

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

AUTUMN 1996

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM, which was once again very well attended, was held this year for the first time in the new undercroft of St John's Church, which is proving a useful new resource for the area.

After apologies for absence and some questions relating to the previous year's meeting, the Chairman, Stephen Enthoven, reviewed the past year under the headings of the three objectives for our area stated in our constitution:

1 To encourage and promote high standards of architecture

Our long-running battle to get planning law changed to bring changes currently allowed under "permitted development" within planning control had resulted in the introduction of new powers for the Council to impose "Article 4.2 Directions" in Conservation Areas, without having to apply to the Secretary of State as formerly, to cover some changes to the appearance of houses from the public highway.

Unfortunately, however, this had been accompanied by some weakening of the legislation where such Directions had not been imposed. Ladbroke was to be the first Conservation Area to be the subject of such a Direction, since it had com-

missioned a suitable report from McCoy and Partners in 1994 with a view to seeking protection under the old Article 4, had the law not been changed. There had been no other planning issues of major significance this year.

2 To stimulate and promote public interest in the beauty of the neighbourhood

This had been a very busy year for events: the Christmas party, the Spring walk to study geology in the area and the Garden walk had all been very well attended, and we had held a Summer party (see below).

3 To encourage the preservation and improvement of features of amenity or historic interest

The Council was abolishing its Planning Advisory Group and hoped to set up a replacement structure which would be a more effective means for us to make our views known.

We were trying to help them find more space for residents' parking.

Owing to Brian Ellsmoor's persis-

tence in pushing for firm action, the area was now virtually free of estate agents' boards.

We encouraged residents to approach the Council if they were unhappy with the siting of replacement lamp-posts or with the standards of paving works, and had asked them to use York stone where possible.

We had played a part in the success of the Notting Hill Improvements Group. The profits from the Christmas and Summer parties raised £230 in aid of the NHIG.

After the approval of the accounts and re-election of Guy Mayers, our invaluable auditor, the officers were re-elected, the Chairman agreeing to serve a fifth term as no successor had been found. Peter Mishcon and Mary Jo Wormell were re-elected to the Committee, but Jill Lever and Roderick Orr-Ewing had resigned and were replaced by Jean Ellsmoor and David Blakeman. The Chairman thanked all members for their hard work.

SUMMER PARTY

This was celebrated on 12th June in the garden of our President, Sir Angus, and Lady Stirling, who had played such an important part in forming the Association. It was a very popular and enjoyable party, with the bonus of a perfect Summer evening.

(l to r) Stephen Enthoven, Sir Angus Stirling and Lady Stirling



PAN-SQUARES MEETING

The second Pan-Squares Meeting was held on Sunday 23rd June 1996 in Elgin/Lansdowne Garden.

The Chairman, Mary Jo Wormell, welcomed representatives of the 15 private gardens on the Ladbroke Estate. She outlined the conservation background, citing the 1928 Royal Commission on London Squares followed by the 1931 Act of Parliament which gave a limited degree of protection to London's garden squares, then numbering 460 but now over 600. More recently, Dudley Fishburn MP attempted through a Private Members Bill to amend this Act to give a greater degree of protection particularly to the land underneath the garden squares. Similarly Roger Phillips had founded the Society for the Protection of London Squares as his area had been particularly vulnerable to the threat of an underground car park. The 1988 National Heritage Act enabled English Heritage to compile a Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. In 1995, the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, with the help of a grant from English Heritage, began a survey of all of Greater London's parks and gardens. They have completed an inventory for the City of Westminster of every green space including the churchyards and cemeteries.

The Chairman introduced the first speaker, **Dr Harriet Jordan, Inspector of Parks and Gardens for English Heritage**. She began by saying how much she had enjoyed seeing five of the gardens on the Ladbroke Estate, which had given her a good idea of the variety and special quality of the gardens. She explained about listing and how squares had been selected for the Register, both inside London and outside as in spa towns.

A site would be included if it were of historic interest, if it had been a particularly good example of the landscape movement, if it had been influential in the development of taste in landscape design, or was

the work of a well-known designer, or had been associated with certain people or events. Anything before the 1750s was rare.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in garden squares. The London Division of English Heritage has put money towards a survey of public sites and those in private ownership, to re-assess these nationally and to include a particular range of London squares; the landscape context is crucial. Listing does not have any statutory powers; the Register is only an advisory document to be used as a basis for local planning policy.

The Chairman then introduced **Charles Levison, a lawyer**, who spoke on the practical and financial implications of the Acts which govern our squares.

He outlined the history of the Ladbroke Estate and how the 1851 Kensington Improvement Act still affected us. Although it specifically covered the parish of St Mary Abbots, it provided for the management of gardens on the Ladbroke Estate, the setting up of committees and the organisation of finance. The original members of garden committees were male resident householders. More recent changes in 1992 specified Council Tax payers. In the 19th century, however, it was the Town Gardens Protection Act of 1863 which provided for the enactment of the Bye Laws of Garden Committees and Section Five stipulated imprisonment of up to 14 days for any injury to a garden. Next came the London Square and Enclosures (Preservation) Act of 1906 and the Great Royal Commission of 1928 followed by the London Squares Preservation Act of 1931 which set down that these gardens should be ornamental pleasure grounds for rest and recreation and accord benefit to the health of London, to be preserved permanently.

