

## Mrs Gay Christiansen

For 45 years the Society's guiding spirit was its founder and secretary, Mrs Gay Christiansen (1912-2001), whose energy, single-mindedness, and achievements were prodigious. She was in every sense a totally dedicated enthusiast for quality and service in all things. Her drive not only founded the Kensington Society in 1953 in response to the usual impending conservation disaster, but in 1958 she also made time in the face of another disaster to found the Westminster Society. She and her planning committee fought harmful proposals - and in those early days there were many - with immense and often successful vigour.



*Mrs Christiansen*

*Princess Alice*

Not all the battles could be wholly won, but many secured amelioration of proposals, or at least part-preservation of distinctive buildings, such as the Colcutt Tower of what is now Imperial College. Ironically, those disasters which have not happened, owing to the Kensington Society's numerous modifications to unacceptable proposals, go unnoticed and unrecorded. We re-visit some of

these hidden public benefits in this exhibition.

Not only did Gay Christiansen run the Kensington Society virtually single-handed in many of its planning aspects for many years, but she also organised annually a programme of privileged visits to various places of interest. And she edited the widely-acclaimed Annual Report, full of historical, literary and illustrative gems. The terror she inspired in conservational miscreants was legendary. She was a force to be reckoned with. Kensington owes her and her fellow early campaigners an incalculable debt of gratitude.