

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

June 2006

Dear Member,

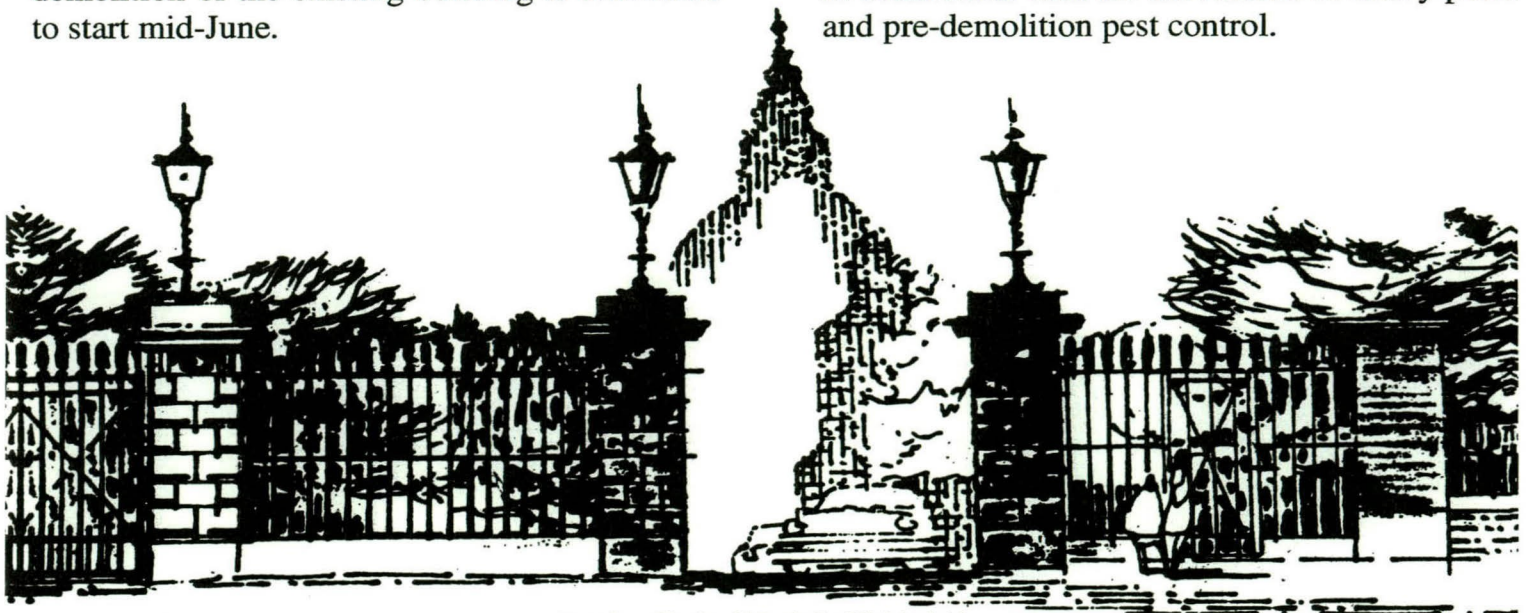
As always your Association has been immensely busy on your behalf – so much so that these regular Newsletters seem to be getting longer and longer. Rest assured that we realise KA members have lots to do – as well as reading our Newsletters! – but we feel, and we hope you agree, that members want to be kept up-to-date with everything of importance that is happening locally. After all, it is surely because you are someone who is concerned about the neighbourhood that you joined the Association originally.

Bowater House

Following WCC's granting of permission for the redevelopment of Bowater House in February, the Mayor raised no objection and the project is now set to go ahead, subject to some important traffic issues still to be resolved. Contractors took over the site on May 22nd and demolition of the existing building is scheduled to start mid-June.

A Community Liaison Group, chaired by a representative from the developers Candy & Candy has been set up with members from neighbouring institutions, community groups and blocks of flats, including two KA committee members. It held its first meeting in April and will meet monthly. Monthly newsletters will be sent out to those in the immediate neighbourhood (the first is enclosed with this KA Newsletter).

At both the April and May meetings great concern was expressed regarding the congestion which would be caused by heavy construction traffic at the Knightsbridge junction. A suggestion that works traffic should use South Carriage Drive is being investigated, but it was pointed out that security controls necessitated by the proximity of the Barracks, and the vulnerability of the daily comings and goings of the mounted guard might be such as to make it impractical. Other issues discussed included control of dust during demolition, road closures in connection with the movement of heavy plant and pre-demolition pest control.



