

Ladbroke News

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

WINTER 2020



Shops in the Portobello Road in the early 1900s

SHOPS AND SHOPFRONTS

The Ladbroke estate was an early example of town planning, and like all good town planners the designers of the estate took care to provide local shops. They erected, for instance, a row of small shops at the southern end of both Ladbroke Grove and Clarendon Road, no doubt noting that both were relatively far from the Portobello Market and from any shops in Notting Hill Gate. What are now Nos. 2–10 Clarendon Road were built in the 1840s with two floors above the shops, to house the tradesman's family and to provide space for stores and preparation. All were occupied by the time of the 1851 census. Where the Michanicou brothers' greengrocery now is, there was a dyer and scourer (i.e. somebody who cleans clothes); further along there was a fruiterer, a draper, a fishmonger and a dairyman.

One can usually recognise a building with a purpose-built shop, as the front gives straight onto the pavement – whereas residential properties almost invariably had a front garden and/or a lightwell. As the area became more populated and richer, it seems that these small shops were no longer sufficient to serve the needs of the neighbourhood. As the 19th century advanced, front gardens began to be converted into one-storey shops. The shops between Holland Park Underground station and Clarendon Road are an example. There was originally a handsome terrace of three or four storey houses, the upper floors of which can be seen set back above the shops. There are other good examples in Notting Hill Gate, where the façades of earlier buildings can be glimpsed above Lloyds and NatWest Banks.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

Our 2020 Annual General Meeting was originally due to be held in July. We decided to postpone it until October, in the hope that we would then be able to meet in person. As this still not possible, we decided that we would have either to arrange a meeting by Zoom, or to conduct the meeting in writing through the newsletter. We finally decided on the latter.

We are required by our constitution to give members 14 days' notice of the AGM and we hereby do so. We have picked 31 December as the notional date of the meeting. The papers for the meeting and instructions to members on how they can participate are on pages 6–7.

AGENDA

- 1 Adoption of minutes of last meeting;
- 2 Matters arising from the minutes;
- 3 Chairman's Report;
- 4 Treasurer's Report and adoption of accounts;
- 5 Election of officers;
- 6 Election of committee;
- 7 Any other business.



Purpose built shops in Portobello Road

Portobello Road – or Portobello Lane as it was called – already had a street market before it was built up in the 1850s and 1860s (before then it was a country lane leading to Portobello Farm). The developers clearly decided that, given the existence of the market, the road should be a commercial zone and most of the buildings along Portobello Road north of Westbourne Grove were built with shops on the ground floor. Again the normal pattern was to have two floors above to house the family of the tradesman and to provide space where craftsmen could work (although when the family was small, they often took lodgers or housed apprentices). The entrance to the upper floor was through the shop and there was usually a yard at the back.

Buildings with shops on the ground floor were also erected in nearby streets like the Portobello end of Elgin Crescent and Blenheim Crescent, and also along the northern part of Kensington Park Road.

Most of these shops have a paved forecourt in front of them. The paving of the forecourts often joins almost seamlessly with the public pavement and people do not always realise that part of what they are walking along is private property and belongs to the shop. Shops can put wares on

their forecourts, and some rent them out to small stallholders. Some of the forecourts, especially in Westbourne Grove, Elgin Crescent and Blenheim Crescent, retain the original York paving stones on their forecourts, some very handsome and in our view well worth preserving.

What did the original shopfronts look like? Sadly, none survive from the 19th century, but there is a double Edwardian shopfront at Nos. 173-175 Portobello Road, erected by George Portwine, a successful butcher, with handsome red marble pilasters.

What do survive are some of the original Victorian brackets or corbels that bookend the fascia, and the Council is encouraging their reinstatement when planning permission for new shopfronts is sought. Some shops also had handsome wrought iron brackets with hanging signs and we greatly regret the disappearance of the



George Portwine's butcher's shop



Magnificent York paving slabs outside 158 Portobello Road



Victorian corbel with lion's head and acanthus leaves, rather marred by wires and boxes

pawnbroker's balls on No. 158 Portobello Road.

