ALBERT SQUARE
LAMBETH

A Report on the Central Garden

by

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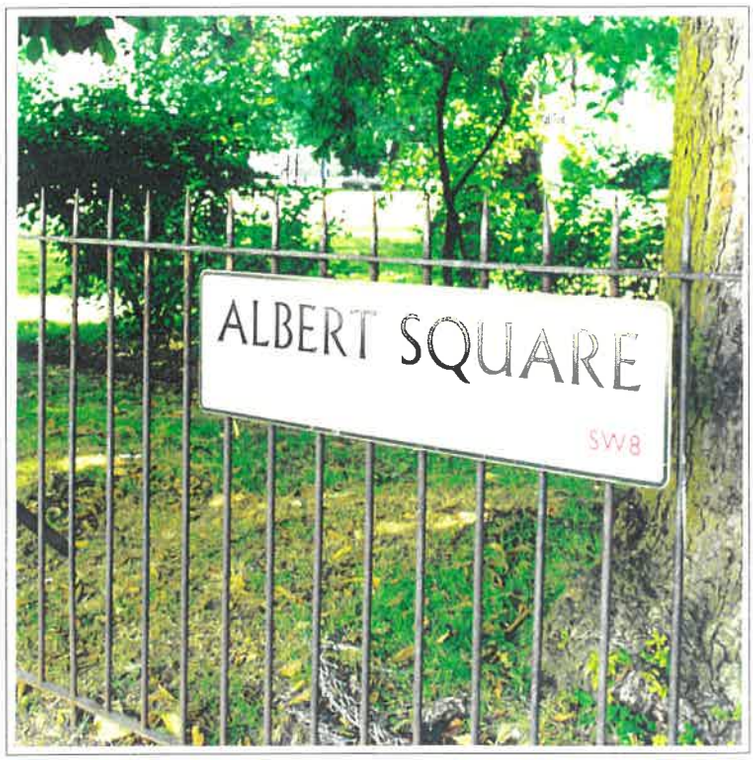

Historical Analysis & Research Team
Reports and Papers 47
2001

ENGLISH HERITAGE

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Nature of the Request

Situated in the London Borough of Lambeth (SW8), Albert Square was a speculative development of the late 1840s, laid out and constructed by the north London builder John Glenn (figs. 1 and 2). The square is surrounded by symmetrically arranged terraces of substantial houses, raised in stock brick with plentiful stucco dressings. Each terrace (five in all) is listed at grade II. From the very outset, Glenn's development included a large central open space, described as an 'Ornamental Ground for the use of the Lessees of the Square'. This large central garden is today enclosed by railings of the 1960s.

As part of its campaign for London squares, the London Region of English Heritage is proposing a project to 'restore' the central gardens of Albert Square. Apart from landscaping and planting, the project is to include the replacement of railings, and the reinstatement of lamp columns and footways.

A brief report charting the development of the square is required. In particular, research should concentrate on the central gardens, with plan evidence of previous layouts and early photographs particularly desirable. The emphasis should be on illustrations, which might help inform the proposed reconstruction works.

The Historical Analysis & Research Team is part of the Architectural Investigation section of English Heritage, based at Savile Row, London.

Origin of Request:	*Drew Bennellick (Landscape Architect, London Region)*
Date of Request:	*19 December 2000*
Date of Report:	*29 June 2001*
File Number:	*Historical Analysis & Research Team London Files, Lambeth 182; see also Lambeth 5*

Produced by English Heritage, 23 Savile Row, London, W1S 2ET.

1
London Squares

'No city is adorned with such fine squares as London' remarked Wilhelm von Archenholz, a Continental traveller to England in the late 1790s. Our visitor was clearly impressed with the examples he had seen, noting the way they were 'all composed of noble and handsome houses'. He observed that 'in the centre there is usually a piece of ground laid out in a beautiful manner, which serves as an agreeable walk'; 'those who reside there', he went on, 'besides this, have the advantage of breathing pure air, and are never disturbed by any noise'.[1] Certainly the square was immensely popular at this time, having become one of the defining elements in the new Georgian city.[2] Through it, developers and builders were able to introduce new and often grand set-piece architecture into the London townscape. Equally, the square did much to appease those pressing for urban improvement and the retention of open space within the fast-expanding metropolis. In the 1760s, the influential John Gwynn was in little doubt concerning their public benefit. Writing of one poorly conceived area of development, Gwynn was of the firm opinion that if 'a range of squares had been formed ... instead of that heap of absurdity and confusion ... it would certainly have been more profitable, as well as more elegant and convenient'.[3]

Of course, the London square is very far from an exclusively Georgian characteristic. Its beginnings are to be traced to the 1630s, whereas the high point of its development belongs to the early nineteenth century — the era which produced the most popular image of the square with its densely planted central garden shaded by the cover of towering trees. Only in 1880s did the square finally begin to loose favour, by which time there were hundreds of examples across the length and breadth of the city. Moreover, by then, the square stood as a distinctly London phenomenon. Nowhere else in Britain had this simple but effective architectural form been exploited to anywhere near the same degree, nor had it been taken up in truly comparable terms in any other European city.[4] Today, the square remains one of the key elements in the urban morphology of London, to be cherished, protected, and enhanced for the benefit of both residents and visitors alike.

1.1 The Development of the London Square

The origins of the London square are generally traced to the now mangled and barely recognizable 'piazza' at Covent Garden, initially laid out from 1631 by Inigo Jones for the fourth earl of Bedford (fig. 3).[5] A few years later, from *c.* 1638, a rather different 'garden

1 The visitor was Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz: *A Picture of England: Containing a Description of the Laws, Customs, and Manners of England,* 2 vols (London 1789), 126–33, quoted in Byrne 1990, 51; Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 227.

2 The Danish architect-planner, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, identified the square as one of the defining elements of Georgian urban architecture: Rasmussen 1982, 166–200, *passim.* More recently, it has been suggested by Longstaffe-Gowan (2001, 2) that each time a new square was laid out, 'the city gained yet another mark of sophistication'. Squares represented, he says, 'a conspicuous incident in the narrative of urban development'.

3 Gwynn was criticizing parts of St Marylebone: Gwynn 1766, 77.

4 Weir (1844, 193) was in no doubt that the 'English "Square" is peculiar to the country'. And Chancellor (1907, ix) expressed the view that the square as we know it, that is 'as a residential quarter', was 'essentially an English institution'. Squares were described as 'that very London phenomenon' in the 1995 conference on their past, present and future by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer MP: LHPGT 1997, 5. For more by way of 'definition' and background see English Heritage 2000b, 2–4; Harwood and Saint 1991, 95–96; McKellar 1999, 191–207; Girouard 1990, 156–61; and now, particularly, Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, especially 183–233.

5 SOL 1970, 64–150; Summerson 1988, 16; Summerson 1993, 124–26; McKellar 1999, 193–95; Harwood and Saint 1991, 208–09; Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 183–85.

square' came into being at Lincoln's Inn Fields.[6] However, for the late Sir John Summerson, the two earliest examples — 'properly so called' — were Bloomsbury Square and its near contemporary, St James's Square. Bloomsbury Square was created by the earl of Southampton in front of his town mansion in 1661 (fig. 4), whereas St James's Square, often regarded as the finest of the early survivals, was formed by the earl of St Albans, 'for the conveniency of the Nobility and Gentry who were to attend upon his Majestie's Person'.[7] In their wake, even before the close of the seventeenth century, a whole clutch of further squares emerged through the determination of other grandees and speculative developers: Golden Square, Soho Square (fig 5) and Leicester Square (fig. 6) in the West End, for example; Red Lion Square and Queen Square in Camden.[8] Indeed, from the 1680s onwards, squares were to feature in all types of development, from the most imposing to the very modest, spreading well outside the West End to reach both the older City area and the newer suburbs.[9]

In the early Georgian period, the construction of Hanover Square (*c.* 1717–20), Cavendish Square (1717 onwards), Grosvenor Square (*c.* 1725–31), and Smith Square (1726) heralded a new phase in the popularity of the form.[10] Amid its ordered rows of surrounding terraced streets, the enormous Grosvenor Square (fig. 7), in particular, demonstrates the way the square had now become absolutely central to the plan of a major development.[11] Other such examples, if not quite so large, included the later Portman Square (*c.* 1765–84) and its neighbour, Manchester Square (*c.* 1776–88).[12] But for many people, the Georgian square was to reach a height of perfection with the creation Bedford Square, built between 1775 and 1786.[13] Up to this time, such was the nature of speculative construction in London, true uniformity was seldom achieved in the buildings along the sides of a great square. It does not seem to have been a feature of the very earliest examples, and a telling comment reflecting informed opinion was expressed by James Ralph on Soho Square in 1734: 'the buildings round it are not scandalous, 'tis true, but they have not the least pretensions to taste or order'.[14] Ralph would presumably have admired the original plan for the east side of Grosvenor Square. Here, in 1725, the Palladian architect Colen Campbell (1676–1729) had proposed a single architectural treatment for the whole block, thereby giving the impression of one great palatial front. Alas, the scheme was not followed through, and the opportunity was lost.[15] But some fifty years later this was precisely the concept which was taken up so successfully at Bedford Square. Though subtle differences abound, in all essentials each side was treated as a single unit, with uniform brown brick terraces flanking

6 The long process by which Lincoln's Inn *Fields* became enclosed with buildings is outlined in McKellar 1999, 195–97, and Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 184–87. See, also, Weinreb and Hibbert 1993, 471–73; Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 306–09.

7 Bloomsbury Square was first known as Southampton Square: Summerson 1988, 24–25; Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 321–22; Chancellor 1907, 183–201. For St James's, see SOL 1960; Harwood and Saint 1991, 96–97; Chancellor 1907, 80–105.

8 Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 309, 313–14; Weinreb and Hibbert 1993, 321, 464–66, 658, 659, 816–17.

9 McKellar 1999, 202–04.

10 Chancellor 1907, 23–79; Weinreb and Hibbert 1993, 131–32, 350–51, 372–73, 812; Cherry and Pevsner 1999, 635.

11 SOL 1977–80, **2**, 112–70.

12 Cherry and Pevsner 1999, 642, 650; Weinreb and Hibbert 1993, 507, 631.

13 Byrne 1990; Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 323–25; Harwood and Saint 1991, 99–100; Chancellor 1907, 202–10.

14 Quoted in Girouard 1990, 160.

15 Edward Shepherd's proposed composition for the north side of Grosvenor Square was also foiled: see Summerson 1993, 358. For Campbell, see Colvin 1995, 209–13; for a full account of these schemes, see SOL 1977–80, **1**, 20–22.

a stuccoed, pedimented and pilastered five-bay centrepiece. Taken as a whole, such is the degree of survival at this Bloomsbury site, it is widely regarded as the most handsome of all London squares.

Of course, the square represented no economical way of building. With the central area lost to development, and with the benefit of little through traffic, the houses were of necessity quite grand so as to command higher rents. The attributes of the square thus made it exclusive, and of great snob appeal. And this is precisely why, in the nineteenth century, the Georgian exemplars of Bloomsbury and the West End were copied in large numbers, notably amid the imposing streets of Belgravia and neighbouring Pimlico, but also in the aspiring suburbs such as Kensington and Chelsea, or Paddington and Islington. For Weir, writing in the 1840s, it seemed as if in 'all the suburbs squares are now springing up like mushrooms'.[16]

At their very smartest, these Regency and Victorian squares can appear supremely grand, none more so than the brilliantly stuccoed and always fashionable Belgrave Square (1826 onwards).[17] For rather more typical examples of the genre we might look to Northampton Square, Myddleton Square and Claremont Square, all in Islington and developed before 1830,[18] or to the especially fine Tredegar Square built *c.* 1828–30 in the then fashionable East End.[19] Elsewhere, one might think of Pembroke Square (begun 1824) and the later Onslow Square (after 1845) and Redcliffe Square (1869–76) in Kensington, or of Paultons Square (after 1836) and Carlyle Square (after 1862) in Chelsea, to name but a few.[20]

Sadly, in the only volume devoted solely to the subject of London squares, the author was far too readily dismissive of those examples to be found south of the river. His view would be remarkable indeed were it held today, but almost a century ago Chancellor thought the district south of the Thames 'a *terra incognita* to many people'.[21] Having recognized that the area was 'more thickly populated', Chancellor went on to say — with breathtaking arrogance — that it could 'hardly be termed residential with the meaning of the word, as understood in Mayfair or Belgravia; indeed, not to mince matters, South London is squalid and probably always will be'. Then, barely concealing his surprise, Chancellor had to admit 'and yet it has ... some squares'. He had discovered nineteen of them, even though this is a considerable underestimate on the full list.

One of the earliest survivals is Cleaver Square in Lambeth (fig. 2), begun in 1789,[22] with other late Georgian developments to be found at West Square (*c.* 1791–1810) and

16 Despite their rapid growth and great diversity, Weir thought it was possible to classify London's squares into 'four grand divisions', based on districts: all those west of Regent Street ('fashionable'); south of a line between Holborn and Oxford Street ('faded greatness ... haunts of busy trading life'); north of Gray's Inn Lane and Chancery Lane ('inhabited by the aristocracy of the law'); and eastwards of this same area ('obsolete, or purely City squares'). See Weir 1844, 195.

17 Harwood and Saint 1991, 101–02; Weinreb and Hibbert 1993, 55. Weir (1844, 205) called it 'Youngest and most gorgeous of our squares'.

18 For Islington in general, see Cosh 1990–93; and for the examples cited, Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 633–35.

19 Harwood and Saint 1991, 102

20 On the squares of Kensington and Chelsea, see the interesting views in Weir 1844, 206–07. For the examples mention here, see Cherry and Pevsner 1999, 447–589, *passim*.

21 This is Chancellor 1907, 394. His volume contains 379 pages on the north bank, with less than five pages on the squares of south London. Apart from Chancellor, there is an earlier essay devoted to the subject of the London square: Weir 1844.

22 Until 1937 it was known as Prince's Square: Draper 1979, 40; Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 369. It has recently been restored with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund: English Heritage 2000b, 11.

Addington Square in Southwark.[23] Among the better known examples of marginally later decades, we might include the very attractive Trinity Church Square (1824–32), along with Lorrimore Square (*c.* 1850), and Merrick Square (1853–56), all located in Southwark.[24] Lambeth's Albert Square, built in 1846–47, and the focus of this report, belongs very much to this mid-nineteenth-century flourish of new squares created in the growing suburbs of south London. Afterwards, the form continued to be employed south of the river from time to time, notably at the delightful Courtney Square (1912–19), again located in Lambeth.[25]

1.2 The Open Space within the London Square

In focussing too much on the architecture of London's squares, we tend to loose sight of the pivotal role they have occupied as gardens, the green lungs to so many areas of the metropolis. The evolution, development and transformation of the garden square has been the focus of much interest in recent years.[26] We find that, despite an almost constant aesthetic debate over the appropriate treatment for central gardens, this has rarely diminished their popularity in the everyday life of the city.

In the earliest squares of the seventeenth century, the central open space was generally paved, or possibly gravelled or cobbled, and apparently left open for walking. If the area was at all separated from the surrounding carriage road, this was done by no more than low posts and rails (figs. 3 and 4). However, among other factors, the encroachment of a market on to the 'piazza' at Covent Garden (fig. 3) — with the consequential loss of value for the surrounding property — led to greater formality in the way the centres of squares were laid out, and to increased regulation by landlords on the use of the space itself.[27] So it was that as early as 1687, when a building specification was drafted for what later became Smith Square, it was to include detailed clauses on the planning of the 'court'. The area was to have gravel walks, grass platts, and lime trees, and there was to be a summer house at the centre.[28] In 1725, a Swiss-French visitor to the city wrote of its 'fine open spaces called squares', and went on to note that the 'centres of these squares are shut in by railings of painted wood, and contain gardens with flowers, trees and paths. Those of Soho [fig. 5], Leicester Fields, of the Red Lion, and the Golden Square are in this style'.[29]

But such a pattern was still very far from universal. St James's Square, for example, was one of those originally left open and without significant garden features of any kind. In 1726 its condition was such that it was observed: [It] 'doth now lie and hath for some years past lain rude, waste, uncleanly, and in great Disorder, and Incroachments are made thereon'.[30] So bad had the situation become, an Act of Parliament was passed for its future regulation. A similar lack of clarity over the accessibility and use of Lincoln's Inn Fields meant that by 1735 the 'great Square' there was 'in great Disorder ... a Receptacle for

23 Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 591–92. Of much the same date was Nelson Square (1804–18) in Southwark, where the buildings have been replaced since the Second World War: Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 590.

24 Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 594, 597.

25 Harwood and Saint 1991, 104–05; Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 368.

26 By far the best account is now Longstaffe-Gowan, 2001, especially, 183–230. See, also, Draper 1979, 39; LHPGT 1997, 14–17; McKellar 1999, 204–07; Scott-James and Lancaster 1977, 87–91.

27 By 1667, the square at Covent Garden was afflicted with 'great ffylth', the result of the volume of business transacted on the south side of the piazza: SOL 1970, 130.

28 McKellar 1999, 205–06.

29 The visitor was C. de Saussure, quoted in McKellar 1999, 205. For the arrangements in Leicester Square, see Fig. 6. Longstaffe-Gowan (2001, 187–88) suggests Soho Square was possibly the earliest London example to be built around a purposely laid out and enclosed garden, perhaps as early as 1680/81 (fig. 5).

30 RRCLS 1928, 12; SOL 1960, 66–67.

Rubbish, Dirt and Nastiness of all Sorts'.[31] It was a consequence of these and other such cases which hastened the move towards more permanent railings and further privatization.

Having said this, the formal but scanty Renaissance-inspired planting found in the squares of the early eighteenth century was almost always subordinate to the architecture. Indeed, as far back as 1722, Thomas Fairchild (d. 1729), author of *The City Gardener*, was critical of the 'plain way of laying out Squares in Grass Platts and Gravel Walks'. He wanted to see them designed more 'in a Country manner', as wildernesses with birds and a variety of trees. 'There is St James's Square, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Bloomsbury Square, besides others which might be brought into delightful Gardens', he suggested.[32] His recommendations had immediate, if limited, impact. In 1723–25, it was proposed that Grosvenor Square, planned as the centrepiece of the Grosvenor estate's new development, would be laid out in 'Wildernesse worke'. When eventually completed, and enclosed by its garden walls, it contained more planting material than most of the other London squares combined (fig. 7).[33]

From the 1780s, as less obtrusive metal railings began to be introduced to London's squares, further improvements were brought about to the gardens. More and more the garden was seen as an essential element within the residential development itself. As some already well-planted gardens began to thrive, there was also a trend towards increasingly naturalistic landscaping. The introduction of some of today's most distinctive characteristics, such as dense shrubberies and tall trees canopies, was due in no small part to the general influence of John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843), Humphry Repton (1752–1818) and John Nash (1752–1835). Loudon, a landscape-gardener and horticultural writer, produced an essay on what he saw as the appropriate way of designing and planting squares in the 'Picturesque' manner.[34] He argued that squares should make an important contribution to the beauty of the metropolis, to the salubrity of its inhabitants, and even 'to some degree to the honour of the British nation'.[35] Repton also approached the subject of the garden square design as a matter of 'Public concern'. He was responsible for the redesign of the gardens in Bloomsbury Square in 1806, and also designed Russell Square about the same time.[36] Nash, a contemporary of them both, was called in to produce a fresh design for the garden in St James's Square in 1817–18, producing a layout similar to that preserved today.[37]

Such was the general beauty and richness of London's garden squares by 1860, *The Builder* put forward the suggestion that a society be formed to arrange exhibitions and competitions as a means of encouraging yet further improvement.[38] The writer also ventured to remark that although 'a limited number [of people] have a right of admission to

31 McKellar 1999, 204: it was the 'Want of proper Fences' which lay at the heart of the problem. See, also, Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 195–96.

32 Fairchild is quoted in Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 189–93; McKellar 1999, 206; Scott-James and Lancaster 1977, 87. For his life, see *Dictionary of National Biography*, **22**, 623–24.

33 SOL 1977–80, **2**, 112–13; Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 193–95

34 In a letter of 1803, addressed to the editor of the *Literary Journal*, J. C. Louden offered 'Hints Respecting the Manner of Laying out the Grounds of the Public Squares in London, to the Utmost Picturesque Advantage'. Louden went on to publish several influential works including *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822) and *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (1838). See *Dictionary of National Biography*, **12**, 149–50; and, more fully, Simo 1988, especially 211–12.

35 Quoted in Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 225.

36 For Repton generally, see Daniels 1999, especially 180–83 for his work on London squares; also Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 325–26; LHPGT 1997, 16; Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 227–28.

37 SOL 1960, 69; LHPGT 1997, 16; Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 228–29.

38 *The Builder*, **18** (1860), 351.

these places, [they are] a kind of public property'. The view was not widely acceptable, and in most cases the gates remained closed to all but the privileged key-holders.

1.3 The Management and Protection of London Squares

The 1726 Act for the regulation of St James's Square is the first item in a line of legislation aimed at the management and protection of London's squares. In particular, this Act vested authority in a body of trustees , whereby they might levy a rate on the inhabitants of the square for the purpose of its upkeep. There followed a number of similar management Acts related to individual squares, in most cases aimed at the improvement and embellishment of the central area: Lincoln's Inn Fields (1734), Charterhouse Square (1742), Golden Square (1750), Berkeley Square (1766), Grosvenor Square (1774). Later, Acts were passed relating to estates, in anticipation of their proposed development, all of them tending to include provision for the management of enclosures.[39]

It may have been the disgusting state of Leicester Square which focussed the attention of Parliament's on the need to provide protection for enclosures in special circumstances. This led to the passing of the *Town Gardens Protection Act*, 1863, though local authorities still generally lacked any real power to actually take over neglected enclosures.[40] The position was much the same in 1904 and 1905, when the London County Council tried to get statutory powers to take over enclosures that were in danger of being built on, a move prompted by Lord Kensington's disposal of the large communal gardens in Edwardes Square to a development company.[41] The initial bills promoted by the County Council were rejected, but it did finally gain some powers to take over a selection of enclosures under the *London Squares and Enclosures (Preservation) Act*, 1906. In all, a total of sixty-four enclosures were covered by the Act, each of them included with the consent of the owners.[42]

The Act lacked real teeth, and the 1920s it proved powerless in preventing developments at Endsleigh Gardens in St Pancras, and Mornington Crescent in St Marylebone.[43] Yet such was the public outcry over the loss of these open spaces, the London County Council finally persuaded the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the desirability of preserving the remaining squares throughout London. The Commission was appointed in August 1927, with its terms of reference:

> 'to inquire and report on the squares and similar open spaces existing in the area of the Administrative County of London with special reference to the conditions on which they are held and used and the desirability of their preservation as open spaces and to recommend whether any or all of them should be permanently safeguarded against any use detrimental to their character as open spaces and if so, by what means and on what terms and conditions'.[44]

The Commission's report was published in 1928. In due course, as a result of its recommendations, the *London Squares Preservation Act* was passed in July 1931.[45] In all,

39 Longstaffe-Gowan 2001, 196; RRCLS 1928, 12–13, and for a list of Acts see Appendix IV, 161–64.

40 For the Act, see RRCLS 1928, 16–17; and on Leicester Square, see Draper 1979, 39; RRCLS 1928, 21.

41 For the context, see RRCLS 1928, 18–21, 171–88.

42 *Act* 1906; RRCLS 1928, 18.

43 For the background, see RRCLS 1928, 24–25. For the new developments, see Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 327, 385.

44 RRCLS 1928, 8.

45 *Act* 1931.

some 461 squares and other garden enclosures were afforded protection, covering a total area of around 400 acres (162ha). The legislation, coming as it did sixteen years before the first major Town and Country Planning Act, might be regarded as a measure of the outstanding cultural and environmental importance attached to these features.[46] Henceforth, it would be impossible to develop any such privately owned space within the metropolis without the necessary permissions. Alas, even this did not save the squares from that devastating blow inflicted just a decade later: the removal of their surrounding railings to support the war effort.

