

Ladbroke News

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

SUMMER 2026



Rear elevations on a Ladbroke communal garden – see article on page 3.

IN THIS ISSUE

Electric Bikes	1
New English Heritage Blue Plaque	2
Ladbroke Association Plaque Scheme	2
Sir Angus Stirling	2
Old Ladbroke Association Newspapers	2
Rear Elevations on Communal Gardens	3
Light Pollution	4
Planning for Climate Changes	4
Front Door Steps	5
Tube Noise	6
How it used to be	6
Major Changes to the Planning Regime	6
Bue Routes	7
Kensington Park Road	7
Portabello Road Barriers and Carnival	7
Annual General Meeting	7
Membership	8

ELECTRIC BIKES

Ebikes continue to figure large as a major bugbear at any public meeting in the borough, so the powers that be are well aware that feelings are running high, particularly about ebikes overflowing their parking spaces or being left in the middle of the pavement. At present the Council can and does remove ebikes if the companies do not take them away when requested. It charges a ransom fee for companies to get them back and have made several tens of thousand pounds which they say they are putting into further enforcement. However, the current powers of the London boroughs to control the companies are very limited (such agreements as they have with them are on a voluntary basis). The boroughs have been putting pressure on the Government to introduce legislation to enable them suitable regulation of ebikes. On 13 July, in answer a Parliamentary question, a junior Transport Minister replied that “We plan to consult on licensing for shared cycles in the coming months. Following this, we will implement licensing through a combination of secondary legislation and guidance to empower local leaders across England, including TfL in London, to regulate these schemes.” So we live in hope.

In the meantime, our Pembridge councillors have had meetings with the two largest operators, Forest and Lime, to urge them to remove wrongly parked bikes

more promptly (there are two smaller companies, Bolt and VOI). Both operators reported a significant increase in demand across RBKC in recent months, which meant that current parking bays for dockless bikes (as opposed to the Santander bikes which have to be returned to a dock) were no longer adequate, and both said they were prepared to contribute to the funding of new bays. As those of you who are signed up to receive our email alerts will know, the Council is consulting on installing extra parking bays for ebikes, so that should ease the situation to some extent.

The companies both said that they were increasing their enforcement against wrongly parked bikes. Patrol teams and vans to reposition bikes visit the Ladbroke area throughout the day (between five to six times daily between Lime and Forest). Lime operates a system of driver warnings and fines of up to £20, with rider suspensions or bans for persistent offenders. Lime say that they have recruited a “Behaviour Champion” to improve rider compliance.

Both companies also say that they have improved their technology to enhance GPS accuracy, so that they can more easily spot wrongly parked bikes – although they emphasise that GPS is still not an exact science.

NEW ENGLISH HERITAGE BLUE PLAQUE

On 22 April, the Astronomer Royal unveiled a new English Heritage blue plaque commemorating the astronomer Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin (1900–1979) at 70 Lansdowne Road, where she lived in her youth. She is chiefly known for her groundbreaking 1925 doctoral thesis which proposed that stars are composed primarily of hydrogen and helium, a discovery that fundamentally changed scientific understanding of the universe, even though it was initially met with scepticism. It was not easy in the field of astronomy for a woman at the time, but she went on to have a highly distinguished career, publishing hundreds of scientific papers and becoming the first woman to be appointed a full professor at Harvard University.

Professor Michele Dougherty, Astronomer Royal, pulls the red veil from the plaque.

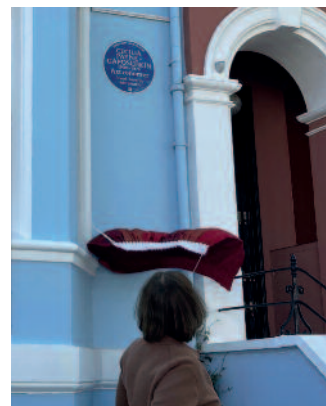


Illustration by Dulac from Hans Christian Andersen's The Snow Queen, 1911.

LADBROKE ASSOCIATION PLAQUE SCHEME

English Heritage are extremely sparing in their issue of blue plaques. We had hoped to get one for the artist Edmund Dulac (1882–1953) who lived at 117 Ladbroke Road between the wars. He was born in France but moved to London at the age 22 and remained here for the rest of his life, first at 72 Ladbroke Road and then at No.117, a house with a big north window, perfect for artists. He was well-known as a book illustrator somewhat in the Aubrey Beardsley mode. Among others, he provided illustrations for editions of the novels by the Brönte sisters, the *Arabian Nights*, the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and various books of fairy tales. English Heritage told us, however, that he was not quite important enough for one of their blue plaques. This sparked the Association into a decision to set up our own (green) plaques scheme and we will shortly be installing a Ladbroke Association Green Plaque.