Any new shopfront requires planning permission and the Ladbroke Association keeps a close eye on these applications. As there is a fairly rapid turnover of shops in the Portobello Road, applications for new shopfronts come round fairly frequently. Council policy is to "require alterations to existing shopfronts to preserve those elements that contribute to their traditional character, such as corbels, part-glazed doors, fascia, glazing bars,

pilaster and stall-risers”, and it has issued an excellent Shopfront Design Guide which sets out what it expects in great detail. The traditional shopfront had solid stall-risers or panels below its windows, and our general view – usually shared by the Council – is that floor-to-ceiling plate glass is out of character in the Portobello area. Open shopfronts are also frowned upon.

These days, the floors above the shops in the Portobello Road are increasingly given over to residential accommodation and many a shop now has a desirable maisonette above it. Over the past few decades one of the most frequent alterations has been the insertion of a door at street level to provide access to the accommodation above. This clearly makes sense, although it does mean a narrower shopfront.

Pawnbroker's balls at No. 158, still there in 2006



NOTTING HILL POLICE STATION

As members will recall, the Metropolitan Police announced in 2017 that they were closing Notting Hill Police Station and would be selling it to raise funds. In fact, it remained open until September last year. Even though it is closed to the public, the Met are continuing to use it and there has not been any recent talk of a sale. We understand that it is used partly as offices by the CID and partly as a “hub” for the local community police.

The Met have now confirmed that the Police Station will finally close in 2022. It has not yet said anything about what happens next, but the assumption must be that it will be sold.

We have been working with the Kensington Society to press for the continued use of the site for community purposes, reminding the Council of the policy in the Local Plan (the document that sets out the policies that the Council will apply in deciding planning applications) that says that the Council will seek to “protect land and/or buildings where the current use is or the last use was a social or community use, for re-use for the same, similar or related use”. Such a use could be for instance for a health centre or a care home, and it could be more than one use, possibly even including a small police office.

The Kensington Society has also succeeded in

obtaining “Asset of Community Value” status for the Police Station. This means that, before the asset is sold, the owner must offer it to the local community (at the market price). It is of course unrealistic to suppose that the community would be able to purchase this site on its own (the ACV regime was brought in chiefly to allow for e.g. villagers to purchase their local shop or pub and run it as a community venture). But it does have a certain symbolic value and adds to the mood music.

Before the station was closed to the public, the Met opened a “counter” in Royalty Studios, Lancaster Road (just round the corner from Ladbrooke Grove). This is open to the public during working hours only and is very badly signed, so we suspect few are aware of its existence. The Met have announced that they also intend to close that counter at the end of June 2021. This would leave the whole north of the borough without any police presence at all – the nearest police stations would be in Earl’s Court Road and Uxbridge Road. We will be campaigning with the Kensington Society for some sort of presence in the area. The police want people to report incidents online, or else to officers on the beat. The latter have computers that theoretically allow them to take statements and provide a print-out with a crime number. But even if one can find an officer, the anecdotal evidence is that the equipment does not work well.

PLANNING ISSUES

Ladbroke Arms

In September the Ladbroke Arms in Ladbroke Road applied for permission to erect an immovable metal “pergola” with louvred screens over its outside seating area. The Ladbroke Arms is one of the oldest pubs in our area, dating back to about 1850, and is popular among local residents both as a place to drink and for its good food. It also has a very attractive original façade, which would be largely obscured by such a pergola. The Ladbroke Association objected to the application, which we are happy to say has now been refused.

