

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

Spring/Summer 2004

Ancient or Modern? - *David Campion*



When giving the Council's now Annual London Lecture this year, Simon Thurley, the Chief Executive of English Heritage, made the serious point that we ought not to regard our conservation areas as being preserved in aspic.

When considering the replacement of the previous undistinguished block of police flats, that existed on this site at the corner of Ladbroke Grove and Lansdowne Crescent, the challenge to the Ladbroke Association was to take a view as to whether it should seek a period Victorian pastiche or give support for a contemporary design.



The view of the site (bottom right) shows that the previous building was well disguised during the Summer months.



The present views of the site (above) looking south and north respectively, taken in April 2004, before the trees were in full leaf, do suggest that the new neighbour does in fact fit well into its surroundings and is acceptable as a replacement.

At the planning application stage there is often understandable public concern about how a new building will fit into its surroundings, and

THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2004

The Thirty-fifth AGM of the Association will be held on Thursday 1st July 2004 at 7:30pm for 7:45pm at St Peter's Church Hall, 59a Portobello Road, W11.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of last AGM
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Chairman's Report
5. Adoption of Annual Accounts
6. Re-election of Auditors
7. Election of Officers
8. Election of Committee
9. Any Other Business

Nominations for Officers and Committee Members, proposed and seconded, should reach the Chairman at 2 Kensington Park Gardens, London W11 before the meeting.

some people may take the view that "better the devil you know" than risk something that turns out to be less acceptable. In this case, while the new building may still upset some of those who live near it, it is hoped that any fears have now been allayed. The Ladbroke Association did not raise objection to the design at the planning stage.



DOES THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION STILL HAVE A PURPOSE?

Charles Levison, Chairman

The Ladbroke Association was founded in 1969, also the year in which the Ladbroke Conservation Area was designated by the Council of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

The impetus for the formation of the Association was the Council's proposal to cut down the plane trees lining the southern end of Ladbroke Grove. Led by Robert Meadows and other local residents, the Association was successful in opposing the proposals, and the trees remain.



Trees in Ladbroke Grove

Since that time the Ladbroke Association has maintained a regular review of all planning applications within the Conservation Area and has made every effort to fulfil its objectives, namely

- To encourage and promote high standards of architecture and town planning within the Conservation Area
- To stimulate and promote public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the neighbourhood
- To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.

These objectives remain as valid and alive as ever.

We live in an area which is one of the most perfect examples of town planning anywhere in the world. For anyone who has grown up in one of the garden squares on the Ladbroke Estate, it is hard to find anywhere finer to live in later life. Several of our members and current residents were born here. Oth-

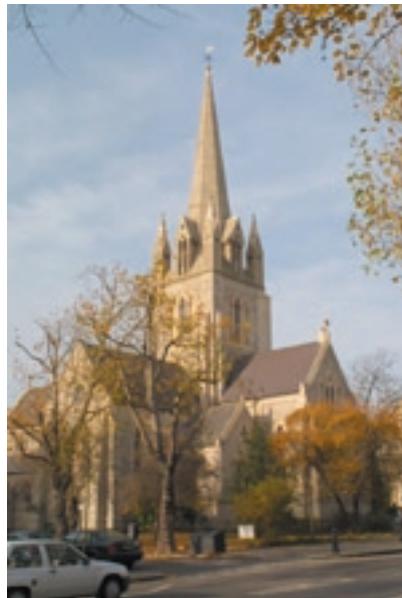


Ladbroke Square

ers have been drawn in to the area because of its beauty and peace.

The Association is not just a preservation society. It does not wish merely to preserve and retain existing buildings. Much has changed since the estate was laid out in the mid-nineteenth century, before modern planning legislation provided some protection for standards. Where ugly buildings have been erected in the intervening period, primarily as a result of bombing or immediate post-war reconstruction, the Association welcomes good contemporary architecture to replace those buildings, which takes into account the spirit and tradition of the original estate buildings. The estate has never been frozen in aspic. It has always contained a variety of styles, but it has never lost the core of superb houses and streets designed by Thomas Allom and others, nor the two churches which dominate Ladbroke Hill and the vista of Stanley Gardens, nor the layout of the sixteen garden squares first proposed by Thomas Allason.

