

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

SPRING 1979

AUTUMN MEETING

The Members' autumn meeting took place last year on the 4th December at the Knights of St. Columba Club. We were to have heard a talk from Professor Roy Worskett, the City Architect and Planning Officer of Bath, on the problems and successes of restoration in a city not without certain similarities to the Ladbroke Estate. Unfortunately Professor Worskett was prevented from coming owing to a sudden call to attend a meeting in Europe, but his deputy, Mr. John Grainger very kindly stood in for him.

Mr. Grainger gave the Association a most interesting and encouraging talk, and he expanded the title "Setting up Preservation Schemes in Areas of Historic Interest" to include not only his own experience in Bath but also in Norwich as well. The spectacular results which have been achieved in both cities gave considerable food for thought in regard to our own circumstances in Ladbroke, but the main message would seem to be that without the enthusiastic encouragement of the local Council, most preservation schemes are nowadays too complicated or too costly to be implemented by the public alone.

The meeting was disappointingly poorly attended, and it has been suggested that it was held too late in the year and too close to Christmas. Any comments from members on this matter would be welcome, especially if they help the Committee to plan activities which will attract the major part of the membership. Meanwhile we very much hope that members will come to the next Annual General Meeting of the Association (see details on back page).

PLANNING

VACANT HOUSES

Members may be aware that the Borough is now taking action in certain cases where houses have been left unoccupied for so long that the fabric is in danger of being damaged beyond repair. The Borough Architect's Department has recently submitted planning applications to the Borough Planning Department to carry out simple conversion and repair works to two properties, one in Ladbroke Grove and the other in Elgin Crescent.

STREET SIGNS

Many people object to large numbers of street signs throughout the area, particularly related to the one-way street system. It is understood that these signs may be of a smaller size in Conservation Areas, and that this also applies to yellow lines. Private street signs have different restrictions upon them, and much concern is being shown about those belonging to the Bowley Clinic in Ladbroke Terrace. Signs which are illuminated at night would seem most unsuitable in a Conservation Area.

MANSARD ROOFS

There have been certain recent planning applications where a slate covered vertical wall at roof level has purported to be a mansard roof. The Committee believes that this is a most unsatisfactory way of trying to obtain extra space.

NEW WINDOWS

Applications frequently involve the replacement of existing windows, or construction of new windows. It is felt that in all cases windows and doors should match, or be in keeping, with those existing, and be of timber rather than steel or aluminium. Windows should in most cases be double-hung sashes or side-hung casements. Pivoting windows or those with louvres are not considered suitable, and fixed glazing can also look out of keeping with the area. Symmetry in the placing of window and door openings can also be of prime importance, where symmetry exists elsewhere in the building.

EXISTING DETAILING

The Committee is always concerned that whilst building work is being carried out, repairs to mouldings, balustrades and other original detailing are included. It can all too often happen that if repair and decoration are not carried out at reasonable intervals, the damage may become such that the expense is much greater than it would have been, or indeed in some cases that repair is no longer possible.

ROOF EXTENSIONS

It is generally believed that roof extensions can so severely alter the appearance of a building, that only in exceptional cases should these be allowed. Such an exception has been submitted to the Borough for 19 Lansdowne Walk. The proposals here have such quality, and are so in keeping with what exists, that the Committee believes they would actually enhance the area. There is one problem however, which relates to a tree in a neighbouring garden which could be too close to allow for the proposed roof extension, despite its domed shape. The Borough have been asked to ensure that the tree would not be damaged during the building work.

INFILLING

For some time past it has been the Borough's policy not to permit infilling between houses, and the Association has given its support to this policy. Although it may seem unjust on the individual house owner who needs additional living space, the views between buildings to trees, private or communal, and the gardens themselves, are an integral part of this unique area. Thus when a householder in Lansdowne Walk recently applied to build a first floor storey on an existing side extension, it was found that this tiny alteration would block off a good view of a beautiful tree from the passer by, and the application was therefore not supported by the Committee.

CABMEN'S SHELTER

In Kensington Park Road there is a Cabmen's shelter, complete with telephone, which until recently was used as a meeting place for taxi drivers. It is now falling into a state of disrepair, and the Committee is endeavouring to discover whom is responsible in order that they may be pressed to carry out the necessary repair works.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH RAILINGS

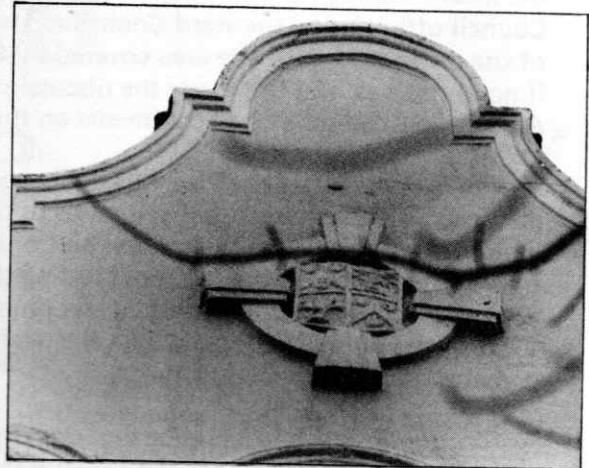
Although progress has been slow and no railings have yet been erected, much has been achieved since the report in the last Newsletter. The negotiations with the Department of the Environment resulted in its offer of a grant of £1,500, and the Royal Borough has now also offered an equal amount. Negotiations have been somewhat prolonged as both bodies made their grants subject to various requirements being fulfilled. Throughout, the Borough's Town Planning Department has been most sympathetic towards the whole project and has given invaluable help in furthering the scheme.

