

News from Ladbroke

April 1974

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

SUBSCRIPTIONS are due on April 1 and should be paid to the Treasurer, (address at the end of this Newsletter.) It is hoped that members who do not already have Banker's Orders or Covenants will take them up; forms are available from the Treasurer. The minimum subscription is £1 for an individual or a family but anyone who feels able to give more will not be discouraged since expenses, such as the cost of this Newsletter, are not getting any less. Another way of increasing subscriptions is to introduce new members, who are always welcome.

1. Annual General Meeting

This will be held this year at 7.30 pm on July 4th at the Knights of St, Columba Club, 11 Lansdowne Road. The meeting will be followed by a talk from Professor Peter Shephard, the distinguished landscape architect, who will take as his subject "Trees in Towns."

2. Planning

- a. Many planning applications in the area involve making additions to existing buildings and it may be of interest to outline the Borough Council's attitude to certain proposals of this kind.

It is now the Council's stated policy not to approve applications to add extra storeys to buildings especially when this would affect the appearance of a street, as for example raising the height of one house in a terrace with an otherwise regular roofline. A current example is Numbers 12/13 Ladbroke Square, where applications to build an extra storey are likely to be refused. Where proposed additions and extensions are not visible from a public place, the Association's Committee does not usually comment.

It is also the Council's policy not to approve the less frequent applications to infill between detached buildings. A recent example in Lansdowne Walk was twice turned down. Infilling is a particularly important issue in the Ladbroke Conservation Area, where the view between the houses into the gardens behind is a unique attraction.

- b. The Kensington Temple
The application to redevelop this site has aroused more spontaneous interest among neighbouring residents than any for a long time. Although the Temple is outside the present limits of the Conservation Area the Association is obviously watching the situation closely. The main objections to the scheme, which aims to replace the present building with a block including a basement church, offices and flats, is the intrusion of office accommodation into a residential area, the destruction of existing trees, and the generation of extra traffic. In addition it is widely felt that this important site should carry a building of more than usual distinction. The Council will probably consider the proposal in conjunction with the plan to build a theatre across the road, a development for which no formal permission has yet been sought. The Secretary would welcome the views of members on this important project.

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2/3 Ladbroke Square

Anxiety has been expressed by members of the public that the reconstruction of these houses does not seem to be resulting in a facade exactly similar to the one that was there before. The Council in fact stipulated that the new facade should be identical to the old one and photographs were lodged with the Council for purposes of comparison. The Association is closely watching the rebuilding and will certainly press the Council to insist on this stipulation being met, should there be any need to do so.

3. Boundaries

It has always been a mystery to the association as to why the Conservation Area has the boundaries it does have. In some cases they run down the middle of streets which have complementary houses each side, but the most peculiar omission is the Kensington Temple triangle. The boundary running eastward along Ladbroke Road does not continue to the junction with Kensington Park Road, but stops short at Horbury Crescent and then runs down the middle of the Crescent, including one side of the street but not the other. The Committee has written to the Council suggesting various logical boundary changes but it may well take some time before anything is done. Meanwhile the Association continues to take a close interest in local developments which may not be within the present limits of the Conservation Area.

4. Traffic

Now that the Borough's traffic management scheme in the Clarendon Road/Lansdowne Road area has been in operation for over three months the Borough Council is taking stock of the results and attempting to assess its effectiveness. The traffic subcommittee of the Ladbroke Association, which put forward its own scheme for the whole Conservation Area in 1972, is therefore holding discussions with the appropriate borough officers, in close collaboration with the Pembridge Association. Comments from members would greatly assist the subcommittee in these discussions, and it is hoped that many will fill up and return the enclosed slip.

5. Trees On The Ladbroke Estate contributed by Clovis Whitfield

Nineteenth century plans show the communal gardens of the Ladbroke area as 'paddocks' or 'shrubberies'; certainly they must have had a very different appearance when originally laid out than they have now. But it is the wealth of mature trees mingled with architecture that gives this Conservation Area its special attraction, and they are indeed a valuable amenity. The Royal Borough is of course aware of this, and in point of fact it has the largest concentration of Tree Preservation Orders in the country. The survey on which these Orders are based was however made in 1953, and many changes have taken place since then; some trees have been removed, and others have grown from saplings to maturity. The Town Planning Department undertook a new survey in this Conservation Area at the end of last year, and the Ladbroke Association was asked to contribute views and make suggestions for new TPOs. As a result, our street representatives undertook an area by area survey, in many cases with great thoroughness, and the results of these labours were assembled and made available to the Council, who are at this time making a decision on new Tree Preservation Orders.

