

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

JUNE NEWSLETTER 2003

As members will know, the border between the City of Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea runs through Knightsbridge, and we have therefore separated the relevant items into two sections.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

Major projects under construction

Work continues on the massive residential development at 195 Knightsbridge, the conversion of Harrods Depository into flats and the rebuilding of 100 Brompton Road (Trevor House). Elsewhere, following the grant of planning permission, work has started on several other developments, those of general interest are listed below.

Royal Albert Hall

Apart from the South Porch, due to be completed in the autumn, the refurbishment is virtually complete. Improvements to the precinct, which will include new York stone paving around the perimeter of the building, are due to start soon. Unfortunately the resurfacing of the entire precinct with granite setts is unlikely to go ahead due to lack of funds.

Royal College of Art

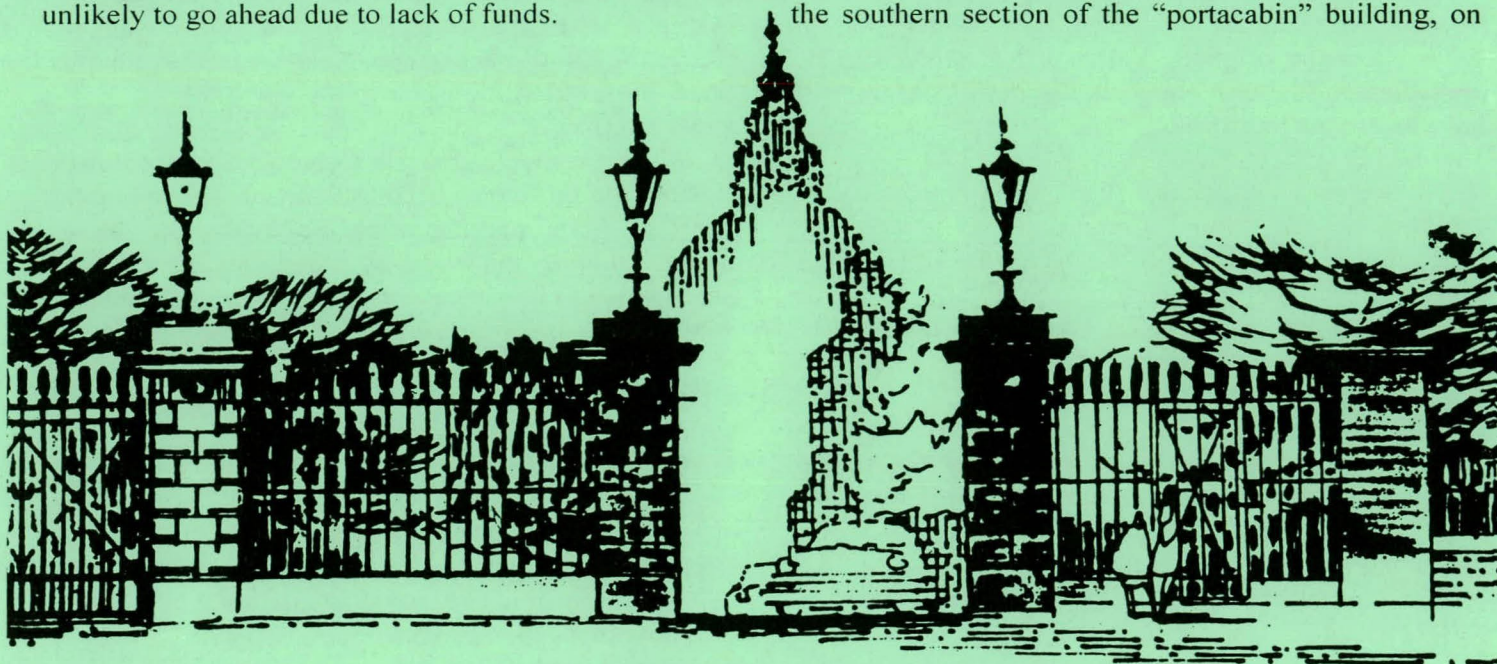
The proposed "Ellipse" extension was submitted for planning approval last December and is still under consideration. On a very sensitive site, next to the Royal Albert Hall, the scheme has been received with mixed feelings by local residents and the architectural establishment. The Association, in commenting on the planning application, criticised some aspects of the design but believes that it has the potential to be a fine building.