While the Association's principal



St John's Church

role is reviewing and helping to enforce planning to ensure that no-one destroys the beauty of the Area, it is also involved in other issues affecting life in the area. We have supported the Council's ban on estate agents' boards in the area, reporting any boards that appear and helping to enforce the ban. We



St Peter's Church

are lobbying the Council to re-designate Portobello Road as a local shopping area, to give the Council additional planning controls. We are acting as a focal point for the Garden Committees who manage the private gardens in the Conservation Area, so that they may liaise more efficiently on subjects as wide-ranging as title ownership, equipment sharing, fox control and project management.

In 2002 the Kensington & Chelsea Council extended the Conservation Area to include additional parts of Portobello Road and Westbourne Park Road to the north, bringing a wider range of buildings, including many more shops, within the purview of the Association. We are looking for a resident of the extended area to join our Committee.

There is much to do. We want to compile a comprehensive photographic archive of the area. We have to concern ourselves with the growing demand for underground rooms and swimming pools which can, unless carefully controlled, harm our trees and the drainage of our gardens. We are concerned about the growth of cellular phone masts. We need to plan the careful maintenance and renewal of our trees as they approach maturity.

We are concerned that we should reflect the views of the broad community who live in the area. Everyone who is a resident of the

Ladbroke Conservation area should be a member of the Ladbroke Association in order that their views may be heard in the debate on continuing issues in the area.

I became Chairman of the Association last summer and wish to ensure that, during my three-year term, we may continue to build on the excellent work which the Ladbroke Association has carried out over the last thirty-five years.

**PLANNING:
WHY CONSERVE?**

Malcolm Pawley

Historic buildings, monuments, towns, villages and landscapes form a central part of our cultural heritage. Their survival offers an irreplaceable record which aids our understanding of the past and helps define our local and national identity. Both aesthetically and environmentally our daily lives are enriched by the quality of such buildings and areas.



*Kensington Park Gardens
(above and below)*

Designating such places as conservation areas aims to protect them from decay, neglect and unsympathetic redevelopment. It also encourages the retention and re-use of existing building stock, providing local skill-based employment and reducing the consumption of valuable energy resources.

The Planning Act of 1990 defines



a conservation area as being ‘of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. The character of the area is important. Any changes of use must be compatible with preserving that character or building which contributes to the value of the area.

An important part of the Ladbroke Conservation Area is the Portobello Road and its market, more of which is now covered by the extended



Portobello Road on Saturday

Conservation Area.

Over the past year there has been an increase in planning applications for the alteration and change of use of the shops in Portobello Road and its adjoining roads.

These applications have the effect of eroding the uniqueness of the Portobello Antiques Market, a world-famous and respected location. We, as an Association, will work to preserve this historic market and prevent high street names – some of which are appearing along Westbourne Grove – from replacing these established traders.

This is not always possible merely by using planning legislation, as that is subject to what is termed ‘market forces’. We would therefore be grateful for any suggestions on how the Portobello Road’s appearance can be preserved, and by what means.

The Portobello Antiques Traders Association have recently approached the Ladbroke Association over the proposals for 282–290 Westbourne Grove (Lipka & Sons Antiques). This application is for amendments to the layout of the Antique Traders market stalls on the ground and basement floors, as well as extending the residen-

tial accommodation on the floors above. With their help we will be lobbying the Council’s Planning Department to establish a coherent policy for the retention of this historic landmark. This must include the redesignation of Portobello Road as a Local Shopping street rather than as a Primary street.

