

# News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

AUTUMN 1980

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 12th Annual General Meeting of the Ladbroke Association was held on Monday June 23rd at the Knights of St. Columba Club, 11 Lansdowne Road.

According to the Constitution of the Association, Mr. Ian Grant's three-year term of office as Chairman came to an end. Mr. Angus Stirling the Vice-President sent a letter regretting that he was unable to be present, and expressing on behalf of the Association great appreciation of Mr. Grant's splendid work as Chairman (see also page 2). The Committee then nominated Mr. Peter Thorold for Chairman and he was elected unanimously. Later in the meeting he took over the Chair from Mr. Ian Grant. The Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary were both re-elected.

Four members of the Committee were due to retire, but were eligible for re-election. There were also two vacancies: one had been unfilled and one was due to Mr. Thorold taking the Chair. Mr. P. Chapman, Mrs. K. Kinmonth, Mr. T. Pakenham and Mr. R. Postgate were re-elected, and Mr. Ian Grant and the Lady Reay were elected to the Committee.

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

*Mr. Ian Grant, retiring Chairman, writes:*

The last Annual General Meeting marked the end of my term of office as Chairman, which began so sadly with the untimely death of Professor Carus-Wilson. Your Committee elected Peter Thorold as my successor, and I know that he will be an excellent Chairman.

During the last year your Committee met once a month, and comments were regularly made to the Council on matters related to town planning and tree preservation. Various members' meetings were arranged, all of them reported in recent Newsletters. On this matter, I should like to take the opportunity of recording our continued gratitude to the Knights of St. Columba Club for allowing us to use their room for our functions.

We still continue to be concerned about the anomaly of "permitted development" in Conservation Areas, which allows householders to make alterations to their property in certain circumstances without planning approval, and we shall endeavour to have "permitted development rights" curtailed, if not removed altogether in Conservation Areas, since we consider them to be totally contradictory to the basic idea of conservation.

Many of you will have seen in the local press that the matter of the Channel Tunnel Terminal has been re-opened, and that British Rail, in the interest of their own short-term convenience, favours a terminal at Olympia and at Shepherd's Bush. We consider that such a terminal, with the increased traffic and congestion that it would cause (not to mention the extra "tourist pollution") would be an environmental disaster for the whole of western Kensington, and we shall hope to be able to marshal our protest to coincide with that of the Kensington Society in due course.

The enhancement schemes promoted by monies from the Borough, the GLC and the Department of the Environment have got under way in the past year, but somewhat spasmodically in Elgin and Blenheim Crescents owing to the nature of the arrangements. Most disappointingly, the DoE has indicated that it cannot contribute to the enhancement scheme for Kensington Park Terrace North, but the Ladbroke Association is pressing for this decision to be reconsidered.

interesting and instructive as possible and which will help us to formulate an overall view of planning and tree preservation throughout Ladbrooke. We are, of course, by and large fortunate in our trees, as comparison with most other parts of London will immediately show. However, the dangers of disease and of indiscriminate destruction and pollarding require constant vigilance.

We are not arguing for uniformity. Trees should reflect the lay-out of the street and the architecture. What is suitable for Ladbrooke Grove, a natural grand avenue, may be wrong for Lansdowne Road with its much more intimate atmosphere. There are parts of the area such as Kensington Park Road where we would wish for a more homogeneous approach to planting, and streets such as Stanley Gardens where virtually any trees at all would be out of place.

The subject of trees links with that of communal gardens and those other amenity societies in Ladbrooke, the Garden Committees. The Association would very much like to establish a closer relationship with bodies with whom we have so much in common. In practical terms, there are difficulties: each garden tends to constitute a little society of its own and, indeed, to some degree, its vitality depends on its being small. There is a natural reluctance on the part of the officers to involve themselves with outside organisations even when, as in the case of the Ladbrooke Association, they share many of their concerns.

Nevertheless events are tending to push us together. An officer on one Garden Committee has suggested that the recent threat to force open the communal gardens to the world at large gave added force to the idea of co-operation between amenity societies. Garden Committees have had to face elm disease and the knowledge that many full-grown and mature trees are nearing the end of their lives. Our Association's expertise in tree management could be useful and certainly we are anxious to put it at the Garden Committees' disposal.

We hope members with a direct interest in communal gardens will consider the question and their views will be very welcome. We shall certainly be inviting members of Garden Committees to our winter meeting, as well as those living in the area who have conspicuous trees in their front gardens.