We were puzzled by the application. The outside seating area is one of the pub’s attractions (and an application at this time seems particularly inappropriate given that Government guidance is for eating places to be open to the air as much as possible). People are increasingly favouring outside eating and drinking in London, and the pergola would make the area in front of the pub a lot less agreeable except in the coldest months (of which we seem to be having ever fewer). Even in bad weather, the current large umbrellas provide protection against most showers, and they could be supplemented by space heaters (although we accept that these are not good from the environmental point of view).

St John’s House

This large building on the corner of Ladbroke Grove and St John’s Gardens has long been a mess. It seems originally to have been two houses, with, as far as one can make out from the old maps, two doors next to each other centrally placed on the St John’s Gardens side, thus achieving the symmetry that is typical of our area. Many years ago, however, an extension was built on one side of that façade and then or subsequently one of the doors removed (the building has long been a single block of flats), creating a thoroughly lopsided effect. The building badly needs renovation and last year an application was put in for a major makeover, including the building out of the St John’s Gardens façade in such a way that the symmetry would be restored. The



The Ladbroke Arms (photo 2006)



The asymmetrical façade of St John’s House

Ladbroke Association Committee liked the design, subject to a few minor points, and supported the application. Curiously, however, the RBKC Conservation and Design team took the view that the asymmetry was part of the character of the building and the application was refused on this among other grounds. The case went to appeal and an Inspector allowed the appeal, pointing out that the recreated symmetrical elevation “would be in a scale, form and with detailing entirely consistent with [the building’s] existing character and appearance”. She also noted that “it would also be consistent with buildings also found within the surrounding well-defined urban grain which upholds symmetry and repetition of stylistic features as a defining characteristic”. We think this is a good result.

We have three architects on our committee, one of whom was involved in the design of the renovated St John’s House. Our normal practice – followed in this case – is to ask any architect involved in a planning application to absent himself during the committee’s discussion of it.

Tables and chairs on the pavement

In normal times, if a café or eating establishment wishes to put tables and chairs on the pavement, it needs to obtain both planning permission and a “pavement licence” from the council in its capacity as a highways authority. Because of the Government’s desire to encourage outside eating and drinking as much as possible during the pandemic, legislation was passed in July (the Business and Planning Act 2020) to simplify the procedures. Establishments now only have to obtain a pavement licence, and if they do so, they are deemed to have planning consent. A licence may also be granted for placing tables and chairs in parking bays and closed roads. The licences granted under the new regime are only valid until the end of September 2021 after which the previous regime kicks in.

One of those who has applied for this new style licence is Ole & Steen, the Danish bakery chain, who have taken over the site on the corner of Notting Hill Gate and Pembridge Road that used to be occupied by W.H. Smith and then Jamie Oliver. They want to put

tables along their Pembridge Road frontage. We considered whether to object on the grounds that this was a busy bit of road and pedestrians might be

impeded. In the end we decided not to do so. The tables will be small and right up against the wall; and they can always be removed later if they are causing problems.

PLANNING WHITE PAPER

The Government issued a White Paper in the summer on a radical overhaul of the planning system. Fortunately, it proposes to leave the regime in conservation areas like ours relatively untouched. But in other areas, it proposes that the public should be consulted only about general planning policies and not on individual applications, which would represent a reduction in local democracy. It also proposes an algorithm for housing targets that would give results impossible to implement in a borough as densely populated as Kensington and Chelsea. Another quirky idea was that there should be design codes for “beauty”. As beauty is well-known to be in the eye of the beholder, any such codes would in our view be bound to be subjective, and might just end up working against worthwhile innovation and anything that was not in line with the current architectural fashions (and we note that architects are as influenced by fashion as anybody else). The Ladbrooke Association put in a response to the White Paper making some of these points.

NEW HOTEL AT 164–146 NOTTING HILL GATE

Demolition is about to begin on the old Marks & Spencer block to make way for the new hotel. We were concerned about possible damage to the mural in the passage down the side of the old Marks and Spencer premises and contacted the developer about it. We are happy to say that they agreed to give it protection and it is now covered in a hoarding.