Royal Geographical Society

After a delay due to subsoil problems, work on the Exhibition Road pavilion and the archive extension under the garden, started early in the year and should be completed in the spring of 2004.

Imperial College

In addition to constant improvements to their existing buildings the College continues with its development programme. The Tanaka Business School in Exhibition Road is taking shape and looks as if it will integrate well with the Royal School of Mines to the north and the Museums to the south. Unfortunately the southern section of the "portacabin" building, on



President: Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge, *Vice-President:* Lady Grade
Chairman: Jonathan Charkham CBE, *Vice Chairman:* A M J Wright, CMG, FRICS, RIBA
Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, *Hon Treasurer:* Christine Gilbertson

the corner of Imperial College Road, will remain. Within the campus, hidden from view, work has started on the four-storey Faculty Building, sited in Dalby Court and linked by a covered ramp with Imperial College Road.

The extension to the Sports Centre, on the north side of Princes Gardens, was granted conditional planning approval in 1999, since when it has been on hold. It has now been revived and subject to meeting the conditions laid down in the approval, building work may begin later this year.

Of particular interest to many members is the future of Southside, listed Grade II in the early 1990s, and the other Halls of Residence in Princes Gardens. The College is having discussions with English Heritage and the Council with a view to having Southside "de-listed" so that it can be demolished and rebuilt as part of a master plan for the redevelopment of the south and east sides of the Gardens and re-integration of the square. Architects have been appointed and it has been agreed that any new buildings will be no higher than the existing Victorian buildings. We hope to have more details for the Annual Report.

Science Museum

The new building in Queen's Gate, which will house the Dana Centre and provide a home for the British Association for the Advancement of Science, is virtually complete. With a number of unrelated elements on the elevation to Queen's Gate, it lacks unity and, in spite of the use of red brick to match its neighbours to the north, does not harmonise with them. It is very disappointing.

Natural History Museum

Following demolition of the old "Spirit" Building, and the tidying up of the site, including some new landscaping, the successful integration of the recently opened, unashamedly modern, Phase I of the Darwin Centre and the original Waterhouse building can be appreciated. Phase II, now at the design stage, will have a hard act to follow.

Victoria & Albert Museum

It seems that lack of funds continues to delay progress on the "Spiral" extension. As part of the programmed improvements to existing facilities, direct access from the pedestrian subway from South Kensington, closed in 1970 for security reasons, is to be re-opened after refurbishment and improvements.

Knightsbridge Barracks

The Stable Block, built as part of the redevelopment of the Barracks in the late 60s to the design of Sir Basil Spence, requires major renovation. This may take a year to 15 months. During this period the horses will have to be re-housed, but for operational reasons we are told, must remain in Knightsbridge. Temporary stables for 120 horses will be erected on the edge of Hyde Park, on New Ride and the adjoining pathway; another 120 horses, usually stabled at Windsor, have to be stabled in London for

the ceremonial season (April to June). Unless the construction period can be significantly reduced, they will have to be stabled on South Carriage Drive, between Prince of Wales Gate and Park Close. This will necessitate the closure of the road between these two points for three months. Other options have been considered, but been turned down on grounds of cost or logistics.

Rutland Gate

Work is in hand on the refurbishment of no. 24 as a single-family dwelling. Plans have been submitted for the conversion of the badly dilapidated no. 26, once home to the famous Mitford sisters, into three maisonettes. Plans for nos. 31-32, also in need of attention, were submitted to the Council early in the year, but have been rejected pending clarification of the proposed use.

The Upper Garden continues to be a problem; attempts by the Association to persuade the owner – who lives in Kuwait – to accept responsibility for its upkeep or come to some agreement have not so far been successful, but thanks to the generosity of some of the residents the Association has been able to arrange for the periodic cleaning up of the garden.

Ennismore Arms

Revised plans for the demolition of the building and change of use to a single-family dwelling were submitted for planning approval early in the year. The Association objected on a number of grounds and the application has been rejected. So this once attractive pub remains closed and its future uncertain.

Montpelier Square/Trevor Square Traffic Barriers

The eighteen-month experimental scheme, which has now been running for just over a year, has been received with mixed feelings. There have also been technical problems and a number of operational failures which have added to criticism of the scheme. We now await the Council's further consultation on the future of the scheme, which, we understand, is under preparation.