Among many resultant benefits would be that it will ensure that individual shop premises are preserved and protected as single units rather than what has happened in



Westbourne Grove

Westbourne Grove (below) where the original character of the individual shops, further to the right, has been ignored by the design of a new building which made only a half-hearted attempt to mirror the prevailing streetscape.

Here, the applicant did not construct the new building in accordance with the approved planning permission and has subsequently lost a planning appeal to retain what has been built - perhaps a salutary lesson!

While, in this case, the new building replaced a previous petrol filling station, rather than a range of smaller scale individual shops, the same principle ought perhaps to apply in the interests of what is within a conservation area - in this case the adjoining Pembridge Conservation Area.

Lipka & Sons Westbourne Grove



THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION LECTURE 2003

Jan Brownfoot

Dame Jennifer Jenkins has lived in Notting Hill, on both sides of Ladbroke Square, from 1954 to the present day. She described the changes that have taken place in the area over the past fifty years.

Physically there has been comparatively little change; very few sites were bombed during the war and most had been rebuilt by 1954, so in Notting Hill – that is from Notting Hill Gate to the Westway and westwards to Royal Crescent – there have been only two major changes. One was the building of the Westway which caused immense upheaval, brought down a great swathe of small terraces, and significantly added to noise and pollution. There was a great deal of objection locally; however, the North Kensington Amenity Trust, under the chairmanship of John O'Malley, a former diplomat, worked with the council and the Trust and managed to improve the amenities, providing sports facilities near Shepherd's Bush.

In Notting Hill Gate itself the tall block of flats on the north side, built in the 1950s, ruined the skyline, but allowed a few larger shops to come in, although that is not always a blessing.



In 1954 there were three bakeries, each with their own baking equipment: they have all gone. There were two or three butchers; now there is only one. Lots of small grocers have also gone, and Waterstones replaced an excellent, small shop, Mandarin Books.

In those days Portobello Market was filled with fruit and vegetable stalls and some antiques shops; that has changed radically. Second-hand furniture shops sold very cheap furniture, while a disused cinema in Westbourne Grove had acres of second-hand furniture.



Garden Squares & Railings

The heart of Notting Hill was and is the Ladbroke Estate. Here there have been both social and physical changes. Fifty years ago it was a run-down area. During World War II and for some time afterwards there were allotments and barrage balloons in the gardens; now the gardens are very well kept and planted; and Victorian railings have been restored or replaced, and more amenities have been provided for children. In the 1950s there was no money for paint or builders. Many houses were divided into bed-sits, people flitted in and out of the area and there were a number of artists and writers around. There was also a sizeable community of immigrants, many of them West Indian. The most serious crisis was the Notting Hill race riots of 1958, but subsequently the West Indian community instigated the annual event of the Notting Hill Carnival.

Not all changes were for the better: for instance so many extensions

have been built to houses that you cannot see through to the communal gardens from the road any more. As more houses are owned by people who live abroad or have country houses too, the squares and the gardens will be affected. Only the Ladbroke Association has stopped more damaging changes. Fifty years ago there were cars, but you could always park outside your own front door. Now, even finding space for a motor bike can be a problem. Too many of the houses have converted their front gardens into parking places.

However, the great thing about Notting Hill is that it is a conservation area, has retained its beauty and has also retained its active and varied social life, thanks also to the Ladbroke Association.

ROBERT MEADOWS

David Champion

Robert Meadows was one of the earliest members of the Ladbroke Association, back in the 1970s.



He has served it with great distinction and his architectural background has been of immense value in providing the responses of the Association to the wide range of planning applications in the area during the last 40 years.

Robert has decided that the time has come for him to relinquish this role and his wise counsel will be greatly missed.

THE NOTTING HILL SYNAGOGUE

Peter Mishcon

At the time of the Summer 2001 issue of 'News from Ladbroke', we reported that dwindling membership had forced the Notting Hill Synagogue in Kensington Park Road to close its doors to worship and that, while its future was uncertain, there was hope that an organisation or group might appear who would be able to use this important local building for a wider community use.

