

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

SPRING 1996

PAN-SQUARES MEETING

The first meeting of residents of garden squares in the Ladbroke Estate was held in a marquee in Elgin/Lansdowne Garden on Sunday 25th June 1995, and was well attended.

Although the Ladbroke Association does not advise private garden committees, it seemed appropriate for it to host a forum for garden residents to discuss issues which they have in common. We were happy to welcome as speakers HENRIETTA PHIPPS, a landscape designer who has worked for the RBK&C; JEREMY LEVER, a landscape planner and instigator of tree surveys; and DEREK AUSTIN, the Principal Arboricultural Officer of the RBK&C.

After introductions the Chairman, Stephen Enthoven, stressed how important it was to protect our area from architectural damage and unwanted changes to its character, including protection of its trees and gardens.

HENRIETTA PHIPPS discussed the original Romantic Landscape concept of the Estate, emanating from the Picturesque-using slopes and curves in the design, with dark clumps of trees setting off the buildings, and unified by evergreen shrubs around the perimeter.

The idea of direct back-of-house access to the communal gardens goes back to Nash and makes for a greater involvement in the life of the gardens. Thought should be given to boundaries, path layouts, the restoration of ironwork and the planting of forest trees.

She suggested that back gardens of the houses should be subject to the same controls as front gardens on the streets.

She reported that English Heritage representatives had visited Ladbroke Square. They are looking at the possibility of listing the gardens as a group. A representative has agreed to attend the next Pan-Squares meeting.

JEREMY LEVER spoke of the damage caused by unthinking new residents to the character of the area, often affecting trees. He described how trees reduce wind and heat loss from buildings, filter dust and dirt, reduce carbon dioxide and make oxygen, providing a much healthier environment.

He emphasised the need for careful long-term planning for future tree planting, and the difficulty of being on shrinkable clay.

DEREK AUSTIN explained the need for long-term management plans for garden squares, including keeping written records, due to changes in garden committees; budgets for tree care; and records of maintenance, to help in applications for work to sustain mature trees, and

Below: Elgin/Lansdowne Garden

care for younger ones.

He turned to the various uses of the gardens – social and solitary, for children and for the conservation of nature; and how to use our timber by-products.

The use of British Standards in pruning and the need for twice-yearly inspections by a tree warden or garden committee representative should be included.

He referred to a document containing guidance notes for private garden enclosures, which was being produced by the RBK&C.

QUESTION TIME

A lively debate ensued from the floor, covering the pruning and health of trees, irrigation, drainage, insurance problems and the use of shredders.

The 1996 Pan-Squares Meeting (see back page) has now been arranged. To help with the cost, the Ladbroke Association will be asking Garden Committees if they would contribute £20 each towards costs.



PLANNING

by Robert Meadows

In a previous issue of this Newsletter we reported that, at last, a scheme had been submitted for rebuilding nos 131-159 Portobello Road. This large block had been under scaffolding for years and was a disgrace to the Portobello Market and the many foreign tourists who visit it. It is good that the rebuilding has now been completed, with Housing Association flats on the upper floors and an antiques market on the ground floor. This is the largest building project in the Conservation Area for some time.

The fashion for constructing CONSERVATORIES continues. Clearly, they can make an attractive addition to any dwelling. Almost invariably they occur in back gardens, so they are not visible to the streets, although they may be visible to communal gardens. The guiding principles for judging such proposals are: do they relate satisfactorily in size and shape to the dwelling; are they well-designed in themselves; do they infringe the privacy of the neighbours?

FORECOURT PARKING is a matter which causes great concern. It invariably looks bad, it can be dangerous, and takes away parking space from the adjacent road. We consider that it is only acceptable in very exceptional cases. The Ladbroke Conservation Area Policy Statement lays down guidelines for such cases. There have been recent applications from Kensington Park Gardens and Ladbroke Road.

