

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

Summer 2010



Porticos in the gaps between houses in Stanley Crescent, one portico untouched, the other with subsequent extensions. ©Thomas Erskine

MIND OUR GAPS

Gaps are one of the Ladbroke area's most attractive characteristics – gaps between the buildings through which one can glimpse the enticing green of gardens and trees beyond.

Some of the gaps are embellished with porticos (as in the photo above), or a grand arch, as in Kensington Park Gardens below.

During the second wave of development on the Ladbroke Estate in

the 1840s, there was a fashion for semi-detached villas with gaps between them, instead of the terraces of earlier and later years.

The best examples are in Clarendon Road, Lansdowne Road and Lansdowne Crescent.

This was an era of great optimism on the part of the developers, and they clearly felt that they could afford to waste some space on better quality surroundings.

(Continued on Page 2)



Ornamental arch in the gap between 33 & 34 Kensington Park Gardens, in the middle of the terrace.

AGM

6 JULY 2010

The 40th Annual General Meeting of the Ladbroke Association will be held on

Tuesday 6 July 2010
at 7.30 for 7.45 p.m.

at St Peter's Church Hall,
Gallery Entrance,
Upper South Room,

59a Portobello Road, W11.

An agenda will be available at the meeting (and will be posted on the Association's website in advance of the meeting).

All are welcome to attend.

Nominations for new officers and/or committee members should be sent to the Hon Sec. of the Ladbroke Association, at 19 Stanley Gardens, W11 2NG, not later than Thursday 24 June.

All nominations should have a proposer and a seconder.

We would be interested to know what members would like to see in their Newsletter.

E-mail your views to:

editor@ladbrokeassociation.org.uk

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In Clarendon Road, in particular, the villas were very widely spaced, with gaps of over forty feet between the houses.

Early maps show paths between the houses into the back gardens, and it is possible that these were designed to allow carriages to come round to the back of the house.

In Lansdowne Road, one of the gaps was wide enough for a small house to be built later, with room to spare – see photo below.

Even in streets with traditional terraces of townhouses, the terraces were often short, with gaps between them.

Sometimes, this was to allow direct access from the road to the communal garden. Sometimes it seems simply because it was easier for the developers of the individual terraces to leave a gap rather than to join differently designed terraces together in a relatively seamless way.

Over the years, there has inevitably been much infilling in the gaps, as people have used the space to insert garages or extensions to their houses.

In the early years, there was little control over what was being done, with unhappy results.

Not all the infilling has been bad.

For instance, the extensions built onto the sides of the two houses in Lansdowne Crescent have closely followed the gothic design of the houses themselves and form an attractive if somewhat eccentric ensemble.

In most cases at least some part of the original gap remains, and very little of the infilling goes up the full height of the houses.

Now, the Council has recognised the importance of our gaps for maintaining the character of the area, and planning permission for further infilling is usually refused.

Its stated policy is to resist applications for extensions where “an important or historic gap or view would be blocked or diminished”.

The Ladbroke Association welcomes and supports this policy.



A sill leafy gap in Elgin Crescent.



Elegant infilling in Lansdowne Crescent.



Uncoordinated infilling between Nos. 39 & 40 Lansdowne Road.



The house in the gap between 22 & 24 Lansdowne Road.

PLANNING MATTERS

Clarendon Works

This rather splendid late 19th century building in Clarendon Cross (see photograph) was originally a contractors' headquarters. More recently it has been used as a warehouse and then for offices. A planning application has now been submitted for it to be turned into a single dwelling. While the Ladbroke Association regrets seeing more business premises disappear from the area, there is no doubt that it will make a stunning house. Moreover, the applicants intend restoring some of the original features, such as windows with glazing bars and a central doorway, all of which is most welcome. But the Ladbroke Association has expressed concern about the proposal for a garage on the right hand side. The ground floor of the façade has been messed about quite a lot and there is at present an ugly protruding full-length plate-glass window on the right, which completely unbalances the building. It is not clear exactly what there was there before. But a not very good photograph from 1970 in the Local Studies Library seems to show a window more like the one on the left. It would be wonderful if the developers could take this opportunity to restore the whole of the façade to something more like its original appearance rather than increasing the lack of balance with a very poorly designed opening and garage door.