Bowater House

Plans for major changes to the ground and lower ground floors have been submitted for planning approval. Some parking would be lost but the setting of the building improved by extensive planting and new paving. The office leases are falling in and the Association understands that consideration is being given to conversion to flats. To many it will come as a disappointment that the owners are apparently not opting for total redevelopment.

Hyde Park Corner

After a delay due to a change of architects, work on the Australian War Memorial has commenced. Located in the south-west corner of the open space it will give a much needed sense of enclosure to the area which is surrounded by busy roads.

The Royal Parks

Work has now started on the Princess Diana Memorial "Fountain", on a site between the Lido and

Serpentine Bridge in Hyde Park. The installation is paid for by the Government's Princess Diana Memorial Fund, but the annual maintenance cost of £118,000 has to be found out of the Royal Parks' budget. Since the Parks are chronically underfunded, the Association and other similar organisations have objected strongly to this further imposition on the Parks' finances.

Following a consultant's report, the Royal Parks' Administration has decided that cycling in Kensington Gardens on a number of designated paths should continue. Both the Association and the Friends of Hyde Park have expressed their disagreement with the findings of the consultants.

Once again, a series of concerts will be held in Hyde Park during the summer. These are said to be necessary to meet the aim of the Government to "attract a wider range of people", "broaden access to cultural activities", and "raise additional funds for the Parks' Administration". Assurances have been given that the conditions of the Licence, especially those referring to noise levels, will be rigidly enforced.

The Serpentine Gallery's temporary pavilion, designed this year by Oscar Niemeyer, famous for his work on the Brazilian capital, will include a small auditorium with a larger pavilion above. It will be a café during the day and used for special events and lectures in the evening.

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

South Kensington Station

Yet another scheme has been prepared for the redevelopment of this station. In addition to a very welcome upgrading of the station and its concourse, the proposals include flats along Pelham Street, the demolition of the Victorian terrace along Thurloe Street, and a new office block, including a 10 storey tower, over the concourse. Though welcoming the improvements to the station, the Association expressed concern at the height and design of the tower and over-development along Pelham Street.

Harrods' Georgian Restaurant

Amended plans for the use of the Georgian Restaurant (4th floor) and part of the ground floor Food Halls for 75 evening functions per year have been submitted for planning approval. A closing time of 01.30 was requested for ten of them and 00.30 for the remainder. The Association objected and drew attention to the danger of "Late Night London" with its attendant problems spreading to the Knightsbridge residential area. The application will probably go before the Planning Committee in July.

Brompton Road/Hans Crescent/Knightsbridge Station

Redevelopment behind the retained façades of 79/81 Brompton Road on the Hans Crescent corner is nearing completion, as is the first stage of the new concourse and entrance to the Tube station. A little

further along Hans Crescent nos. 32-44, on the corner with Basil Street, have been demolished to be replaced by a new development with shops on the ground floor and offices above.

Brompton Arcade

Closed for some time, plans for the conversion of this arcade into a single shop with entrances from Brompton Road and Basil Street, have been resubmitted. If permitted, changes will include improvements to the façade of 6-8 Basil Street.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE INITIATIVE

Phase I of this project initiated by the Association and completed two years ago, saw great improvements to the raised pavement area between 132-188 Brompton Road. Our thanks to the Royal Borough's determination to see it through at considerable cost, and to those frontagers and businesses who made financial contributions.

Phase II Transport for London (TfL) have now taken over responsibility for Brompton Road from the local authorities, and are working on a scheme – part of the Association's original initiative – for improving the split level pavement between nos. 106 and 130. TfL's report, due at the end of March, has been delayed due to the necessity to incorporate improvements to the Montpelier Street entrance, which form part of the Red Route proposals.

AREA FORUMS - public consultations

In Westminster the Knightsbridge & Belgravia Ward participates in the Central Area Forum. The Council organises a series of meetings chaired by a Council Cabinet Member and attended by senior officers. A wide range of subjects are discussed and criticisms voiced. Two committee members from the Association regularly attend these meetings, but greater representation would be welcomed by the Council. Any members wishing to attend – four evening meetings a year – should contact WCC's Helen Blantz on **020 7641 3383**.

Kensington & Chelsea also consult local organisations through their public partnership schemes on which the Association is represented.

LAW & ORDER

Westminster beat officer, PC Doug Foreman, moved to another district earlier in the year. He will be much missed. His replacement has yet to be announced. PC Lee Rogerson remains the beat officer for Chelsea. Neighbourhood Watch schemes are being revived and if anyone would like to participate, please contact Law & Order chairman, Iain Walker, on **020 7584 6307**.