President: The Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Winston Fletcher, *Vice Chairman:* Michael Wright, CMG, FRICS, Edward Davies-Gilbert

Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, *Hon. Treasurer:* Christine Gilbertson

Normandie Hotel

Planning permission has been granted for the demolition of the Edwardian building and its replacement with a hotel of 154 bedrooms and nine flats on the 8th and 9th floors. Though the existing building is not listed, and had become uneconomical to use, it was typical of the fabric of Knightsbridge and many will be sorry to see it go. The new building, faced in Portland stone with brick trimmings to recessed balconies, will lack the decorative details of its predecessor and alter the character of the Knightsbridge Green conservation area. Demolition is likely to start towards the end of this year.

Exhibition Road Project

The consortium, led by the Royal Borough, has been told their Stage 1 bid for lottery funds has been successful. They are now starting to work up a more detailed design for their Stage 2 bid, to be made in 2007. RBK&C proposes to form a consultative group which will include representatives from KA, the Kensington Society and the Brompton Association. We will need to monitor the project carefully to ensure the amenity of local residents is not harmed.

Imperial College Redevelopment

Princes Gardens Southside - though not yet visible above the hoardings, the new halls of residence are rising and good progress is being made on the revised layout of Princes Gardens. (Some residents in Princes Gate Mews have been experiencing problems with vibration and damage and this is now in the hands of the College's insurers).

The Sports Centre - when the Centre reopened at the end of January local residents were upset to learn they would not be offered access to the facilities. The KA took the matter up with the College. We have just been notified that the Sports Centre will be offering membership to local residents, subject to certain conditions and a fee. There will be an open weekend on Friday 9th – Sunday 11th June and those wishing to attend and obtain more information should telephone 020 7594 6660 to book an appointment.

The Nursery School - two planning applications for moving the Nursery School from 8/9 Princes Gardens to temporary sites on either the Tennis Courts or behind Weeks Hall and doubling its size came in for much criticism. As reported in our last Newsletter, KA objected to both applications, which have now been withdrawn.

Exhibition Road/Imperial College Road site - it is intended to demolish the post-war building. An architectural competition was held to design a building to house the new Aeronautical Engineering, Research and Teaching faculty. The competition has now been narrowed down to two contenders, and is in its final stage.

The Royal Parks

Events and Licensing - as a result of the new licensing laws the Royal Parks have had to apply for licences for their events. Originally they applied for 20 events in Hyde Park, with a smaller number in Kensington Gardens, but neither WCC's Licensing Committee nor the residents' associations around the perimeter of the Parks were prepared to accept this increase over previous years. In the event Hyde Park was granted a licence for 13 events of which only one can be "major" – that is, up to 50,000 attendees.

KA has asked for a noise monitor to be fixed on the south side of Hyde Park in order to check noise levels when major events are held on the Parade Ground.

Consultations

The Parks have also inaugurated a series of breakfast meetings to which representatives from interested organisations are invited. The opportunity these provide for the discussion of mutual problems is very welcome.

This year the temporary pavilion in the garden of the Serpentine Gallery will take the form of a circular space some 20 metres in diameter, to which will be attached a helium filled balloon as its roof. As in previous years the pavilion will be used as a café during the day and for special events in the evenings.

Brompton Estates

Changes to the western end of Brompton Road – now called by its developers ‘The Brompton Quarter’ - continue. By no means all of them are welcome. While the newsagents has been enlarged and improved, the shop at 265/269 has closed and the premises are empty; the Indian restaurant at 225 is to become a ‘food emporium’ and an application has recently been submitted to change the use of 235 (James Hardy & Co., the jeweller) from retail use to restaurant use – a change to which we have objected.

KA has also objected to the proposal to move the entrance to the Egerton Mansions flats (209-225) from Brompton Road to Egerton Gardens Mews. If granted it would set a precedent for the removal of the remaining six residential entrances from Brompton Road and clearly detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

Montpelier/Trevor Square Barriers

In April WCC Cabinet Minister, Cllr. Danny Chalkley, announced that following the public consultation, there would be no change to the current situation – the traffic islands will remain, with weight restriction signs and granite setts across the highway in two places, but the barriers will not be re-installed. The Montpelier Trevor Association, which had previously successfully challenged in court WCC’s removal of the barriers, held a meeting at the end of April to decide whether to take further legal action, but decided against doing so.

The Olympics 2012

Hyde Park - it is planned that the Triathlon will take place in Hyde Park, and discussions are currently taking place as to whether some of the swimming events might also be held there.

New Transport Committee

In May, the KA Executive Committee agreed to establish a new committee to address the increasing number of important transport related issues across the breadth of the Knightsbridge area. I am very pleased to say that Simon Birkett has accepted our invitation to become Chairman of the new Transport Committee. He would welcome your views on major issues which the Committee might address and can be contacted by e-mail on

tkatransport@btinternet.com or by fax on 020 7589 5366. In addition to the usual transport issues, the Committee will focus on the high level of nitrogen dioxide air pollution in Brompton Road, Sloane Street and Knightsbridge, which is among the very worst in central London.

