in building operations in this part of North End Road until 1928, when the greater part of the garden of Otto House was covered with the ten five-storey blocks of the Lewis Trust Buildings. Then in 1930 North End House, eight storeys high, was erected on the garden of North End Villa and shortly before the last war a large five-storey block, called after the man who had built his garden-studio to hide Lisgar Terrace's three storeys, was built on the remains of the Otto House garden within sixty feet of the Grange. Shortly before this the cottages opposite the Grange were demolished and North End Road straightened by the formation of the cut immediately to the north of Edith Road. Map No. 3 shows the surroundings of the Grange as they appeared at the outbreak of war in 1939.

In 1938 the land lying immediately opposite to the Grange between the old and the new portions of North End Road had been left as an island occupied only by the Cedars Hotel, a public-house, last re-built, apart from minor additions and alterations, in 1883. On the west side of the new North End Road the remainder of the land formerly occupied by the cottages demolished to make way for the road improvement was also vacant. On each of these vacant sites the London County Council built a four-storey block of flats. These were



THE GRANGE, NOS. 38-40 NORTH END CRESCENT, FULHAM

Drawn by A. J. North

*NW Elevation**SE Elevation**Elevation to North End Crescent**Elevation to Garden*

THE GRANGE, NOS. 38-40 NORTH END CRESCENT, FULHAM



Section A-A



Section B-B



Section C-C

THE GRANGE, NOS. 38-40 NORTH END CRESCENT, FULHAM

completed, the first late in 1952, and the second early in 1953. Thus the encirclement of the Grange by high blocks of flats, as shown on map No. 4, was almost complete.

In the meantime the Grange itself had changed greatly. In 1938 No. 38 had been acquired by the Fulham Borough Council who wished to use the site for housing purposes. From that time onward it remained unoccupied and by November 1952 could only be described as derelict. No. 40 on the other hand became vacant only in March 1954 after it, too, had been acquired by the Borough Council for housing purposes. This part of the building was then in a habitable condition, though it was suffering from certain structural defects which could only have been remedied by the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. Although the Minister of Housing and Local Government made a Building Preservation Order on both Nos. 38 and 40 in September 1954, No. 40 had deteriorated so badly by July 1956 that it became necessary for the District Surveyor to issue a Dangerous Structures Notice requiring portions of both houses to be demolished. This was the state of affairs when, at the beginning of October 1956, the Minister held a second Public Inquiry into (i) an appeal by a prospective purchaser against the London County Council's refusal of permission, under the Building Preservation Order, for the conversion of the two houses into flats, the reason for the refusal being that the proposed conversion, by cutting up existing rooms, would destroy the historic entity associated with Burne-Jones; and (ii) with the consequent application by the Fulham Borough Council for permission to demolish the whole building. The outcome of the Inquiry was that on 20th May, 1957, the Minister acceded to the application by the Fulham Borough Council, and the work of demolition was completed in August 1957.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Will of John Smith, P.C.C. 283 Bolton.
- ² Information supplied by Mr. Morley, Assistant Clerk, from the records of the Company of Armourers and Braziers.
- ³ Inscriptions on Constables' staves presented to the Corporation of Devezes by Smith, quoted in *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, vol. 28, 1896, p. 41.
- ⁴ *Some annals of the Borough of Devezes, 1555-1791*, extracted by B. H. Cunningham, p. 206.
- ⁵ In his will Smith referred to the Company of Braziers only, but as this latter was amalgamated by Charter with the Company of Armourers in 1708, he was presumably referring to the joint Company.
- ⁶ Church Commissioners' Deeds, 171603.
- ⁷ Fulham Public Library: rate books.
- ⁸ Church Commissioners' Deeds, 171631.
- ⁹ Middlesex County Records Office, Commissions of the Peace.
- ¹⁰ A. I. Dasent, *The History of St. James's Square*, 1895.
- ¹¹ London County Council Record Office, Middlesex Land Registry, 1717/6/1 and 1720/4/53.
- ¹² G.E.C. *Complete Peerage*.
- ¹³ Will of Countess Dowager of Ranelagh, P.C.C. 62 Brook.
- ¹⁴ Church Commissioners' Deeds, 171615.
- ¹⁵ *The Gentlemans Magazine*, 1750 (Mistakenly entered as Joseph Vanderplank).
- ¹⁶ Anna Lactitia Barbauld, *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, 1804, vol. vi, p. 20.
- ¹⁷ A. B. Fèret, *Fulham Old and New*, 1900, vol. II, p. 293.
- ¹⁸ A. L. Barbauld, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. clxii.
- ¹⁹ Church Commissioners' Deeds, 171681.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* 171693.
- ²¹ Holden's *Triennial Directory*, 1805-7.
- ²² Private information.
- ²³ *Fulham Old and New*, vol. II, p.289.
- ²⁴ *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 1904, vol. II, pp. 3f.
- ²⁵ Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling*, 1955, p. 18.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
- ²⁷ *Memorials*, vol. II, p. 124.
- ²⁸ A. Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 1932, p. 18.

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