Very shortly after the synagogue closed, a well-established community arts group entered negotiations with the Federation of Synagogues, the trustees of the synagogue, to take a lease for just this purpose. Sadly, these negotiations did not run their full course, and the building was sold to a commercial developer, UK Investments Limited. Planning permission was obtained in August of last year for a change of use from Use Class D1 (embracing a place of worship, art gallery, educational institution, public hall or library, medical or health facility) to Use Class B1 (business use, which embraces offices, studio space and light industrial).

During last year, the developers carried out a conversion of the building and currently let the building (still under the existing D1 use) to a branch of the Montessori School organisation who operate a day nursery in the building.

This building is an important building in Notting Hill and has recently been brought under the umbrella of the Ladbroke Association with the extension to the Ladbroke Conservation Area. Regrettably, neither the developer nor Ms Arnold, the Principal of the School, has responded to approaches made by 'News from Ladbroke' for comment on their future plans for the building. We do hope to be able to bring you more up to date in-

formation in subsequent issues of the News.



The old Synagogue as it looks now viewed from Convent Gardens



The Synagogue's new use - but for how long?



The attractive triple-arched window with its Stars of David temporarily whited out



The Montessori School sign



Unattractive new UPVC windows out of keeping with the Ladbroke Conservation Area

THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT TREE STRATEGY

David Campion

Summarised below is the response made to the Council jointly by the Ladbroke Association, the Norland Society, the Pembridge Association and the Kensington Society with the help of Fergus Kinmonth.

Such a document is admirable, fulfilling the need for an interface between local authority and the public in treescape conservation. Without this information, residents and newcomers may not immediately recognise the importance of the Borough's trees in a landscape and historical sense or as an element of protected heritage. .

A requirement exists, intended to maintain the number of trees in the Borough, in the event of their destruction or removal, but no mechanism to follow up or enforce it. The document declares only a timid intention to initiate prosecution in appropriate cases.

A particular concern is the maintenance of street trees and the Council's pruning policy; some excessive pruning has seriously affected the treescape amenity.

About 8,000 of the Borough's trees are actually at risk of root damage by cable contractors' with little legal redress where damage is caused.

The document lacks a proper summary of the Town & Country Planning Acts, including penalty scales and enforcement measures.

Development consent should be conditional upon compliance with arboricultural restrictions.

As a public information document and reference manual, it is excessively cumbersome. A more concise document might help the reader more easily to answer specific questions.

Importantly, are the resources available to implement the proposed strategy?

BEAUTY PATCHES

Gloria Mundi

Observant readers will doubtless already have been becoming aware of the relatively new – in aesthetic terms - problem of the front garden in Greater Ladbrokeia.

In architectural terms, the patch in front of a house is designed to draw and direct the eye, to complement, rather than compete with, the building in the centre of the plot. Once upon a time there were accepted styles for these front gardens: there were the colourful, flower-packed cottage gardens planted – unsurprisingly - in front of cottages, whilst the front gardens of town houses were a little more disciplined in content and colour, often consisting of a quartet of well-bred, seasonal shrubs, surrounded with appropriate, equally well-bred planting. And although there were these outward decorative differences between the two styles, what they had in common was their tight and homogeneous relationship with the buildings they adorned and ornamented.

But somehow, almost without noticing, the bit-that-leads-from-the-pavement suddenly seems, in several highly visible instances, to have nothing at all to do with the house behind. Perhaps it is because, to some, the phrase itself – ‘front garden’ like ‘front room’ seems to imply ‘best only’ room – one that is designed strictly to impress visitors. Whatever the reason, there is, I detect, a worrying tendency for the front garden to become a show-off zone and Gloria’s ever-sensitive antennae are quick to detect the scent of a new threat stalking the Ladbroke – the invasion of the Designer Garden.