Ground floor terraces

It is quite common for single-storey back extensions such as conservatories to be added at lower ground floor level where the back garden is on the same level as the lower ground floor, so as to extend the living space at that level. Normally the Ladbroke Association is not too concerned about these extensions, as they cannot be seen from the street. Recently, however, there have been a couple of applications for the roof of the extension to be used as a terrace – sometimes quite a big terrace – accessible from the ground floor (the most recent is at 29 Clarendon Road – the plans can be seen on the Council website). These terraces cannot be seen from

the street and therefore do not affect the appearance of the conservation area. But the Association does have some concerns about the over-looking of neighbours' premises and about noise if such terraces are used for parties etc., and has suggested that the Council should take special account of any concern from neighbours, most particularly when the proposed terrace is in reality an 'external room'.

Noise from air-conditioning units

There is an increasing number of applications for permission to install air-conditioning units and similar potentially noisy installations. There are strict limits on noise, enforced by the Council's Environmental Health Department. But we are concerned that the issue of noise is not always considered at the planning stage. It is much more difficult to deal with any

noise problems retrospectively. The Council in its 'Planning application guidance' notes dated 1 October 2009 requires an independent Acoustic Report to be submitted at the planning application stage, so that the applicant can demonstrate in advance that any proposed new restaurant extractor fans or air-conditioning units will meet appropriate noise standards and avoid nuisance for neighbours.

We are aware of a number of cases where either planning permission has been granted where no Acoustic Report has been submitted, or where an Acoustic Report's conclusions have been ignored. Greater care clearly needs to be taken by all concerned in the scrutiny of these cases.

Model railway

One of the most unusual recent planning applications was for a model railway in the garden



Clarendon Works

alongside Ladbroke House. The installation was temporary and the Ladbroke Association did not object, but we did formally object to the Council's expenditure of time and money on a full planning permission for a temporary structure in a private garden!

BORIS'S BICYCLES



A typical cycle stand showing how cycles are secured to prevent theft.

The Mayor of London's cycle hire scheme is due to be launched at the end of July and nine central London boroughs were asked to find places for bicycle docking stations. There are plans for some 50 docking stations in the Royal Borough. Each, however, needs planning permission, and it has not been easy to find sites that are acceptable.

A proposal for a station for 17 bicycles in Notting Hill Gate on the wide bit of pavement by Campden Hill Towers attracted a lot of opposition from the Notting Hill Improvement Group and others on grounds of clutter in what is a relatively open space and it was finally turned down on planning grounds because of likely damage to the street trees, as has one in Ladbroke Grove next to Ladbroke Square. But ones at the junction of Chepstow Villas and Kensington Park Road and near the old Post Office at Westbourne Grove have been approved.

The Paris cycle hire scheme, which started in 2007, is still going despite a high theft rate (up to a hundred

a week according to some reports) and it will be interesting to see how Boris's scheme does. The Police say that there are already some 70 bicycle thefts reported in the Royal Borough each month, so those implementing this scheme are going to need strong nerves and persistence.

TABLES, ELEPHANTS AND PORTALOOS

The Association is quite often asked to comment on applications from cafés, restaurants and pubs for licences to put tables and chairs on the pavement so that people can eat and drink in the open.

The Council generally approves these applications so long as the tables do not occupy more than one-third of the available footway outside the premises and that at least two metres of pavement is left clear for pedestrians in 'lightly used' streets; three metres in 'medium use' highways; and four metres in really busy shopping streets.

Your Committee looks at the particular circumstances in each case, but generally its view is that the Council's criteria are sensible and that pavement tables add to the amenity of the area. Tables may be put out only within certain hours and licences only last 12 months – so the situation can be reviewed if the tables have caused problems.

Tables and chairs are not the only thing that needs permission to go on the pavement. The elephants that have recently been enlivening our streets were granted permission by the council to stand in their places.

A portaloos that was spotted on the pavement outside No. 19 Holland Park Avenue most definitely did not have permission and was removed after the Kensington Society drew the Council's attention to it.

The Highways Department of the Council say that it is their policy to resist the siting of workmen's toilets on pavements except where they really cannot be put anywhere else, and if they are on the pavement they must be suitably obscured by a hoarding "to cause the least offence to residents".

So, if you see a portaloos or other structure on the pavement that you do not think ought to be there, please contact the Council.

You can e-mail at:

streetline@rbkc.gov.uk

PORTOBELLO ROAD

Most of the Portobello Road south of the Westway flyover is in the Ladbroke Conservation area, and the Association regularly comments on planning applications for properties in the Portobello Road. In particular, we try to ensure that the traditional shop-fronts are preserved and that new developments are in keeping with the street as a whole.