Kensington Park Gardens is one of the finest streets in the area. There are handsome stuccoed balustrades dividing the pavements from the front areas of the houses. On the south side this balustrade has been broken in some places to allow forecourt parking. This is visually disastrous. We opposed strongly a recent application for a further forecourt parking space. Similarly in Ladbroke Road there are cases where cars park in the small front gardens. We opposed recent applications for visual and safety reasons.

GAPS BETWEEN BUILDINGS can have a crucial significance, frequently giving attractive views of gardens and trees beyond. Ladbroke Conservation Area Policy Statement recognises this and indicates the gaps which are particularly important. So, proposals to fill such gaps are always resisted, although sometimes without success. The east side of Lansdowne Crescent is a clear case where the houses were originally designed in pairs separated by quite wide gaps. This gave an attractive rhythm of solid and void as well as creating the impression of the buildings set in landscape. But, alas, over the years, these gaps have been progressively filled; first by garages, and later by two-storey extensions to the houses. So there is now a more or less continuous wall of building with the gaps filled by a miscellaneous hotch-potch of extensions – the serenity of the original layout is lost. This process is still going on and a recent case was only slightly modified as the result of a Planning Appeal.

However, there is some good news! There have been recent examples where buildings and back-of-pavement railings, gates and piers have been carefully restored. The importance of railings or boundary walls to the street scene cannot be over-emphasised.

REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

by Ian Grant

The Ladbroke Association has long been worried about the tendency amongst some householders in our Conservation Area to install 'replacement windows', and it was felt that a few comments on the matter might prove helpful.

The necessity for complete replacement of original windows hardly ever exists, and the idea is often floated by lazy builders who have been commissioned to restore

old windows, or by companies selling new UPVC (plastic coated metal) windows, who solicit custom from householders by the adoption of aggressive sales techniques.

The advantages claimed for UPVC are, however, very questionable. The material itself is of relatively recent invention, and therefore its length of life is unproven. The gain in heat insulation provided by the double-glass units that are incorporated is minimal in old houses with thick walls and small windows. However, the worst feature is that UPVC *never* resembles the profiles of the original windows, and in conservation terms the resulting appearance is always a disaster.

Another frequent cause of imagined 'draughts' is when the warm air in a room strikes the cold surface of the glass, setting up a current of chilled air as it is rapidly cooled and falls. A certain way of curing this is to place radiators under windows, providing a counteracting flow of rising hot air.

Furthermore, the double-glass units have virtually no effect in excluding noise. The only effective way to combat noise penetration is by the installation of a completely separate set of windows, positioned at least 150mm inside the original ones. Care of course should always be taken to ensure that any new glazing bars follow the lines of the original ones.

In the very rare cases where original windows are really found to be beyond repair, or have perhaps already been changed, there are also a number of specialist firms who claim to be able to copy exactly original shapes, divisions and moulding profiles, and their advice should always be sought. There is absolutely no reason why 'replacements' should not be exact copies of originals and in conservation matters this is the ideal which should always be sought.

LONDON SQUARES CONFERENCE – JUNE 1995

The London Squares Conference was held at the Institute of Horticulture in Belgrave Square. The Conference was organised by The London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust and the Metropolitan Gardens Association and was chaired by Dudley Fishburn, MP for Kensington.

History, Design and Planting of London Squares

No other capital city has anything to compare with London which has over 460 garden squares, and unique amongst these are the 15 gardens on the Ladbrooke Estate. Susanna Marcus, Chairman of the Working Party of the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, spoke on the historic gardens issue.

Legal Aspects and Threats

The Rt Hon John Gummer MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, and Dudley Fishburn shared a concern for the protection of London's squares, both public and private, concern which was also expressed by David Marcus, a partner in Franks Charlesey & Co Solicitors. Although there is a measure of protection for our squares in the London Squares Act 1931, there is a need for amendments to the Act which Dudley Fishburn is determined to pursue. Some of the main objectives are to ensure that the squares will no longer be used for underground car parks; nor dumping grounds for waste from below

ground developments; also to widen the Act to include all London boroughs.