Designer Gardens require, of course, Garden Designers, and vigilant people-watchers will soon detect one or two of these shy little creatures around the neighbourhood, once they know what they

are looking for. Tell-tale signs can include pristine green wellingtons on a sunny day, corduroys with pressed creases, pashmina mufflers and - STORY BOARDS.

The Designer Gardens these talented people create are easily identifiable – common features include fashionable colour schemes like grey and white - so very now; interestingly, very contemporary and vastly oversized metal containers, and most puzzling of all, little lines of rather weedy pleached trees edging the front plot. This last ornamental feature is most interesting, for there are in our little neighbourhood not too many formal gardens of classical French design, nor coloured gravel parterres waiting to be surrounded by geometric arborial features. And I fear this is only the beginning – future front patches could well hold such delights as shell-encrusted grottoes, plashing fountains, convoluted statues of rearing horses or prancing putti – fibreglass is, after all, so very versatile. All they will lack then will be themed background music – no, don’t even go there.

Three examples of what Gloria regards as good front garden design, i.e. appropriate to the place and the building, are 43 Clarendon Road, 46 Lansdowne Road and 4 Lansdowne Crescent.

These are followed by three examples of over-design, i.e. with little or no relation to the shape, age and style of building, as at 20 Kensington Park Gardens, 8 Lansdowne Crescent and 82 Ladbroke Road.



43 Clarendon Road, W11



46 Lansdowne Road, W11



4 Lansdowne Crescent, W11



*20 Kensington Park Gardens, W11
gigantic, pointless metal planters taking up almost the whole of the front of the property*



*82 Ladbroke Road, W11,
a minimalist installation*



*8 Lansdowne Crescent, W11
pleached trees along the front*

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2003

Charles Levison

Thanks to the generosity and kind hospitality of Mr and Mrs William Salomon, the Ladbroke Association's Christmas Party in 2003 was held at No. 1 Stanley Crescent.

No. 1 Stanley Crescent (see below) is an impressive stuccoed Thomas Allom house on the north side of Kensington Park Gardens at its junction with Stanley Crescent. A particular feature of Thomas Allom's houses is the stuccoed and detailed backs facing the gardens, which he treated with as much care as the fronts. Begun in 1853, the house benefits from a lavish entrance hall and open well staircase making it the perfect venue for a party.

We were shown into the charming library and, as numbers swelled, guests overflowed into the music room and the drawing room overlooking the gardens. All were plied with copious quantities of champagne and delicious canapés (thanks to Janice Miles).

Our thanks to the Salomons for allowing us to enjoy their beautiful house.



No 1 Stanley Crescent, on the left, and its neighbours, on the right, make an impressive architectural statement at the junction of Kensington Park Gardens and Stanley Crescent, W11

THE PAN-GARDEN SQUARES MEETING

The 2nd Garden Squares Meeting, organised by the Labroke Association, took place at St Peter's Church Hall on Monday 23rd February 2004.

The Minutes are printed as a loose-leaf insert issued with this Newsletter.

MEMBERS' GARDEN WALK Wednesday 2nd June 2004

Anne Chorley

Again this year, Henrietta Phipps has kindly agreed to lead a walk through some of the gardens on the Ladbroke Estate.

The gardens to be visited are:

- * Arundel Elgin
- * Arundel Labroke
- * Stanley Gardens North
- * Stanley Gardens South

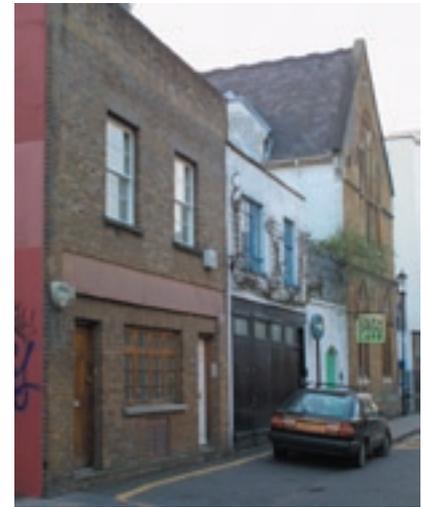
Admission will be by ticket only and numbers will be strictly limited so please apply early for your ticket to:

Anne Chorley 020 7727 7494
19 Stanley Gardens, W11 2NG

THE UPGRADING OF AN EXISTING BUILDING

David Campion

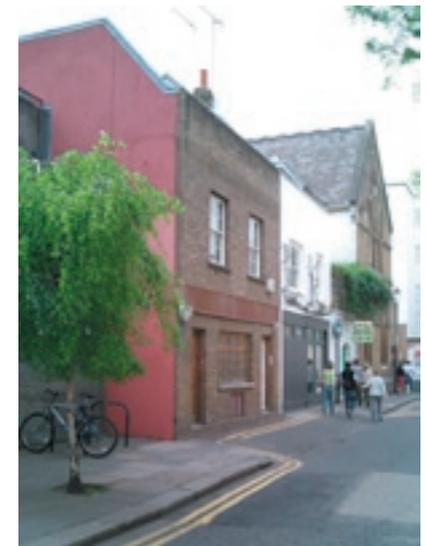
A small-scale example of the refurbishment of an existing building is demonstrated by a recent conversion in Portobello Road.



Before conversion

The middle building (above), with white-painted first floor, had its parapet below that of the adjoining building and the garage had for many years been used as storage for goods sold during the Saturday market.

The conversion (below) shows the first floor brickwork carried up to line through with the adjacent building on the left.



After conversion

The original metal windows have been replaced with timber-framed windows and the previous double-garage has been converted into a single garage and studio with the first floor being used for residential purposes.

THE GARDEN SQUARES MEETING 2004

The Second Garden Squares Meeting of the Ladbroke Estate Conservation Area was held at St Peter's Church Hall on Monday 23rd February 2004.

The Ladbroke Association had invited representatives of each of the communal gardens within the conservation area to attend the meeting, to provide a forum for discussion of issues affecting the garden squares and to support the efforts of the garden committees.

Thirteen of the sixteen gardens were represented. Charles Levison welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced members of the Ladbroke Association Committee. He hoped that all those present were members of the Association and would encourage other garden residents to join the Association if they had not already done so.

Issues:

1. Information and Co-operation Database

Anthony Thompson, from Ladbroke Square, presented a mind-map of the main issues facing the garden committees, which he divided into four main areas:-

- * Regular work requirements (e.g tree surgery, planting etc.)
- * Equipment audit/sharing
- * Annual costs (e.g. insurance, admin etc.)
- * Projects (tree removal, benches, fountains, railings)

He believed that there was a considerable scope for the benefit of each of the garden committees if there were to be a central pool of information and potential co-operation in all these areas and wondered whether this could be co-ordinated under the auspices of the Association. There was considerable support for this view.

Anthony Thompson was asked to prepare a more detailed brief for organising such an information/co-operation database.

The Association members present supported this initiative and would ask their Committee, when they

had the brief, to consider whether this could be done under the auspices of the Association and what if any additional resources might be required.

2. Ownership

It was evident that some garden committees were not clear as to the ownership of their garden squares. There were different ownership structures for different gardens and it would be helpful if there were one solicitor who could be found who could be or become a specialist in the area.

3. Involvement of RBKC

RBKC is generally reasonably vigilant in dealing with planning applications and enforcement in the area. It takes notice of the Association's and the garden committees' comments. However, it should be noted that a minimum of three objections to a planning application are required to force an application to be considered by the Planning Services Committee and that many more applications are being determined by planning officers under delegated authority. It was important to rally support from individuals for objections, where planning officers are supporting an application in opposition to the Association or garden concerned. It was noted that the

rears of houses and details such as railings were protected equally with the fronts of houses.

