

Ladbroke News

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

SUMMER 2025



Robina Rose's bicycle-driven hearse starting out from her home in Elgin Crescent.

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ROBINA ROSE: OBITUARY

Robina Rose, one of the best-known characters in the Portobello area – and a long-time member of the Ladbroke Association Committee – died of cancer in the spring at the age of 73. Robina was born and lived in the same house in Elgin Crescent all her life. In her younger days she was a distinguished film-maker. More recently, her life was spent on her various campaigns. She was a passionate conservationist, always arguing for greener solutions to every problem.

While Robina was on our committee, she was responsible for persuading the powers that be to give a Grade II listing to all sixteen of our communal grades, a great achievement. She was however vehemently resistant to change in her communal garden (specially over the removal of trees), which more often than not put her at odds with the garden committee. But among Portobello traders she was well-known as a supportive figure in their many battles with the authorities. While some felt that her emotions and strong passion for certain local issues on occasion lost her support, her immense charm often won in the end.

She was to be seen most days on her bicycle around the market area and made friends with everybody. She spent her last weeks in a hospice and it is a tribute to her ability to make friends that she received a constant stream of visitors – at times it was almost like a party at her bedside. She had no close family and the community got together to organise a magnificent funeral for her. In line with her principles it involved a wicker coffin in a bicycle driven hearse. The huge funeral procession wound its way on foot from her home in Elgin Crescent, along Portobello Road to Kensal Green Cemetery, where there was standing room only. She was a remarkable person.

London planes are programmed to shed their bark to get rid of all that urban pollution, but recently the draught has caused far more drastic shedding than usual.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Ladbroke Association AGM was held on 16 September in St Peter's Church, Kensington Park Road. About 30 people attended. As no other names were put forward, the three officers (Sophia Lambert (chair), Kay Broadbent (treasurer) and Anne Chorley (secretary) were re-elected for further terms. The co-option of a fourth architect onto the committee, James Wignall, was welcomed. It was noted that the finances of the Association were in a healthy state, in part due to donations made by film companies when filming in the area.

In her report, the chair described some of the planning issues that had come up over the years. Issues raised by members included the performance of the RBKC planning department, with applications taking many weeks to be dealt with; the massive nuisance caused by huge groups of tourists being taken on guided tours in the area, especially in and

around the Portobello Road; and the disruption caused by film companies filming in the area. On the latter, there was a lively debate, with some members pressing for filming to be banned. Concern was also expressed about the new safety barriers in Portobello Road.

The minutes of the meeting will be posted on our website shortly.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

We would welcome contributions to the newsletter from people who have stories to tell about the area. It would be particularly interesting to hear about the old days from long-term residents. Please do contact us if you would like to contribute. The editor's decision, however, will be final.

COUNCIL FINANCES

As part of its planned reform of local government finance, the Government is proposing to make drastic cuts to its funding of eight of the wealthier London boroughs, including Kensington and Chelsea. The cuts would require the borough to make cuts of some £80 million over the next three years. If this was to be

covered through Council tax, it would mean a 27% increase, something the Council has said it is not prepared to contemplate. How this will play out is anybody's guess, but we could be in for some uncomfortable cuts in services.

FLOODING

There are two sorts of floods that can affect our area – surface water flooding and groundwater flooding. Groundwater flooding, e.g. because of a rise in the water table, is rare. The 2021 floods, like earlier ones, were caused by heavy rainfall overwhelming the drains and sewers. As a result the water from the sewers bubbles up into toilets, sinks showers and other internal drains. Water (including from burst water mains) can also flow down from the road or paved gardens into basement areas.

After the July 2021 floods, we urged to Council to prepare a handbook for residents on how to protect one's property from flooding and what to do if there is a flood. We are happy to say that it has now produced a very good document. At the moment it is only available online, with a few copies in libraries. But we are discussing with the Council the possibility of wider distribution of the handsomely produced physical document to houses in high-risk areas. In the meantime anybody wanting a copy can contact james.latham@rbkc.gov.uk. The Council website also has comprehensive information on what to do before, during and after flooding which is well worth looking at – google "RBKC/flooding".