In June 1995, the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust organized a conference to discuss 'the past, present and future' of London's squares. In his keynote speech, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer MP, spoke of the enthusiasm for the square as 'a particularly London feeling'. He hoped that the conference would 'give new life to the enthusiasm', placing the square at the centre of future redevelopment ideas.[47] Five years later, in May 2000, English Heritage launched its 'Campaign for London Squares'.[48] The primary objective of this campaign is to encourage all those responsible for the management and maintenance of these spaces to bring forward positive measures for their coordinated improvement. In particular, the reinstatement of the railings is afforded a high priority, since they are such a vital component of the public realm.

46 English Heritage 2000b, 4.

47 LHPGT 1997, 5.

48 English Heritage 2000b.

2
The Growth of Lambeth and Lambeth Open Spaces and Squares

Until the nineteenth century, the ancient parish of Lambeth remained essentially rural in character. When, for example, John Rocque published his 'Exact Survey' of London in 1746 (fig. 8),[49] although a thin line of development existed alongside the river, there were still very few buildings to be found south of Kennington Common.[50] At this time, the two chief landlords remained the Church and the Crown. The Church was represented by the archbishop of Canterbury, who owned the manor of Lambeth, and also by the dean and chapter of Canterbury, who held the manor of Vauxhall (fig. 9).[51] The Crown, in the person of the duke of Cornwall, held the manor of Kennington.[52] As conservative as these landlords traditionally were, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, they could no longer resist the pressure put on them to release open land for urban development.

2.1 Urban Growth in Lambeth

For Sheppard, it is the 'colossal growth' of London which is 'the central fact in the history of the capital in the nineteenth century'.[53] And, what is of particular interest with regard to Lambeth, is the fact that its urban development was almost entirely concentrated within the span of this single period. In 1801, the population of the historic parish was not quite 30,000; by 1901 much the same area (then the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth) accommodated almost 302,000 people.[54]

The growth of Lambeth, in common with all nineteenth-century speculative development south of the Thames, was facilitated by a new infrastructure. Hitherto, it had been the river in particular which had for long barred progress. It was the opening of Westminster Bridge in 1750, the authorization of Kennington Road a year later, and the building of Blackfriars Bridge and its approach roads between 1760 and 1769, which all began to introduce change. Then, between 1816 and 1819, three further bridges became available, at Vauxhall, Waterloo (fig. 2), and Southwark. In the main, it was Vauxhall Bridge which opened the way for new housing stretching further and further to the south. Ribbon developments and suburban villas were soon the prelude to a far denser network of streets and terraces.[55]

In turning to the available map evidence, it is clear from the first edition of G. F. Cruchley's 'New Plan of London', published in 1826 (fig. 10), that much of the landscape

49 Published in 16 sheets at a scale of 5½ inches to one mile.

50 On Kennington, and Kennington Common (now Kennington Park), see Weinreb and Hibbert 1993, 421–22; Draper 1979, 22–24.

51 In 1862, both these manors passed into the custody of the Ecclesiastical (subsequently Church) Commissioners

52 The land on which the modern buildings of Lambeth stand once comprised ten manors, of which the three most important were Lambeth, Kennington and Vauxhall: SOL 1956, 1. For an early history, see Brayley 1841, **3**, 293–400. For fuller background to the suburban development of the borough, see SOL 1951, 1–11; SOL 1956, 1–17. Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 327–31.

53 Sheppard 1971, 1.

54 SOL 1956, 1. The stages of growth are given in Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 69: 28,000 (1801); 58,000 (1821); 116,000 (1841); 162,000 (1861); 254,000 (1881); 302,000 (1901). See also Roebuck 1979, 114–18.

55 Draper 1979, 13–14; Sheppard 1971, 84–85; Roebuck 1979, *passim*, especially 1–2, 124–29.

around South Lambeth Road and Clapham Road remained undeveloped at this time.[56] The situation was, however, to change dramatically over the next few decades. Stanford's Library Map of 'London and its Suburbs' (1862) shows the district filled with a whole variety of housing, including terraced and semi-detached rows with their gardens (fig. 11),[57] along with several notable enclaves such as Lansdowne Circus (fig. 12), Park Crescent, and Albert Square (fig. 13),[58] 'modest imitations of Belgravia or St John's Wood'.[59] Churches, chapels and schools, as well as public and industrial buildings also stand out prominently.

Interestingly, there is further map evidence which allows us to pick up on the precise point when Albert Square itself was under construction. The 1847 edition of Cruchley's plans shows the form of the square had been determined by that year, though it was so far unnamed, and the housing had only been constructed along the south-west and north-west sides. The relevant first edition Ordnance Survey sheet was published in 1877 (fig. 14), compiled from survey data gathered in 1871.[60] Albert Square is shown in its completed form, and further developments had been added along the roads running out from the south-west and north-west corners: Albert Terrace and Wilkinson Street (fig. 15). There is little change to be seen on the 1894–96 or 1913 Ordnance Survey maps (figs. 16 and 17).[61]

2.2 The Open Spaces and Squares of Lambeth

Fortunately, there is already a very useful study of the publicly owned and maintained parks and gardens in Lambeth.[62] As an historical account, it provides much by way of context when considering the place of garden squares within the framework of managing open spaces throughout the borough as a whole.

Lambeth's oldest public park is Kennington, converted from Kennington Common and first opened in 1854. Vauxhall Park was created by a special Act of Parliament, passed in 1888.[63] Further south, Brockwell Park — 'undoubtedly the grandest of Lambeth's open spaces' — was opened 1901–03, and Norwood Park followed in 1911.[64] The borough's other large public open spaces include Clapham Common, Archbishop's Park, and of course the Albert Embankment and Jubilee Gardens. Nor should we overlook the smaller but important contribution made by other garden and recreation areas, along with a significant group of disused burial grounds.

As noted above, the earliest square in the borough was Clever Square, begun in 1789, though not finished until the 1850s. The central area was first mentioned in 1791 as a 'grass plat', and a year later it was described as 'a Grass Plot or Grazing Ground'.[65] Melbourne Square was begun about 1830; its garden has the distinction of being the only one in

56 Cruchley's map was produced on a scale of nearly 5 inches to the mile.

57 The map was produced in 24 sheets, at the scale of 6 inches to a mile.

58 Lansdowne Circus is now known as Lansdowne Gardens, and Park Crescent as Stockwell Park Crescent: Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 371, 373–74; SOL 1956, 63–64, 88–89.

59 Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 329.

60 Ordnance Survey Sheet, London LXVI (1877).

61 For a summary of more recent developments, see Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 329–31.

62 Draper 1979. Privately owned gardens and open spaces are not included in the volume. For a broader account of Victorian public parks, see Conway 1991.

63 Draper 1979, 22–24, 54.

64 Draper 1979, 24–25, 48–49.

65 Draper 1979, 40.

Lambeth to be scheduled for protection under the 1906 *London Squares Act*.[66] Grafton Square was laid out in 1847–51, with the garden originally railed in and planted with shrubs. It was taken over by the local authority in 1965, and laid out with seats, a shelter and a play area.[67] Though not strictly a square, Lansdowne Gardens (originally Lansdowne Circus) remains one of the most attractive of Lambeth's small enclosures. The builder, John Snell of Dorset Street (now Dorset Road), raised handsome two-storey villas set over semi-basements, with projecting porches carried on Doric columns (fig. 12). His lease of one of the houses in the circus included mention of the railed 'ornamental enclosure'. After attempts to trace the legal owner in 1910 and 1927 failed, the garden was grassed over and planted with thick shrubberies and trees. In 1951, the council acquired the enclosure by compulsory purchase.[68]

Under the 1931 *London Squares Preservation Act*, a total of twenty enclosures across the borough of Lambeth was scheduled for protection. We should also add three more to the list, then in Wandsworth but since transferred (Annex 1).[69] When reviewed as part of the London Squares and Historic Open Spaces project,[70] one of these enclosures (Melbourne Square) had quite definitely disappeared, and another (Stangate Triangle) was thought to have gone. Eleven sites were in public ownership, seven certainly still remained in private hands, with question marks over the remainder.

66 *Act* 1906, 9; Draper 1979, 42.

67 Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 384, Draper 1979, 40.

68 SOL 1956, 63, 64; Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 371; Draper 1979, 41.

69 *Act* 1931, 42–43, 63–64.

70 LHPGT 1997, Appendix 4 (London Squares Draft Inventory), Lambeth Squares List.

3
The Construction and Development of Albert Square

It has been established, then, that Albert Square was built during the early Victorian era, and that its development has to be seen within the context of the growing nineteenth-century suburbs of south London as a whole. Its houses were in fact among the 43,000 raised in the capital over the decade 1841–51 alone, at a time when upwards of 65,000 people were engaged in the building trade.[71] Apparently, most of Lambeth's building at this time tended to be carried out by small local firms, seldom taking on the construction of more than ten properties at a time, and rarely venturing further than a couple of miles from their workshops or yards.[72] It is of even greater interest, therefore, to find that the developer of Albert Square was John Glenn, an Islington-based builder with a house or premises in Liverpool Terrace.[73]

There are a few hints from elsewhere as to Glenn's career, but it would really be no more than speculation to suggest reasons for his interest in this comparatively ambitious venture south of the river.[74]

3.1 Construction

In any case, an Act of Parliament passed in 1843 allowed those who had succeeded to a small block of copyhold lands in the manor of Vauxhall (including three plots known as the 14 acres) to grant leases for building development (fig. 9).[75] It was the trustees of the relevant moieties who, in September 1846, entered into the agreement with John Glenn, [76] the details of which read:

> Licence to Richard Atkinson, Edward Dixon, Nutter Gray, John Cole, Trustees of both moieties of premises under Act 6 & 7 Vic. to demise to John Glenn of Liverpool Terrace, Liverpool Road, Islington, Builder, of land at the rear of Clapham Road measuring on S.E. side banded by the backs of houses built or intended to be built fronting the Clapham Road 570 feet which includes an intended public road 80 feet wide leading from Clapham Road into an intended square to be called Albert Square, on the S.W. sided banded by garden ground and premises in occupation of [?] Moorman and others 355 feet then running from the S.W. to the N.E. 163 feet then running from S.E. to N.W. (beside an intended new street to be called Canton Street) for 80 feet, on the N.W. side of the said ground intended to be demised (including Canton Street and Napier Street) bounded by other ground of the said lessors 350 feet then running from the S.W. to N.E. 107 feet and on the N. side of

71 Sheppard 1971, 101.

72 This is the broad assessment given by the Survey of London: SOL 1956, 11–12.

73 Liverpool Terrace, where Glenn was based, was apparently built in 1835. Seven years later it was described as having 'a neat and uniform appearance': Lewis 1842, 370.

74 John Glenn is named as the builder of the Fulham Union workhouse in 1849 (*Illustrated London News*, 23 January 1849, 66); a builder called Mr Glenn (of Islington) was building Royal Crescent in Notting Hill in 1850 (SOL 1973, 297); and Messrs Glenn (builders of Islington) were fined at the Clerkenwell police court in 1864 under the Metropolitan Building Act for making certain alterations to Mildmay Park Chapel without proper notice (*The Builder*, **22**, 1864, 68). I am most grateful to John Greenacombe of the Survey of London for leading me to this information. Apart from Albert Square, there is no other mention of Glenn in any of the London volumes of the *Buildings of England*. His part in the design of the Albert Square buildings is presumably open to question.

75 SOL 1956, 62.

76 CC Deed, 124457, 333–35; Survey of London files, Blandford Street, volumes 23 and 26, St Mary Lambeth, Box 8.

ground intended to be demised bounded by premises in occupation of Notley and others 355 feet. Also all those 37 messuages intended to be built on said ground and to form the intended square together with the mews and apartments for 99 years or less from 29 September 1846.

It is clear not only from the Cruchley map evidence of 1847 (see p. 12, above), but also from a few surviving individual indentures, or sub-leases of particular properties, that the houses were built around the central open square in numerical order, in a clockwise direction. The sub-lease on No. 7, for example, at the southern corner of the square, was offered in February 1847 to William Young, a tea dealer of High Street, Islington,[77] and No. 20 was leased to John Neale, a gentleman of St George's Terrace, Islington.[78] The plan attached to each indenture shows the position of the house in question, along with its garden and nearby stable and coach house block (fig. 18).

Additional evidence on the progress of the development comes from the returns of the district surveyor, where John Glenn is again identified as the builder/owner, and where his address is given as 3 Liverpool Terrace.[79] The first seven houses were rated in October 1846, just weeks after the original lease, with all thirty-seven houses assessed for rates by April of the following year:

October 1846	6 dwellings	1st class	3rd rate
	1 dwelling	1st class	2nd rate
December 1846	3 dwellings	1st class	2nd rate
	8 dwellings	1st class	3rd rate
February 1847	2 dwellings	1st class	2nd rate
	3 dwellings	1st class	3rd rate
March 1847	1 dwelling	1st class	2nd rate
	8 dwellings	1st class	3rd rate
April 1847	2 dwellings	1st class	2nd rate
	3 dwellings	1st class	3rd rate

There is one further piece of information relating to the provision of services for the new houses. Dating from February 1847, there is an indenture of contract between Mr John Barnett and the Commissioners of Sewers for Surrey and Kent, concerning the formation of a sewer from High Clapham Road through Albert Square into Napier Street, a continuation of that earlier made from Napier Street into Southampton New Road.[80]

3.2 Plan and Form of the Original Houses

The completed development comprised a rectangular open 'square', with the longer axis orientated north-east to south-west (fig. 19). The principal approach from Clapham Road leads into the eastern side of the square; Wilkinson Street and Albert Terrace then open

77 The copy indenture is: LA&ML, LBL DALS/1/2.

78 Information and a copy of the lease provided by Mr J. Nicholson, the current owner of No. 20 Albert Square. Mr Nicholson is the Managing Trustee of the Trustees of the Albert Square Garden. He was kind enough to discuss various aspects of the garden with me in January 2001, and also allowed me to make copies of various photographs in his collection. Mr Nicholson is an important source for the somewhat complex history surrounding the Trust ownership of the garden and its curtilage.

79 Historical Analysis & Research Team, London Files, Lambeth 5.

80 The document is dated 5 February 1847: summarized on Historical Analysis & Research Team, London Files, Lambeth 5. The original leases included a clause to the effect that lessees were liable to pay their share 'of building and finishing a proper watercourse sewer or drain' for the square.

from the north-west and south-west corners respectively. The thirty-seven properties were cleverly set out in five symmetrically arrange 'terraces': nine houses to each of the three rows on the northern, southern and western sides, and five in each of the two smaller rows separated by the main access road on the eastern side. The houses in the longer rows are grouped 1–2–3–2–1; those in the smaller rows follow a 1–3–1 layout. In all cases the properties have three principal floors, with a half storey above and basement below. They are built of yellow–brown stock brick, though with the basement and raised ground-floor levels rendered with stucco. The stucco dressings above are also plentiful, including strings, cornices, architraves and incised quoins.

Perhaps the grandest, and very marginally the largest of the 'terraces' is that on the western side of the square (figs. 20–22). In all essentials, the upper stages of the five individual blocks within the composite 1–2–3–2–1 arrangement are discreet entities; the 'terrace' link is at raised ground-floor and basement levels (fig. 21). Each floor level is prominently demarcated by a full entablature or cornice.

Beginning with the stucco-rendered raised ground-floor, we see that the two end properties, and those flanking the larger central house (i.e. Nos. 6, 9, 11, 14), have a projecting square bay and square-headed sash windows. The remaining windows and all of the doorways at this level have half-rounded heads springing from a moulded impost sting (fig. 21). Tuscan pilasters and engaged columns rise to support the entablature, which features a dentil cornice in places (fig. 21). At first-floor level, in the properties with the square bays, the windows are grouped under a central triangular pediment (with broken base) supported on curved consoles. The larger central house (No. 19) has a three-bay window arrangement, the middle window again featuring a similar triangular pediment. The remaining four houses (Nos. 16, 17, 21, 22) have two-bay window arrangements, with console bracketed cornices. In all cases, the sash windows (many with glazing bars) sit in moulded architraves. Next, above a subsidiary cornice, the windows in the second floor are all in pairs, except for the three-bay central house. This level terminates with a heavy entablature bearing a modillion cornice, further elaborated in the case of the central house with scroll brackets (fig. 22). Finally, the shorter windows in the top storey follow the arrangement below; the elevation is then closed with a plain cornice.

The overall form of the southern (fig. 23) and northern (figs. 24–26) 'terraces' is very similar to that described above, and calls for no additional comment.[81] The two shorter 'terraces' on the east side of the square (figs. 27–30) were originally identical to one another. Within the 1–3–1 arrangement in each block, the two end houses again featured the projecting square bay (Nos. 1, 5, 33, 37);[82] but here the whole of the central three-bay house (Nos. 3 and 35) also projects from the line of the 'terrace'. Otherwise the design details conform to those in the three larger 'terraces' around the square.

3.3 Subsequent Development of the Square

Within ten years of the construction of Albert Square, the increasing number of inhabitants in this part of the parish of St Mary Lambeth led to a call for a new church.[83] Eventually, in 1860–61, St Stephen's church was built on what remained open ground to the rear of the development (fig. 13). It provided space for 1,000 worshippers in the main body of what

81 However, the central three-bay house in the northern 'terrace' lacks the scroll-bracketed modillion cornice at second-floor level (fig. 23). Though only closer investigation would reveal if the existing arrangement is original, it is confirmed by at least one photograph of *c.* 1900–10.

82 The original No. 37 has been lost, though its form is confirmed from early photographs and a survey drawing of 1935 (fig. 29).

83 SOL 1956, 63.

was a Decorated-style Gothic building, with room for a further 400 in the gallery.[84] Meanwhile, no further housing had as yet been constructed along those roads opening out from the north-west and south-west corners of the square. The properties in Wilkinson Street (fig. 15) and Albert Terrace must have followed later in the 1860s, and appear on the first edition Ordnance Survey sheet, surveyed in 1871 (fig. 14).

From the outside at least, there is little sign that the basic form of any of the Albert Square houses has been fundamentally altered since their mid-nineteenth-century construction. Perhaps the most notable exception is the introduction of bathrooms, occasionally spilling out as additional blocks into the former free space above the raised ground-floor doorways. Some of these are in keeping with the original fabric, and are difficult to date accurately from mere external observation (fig. 31).

In 1913, the London County Council suggested to the local authority that the name of the square might be changed to avoid confusion with the ('senior') Albert Square in Stepney. The names 'Albert Gardens' and 'Prince Albert Square' were offered as possibilities, and the town clerk was asked to canvas the views of the council.[85] No record of any further correspondence on this has been located.

The only evidence of bomb damage comes from a report of November 1940. A shell landed in what is described in the account as 'Albert Gardens Albert Square', which one might take to refer to the central garden. The shell exploded 'making a crater 6 feet wide and 3 foot deep'.[86]

By the late 1950s, if not earlier, No. 37 had been reduced in height, comprising by that period just the basement and lower storey.[87] Soon afterwards, probably about 1963–64, the plot was cleared and an unimaginative brick apartment block built in place of the original structure. The property developer sought permission to call this 'Regency Court' (fig. 28).[88]

It was presumably within the same decade (though possibly a little earlier) that the spaces between the upper stages of Nos. 11 and 12 and Nos. 12 and 13 were blocked in a rather pedestrian fashion, with additional rooms created behind bland brick façades, relieved only by utilitarian casement windows (fig. 32). One wonders whether the rebuilding at the top of No. 33, and the addition of the infill block designed in keeping with the original houses (fig. 33), belongs to this or an earlier period?

The square was designated a Conservation Area in 1967, and the thirty-six remaining houses (in their five 'terrace' groups) were listed at grade II in August 1975.[89]

84 *The Builder*, **18** (1860), 688–89. The original church was designed by John Barnett; it was replaced by a new building in 1967–68: Cherry and Pevsner 1994, 333.

85 LA&ML, LBC/DCEPS/SL/1/62.

86 LA&ML, Lambeth Bomb Incidents 1217. The shell was also said to damage the AFS water dam stop. It is tempting to link this incident to the fate of the original No. 37.

87 Information from Mr J. Nicholson. A record of the original form of the houses survives in a drawing of 1935 (fig. 29).

88 Calarin Properties Ltd (71 Crouch Hall Road, N8) wrote to the local authority in January 1964 with the request. No objection was raised, as long as the existing number (37) was also used: LA&ML, LBC/DCEPS/SL/1/62.

89 Each 'terrace' is separately listed: DOE 1981, 8–10.

4
Historical and Pictorial Evidence for the Central Gardens

As outlined above, the importance of the central garden to the whole character of the London square grew as the eighteenth century progressed.[90] For some improvers, open space was seen as an essential prerequisite in any worthwhile development. John Gwynn, writing in the 1760s, was of the opinion that builders were deceiving themselves in contriving no more than narrow streets: 'though the houses may let well for the present', he argued, 'yet they [the developers] may be assured that as the rage for building increases, whenever a more spacious avenue is built, those ill-contrived things will be deserted, and the inhabitants flock to places where they can breathe freely and better enjoy the conveniences of life'.[91] Yet as the nineteenth century progressed, with a decline in the popularity of terraced housing generally, coupled with an ever-growing demand for private gardens, the appeal of the square began to ebb. Not that this change came about all at once.

4.1 Documentary Sources

Indeed, from the very outset of plans for the development of Albert Square, there can be no doubt there was an intention to include a central garden. The original leases included the clause:[92]

> And also the said Lessee his executors administrators or assigns shall and will by or before the twenty-ninth day of September next pay his and their proportion of expense in common with the other lessees of houses in Albert Square aforesaid of forming a garden and gravel walks in the centre of the said Square for the general use and benefit of the Inhabitants of the said Square and of surrounding the same with an iron pallisading to the satisfaction of the Lessor's Surveyor and shall and will pay his and their proportion in like manner of the expense of constantly keeping in proper order the said garden walks and pallisading.

The sketch plans attached to the the individual leases carry the annotation over the garden area: 'Ornamental Ground for the use of the Lessees of the Square' (fig. 18). The sum of £1 was apparently required from each new lessee for use of the garden.[93] Then, in November 1913, all of the individual freeholds in the Albert Square properties were sold off at auction. The garden was awarded to the purchaser of the largest block of houses. About ten properties were bought by one man, who thus having acquired the garden sold it in turn to two of the residents, Mr A. C. Pensam and Mr J. F. Budge .[94] A trust deed was drawn up at this time, with terms of reference for the maintenance of the 'Ornamental Garden'.[95]

By the time the Royal Commission on London Squares began gathering its information in 1927, Pensam and Budge had died. Budge's son, Mr L. J. Budge, had become the joint executor and beneficiary under his father's will. In the Commission's report it was stated

90 See above, pp. 9–10.

91 Gwynn 1766, 5.

92 LA&ML, LBL DALS/1/2; also copy of lease for No. 20, courtesy of Mr J. Nicholson.

93 Information from Mr J. Nicholson.

94 It was a Humphrey Quin who made the largest purchase; he sold the garden to Budge and Pensam for £50.

95 Mr Nicholson suggests there is some confusion surrounding this trust deed. It is not clear if the terms relate to ownership or use of the garden. Mr Nicholson has provided a modern typescript copy of the document, entitled 'DEED as to the user enjoyment and Management of the Ornamental Garden in Albert Square, Lambeth, S.W.'. It was dated 29 July 1914.

that the lessees of the houses had rights 'of user' during the term of their leases, with the unexpired term standing at eighteen years.[96]

In any case, when the trust deed lapsed in 1945 nothing formal seems to have replaced it for some years. Not until 1960 were any reappointments resolved, with Mr J. Nicholson eventually becoming the owning trustee.

