

NEW COLLEGE HEADQUARTERS

The College has bought and will soon occupy a new home at 13-14 Princes Gate, London, S.W.7.

The family doctor is in a better position than people in most other walks of life to appreciate the meaning of home. He enters the home in times of trouble and nearly always finds himself welcome: he makes his call at any time of the day; conventional calling times are not for him. His relationship, and it is often a very close relationship, with the families in his care is strangely different from any other. This freedom of the home was recognized even in the days of pagan Greece, and the Hippocratic Oath required that the physician should not abuse his privileges therein in any way. "And I will enter every abode into which I may go only for the benefit of the sick, being in a state devoid of wrong-doing, injustice, mischief-making, such as might be intended in other transactions". Again the home is evidently included in the further clause of the Oath, "And as far as the things which I may see or hear during the time of treating the sick, or at such times other than those in which I am so engaged, about such behaviour of men as should not be talked of outside, I will keep silence, considering that such thing should not be discussed".

In the course of his rounds the doctor of necessity becomes a connoisseur in domesticity. In the same way as no two people look exactly alike or think in precisely the same way, no two homes are identical. Even in this age of mass production, of pressure cookers, deep freeze, electric mixers and electric cleaners, of hire purchase, easy payments, and long renting, when all conspire towards drab uniformity, the differences go deeper than decor. Even empty houses have their individual atmosphere, a lingering aura of love and care, or of deep tragedy, the bare boards giving forth a joyous ring, or groaning in agony. In short, houses are homes: homes which have mellowed or mildewed in empathy with those who have lived in them.

When the Council of the College began to look for a home suitable to its requirements, none of these thoughts was voiced in debate, though at times the debates on the subject were long and searching. None-the-less, these ideas must have been present in varying shades of subarticulate thought in all who were present, making decision more hard to take. But now the choice has been made. The house which stands at Princes Gate has all that could be wanted for the home of a learned body. As a headquarters it is admirable. There



14 PRINCES GATE



14 PRINCES GATE
Interior and staircase to first floor

are rooms for libraries and study, for committees and for general meetings; there are rooms where the inevitable office routine can peacefully be followed; and there are rooms where members and their wives may come and stay, rooms where they may meet their friends and renew old acquaintances. Those who may feel a parting pang at leaving 41 Cadogan Gardens with its cosy library and its graceful but ever steepening staircase will find all the best of what was there behind the windows overlooking Hyde Park. The description which follows has been written by Mrs H. L. Glyn Hughes who has been much occupied on behalf of the College in refurbishing and arranging the interior.

“ The new home acquired by the College is situated in Princes Gate, set back from the main Kensington Road in a private terrace. The front rooms command a wide view of Hyde Park and at the back is a large private garden of about three acres, beautifully maintained, which the College is entitled to use. The building is imposing and dignified, all cream, and ornamented on either side above the handsome entrance, with heads of Red Indians. There have been suggestions that these should be replaced with the heads of past presidents of the College. A wide range of buses stop outside the building, and the Knightsbridge and South Kensington Underground stations are within five to ten minutes walking distance. The private road should ensure parking facilities.

“ Starting a conducted tour, through the spacious entrance hall, already furnished with a graceful gilt framed mirror, across the marbled floor, with a large cloakroom on one side, a small reception room and another large room, designated as the Secretary's office, on the other side. Then through an oval inner hall with a domed cupola ceiling and panelled walls, leading to two very large oak panelled rooms, opening into one another, and both opening on to a wide terrace, which will lend itself to interesting gardening experiments. These two rooms are to be the members' common room and dining room. The dining room has a small kitchen attached, which is being entirely modernized.

“ A graceful stairway winds up to a reception hall, decorated with moulded plaster panels and lit by cut glass chandeliers of breath taking proportions, and gilt wall lights. Proceeding from the hall to the front of the house, an oak floored room runs the whole length of the building. This is again decorated in the green moulded panels of the hall and has marbled fireplaces in the Adam style at either end. Passing back through the hall which, incidentally, is already furnished with two marble and gilt tables, a gilt settee and chairs, upholstered in green damask, the tour of the main reception rooms

concludes with two rooms at the rear of the building, both handsomely proportioned. The right hand room, designated as the Council Room, is already close carpeted in grey green, and the walls decorated in green and gilt, with inset panels of silk damask. There is another magnificent fireplace in this room and the folding shutters are mirrored on the inside. The last room on this floor is panelled entirely in cedar and will be the library. The panels here are just made to take the portraits of the presidents of the College.

The second floor is to be devoted to the secretariat of the College. The rooms here are well proportioned and are all carpeted and curtained. The staff should find itself accommodated in pleasant surroundings, with none of the present overcrowding with its attendant distractions.

The third floor is being converted into flatlets, one of which will be for the use of the President, and the fourth floor is to be used as bedrooms for members of the council and the College. One room of historic interest on the fourth floor still has the telephone apparatus which went straight through to the White House, Washington, D.C. This will have to be removed, as it is too cumbersome to ornament a bedroom.

The lift will then take the tour down to the basement, and anyone getting separated from the main party will find the Hampton Court Maze well equalled. There is a self-contained caretaker's flat, with well lit rooms, and two small courts, which would qualify as "patios" in many an estate agent's brochure. Somewhere in the middle of the maze is a strong room, lined throughout with baize, where no doubt the silver and gold ornaments of the College will be lodged in future. There is a work room, a boiler room, and several more well lit rooms, including a wine cellar, unfortunately empty.

It is hoped that this brief description will assure members of the College that they have at their disposal a very beautiful and dignified home. They now own a most valuable bit of London in the ground space alone, and the building is classified as being one that must be preserved.

CHRISTMAS CARDS 1962

The Christmas card selected this year will show a small, embossed reproduction of the College Coat of Arms in blue on the front and a photograph of the interior of 14 Princes Gate, London, S.W.7 inside.

The price will be 10/- per dozen, including envelopes and the proceeds from the sale will go towards the College Appeal.

Orders should be addressed to the Secretary, College of General Practitioners, 41 Cadogan Gardens, London, S.W.3.