

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

Spring 1978

MEETINGS AND LECTURES

Since publication of the Autumn Newsletter there have been two most interesting lectures for Association members and their friends.

The Association is fortunate in having many notable people as members. Among them is the distinguished Landscape Architect, Dame Sylvia Crowe who lives at the centre of the Conservation Area.

In November Dame Sylvia gave an illustrated lecture which was attended by about 50 members of the Association. Dame Sylvia delighted her audience with her charm, enthusiasm and dedication, and reminded us of how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful area and of the extent to which gardens and trees determine it's character.

The layout of the Ladbroke Estate combined buildings and soft landscape in a unique complementary way. It is a precious heritage and the landscape, like the buildings, needs proper care and maintenance.

Dame Sylvia pointed out it was particularly important now, when trees were being lost through disease and old age that those responsible should take advice on any re-planting and generally on the care and maintenance of the soft landscape.

The Association is, inevitably, very much concerned with the buildings in the area. Dame Sylvia gave members an enjoyable and very timely reminder of the other most valuable component of our environment.

On Tuesday 7th March last, Mr. Ashley Barker, OBE, FSA., FRIBA, Surveyor of Historic Buildings to the GLC addressed members of the Association and friends on "Conservation in the Ladbroke Area - The next ten years." He prefaced his more specific remarks by a fascinating history of the whole conservation movement since the first late nineteenth century Acts of Parliament.

On more detailed matters, Mr. Barker made reference to the fact that the Ladbroke Conservation Area has been designated as being of "Outstanding Architectural and Historic Interest," and pointed out that this designation allowed householders within the area to have access to public money which was not generally available. He urged that the Association and its members should encourage schemes of general environmental enhancement and the repair of architectural detail.

A lively discussion took place after the talk, and members were able to air their views and to elucidate further information from the speaker. The Association is extremely grateful to Mr. Barker for giving his time to the members so generously. The large audience gave ample evidence of their appreciation.

PLANNING

FLUE PIPES

A small but nonetheless important matter has recently come to the attention of the Association's Architectural Advisers and relates to the positioning of gas flues on the outside of buildings.

Most heating engineers appear to be completely oblivious of architectural considerations, and will always seek to place the flues and outlets of the appliances that they install, in the easiest position.

This attitude has led to a number of most unfortunate cases, of which the Association is keenly aware, where bright metal flues have been fixed onto porches or carried up conspicuous elevations and balanced-flue outlets have been cut directly through stucco pilasters or cornices.

The Association has brought this undesirable trend to the notice of the Council, and its officers have agreed to look into the matter; nevertheless the onus really rests with the householders themselves, who should be much more concerned about preventing the disfigurement of their houses by insensitive and ignorant tradesmen.

OCTAVIA HILL HOUSING TRUST SITE, 83 CLARENDON ROAD.

Town Planning approval has been granted for a large development of dwellings on this site at the corner of Clarendon Road and Portland Road. Apparently it is proposed to begin building this year.

The corner building, the old Clarendon Hotel, 85 Clarendon Road, is to be retained in the new development and this is strongly welcomed by the Association. Unfortunately there is no evidence on the Planning Application of any intention to restore the main cornice or any of the missing architectural features, although this would seem to be an ideal opportunity to set in motion an application for some of the public funds described in Mr. Barker's talk.

124 ELGIN CRESCENT

An application is before the Council for permission to erect a pre-fabricated garage in the large garden of this property, which occupies a prominent position near the corner of Elgin Crescent and Clarendon Road.

Access is to be obtained through existing gates on Clarendon Road. The garage is to be set well back from the frontage and almost in the centre of the garden. Whilst this will mean that the actual garage, which is of poor design, will be relatively invisible from the road, the amount of roadway and turning space required to reach it will virtually turn half the garden into a car park.

The Association cannot but view the whole scheme with considerable misgivings.

77 LADBROKE ROAD

The appeal against the Council's refusal to allow this house to continue in use as a language school has been withdrawn.

22 HOLLAND PARK AVENUE

Planning approval has at last been given for various alterations to this property, after a lengthy series of negotiations. The Association has never been happy about the intention to add an extra storey to the house, which is paired with its neighbour, since the adjacent house has not a similar top floor.

Although the new wall is set back from the line of the original front wall, the present proposal will noticeably break the symmetry of the paired buildings.

The following two matters are outside the Ladbroke Area but are of interest to the Association. The first closely affects the western edge of the area.

KENLEY STREET AND WALMER ROAD CLOSURE

The junction between Kenley Street, Princedale Road, Walmer Road and Pottery Lane was closed to traffic some seven years ago. This seems to have successfully eliminated the dangers inherent in a most unsatisfactory road junction which was being increasingly used by rush-hour traffic in an attempt to avoid delays elsewhere.

Pressure was recently brought to bear on the Council by some local residents, to re-open the roadway to limited traffic, it being claimed that the closure caused serious isolation in certain parts of Avondale Ward; the Council expressed its willingness to comply.

The Norland Association mounted a strong campaign to retain the closure and petitions containing some 1000 signatures were presented to the Council in support of its retention. In view of the evident local concern, especially in regard to the safety of the children attending St. Francis' Junior Girls' School in Pottery Lane, the Council has agreed that the junction shall remain closed.