Roger Phillips, who founded the Society for the Protection of London Squares, cited the example of Eccleston Square where the residents had successfully managed to fight off carpark developers. Roger Phillips' plan of action was for the completion of a survey of all London squares, to organise legislation for protection and to achieve a millennium goal of having all London's garden squares restored for a Festival of Garden Squares in the year 2001. This was a suggestion warmly received and the Chairman announced at the close of the meeting that the two delegates from the Ladbrooke Association would cooperate with Roger Phillips.

Chris Green, the Chief Executive of English Heritage, proposed an all-borough initiative, with English Heritage acting as a catalyst for a bid for Lottery money in 1996. English Heritage would offer expertise on landscape resources, planning, grants and historic advice.

Practical Conservation and Management

Our city's private squares are essentially green spaces with an emphasis on horticulture and leisure. Long-term horticultural management plans with proper consultation and budgetary forecasts are essential. It is important to

consider the needs of the garden users, the management of the trees and other natural features and the biggest asset in a garden square is a skilled gardener who can work on the ground as well as direct maintenance of the landscape.

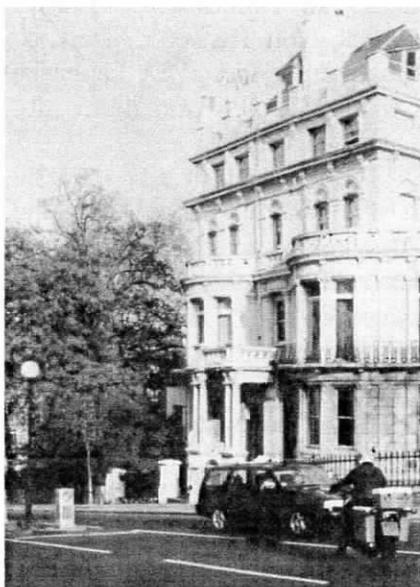
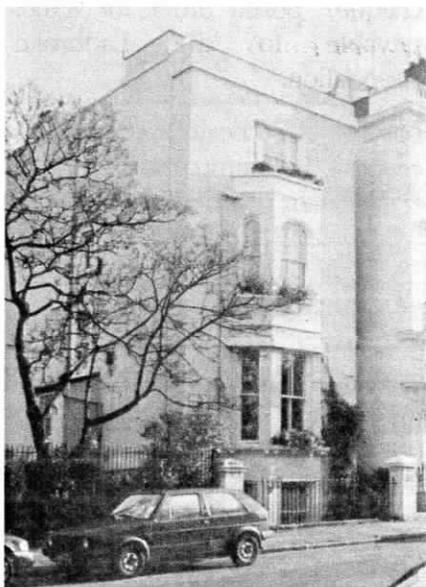
Summary and the Way Forward

The afternoon was taken up by the very interesting workshops:

To close the meeting Dudley Fishburn summarised the three main objectives of the Conference:

- 1 The inventory of London Squares should be updated and should include all those squares created since the 1931 Act, now probably totalling almost 600. There is also a need for updating the 1928 Royal Commission.
- 2 Because many of the trees in the garden squares are reaching maturity there is a need to encourage replanting for future generations. There is also an urgent need for amendment to the 1931 Act, for instance, by removing the Clause on sub-soil, to ensure a greater degree of protection for garden squares.
- 3 A representative group was to be formed to advance the English Heritage proposal for a bid for lottery funds.

Below: Some groupings of trees between houses in the Ladbrooke Estate



CHRISTMAS PARTY

On December 7th Ruth East kindly hosted the annual Christmas party for Ladbroke Association members. Her house is a visual and architectural triumph. Janice Gill again provided delicious canapés, the champagne flowed and the Christmas season was officially launched. It was a wonderful party and huge thanks are in order to Ruth and Guy East for their generous hospitality.

Would any member like to offer the hospitality of their home as a venue for the 1996 Christmas party?