In 1995, Albert Square was cited by Roger Phillips of the Society for the Protection of London Squares as one example where the lack of funds was preventing the regular maintenance of the central garden.[97] Mr Phillips's information was that 'a legal garden rate' had been fixed early in the twentieth century, 'of about £1 per house'. This was said to raise bout enough to put a padlock on the gate, should one be wanted. Some residents were giving a little more, so a 'tiny fund' was raised. Other households in the square were refusing to contribute even £1. Hence, the garden was thought to have fallen into sad state of disrepair, despite the Trustee's 'tremendous personal efforts'. In conclusion, Mr Phillips felt: 'This situation quite obviously must have some legal support so that they can gain funds'.

4.2 Form of the Garden

The garden at Albert Square is approximately 0.72 acres (0.3ha) in extent.[98] The earliest depiction of its form is that on the plans attached to the lease indentures of 1846–47 (fig. 18). Apart from the basic shape and the descriptive label, however, there is no further clue as to the detail of the layout and planting of the 'Ornamental Ground'.

In fact, our first real indication of the plan and nature of the garden comes from the first edition Ordnance Survey sheet for this area of south London. The sheet was published in 1877, though it was compiled from survey data gathered in 1871 (fig. 19).[99] From the detail seen in other aspects of the mapping, we can be reasonably confident that this represents a pretty accurate representation of the maturing garden, just twenty-five years or so after the completion of the development. In point of fact, there seems no reason to doubt that we are looking at other than the original layout.

A basic network of paths (presumably of gravel as specified in the original property leases) can be seen radiating from a central point along each side of the garden. The four points where the paths begin *suggest* the positions of entrances to the garden enclosure, but this is unconfirmed. The dominant pattern within the plan of the paths is that of an overlapping 'figure of eight', with a subsidiary east–west link through the central circle, and a further side path in the south-west corner.[100] The whole garden is shown thickly wooded, though with the stands quite definitely broken with open spaces, or beds.[101] A continuous line of trees is can be seen running right around the outer permitter of the enclosure, presumably

96 The Trustees, of whom Mr L. J. Budge was one, were said to maintain the square out of annual rents of £1 per house, collected from the lessees. Mr Budge was unaware of any 'prescribed provision' for the maintenance of the square after the expiry of the leases, and that it would presumably be necessary for the owners at that time to devise some means of raising money for the purpose. He understood that the land was reserved as an open space for ever. Budge was aware of the existence of a Trust Deed, 'which may deal with the matter', but he had not seen it: RRCLS 1928, 111.

97 LHPGT 1997, 33–34.

98 This is as given in: RRCLS 1928, 111; LHPGT 1997.

99 Ordnance Survey Sheet, London LXVI (1877).

100 J. C. Louden was critical of layout where paths crossed in all directions and seems to have preferred serpentinic forms: Conway 1991, 44–45, 77–78.

101 The wood is all depicted as deciduous.

affording privacy to the interior.

The same network of paths can be made out on the 1894–96 edition of the Ordnance Survey sheet (fig. 16), if rather less-well defined. The tree cover is depicted in a somewhat more schematic fashion, but in this case a mixture of both evergreen and deciduous forms is shown.[102] Again, the same basic pattern of pathways is given on the 1913 edition of the sheet (fig. 17). Yet here, if the symbols can be read with confidence, we are shown a mixture of deciduous wood, bushes or shrubs, and some brushwood.

In 1928, the garden at Albert Square was said to be 'planted thick with shrubberies'.[103] There was no mention of any formal flower beds, nor of any particular furnishing or prominent topographical features. Nevertheless, the circle of the central path does perhaps suggest the possibility of a raised mound, something which is given support by one resident, whose recollections extend back over forty years.[104]

Early photographs are another potentially important source of information for the historic form of the central garden. Nothing before *c.* 1900 has so far been located, though a reasonably good selection of views taken in the early twentieth century does survive. They are taken from various positions around the square (figs. 34–40), none alas within the garden itself.[105] All of the views show the mature cover around the perimeter of the garden, including what was by then a fairly substantial canopy of plane trees, with perhaps hollies and shrubs at a lower level.

It is difficult to know how the trustees were managing the growth through the first half of the twentieth century, though the £1 paid by each lessee was presumably used for periodic coppicing and pollarding. Indeed, much of the wood and other planting first laid out in the late 1840s may well have come through to us in something like its original form had it not been for a drastic episode in the late 1960s. It was in 1967 that the extension of the Victoria underground line from Victoria to Brixton was announced. In the course of the works (1968–71), it was necessary to open a total of seven shafts to drive the running tunnels for the line, with one of these shafts sunk directly from the centre of Albert Square (fig. 41).[106] In the process, the archaeology of almost the entire garden must have been lost, save for a perimeter strip some 8 feet (2.4m) wide.[107]

4.3 Street Furniture

Early photographs are also our best source of information on the original street furniture in the square. All of the views located (figs. 34–40) show the front of the houses paved with flags. Across the road, the footpath around the central garden was certainly kerbed with stone, probably granite, but there is no indication that the path itself was covered with paving of any kind. It is difficult to be certain from the photographs, but the surface looks like well beaten soil, or fine gravel. This would not be so very different from the more exposed surfaces today, though for the most part the surrounding footpath is now covered

102 There is some account of OS practice given in Harley 1975, 32–69, especially 66–68.

103 RRCLS 1928, 111.

104 Mr Nicholson moved into the square in 1958: although the heavy wood cover made interpretation a little difficult, he feels sure there was a roughly circular mound at the centre of the garden. J. C. Loudon certainly created interest in his gardens by increasing contours of the ground: Conway 1991, 44.

105 Three sources of photographs have so far been located: Lambeth Archives; Local Yesterdays of Loxley Road, SW18; the private collection of Mr J. Nicholson.

106 Croome and Jackson 1993, 359–60.

107 Mr Nicholson recalls that screening (visible in Fig. 41) was placed about 10 feet (3m) from the edges of the central square.

with earth and some vegetation.

The garden was enclosed with cast iron railings, the 'iron pallisading' of the original property leases. The railing were set on a chamfered stone plinth, and stood at around 4 feet (1.2m) high. The plinth was punctuated at regular intervals (apart from the curved corners) by a projecting stop, not — it seems — directly related to the form of the railing construction (figs. 36 and 37).[108] The vertical bars appear to have been set directly into the plinth and rose uninterrupted to a single coping rail. Above this, they featured ornamental pointed heads. By the early twentieth century, at the time the photographs were taken, a net-like fencing had been attached to the inner side of the railings, one would assume to keep out animals.

It was suggested above that the path layout seen in the earliest Ordnance Survey plan (fig. 19) may indicate the presence of a gate at the middle of each side of the square. However, if this were the case, the gates cannot have been very prominent features; it is difficult to make out anything positive from the early photographs. In two views of the south side (figs. 36 and 37), one can just about detect a narrow break in the railing plinth, at about the centre point. The plinth seems to curve in (fig. 36), but this could not have allowed for an entrance of any great size.

One further element of furniture to appear in the early photographs is the street lighting. By *c.* 1900, at least, there was a lamp at each corner of the central garden, and another near the entrance to the square from Clapham Road (figs. 34–39). Not particularly ornate, the lamps were of octagonal section, tapering from the base to the head. The shafts were relieved with three sets of simple parallel bands, at the base, neck and waist. The lamp boxes themselves were of four sides, splaying towards the top, the metal covering featuring a decorative finial. Gas mantles can just about be discerned in two of the views (figs. 35 and 37). The lamp shafts could perhaps be original, though there is a suggestion that the lamp boxes may be replacements.[109]

Though a precise record has not been located, the iron railings presumably met the same fate as those from most other London squares. They would have been removed to support the war effort, perhaps in 1940–41. A photograph taken of the south-west corner of the garden in 1964 (fig. 42) shows that the square was then completely without railings. Replacement railings were put up in the 1960s (fig. 43). The lamps may have survived the war, though these too have since disappeared.

108 Though it is very difficult, from the photographs) to be certain of this.

109 A search of trade catalogues, if they can be located, may help to determine bracket dates for the features. My colleague Andy Wittrick suggests the two elements may not be contemporary. The gas mantle was introduced in the late 1880s.

5
The Garden Today

Following the late 1960s destruction of all early features at the centre of Albert Square (fig. 41), when the underground works were completed it seems the vast bulk of the garden was laid out to grass (figs. 44–47). A good number of large plane trees were to survive near the perimeter of the enclosure; today they continue to provide the principal canopy, and in summer shelter the garden area from the surrounding road. Beneath the planes, a lower tier of bush-like hollies also surrounds the garden, and these too might well go back to the original planting of the mid-nineteenth century. A few ornamentals have been introduced in more recent years (figs. 45 and 47). The trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.[110]

Apart from the trees, there are very few other garden features to be seen. There are traces of banks at the north-west (fig. 46) and north-east corners, and these *could* represent sections of the paths seen on the Ordnance Survey plan of the 1870s (fig. 19). Within the last couple of decades the occasional new feature has been introduced, such as the now rather tired wooden bench on a brick base on the northern side (fig. 48), and the simple planter beds constructed of what look to be reused railway sleepers (fig. 49).

The railings put up in the 1960s (figs. 50–53) are fairly typical of their era, a practical if not an especially attractive response to the need. Though the ground surface has built up around them, there is no trace whatsoever of the original stone plinth, suggesting that this too was removed during the war years. The railings comprise panels of about 10 feet (3m) in length, hung on flat-section posts, presumably concreted into the ground (fig. 52). They clearly respect the original boundary line, and are therefore curved in places to accommodate the expanded trunks of the mature plane trees (fig. 53). The pedestrian gate into the garden is at the north-east corner, and generally appears to be left open. There is a larger gateway on the east side (figs. 51 and 52), usually kept locked.

The footpath surrounding the garden is much as it appears in the early photographs. It has no formal paving (except near the larger gate on the east side), but the kerb stones survive.

The early street lamps have gone, and there are now rather unattractive examples in their place, almost all of them standing out of true vertical (figs. 50 and 51). At least two different types can be seen.

Parked cars detract from any aesthetic impact the current arrangements may have (fig. 50), and this is made worse by both the formal collection of rubbish at the south-east corner, and by the casual tipping of unwanted items.

110 Information from Mr J. Nicholson.

6
Summary and Conclusions

Albert Square is clearly a very good candidate for consideration under English Heritage's London Squares initiative. The square began as an early Victorian speculative housing development in the fast growing residential suburbs of south London. Of no mean proportions, the thirty-seven houses must have been especially imposing when first built, certainly within the context of the generally smaller terraced rows opening off the Clapham Road. The work by the north London builder, John Glenn, is of good quality, and includes several quite refined features.

Unusually for their date, the houses won the distinction of inclusion in the Survey of London volume on the parish of St Mary Lambeth, published in the 1950s.[111] Each of the five 'terraces' has since been individually listed at grade II.[112]

Today, quite a few of the houses are in the possession of owner-occupiers, and externally seem in excellent condition. Others have been turned into flats, with a consequent lack of uniformity and presentation in aspects of detail, but this does not detract too much from the architectural integrity. The square continues to exude an air of modest grandeur, with those properties on the north and west sides appearing especially handsome.

The garden is a comparatively large open space, and, despite the loss of much of its historic planting, it remains attractive. There is undoubtedly great potential for improvement, with the possibility — one imagines — of reintroducing the path network seen in early maps. Another huge improvement would be to replace the railings with something more in keeping with the originals. Other aspects of the street furniture might also be considered.

Were any enhancement scheme to go ahead, The Managing Trustee of the garden stresses the need for an effective management regime in the years afterwards.

111 SOL 1956, 62.

112 DOE 1981, 8–10.

Annex 1
Lambeth Enclosures Scheduled Under the 1931 Act

Albert Square:	Shrubbery enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Albert Square.
***Becondale Road**:	Triangular garden enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Becondale Road.
Brixton Road Enclosure:	Small stip of lawn fronting Nos. 341 to 361 Brixton Road.
Clapham Common:	Enclosures planted with trees and divided (between Nos. 47 and 48 Clapham Common North Side) by the roadway of Cedars Road bounded on the north by private roadway leading to Nos. 43 to 52 Clapham Common North Side and on the south by the roadway of Clapham Common North Side. Crescent Grove (Clapham Common South Side). Enclosure planted with trees and bounded on all sides by the roadway of Crescent Grove.
***Clayland[s] Road**:	Triangular grass enclosure situate at the junction of Clayland[s] Road and Trigon Road.
Durand Gardens:	Garden enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Durand Gardens.
*Grafton Square:	Garden enclosure planted with trees partly used for tennis and bounded on all sides by the roadway of Grafton Square.
Hanover Gardens:	Garden enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Hanover Gardens.
***Holmewood Gardens**:	Garden enclosures bounded on all sides by the roadway of Grafton Square.
Josephine Avenue:	Garden enclosure situate in Josephine Avenue one on the north side fronting Nos. 2 to 58 the remaining four on the south side lying between the junction of Helix Road with Josephine Avenue and the junction of Water Lane with Josephine Avenue.
Lambeth Square:	Grass enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Lambeth Square.
***Lansdowne Gardens**:	Circular garden enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Lansdowne Gardens.
*Loughborough Park:	Triangular garden enclosure planted with shrubs and bounded on all sides by the roadway of Loughborough Park.

*Melbourne Square:	Garden enclosure situate at the junction of Melbourne Square with Normandy Road.
***Princes [Cleaver] Square**:	Asphalt enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Princes Square.
St Mary's Square [Gardens]:	Triangular garden enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of St Mary's Square.
Stangate Triangle:	Grass enclosure bounded on the north-east by the roadway of Stangate and on other sides by the roadway of Lambeth Palace Road.
Stockwell Grove:	Grass enclosure planted with shrubs and bounded on all sides by the roadway of Stockwell Grove.
Stockwell Park Walk:	Triangular grass plot enclosed by a hoarding and bounded on the north by the roadway of Stockwell Park Walk on the south-west by the roadway of Stockwell Road and on the east by the roadway of Belgrave Terrace.
***Stockwell Terrace**:	Garden enclosure situate at the junction of Clapham Road and South Lambeth Road.
***Tate Library Garden**:	Garden enclosure situate at the junction of Coldharbour Lane with Brixton Hill and Effra Road and bounded on the east by the roadway of Brixton Oval.
***Trinity [Gardens] Square**:	Grass enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Trinity Square.
Walcot Square:	Triangular garden enclosure bounded on all sides by the roadway of Walcot Square.

* Indicates examples owned by the London Borough of Lambeth: Draper 1979, 42.

Bold indicates public status as determined through the London Squares and Historic Open Spaces project: LHPGT 1997.

The descriptions are as given in the Schedule of the *London Squares Preservation Act*, 1931)

Annex 2

Early Occupation of Albert Square: Rate Book Evidence

House	June 1860	September 1849
1	Turner	Henry Taylor
2	Robert Selby	Richard Shaw
3	Arthur Ellis	
4	Robert Christie	James Phillips
5	Charles Stronghill	Alex Tod
6	Augustus Johnson	Augustus Johnson
7		Henry Moore
8	James Morris	
9	William Bean	William Bean
10	Benjamin Smythe	Richard Atkinson
11	John M. Hall	Patrick Kersey
12		
13	Edward Baker	Anne Hammond
14	Thomas Cave	Edward Smith
15		
16		William F. Coward
17		Maria Stoker
18		Charles Hopkins
19		Ellen and Jane Webb
20		
21		Joseph Bartrum
22		
23		
24		Isabella Gasthorn
25		William Lewis
26		John Jackson
27		Arthur Ellis
28		Edward Seyler
29		
30		Charles Sanders
31		Elias W. Watts
32		
33		Hannah Robinson
34		
35		J. J. Curling
36		Edward Hoskins
37		

(Source: Historical Analysis & Research Team, London Files, Lambeth 5)

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Fig. 1 A general winter view of the north-west corner of the garden at Albert Square.

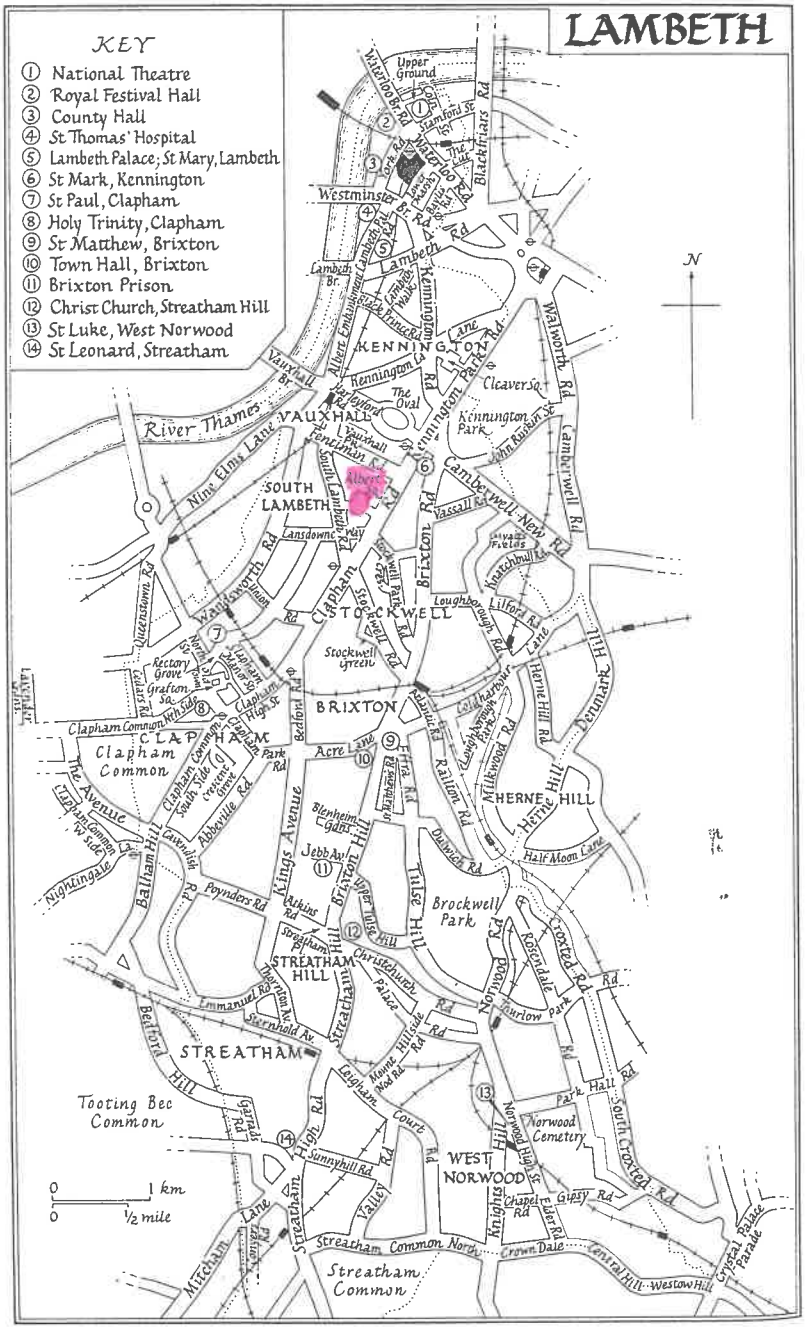

Fig. 2 Sketch map of Lambeth, to show the location of Albert Square.
(*From Cherry and Pevsner 1994*)

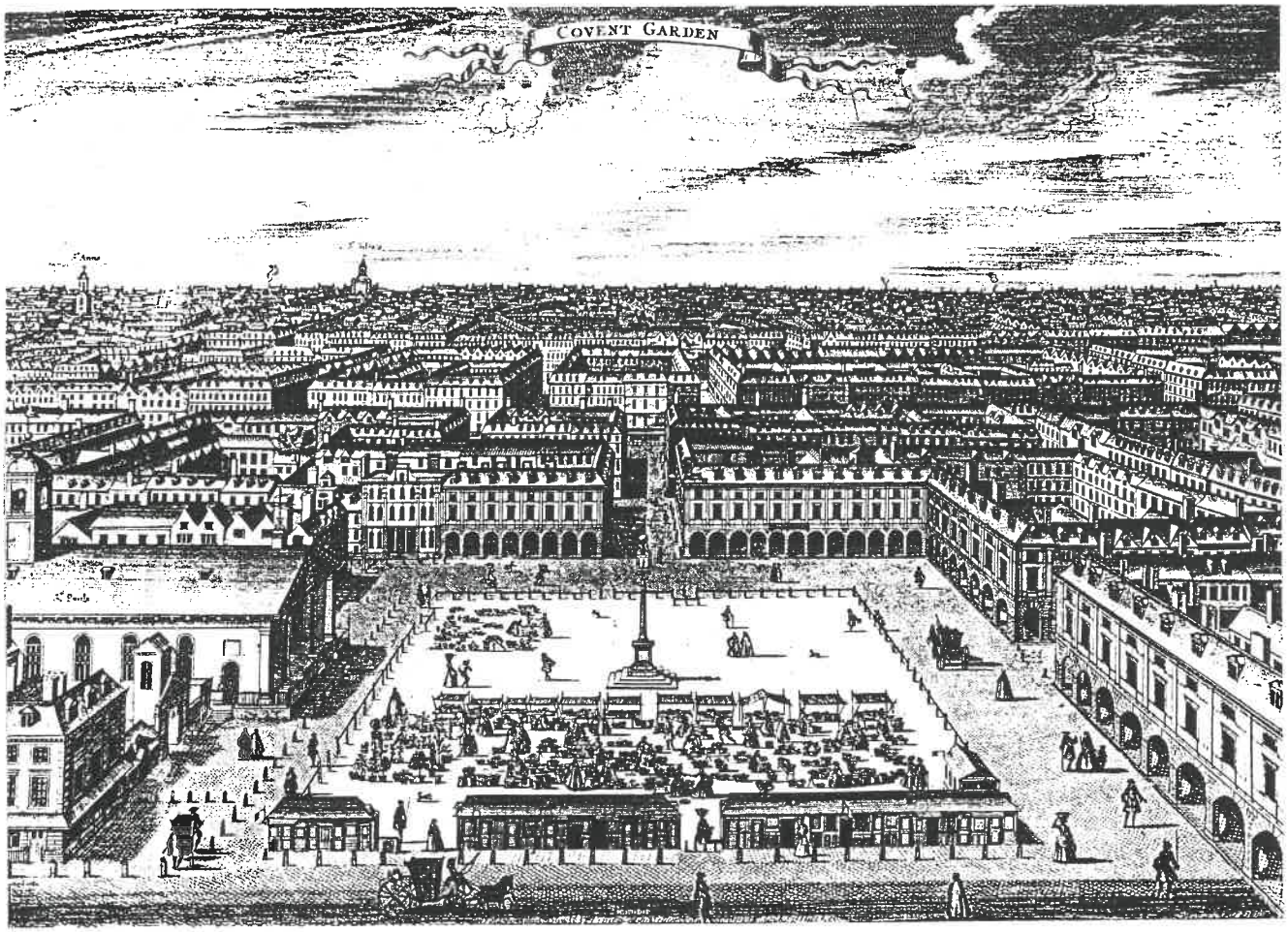

Fig. 3 The 'Piazza' at Covent Garden, an engraving of *c.* 1717–28 by Sutton Nicholls.

