

News from Ladbroke

September 1974

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

IMPORTANT NOTICES

a A Traffic Meeting for members only to discuss the new traffic circulation system in the Clarendon Road area will be held at 8.30pm on Wednesday 9th October at the Knights of St. Columba Club, 11 Lansdowne Road. A senior representative of the Borough's engineering department will be present to answer questions. In order to ensure the fullest possible replies it is advisable to give notice of your questions to Angus Stirling, 25 Ladbroke Grove by 1st October so that the necessary research may be made by the Borough officers.

b Ashley Barker, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., Surveyor of Historic Buildings to the Greater London Council, will give a talk on "Architectural Restoration in Conservation Areas" at 8.30pm on Monday, 18th November at the Knights of St. Columba Club. Members may bring guests for 25 pence each and a bar will be open from 8pm. Mr. Barker, who lives in Kensington Park Gardens, is, of course, very distinguished in his field and the evening promises to be interesting and enjoyable.

c Channel Tunnel Terminal. The proposal by British Rail to site the new terminal for the Channel Tunnel rail link at the Whire City is causing much concern to all the Kensington amenity societies. The presence of a transport complex of the magnitude that this promises can only have an adverse effect on the environments of the adjacent areas, and the inevitable traffic generation could eventually prove disastrous.

Since the recent publication of British Rail's unsatisfactory and hastily compiled proposal document, protests have been mounting in many quarters, and the Committee of the Ladbroke Association believes that we should also make our voice heard.

The Kensington Society is organising a Public Meeting in the large hall at Kensington Town Hall at 8 o'clock on Monday 7th October next, 4th Nov and your Committee wishes most strongly to urge every member to attend who is able to do so.

1. Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Ladbroke Association was held on July 4th at the Knights of St. Columba Club. The Chairman expressed the gratitude of the Association to the Knights for once again allowing the A.G.M. to be held in their hall and also for having allowed meetings to be held in the Club during the past year. It was unanimously agreed that the Secretary of the Club, Mr. Corcoran, should be invited to become an honorary member of the Association.

a. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the Treasurer the report on the accounts was presented by the Chairman. It showed that the Association's funds were in a reasonably healthy condition. Expenditure had been less than in 1972/3, chiefly because payments in that year had been somewhat inflated by the cost of the Traffic Report, and there had been a considerable increase in the income from subscriptions, both because of a drive by the Treasurer to get members to pay outstanding subscriptions and because many new members had joined. There were 210 members on the books at present - an increase of 50 over the previous year. Equally encouraging had been the increase in the number of covenants and bankers' orders, though it would be gratifying to see still more of both of these since they are extremely helpful to the Association. The report stressed the continuing need of new members in order to maintain numbers because of the inevitable wastage each year due to persons moving out of the area. It also urged members who had not already done so to pay their current subscriptions for 1974/5 (due last April 1st) without further delay; these were coming in only slowly at present, except for those paid by bankers' order, while some were still unpaid for previous years, despite the Treasurer's 'cri de coeur'.

The accounts, which had been circulated at the meeting, were duly adopted, and the Chairman expressed the Association's warm appreciation of the Treasurer's work during the year.

b. Election of Officers and Committee

Professor E. Carus-Wilson and Mr. H.F.A. Jackson were re-elected as Chairman and Treasurer respectively. The Chairman then expressed the great gratitude of the Association to Miss Janet Lloyd who had acted so ably as its Secretary over the past three years, and its keen sense of loss as she retires this year on leaving the area. No successor had as yet been found, but Santa Raymond (Mrs. Burrill) had agreed to act until September. The Chairman appealed to all members for help in finding a new secretary to take over then, and also for help with typing and duplicating.

