

Ladbroke News

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

WINTER 2021–22



The “pound” stall in Portobello Road (see article on Marks & Spencer on pages 2–3)

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DOUBLE-GLAZING

We are all being encouraged to insulate our buildings better. One of the best ways of doing this is by installing double-glazing or secondary glazing (double-glazing has two panes of glass inbuilt into the window lights; secondary glazing means when a second internal window is installed immediately behind the outside one – it can be as efficient or more so than double-glazing in terms of insulation from both outside weather and sound). We are quite often asked what the planning situation is for installing such windows on our mostly Victorian windows.

The great majority of our buildings are either listed or subject to an Article 4 direction requiring planning permission for changes to doors and windows on the front of the house – and in the case of houses giving onto communal gardens also for the back of the house. For listed buildings, listed building consent would normally be required (whether a separate planning permission is also needed will depend on whether there is a “material change” to the appearance of the building). Consent is likely to be refused when the windows concerned are original ones. If they are not original, or if they are on a non-original addition to the house, there is a bit more latitude and double-glazing may be allowed if a suitable slimline design is used so

that they look virtually identical to single-glazed ones (there are quite a few firms now specialising in “heritage” double glazing). Secondary glazing is likely to be less of a problem, so long as it is designed so that the glazing bars are as invisible as possible from the outside.

In the case of a house subject to an Article 4 direction, whether planning permission is needed for double-glazing depends on whether the installation of the window constitutes a “material change” to the window. If a slimline design pretty well identical to the existing window and with the same materials (e.g. timber-frames) is used, this would not usually constitute a material change and planning permission is not needed. But if any change to the shape, glazing bars or materials is being made, then planning permission should be sought. PVC windows, for instance, would not normally be allowed on historic buildings. Secondary glazing does not require planning permission, but we would urge people to ensure that the glazing bars on the secondary window show as little as possible, for aesthetic reasons.

To check whether your house is subject to an Article 4 direction, go to <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/article-4-directions> (or put “RBKC Article 4 Directions”

into Google) and scroll down to the list of streets at the bottom of the page. If there is no relevant direction, planning permission will not be needed (subject always to there being no material change). In conservation

areas both we and the Council strongly recommend a design that relates to the age and style of the building.

There are more details on the Council's recently issued *Householder Guide to the Greening SPD*

MARKS AND SPENCER IN PORTOBELLO ROAD

The history of Marks and Spencer plc began with Michael Marks, a Polish-Jewish immigrant from what is now Belarus, who arrived in Leeds in the early 1880s and set up a stall in the town's Kirkgate Market selling miscellaneous goods. He classified everything by price and quickly noticed that the penny section was by far the most successful. In 1884 he set up the first of what were to be many "Penny Bazaars", with the slogan "Don't ask the price, it's a penny". In 1894 he took as a partner an accountant called Tom Spencer, who invested £300 for a half share of the business, and Marks & Spencer was born. Between them, they developed the business and by 1900 they had opened 36 Penny Bazaar outlets – mostly market stalls, but including 12 high street shops. They kept the penny slogan, but added "Admission free", indicating that people were free to come in and browse without any obligation to buy – something that was unusual at the time.

Most of the early outlets were in the north of England, but in about 1911 they opened one of their first Penny Bazaars in London, at 233 Portobello Road. The premises had earlier been a greengrocer,

but were taken over in about 1907 by one Henry Davis, who set up his own penny bazaar (no doubt in imitation of Marks & Spencer). Davis had opened several other penny bazaars in London, trading under the name "Davis' Renowned Penny Bazaars", selling hardware, china and fancy goods. His business ran into difficulties, however, and he ran up large debts. He was declared bankrupt in 1911 and according to an article in the *Kilburn Times* of 27 January 1911 Marks and Spencer Ltd stepped in at a meeting of creditors to buy his assets, including the Portobello store. As can be seen from the photographs below of the Marks and Spencer Ltd establishment in Portobello Road shortly after its opening, the new owners were keen to emphasise that they were the true originators of the penny bazaar.