In broad terms, such Orders do give protection in some measure against developers, and it is particularly appropriate to have as full a cover as possible in this Conservation Area, whose essence is in the general character of the area rather in specific architectural buildings and features. TPOs cannot be said to have a magic power to ensure the survival against all odds of an individual tree, but they can make householders more aware of their responsibilities. And there is no doubt that owning trees is a responsibility that must be taken seriously and professionally, especially in the case of trees that are subject to TPOs. Work on such trees has to be approved by the Borough Parks Department, which has a list of recommended contractors who undertake work from pruning and other remedial work to felling. (The present list is set out at the end of this Newsletter). Obtaining permission for such work is no longer, we are assured, such a lengthy procedure, and we have found that the Council's officers do show an enlightened attitude towards schemes of replanting with younger stock, especially as regards gardens where there is overcrowding of mature trees, often all of the same generation. Nineteenth century plans of the estate show that many of the gardens still preserve the same basic layout today, some without the benefit of thinning out mature trees that have grown too close together, or saplings that have sprung up of their own accord. In our experience the Parks Department of the Borough has been most helpful in advising about such matters.

Trees planted in front gardens and those visible from the street are clearly of the first importance from the public point of view, and they are also among those that are most vulnerable. In streets like Elgin and Blenheim Crescents, the sacrifice of mature trees along the frontages for the purpose of securing off-street parking impinges on the whole character of the area. The trees that do survive are sometimes mutilated by inept pruning and lopping, which in turn reduces the life and the beauty of individual specimens. The law obliges the householder to look after his trees in a proper manner, and in fact presumes expert arboricultural knowledge. It is simply not good enough to employ a jobbing contractor.

TPOs, as we have already indicated, are not a solution in themselves. It is difficult to keep a check on the protection they should afford, and we found many examples of trees that should still be standing that are not. There were also many instances of trees having been removed with permission but without a replacement being planted within the statutory period (four years).

A second meeting of the street representatives has now been planned for 8.30 pm. on April 30th at the Knights of St. Columba Club when the results of the recommendations made to the Royal Borough will be made known, and the co-operation of the representatives sought in publicising the concern that prompted the Ladbroke Association in the first place. It should be possible to make available accurate lists of the existing and new TPOs, area by area, and of the gaps that should be filled. Some householders we encountered seemed to be unaware of TPOs on their own trees; this should certainly not be the case. But, as in all such things, it should be emphasized even at this stage that vigilance must be tempered with tact, and above all with accurate information.

We are hoping that the street representatives and indeed other members of the Association will come up with suggestions for possible sites for new trees in the streets themselves. This, like the replacement of existing street trees, is of course the responsibility of the Royal Borough, and from their point of view new schemes are necessarily a long term affair. But they are prepared to consider such schemes long before they can actually carry them out, and it is possible to argue the particular merits of individual sites. Residents' planting schemes have in the past proved to be important contributions to the landscape in Kensington, and there is no reason why this should not happen again.

List of Tree Contractors approved by the Borough

T.N. Harrison & Co.,
14 Barlby Gardens,
W.10 (969 6223)

Mr. P. Briscoe,
The Moorings,
15 Matham Road,
East Molesley,
Surrey (979 2991)

Southern Tree Surgeons Ltd.,
Crawley Down
Crawley, Sussex.
(Copthorne 2215)

Mr. J.W. Beattie,
36 Parkside,
Dollis Hill N.W.2.
(452 8348)

Michael Dalrymple of Esher Ltd.,
Hill Cottage,
Berrylands Road,
Surbiton, Surrey (399 9255)

Cawley Bros. (Chertsey) Ltd.,
Chilsey Green Road,
Chertsey, Surrey
(Chertsey 2090)

M. & L. Contractors.
Station Approach,
Kingswood, Surrey,
(Kingswood 52021)

Stop Press

The Association is sad to be soon losing its Secretary, Janet Lloyd, who will shortly be leaving the Ladbroke area. Nominations for a possible successor would be warmly welcomed and should be sent either to the Chairman or to the Secretary.

Secretary
Miss J.M. Lloyd,
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W.11

Treasurer
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W.11