There are, however, wider issues causing concern, surrounding the preservation of the antique market. The essential problem is the buying up by developers of properties containing arcades of antique stalls and their transformation into fashionable bars and restaurants and smart retail outlets selling clothes or designer objects. As a result, the number of antique stalls is steadily diminishing.

The Portobello market has never stood still. Your editor, who was brought up in the area, recalls that in the 1950s when she went as a child with her mother to do the household shopping, fruit and vegetable stalls filled the biggest stretch of the market, and most of the actual shops alongside were butchers, bakers, etc. with just the odd antique or furniture dealer. On Saturdays, the antique stalls appeared in the section south of Westbourne Grove, but they were in the street, not in arcades.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the antique market suddenly took off as a tourist attraction and expanded exponentially, driving out the vegetable stalls between Westbourne Grove and Elgin Crescent and also the local food shops (leaving the butcher Kingsland uncomfortably marooned in a sea of antique and junk stalls, the sole survivor of the shops that used to be there).

The developers of the period, with no less of an eye to the main

chance as those today, started creating indoor space for more stalls by burrowing backwards into the shops lining the street and creating the well-known arcades crammed with stalls that we know today.

These arcades are now being taken over in turn and transformed by new landlords into quite different sorts of retail outlets.

A typical story is that of 177 Portobello Road, on the corner of Elgin Crescent opposite the Duke of Wellington pub. Until the mid-1970s, it was a tailors called Montague Burton. Then it was transformed into the so-called “Famous Portobello Market”, with a network of

arcades full of stalls. A couple of years ago, the building was refurbished. Although it still bears the same name, the antique stalls have sadly disappeared and it is now a shopping area devoted entirely to what might be called tourist-type goods.

The latest cause célèbre concerns a complex of six houses along Westbourne Grove (Nos. 282-292) extending to the corner of the Portobello Road. They contained a labyrinth of arcades on three levels, including “Lipka’s Arcade” (the name by which the complex is often known), with flats above. Altogether the lower floors accom-

modated some 150 stalls (although apparently fewer than 100 were occupied when the landlord began the current development).

The buildings were fairly run-down and a planning application was originally made in 2004 for inter alia renovations and changes to the shop-fronts.

The Ladbroke Association was unhappy about the proposals for the façade, and there was a large volume of complaints because the proposal involved the replacement of the arcades by individual shop-fronts. The developer decided to put in a new application which met the main architectural objections (including those of the Ladbroke Association), and in particular, indicated that he intended to retain an area for stalls on the lower ground floor. This application, with some subsequent modifications, was accepted by the Council and work has now been completed.

The photographs show the buildings before and after the development. The street and basement levels of the complex, including the area intended for market stalls, are now occupied by a huge branch of the clothing chain All Saints. Predictably, the reaction of the supporters of the Portobello market was a furious one and extreme pressure was put on the Council to force the developer to keep to his undertaking, including a huge petition (which can be found on the RBKC website, together with the Council’s reply).

Unfortunately, the planning legislation is such that the Council’s hands are tied on the issue of market stalls. The buildings already had planning permission for retail use, and once retail use has been agreed, there is nothing that the Council can do to specify what sort of retail use (antique stalls and chain fashion stores are as one under the law for planning purposes) or how many retail units there can be in a particular building. The planning permission was not conditional on the developer’s undertaking to provide space for stalls, and nor could it have been under current legislation. To do them justice, the Council is itself concerned about the situation and has lobbied the previous govern-



282-292 Westbourne Grove before redevelopment (not on a market day; on Saturdays, there were not only stalls inside but stalls all along the outside of the complex). c Thomas Erskine.



282-292 Westbourne Grove as it is now, occupied by the All Saints clothing chain who have filled every window with antique sewing machines.

ment about changing the legislation to allow councils to give more protection to areas of small shops. But so far to no avail. We can only hope that it will have more success with the new Government.

It is possible, however, that a better course of action would be for the Council to try to achieve its objective through a London Boroughs Bill with provisions for the protection of either of small shops or of traditional markets – especially as it is not only the antique market that is in trouble; the vegetable market is also steadily shrinking.

This is, however, not entirely a straightforward issue. Even without the actions of developers, the antique market is under pressure.

The fashion for minimalism has meant a big fall in the demand for antiques and picturesque “collectibles” of the sort to be found in the Portobello Road, and many stallholders were giving up anyway – and there seem to be quite a few empty spaces in the remaining arcades. But there is no doubt that the reduction in the number of spaces for stalls in arcades at a reasonable price has added extra pressure.