Alas, the penny price limit could not last indefinitely. After the First World War, Marks & Spencer changed its pricing system, selling goods up to 5 shillings; reducing the huge array of items offered; and increasingly placing emphasis on two departments: food, which Marks & Spencer had always sold to some extent, and clothing, which was new. They made their name by offering clothing that was well made but affordable. They were clearly sufficiently successful in the Portobello shop to want to move to larger premises. In 1931 Marks and Spencer plc opened much bigger premises at Nos 188-192 on the other side of the road, next to the old Colville pub (now The Distillery).

The new building appears to have been custom-built (the space had earlier been occupied by three terraced houses – it is not clear whether they were demolished to make way for the new store or had disappeared earlier). As can be seen from the



233 Portobello Road c.1912 (the M&S Company Archive)



The staff of the new Penny Bazaar (the M&S Company Archive)

photographs below, it was an elegant low construction in an Art Deco style typical of the 1930s.

By 1979 the store had become unprofitable and it was closed, to the dismay of many. A motion was passed by concerned councillors at a Council meeting in June 1979 regretting the closure and calling on the Council “to oppose totally the conversion of this store and other remaining small shops to tourist-orientated antique, bric-a-brac or clothing retailers. We ask the Council to do everything in its power to ensure that this site is retained for the sale of food”.

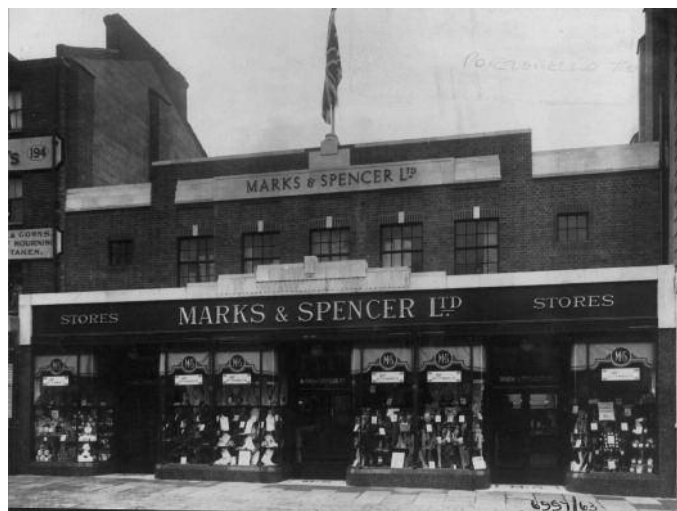
In 1991 (by which time the premises were a ‘Best Save’ supermarket) planning permission was granted for the set-back first floor to be demolished and three floors of flats built above the shopfront. Unfortunately, no thoughts at all appear to have been given to the aesthetics – the only concerns of the planners were with the density of the residential accommodation and with parking arrangements. The result was three shoddy and mean-looking floors in unadorned bricks, with no particular relationship other than height with neighbouring buildings – surely one of Portobello Road’s worst eyesores – see right. The store on the ground floor is now a branch of Sainsbury’s.

The building at No. 233 still exists. For a long time it was a branch of William Hill and is now occupied by



a pizzeria. As can be seen from the photograph above, it has been sadly knocked about over the years and has lost most of its window dressings.

The idea of a penny bazaar was reinvented in the 1990s with the opening of the Poundland stores, including one on Portobello Road. Like Marks & Spencer, they soon had to abandon the “all at £1 offer”. However, the tradition lives on in the “pound” market stall near to the original Marks and Spencer store, selling fruit and vegetables in bowls which genuinely do cost no more than £1 each (see photo on front page); and very popular it is too, judging by the queues.



The new store in 1931 (The M&S Company Archive)



Marks & Spencer in 1979 just before it closed



188-192 Portobello Road today

PARAKEETS

Ring-necked parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) came some years ago to our area and are now a fairly common sight – welcomed by many for their flash of colour, but much disliked for their screech. They are now the most northerly breeding parrot species in the world.

