

News from Ladbroke

October, 1975

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

1 Annual General Meeting

The 7th Annual General Meeting of the Ladbroke Association was held at the Knights of St. Columba Club, 11 Lansdowne Road, on June 17th 1975. The Chairman expressed the thanks of the Association to the Club for once again allowing the Association to use its hall for this and other meetings during the past year. She pointed out that there were three Borough Council members who were also members of the Association: Mr. David Campion, Miss Jane Winn, and Mr. Micheal Cocks, and that the first two of these were present.

a Treasurer's Report

The Hon: Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ending 31st March, 1975. He was able to report a healthy balance with an increase of income on the previous year.

No excessive expenditure was incurred, the heaviest item being the cost of two issues of the Newsletter amounting to £66.

It was disturbing to find that subscriptions had dropped below the 1974/5 figure. Admittedly it was by only £10.60, but additionally there are 32 outstanding subscriptions for the current year. The Treasurer would much appreciate these being paid by those who wish to continue their membership.

The accounts, which had been circulated at the meeting, were duly adopted.

b Election of Officers and Committee

Professor E. Carus-Wilson and Mr. H.F.A. Jackson were re-elected as Chairman and Treasurer respectively, there being no other nominations for these two offices. The Chairman paid tribute to Miss Janet Lloyd's excellent work as Secretary until her retirement on leaving the area last summer. Miss Santa Raymond had acted as Secretary for some months, as promised, and for this the Association was most grateful. More recently Miss Muriel Cosh had been acting in this capacity, and since she was willing to continue the Chairman asked the meeting to confirm her appointment; this motion was carried. The Chairman expressed warm appreciation of the valuable work done by Mr. Markham as Editor of the Newsletter, and regret that he was no longer resident in the area. The following were then elected members of the Committee:-

/Committee:

Royd Barker
Dr. C.I. Collins
I. Grant
T. Herring
Mrs. Kinmonth
R. Meadows

Mme. Pilsudski
Mrs. Porteous
Miss Santa Raymond
A. Stirling
B. Thompson-McCausland
C. Whitfield

c Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that the Committee had met regularly each month and that its business had been largely concerned, as previously, with planning applications. The application which had caused most concern was that for the demolition of Nos. 1-11 Ladbroke Road, opposite the Kensington Temple, and the erection there of an office block providing over 6000 sq. ft. of office space for the engineering and architectural firm of Ove Arup, with an underground theatre beneath it for the Ballet Rambert. The Association had opposed the scheme for reasons set out in a letter to the planning authority (see page 3)

The traffic management scheme that had been introduced in the south-west corner of the Conservation Area had continued to be the subject of keen debate. At a discussion meeting on October 9th organised by the Association, the Borough officers put forward various modifications which would, they hoped, improve access for residents and ease the greatly increased burden placed on certain streets by the original scheme. One part of these modifications - the restoration of two-way working on sections of Ladbroke Road and Lansdowne Walk - has already been brought into operation; the remaining part awaits the approval of the G.L.C. The Association had expressed its thanks to Mrs Gullick Chairman of the Works Committee, and to the Borough Engineer and his colleagues, for attending the meeting, and its appreciation of the full opportunities given for consultation on this matter of such vital concern to residents.

The Association had been represented at various Ward meetings called by the Borough for preliminary discussion of the Borough Development Plan and the problems outlined in the six 'Context Papers' which aim at analysing the principal issues involved, provoking public discussion, and helping to guide the council to arrive at overall policies. The system of holding meetings on a ward basis has, however, proved far from satisfactory, since there is no Ladbroke Ward and the Conservation Area is effectively split into three parts, one part being in Pembridge, one in Norland, and one in Avondale Ward. Hence discussions have focussed largely on problems irrelevant to Ladbroke. The Association has accordingly taken the matter up with the Borough, and has been informed that it is hoped to arrange later meetings on a community basis.

The Chairman was gratified to record that in this European Architectural Heritage Year, 1975, the Ladbroke Conservation Area has been designated by the Department of the Environment as one of the areas of "Outstanding Architectural or Historic Interest". Since special financial support has been made available for preserving and enhancing the appearance of such areas the Association's Committee has been considering possible projects which might attract grants, and has invited suggestions from members. A stimulating lecture on 'Restoration in Conservation Areas' by Mr. Ashley Barker was much appreciated, and the Association itself, in collaboration with the G.L.C., is now preparing a pamphlet on one aspect of this problem which is of special concern to Ladbroke - the restoration of stucco.

2 Planning

The Association's architectural advisers have continued to make regular visits to the Kensington and Chelsea Borough planning department to examine current planning applications and to comment to the officers where this was felt necessary.