The Chairman thanked those members of the committee who were retiring in accordance with the three year rotation system, and Mrs. Quirk who was retiring on leaving the area. The following were then elected as committee members:-

Royd Barker	F.C.T. Markham
J.D.C. Carleton	Mme. Pilsudski
Dr. C.I. Collins	Mrs. Pirie
I. Grant	Mrs. Porteous
T. Herring	A. Stirling
Mrs. Kinmonth	C. Whitfield

c. **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman commented on the satisfactory state of the Association's membership and finances, as reflected in the accounts, but appealed to all members to try and enrol friends since it was clear that a considerable number of residents in the area were unaware of the Association's existence. The Association's activities during the year had largely been reported in the two Newsletters issued in November and April. Although these were relatively inexpensive to print, their production entailed much hard work, and the Chairman thanked Mr. Markham for acting as editor. The Association had continued to enjoy good relations with the Borough, whose officials appeared really to wish to have the Association's views before taking decisions of particular importance to the Conservation Area.

Borough officers had taken part in one Association meeting on the preservation and listing of trees, and the tree preservation orders first made over twenty years ago had been checked and new ones made. The Chairman thanked Mrs. Kinmonth and Mr. Whitfield who had organised the tree survey which had been carried out with the help of street representatives; detailed maps had now been distributed to each of these representatives, showing tree preservation orders old and new, and it was hoped that this would stimulate interest in the care of established trees and the planting of new ones.

During the year the Planning Sub-committee had been notified of 113 applications for planning approval within the conservation area and had sent comments to the Borough on 88 of them. The application which had caused most widespread concern in the neighbourhood had been that for the demolition of the Kensington Temple and re-development of the site. At the time of the application the site lay outside the boundaries of the Ladbroke Conservation Area, although its future was of major interest to residents. Largely as a result of the application the triangle bounded by Ladbroke Road, Kensington Park Road and Horbury Crescent (south side) had now been brought within the area and the Association was pressing the borough to amend other boundaries of the area which appeared somewhat anomalous.

The introduction of the new traffic management scheme in the south-west corner of the area had caused considerable concern to members and the Chairman emphasised that this scheme was one designed by the Borough and was not in any way based on the scheme which the Association itself had proposed. Although it was generally agreed that the overall traffic flow had been reduced, the great improvement in conditions in Clarendon Road had clearly been achieved at the expense of other streets, and the one-way streets had led to excessive speeding. After the scheme had been in operation experimentally for some little time the Association had circularised all its members asking for written comments. Some thirty-seven replies were

received and duly analysed, and a preliminary letter was sent to the Borough reporting the results of the enquiry, with a request that when reviewing the scheme in one corner more consideration should be given to treating the traffic problems of the area as a whole. As a result of these representations it had been agreed that Borough officers should come to a meeting which the Association would be arranging in October; this would give members an opportunity to put their views to the Borough.

Note: Since the A.G.M. this meeting has been fixed for Wednesday October 9th.

2. Professor Shepherd's Lecture

The Annual General Meeting was followed by a lantern lecture given by the very distinguished landscape architect Professor Peter Shepherd on Trees in Towns. The speaker, who combines his architectural practice with an academic post in America, spoke of being particularly drawn to the urban landscape of the Ladbroke area, where trees and architecture formed a successful whole.

Professor Shepherd illustrated in a very lively manner the role of trees in our urban surroundings, from their biological functions as living organisms to the visual niceties of their appearance in an architectural setting. He emphasized the need for informed care on the part of the amateurs who were ordinarily responsible for their welfare, and demonstrated graphically with photographs of damaged limbs, festering sores and rotten trunks the results of unprofessional work. Pictures of the same tree taken over a period of years showed dramatic differences - amateur work often achieving quite the opposite of what was intended. Some protection in the urban landscape was afforded by Tree Preservation Orders, but decades of slow growth could be undone in a few moments. In cases of doubt, the first priority was to get the saw out of the offending hands.

Professor Shepherd concluded with various series of slides of the same view at different times of year, bringing out the immense changes that the seasons make to the urban landscape, and the importance of trees in the architectural scenario.

The lecture came at the end of a year of activity on the Ladbroke Association's part in the field of trees. The Area representatives have co-operated with the Council in drawing up recommendations for new Tree Preservation Orders in the area, and new maps, with up-to-date references, have now been circulated. These will, it is to be hoped, contribute to greater vigilance in the conservation of the magnificent trees in the area, and commend surgery to the professionals.