RECYCLING

Kensington & Chelsea's recycling collections have been up and running for some time. Westminster City Council will be commencing a new recycling service for residents in September – Knightsbridge ward will be included. The door-to-door collections for glass and paper will be extended throughout the city and new Micro Recycling Centres and other on-street facilities

will be established. The Council will be communicating with property owners nearer the time and will be providing suitable receptacles.

STREET LIGHTING

On the Westminster side of the border matters are still far from satisfactory. Some new lamps have been provided, most of which have not yet been connected. Lighting in much of the area is not up to standard, maintenance and repairs remain patchy, and some lamp heads have been missing for several years. Residents have been badly let down.

GENERAL

Congestion Charging

It is too early to come to a final conclusion on congestion charging; there is no doubt that many residents who work within the charging zone face additional expense or added inconvenience, but traffic within the zone is moving faster and there appear to be fewer cars, but more buses, in Knightsbridge and Brompton Road.

There are conflicting reports on its effect on business. Since the re-opening of the Central Line retail trade in and around Oxford Street has recovered and does not appear to be seriously affected; on the other hand the leisure industries – theatres and restaurants – claim to be suffering.

The Mayor, buoyed up by the apparent success of the scheme, is reported to be planning to extend it by 2005 to those parts of Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea that lie south of Harrow Road.

Mobile Phone Base Stations

Many residents continue to be concerned by the number of roof top base stations (necessitated by the demand for mobile phones) being installed in this area. Recent newspaper articles referring to new research into possible long term health hazards due to exposure to radio frequency fields, have added to public unease, and lack of confidence in the Government advice that permission for rooftop base stations may not be rejected on health grounds. The Association is invited to comment on local applications for the siting of base stations, and has written to both local MPs asking them to raise the matter with the Minister responsible, with particular reference to current Government advice.

Conservation Areas – Permitted Development Rights

Most of Knightsbridge falls within one or other of a number of Conservation Areas, and the controls, aimed to prevent unsuitable development, are supported by the majority of residents. However, some areas have been harmed by the use of replacement windows and, in some cases doors, of plastic or other non-traditional material. In spite of the fact that Unitary Development Plans prohibit the use of such materials in *new* buildings, apparently in existing buildings they are part of “permitted development” rights. When the Association drew the attention of Westminster Council to the apparent contradiction, they pointed out that the anomaly was a result of the

General Permitted Development Order (“GPDO”) of 1995 which allowed within a conservation area, without prior planning permission, limited alterations to the façade of a dwelling house, including the insertion of non-traditional windows. The GPDO is currently under review by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (“ODPM”). As a result we have written to the ODPM suggesting that as part of the current review, consideration should be given to excluding from the scope of Permitted Development Rights the ability to alter the external appearance of dwelling houses in Conservation Areas.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003 – Please make sure that you have renewed your subscription or if paying by Banker’s Order that it is up-to-date:

Single	£ 10.00
Couples/families	£ 15.00
Corporate	£ 40.00
Life Membership: Single	£100.00
Double	£150.00

If you have changed to Life Membership, please make sure to cancel your Banker’s Order if applicable.

NEW MEMBERS – Your help in introducing new members would be very much appreciated. A form is enclosed please pass it on to a friend or neighbour or ask them to contact Carol Seymour-Newton telephone no: **020 7823 9103**, for further details.

EVENTS – The Garrick lunch on 1st June proved a popular success. Members and guests met beforehand to be taken in groups round the historic collection of portraits.

DIARY DATES

Tour and Lunch at Hyde Park Barracks

Tuesday 30th September and Wednesday 1st October: this will be an opportunity for small numbers of people to visit Hyde Park Barracks. The tours will start at 10am with a tour of the Barracks and a presentation of proposals for new stabling; followed by lunch with the officers in the Officers’ Mess. Numbers will be limited to give each member a chance to meet the officers and learn about the Household Cavalry. Full details will be circulated nearer the time. Tickets will be £15.00.

The Annual General Meeting

Monday 8th December 2003, 6pm in The Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road.

Guest speaker: Sir John Stevens, Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police.

The Knightsbridge Association

6 Montpelier Street, London SW7 1AE.

Tel: 020 7823 9103 Fax: 020 7581 3130

Registered with The Civic Trust