There is a charity called the National Flood Forum which also has a website with much useful information. It encourages and provides support to local residents to set up a local "Flood Action Group" – a voluntary group of residents, who meet on a regular basis, to work on behalf of the wider community to help to try and reduce the impact of future floods and obtain action from the authorities. Residents in and around the Portobello area who were affected by the 2021 floods have set up such a group, which is developing a Flood Action Plan for the area, in consultation with the agencies involved. At present it covers only the area east of Ladbroke Grove, but there are plans to set up a new Action Group for the areas to the west that were flooded.

It seems that quite a few people who were flooded in 2021 did not report the fact either to the Council or to Thames Water. We would strongly urge all flood victims to do so in future. Thames Water's emergency number is 0800 316 9800. The Council has a form for people to report flooding after the event see under "Flooding advice – after a flood" on their flooding web pages. Both can offer help. And if they are aware of flood-prone areas, it helps them develop strategic flood prevention measures. We suspect that some people

have not reported their flooding because they fear that their insurance premiums will sky-rocket. In practice, however, insurance companies are pretty well informed about instances of flooding – they will, for instance, look very carefully at properties next to where a flood has been reported.

Flood insurance

There is advice on getting insurance on the National Flood Forum website. With government support, the insurance industry has set in place a special scheme called Flood Re to provide insurance for flooded properties that can no longer get normal commercial insurance. Unfortunately, in blocks of flats Flood Re is not necessarily available. This is a major problem as in so many buildings the tenants and those with mortgages are required to have insurance. We were pleased, therefore, that our MP, Joe Powell, says he will campaign to get this changed.



Front garden with planting and gravel.



Avoiding hard surfaces

It is important to give rainwater the maximum scope for draining into the ground rather than running off hard surfaces into drains and basement areas. Gardens are a major asset in this respect, and we are lucky in our area to have so many front and back gardens into which water can drain, not to speak of the communal gardens. Probably a quarter or more of the ground in the Ladbroke area is garden. But gardens will not act as a soakaway if they are covered in hard surfacing – and unfortunately we have noticed more and more gardens being largely paved over, often with white sandstone that needs regular steam-cleaning. Please think twice about extensive paving in garden areas – it helps us all if it can be minimised. The more gardens are covered by flowerbeds the better, not only for sustainable drainage but also to encourage biodiversity. Lawns (natural grass not astroturf) are also good, as is gravel. For areas that really need to be paved, permeable paving should be used (with no concrete underlay and gaps between the stones). And please, York stone, which is the traditional stone for paving in gardens on the Ladbroke estate.

Basements and flooding

In almost all cases when somebody applies to build a basement, the neighbours raise concerns about the possibility of flooding affecting their property. This is understandable, as a basement is effectively a large concrete tank set into the ground. The question that comes to mind is where will the underground water blocked by this tank go instead. In practice, in the great majority of cases, water finds other channels without causing any problems for the neighbours. Once a basement has been built, we have heard of almost no reports of later flooding. But there may be cases of which we are unaware and we would welcome any information that members can give us.

The Council requires all basement applications in flood risk areas to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment to identify and assess the risks of all forms of flooding to and from the development. In practice, this should identify any risks to neighbouring properties. However, many neighbours are concerned that these assessments do not specifically address the risk to nearby properties. This was also a concern at a recent meeting of the Planning Applications Committee in connection with a basement application in a part of Lansdowne Road that had a history of flooding. Most unusually the Committee decided to defer a decision until further information was available. We are urging the Council to ensure that in future flood risk assessments look specifically at the impact in neighbouring properties.

Garden in same street with paving.

GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR CHANGING THE PLANNING SYSTEM

In a bill now going through Parliament, the Government is proposing that almost all planning decisions must be delegated to officers. At present, in Kensington and Chelsea a very high proportion of decisions (near 95%) are already delegated. Only if there are three or more objections and the officers nevertheless recommend approval, do applications go to one of the planning committees of councillors for decision – about 200 a year or 2.4% of all cases. In most cases, the planning committees follow the officers' recommendation and decide to grant the application despite the objections. So in the overall scheme of things it could be said that such a change will make very little difference.

The proposals put applications into two categories: the smaller developments (which would include all the "householder developments" that exercise us and our members) and major projects. In the case of the latter, it would be open to the chief planning officer and the chair of planning committee to agree that they should go to committee if, for example, an application were for a large-scale development that would have a lasting

impact on the community, and would therefore warrant democratic debate and scrutiny by way of committee. But there would be no such safety valve for the minor applications often of more concern to our neighbourhood and which are our Association's bread and butter, as they would all be delegated to officers.

We consider this a serious departure from local democracy and will be pressing our MP to argue for changes so that at least some minor development, especially in conservation areas, can go to committee. Apart from anything else, we suspect that it makes planning officers a lot more careful if there is a possibility that their recommendation may be scrutinised by a committee of councillors. Our planning officers are pretty competent, but there may be issues of which they are unaware that will come out in committee (and even if the committee decides to grant an application, they often impose new conditions to meet the concerns of objectors). There are also difficult cases where a judgement needs to be made between for instance environmental and heritage issues – a judgement that arguably ought to be made by elected representatives.



BT Inlink cabinet outside the Mitre.

INLINK CABINETS

These are the tall structures with advertising screens that BT erected some years ago to replace the old telephone boxes. They can be used for various purposes – making free local calls, checking local information and charging mobile phones. They appear to be infrequently used and the general belief is that their main role is to allow BT to make money from advertising revenue

In February, BT made a number of applications to "upgrade" those in Notting Hill Gate and on Holland Park Avenue (outside the Mitre and outside Tesco), as well as in other parts of the borough, in order to incorporate environmental sensors. The upgrading would involve replacing the existing units with ones that would be slimmer but much wider, with bigger screens. The Ladbroke Association objected strongly, quoting the Council's policy of resisting "*freestanding structures such as telephone kiosks where the function for the display of adverts dominates the primary purpose for the structure*". We accept that we are stuck with the existing cabinets, but saw no reason why bigger units should be-needed simply to add environmental sensors.

BT subsequently withdrew their applications for new cabinets in Notting Hill Gate outside Boots and outside the Ruby Hotel, and also for two in Holland Park Avenue, apparently because of concern expressed by the Council about the effect on street trees. But the one outside the old Lloyds Bank building in Notting Hill Gate was recommended for approval by the planning officers. It went to committee and the councillors decided they wanted more information on usage – information that BT has now provided. Rather to our surprise, almost 1,000 calls were made in the year to June 2025, including 18 to the emergency services. We doubt whether the Holland Park Avenue ones have as much usage. And in any case, there is no need for bigger units to allow people to continue to make calls.

CASINO IN NOTTING HILL GATE

The 24-hour Maxim's Casino Club until recently operated from premises in Palace Gate (at the top end of Gloucester Road, opposite Kensington Gardens). It has now closed and wants to open on the old NatWest Bank premises in Notting Hill Gate, again on a 24-hour basis. Maxim's was a high-end casino and we are told operated very discreetly, so that locals were hardly aware of its existence, apart from occasional problems with the parking of patrons' cars. We are not opposed in principle, but we are concerned about the parking situation. If the clients are as expected wealthy, they will mostly come by car in the evening. Around Palace Gate there are parking possibilities at night, but it could be more difficult in Notting Hill Gate.

The old NatWest building (which includes both the handsome stone frontage and the building to the left).