The Ladbrooke Association welcomes the decision and gave all possible support to the Norland Association over this matter which also affects the Ladbrooke environment.

POWIS SQUARE

Residents in the Powis/Colville area – which has not been designated as a Conservation Area – have recently been expressing considerable concern over the Council's proposals to demolish numbers 3 to 14 Powis Square (which are owned by the Council) and to replace them with a new block of flats.

The residents have argued, with justification, that the design of the proposed new building is not in harmony with that of the remainder of the surrounding area, where a strong and consistent character is universally evident. The height of the new block is considerably less than that of the existing and adjacent blocks of houses and the material to be used is at variance with the existing stucco treatment.

The local residents, who have formed themselves into a Colville/Powis Amenity Society, have been endeavouring to persuade the Council that the buildings should be preserved and rehabilitated. Unfortunately the campaign appears to have failed, since the Planning Committee has now given planning approval to the rebuilding plans of the Housing Committee.

The whole matter raises questions of considerable importance in all areas where "conservation" depends almost entirely on "preservation" and the Council seems to have acted somewhat mistakenly in this instance.

It is very regrettable that, as the buildings have been in Council ownership since the 1930s and the standards of accommodation provided for the Council tenants no longer conform to modern requirements, a case which should have been judged on environmental and architectural criteria has come to be clouded by largely political and social issues.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER

Members will be pleased to know that the proposed modifications to the General Development Order on the Town and Country Planning Acts have been withdrawn.

The proposals, which, had they passed through Parliament, would have considerably relaxed controls over all development, were strongly resisted by all official and voluntary bodies concerned with preservation. The intended relaxations could only have had a disastrous effect on the maintenance of Conservation Areas and indeed the whole conservation movement. Their withdrawal is greatly welcomed.

TOWN SCHEME

To establish the Ladbrooke Estate as a statutory 'town scheme' – an urban area attracting maximum grants for the restoration of façades – a group of members have begun to organize a photographic survey of the whole estate. The work has the blessing and support of Mr. Ashley Barker, Surveyor of Historic Buildings to the GLC.

The Committee hope that this survey will help launch a large-scale programme of façade-restoration carried out by individual house-owners throughout the Ladbrooke Estate. Five phases are envisaged for this ambitious task:

to:

- 1, make a photographic dossier of the stucco façades and their ironwork etc., the dossier when completed will provide a catalogue of all the architectural detail in the area;
- 2, establish the Ladbrooke Estate as a 'town scheme' attracting maximum grant from the Department of the Environment, Greater London Council and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea;

- 3, investigate the costs and general practical problems of restoring stucco and ironwork — including the creation of a 'pool' of re-usable moulds for casting both these materials (and fibreglass);
- 4, circularise all householders in the Ladbroke Estate with information about these new opportunities; arrange an exhibition on the same lines;
- 5, create a permanent 'ginger' group in each part of the Estate to see that householders and their architects and builders know about the programme.

So far the survey team has done most of its work on the West side of the Estate. Members report a new appreciation of Ladbroke's glories and the richness and variety of its stucco-work — and also a recognition of the havoc caused by decay followed by ill-conceived restoration.

Mr. Thomas Pakenham is organizing the survey and would be delighted to hear of any members of the Association who would volunteer to join the survey team. He can be reached at 111 Elgin Crescent (727-7624). No photographic knowledge is needed. The survey team administers the survey; the photographs are being taken by professional photographers.

SILVER JUBILEE TREES

The Committee are glad of the response to the Association's offer of a tree to each of the communal gardens in the Ladbroke Estate Conservation Area to commemorate Silver Jubilee Year. Eleven trees have been ordered. There are thirteen gardens in the area. The choice of trees is wide, which would be expected from the varying needs and character of the gardens concerned. Most of the elms in the communal gardens have suffered to a greater or lesser extent from Dutch Elm Disease and conservation demands that these losses are made good. The well-timbered aspect of many gardens will be lost unless replacement plantings are undertaken now for the benefit of the next and succeeding generations of residents.

For their Jubilee Tree three gardens have chosen the common Mulberry (*Morus nigra*), several specimens of which have been planted in Kensington Gardens. Two gardens chose the attractive golden leaved Acacia (*Robinia frisia*) and a third garden chose a Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar*) which is notable for its Autumn colouring. Interesting choices were a Plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*), — not the ordinary London Plane — and a Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus*).

It is hoped to have news shortly of the plaques. The total cost of the tree presentations exceeded estimates and the Committee are investigating a source of economical and acceptable plaques in accordance with their original undertaking.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH APPEAL

More than £3,500 has been donated since the appeal was launched. The balance of approximately £1,750 remaining after the repairs to the masonry will help towards the purchase and erection of iron railings. It is planned to place the railings along the Ladbroke Grove frontage.

The Ladbroke Association donated £50 to the Appeal Fund and will assist in presenting a scheme and specifications to the Lamb Iron Company.

It is hoped that the scheme will be used as the basis for an approach to the Department of the Environment or other public bodies who might be willing to give a grant.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not already done so, please send your subscription for 1978/1979/due April 1978/ to the Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. H. Edwards, 18 Clarendon Road, W.11. The minimum Annual Subscription is still only £1 per person or family.

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