



LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

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PRESS BUREAU

*Good will you
please
cover!*

THE PIED PIPER OF CAMBERWELL

At 11 a.m. next Friday (13 November) at Elmington estate, Camberwell, Sir Isaac Hayward, Leader of the L.C.C., will unveil 'the Pied Piper of Hamelin', a mural in concrete which has been designed by Mr. Willi Soukop and with the help of two building workers formed into an external wall of the tenants' clubroom. The cost of this mural has been provided by the L.C.C. under its £20,000 a year scheme for the acquisition or commissioning of works of art as features of housing schemes, parks, road improvements, schools, etc.

Mr. W. G. Fiske (Chairman of the L.C.C.'s Housing Committee) will preside at the ceremony. It is expected that Councillor T. J. Wallis (Mayor of Camberwell) will speak in thanks following the unveiling of the mural. Mr. and Mrs. Soukop will be present. Other guests will include Mrs. Freda Corbet (Chief L.C.C. Whip), Mr. G. S. Burden (Leader of Camberwell Metropolitan Borough Council), Mrs. E. Denington (Vice-Chairman of the L.C.C. Housing Committee). Also present will be other members and officers of the L.C.C. and Camberwell Metropolitan Borough Council and representatives of the Art Panel of the Arts Council, J. Laing and Son, Ltd. (Contractors for the Elmington estate) and the Elmington Estate Tenants' Association.

Robert Browning, who wrote the poem 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', was born in Camberwell in 1812 and had strong associations with the Borough. ~~The poem was written while he lived at Hanover Cottage in Southampton Way.~~ Mr. Soukop was commissioned to provide a work of art on this mural as a part of the Picton Street (later Elmington estate) housing scheme.

Mr. Soukop describes his work as follows:-

'An early visit to the building site convinced me that any sculpture for this particular place ought to be on a large scale' ----- 'it had to be bold and strong as it could be seen from a great distance, though it should provide enough interest to passers-by only a foot or two away'. ----- 'a photographic likeness in stone is without force and power. The only way open to me was a free interpretation of the most vital moment of the story, the children following cheerfully and like under a spell the strange figure of the Piper. This I hope is visible on the wall. There had to be lots of children, dancing, jumping, dressed in all sorts of costumes, a busy lively crowd. Of course I did not wish to imitate real children; individual faces and details are of no importance in a crowd. 'The

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way I wanted to build this wall demanded a pattern. I had to find out how to change natural appearances into forms of sculpture, in this case sculpture made in concrete combined with granite blocks and pebbles. As the story happened in a town the pattern of the children, square heads for instance, also had to stand for houses, blocks of streets, cobbled roads and squares suggested by the background treatment of the materials used. Approximately 80 pieces of concrete shapes were cast in my studio and transported to the building site, where with the help of two excellent building workers the wall was made'. ----- May I hope that this piece of work, although presented in an unconventional form, will become acceptable to the people who live round, and from the conversations I had with children and adults when working on the site I do feel this hope fully justified.'

Elmington estate, which was completed in 1958, covers nearly 18 acres and contains 697 dwellings, 320 of which are maisonettes in 4 11-storey blocks. The tenants' clubroom has been sited in a central position and the mural on its east wall will be visible from many view points.

Mr. Willi Soukop was born in Vienna in 1907. His bronze 'Frog Girl' was exhibited at the L.C.C.'s Open Air Sculpture Exhibition in 1948 and his concrete sculptured 'Mother and Child' was shown in a similar exhibition in 1951.

The Press are cordially invited to the ceremony and for refreshments. There will be every facility for photographs.

The clubroom lies off Lomond Grove and is best approached from Camberwell Green via Elmington Road.

11 November 1959