

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

March 2007

Dear Member,

Unusually, I am beginning this Newsletter by urging you to try and recruit a new member – or several! – to join the Association. Our membership numbers are strong, as they have been for many years, and subscriptions are coming in very healthily. But so many people move out of the area – and of course so many pass away – that it is vital for us to replenish our membership constantly if we are to represent the majority views of the neighbourhood. So please contact people who have recently moved in, and persuade them it is in their interest to join us. Application forms are easily available from 020 7823 9103, or can be quickly printed off from our website

www.knightsbridgeassoc.org.uk

Talking of representing members' views, with this letter you will find a short questionnaire which I do hope you will complete and return. It is essential for us to know what members want the Association to do, and to know how well members think we are doing things. Only that way can we fulfil our members' wishes, which is what a

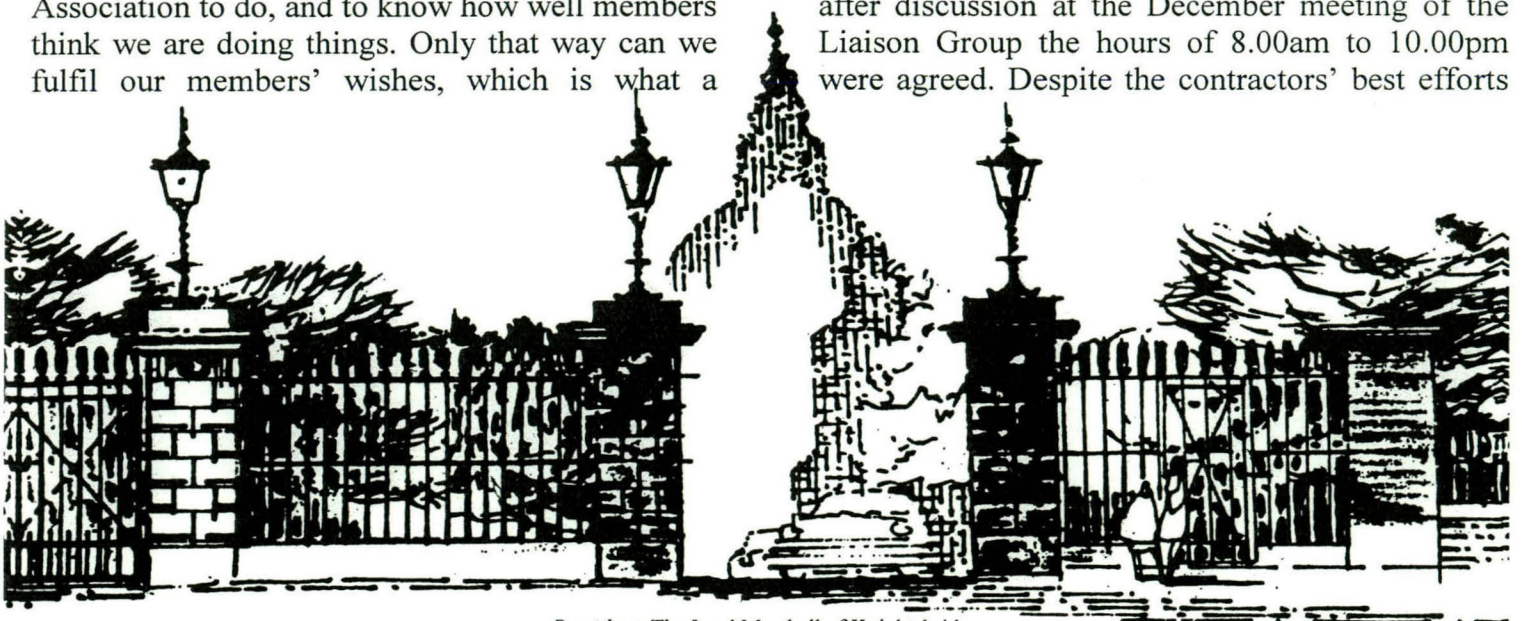
residents' association exists for. Incidentally, though the questionnaire lists our main activities, there are several that are not mentioned, because we wanted to keep it short and simple. For example, we constantly monitor licensing applications, and street lighting, and liaise with the councils and other authorities, as well as helping individual members with personal enquiries whenever we can. But this is our first stab at a members' questionnaire, and we may – depending on your responses – investigate other things in more detail in future.