CYCLE LANES

Since the pandemic, there has been no word out of TfL about

their plans for a two-way cycle lane down Notting Hill Gate and Holland Park Avenue. However, when lockdown ended, the Council came under strong pressure to install a temporary “pop-up” cycle lane along High Street Kensington, to join one already put in place by Hammersmith and Fulham west of Olympia, and make it easier to travel to work by cycle rather than public transport during the pandemic. The Council, after consulting local residents’ associations (who seemed pretty relaxed) went ahead in October, with cycle lanes on either side of the road.

Nobody foresaw, however, quite what chaos would be caused at the pinch point where the road narrows by the Royal Garden Hotel, with huge back-ups especially on the southern side. There was a strong outcry from almost all the residents associations and also from local businesses, with pressure on the Council to remove it sooner rather than later. The Council bowed to this pressure and is now removing the lane, bringing a strong reaction from the cycling lobby. Many regret that the experiment was not allowed to continue longer, so as to give it more of a chance to bed down and to get better data on usage and problems.

In some ways (apart from the pinch point) High Street Kensington seemed a more suitable street for a cycle lane than Holland Park Avenue–Notting Hill Gate, as it is wider and there was therefore room to put in two one-way lanes wide enough for slow cyclists to be passed by fast ones (and incidentally wide enough to take ambulances in emergencies) – whereas the lane proposed for our area would have been a

narrow two-way one, more dangerous for all concerned. But what this affair demonstrates is the very real difficulty of installing segregated cycle lanes in busy high streets with buses, shops and pedestrians. Kensington and Chelsea is not the only borough to have run into problems with such pop-up lanes, and there have been numerous articles in the press on the subject. Most people accept the desirability of cycling as a low-pollution and healthy mode of travel, and there is little doubt that cyclists are safer in segregated lanes. But how to create them through central London shopping centres without real prejudice to other road users remains a conundrum.

In the meantime, the Council is pressing ahead with a programme of “quietways”, cycle routes along the quieter back streets, where they share the road space with motor vehicles. These include one from Shepherds Bush to Chepstow Villas, which goes through the Ladbrooke area along Clarendon Road, St John’s Gardens and Kensington Park Gardens. To facilitate an easy passage for cyclists, the roadway next to the church has been blocked to cars by the installation of wooden planters (not yet planted). We would be interested in opinions on the planters. Some think they are out of keeping with the area and elegant bollards would be better.

The plan is (as described in our last newsletter) then to close one side of the junction of Kensington Park Gardens and Ladbrooke Road so that it can only be used by cyclists. This is unlikely to happen before March, and even then will depend on the availability of finance from TfL (who fund these schemes).

OBITUARY – DAVID CAMPION

We regret to announce the death of David Campion, an architect who was a councillor for 51 years – a record for a ward councillor – and was also a long-standing and invaluable member of the Ladbroke Association committee. Not only did he give valuable advice to us on architectural matters, but he was an early IT expert and designed the first websites of the Ladbroke Association, the Pembridge Association, the Norland Conservation Society and the Kensington Society. On the Council he was *inter alia* Chairman of the Borough's Environment Advisory Committee, Mayor in 1985–86, and for many years was on the Planning Committee, where he displayed strong and consistent views on conservation issues.

DIWALI LIGHTS

Our area has been getting a bit of a reputation for its hallowe'en decorations. They were more muted this year, but there was one fine display for Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, in Clarendon Road.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The following are the papers for the AGM.

1. Adoption of minutes of last meeting

These are on our website at www.ladbrokeassociation.info. David Marshall has proposed their adoption and Sandra Kamen has seconded. Unless we receive amendments by the end of 31 December 2020, we shall take them as adopted. Amendments to be sent to chair@ladbrokeassociation.info.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

The Committee members do not wish to raise any matters from the minutes. If members wish to raise anything arising from the minutes, please could they email the chairman by 23 December and we will post them on the Ladbroke website before the meeting so that others can also comment.