Licensing

Last November’s Licensing Act, allowing 24 hour drinking, has drawn opposition from residents in many areas. The government is conducting a review of the Act, but this won’t affect late licences already granted. WCC is one of the few authorities to oppose the big brewers, who argue that the Act confers a quasi-automatic right to open around the clock. The Knightsbridge Association has lobbied both WCC and RBK&C on behalf of local residents, with encouraging results. Please contact us if you have a licensing problem.

Street Lighting

The quality of street lighting in the area is a regular topic of criticism in our Annual Report. Planning Committee member Dr Klaus Leist has constantly pressurised the Councils for improvements, and it is therefore a pleasure to report that some are now in train. More lights are working, and there is even a small sum in Westminster’s budget for additional lamps where needed.

Cleansing

Following pressure from KA, WCC has taken action against several repeat offenders who dump bags on the pavement. In Cheval Place, which is partly in RBK&C and partly in Westminster, both councils are now making their collections on the same day, which also helps.

Forums

WCC continues to hold Area Forums three times a year from 6.30 to 8.30pm. These provide an opportunity to meet Ward Councillors and senior officers for discussions over coffee and sandwiches, followed by workshops on topical subjects. The meetings conclude with a Question Time from 8.00 to 8.30pm. The forums are open to all: if any KA member wishes to take part they should contact the City Council on 020 7641 3372 or get in touch with Carol Seymour-Newton on 020 7823 9103.

Crime and Security

Thankfully, things have been relatively quiet in Knightsbridge recently. A well-known burglar was arrested in March for a series of burglaries in Knightsbridge and Kensington. A surveillance team followed him for several days, arrested him in Rutland Gate, and he is currently awaiting trial. Motor vehicle crime is still the most prevalent locally, with SatNav units and top of the range radios being targeted.

The street robbery level is very low, although it always rises in the summer months, particularly in the Parks when robbers can see expensive watches on bare wrists.

We have requested more uniformed police for Brompton Road, especially over the weekends to deal with persistent begging, rough sleepers and pickpockets, particularly in the vicinity of Harrods and Barclays Bank. Another persistent problem is cyclists running red lights.

The Met are reportedly recruiting another 2,000 officers, 1,500 PCSOs and more than 1,000 specials. Even though we are considered a low crime area, we should like to see more of them deployed in Knightsbridge.

At the next Law & Order Committee meeting on July 11th, Gary Pepe from the anti-terrorist unit is the guest speaker. If any KA members are interested, please contact the chairman Maddie Elsdon, as she needs to know in advance the names of those attending.

E-mail: elsdonmv@aol.com, Tel.: 020 7589 4006.

Social Events

The musical/historical evening at St. Paul's was one of the most successful events in KA's forty-five year history. It was considerably oversubscribed, so many people unfortunately missed out. Congratulations to Lillemor Gardener who organised it so wonderfully. The House of Lords Dinner on May 25th will also have taken place by the time you receive this newsletter - and again it has been oversubscribed. General, the Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank, former Chief of the General Staff, was our guest speaker.

Bonhams Private View and Reception – Monday September 18th 2006: following the success of last year's evening, **Bonhams** will again be generously hosting another event for our members. They will be invited to a reception to view Japanese pictures and prints and other Asian works of art, European furniture, ceramics, clocks, watches and barometers, with refreshments supplied by Bonhams.

Reform Club Dinner – Wednesday October 25th: a black tie dinner in this great, historic clubhouse, with an address on the history of the Club by its chairman Roger Billis.

AGM – Important Date Change - due to a clash of dates we have been forced to move the AGM from December 11th to **TUESDAY DECEMBER 12th**. It will still be, as usual, at the Royal College of Music.

Other Events

London Open Garden Squares Weekend June 10th/11th: Over 100 private & public garden squares open. Further information: www.opensquares.org

Chelsea Festival June 16th-25th: a wide range of events available to the public Tel: 020 7349 8101 – or see www.info@chelseafestival.org.uk

Website

Thanks to Professor Tony Ralston our website is now up and running – address below. If you are an internet user, do please visit it, and let us have your comments. Also, would any member who has a personal home page on the Internet, please get in touch with Tony Ralston (ar9@doc.ic.ac.uk). This could help us to get the KA website picked up by search engines.

Membership

Subscriptions for those who pay by cheque were due in April. Please make sure yours is up to date. Please also pass on details of the Association to neighbours. With the continuous turnover of people moving in and out of the area, we constantly need new members to maintain and - if possible - increase our numbers.

With thanks for reading, and best wishes,



Winston Fletcher
Chairman

It was with very great sadness that – as we were going to press – we learnt of the death of our joint Vice President and former Chairman, Jonathan Charkham. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Moira and all his family. A full obituary will be published in our Annual Report.

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