3. European Architectural Heritage Year

The Governments of a number of European countries have agreed to designate 1975 as "European Architectural Heritage Year". The British Government is marking the occasion by making a certain amount of public money available for the execution of schemes of preservation or enhancement, under approved circumstances and in various approved areas.

The Ladbroke Association is considering applying to have the Area accepted as one of "outstanding interest", and should this take place, the Association would then be in a position to apply for money to implement Conservation and Preservation schemes.

It would be of great assistance to your Committee if interested members of the Association would write in and give any suggestions, so that, in the event of a scheme being made possible, the Committee members would have some indication of the opinions on priorities held by the body of the membership.

4. Paper Salvage Scheme

The West London Friends of the Earth, an environmental action group, is working for the Borough to introduce its own paper salvage scheme. In order to demonstrate that this is both practical and profitable they have introduced a scheme of their own in association with St. John's Church, Ladbroke Grove. Neatly tied bundles of newspapers may be left in the church at any time. At the moment about a ton a week is collected and the £12 proceeds are donated to the Notting Hill Housing Trust. Members who wish to help with the scheme or who are unable to reach the church themselves should contact Joyce Taylor on 727 9681.

5. Planning

Since the last Newsletter, the Association's Architectural Advisors have continued to visit the Chelsea Old Town Hall at regular intervals to personally examine any Planning Applications affecting buildings in the Conservation Area, or immediately adjacent to it. These visits have then been followed by written comments to the Borough Council, giving the Association's views about applications of importance. The bulk of the applications in the Ladbroke Area over the last six months has continued to consist either of proposals for the erection of extra storeys, or for the formation of forecourt parking. The Association is generally opposed to the addition of an extra storey to existing houses, especially if this throws out the balance of a terrace or the symmetry of a pair, or if the details of the proposed work are unsympathetic to the character of the existing building.

Nevertheless the Association's Advisors believe that every case needs to be considered on its merits, and that it is therefore necessary to examine each one. The RBK & C's Policy Document on this matter, issued in October 1972, puts the case admirably in regard to the Council's own attitude, and the Association has always been in complete agreement with the principles that are laid down in this document.

The question of forecourt parking is one which gives perpetual cause for concern, since the Planning laws relating to it are in some ways rather unsatisfactory. Whilst the Association is perfectly well aware of the reasons for owners' desire to get their cars off the road and onto their own property, the Committee does not consider that these should alter their opinion that the operation is nearly always undesirable both architecturally and environmentally. The Association objects to almost every case. Where houses were designed set back from roadways, with their own front garden, an architectural loss must inevitably take place when walls or railings are removed, and visually important trees, shrubs or flowers are uprooted to allow for the laying of paving. Furthermore, very few householders appear to feel any sense of civic responsibility in this matter, and most of the alterations have been carried out in the cheapest and most casually unconsidered manner. An inevitable and unpleasant visual intrusion must always occur when vehicles stand close against the buildings.

A recent and disturbing element has been the appearance of various proposals to make use of the ends of some of the open spaces for parking, where the gardens flank the short linking streets and have no houses upon them. The Association considers that such use could only form an undesirable precedent for the gradual whittling away of valuable open gardens, and has and will resist any such intentions by all possible means.

Probably the most contentious recent Planning Application has been that concerning the proposed infilling between No's. 12 and 14 Lansdowne Walk by the Shepperd Trust. The scheme was opposed by both the Ladbroke Association and the Kensington Society, and was refused Planning approval by the RBK & C. The applicants have decided to appeal to the Minister however, but the result of this is not yet available. In order to re-state the Association's case, we reprint below a copy of the letter sent in February of this year by the Chairman of the Kensington Society to the RBK & C, which seems to set out the various points very clearly, and with which the Association allied itself.

"Dear Sir,

12-14 Lansdowne Walk, London W.11.

This Society has recently had the opportunity of examining a new and slightly modified scheme for the infilling between the above properties, and I wish to state that the Society's grounds for objection still remain, and that I consider that they relate to matters of fundamental principle.