If anybody has other candidates, we would be most grateful to hear about them.

SIR ANGUS STIRLING

With great sadness we announce the death of Sir Angus Stirling, the principal founder of the Ladbroke Association. It all began when he was living on Ladbroke Grove and came back from holiday one day in 1964 to find white crosses painted on some of the plane trees. It turned out that the Council had marked them for felling. With some of his neighbours, he went into action and the Council was persuaded to drop the idea. After that, other undesirable developments caused the same group to go into joint action. In 1969, Sir Angus invited the group to a meeting at his house where it was decided to set up a conservation association for the Ladbroke area. The Association is the product of this initiative, from which we have all benefitted. For many years he was

our Chairman and then President. It is a tribute to his organising powers that the Association is still going strong 55 years later.

We were only a small part of his life. He was truly one of the great and the good in the cultural and conservation life of the country. To name just a couple of his many appointments, he was Director General of the National Trust (during his tenure he took the membership from 700,000 to over two million), and then chairman of the Royal Opera. He was invariably calm and courteous but combined it with a real gift for organisation and getting things done. We offer our condolences to his widow Morar.

There will be a memorial service on 7 October 2026 at Saint Magnus the Martyr in Lower Thames Street.

OLD LADBROKE ASSOCIATION PAPERS

Last year we announced the death of one of our most longstanding and active members, Robina Rose. She lived all her life in her parents' large house on Elgin Crescent and was a hoarder of papers. After her death, when they were clearing out her house, her executors

were kind enough to invite us to see if there were any old Ladbroke Association papers that we would like to keep. We discovered that she had a complete set of minutes of our Annual General Meetings right back to the first meeting in 1969. We are putting these on our website for anybody who is interested in our early activities.

REAR ELEVATIONS ON COMMUNAL GARDENS.

One of the greatest assets of our communal gardens is the fact that the houses backing onto them tend to have beautiful rear elevations, quite unlike the plain brick that is to be found on the backs of most of our houses. Even in the communal gardens where the rear elevations are in brick, there are usually interesting fenestration patterns and the windows tend to have decorative surrounds. Unfortunately, over the last 30 years or so, many residents on communal gardens have made detrimental alterations to the backs of their houses. In many cases, this has been done by newcomers who probably do not appreciate the importance that the look of the houses has for the character of the garden.

There has been a particular problem with rear extensions at lower ground floor level, often with picture windows quite out of character with the rest of the architecture. In many cases, where the lower ground floor is set below the level of the communal garden, this is not a problem as the extension is barely visible. But where the rear lower ground floor is at or almost at the same level as the communal garden, an inappropriate extension can really harm the view from the garden.

One of the terraces that has suffered is on the Blenheim-Elgin Garden. On its Blenheim Crescent side, there is a long terrace of houses that were built with attractive double-height angled bays at ground and lower ground level – see photograph top right. Over the years, some of these have been compromised by people removing the lower ground floor level of the bay and replacing it by a squared-off glass extension, quite out of character with the architecture of the terrace. These are visible from the communal garden and have the unfortunate effect of making the houses look as if they are floating on a void.

We are very concerned at the readiness of planning officers to agree to such extensions. In one particular

Matching two-storey angled bays on the Blenheim-Elgin Garden.



case, where the whole bay had disappeared many years ago, before conservation became a priority, the then owner took the welcome decision in 2016 to rebuild the bay, with Council consent. However, a subsequent owner then sought and obtained permission in 2021 to remove the lower ground floor level of the bay again and to replace it with a squared-off glass extension (see photographs below). This is a worrying example of Council inconsistency.

We continually urge the Council not to consent to extensions that will damage the architectural integrity of these rear terraces, and even successfully managed to get an extra policy inserted into the Local Plan (which is supposed to guide all planning decisions) which says that: “Where extensions are proposed to properties backing on to registered communal gardens, they must preserve the significance of views into, from, and across the garden, including any impacts from artificial lighting”. We were shocked, therefore, when in June this year consent was given to yet another destruction of the lower ground floor of an angled bay on this terrace and its replacement by a modern extension. One of the arguments advanced was that there were already other such new extensions. However, at present they are only on a small minority of the houses, mostly at the other end of the terrace, so the general view of the terrace is relatively unchanged. This decision seems to be giving the green light to everybody on the terrace to install such extensions, which would completely change its character.