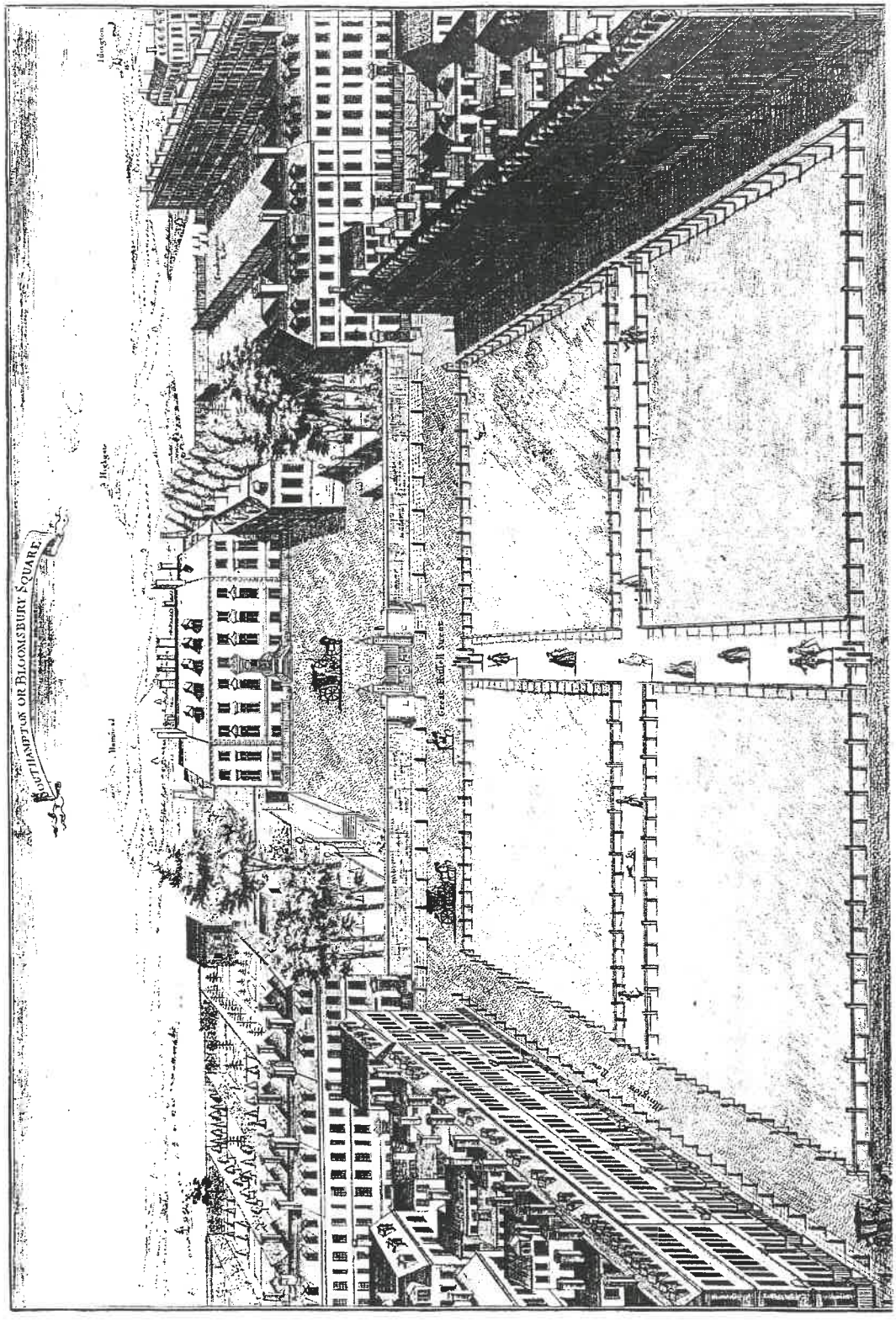

Fig. 4. Bloomsbury or Southampton Square, an illustration of 1746
by Sutton Nicholls.

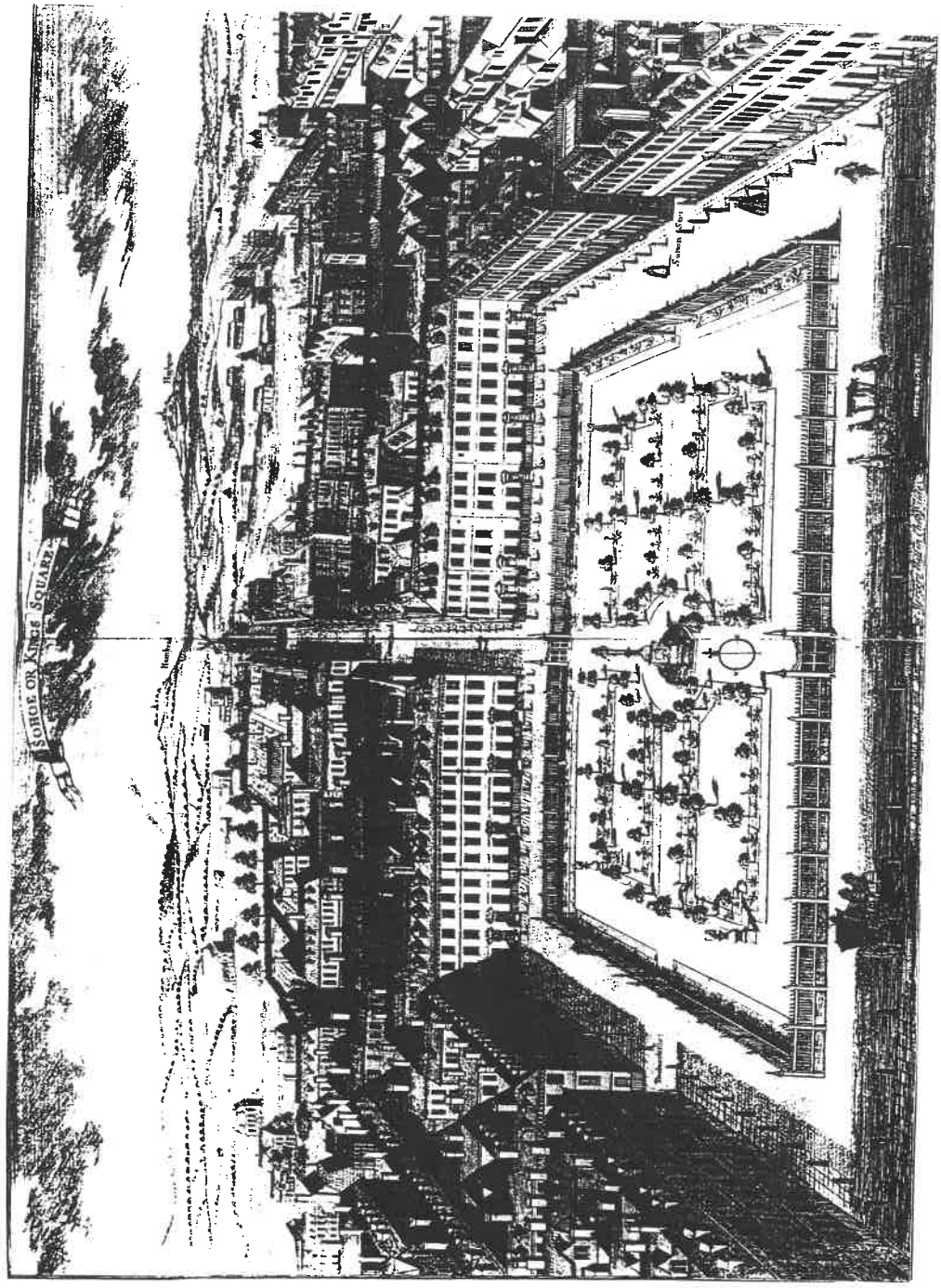

Fig. 5 Soho or King's Square, an engraving of *c.* 1750
by Sutton Nicholls.

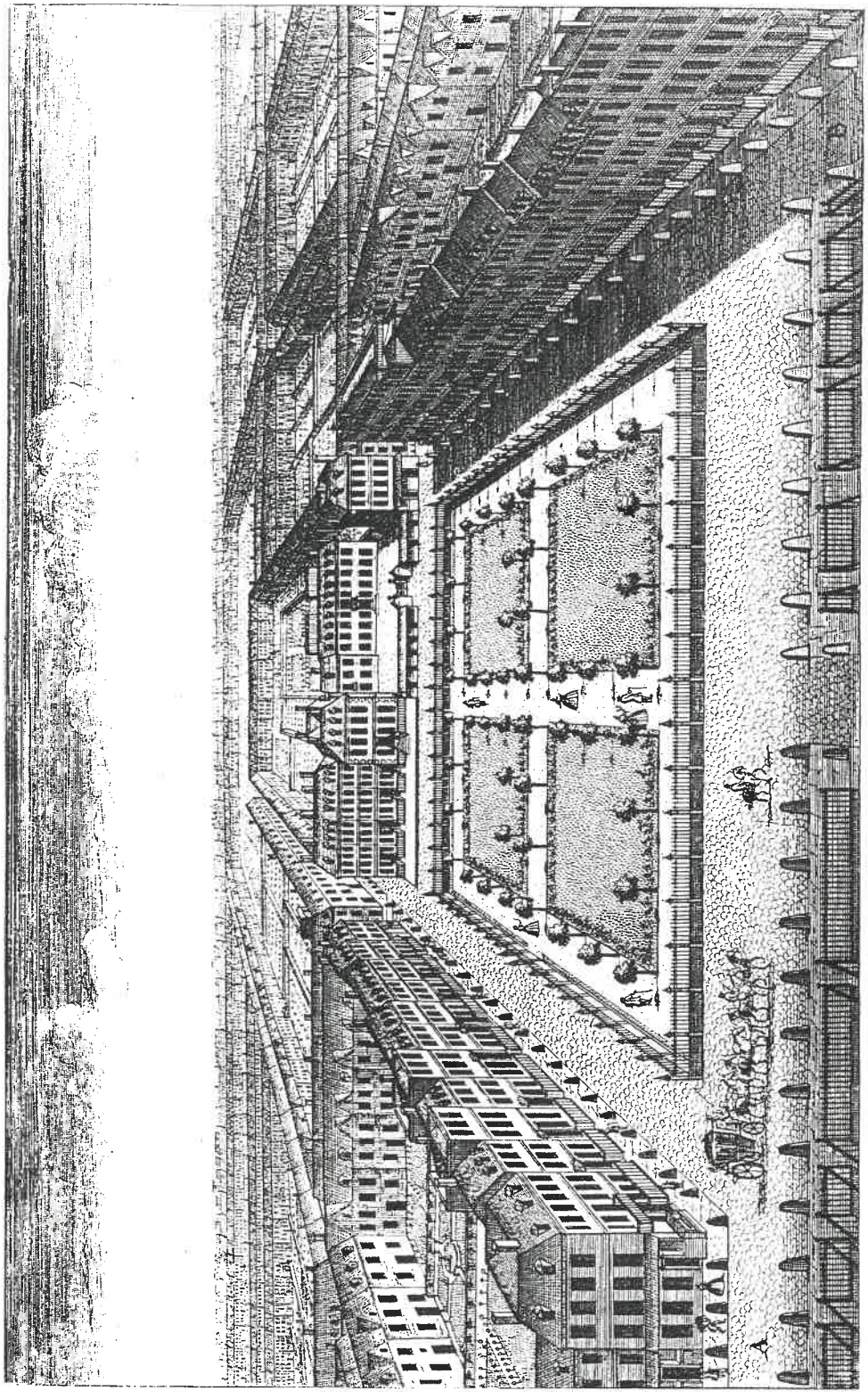

Fig. 6 Leicester Square, an engraving of 1727 published by J. Bowles.

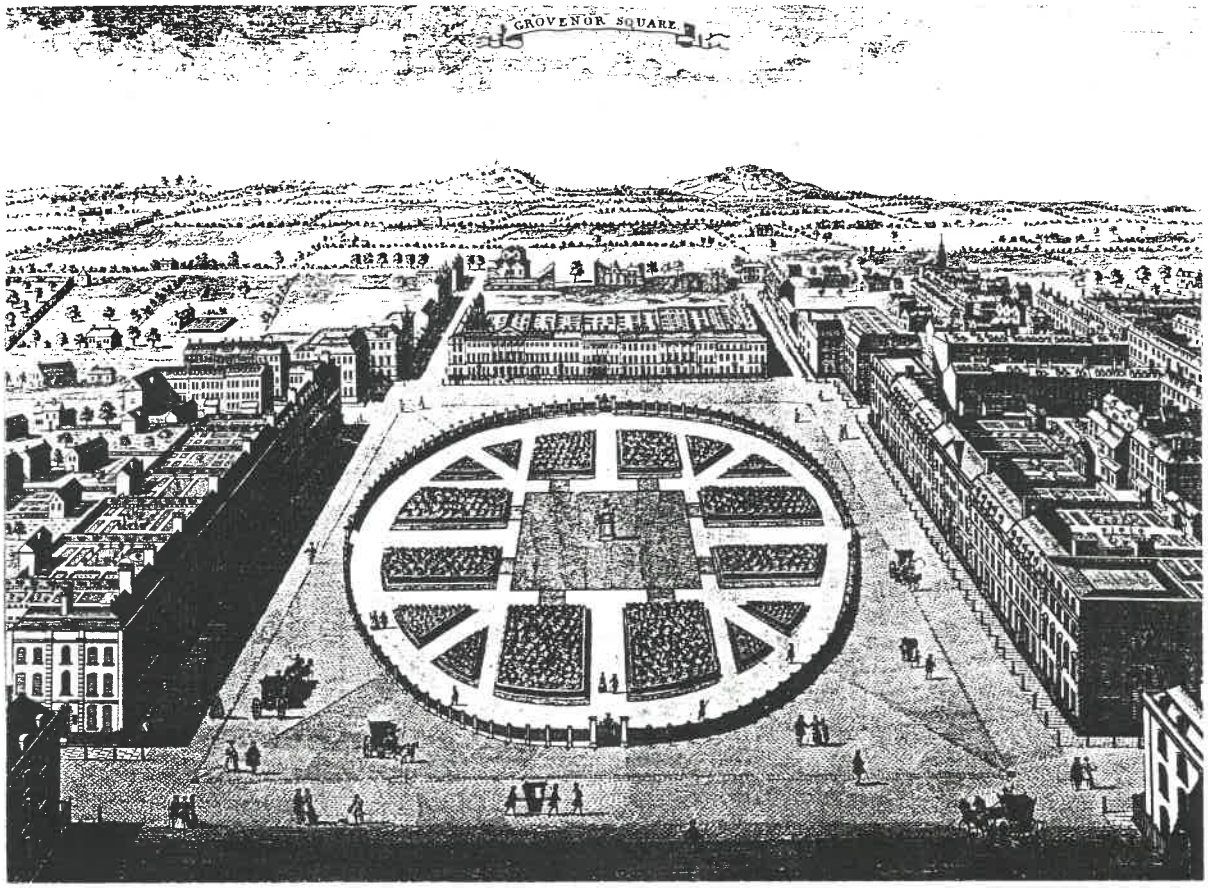

Fig. 7 Grosvenor Square, an engraving looking north, *c.* 1730–35
by Sutton Nicholls.

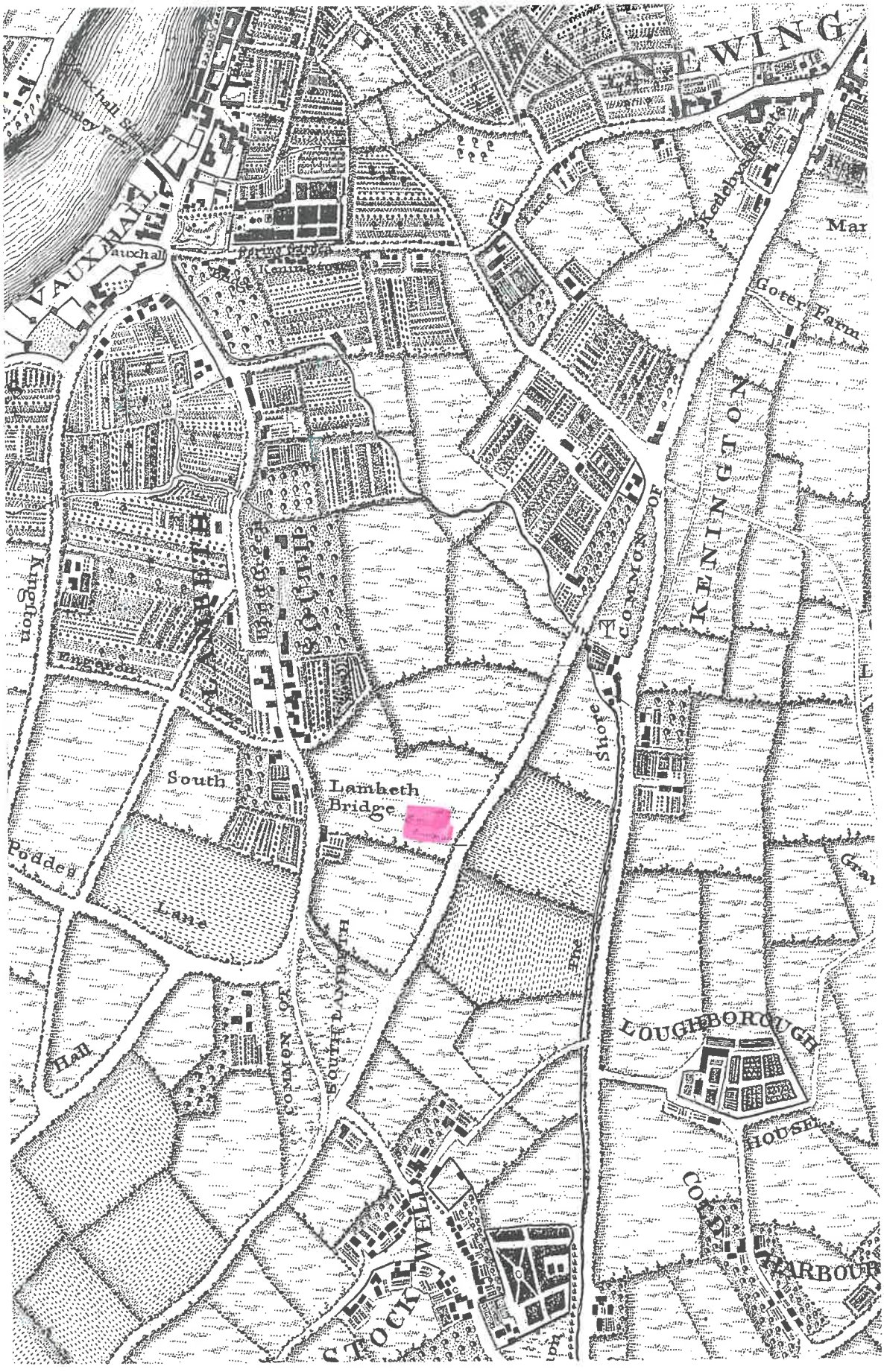

Fig. 8 Detail of John Rocques 'Exact Survey' of London, 1746, showing the eventual location of Albert Square.

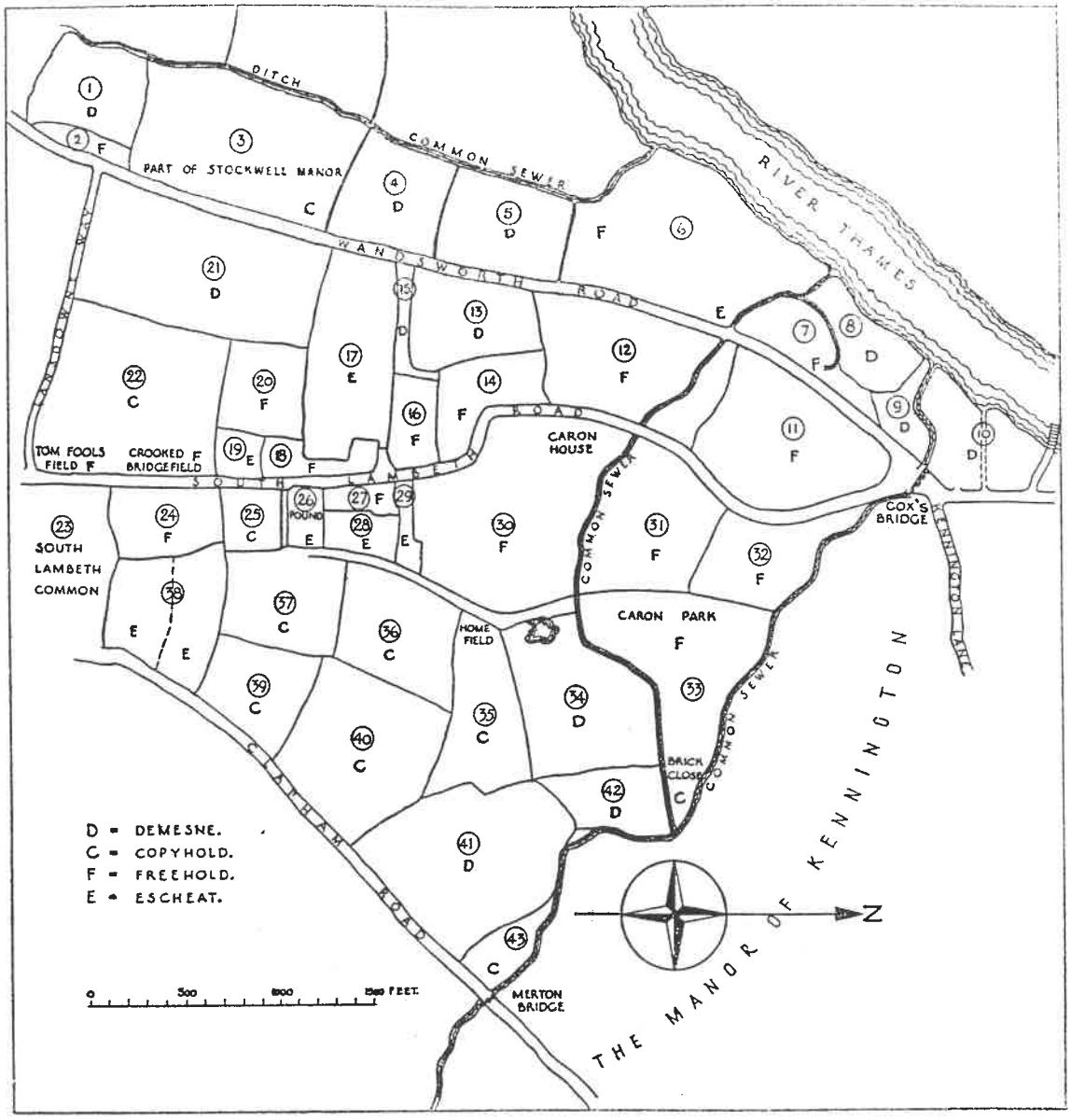

Fig. 9 Vauxhall Manor, based on a map by Thomas Hill, 1681. Albert Square was eventually built over plots 37 and 39.
(*Survey of London 1956*)

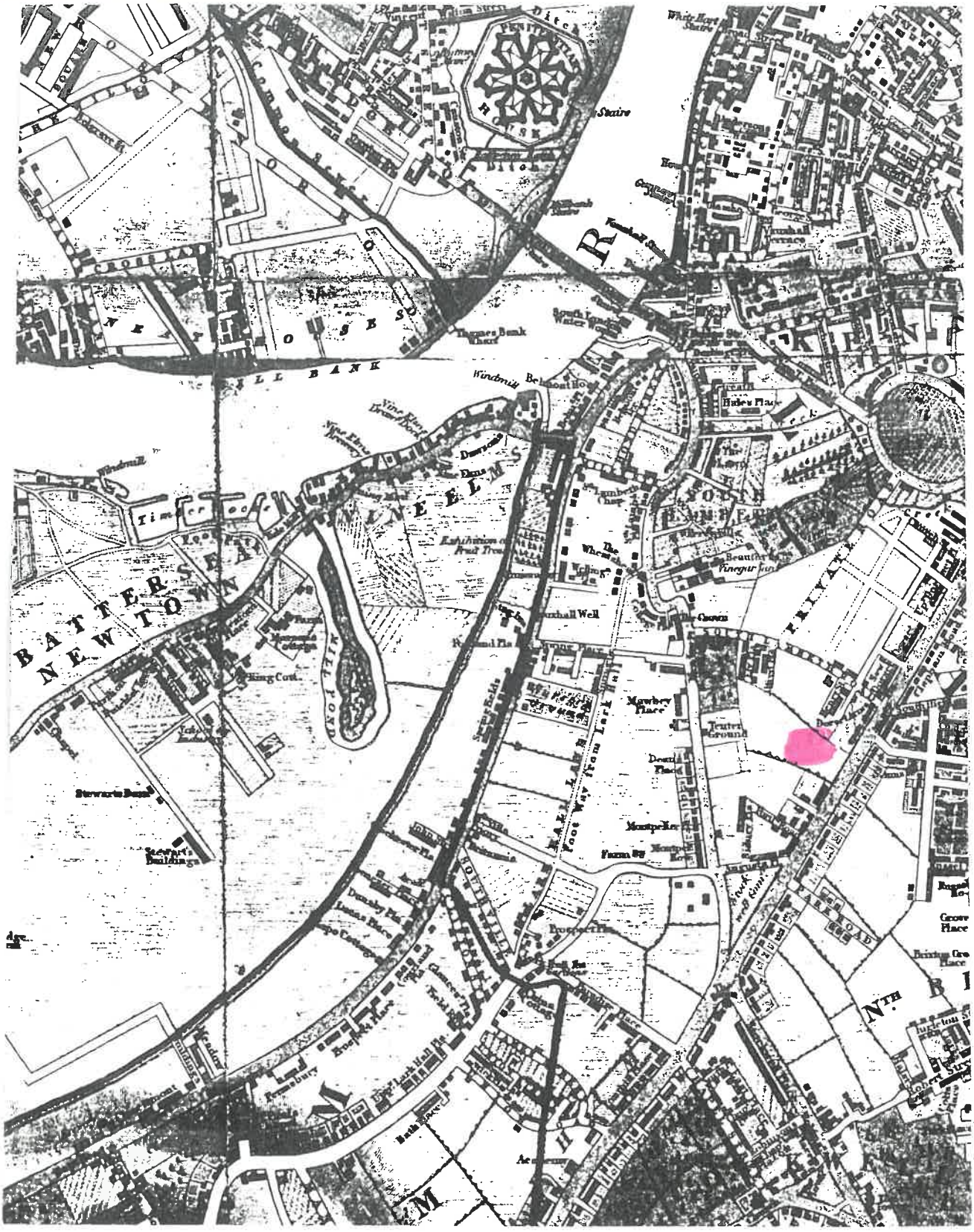

Fig. 10 Detail of G. F. Cruchley's 'New Plan of London', 1826, showing the eventual location of Albert Square.