RBKC LICENSING POLICY

All Councils are required to consult on and publish every five years a Statement of Licensing Policy setting out how they will administer the regime for the various licensed premises, including pubs, restaurants, clubs, and off-licences. The latest version is out to consultation and can be found on the RBKC "consultation hub". It is not that different from the current version – for instance the policy of generally limiting licensable activities to midnight "to balance residential and commercial interests", although it is made clear that later licences can be granted if they would not result in public nuisance, risks to public safety or crime and disorder. There are new paragraphs dealing with licences for tables and chairs on pavements and for the summertime "parklet" terraces on the carriageway which became popular during the pandemic. The document says that, as a general rule the Council will licence parklet terraces to operate no later than 10pm.

It is somewhat disturbing, however, that the document seems to be pushing for an expansion of the night-time economy and specifically mentions High Street Kensington, Notting Hill Gate and Portobello Road as area where plans for "well-managed" night-

time businesses will be viewed positively by the Council. The document seems to want to hark back to some sort of golden age – it refers to promoting "a thriving, fun yet responsible evening and night-time hospitality sector, with the goal of restoring the Borough to its vibrant prime".

High Street Kensington and Notting Hill Gate already have a number of well-managed nightspots. But we are deeply unhappy about the mention of Portobello Road, which falls into a quite different category. It is not a busy high street with lots of transport links, but a narrow street where the upper floors above the small shops and hospitality establishments are now almost entirely residential. During the day, residents have to put up with the inconveniences of the market but benefit from relatively quiet conditions at night. The great majority of bars and restaurants close no later than midnight (and most a lot earlier), and the few that have later hours like the Zephyr restaurant have given rise to complaints of residents' sleep being disturbed by the loud talk of patrons emerging well after midnight, summoning Ubers and banging car doors. Sleep is precious and we will be arguing strongly against later hours in Portobello Road.

RESIDENTS' PARKING FOR SECOND HOME OWNERS

The number of resident's parking permits issued has been going down, reducing the pressure on parking spaces, and a few months ago the Council consulted on the possibility of allowing up to 2,000 permits to be issued to people who were not residents but had second homes in the borough. We thought this was a dreadful idea and said so to the Council. Not only are there parts of the borough (particularly near shopping streets) where pressure on spaces remains intense, but what we felt was really needed was a system of visitors'

permits whereby visitors and tradespeople coming to work at their properties could park locally. Such schemes operate in other inner London boroughs. The responses to the consultation were overwhelmingly negative, with 72% objecting to the proposal. We are sorry to say that the Council has nevertheless decided to go ahead, although capping the number of permits for second home owners at 1,000 rather than 2,000. It has, however, said it will explore the possibility of making available visitor or tradesperson parking permits or vouchers in the borough.



PORTOBELLO PROTECTION MEASURES

For some years now the Portobello market community has been pressing for measures to be taken to protect the busy market area from rogue vehicles driving into the crowds. At last, prompted no doubt by the by the recent incident in Liverpool, the Police and the Council have suddenly decided that they needed as a matter of urgency to install barriers on Portobello Road at each of the main crossroads to prevent vehicles driving into Portobello Road at busy times. They did not allow for any time for consultation and have already installed temporary barriers – see photo – the central part of which (called an H-stop) is removed when the market is not operational so as to let cars through. The H-stops will be in place from 10am to 4pm on Fridays, Saturdays and on market Sundays, between Golborne Road and Chepstow Villas; and from 10am to 4pm Monday to Thursday between Cambridge Gardens (at the Westway canopy) and Elgin Crescent (at the Duke of Wellington pub). Emergency vehicles will however have access at all times. The roads crossing Portobello Road will also always remain open, except for Denhigh Terrace.

One problem that is yet to be resolved is how to allow access for the cars of people who live and park

Temporary barriers on Portobello Road.

in the various blocks of flats on Portobello Road, or who live in the mews off the street. When there were just flimsy removable gates at the crossroads, it was easy for them to be temporarily moved aside to allow eligible vehicles through. But this is not possible with the H-stops, which has understandably led to a host of complaints from those affected.

Longer term plans for more sophisticated barriers are being developed. We have no idea what they will look like or how they will work. An obvious solution would be bollards which sink into the ground. But this may not be possible given cost considerations and the number of pipes and cables under the road – which have yet to be investigated.