The parakeets are native to a wide band of mainly tropical territory from Senegal to Burma. Genetic testing indicates that the ones in the UK come from the foothills of the Himalayas, which no doubt explains why they have adapted so well to our cold climate. Nobody knows quite how they arrived here. One story is that the rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix (who was staying in Lansdowne Crescent at the time of his death in 1970), took a breeding pair of parakeets in a cage to Carnaby Street during the Swinging Sixties and deliberately released them, naming them Adam and Eve. Another story is that some were brought here during the filming of the 1951 movie *The African Queen* to lend tropical colour to parts of the movie that were filmed in the UK, and were released when filming ended.

Sadly, both stories seem to be myths. These birds have been found occasionally in England for well over a hundred years, probably brought home as pets by sailors and travellers from tropical parts (like other parrots, they are not only decorative but can be taught to speak). The

earliest recorded sightings were in Dulwich in 1893 and Brixton in 1894. However, it was not until the 1990s that the first large colony was established, roosting noisily in the trees by the river at Kingston-upon-Thames. From there they spread to Richmond and Kew, and then to many parts of West London. Given their Himalayan genes, the Kingston colony may have originated from released or escaped family pets brought into the UK from India and Pakistan.

The jury is still out on whether the parakeets are adversely affecting native species. Some fear that they can outmanoeuvre garden birds at bird tables – although given the amount of food that they get from visitors to Holland Park and Kensington Gardens, we suspect that their interest in garden bird tables may be limited in this part of London. They like nesting in holes and tree trunks, preferably ones that have already been hollowed out by other birds like woodpeckers. This could bring them into competition with native “secondary cavity nesters”. But again there is no real evidence that there is a significant problem. The species that do like them are birds of prey such as sparrowhawks and peregrine falcons, who have been observed preying on parakeets and whose population has been increasing.

Having been around so long, they are now classified as naturalised British birds and they are protected by law.

GAPS

One of the best characteristics of the Ladbroke estate is the gaps between groups of houses or terraces, especially along communal gardens, allowing glimpses of greenery beyond. This was a deliberate attempt by the architects of the estate to introduce a rural feel. The value of these gaps has long been recognised in planning policy. The Local Plan (the document that must be followed by the Council in determining planning applications, unless there are particular reasons to depart from it) says that the Council will resist extensions where “an important or historic gap or view would be blocked or diminished”. The Ladbroke Conservation Area appraisal, which gives further guidance to planners on the Ladbroke area, makes the point that “the few completely undeveloped gaps are of great conservation value”. It also emphasises that, even when gaps have been partially filled, they

“should continue to be preserved against incremental change”.

The pairs of houses on the eastern side of Lansdowne Crescent all had big gaps between them. Over the past 50 years or so, almost all, despite Council policy, have been blocked by side extensions, albeit in some cases fairly low-level ones. The one remaining full-length gap of any size is next to No. 17.

The owners of No. 17 put in a planning application in 2021 to build a basement under the house, with a side extension in the gap over part of it, thus blocking the bottom part of the gap. We were amazed and extremely concerned, therefore, when the officers’ report on the application recommended in favour of granting it, and even more concerned when the Planning Applications Committee accepted this advice, despite the fact that it runs completely counter to Council policy. This is not the only occasion recently when officers have given advice that

appears to go against declared Council policy. With the Kensington Society, we are putting a dossier together to put to the Council with our concerns. In the meantime we are losing one of our few remaining full length gaps.



Gap next to No. 17 Lansdowne Crescent

BALUSTRADES

Bottle balustrades originated in Italy during the Renaissance – although there were apparently some on Assyrian palaces, the Greeks and Romans gave them a miss. The High Renaissance architect Bramante used them on the church known as the Tempietto at San Pietro in Montorio, Rome, built in 1502, which was much admired by Palladio for its classical style and its dome. He illustrated it in his highly influential treatise on architecture, *Quattro Libri* (1570). Bottle balustrades then became popular all over Europe, including with the great English classical architect Inigo Jones, who for instance included a bottle balustrade or baluster along the top of the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall.

The architects of the Ladbroke estate were heavily influenced by classical and Renaissance architecture and adopted balustrades with gusto from the 1840s onwards.