House on Blenheim Crescent that lost its whole two storey bay many years ago.



The same house after the bay was restored in 2016.



The same house after the lower part of the newly rebuilt bay was removed and replaced with a glazed extension.

LIGHT POLLUTION

There are increasing complaints about light pollution. This can arise from various sources. There are security lights on buildings that are left on all night, and others that are movement-sensitive – as they can easily be being set off inadvertently, for instance by fronds and branches being blown about by the wind, and even by wildlife, such as our increasing population of urban foxes. There is light from rear extensions, both from big picture windows and from glass roofs. Increasingly, residents are installing lights in their gardens to light up trees and other features, and lights along paths. This is a particular problem in communal gardens, where light from picture windows on rear extensions and from lights installed in back gardens can be seen from many angles. Communal gardens used to be havens of country-style darkness to the benefit of local wildlife. Alas, this is often no longer the case.

The Council does have a policy on light pollution

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

There has been a big increase in the number of applications for double glazing and air conditioning, and a few for awnings. No doubt there will be another surge after the current heatwaves.

Double-glazing

Applications for the replacement of single glazed windows by double glazed ones are normally passed on the nod, so long as what is proposed is “like for like”, i.e. double-glazing without any change in the shape of the window or the glazing bars, and the building is not listed. Even for listed buildings the Council is now taking a more relaxed attitude., not least because it has lately become possible to manufacture such extremely slim-line double-glazing that it is virtually impossible to distinguish the new window from the historic window that it has replaced.

Air conditioning

Applications for the installation of air conditioning units or heat pumps (which can double as air conditioning in summer) can be more controversial. Many neighbours are concerned that the units will be noisy. In fact, the Council imposes strict limits on the amount of noise that can be made by AC units. Applicants are required to provide a noise survey which is assessed by the Council experts. In many cases a so-called acoustic enclosure is required. These controls seem to work well, and any noise air-conditioning units make is barely perceptible above the background noise. The Ladbroke Association therefore concerns itself mostly with aesthetics. In many cases, an AC unit can be hidden away in a basement area or on a roof. We register our concern, however, if units that are clearly visible from the street or a communal

garden are proposed, especially on buildings of architectural merit.

which it must normally apply in deciding on planning applications. It says that “*Development must not create an unacceptable impact from light glare and light spill on local residential amenity including neighbouring properties and communal gardens, biodiversity, highway and waterway users*”. There are lights, however, that cannot be controlled through the planning system. For instance, no permission is normally needed to install lights in private gardens. If they are causing a nuisance to a neighbour, the only recourse that the neighbour has is to call the Council’s noise and nuisance team. But we suspect that the latter will set the bar for action fairly high.

It is particularly infuriating when lights are on all night, as they are both a nuisance and waste of energy. If our members have lights on or around their property, we would appeal to them to install a time switch or to remember to turn lights off at night, especially if they can be seen from neighbouring gardens.

garden are proposed, especially on buildings of architectural merit.

Awnings

When our Victorian houses were built, it was common for them to have awnings that could be extended to provide shade over the windows. A tell-tale sign is the remains of the decorative cover that hid the awnings when not extended – see the photograph below of the windows with a balcony on Chepstow Villas (both the balcony and the awning covers have now sadly been demolished with Council consent).

The Council has now produced a *Householders’ Guide to External Solar Shading*, which can be found on the RBKC website. Generally, the Council favours awnings where they help reduce reliance on mechanical air conditioning. However, in conservation areas, there is often a clash between the desirability of shading and the preservation of the architectural character of the building. Planning permission has however been given for several awnings on rear extensions in our area and we remain open-minded.

Former balcony and windows with awning covers on 41 Chepstow Villas



FRONT DOOR STEPS

Most of our Victorian houses have raised front doors with steps up to them, so as to allow the basement – or as it is euphemistically called nowadays “lower ground floor” – to be sufficiently above ground level to allow some light into its windows. Normally there are only 6-8 steps up to the front door. But where there is a particularly long flight of steps up to the door, householders have in the past sometimes decided to create an entrance at lower ground floor level, leaving the front door marooned above it or turned into a window, as at 11 Ladbroke Road below. This always looks odd and we are delighted that there are two current applications – one at 11 Ladbroke Road and the other at 22 Ladbroke Grove – to restore the original front doors with their steps.