Fig. 11 Detail of Stanford's Library Map of 'London and its Suburbs', 1862, with Albert Square highlighted.

Fig. 12 The circle of houses at Lansdowne Circus, Lambeth, was developed *c.* 1843–50 by John Snell of Dorset Street (now Road). The small central garden has been the care of the local authority since 1951.

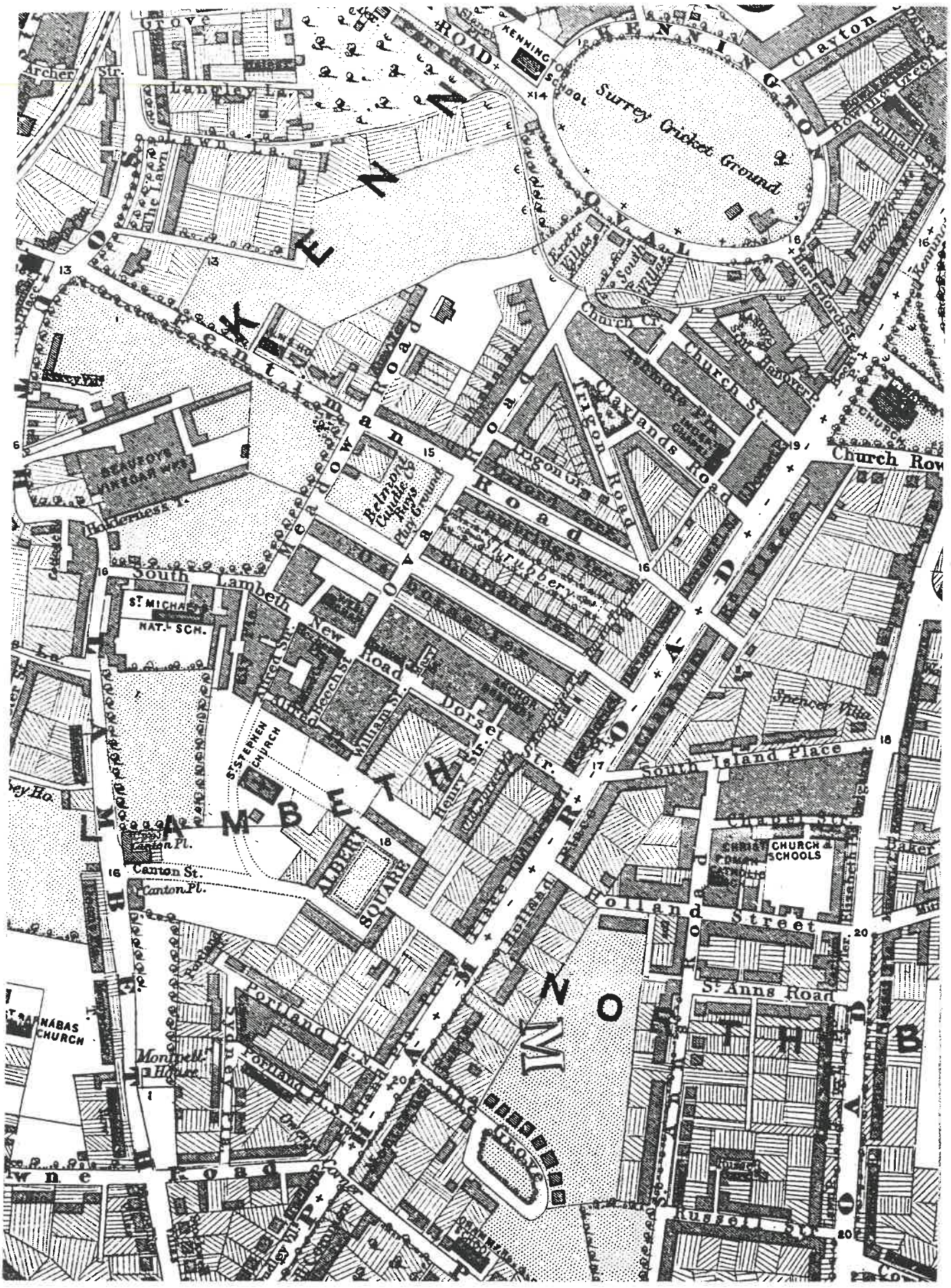

Fig. 13 Enlarged detail of Stanford's Library Map of 'London and its Suburbs', 1862.

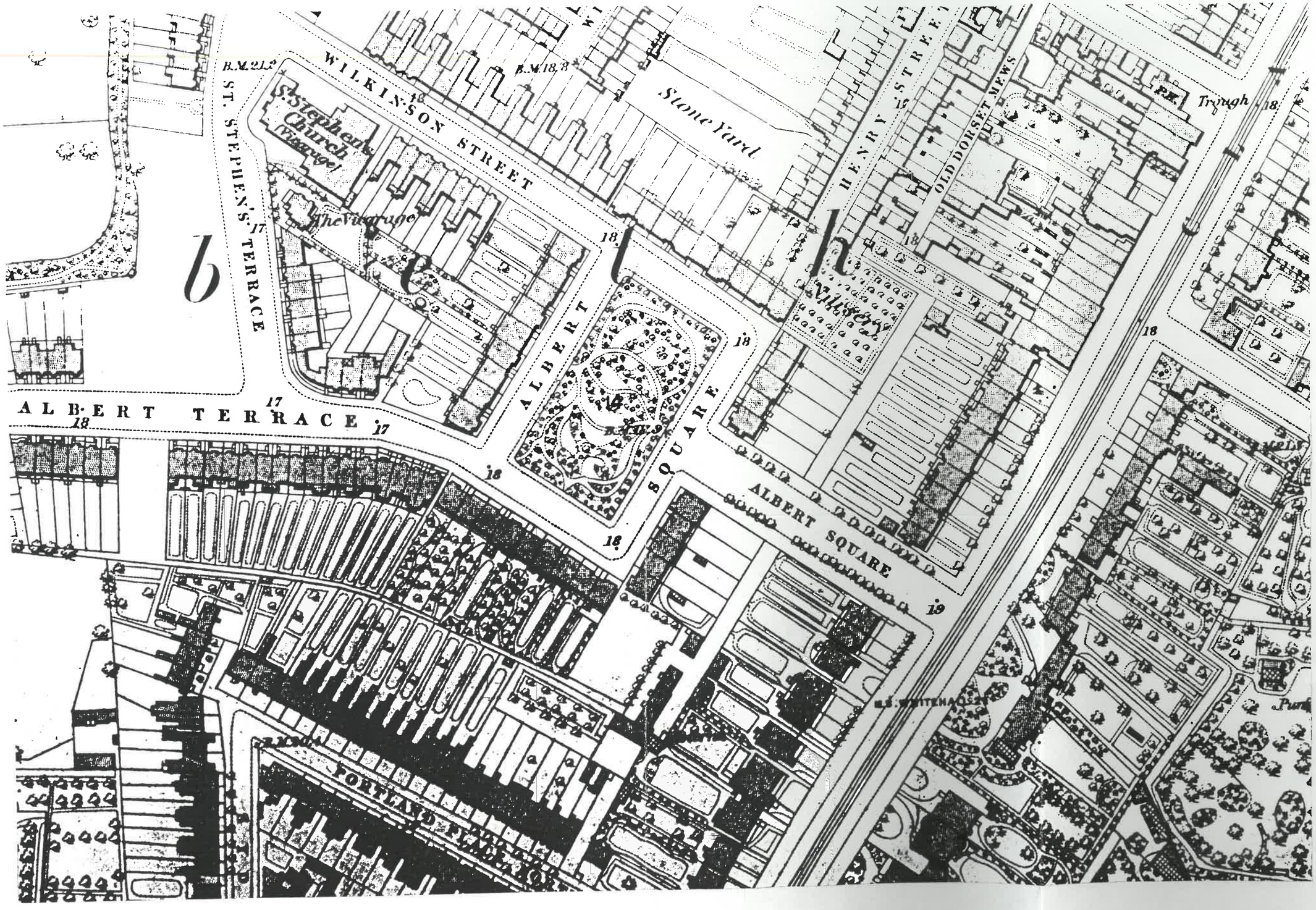

Fig. 14 Detail of first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1877 (London LXVI), showing Albert Square and environs. The survey data was gathered in 1871.

Fig. 15 Wilkinson Street, running from the north-west corner of Albert Square, was a development of the 1860s.

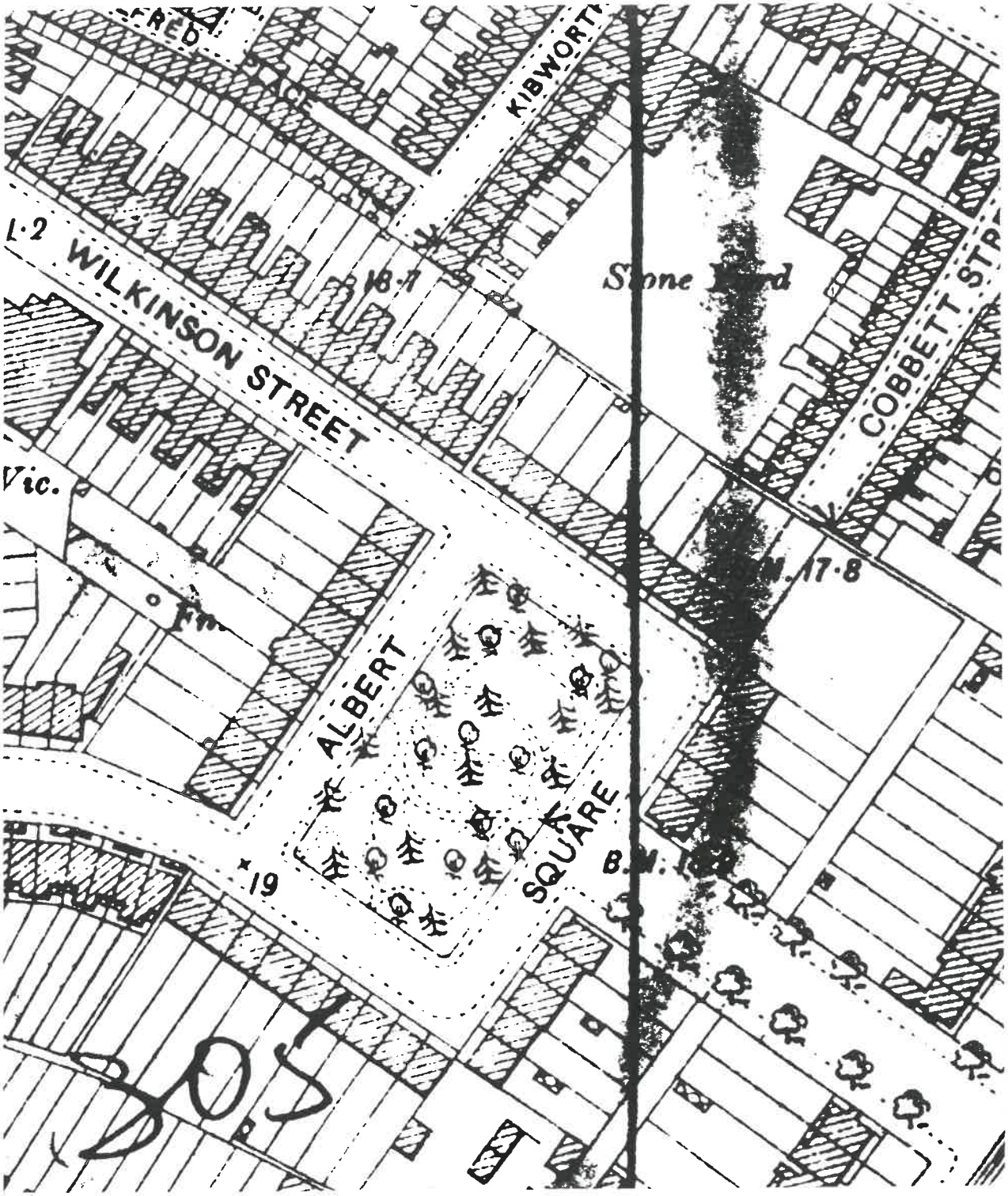

Fig. 16 Detail of the Ordnance Survey map, 1894–96 edition, showing Albert Square.

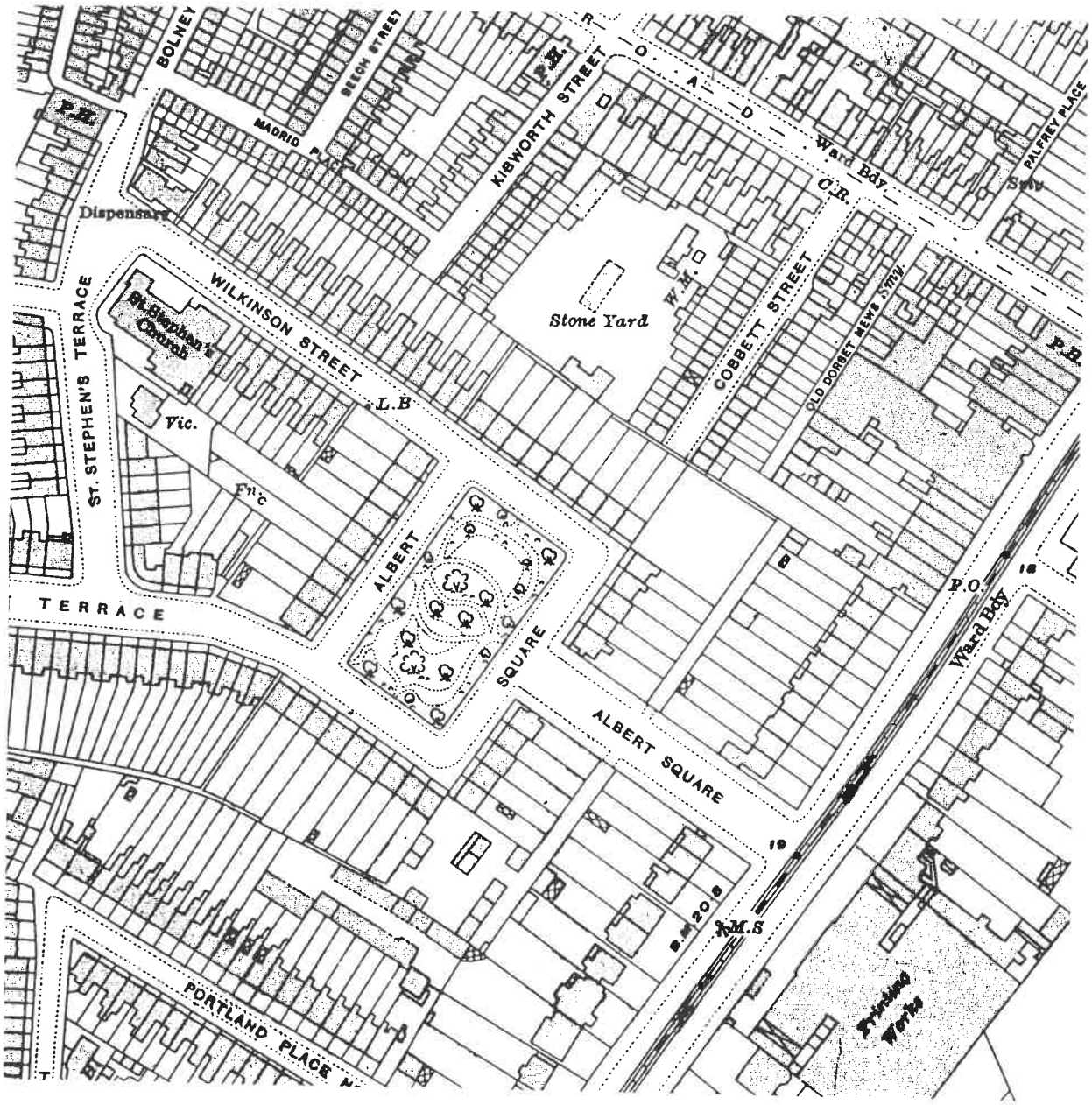

Fig. 17 Detail of the Ordnance Survey map, 1913 edition, showing Albert Square.

Fig. 18 Plan of Albert Square attached to the original lease indenture of No. 7, 1847.
(*Lambeth Archives, LBL DALS/1/2*)

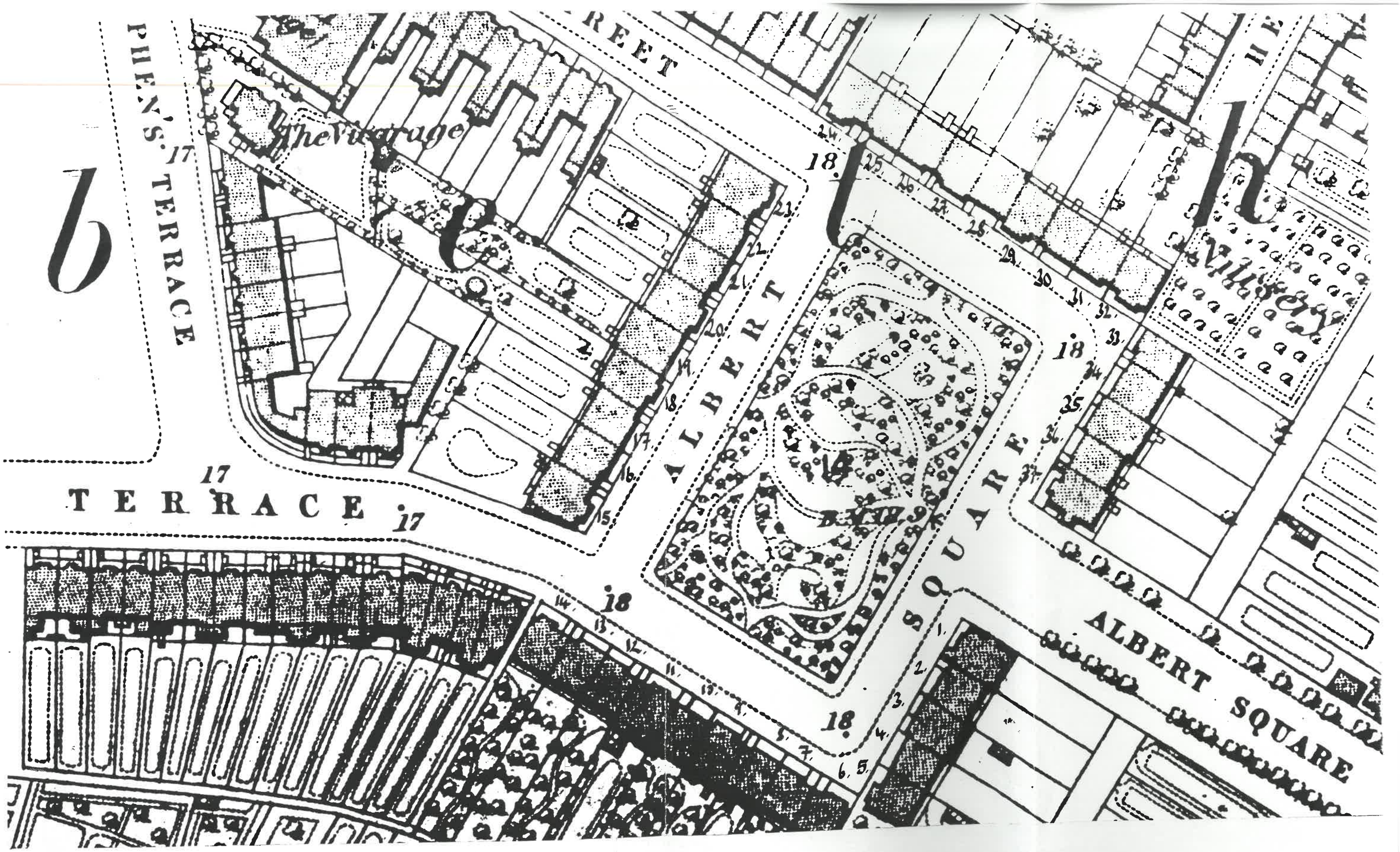

Fig. 19 Detail of Ordnance Survey map, 1877, showing the houses (numbered) and central garden at Albert Square. The survey data was gathered in 1871 and it seems very likely the garden layout was much as originally designed in the late 1840s.