The original design for 7–8 Lansdowne Walk (Survey of London)



7–8 Lansdowne Walk in 2016



7–8 Lansdowne Walk in 2021 with restored bottle balustrades along the roof.

Among the earliest buildings to have bottle balustrades were Nos. 7 and 8 Lansdowne Walk, dating from around 1845. Like the Banqueting Hall, they had balustrades along their roofline, and also along their street boundary. Unfortunately, when houses are left to decay, the bottle balustrades are often the first thing to go. By the mid-20th century, the balustrade along the roof had disappeared (although happily it has now been reinstated – see photo bottom left); and that along the street boundary disappeared shortly afterwards, to be replaced by railings.

Bottle balustrades along the street boundaries tended to be used on only the grander houses of the Ladbroke estate. Thus, all the houses in Kensington Park Gardens have bottle balustrades (although the balustrade outside Nos. 3–4 has been partially lost). There are similar balustrades outside some of the grander houses at the southern end of Lansdowne Road. Many of the houses at the eastern end of Lansdowne Road probably also had bottle balustrades along their street boundaries and quite a few remain in the block between Rosmead Road and Ladbroke Grove (Nos. 79–123).

Balustrades were also a popular addition in the 1840s and 1850s to balconies and the tops of porches. But by far the most common use of bottle balustrades on the Ladbroke estate, in particular in the 1850s and 1860s, was along the roof cornice. Unfortunately, on the less grand houses in particular, these have disappeared, especially in the Portobello Road and in the streets leading off it. But it is a fair bet that where there is a solid stucco cornice along the roof, or one with gaps (as for instance above the 20th Century Theatre in Westbourne Grove – photo above right), or where there are rendered piers above the roof cornice joined by a rail, there was originally a bottle balustrade.

Not all balustrades on the



The parapet along the roof was originally a bottle balustrade



Missing bottle balustrade in Ladbroke Grove

Ladbroke estate have bottles. A variety of pierced stucco designs were used – see for instance the photograph overleaf of 87 Lansdowne Road. There were also different designs of bottle. The two most commonly used on the Ladbroke estate are shown below – one round, one square.





Surviving bottle balustrade outside No. 87 Lansdowne Road

Where bottle balustrades have been lost, should they be restored? In cases where they have been completely lost along a whole

street or terrace, it may not make sense to restore them on isolated houses. But where quite a few remain on a terrace, we very much hope that householders will one day restore missing ones. For instance, on the north side of Ladbroke Gardens, most houses still have their roof balustrades and it would improve the look of the street if the others were restored (see photo right). Again, on the block at 79–121 Lansdowne Road, quite a few bottle balustrades remain along the street boundary (see example in photo left), and where they have been lost, they have been replaced by a variety of sometimes unsightly railings and fences. This looks a mess, and the block would be enormously enhanced by the reinstatement of the original balustrades.

[A more detailed version of this article will be published on the Ladbroke Association website.](#)



Example of houses in Ladbroke Gardens with and without roof balustrades.

CLEARING SNOW ON THE PAVEMENT

When we have snow, many people wonder whether they should clear the snow from the pavement in front of their houses, or whether they might be leaving themselves liable to damages if someone should slip on the cleared area. The general advice seems to be that the householder is unlikely to be liable. According to a recent article in *The Times*, there is no reported court case in which a householder has been successfully sued for snow clearing, and a 2011 government report described the legal risk as “a myth”. In some European countries, there is even a duty on householders to keep the pavement in front of their houses clear of snow. Nevertheless, it should be done carefully. Government advice is:

- do it early in the day - it's easier to move fresh, loose snow;
- don't use water - it might refreeze and turn to black ice;
- use salt if possible - it will melt the ice or snow and stop it from refreezing overnight (but don't use the salt from salting bins as this is used to keep roads clear).

We would add: avoid leaving heaps of snow on the pavement where they could inconvenience pedestrians.