This Act, however, did not protect the use of sub-soil; there is a risk that owners could decide to build an underground car park and there

is no protection against this in any statute. In the 1931 Act, every single garden is listed and ownership when known, with details of how finances are organised.

Charles Levison explained the role of the Garden committee which has to be re-elected every year, and how it can appoint sub-committees. In fact, provision for the management of such a committee is still contained in the 1851 Act. There are different financial structures; in some cases rates are levied by the Garden Committees asking for a precept to be put to the Council, which pays this over in advance every year to the garden committee to be used exclusively for maintaining ornamental enclosures.

Following the AGM, Carolyn Starren, RBK&C Local Studies Librarian, spoke on the Royal Connection from Henry VIII to our present Royal family. Her talk was illustrated by coloured slides from the RBK&C libraries showing a fascinating panorama of our local Royal connections.

She also provided a very interesting exhibition of photographs from the archives showing us the rich historical background of the area we all enjoy.

LAMP POSTS

by Brian Ellsmoor

The pediment above Kensington Park Terrace North is fully recognised in the RBK&C's 'Unitary Development Plan'. However, the unity of this architectural composition has been spoilt by the presence of a large concrete lamp post just in front of the pediment centreline. The recent unexpected renewal of lamp posts provided an opportunity for correction and Mr Fred Davies of the Council's Street Lighting Department took the point immediately and within two weeks the offending lamp post had gone. We would like to thank Mr Davies for his co-operation and speedy action. Any other comments on badly-sited lamp posts in our area?

GEOLOGY OF THE LADBROKE AREA

by Sally Kingston

Ladbroke's intractable clay has been here a lot longer than anyone who has ever tried to till it, build on it or garden it. In fact, fifty million years or more, said geologist **Eric Robinson** at a packed meeting in February this year and on a follow-up "field trip" round St John's Church in July. And there are even older deposits below that, the sand of the Reading Beds 150' down and the Chalk at 175'. But it was only ten thousand years ago, in the clay, that the landscape of the Ladbroke area was carved out, when rivers of melt-water poured across from the Ice Age ice-sheet that had pulled up in the environs of modern Finchley.

St John's is on a ridge left between rivers; Clarendon Road runs along a river bed in the valley below. A former brewery borehole provides recent evidence of the river gravels in the valley; the notoriously bad going at that point on the old race-course backs it up.

And what's underneath shows in our buildings too: sometimes usefully, as in the house bricks behind the white stucco, which were produced from the very clay that was excavated for drains and foundations when the area was developed in the 1840s; sometimes worryingly, for the clay rapidly expands and contracts according to weather conditions. Indeed, Eric Robinson pointed out a crack in the ground where it has dried out and pulled away from the church wall.

The buildings in Ladbroke are a lesson in the geology of all sorts of other areas too: smooth Bath Stone and a rougher ragstone from Kent, the one in the dressings of St John's and in The Lodge at the corner of Kensington Park Gardens, the other in the church walls and in the garden wall of the old vicarage; dull red granite from Leicestershire in some kerbstones, a bluer variety from the Channel Islands and some red and pink from Scotland in others; and York stone for paving.

On the conservation front, Eric Robinson is stern: the York stone



Drinking fountain of finely-worked Cornish granite outside St John's Church

pavements, for example, are to be guarded with our lives against cable layers; and we must not only chip off any cement left on them by builders, but also prevent the Council from putting pointing between them.

SPRING WALK

On the 18th April Henrietta Phipps again gave us a guided tour of some of the gardens on the Ladbroke Estate. We were fortunate to have beautiful weather and first visited Stanley Crescent Garden with its original layout and magnificent trees including what we believe be to be the largest ash in the area. Stanley Gardens North was next and this proved to be quite a surprise for many who had not seen it before with rolling lawns and a handsome bank of mature trees and shrubs screening the garden from the nearby flats. We were given refreshments by Anne Chorley in Stanley Gardens South where the houses open directly on to a wonderful romantic garden, quite secluded, with fine old Wych Elms and Weeping Ash trees and a plantsman's delight with roses,

PLANNING

by Robert Meadows

The fronts of buildings in full public view tend to be regarded as more important than the backs. In general this may be true, but in the Ladbroke area, with its distinctive communal gardens, the backs of many buildings come into full public view and must be regarded as equally important as the fronts. So the tendency to build back extensions or conservatories must be viewed critically, for they may be damaging to the continuity and integrity of the back elevations. This is apart from the effect they have on reducing the size of private gardens and on the privacy, light and outlook of the neighbours.