Probably many visitors buy more in the fashion shops and from the many outlets peddling tourist tat than they do from the antique stalls. Nevertheless, the market’s reputation is built around the antique market. If that were to disappear, leaving nothing but a collection of smart clothes shops and eating places, the street would no longer be any different from a dozen other such streets in London, and it is difficult to see how its attraction would last.

The goose that lays the golden eggs needs to be kept alive as long as possible.

As a postscript to the saga of Lipka’s Arcade, quite apart from the issue of the market stalls, the new shop-fronts have been built in a way that is not in accordance with the detail of the planning permission (and in a style to which many have strong objections).

All Saints put in a new planning application in February 2010, seeking retrospective permission for the non-conforming elements.

The Ladbroke Association urged the Council to refuse this.

A meeting of the Planning Applications Committee was held in April to consider the application. Such is the passion aroused by the disappearance of Lipka’s Arcade that it was attended by several hundred people, and the meeting had to be moved from the normal committee room into the Great Hall in the Town Hall. To general welcome, permission was firmly refused for the unauthorised elements. Unless they win an appeal,

All Saints will now have to rebuild the shop-front in wood rather than “glass-reinforced plastic”, the artificial material now used.

They will also have to remove the three projecting illuminated signs in the form of sewing machines which were put up without planning permission.

The developers also went much further than in the original drawings for the plans for the Portobello façade. Instead of two shop-fronts near the corner and a modest doorway at the other end of this façade (where there used to be a door down into the lower arcade), there are now shop-fronts extending all the way along the Portobello façade.

Continued on Page 9

CAR CLUBS

Car Club bays are popping all over our area, for the simple reason that the Council has recently doubled the number of car club bays in the borough from 97 to 200.

Each bay is licensed to a specific vehicle belonging to one of three car clubs: City Car Club, Streetcar and Zipcar (although the last two are in the process of combining).

This means that each company has a bay within a few hundred yards of almost any house in the area – the Council reckons that almost all residents will now have a car club bay within 3 minutes’ walk.

In 2007 there were a mere 7 bays and some 400 members in the borough; now some 6,000 residents of the borough are members of a car club.

Each club operates slightly differently, but basically members phone

or go online to reserve a car from a bay near them; they pay an hourly charge for using the car; and must return it to the same bay. There are details of the companies on the RBKC website:

[www.rbkc.gov.uk/
environmentandtransport/
roadsandhighways/carclub.aspx](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/environmentandtransport/roadsandhighways/carclub.aspx).

To accommodate the car club bays, the Council has converted pay-and-display and single yellow line space (all the costs of doing so are borne by the car clubs).

We welcome the fact that residents’ parking bays have not been touched. But pay-and-display spaces for visitors and tradesmen are becoming uncomfortably short in some areas, especially as encroachments have also been made to accommodate the Mayor’s cycle scheme, as well as stops for the new 228 bus on Ladbroke Grove.

The theory is that car clubs will persuade more people to manage without their own car, thus reducing the pressure on residents’ parking. There are now some twenty car club bays in or on the edge of the Ladbroke area.

WE NEED A NEW CHAIRMAN

David Corsellis, our current chairman, is resigning and we need a new chairman.

If you, or anybody you know, would be interested, please let David know. He says:

‘The main qualification is an enthusiasm for the Ladbroke area.

I chair the committee and am on various circulation lists for consultations about changes affecting the area. But the position is a purely honorary one, which means one can make of the position what one wishes.

It need not be time-consuming and there is no need to have prior experience of planning matters; there are a number of active and knowledgeable Committee members who help run the Association.

The Association has, I believe, built up an influential reputation for itself and it has been an honour to chair it, tremendously rewarding and great fun.’

DEPARTURE OF THE SHEPPARD TRUST

Sadly for the area, the Sheppard Trust has decided to move from its premises at 2-4 and 12-14 Lansdowne Walk.

This charitable organisation was founded in 1855 and provides accommodation for 29 elderly ladies in its two properties.

The latter were originally family houses which have been converted into one bedroom flats, supervised by a warden.

The Trust says that it is finding it increasingly difficult and expensive to operate from these not totally suitable properties with their narrow hallways and steep staircases. Therefore, it plans to sell them and use the proceeds to build a purpose-built property elsewhere.

To maximise the value of the Lansdowne Walk properties it plans to seek planning permission for them to be turned back into family houses in single occupation.