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In relation to these, I should like to emphasise the following points:-

1. The Civic Amenities Act states that development within a Conservation Area shall maintain or enhance the existing character of the area, and your Council's designation of the Ladbroke Estate implies a recognition that it possesses distinctive characteristics.
2. Your Council's stated policy, formulated in 1970, undertakes to restrict, limit and in many cases refuse permission for infilling between pairs of houses (with especial reference to Clarendon Road) and this agrees with the Amenity Societies' opinion that much of the especial interest of this part of the Ladbroke Estate resides in the open layout, with pairs of houses separated by open spaces through which vistas of further open spaces may be glimpsed.
3. The existing separation between nos. 12-14 Lansdowne Walk is a particularly fine example of this peculiar local feature, and it could only be undesirable for your Council to be seen to go back on its previously maintained policy, and it would set a dangerous precedent. It can hardly be said that the proposal either maintains or enhances the existing character of the area.
4. Another stated policy of your Council is to try to ensure that domestic development and conversion within this part of the Borough shall provide family accommodation, and proposals showing the type of one room/ kitchen/ bathroom accommodation as intended in this scheme have nearly always been refused planning approval.
5. Should the present owners decide at any time in the future to move from their premises in Lansdowne Walk, a large number of one-room units could be offered on the market, and must encourage exactly the type of transient and undesirable occupation that your Council has hitherto been admirably trying to restrict.
6. It appears to be impossible in law to issue conditional approval for old people's use which would be valid for all time, and since, as I understand it, the residents are not even drawn from among previous Kensington inhabitants, there would seem to be hardly any reasons why the Trust should not at some future time decide to move elsewhere, particularly as they could release such a potentially valuable asset onto the market by such an action.
7. Whilst the architect has obviously taken a great deal of trouble to try to resolve his elevational problems on the Lansdowne Walk front, the matter is basically insoluble, since it is architecturally impossible to satisfactorily link two buildings in different styles across a 30'0" gap which falls some 2'6" in level. It is also disappointing, inter alia, to see that it is not intended to improve the deplorable dormer additions on the existing properties."

Yours faithfully.

The other important recent case was that concerning a proposal to demolish the Kensington Temple in Kensington Park Road and replace it with a new auditorium-type church, offices, living accommodation and a shop. As noted in the previous newsletter, a great deal of local opposition was generated by the application, and the Association registered its opposition with the Council, although the building was not then included in the Ladbroke Conservation Area. The application was refused, and the Council subsequently decided to include the block bounded by Kensington Park Road, Horbury Crescent and Ladbroke Road into the Ladbroke Conservation Area. (An inclusion for which the Association had been pressing for some time previously). Furthermore, the Kensington Temple was also subsequently placed on the Minister's list of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest.

Boundaries

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the Committee of the Association has been urging the RBK & C for some time past to revise and rationalise some of the boundaries of the Conservation Area, particularly in order to remove the anomaly of boundaries which run down the centres of roads, or which seem to arbitrarily exclude blocks of buildings or adjacent streets which obviously display the same character as that of the Estate.

A revised map has been submitted to the Council's officials, and we are assured that the matter is receiving favourable consideration, although so far without any concrete results. The only recent action concerning this matter has been the inclusion of the Kensington Temple block (see above), together with some extra buildings on the south side of Ladbroke Road, and in this case the Council's hand was apparently forced by the necessity of bringing under closer control a number of buildings occupying very sensitive positions on the edge of the Ladbroke Estate.

The recent information that the Council is considering making the whole Borough into a Conservation Area does not in fact affect the question of individual boundaries very greatly, since it continues to be desirable to define districts which have a homogeneity of character in order to ensure their proper preservation, and also to make practical the continued work of the various local Amenity Societies.

6. Secretary Required

Since Janet Lloyd left the area, the Association has been looking for a new Secretary to replace her. This part-time job involves more than taking the minutes at the monthly meeting as it includes writing the letters to the Borough officials and others stating the Association's views and reporting their replies. The job could be attractive to an educated person who would enjoy some mental stimulation. If you are interested or know of anyone who might be suitable, please contact the Association at the address below.

The Ladbroke Association,
41 Ladbroke Square,
London W.11