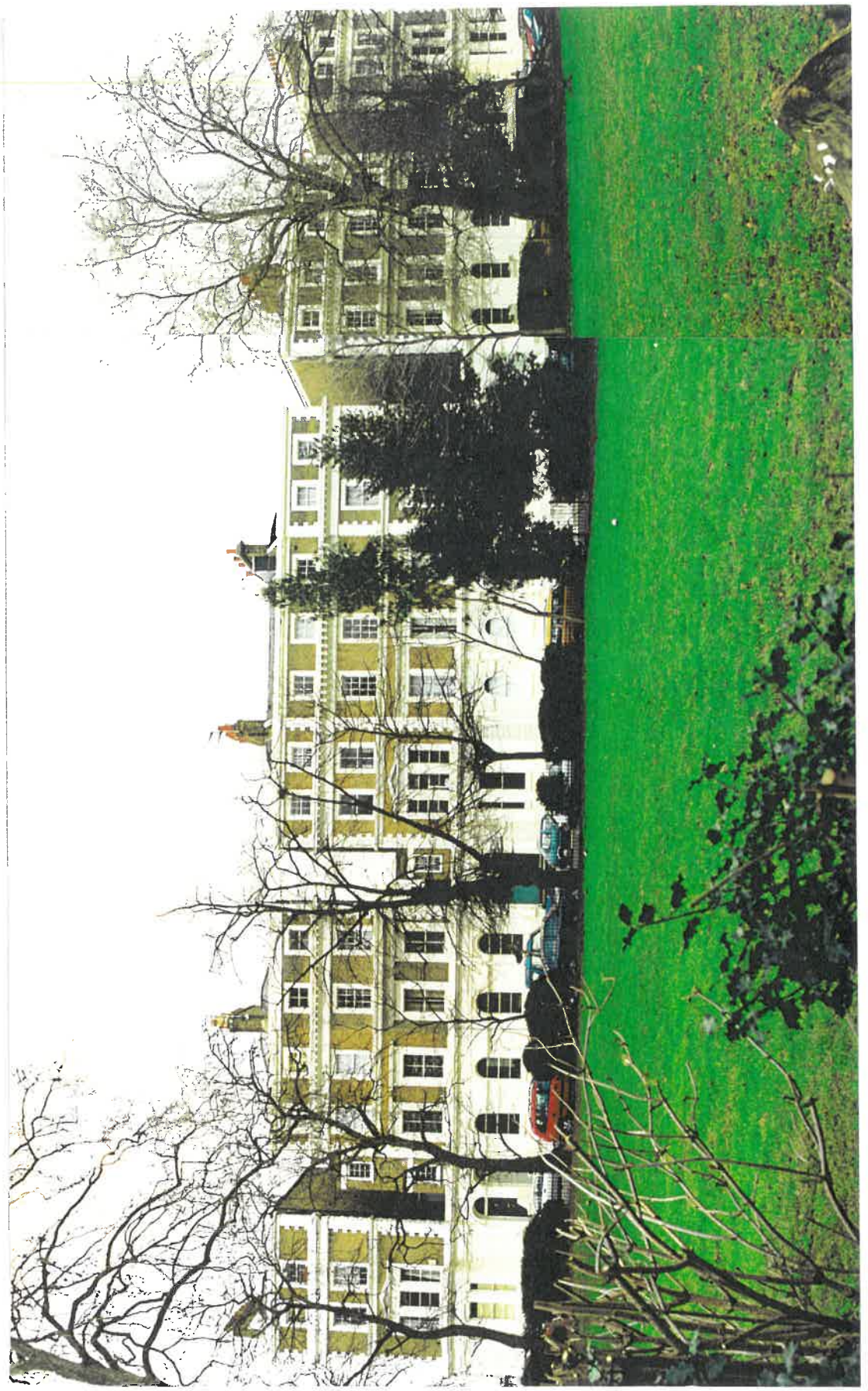

Fig 20 A general winter view of the houses on the western side of Albert Square, seen from the central garden. The perfectly symmetrical 'terrace' comprises nine houses arranged 1–2–3–2–1.

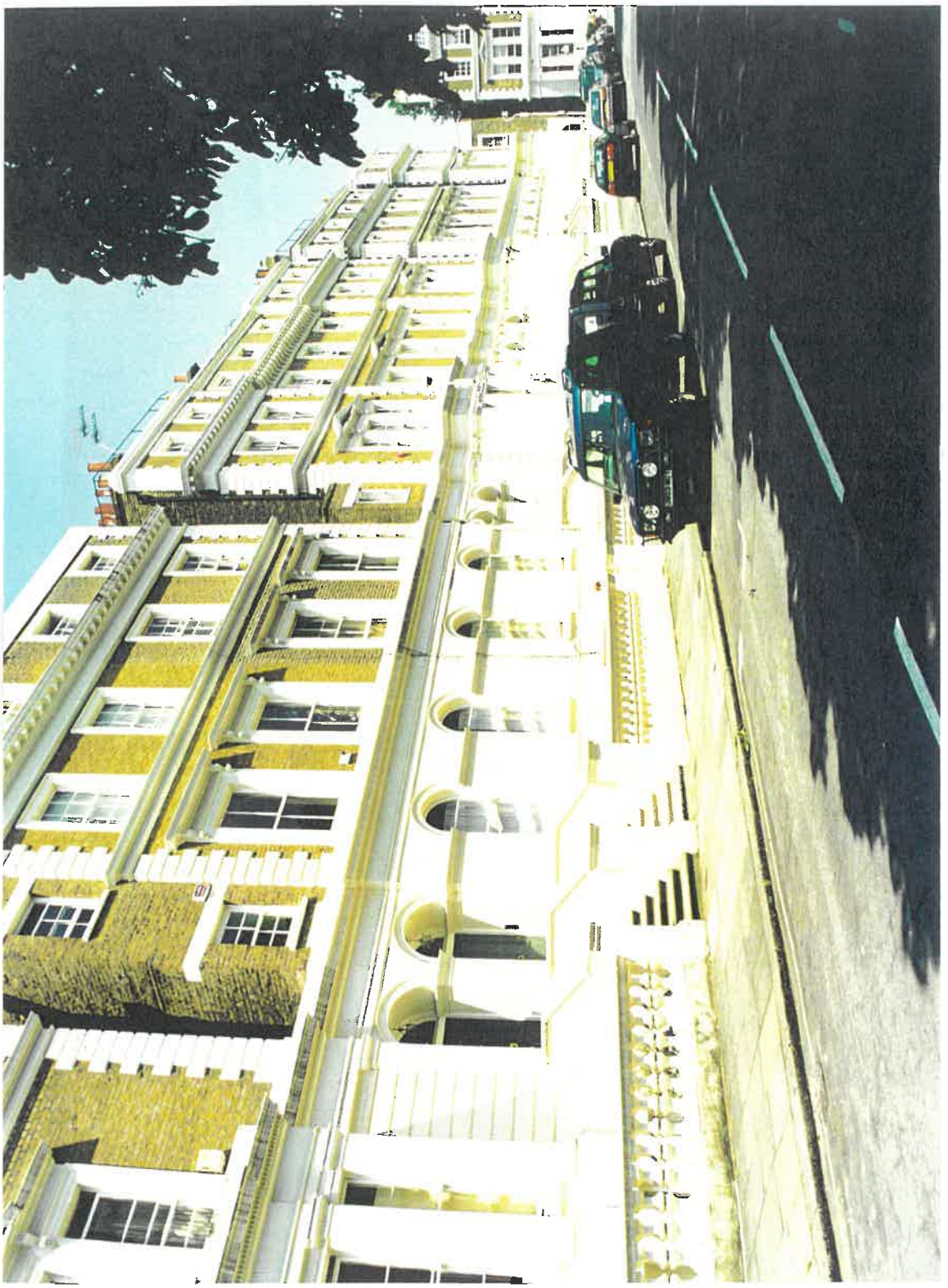

Fig. 21 View of the western 'terrace' at Albert Square, looking north. The five-tier houses are of yellow-brown stock brick with stucco rendered basements and raised ground-floor level, and plentiful stucco dressings above.

Fig. 22 Detail of the upper entablature on No. 19 Albert Square, to show the scroll brackets supporting a modillion cornice.

Fig. 23 General view of the southern 'terrace' at Albert Square, looking west. The arrangements are identical to those seen on the west side.

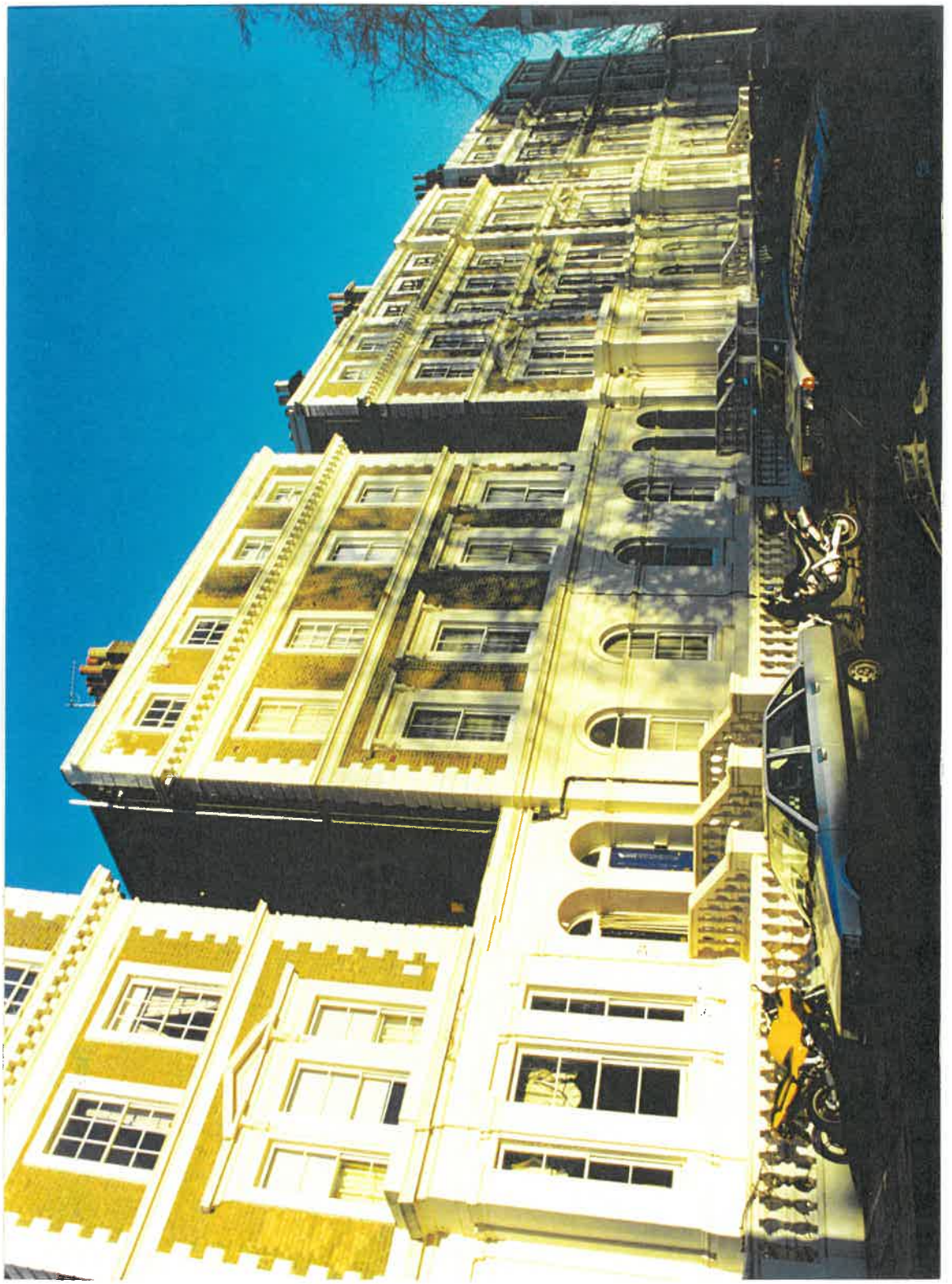

Fig. 24 General view of the northern 'terrace' at Albert Square, looking east. As on the west and south sides, the nine houses are arranged in 1–2–3–2–1 fashion.

Fig. 25 View of the west end of the northern 'terrace' (Nos. 24–29).

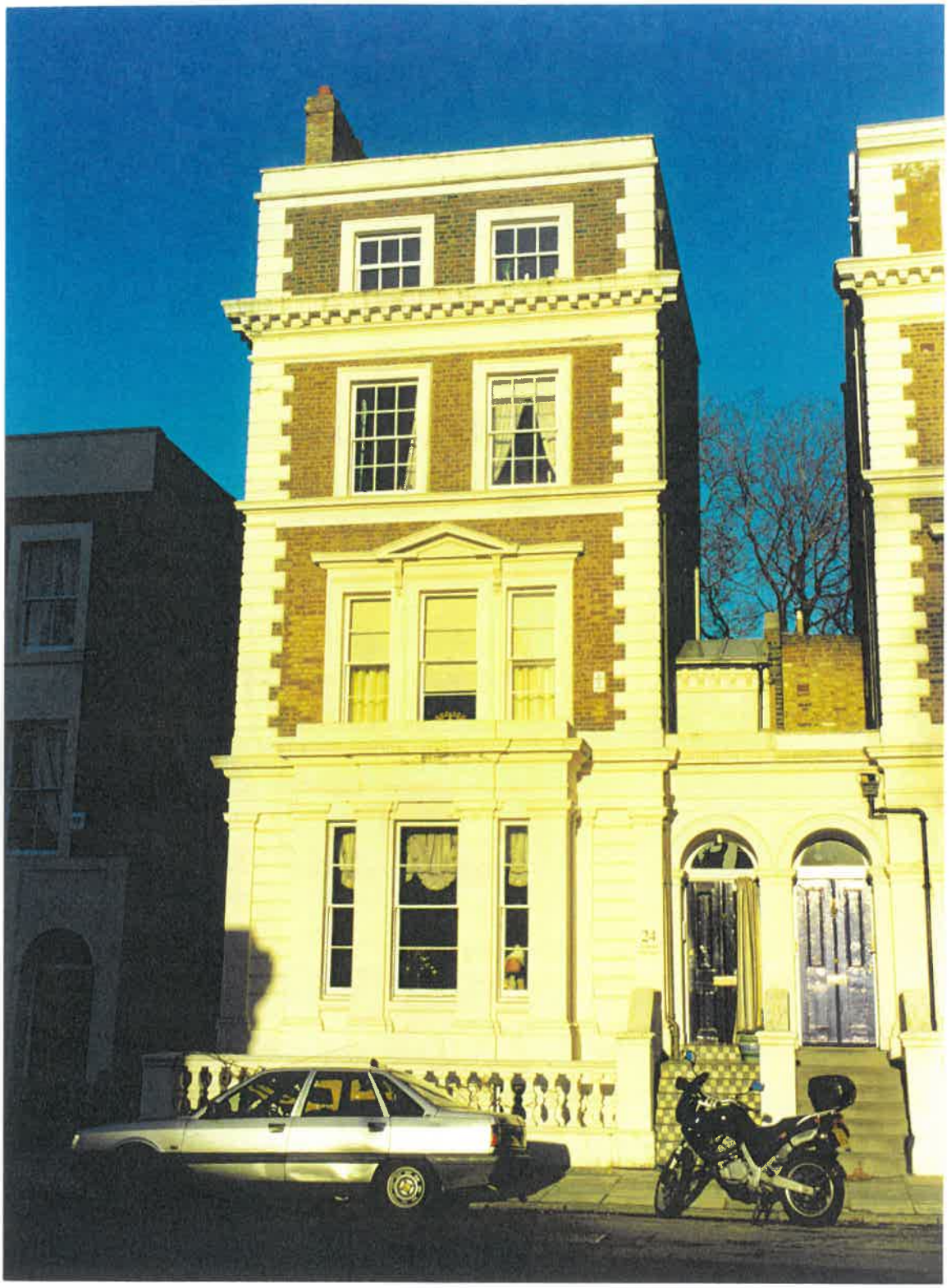

Fig. 26 Detail of No. 24 Albert Square. This is an example of the single houses seen at the ends of all the terraces, with a square projecting bay at raised ground-floor level, grouped windows at first-floor level, and paired windows above.

Fig. 27 The five houses in the southern terrace on the east side of Albert Square are arranged in 1–3–1 fashion.

Fig. 28 The northern terrace on the east side of Albert Square was originally of the same form as that to the south. The last house (No. 37) has been lost, replaced about 1963–64 by a small block of flats.

Fig. 29 The east side of Albert Square, detail of northern terrace.

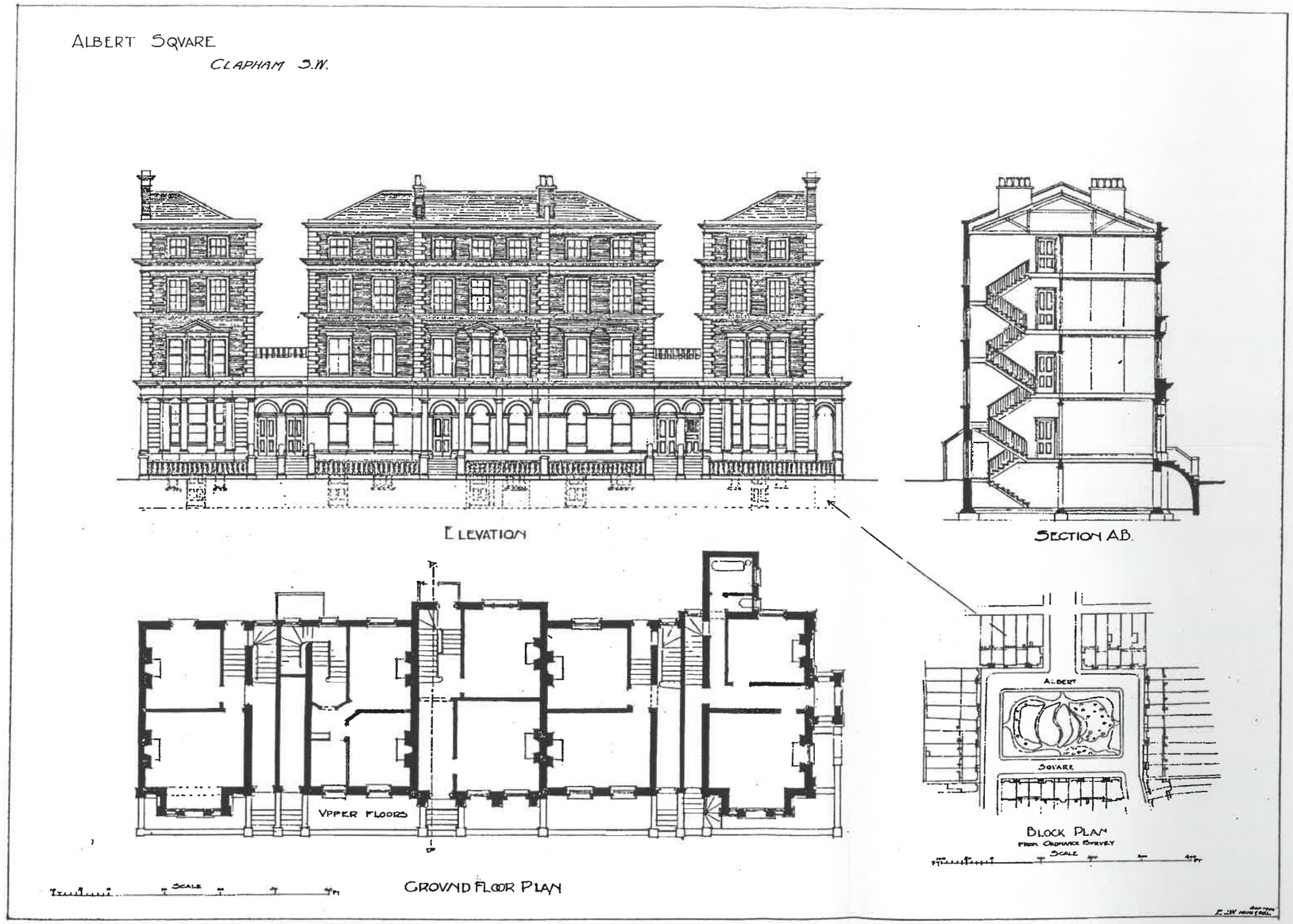

Fig. 30 Elevation, plan and section of the original arrangements at Nos. 33–37 Albert Square, 1935

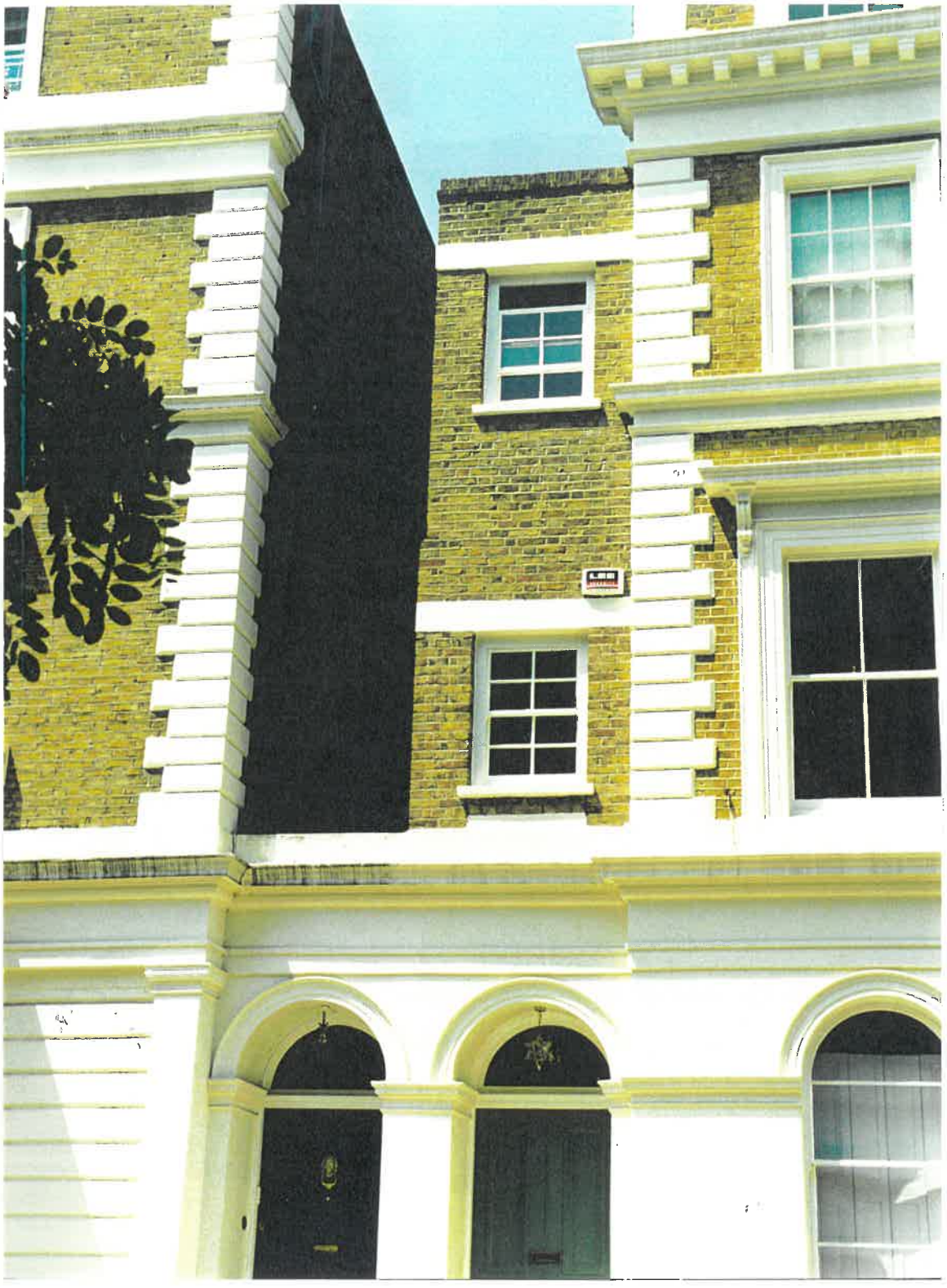

Fig. 31 Additional room space created above the doorway to No. 16 Albert Square. The extensions are built of similar brick, and feature plain dressings.

Fig. 32 The space between the uppers stages of Nos. 11 and 12 Albert Square was blocked, perhaps in the 1960s, to create new room space.

Fig. 33 The upper stages of No. 33 Albert Square shows distinct signs of having been rebuilt at some stage. The brick is of a different type, there is a loss of the upper entablature, and the topmost cornice is also of reduced form.