The Ladbroke Association has already been sent preliminary plans and will be scrutinising the Trust's application carefully when it is submitted. While there is no doubt that these buildings could make excellent family houses, there must be some concern about the disappearance of much wanted sheltered accommodation for the elderly in our area.

IMPACT OF SUBTERRANEAN DEVELOPMENTS: UPDATE

In our last edition we reported on the completion and distribution of our Report on lessening the impact of basement developments on neighbours. See our website at: www.ladbrokeassociation.org.uk We recommended in particular that:

- RBKC should produce a Good Development Guide for developers and contractors – this is now referred to as the Considerate Builders Code – and require Construction Methods Statements to be more comprehensive;
- Greater use could be made of Party Wall Agreements by widening the subjects covered;
- Legislative changes should be



Members of the Ladbroke Association Committee.

LADBROKE ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

The Association has a committee of twelve members, including the chairman. It includes two architects, a chartered surveyor and a chartered engineer, giving us valuable expertise. It also includes two local Councillors, which is also very helpful. But the other members are all residents whose main qualification is a deep love of the area.

The Committee meets once a month at 6.30 p.m. in the house or flat of one of our committee members to go through current planning applications and any other business, usually over a glass of wine and a bowl of crisps. One sunny evening

last summer, the Committee were fortunate enough to be able to do its business in the garden of the house where we were meeting, and one of the members took this photograph of the occasion.

From left to right: David Marshall (chartered surveyor); Robina Rose; Paul Bastick (hon. Treasurer and a chartered engineer, standing); Peter Mishcon (one of our architects); David Corsellis (chairman); Anne Chorley (hon. secretary); Peggy Post; Sophia Lambert (the newsletter editor who attends meetings as an observer); David Champion (Councillor for the Pembridge ward and responsible for our website); and Andrew Lamont (Councillor for the Norland ward).

considered to make it easier to control these developments.

In January, at his invitation, we had a meeting with Sir Malcolm Rifkind to discuss the recommendations. He was very supportive and constructive. We have also received widespread support from Conservation and Residents' organizations in the Borough and in Westminster.

RBKC have accepted the recommendation for a Considerate Builders Code and a draft is being prepared. This exercise is being led by Councillor Julie Mills who is Cabinet Member in charge of environmental health.

The draft will we understand contain input from other Cabinet members' areas of responsibility. The Council's intention is to publish a first edition of the Guide as soon as possible and then update it as further changes to procedures are made. The actual process of consideration of the draft is not yet known but we have urged that all those who have offered us their support should get their opportunity to express their views.

The Association is going to undertake work on the widening of the scope of Party Wall Agreements and would welcome input from members on their experiences and views.



THE OFFICERS AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

Officers:

President: Sir Angus Stirling
 Chairman: David Corsellis
 Hon Treasurer: Paul Bastick
 Hon Secretary: Anne Chorley

Committee Members:

Alex Bell
 David Campion,
 Peter Chapman
 Maurice Fraser,
 Sandra Kamen,
 Andrew Lamont,
 David Marshall,
 Peter Mishcon,
 Malcolm Pawley,
 Peggy Post.

Newsletter: Sophia Lambert

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 Ladbroke 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 Ladbroke Association is on its website at:

www.ladbrokeassociation.org.uk
 and the website also includes much historical information about the conservation area.

The layout for this Newsletter was composed by David Campion with the Adobe InDesign software. Printing was done by: Prontaprint Notting Hill Gate.

TO JOIN THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

If you wish to join or support the Ladbroke Association, please complete this standing order form and send it to Paul Bastick, the Hon Treasurer, 75A Ladbroke Grove, W11 2PD. The minimum subscription is £15 for family or individual membership but many members pay more to support our activities. We would also appreciate it if you could complete a Gift Aid Form which is available from the above address and on the website.

To:.....Bank plc Sort Code:

Address of Bank:

.....

Please pay to Barclays Bank plc, 212 Regent Street, PO Box 4BP, London W1A 4BP Sort Code: 20-71-74, immediately and thereafter on 1st April each year until further notice the sum of £..... for the credit of the Ladbroke Association (Account No: **80522635**)

Name: [Please print]

Signed..... Date.....

Address.....

.....Postcode:.....

ERRATUM

Page 6 (Portobello Road)

We regret that, due to a glitch in the editing process, the final part of the article on Portobello Road in the newsletter was omitted.

The missing paragraphs are:

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All this will have to be put right.