The normal material for front door steps in the Ladbroke area was Portland stone, which is hard wearing, and quite a few original steps do remain, albeit now after 150 years or so beginning to look a bit worn. Over the years, stone steps have often been replaced with tiles, which are a mid-to-late Victorian fashion that did not really take hold until after the construction of the Ladbroke estate. More recently, there has been a fashion for very white stone, more suitable to the Mediterranean. Where Portland stone steps survive, we hope that owners will preserve them or replace them with Portland stone or possibly York stone, rather than inappropriate white sandstone.



11 Ladbroke Road where the original front door has been turned into a window.



22 Ladbroke Grove where the steps were moved and a new main entrance was built under the original front door.



Original Portland stone steps on Ladbroke Terrace.

TUBE NOISE

There has always been a bit of a noise problem with the Central line track between Holland Park and Notting Hill Gate stations. About eight years ago, the noise got so bad that it was affecting the lives of people living near the line. TfL ground the rails and installed special dampening pads which more or less dealt with the problem. However, last summer, the pads stopped doing their job, apparently because of corrugation of the rails. There was such a screeching noise in the tunnel that the tube drivers started complaining, so TfL unless the removed the pads, without warning anybody above ground. Rather mysteriously, most people above ground were not immediately affected, but by the late autumn a large number of properties

began to experience noise and vibration, in some cases so serious that it affected their sleep.

The distribution of the noise is equally odd, with some houses near the line not or hardly affected, whereas others further away are really suffering. TfL seem non-plussed and both TfL and the Council noise and nuisance team engineers have been going round affected houses to take measurements. TfL have promised action of various sorts, but not in the immediate future. The energetic Councillors in Pembridge and Norland wards (where most of the affected properties are) have therefore launched a petition asking for action n to be brought forward.

HOW IT USED TO BE

When one looks at our houses today with their immaculate painted stucco, manicured gardens and stylish modern kitchens and bathrooms, it is not easy to remember that only 50 years ago things were often very different. One resident of Horbury Crescent recalls how, when she bought her house in the 1970s, it was in a largely “unconnected” state - with no radiators or central heating (but 10 open fireplaces), and no real plumbing, apart from an outside loo and a bathtub on the top floor from which the water drained away through the rainwater gutter. The basement floor had a large kitchen with an old-fashioned ceramic Belfast

sink and a fireplace with a spit. Next to the kitchen there was a staff sitting room. The floor was paved with York flagstones. There was a dumb waiter from the kitchen up to the ground floor where, presumably, the dining room had been. The back window had some sort of “ersatz” glass panes, probably because the original glass had been damaged by a bomb which fell in nearby Ladbroke Square. It took the new residents a year to make the house reasonably habitable – actually not that long when one considers the amount of time that it takes newly arrived residents today to redo their houses to meet their taste.

MAJOR CHANGES TO THE PLANNING REGIME

The Infrastructure Act 2025 is making major changes to the planning regime. The Act is billed as speeding up the planning system, accelerating the delivery of new homes and making it easier to get consent for major infrastructure projects. One of the changes most likely to affect our residents is that from next October only major projects will be decided by a planning committee. Everything else, including “householder” applications – i.e alterations to existing dwellings such as additional floors, extensions etc – will normally be decided under delegated powers by planning officers, however many objections there have been to them. In the overall scheme of things, this may not make much difference as already over 95% of planning applications are already decided by officers (so it is unlikely to make the application process any quicker). And when applications do go to the Planning Applications Committee, in the great majority of cases, despite the pleas of the objectors, the committee members decide to follow the officers’ advice to grant the application. It is nevertheless a major blow to local democracy. It is all the more galling in that it will in no way help achieve the government’s stated objective of

more housing, since very few minor applications are about adding dwellings.

The Planning Applications Committee has its faults. In particular, as objectors always have to speak first, they have no chance to challenge any subsequent presentation by the applicant (often economical with the truth), or to challenge officers’ replies to questions from the Committee. Inevitably, officers can get things wrong as they do not have the local knowledge that the objectors have, and it is utterly infuriating for the objectors when they are unable to correct mistakes. One major advantage of the Planning Applications Committee arrangement, however, is that the world is given sight of the officers’ report before the meeting. This means that mistakes and ignored problems can be pointed out. There is often also a chance to suggest conditions that would make a proposal acceptable to neighbours or the local community.

The Council have told us that they share our concern about the lack of local input and are exploring with their lawyers how they might somehow allow at least for local councillors to be consulted about applications.