Three particular matters have caused the Association's Committee much concern since the last Newsletter. They are:

1-11 Ladbroke Road (Ballet Rambert)

Various proposals for redevelopment on this site which is owned by the Ballet Rambert, have been put forward for many years. All have caused certain misgiving.

There is now an application for permission to demolish all the standing buildings and to replace them with a 600 seat underground theatre, together with an extensive office block above to be occupied by the developers.

The Association has serious reservations about the proposals and these have been set out in the following letter to the Council from the Association's Chairman:

Dear Sir,

"Proposals for redevelopment at 1-11 Ladbroke Road, London W.11.

In view of the importance of the above proposals in relation to the Ladbroke Conservation Area, and the evidence of considerable local feeling about the scheme, my committee has asked me to write to you again to re-state the position of the Ladbroke Association in this matter.

We view the proposals with considerable misgivings, and you will already have received the petition which has been got up independently by local residents. This Association has already received numerous protests from members of the Public, and we wish to make the following points for the consideration of your Council:-

1. The scheme appears to constitute a considerable over-development in terms of plot-ratio.
2. Whilst it might be argued that the site is merely an extension of the Notting Hill Gate commercial area, we consider that any intrusion of office use into the Conservation Area is not only undesirable in itself, but would also set a dangerous precedent, and would be likely to give encouragement to applications for further intrusions, as have already been proposed for the Kensington Temple site.
3. There is no provision whatsoever for parking related to the theatre use, and this must cause endless congestion on this already extremely dangerous corner, with stage door deliveries during the day and audience activity at night. This last will also inevitably give rise to disturbance in all the adjoining residential streets.

4. We particularly deplore the loss of nos.9 and 11 Ladbroke Road, which is a pair of houses of sufficient architectural interest to have been both illustrated and described in the GLC Survey of London vol. XXXVII and which are a positive enhancement to the Conservation Area."

Yours faithfully,

81-85 Clarendon Road

There is an application for permission to build 32 dwellings in 2, 4 and 5 storey flat blocks on this site, on behalf of the Octavia Hill Housing Association.

The proposal will involve the demolition of Nos. 138-142 Portland Road, but No.85 Clarendon Road, the old Clarendon Hotel, is to be preserved.

The Association is concerned that no provision appears to have been made to restore the exterior features of No.85 and it is also felt that such a key site deserves buildings of a rather less stark and utilitarian type than those which are proposed.

76-78 Elgin Crescent

The Association made strong protests about an application for permission to turn the back garden of these two houses into a car park, with access from the street down the sideways. The application was refused but it is perhaps worth taking this opportunity of re-stating the Association's attitude in these matters. The Association is almost always opposed to front garden parking, since it usually entails the removal of environmentally valuable railings or boundary walls, reduces the amount of space for planting and frequently causes the destruction of important trees. It also reduces the architectural value of buildings by obscuring them with vehicles. The Association is even more strongly opposed to encroachment on to rear gardens, for all the reasons related to front garden parking, together with that of the undesirable loss of amenity which must follow the noise and pollution which vehicles will inevitably introduce into areas of essential open space.

Portobello Road

Since the publication of the Colville/Tavistock Study the Association has kept a watching brief over the developments in the Colville/Tavistock area, part of which lies within the Ladbroke Conservation Area.

The Notting Hill Social Council arranges regular public meetings to discuss various aspects of these developments. One such meeting was concerned with the planning policy for Portobello Road. The Ladbroke Association was represented at this meeting and the various matters raised at it were subsequently discussed by the Ladbroke Association Committee.

Although it is outside the Ladbroke Conservation Area, the influence of Portobello Road is felt very strongly within it. Members of the Association live near to and use the market. It was therefore felt that the Committee should make known its views on this matter to the Borough Planning Control Officer. These views were summarised as follows:

1. Large-scale redevelopment or expansion of stores and supermarkets is considered quite inappropriate.

2. The present character of the market and small-scale shops should be preserved and any further expansion of the antique trade at the expense of food and other 'community' shops should be stopped. To assist this it might be desirable to make Portobello Road a Conservation Area.

3. Experimental schemes for pedestrians would be welcomed. It is appreciated that reasonable provision must be made for traders' access to stalls and shops.

3 Traffic Report

The last Newsletter gave details of certain modifications to the original traffic management scheme which the Borough Council had proposed as a result of experiment and consultation a year ago.

Members will by now be familiar with the new measures which have been introduced by means of permanent kerb works and barriers at a number of junctions in Clarendon Road, Ladbroke Road/Lansdowne Road and Lansdowne Walk. There is also the barrier in Ladbroke Grove opposite Ladbroke Square and Lansdowne Walk preventing cross-traffic and right turns at that junction.