WINTER LECTURE

Eric Robinson, Librarian of the Geologists' Association, gave a lively and stimulating talk on 'The Geology of the Ladbroke Area' on February 22nd.

A follow-up Summer walk to look at the way local buildings reflect geology will take place on Wednesday, July 3rd at 6.30pm. Details to follow.

COMING EVENTS

A Spring Walk, conducted by Henrietta Phipps, round Stanley Crescent Garden and Stanley Gardens, both North and South, will take place on Wednesday, 1st May. Members should meet at the Kensington Park Gardens gate to Stanley Crescent Garden at 6.15 for 6.30pm. Refreshments will be provided at the end of the walk in Stanley Gardens South.

The Ladbroke Association Pan-Squares Meeting will be held in Elgin/Lansdowne Garden. Provisional details: Sunday, 23rd June at 6.00 for 6.30pm. Entrance from Rosmead Road Gate.

A Summer Party to mark the 175th Anniversary of Thomas Allason's first basic plan for the Ladbroke Estate will be held at Lady Stirling's house at 25 Ladbroke Grove on Wednesday 12th June. Details to follow.

NOTTING HILL GATE

The Notting Hill Gate Improvement Group should be congratulated for what it has achieved in collaboration with the Borough, principal building owners and local residents – the many trees planted; the railings, bollards and paving all improved. The latest initiative was an open competition for ideas for further ways of developing the character of 'The Gate'. This competition attracted 40 entries. These varied from the professional to the truly amateur, and included proposals for 'features', clocks, sculpture, further planting, applying colour to the sixties buildings etc. It is hoped to carry out some of these ideas. All that is needed is the necessary funds! The competition entries have been on view, and selected proposals will be on view at a reception to be held in June – details later. R.M.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Ladbroke Association will be held in the Undercroft of St. John's Church, Ladbroke Grove, entrance beneath the North Porch, on Thursday, 20th June at 6.30 for 7.00pm. A talk will follow the meeting.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Hon Treasurer wishes to remind those members *without* standing orders that subscriptions are due on *1st April 1996*. Please send cheques, payable to 'The Ladbroke Association' to Paul Bastick, Hon Treasurer, The Ladbroke Association, 75A Ladbroke Grove, W11 2PD; minimum subscription £5.

Those members who pay by *standing order* are reminded that the Association's account has changed to: Barclay's Bank Plc, 212 Regent Street W1A 4BP. The sort code is 20-71-74 and the account number is 08522635.

Please check that your bank is aware of this.

THE COMMITTEE

The Officers and Committee for the year 1995-96 are President, Sir Angus Stirling; Chairman, Stephen Enthoven (tel. 221 5167); Hon Treasurer and Secretary, Paul Bastick (tel. 229 1741); Anne Chorley; Brian Ellsmoor; Ian Grant; Jill Lever; David Marshall; Robert Meadows; Peter Mishcon; Roderick Orr-Ewing; Thomas Pakenham; Peggy Post; Robina Rose; Mary-Jo Wormell; Editor, Jean Ellsmoor; Hon Auditor, Guy Mayers; Minute Secretary, Janet Barton.

MEMBERS' LETTERS

Please write telling us what subjects you would like to see covered in the Newsletter.

Tell us of matters you think should be aired, of points of particular interest that concern you – and would you be prepared to contribute to the Newsletter? If space allows we will publish your letters.

Please write to the Editor: Jean Ellsmoor, 19A Arundel Gardens, W11 2LN.

JOIN THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION and help conserve your area. For £5 per annum you receive the Association's Newsletter, can take part in guided walks around Ladbroke and its gardens, attend the annual lecture and other events.

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I would like to join the Ladbroke Association. I enclose a cheque/ postal order for £5.00, payable to the Ladbroke Association.

Name:

Address:

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Send to Paul Bastick, Hon Treasurer, The Ladbroke Association, 75A Ladbroke Grove, W11 2PD.