BUS ROUTES

TfL decided last year to cease running the No. 452 bus between Notting Hill Gate and Ladbroke Grove Sainsburys. This was an understandable decision as it duplicates the No. 52 route on this section and its route was very long. We urged TfL to compensate by increasing the frequency of the No. 52, and they have added an extra bus at rush hour. However, given the large number of tourists who use the No. 52 to get to Portobello market, it is often overcrowded at other hours of the day. We have asked TfL to look at the situation, with a view to adding extra buses at other times.

At present, the No. 452 “terminates” at the top end of Kensington Church Street and starts its truncated route at the bus stop in Palace Gardens Terrace. However, when it ends its journey it goes back to its

depot via Pembridge Road, and returns that way, sailing past the bus stops at the top end of Pembridge Road without stopping. For many people, it would be far more convenient to alight or catch the bus on the north side of Notting Hill Gate, and it is infuriating to see empty buses passing the Pembridge Road stops. We have therefore suggested to TfL that they might make the Pembridge Road bus stops the places where the No. 452 terminates or begins its route.

As part of the arrangements for the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street, TfL are also planning to stop the number 94 at Marble Arch, which will be a nuisance for many. Westminster Council, however, have decided to scrap the plan for a segregated cycle lane along Bayswater Road, where we were fearful that the proposed floating bus stops would cause delays.

KENSINGTON PARK ROAD

The Council’s revamp of the restaurant-filled section of Kensington Park Road between Elgin and Blenheim Crescents is finally complete, although there is talk of planting some trees. The whole road surface is now on a level, with no kerbs, and is paved with granite setts. The latter proved extremely difficult to lay and the whole process took more than six months – an extraordinarily long time for a very short section of road, which caused major disruption to those living and working in the area. Now that it is finished, and the restaurants have put their tables out on what used to be the carriageway, it looks pretty good. As one resident said, there is a: “very good atmosphere in the summer evenings and also during day. It calms down Kensington Park Road itself as well as Blenheim Crescent, where I think it is also helpful for the restaurants and cafes”.

The makeover is, however, not without potential problems. Bags of rubbish are still being left around. The granite setts, which were billed as non-staining,

seem to pick up oil stains from cars. They may also be difficult to take up and relay if anything has to be done to the utilities underneath. Also, in winter, when the places on the eastern side now occupied the summer tables return to being parking spaces, those people sitting immediately outside the cafes and restaurants are going to find themselves on a level with often badly parked cars – not very inviting.

PORTOBELLO ROAD BARRIERS AND CARNIVAL

The anti-terrorism barriers on Portobello Road continue to cause big problems for those who live in side streets and cannot access their homes with a car during the market times when the barriers are in place. It is a particular problem for the disabled and it also makes deliveries difficult. There are ongoing discussions between residents and the Council on how to provide for the residents’ needs, but so far they are getting nowhere.