3. Chairman's report

This has been a difficult year for us all. Since February, we have not been able to hold live committee meetings and have conducted most

business by email. The Council officers with whom we deal have been working from home, and it has been pretty easy to contact them by phone or email – indeed probably easier than before the pandemic, as they are spending less time in meetings. But it has not always been possible for them to make site visits. Planning committees have continued to meet, but by video-link, with any member of the public being able to join the link (although only those who have registered can speak). It is however far from perfect: only the person speaking is shown on screen and it is difficult to get clues from body-language. But it has meant that the planning system has continued to operate, albeit rather slowly at times.

Architects seem to have continued working throughout, and after an initial dip at the beginning of the February lockdown there has been a steady stream of planning applications coming in. Each week, the applications are circulated to all committee members. One of the three architects on our committee has an in-depth look at them and advises on whether we should support, object or make no comment. So we have not been inactive.

This last year we have also circulated a number of email alerts to members about various Council initiatives on a variety of subjects from how the Council should spend the Community Infrastructure Levy to cycleways. We are always grateful for the comments that we get from members and pass them on to the Council where we think that would be useful. We were also heavily involved in the “Save Our Streets” group of local associations fighting the proposal for a segregated cycleway along Holland Park Avenue and Notting Hill Gate, in abeyance for the moment.

Our website has been looking increasingly old-fashioned and is also difficult to read on mobile phones and tablets. We have therefore been giving it a makeover. We will be switching to the new one in the new year and hope members like it. A surprising number of people from North America and Australia visit our website as they find the information we have on our Streets pages useful in researching their ancestors. As can be seen from the accounts, there was a kind donation last year from an enthusiast for his family tree who found our website very informative.

4. Treasurer's Report and adoption of accounts

We are glad to have produced a surplus for the year, resulting in a healthy bank balance. Subscription income has reduced this year as membership has fallen from 375 to 350 members. An unusual number of members who pay by standing order ceased to do so without notice and we suspect that this may be due to a problem with either our or their bank. We are therefore contacting them to check that

they really meant to end their subscriptions. We did however gain 11 new members in the financial year.

On the expenditure side, our costs were reduced this year as we were able to send notices about the AGM and the winter party with newsletters. We also cut expenditure on secretarial services as our committee member Kay Broadbent is kindly assisting the Treasurer with gift aid applications and maintaining comprehensive membership lists.

We are actively looking at expenditure that can be usefully employed within the rules of our constitution. To this end, we are currently making a donation of £2,500 to repair St. Peter's Church clock. This will be reflected in next year's accounts.

I believe it is important for us to keep up a healthy balance. For instance, we may need costly professional advice if any particularly troublesome planning application is submitted that generates controversy and requires greater knowledge of the regulations than our committee can muster.

I do not intend to recommend increasing the subscription rates as I think that current expenditure for the next few years can be accommodated within the projected income and reserves.

The expenditure for this year has been approved by the committee and trustees but if members have any queries, please would they visit the Ladbroke Association website. *Paul Bastick, Treasurer*

¹ We endeavour to collect gift aid annually but current income from this source has not fallen within the financial year under review. We should see some income in next year's accounts.

² This financial year we had no garden walk but did have a party, generating income of £1,450 and making a profit.

³ Donation from a person who found our website useful.

⁴ We have subscriptions to the following:

The London Forum (a discussion group for all London amenity associations)
The Kensington Society

The Arboricultural Association

London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust

The difference in expenditure on subscriptions from year to year depends on how they are paid and how they are accounted for within the financial year.

⁵ There will be a final payment for the new website in the next financial year.

5. Election of officers

The Chairman was elected last year for a three-year term. But the Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary must be re-elected every year. Paul Bastick has offered to continue as Treasurer and Anne Chorley as Secretary. Both these appointments have been proposed by Graham Child and seconded by Jeff Durrell. Unless we hear to the contrary by the end of 31 December they will be deemed to have been elected.