Unfortunately, this means further delay to the long-planned improvements to Portobello pavements, electricity and water supplies to stall-holders and others. Infuriatingly, a year has already been wasted on pointless consultations and the development of plans that may not be implementable because nobody knows exactly what services lie underground. We have all along said this was putting the cart before the horse, and it is an enormous pity that the Council took no notice.

FIREWORK PARTIES

Several of our communal gardens organise firework displays around the fifth of November. Many of us who do not live on a communal garden enjoy watching the fireworks from afar. But they can spook pets and some children. We are therefore giving below the dates of this November's displays so that our members for whom they may be a problem can make appropriate advance preparations.

Sunday 2 November:	Arundel and Elgin Garden Hanover Gardens
Wednesday 5 November:	Lansdowne Road-Lansdowne Crescent Gardens Lansdowne Road and Clarendon Road Garden Stanley Gardens South
Friday 7 November:	Blenheim-Elgin Garden Montpelier Garden
Saturday 8 November:	Ladbroke Square Garden Rosmead Garden (tbc)



46–52 Holland Park Avenue, in shades of ever brighter pastel.

COLOURED HOUSES AND TOURISTS

You may have seen press reports about people in “Notting Hill” painting their houses black to discourage the endless tourists taking photographs of themselves against a backdrop of our multi-coloured stucco terraces. None of these was in the Ladbroke area and we hope none of our residents will follow suit. In fact, the craze for colours seems to be spreading. The four houses at Nos. 46–52 Holland Park Avenue (next to the Mitre pub), have long had pastel colours, but the colours have recently become bolder (these houses, erected in the 1830s, would originally have had stone-washed stucco, to make it look as if they were built of stone). And the upper floors of Nos. 2–8 Clarendon Road have similarly become more boldly multi-coloured.

There seems to be no easy solution to the tourist problem. If it is not our coloured houses, it’s our wonderful front garden blossoms – especially the magnolia, wisteria and cherry blossoms. The space



46–52 Holland Park Avenue in 2008.

under the cherry trees on the corner of Kensington Park Gardens and Stanley Crescent had what looked like a permanent cocktail party going this spring. There is also a growing problem with professional guides taking large groups of people round the area.



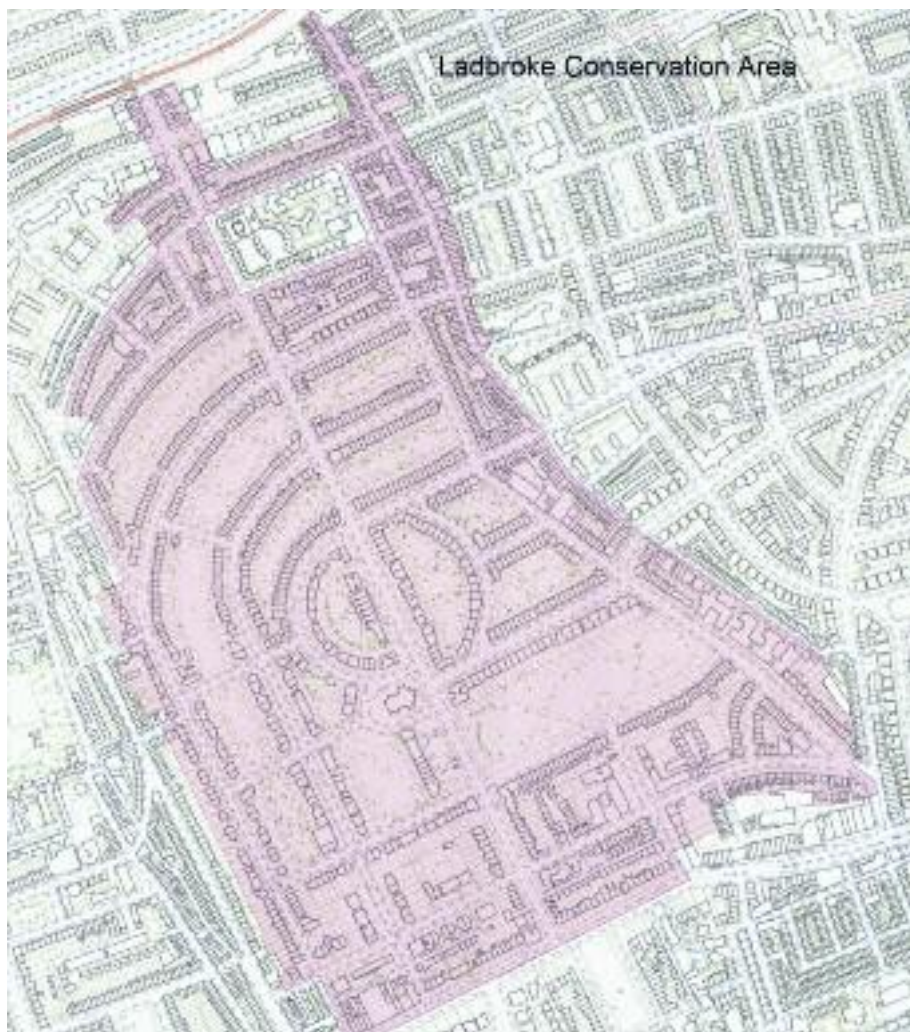
Nos. 2–8 Clarendon Road.