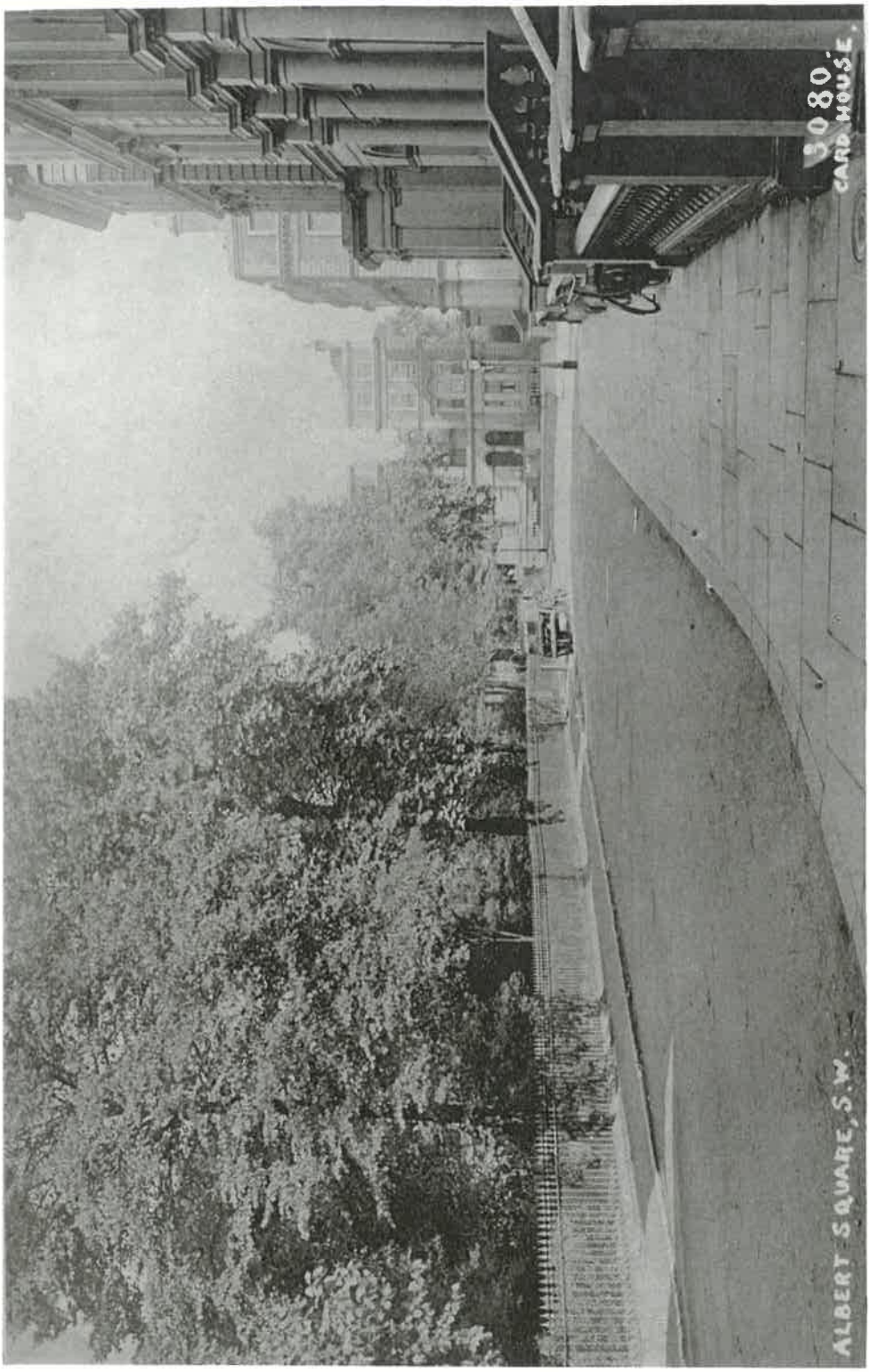

Fig. 34 A view of the east side of Albert Square, looking northwards, *c.* 1905. The railings surrounding the garden are probably the originals, and the trees have clearly reached considerable maturity. (*Lambeth Archives, SP 12/170/ALB.S.4*)

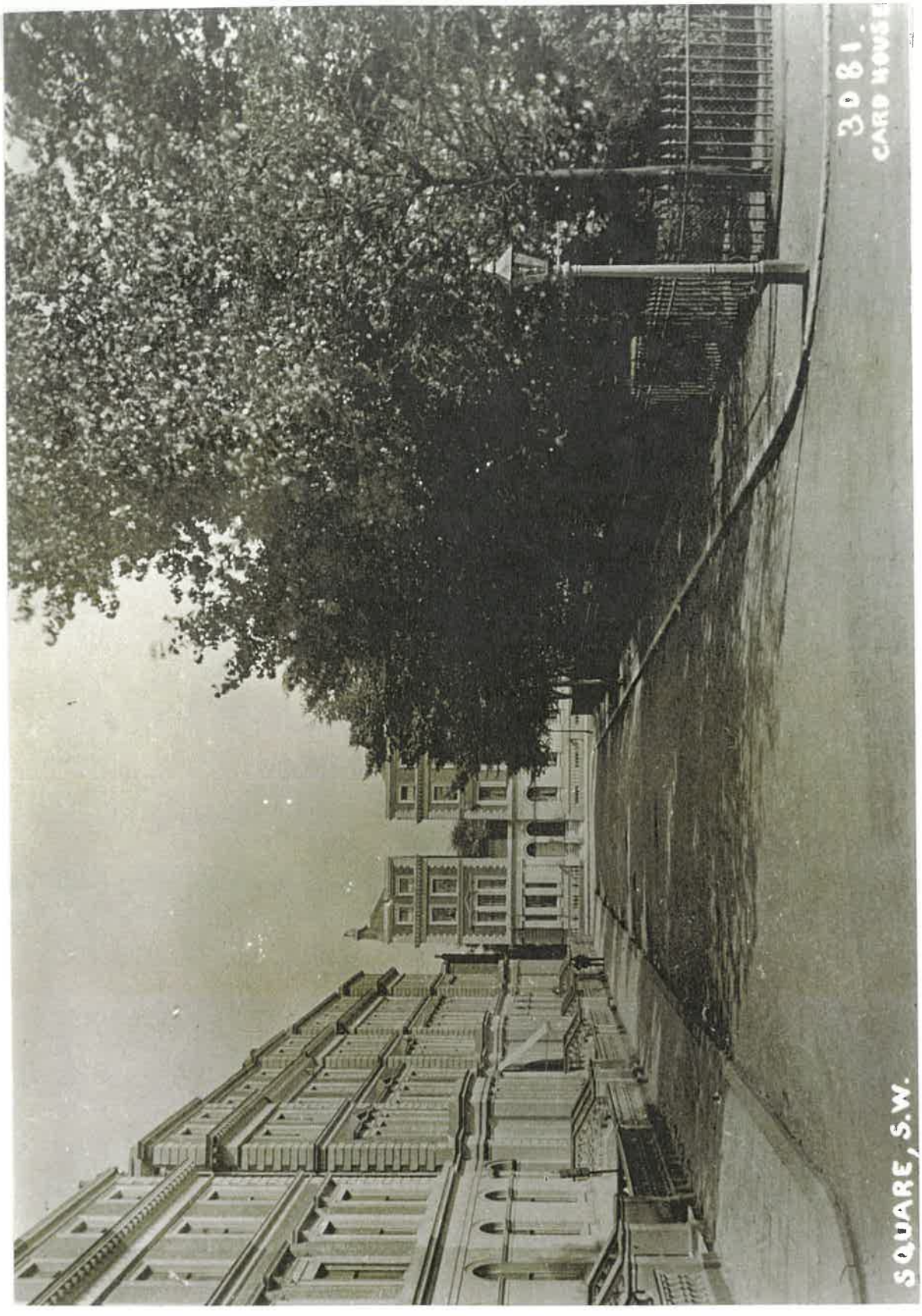

Fig. 35 A view of the west side of Albert Square, looking northwards, *c.* 1900–10. The surface of the footpath surrounding the garden shows no sign of paving. The shaft of the street lamp may be original. (*Ron Elam's Local Yesterdays, 3081*)

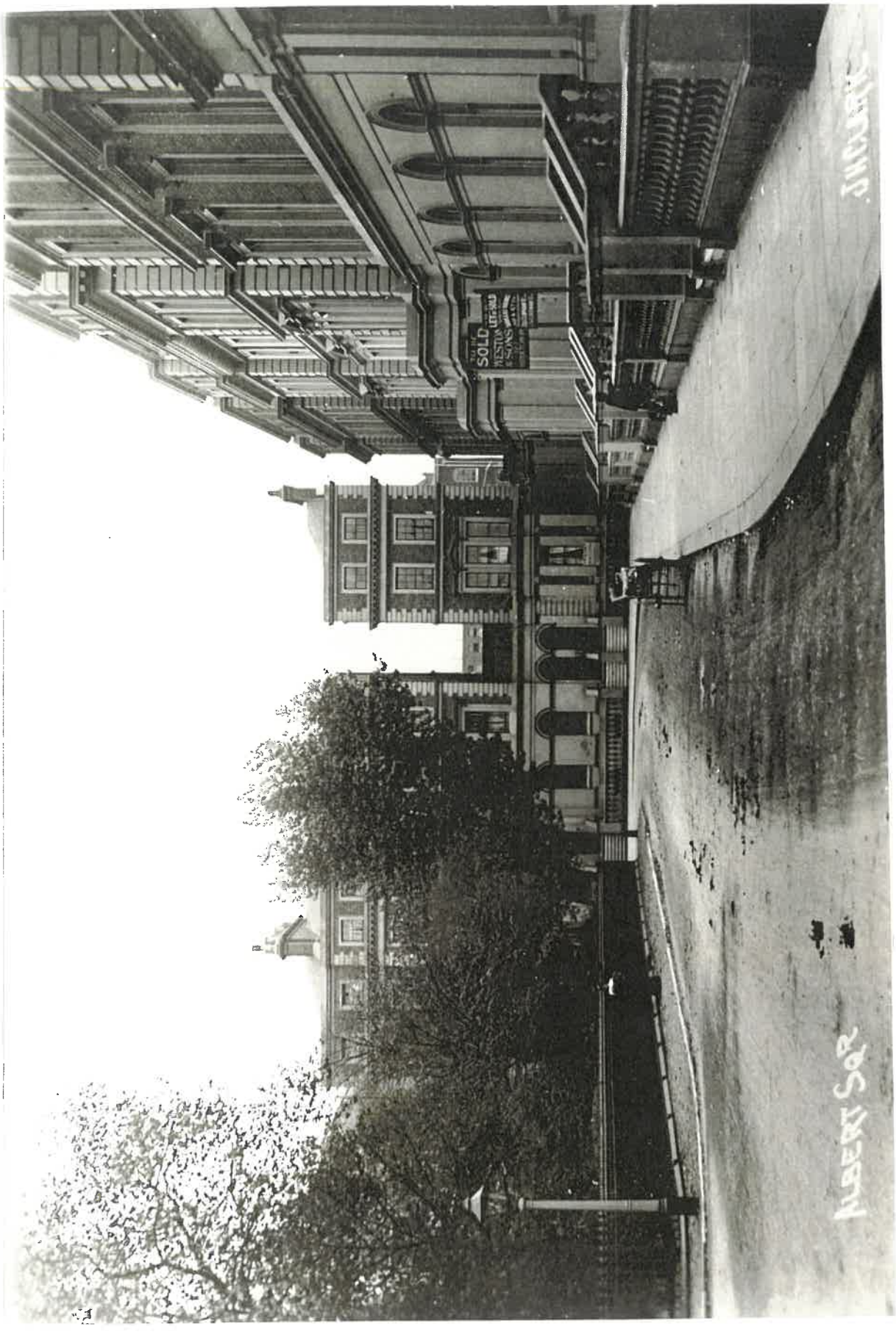

Fig. 36 A view of the south side of Albert Square, looking eastwards, *c.* 1900–10. The plinth supporting the garden railings is clearly visible. (*Ron Elam's Local Yesterdays, LAM 74*)

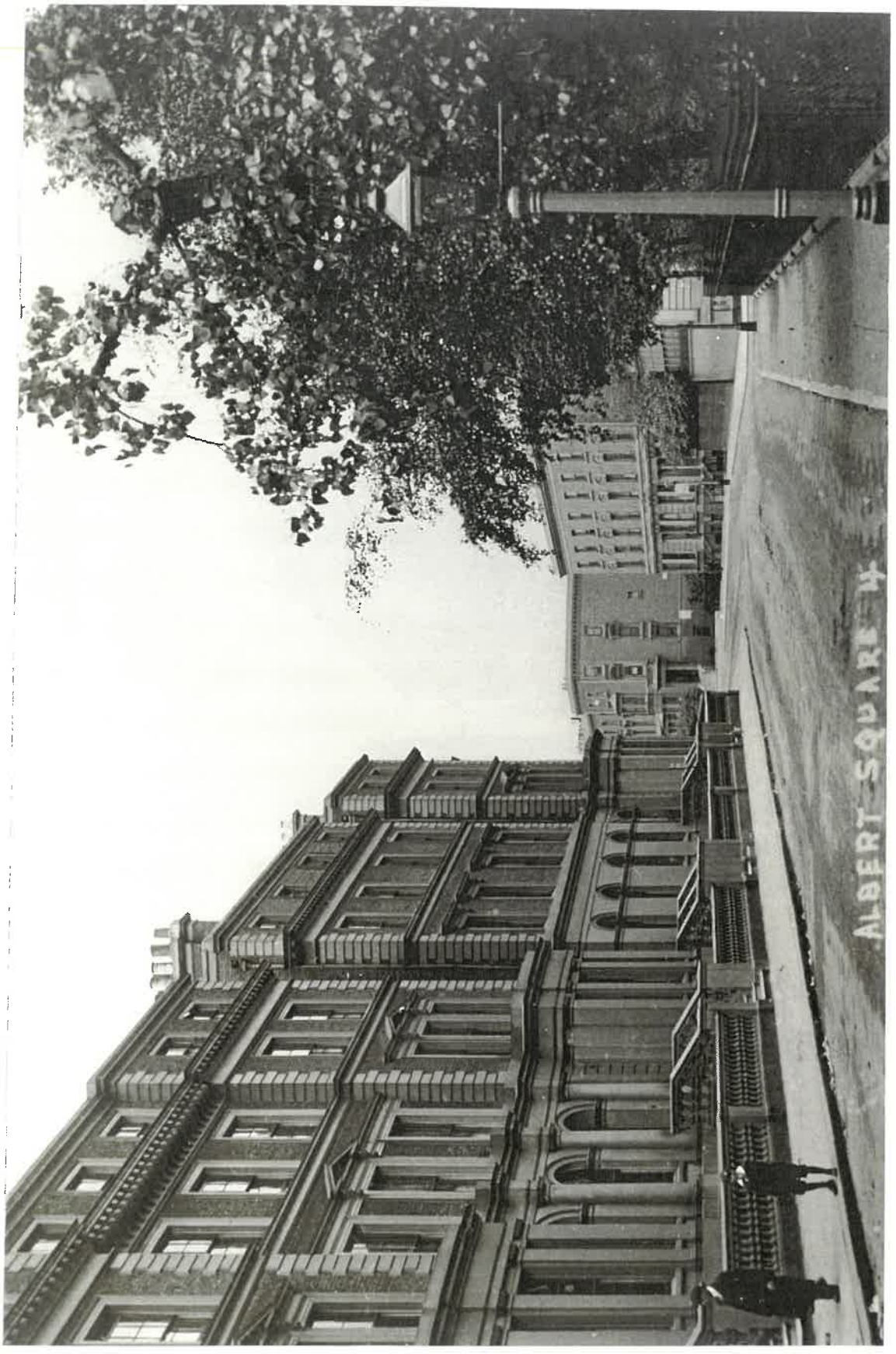

Fig. 37 A view of the south side of Albert Square, looking westwards, *c.* 1900–10.
(*Ron Elam's Local Yesterdays, 'Miss Tozer'*)

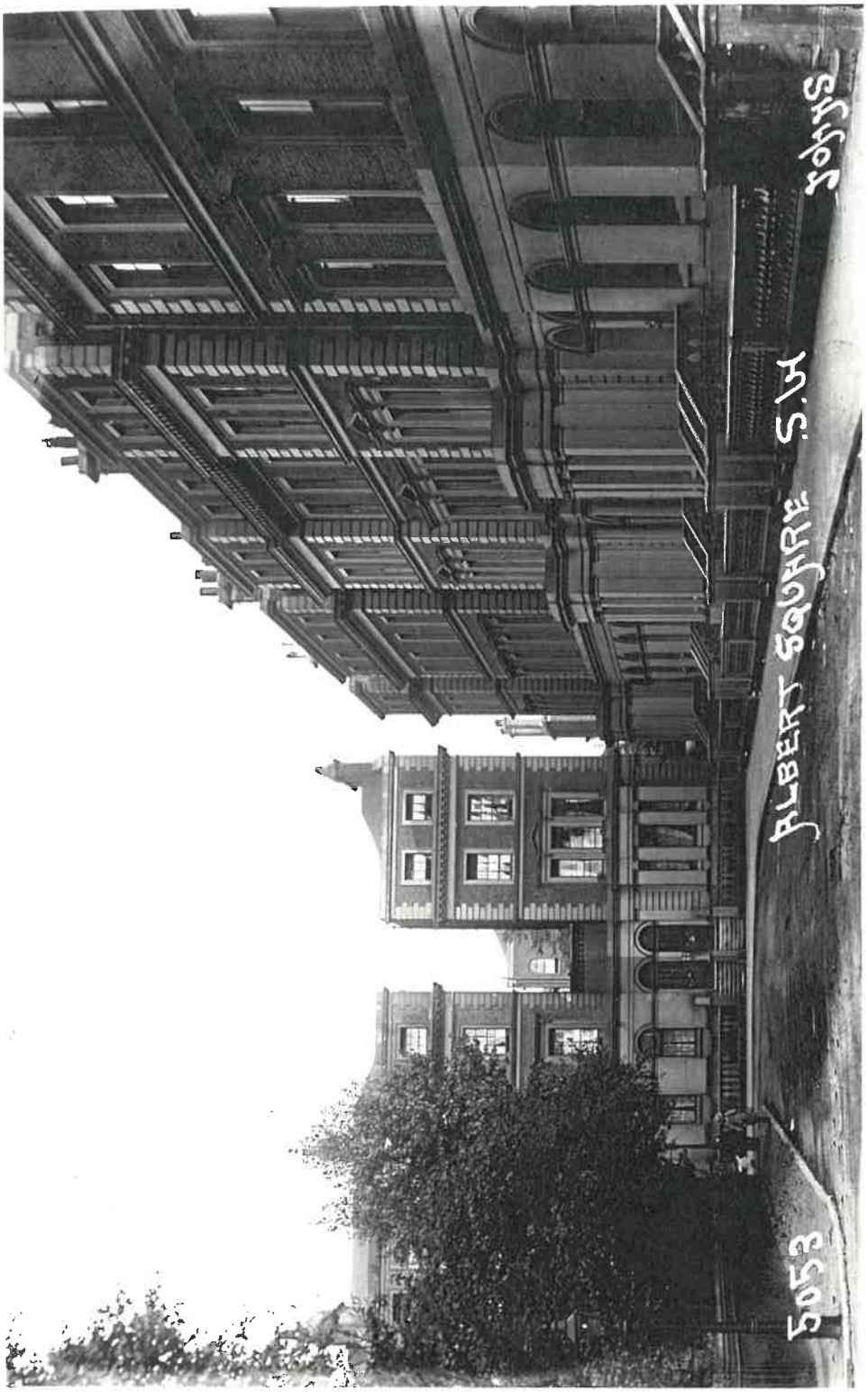

Fig. 38 A view of the south side of Albert Square, looking eastwards, *c*. 1900–10.
(*Lambeth Archives, SP 1010*)

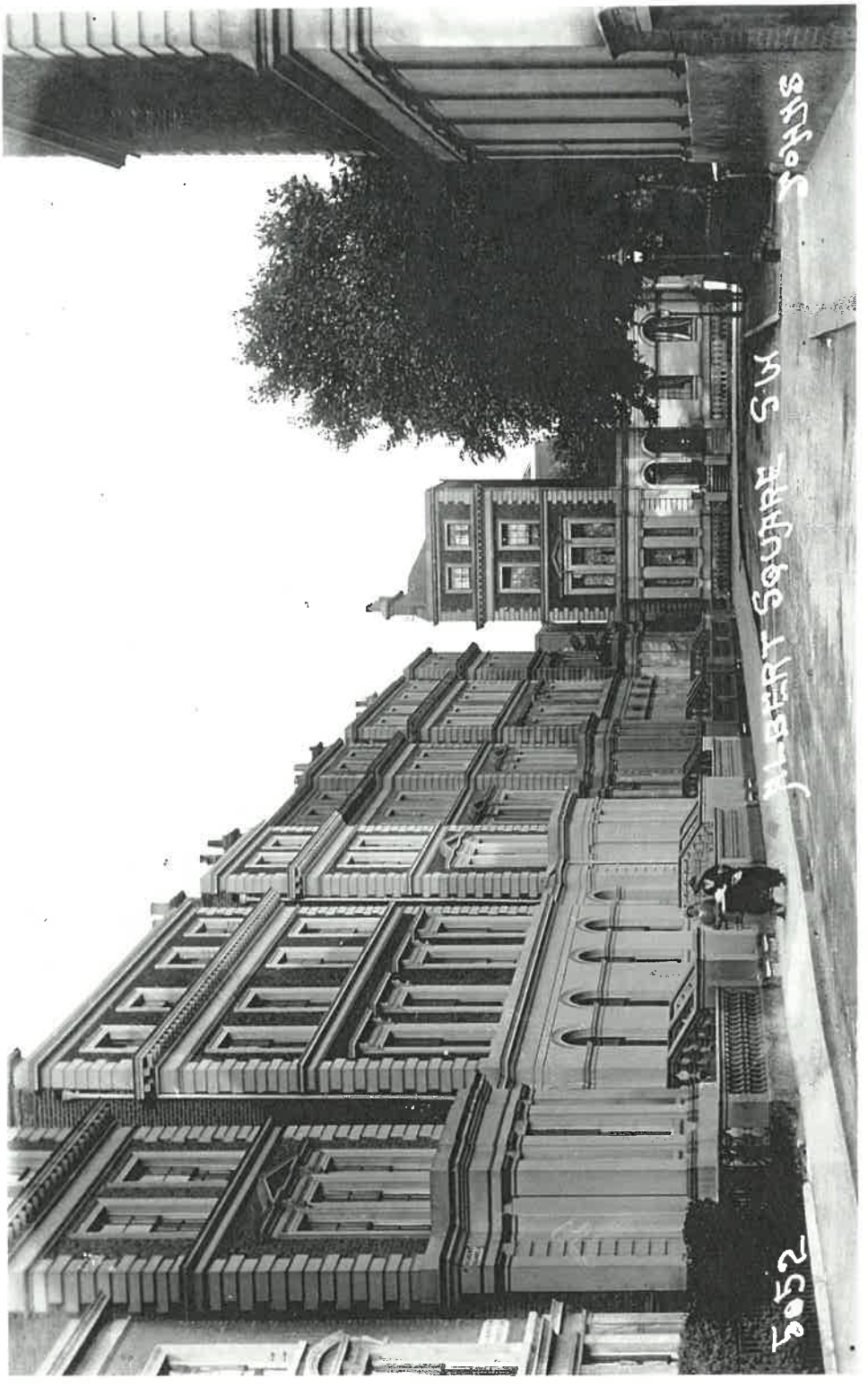

Fig. 39 A view of the north side of Albert Square, looking eastwards, *c.* 1900–10. (*Lambeth Archives, SP 1008*)