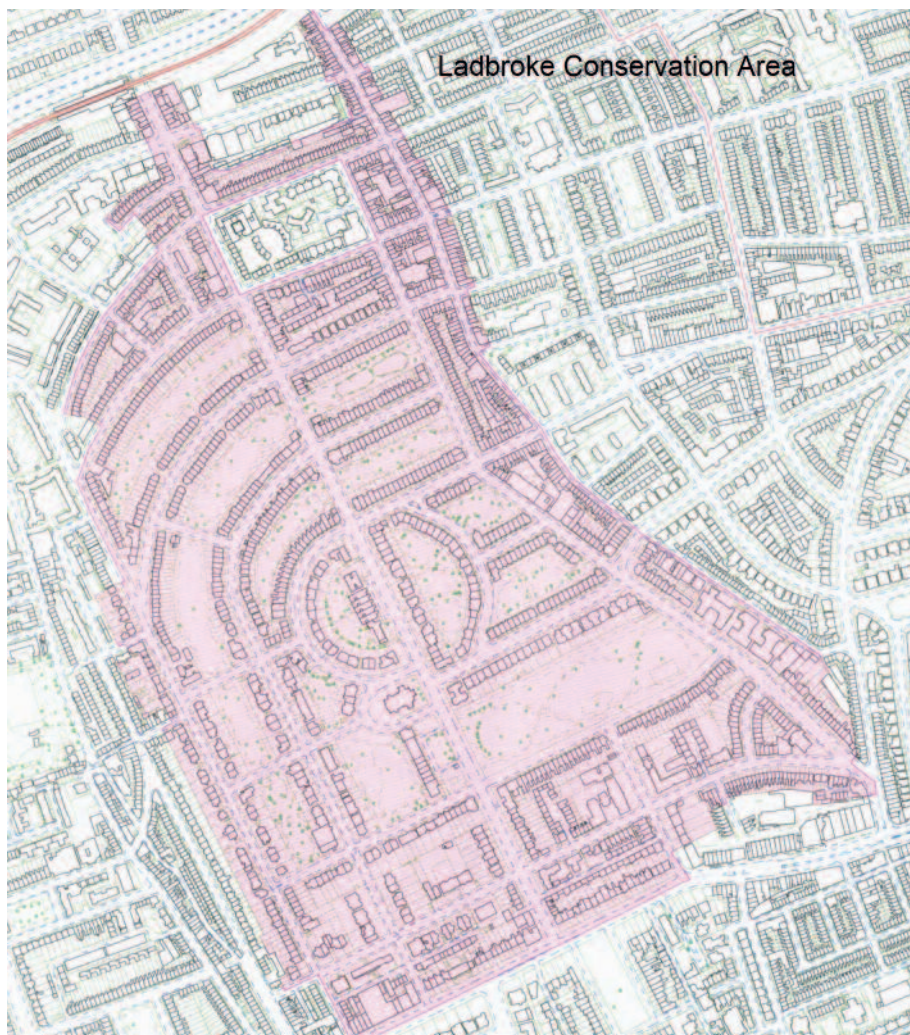
The concrete blocks will, as last year, be removed for Carnival and put back afterwards, so as to reduce the risk of crushes in the crowds. Otherwise the good news is that the Carnival organisers have got extra funding for stewards, which we hope will make it easier to manage the crowds. The bad news is that only the same number of toilets as last year are being provided.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Association’s AGM was held in St Peter’s church on 8 July 2026. Despite the heat, as well as committee members, 18 people attended, including three of our new councillors. There was a good atmosphere and subjects discussed included ebikes; the problems caused by the huge crowds in and around Portobello Road and how best to deal with film companies. The minutes will be posted on our website shortly.



Cafés and restaurants in Kensington Park Road.



MEMBERSHIP

The Ladbrooke Association was founded in 1969, in the same year as the designation of the Ladbrooke Conservation area. The original impetus for the setting up of the Association was a proposal by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to cut down and replace the plane trees along the southern end of Ladbrooke Grove. Led by the well-known architect and town-planner Robert Meadows and other local residents, the Association was successful in opposing the proposals, and the trees remain.

The Association is registered as a charity (Charity No. 260627) and is therefore subject to the strict rules governing charities.

The Association receives notice of planning applications and inspects, discusses and comments on those which affect the Ladbrooke area in any significant way. In addition, the Association has been involved in (and sometimes initiates) discussion with the planning authorities on wider questions of conservation and planning policy.

We are concerned that we should reflect the views of the broad community who live in the area. Everyone who is a resident of the Ladbrooke Conservation Area and cares about the area should be a member of the Association so that their views may be heard in the debate on continuing issues in the area.

The more members we have, the more influential we can be. At present we have under 400, as many people have moved away. If you have new neighbours, please do encourage them to join. Membership for a person or family costs only £15 a year, which is we reckon a bargain in this day and age.

Would-be members can download a membership form from our website: www.ladbrookeassociation.org or apply to the Hon Treasurer: **Kay Broadbent**, kay@broadbentassociates.co.uk or **9 Kensington Park Gardens, W11 3HB**.

THE OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

President: Thomas Pakenham

Officers:

Chairman: Sophia Lambert

Hon Treasurer: Kay Broadbent

Hon Secretary: Anne Chorley

Committee Members:

Paul Bastick

Tom Croft

Liz Ellerton

Catherine Faulks

Michael Hamill

Sandra Kamen

Billie Lee

David Marshall

Peter Mishcon

Peggy Post

Nick Simmons

Tony Temple

James Wignell

Newsletter: Sophia Lambert

info@ladbrookeassociation.org

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

The Association is a charitable non-political organisation. Its constitution requires it to promote and encourage the following objectives by charitable means but not otherwise:

- To encourage and promote high standards of architecture and town planning within the Ladbrooke Estate Conservation Area
- To stimulate and promote public interest in, and care for the beauty, history, and character of the neighbourhood
- To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.

The complete constitution of the Ladbrooke Association is on its website at:

www.ladbrookeassociation.org

and the website also includes much historical information about the conservation area.

This edition of the newsletter was edited by Sophia Lambert and the printing was done by K J S Print Services Ltd, Peterborough.