CARNIVAL

As you may have read in the press, the Metropolitan Police raised major concerns about the risk of a “mass casualty event” as a result of crushing if extra resources for stewards were not made available for the forthcoming Notting Hill Carnival. They pointed to the fact that police officers had to intervene on a number of occasions last year to save lives after “100 spontaneous crowd incidents” caused alarm.

The Mayor of London, the Royal Borough and the City of Westminster already provide substantial funds towards Carnival safety and the organisers approached the Government for the extra £1 million needed. Their request was met with a refusal, but the Mayor, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Councils have now agreed between them to find the funds. This means that the event will go ahead as usual. Our Council has warned, however, that their contribution is on a one-off basis and that other arrangements will need to be made next year.

In the words of Council Deputy Leader Kim Taylor-Smith, “Given the evolution of Carnival, it has grown so much since the first event on the streets of Notting Hill in 1966, we really do hope Government recognises its importance to the community and will lend its support for the future”. But this hope may well be vain. There is beginning to be a general acceptance that the Carnival is not sustainable in its present form, and that major changes will be needed. What these should be is still being debated. The Carnival (the biggest such event in the world after the one in Rio de Janeiro) is an event associated with the North Kensington Caribbean community. Even though the number who still live in the area is now small, its association with North Kensington is still much valued and many feel that moving it away from our area (to say Wormwood Scrubs or Hyde Park) would be unthinkable, as it would completely change its nature. One option would be for it to be greatly reduced in size, but this would also meet with much opposition. There are certainly no easy options.



MEMBERSHIP

The Ladbrooke Association was founded in 1969, in the same year as the designation of the Ladbrooke 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 Ladbrooke 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 notice of planning applications and inspects, discusses and comments on those which affect the Ladbrooke 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 Ladbrooke Conservation Area and cares about the 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: **Kay Broadbent**, kay@broadbentassociates.co.uk or **9 Kensington Park Gardens, W11 3HB**.

THE OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

President: Thomas Pakenham

Officers:

Chairman: Sophia Lambert

Hon Treasurer: Kay Broadbent

Hon Secretary: Anne Chorley

Committee Members:

Paul Bastick

Tom Croft

Liz Ellerton

Catherine Faulks

Sandra Kamen

Billie Lee

David Marshall

Peter Mishcon

Peggy Post

Nick Simmons

Tony Temple

James Wignell

Newsletter: Sophia Lambert

info@ladbrokeassociation.org

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 Ladbrooke 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 Ladbrooke 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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