The amount now standing in the Restoration Fund, together with additional sums of money promised, totals some £2,600. It is clear that, even with the addition of the grants, further sums will be needed to complete the project. The Fund is still open: our own Treasurer is also acting treasurer of the Fund, and would gratefully receive donations from members, which should be sent to Mrs. H. Edwards, 18 Clarendon Road, W.11.

PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY



Gothic gate ironwork, 74 Elgin Crescent.



Stucco gable, 102 Lansdowne Road.

Some of the results of the photographic survey of the estate, begun two years ago, will be on exhibition at the Annual General Meeting in June (see announcement on back page of Newsletter). The survey team is led by Thomas Pakenham, assisted by Ian Grant, Catherine Porteous and about 15 other members of the Association.

The exhibition will include photographs of the following streets, which have now been surveyed: Ladbroke Square, Ladbroke Road, Lansdowne Crescent, Elgin Crescent, Blenheim Crescent and Lansdowne Road. The survey photographs have been taken by professional photographers (see illustrations), but it is hoped that we can also put on exhibition some additional photographs taken by volunteers.

The aim of the survey is to help establish the estate as a "town scheme" — an urban area attracting maximum grants for the restoration of facades — and we also hope that the survey will help launch a large-scale programme of facade restoration carried out by individual house-owners throughout "Ladbokia".

Once the estate has been recognised by the authorities as a "town scheme", we plan to circularise all house-owners with details of the opportunities open to them. We hope to create a "pool" of re-usable moulds for casting materials — ironwork, stucco and fibreglass.

Anyone who would like to help with the survey should contact Thomas Pakenham at 111 Elgin Crescent (tel. 727 7624). No photographic knowledge is needed, since the survey team administers the survey, the formal photographs being taken by professional photographers.

DISTRICT PLAN

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, and the Town and Country (Local Plans for Greater London) Regulations 1974, all Greater London Metropolitan Borough Councils are obliged to prepare District Plans. These Plans must conform with the Greater London Development Plan which sets out the broad policies and strategies for the future development of London as a whole.

During the past four years the Council of the Royal Borough has been engaged in the process of producing a draft District Plan for Kensington and Chelsea. First, a series of ten special study papers — "Context Papers" — was prepared on such topics as Housing, Movement, Conservation, Shopping, Employment etc., and these were circulated to interested bodies, including the Ladbroke Association. Then, an elaborate framework for "public participation" was set up. The Borough was divided into six areas, each area being a group of three or four wards. In each of these areas a Planning Forum was set up consisting of persons from the wards concerned and representatives from local organisations. In our case the area was that covered by Avondale, Colville, Norland and Pembridge wards.

Several members of the Ladbroke Association, including the Chairman, became members of the local Planning Forum. Regular meetings were held to discuss the Context Papers with the Council officials and the ward Councillors in an attempt to form a local view on the various aspects of the proposed Plan. The area covered by the local Forum is one of physical and social diversity, if not extremes, and this made the discussions difficult. The executive committee of the Ladbroke Association also submitted comments on those Context Papers on which it felt able to express a view.

The draft District Plan was then produced and submitted to the Forums and other bodies for comment, and also presented at a series of public meetings. At this stage our executive committee limited its comments to the section on Conservation which, on the whole, it regarded as satisfactory. In the local Forum there was some feeling that the Plan was not positive and specific enough, especially with regard to the particular social and physical problems of North Kensington. It was also felt that some of the Forum's comments on the draft Plan had not adequately been taken into account in the preparation of the final document.

The public participation and drafting processes are coming to an end and the District Plan, which lays down policies for the Royal Borough for the next ten years, will soon be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment for his approval. Meanwhile, there is still time for public comment. Copies of the District Plan can be seen at the Town Hall and at Public Libraries.

TREES IN LADBROKE

Most of us, when deciding to live in the Ladbroke Association area, were impressed by the quality of the environment with its fine buildings, communal gardens and tree-lined streets. Having lived here some years one appreciates the subtleties of the trees as they change with the seasons. But following the drought of 1975/6 some people have found it necessary to review their earlier impressions and now perhaps feel threatened by trees in garden and street.

Are they right to feel so disenchanted? To answer this question it is necessary to analyse a series of technically complicated subjects. In future issues of this Newsletter information will be given that will present a balanced view of this problem. The subjects to be explored will include:

- i) Ground conditions in the Ladbroke Association area, that is, the characteristics of shrinkable clay with particular reference to the water content and its possible effect on foundations.
- ii) Weather conditions over the last century with special emphasis on rainfall records to discover if the recent drought was unique and whether buildings have been subjected to similar conditions in the past. .
- iii) The characteristics of the most common types of trees found in the area and the effects they have on shrinkable clay.
- iv) The implications of the advice given by the National House Building Council in their Practice Note 3; other publications; and current views expressed at the Tree Council/RIBA conference of March 1979.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 11th Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at 8.30pm on Monday June 25th at the Knights of St.Columba Club, 11 Lansdowne Road. A number of photographs from the current survey of the area will be on exhibition (see page 3).

Drinks will be available in the bar after the meeting, and if the weather is fine it is hoped to obtain permission to use the adjoining gardens.

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