One of the few relatively new buildings in the Ladbroke area is the small undistinguished block of flats, No 79 Ladbroke Grove, at the corner of Lansdowne Crescent. This was erected in the 50s as flats for the police. It has passed into private hands and there have been various proposals to improve the building. There is clearly scope for improvement. The latest proposal is to increase the size and to build new curved front and end elevations and an elaborate curved penthouse roof. In view of the basically rectilinear nature of the surrounding buildings, we considered the curvilinear treatment inappropriate. However, we understand that the scheme has been given planning approval.

LADBROKE ASSOCIATION ARCHIVE

Does anyone have back issues of the Newsletter, especially for the early years? If so, please contact Robina Rose on 727 0037

many varied and unusual shrubs and herbaceous perennials giving a riot of colour for all to enjoy.

Our thanks to Anne Chorley for entertaining us in her garden after the Walk.

LETTERS

The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Ladbroke Association

I am writing about the **Municipal Flower Beds** in our area which since having been taken over by contractors, and this year in particular, have been a disgrace. The spring planting in the street beds was of such poor quality that many of the tulips did not bloom and the narcissus were over in a very short time. In some instances the spring plants were left dead and unsightly until July and in others the beds were emptied out and left unplanted until the end of July, far too late for summer planting. Eventually some were planted with unsuitable spindly blue salvias and straggly pink petunias which were not watered and soon died, one bed in particular having to be replanted again with busy lizzies which were presumably the only plants available at a late date and not at all suitable for street beds. It seems foolish that those planting the beds could not bother to report that in some instances the walls containing the flower beds were damaged; they remain so even now.

I hope the Council will realise the error of its ways in employing contractors with diverse interests and return to employing qualified gardeners and reinstating the green houses in Holland Park.

Kelvin Spooner, 13 Stanley Gardens

I feel I must write regarding the state of the Paving on the Ladbroke Estate. As this is a conservation area it seems quite unacceptable that we should be subjected to having parts of our pavements ripped up, old flag stones replaced with ugly concrete, and corners often a mixture of the old kerb stones surrounded by bricks and concrete. Is it not time that we made representations to the Council about this?

Our pavements which, apart from being an eyesore, are also dangerous and uneven, should be of York stone which is hardwearing and pleasing on the eye.

Myra Clark, 29 Stanley Gardens

As a local resident for seventeen years, I feel that the **Notting Hill Carnival** has grown to such an extent that the area can no longer cope with the influx of visitors. The Carnival, which began as a neighbourhood street party, has grown enormously and that neighbourhood has moved away to the extent that the southern third of the area affected has no more to do with the Carnival than Hampstead or Richmond. However, we have to pay for it.

We pay financially. We pay for refuse collection which increased from 78 to 140 tonnes this year. We pay for sewage works to install temporary lavatories and for any damage caused to them. In our communal garden we had to pay the gardeners to clear 30 bags of rubbish. Next year we will be paying for security guards to evict trespassers. Those with businesses in the area have to pay for boarding up their premises, and many suffer through loss of business over the period. And we pay for the policing.

We also pay personally. Car owners, not all in good health, have to move their cars and walk home. Those with temporary lavatories in their area had their parking suspended from the 13th to the end of August. We have to clear our paths, front gardens and basements of broken glass, rubbish and faeces. Our patios are used as urinals despite chains on the gates. For those actually living on the route, the noise and vibration from the amplifiers is insupportable.

I think it is time that the whole Carnival and its route is re-thought and that local residents, who are currently ignored, have equal representation with the three bodies responsible for all decisions, those being RBK&C, the police and the Carnival Committee.

J A Davies, 16 Ladbroke Gardens

Comments and more letters please to the Editor: Jean Ellsmoor, 19A Arundel Gardens, W11 2LN.

THE COMMITTEE

The Officers and Committee for the year 1996-97 are President, Sir Angus Stirling; Chairman, Stephen Enthoven (tel. 221 5167); Hon Treasurer and Secretary, Paul Bastick (tel. 229 1741); David Blakeman, Anne Chorley; Brian Ellsmoor; Ian Grant; David Marshall; Robert Meadows; Peter Mishcon; Thomas Pakenham; Peggy Post; Robina Rose; Diane Ward; Mary-Jo Wormell; Editor, Jean Ellsmoor; Hon Auditor, Guy Mayers; Minute Secretary, Janet Barton.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY will be held on Monday, December 16th, 6.30—8.30, at the home of Allen and Charlotte Levy, 3 Stanley Gardens. Invitations will be sent.

NOTTING HILL IMPROVEMENTS GROUP

We have now raised over £1000 for the NHIG. Any private donations (urgently required) can be sent to Mr Anthony Land, Hon Treasurer, 32 Holland Park Avenue, London W11 3QU. Cheques to be made payable to the Notting Hill Improvements Group.

JOIN THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

Have you new neighbours? There is a publication available from Paul Bastick (see below), about our aims and work

✂
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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To Paul Bastick, Hon Treasurer, The Ladbroke Association, 75A Ladbroke Grove, W11 2PD.