6. Election of Committee.

We currently have the following committee members:

Kay Broadbent
Catherine Faulks
David Marshall
Malcolm Pawley
Anthony Temple QC

Tom Croft
Sandra Kamen
Peter Mishcon
Peggy Post

The terms of Tom Croft and Catherine Faulks have expired and both have been proposed for election by Graham Child and seconded by Jeff Durrell. In addition, we have a new committee member whom we have temporarily co-opted on to the committee, Nick Simmons, who lives in Boyne Terrace Mews and runs a local graphic design business. His election is now proposed by Graham Child and seconded by Jeff Durrell. Unless we hear to the contrary by the end of 31 December, all these will be deemed to have been elected.

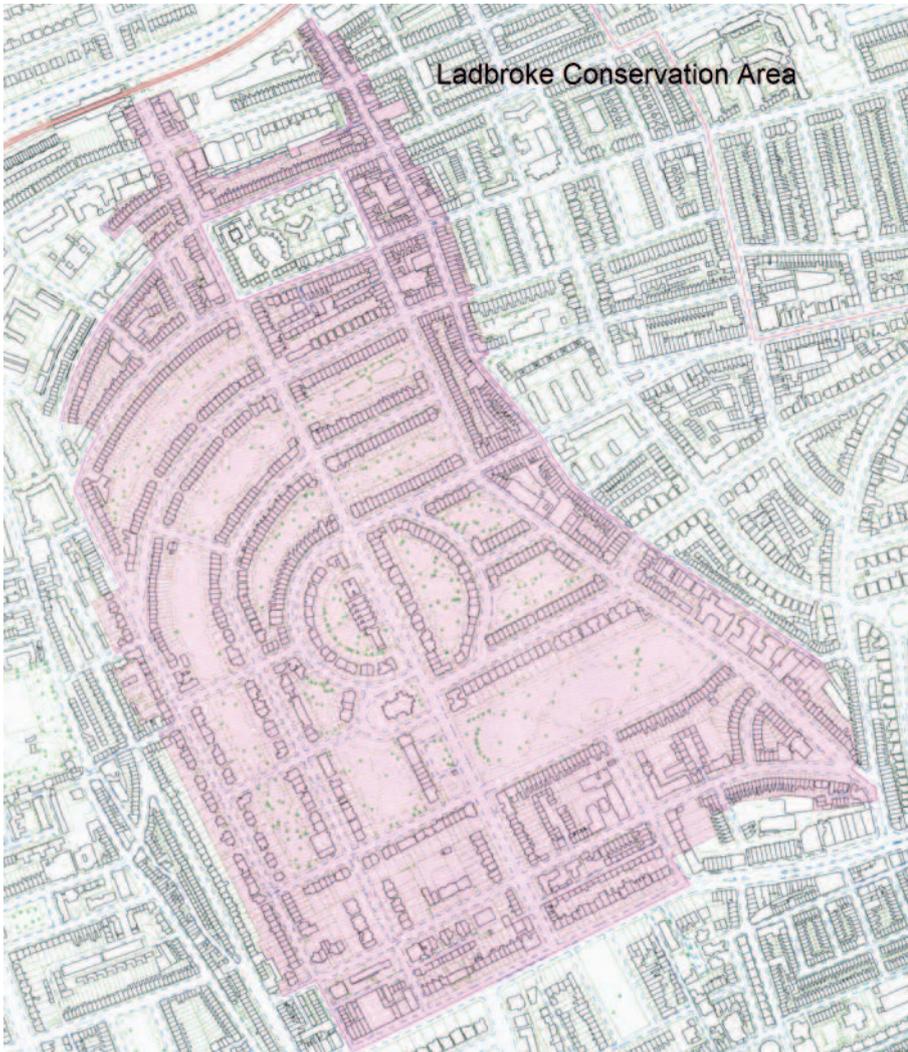
If there are further nominations, please could these be sent to the Hon Secretary at 19 Stanley Gardens W11 2NG, or info@ladbrokeassociation.info at least a week before the day of the meeting, proposed and seconded. We will then post them on our website so all can see them and invite votes to be sent to the chairman at chair@ladbrokeassociation.info by the eve of the meeting.