4. Conservation.

Since the last meeting in 2001 Robina Rose and Henrietta Phipps, with support from the Association, have been successful in getting all 16 gardens included on the English Heritage List of Parks and Gardens, thus enhancing the protection of the gardens.

5. Tree Strategy

The Association, together with Norland and Pembridge and the Kensington Society, had commented on the RBKC draft tree strategy document.

6. Other issues

A number of other issues were discussed including possible co-operation on insurance cover, dealing with foxes, issues surrounding public openings of private gardens, irrigation and the possibility of starting garden log-books.

It was agreed that the meeting had been extremely useful and that Anthony Thompson's initiative should be pursued and that similar meetings should be held on an annual basis. The Association was thanked, and in particular Anne Chorley, for organising the meeting.



Garden Party in Ladbroke Square 2003

RBK&C COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

The Council recently issued the following press release which may be of particular interest to those concerned with Garden Squares:

"Kensington and Chelsea's numerous garden squares are a major element in the character of the Royal Borough but they also have many legal issues to resolve.

Now local residents from garden square committees will be able to obtain free legal advice to tackle disputes thanks to a new Royal Borough initiative.

Knightsbridge solicitors Pemberton Greenish have been commissioned by the Council to represent garden square committees for the next year and to offer them legal advice in the myriad of issues that can arise.

Many of the matters that Pemberton Greenish will be asked to advise on centre around rights of access and what the money collected from those living around garden squares at the same time as Council Tax should be spent on.

Cllr Merrick Cockell, Leader of the Royal Borough, said:

"I would like to welcome Pemberton Greenish on board and look forward to them offering valuable advice when issues arise regarding garden squares. Pemberton Greenish have great experience in dealing with property issues and are certainly no strangers when it comes to the complex world of garden squares."

Forty-six of the 100 garden squares in Kensington and Chelsea are under the care and management of garden square committees under the Kensington Improvement Act 1851 or the Town Gardens Protection Act 1863.

The committee is responsible for the management of the garden. The committee decides, for example, what is needed and how much it will cost.

Rights of access to garden squares has long been a hazy topic. The rights set out in the 1851 Act generally extend to the occupiers of every house or building, the front or sides of which face, or form part of, the square in question, subject to certain conditions being fulfilled. The position is, however, complicated as the Act states that in some cases it is only the people responsible for paying the levy for the upkeep of the square who enjoy access.

The 1851 Act also charges the garden committee with the responsibility for the maintenance of the garden including keeping it "enclosed, laid out, fenced, planted, gravelled, maintained, repaired and embellished." Disputes often arise as there is no legal ruling on whether money gathered can be spent on more modern facilities such as children's play equipment and closed circuit television.

Pemberton Greenish has a wealth of experience in dealing with garden square matters and it is hoped they will be able to support garden square committees in resolving certain legal issues as they arise."

[End]

GARDEN SQUARES WITHIN THE LADBROKE CONSERVATION AREA

The following sixteen Garden Squares lie within the boundaries of the Ladbroke Conservation Area:

- * Arundel Elgin
- * Arundel Ladbroke
- * Blenheim Elgin
- * Clarendon Rd / Lansdowne Rd
- * Clarendon Road & Lansdowne
- * Hanover
- * Ladbroke Grove
- * Ladbroke Square
- * Lansdowne Crescent
- * Lansdowne Elgin
- * Lansdowne Road/Crescent
- * Montpelier
- * Notting Hill
- * Stanley Crescent
- * Stanley Gardens North
- * Stanley Gardens South

but it should be noted that not all of these are the subject of the 1851 Act, e.g. Labroke Square, which is said to be the largest private garden square in London.

A Reminder:

Any tree works to be undertaken within these garden squares will in general require an application to the Council for permission to carry out such work.



Stanley Gardens South