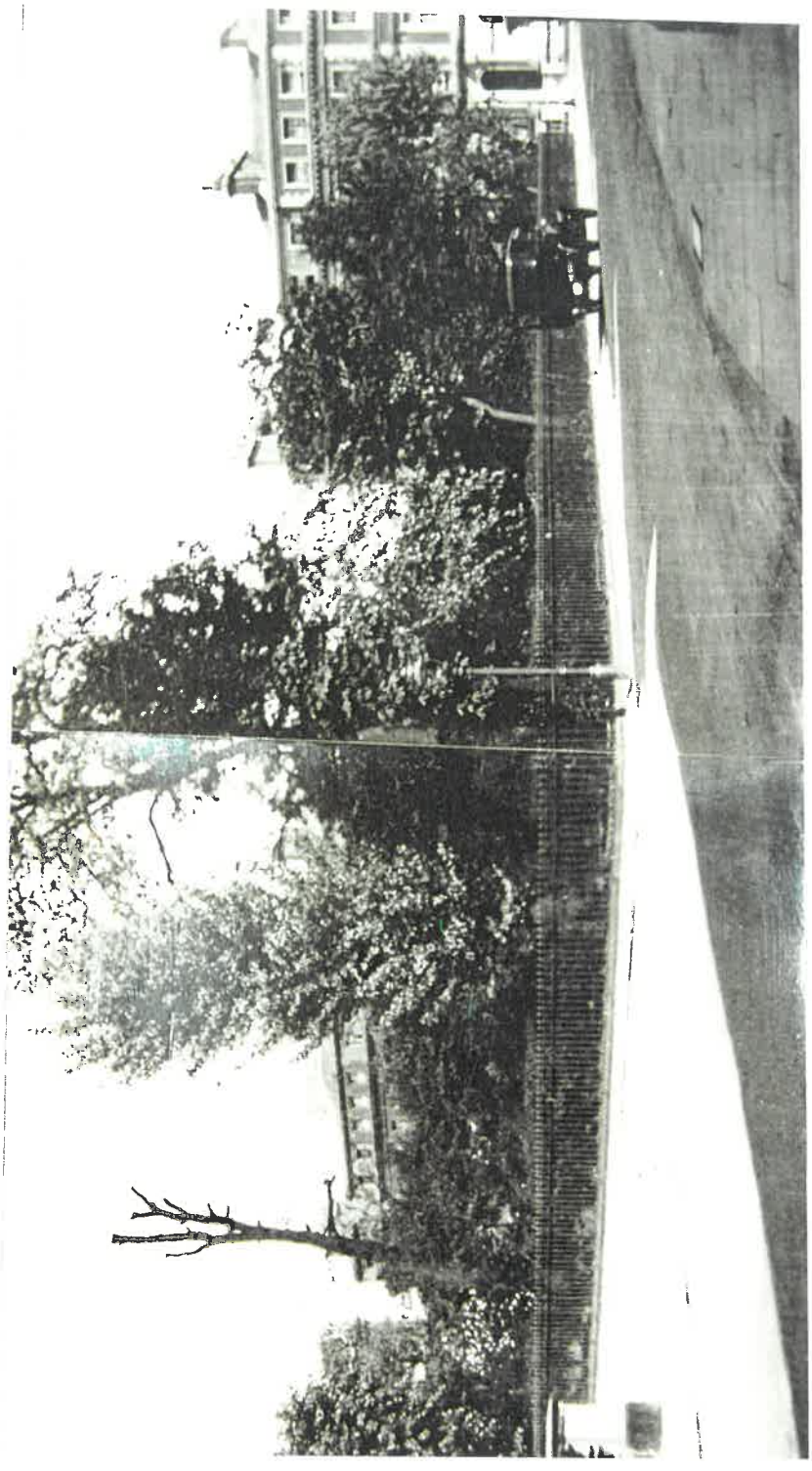

Fig. 40 A view of the south-west corner of the central garden at Albert Square, *c.* 1930s.
(*Mr J. Nicholson*)

Fig. 41 A view across the garden of Albert Square from one of the upper levels of No. 20 during the Underground works (Victoria Line) of the late 1960s. Apart from a narrow perimeter ring, all of the historic garden features must have been lost during the works.
(*Mr J. Nicholson*)

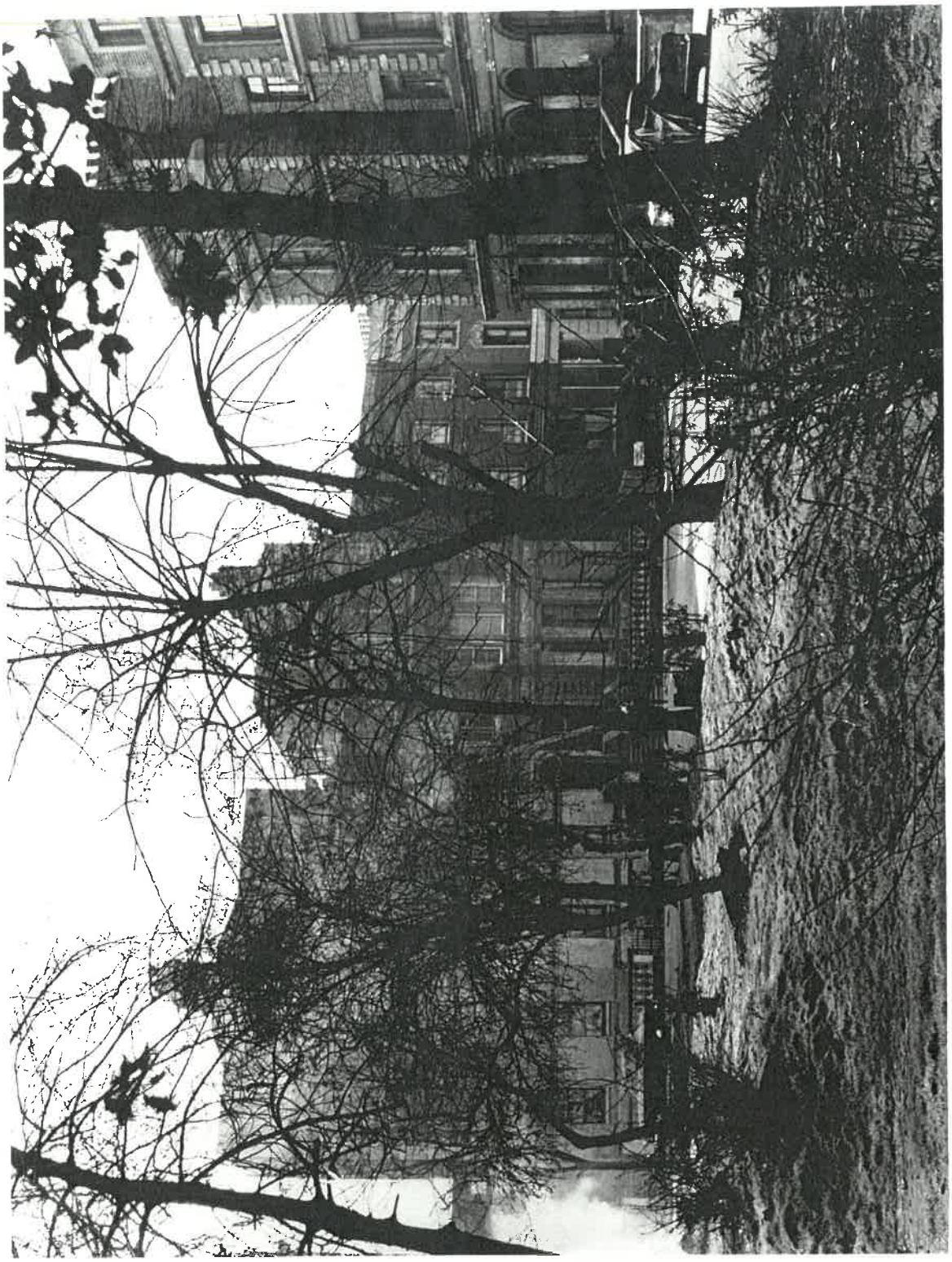

Fig. 42 A view of the south-west corner of the garden at Albert Square in 1964. The railings had presumably been removed during the war, and at this time they had not been replaced.
(*Lambeth Archives, SP 12/170/ALB.S.3*)

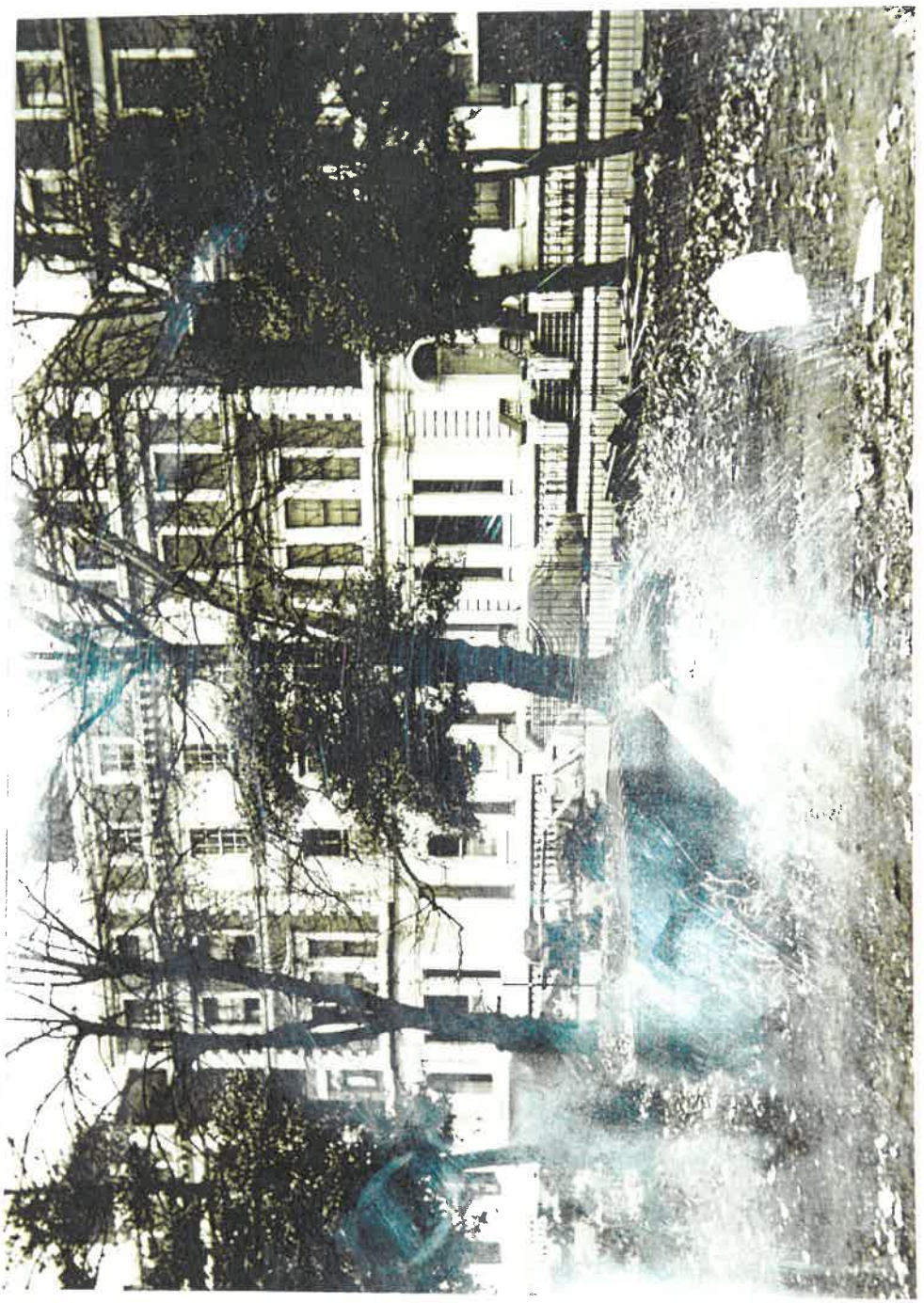

Fig. 43 New railings were erected around the central garden at Albert Square in 1965.
(*Mr J. Nicholson*)

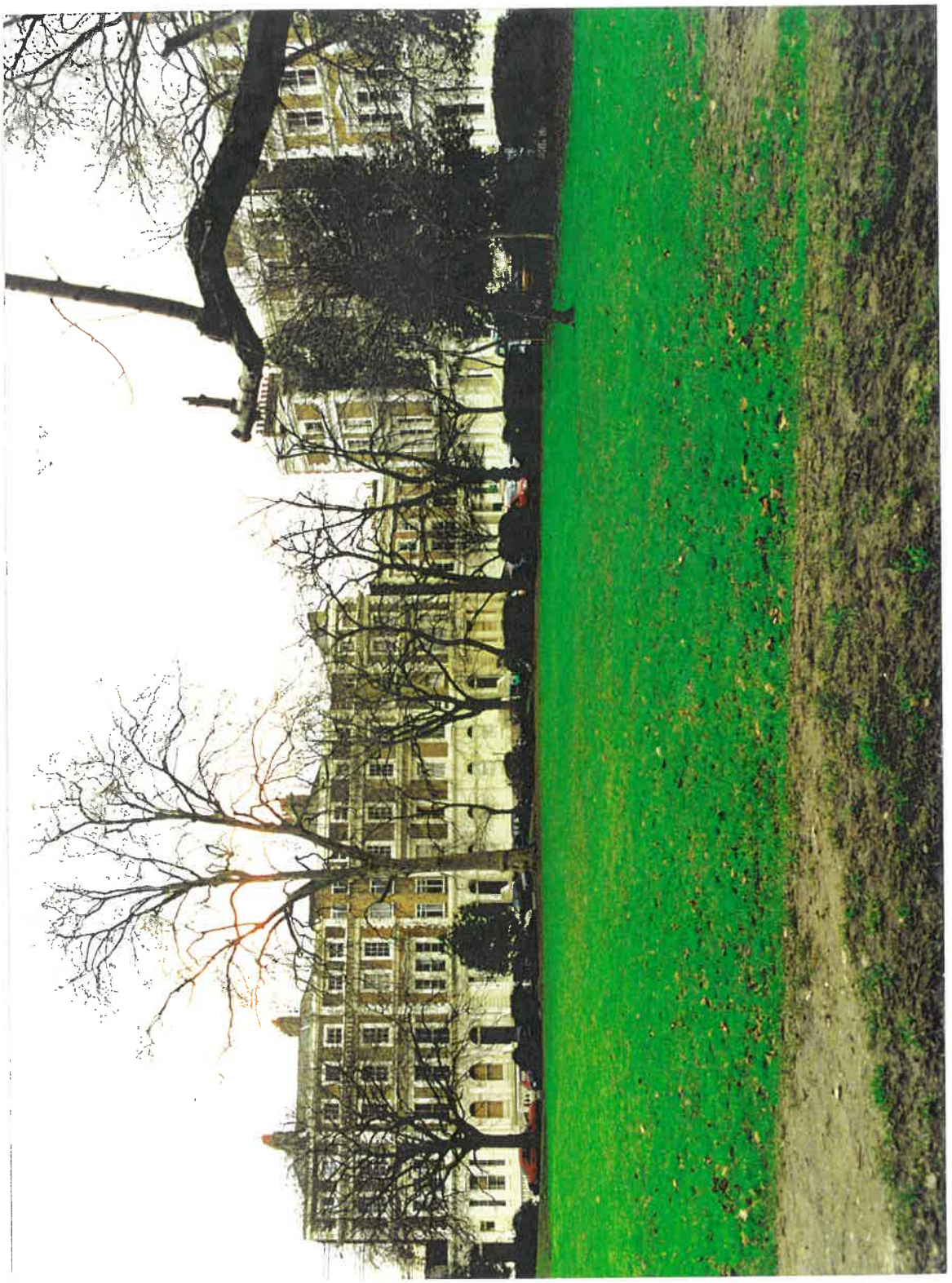

Fig. 44 A general winter view of the Albert Square garden, looking south-west. The plane trees and hollies probably go back to the initial planting.

Fig. 45 A general summer view of the Albert Square garden, looking south-west (to compare with Fig. 44).

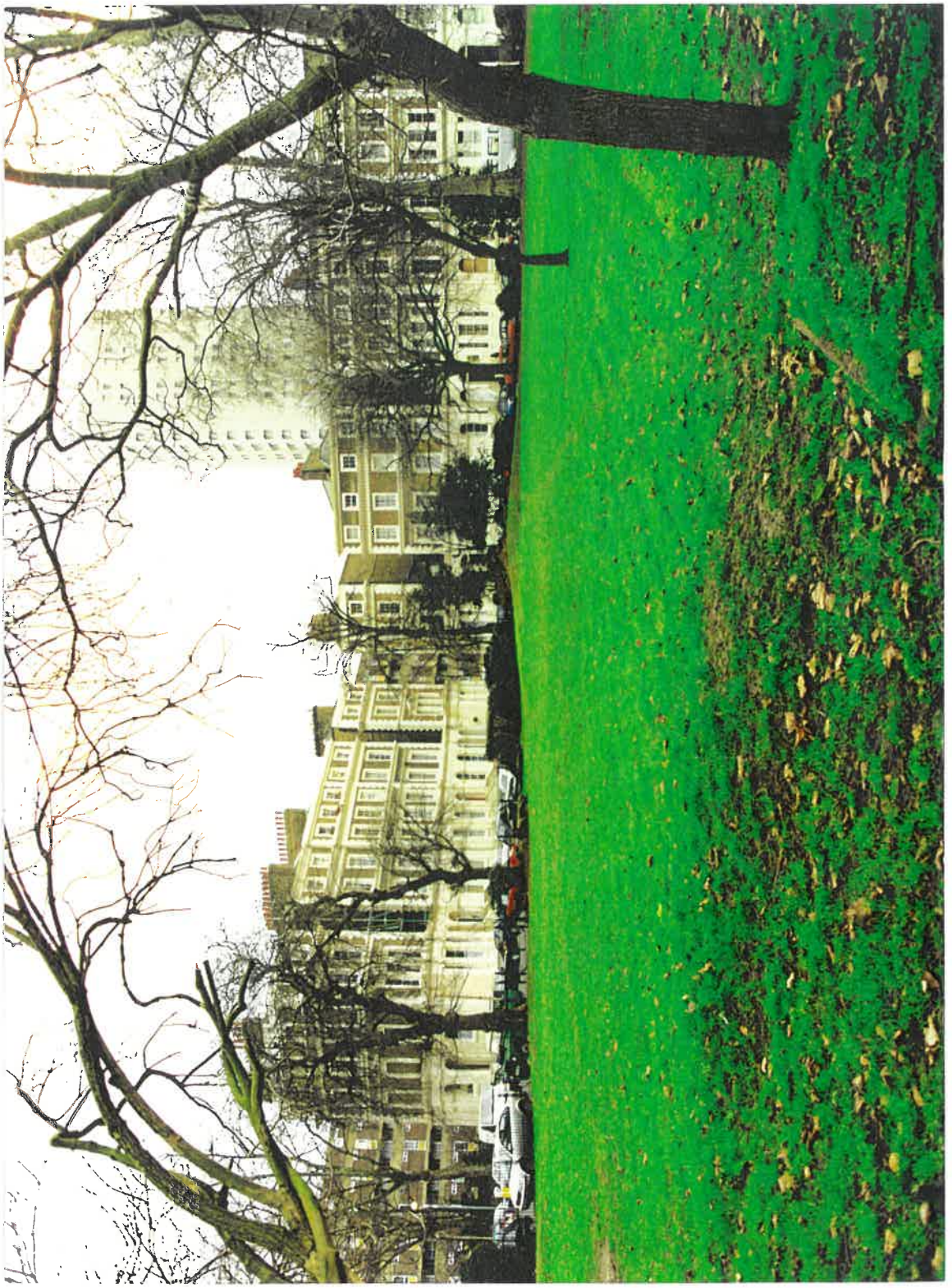

Fig. 46 A general winter view of the Albert Square garden, looking south-east.

Fig. 47 A summer view of the north-west corner of the Albert Square garden. The ornamental to the front of the large plane seems to be a more recent introduction to the garden.

Fig. 48 Apart from the historic planting around the perimeter, there are very few other features in the garden at Albert Square. This rather tired wooden bench, set on a brick plinth, stands near the north-west corner.

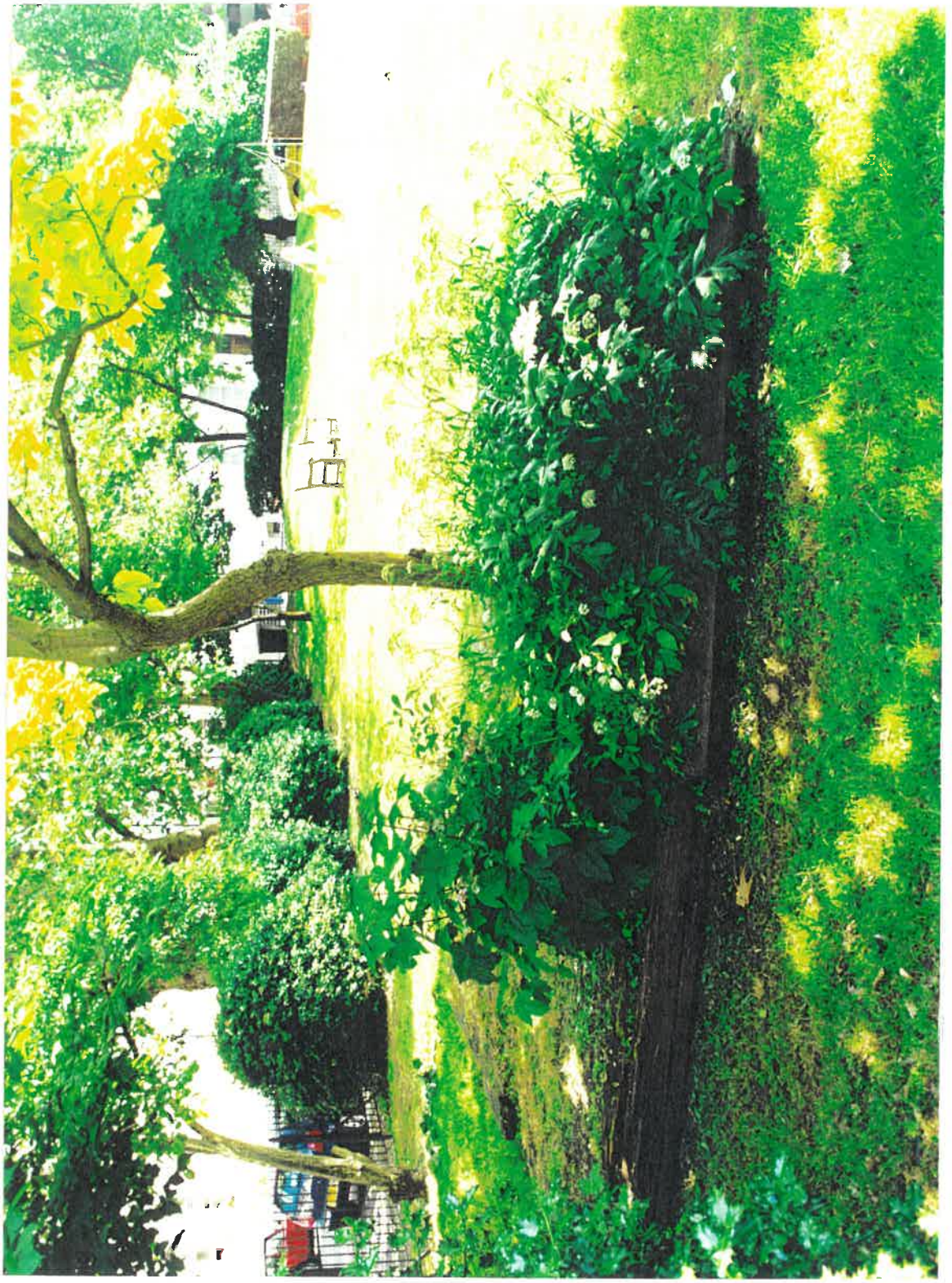

Fig. 49 Makeshift planter, made of wooden sleepers, near the north-west corner of the Albert Square garden.

Fig. 50 Heavy car-parking around the south-west corner of the Albert Square garden. The footpath is used for occasional tipping.

Fig. 51 View of the 1960s railings along the east side of the Albert Square garden.

Fig. 52 Detail of the railings and large gate access on the east side of the Albert Square garden.

Fig. 53 In places, the 1960s railings introduced to the Albert Squre garden were curved to accommodate the trunks of mature plane trees.