## **PLANNING**

### **BOROUGH DISTRICT PLAN**

On October 7th 1980 the Public Inquiry started at Chelsea Old Town Hall into the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea District Plan. In reply to the Association's original objections which related to building design, street lighting, availability of publications, off-street car parking, access to Communal Gardens and scale of drawings, the Borough sent details of their proposed amendments, or their reasons for making no amendment. These were examined by the Association's sub-committee and all but two objections were withdrawn. With regard to off-street car parking, the objection remained in that it was felt that the emphasis should be against off-street and forecourt parking in Conservation Areas.

More seriously, having carefully examined the various mentions made of possible public access to Communal Gardens, the Association's attitude remains that, "any unrestricted public use would inevitably put children, animals and property at risk and also break down the existing system of communal care for the gardens". The Council's amended policy statement is that, "the Council welcomes wider access into the protected Garden Squares, where this is consistent with the wishes of the Garden Square Committees and the nature of the garden square and the amount of open space available".

The Association, as with other objectors, had the opportunity to appear personally at the Public Inquiry, or be professionally represented, and also call witnesses. However, it was decided that written representation would be more appropriate. The Association's attitude towards the Borough policy to wider access to Communal Gardens remains one of extreme concern. Whilst accepting that the inclusion of this item was probably for political motives and without much practical future, it remains unfortunate that mention of public access into what are private gardens, whether Communal or Square Gardens, will now be on the record for future reference. The Association will continue to monitor the situation, in the future, and would suggest that Communal Gardens Committees should do likewise and perhaps join together to forestall any possible threat.

### **OBJECTIONS**

Once monthly the Association's representatives visit the Borough Planning Department to view planning applications currently submitted. Details of these applications are discussed in Committee before the Committee's views are sent to the Borough Planning Control Officer. Concern was expressed recently as to the effect that the Association was having on the outcome of applications. It is however understood that although the Borough may be of the same opinion as the Association, frequently they have no legal grounds for refusal of an application, but by consultation the proposals

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may be greatly amended before receiving approval. Thus often the Association's views may be put to good use at this informal level, and in addition it is understood that the Planning Committee always requires details of local amenity Associations' objections to aid deliberations.

### **137 BLENHEIM CRESCENT**

When commenting upon this application for minimal change of use, the Association urged that the Borough should insist upon the renovation of the really very fine town house backing onto the Communal Garden at the rear, which it is believed antedates the surrounding houses.

### **3 CLARENDON CROSS**

Whilst beyond the boundary of this Conservation Area, the Association is concerned at the continued disintegration of Clarendon Cross as a local shopping centre, and are urging the Borough to assure "That those remaining food shops, the post office and the newsagents should only be allowed to be used for that same general purpose".

### **HIPPODROME PLACE**

For some years, and especially since the closing of Portland Road, and the building of Hippodrome Mews, Hippodrome Place has been one of the worst danger spots in the area. This stems from the narrowness of the roadway and pavements (in each case half the normal minimum permitted width), the quantity of pedestrians generated by the three local schools and the playground, and the fact that this is the only east-west route between Holland Park Avenue and Lancaster Road. It is indeed surprising that nobody has yet been killed by a car or lorry mounting the narrow pavements in order to pass an oncoming vehicle.

It was the Borough's stated intention to close Hippodrome Place, and also the stretch of Walmer Road along Avondale Park, and to pedestrianise this area with plants and trees, and build a small new stretch of road, between the two new developments, from Portland Road to Walmer Road. The space has been allowed, as may be clearly seen, and the road would provide direct access from Clarendon Road to Walmer Road bypassing Clarendon Cross altogether.

In reply to the Association's recent query asking when this work would be carried out, the Borough stated that it had been postponed indefinitely due to spending cuts. It should be noted that the amount of new road requiring to be made is only about twenty metres, and would therefore require a comparatively small outlay. The Association will continue to pressurise the Borough and would recommend that local residents should do likewise.

### **AGENTS' BOARDS**

The Association has asked the Borough whether there would be some way of minimising the visual detriment afforded by House Agents' Boards.

### **PLANNING APPEAL**

The owners of 11a Lansdowne Walk have appealed against the Borough refusal of their application to build a wall in the front garden. The Association, whilst not objecting to the wall, will support the Borough on their objection to the parking of cars in the forecourt, which is so small that cars are parked right against the house.

### **VIEWING THEATRE**

An application was recently submitted for a basement level viewing theatre at 4 Kensington Park Gardens. The Association believes that since a very large area was involved, the proposal was in effect for a commercial viewing theatre with subsequent generation of parking, and traffic problems. They therefore pointed out that permission for "change of use" would be required. In addition it should be noted that the proposals involved building over the entire rear garden with an upstand of about sixty centimetres above the adjacent private and communal gardens. It was felt that a principle of the area should be that gardens should remain basically gardens, with trees, shrubs, flowers, grass and perhaps some paving, and not be just hard surfaced "grandscape" like the streets and pavements outside.