CAR CLUB BAYS

The Council have informed us that they are restoring a number of car club parking bays to residents' parking. Instead, they will give the relevant car club operators a number of residents' parking permits equal to the number of disappearing car club bays, so people using car club cars will be able to park anywhere they can find a place in residents' parking bay. The bays being removed in the Ladbroke area are those outside 29 Lansdowne Road, 1 Lansdowne Walk and 13 Ladbroke Road. The Council says it will monitor the new arrangements so that they can be re-assessed if there are any problems.

POP-UP PHOTO-SHOOTS

People living in one of our grander or more picturesque streets are used to pop-up photoshoots in front of their houses, usually involving a model standing in front of the railings or porch. Slightly more unusual was this one in Stanley Gardens last summer. Perhaps something to do with the end of a drunken night out.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Association held its 2021 AGM (our 52nd) on 17 November at St Peter's Church in Kensington Park Road. Over 30 people attended. Issues raised by members included light pollution and the environment; subterranean developments and their effect on neighbours and potential for causing flooding; air conditioning; double glazing and solar panels; and parking spaces and electric cars and charging points.

The existing committee were re-elected *en bloc*. A new member, Billie Lee, was also elected. Billie is an architect who does not live in the area but does a lot of work here and knows the area well. His election means that we now have four architects on the committee to give us advice on planning matters, which is welcome. Other expertise on the committee includes a building services engineer (Paul Bastick); a retired QC (Tony Temple); and a local Councillor (Catherine Faulks).

DEMOLITION OF MOST OF 57 CLARENDON ROAD

Many people will have been alarmed by the demolition of all but the front façade of 57 Clarendon Road. This does in fact have planning permission and follows a series of planning applications for works on the property – for a basement, a dormer window, the demolition of a garage and a rear extension, and the rebuilding of a new side extension. Most of these involved some works to the walls of the property and the applicants concluded that it would be easier simply to demolish the side and rear walls completely and rebuild them with the new extensions. The Council refused their application, but it was allowed on appeal by a government inspector. The latter concluded that the significance of the building was primarily derived from the decorative front elevation, which would remain “largely intact”, and it would not matter if the other walls were demolished and rebuilt.

This is not the first time that there has been such a demolition in our area. Below are before and after photographs of 5 Ladbroke Terrace. Although all one's instincts are against such demolition, which must be wasteful in environmental terms, it has to be said that, once rebuilt, there is little sign of any change.

57 Clarendon Road



LIGHTS IN BACK GARDENS

We are beginning to get complaints from members irritated by lights in their neighbours' back gardens. There is a particular problem in communal gardens, where lights in private gardens backing onto the communal garden do not affect only the immediate neighbours.

If a house is listed, listed building consent is normally needed for the installation of light fixtures on the outside of the house or any structure within the curtilage of the property, for instance a garden wall. But even on listed buildings, lights in flower-beds, pond lights, patio lights or footpath down lighters would probably not require permission. Generally, no planning permission is needed for light fixtures unless their installation can be said to amount to a “building operation” AND to “materially affect the external appearance” of the building.

Since 2006, “artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance” has been a statutory nuisance under section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. That means that a complaint can be made to the Council's Noise and Nuisance Team (on 020 7361 3002), who have the power to serve an abatement order. It is also possible

to bring a private prosecution if bright or flashing lights interfere with sleep. There are two relevant cases. In 2000, a judge ordered a landowner to switch off obtrusive security lights (*Bonwick v. Brighton and Hove Council*); and in 2004 a court made a similar order about domestic floodlights and ordered compensation for sleep disturbance (*Bacon v. Gwynedd County Council*).

The authorities are only likely to take action, however, in fairly extreme cases, and we suggest that sufferers' first recourse should be to dialogue with their neighbour, who may not realise the nuisance that their lights are causing.

It is pleasant in summer to be able to eat and socialise outside, and lights can enhance the experience. However, we would appeal to all in our area to keep gardens light at a low level and to turn them off when the garden is not being used. Lights are not just irritating to neighbours; they can be a significant disruption for wildlife, especially in dark areas like communal gardens. There are, incidentally, now excellent rechargeable table lights that can be taken into the garden, and these are generally preferable to permanent fixtures.



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

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

info@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.org

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

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