7. Any other business

Please could members email the chairman at least two days before the meeting if there is any other business they wish to raise. She will then put the item on the website and invite comments. A reply will then be sent after the meeting. The same applies to any questions or comments on the treasurer's or chairman's reports.

Income and Expenditure Account Year Ending 31st March 2020

	2020 £	2019 £
Income		
Subscriptions	5395.00	6252.00
Interest from deposit account	31.98	33.51
Gift Aid ¹	–	1767.20
Party/Garden Walk ²	1415.00	420.00
Donations ³	20.00	–
	<u>6861.98</u>	<u>8472.71</u>
Expenditure		
Printing, postage, stationery	375.63	679.43
Newsletter	3999.61	3806.78
AGM		
(hire of church hall and refreshments)	221.52	200.75
Party/Garden Walk	1093.31	713.73
Subscriptions ⁴	162.00	225.00
Secretarial	–	110.00
Website ⁵	–	780.00
Return subscription	15.00	–
	<u>5867.07</u>	<u>6515.69</u>
Surplus for year	994.91	1957.02
From previous year	<u>24908.64</u>	<u>22951.62</u>
	<u>25903.55</u>	<u>24908.64</u>
Barclays Current account	8508.64	8025.71
Barclays Premium account	<u>17394.91</u>	<u>16882.93</u>
	<u>25903.55</u>	<u>24908.64</u>



THE OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

President: Thomas Pakenham

Officers:

Chairman: Sophia Lambert

Vice Chairman: Jane Martineau

Hon Treasurer: Paul Bastick

Hon Secretary: Anne Chorley

Committee Members:

Kay Broadbent

Tom Croft

Catherine Faulks

Sandra Kamen

David Marshall

Peter Mishcon

Malcolm Pawley

Peggy Post

Nick Simmons

Tony Temple

Newsletter: Sophia Lambert

editor@ladbrokeassociation.info

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

The Association is a charitable non-political organisation. Its constitution requires it to promote and encourage the following objectives by charitable means but not otherwise:

- To encourage and promote high standards of architecture and town planning within the Ladbroke Estate 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.

The complete constitution of the Ladbroke Association is on its website at:

www.ladbrokeassociation.info

and the website also includes much historical information about the conservation area.

MEMBERSHIP

The Ladbroke Association was founded in 1969, in the same year as the designation of the Ladbroke Conservation area. The original impetus for the setting up of the Association was a proposal by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to cut down and replace the plane trees along the southern end of Ladbroke Grove. Led by the well-known architect and town-planner Robert Meadows and other local residents, the Association was successful in opposing the proposals, and the trees remain.

The Association is registered as a charity (Charity No. 260627) and is therefore subject to the strict rules governing charities.

The Association receives notices of planning applications and inspects, discusses and comments on those which affect the Ladbroke area in any significant way. In addition, the Association has been involved in (and sometimes initiates) discussion with the planning authorities on wider questions of conservation and planning policy.

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 Association so that their views may be heard in the debate on continuing issues in the area.

The more members we have, the more influential we can be. At present we have under 400, as many people have moved away. If you have new neighbours, please do encourage them to join. Membership for a person or family costs only £15 a year, which is we reckon a bargain in this day and age.

Would-be members can download a membership form from our website:

www.ladbrokeassociation.info

or apply to the Hon Treasurer: **Paul Bastick, 75A Ladbroke Grove, W11 2PD**

This edition of the newsletter was edited by Sophia Lambert and the printing was done by K J S Print Services Ltd, Peterborough.