Inevitably these measures will create inconvenience for some people. They do, however, seem to have eased the worst of the traffic, especially heavy vehicles, which previously concentrated upon streets and junctions least fitted to bear it. The Committee has urged the Borough to make these structures as attractive as possible.

The Association is glad that the drastic step of closing Clarendon Road at Elgin Crescent has been dropped. In fact, when the Lancaster Road housing development scheme is completed, Clarendon Road will cease to be a through-road with direct access to and from the north.

There remains the problem of unduly heavy traffic flows in many other streets in the eastern half of the conservation area, not excluding Ladbroke Grove. There are no easy solutions: piecemeal attempts to reduce traffic in one small area merely drive it into another, causing similar problems. It is encouraging that the Borough Council, through the new series of "Context" studies and special surveys of conservation areas, are looking seriously at the long-term objectives of traffic management in its widest sense. The Committee will continue to keep in close touch with the Council. The views of the Association's members are most important and it is hoped they will communicate these to the Committee when particular issues come up.

4 Empty Houses

The Association has felt concern for some time at the number of empty houses in the area. Some of these have been unoccupied for a long period, with their ground floor windows blocked and their increasing structural deterioration. The reasons appear to be mainly economic, in that many owners, who in some cases acquired properties at inflated prices

with the intention of carrying out conversions, have found that the present financial climate no longer favours such operations.

In the long run, however, leaving aside the social implications, this situation can do nothing but harm to the environment - good accommodation remains unused, vandalism is encouraged and deterioration of the fabric takes place at an accelerating pace.

The Association has expressed these feelings to the Council and it is hoped that some form of action may eventually be devised to combat this blight.

5 Ladbroke Area Report

The Council, in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Amenities Act of 1974, has begun to prepare a series of Reports on the Borough's Conservation Areas; these will include statements of policy related to preservation, traffic, redevelopment and enhancement.

The first Report will be on the Ladbroke Area and the Committee of the Association has already examined the preliminary document. The final Report promises to be a most interesting statement, and the Committee felt extremely encouraged at the whole tenor of the Council's thinking in relation to matters of Conservation Area interest.

A small delegation from the Association's Committee had a most satisfactory meeting at Chelsea Town Hall with some of the officers of the Council and it seems that the Association and the Council have views that largely coincide. The final document is awaited with great interest.

6 European Architectural Heritage Year

The Chairman's Report has referred to European Architectural Heritage Year and the recognition of the Ladbroke Conservation Area as one of 'Special Architectural and Historic Interest'. This means that 'inter alia', a continuing yearly fund of public money becomes available to assist in the promotion of schemes of environmental enhancement, but such grants must be matched by equal sums raised by the beneficiaries. It now seems evident that the promotion of any reasonable scheme by the Association would be beyond its small resources, but the evidence of the emerging policy at Council level encourages the Association to hope that it may be possible to undertake a fruitful collaboration in the future and it is intended to pursue this with the Council.

7 Notice of Autumn Lecture

Members will have received notice that the Civic Trust film 'Europa Nostra' will be shown to members and friends on Tuesday 4th November, 1975 at 8.30 p.m. at the Knights of St. Columba Club, 11, Landsdowne Road, W.11.

Mr. Michael Middleton C.B.E., Secretary-General of the United Kingdom Council for European Architectural Heritage Year, has kindly agreed to introduce the film.

8 Overdue Subscriptions

If you have not already done so, please send your subscription for 1975/76 (due April 1975) to the Treasurer, H.F.A. Jackson, Esq., O.B.E., 50 Holland Park Avenue, W.11. The Annual Subscription is still only £1 per person or family.

9 Borough Department Addresses

The following list of names and addresses of some Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council officers may prove useful to Ladbroke Association members:-

At Chelsea Old Town Hall,
King's Road, SW3 5EE (352-8101)

Director of Engineering and Public Amenities -
Mr. E. G. Goldring (352-8101)

Director of Public Cleansing and Works Services -
Mr. E. D. Burton (352-8101)
(Central Depot, 143A Walmer Road, W.10
Tel: 229-9092)

Director of Architecture and Planning -
Mr. R. R. Martin (352-8101)

Borough Planning and Control Officer -
Mr. E. A. Sanders (352-8101)

Borough Environment Health Officer -
Mr. D. C. Draper (352-8101)

Parks Superintendent -
Mr. J. C. Dale (352-2133)

Arboriculturist -
Mr. P. M. Annett (352-8101)

Planning Applications received by the Council are published in the local press. They can also be seen at the Chelsea Old Town Hall's Planning Information Office, the Kensington Town Hall's Information Room, and the Information and Aid Centre (Council's Services) which is under Westway, Ladbroke Grove, W.10.

*** Stop Press**

It has just been learned that the Council has refused planning permission for the proposal put up by the Ballet Rambert.

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