And now to our news reports.

Planning & Conservation

Number 1 Hyde Park (formerly Bowater House)

Demolition of the old building has now been completed. Some heavy piled foundations will require extended working hours on some days; after discussion at the December meeting of the Liaison Group the hours of 8.00am to 10.00pm were agreed. Despite the contractors' best efforts



President: The Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge
Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Winston Fletcher, *Vice Chairmen:* Michael Wright CMG RIBA FRICS, Edward Davies-Gilbert
Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, *Hon. Treasurer:* Christine Gilbertson

residents, particularly those living immediately adjacent, have suffered from the noise. Due to the need for TfL (Transport for London) to carry out a survey on the effect of the congestion charge extension from 19th February, they are insisting that all the trenches at the Knightsbridge junction have to be filled in, with work on moving the gas main suspended until May at the earliest. So the traffic jams will continue for many months I regret to say.

Normandie Hotel

Demolition is scheduled to start in the spring and will take four to five months. Construction of the new building (which includes the empty site between the Normandie and The Knightsbridge) will begin in the autumn. It is intended to organize a liaison group, similar to that which is working well in the case of Number 1 Hyde Park.

158/166 Brompton Road

This building, currently an office block above retail and café units, is to be redeveloped with three shops on the ground floor and thirteen flats above. The height will be the same as at present, with the tanks and other service plant being replaced by two small bedrooms attached to the flats below, set well back from the frontage. Access to basement parking, plant room and service area for the shops and flats will be from Cheval Place. Plans have been submitted to RBKC. The current building has little merit. The proposed plans are acceptable.

Brompton Estates

The effect of the proposed changes for this stretch of Brompton Road, previously owned by the Wellcome Trust, is beginning to be apparent – and not all of them are welcome. Sadly, many of the convenience shops have gone, a new restaurant has replaced the Midnight Shop and Shaheen restaurant, and a new furniture store is to replace the Cargo Home Store with an improved shop front. Several of the planning applications, current and retrospective, are being contested.

Hans Crescent

The long-term closure of the Brompton Road entrance to Hans Crescent has been confirmed by TfL, and RBKC are preparing a scheme for its development as a pedestrian precinct, up to the junction with the eastern arm of Basil Street. The precinct will be formally set out with trees, decorative paving and seating. Harrods and other shops fronting the precinct will not be permitted to place tables and chairs on it.

The Knightsbridge Estate (1-85 Brompton Road/Basil Street block)

As mentioned in our 2006 Annual Report, we are concerned that owing to its change of ownership last year, this large and important part of Knightsbridge may be subject to a series of planning applications. Indeed several have already been submitted, including one for the much missed Basil Street Hotel to be converted into offices.

Accompanied by Paul Velluet, our consultant, we had a meeting with the RBKC Planning Department in February when we strongly expressed the view that any proposals should take into account the importance of these buildings within the conservation area, and to the character of Knightsbridge itself.

Imperial College – Princes Gardens Redevelopment

The envelope of the new Southside hall of residence is nearing completion. The height of the new building, mirroring that of the remaining Victorian houses, and the stonework matching the original stucco has greatly enhanced the square. The railings on the north side of the garden have been installed and considerable work has been done on the garden. Work has started on the Princes Gate Mews building. Southside will be ready for occupation at the beginning of the October 2007 academic year. Demolition of Linstead Hall and its extension is scheduled to begin in June/July this year. Subject to planning permission being granted it will be completed by October 2008.

The Natural History Museum, Darwin Centre Phase Two

Construction of this new building, which links Phase One with the famous Alfred Waterhouse building fronting Cromwell Road, is well under way. It will soon be possible to see the areas which will house and protect millions of insect and plant specimens, provide state-of-the-art laboratories and research facilities, and give visitors an experience of these resources at work. Building work is due to be completed by July 2008 and it will open to the public in 2009.

The Royal Parks

Planning permission has now been granted for the new boathouse on the Serpentine, featured in the 2006 Annual Report. All being well, construction is scheduled for Autumn this year.

The temporary fencing around the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain was reviewed by the Parks agency in June and a decision made to replace it with permanent bow-top fencing – work is due to start in the near future.

Events in Hyde Park

We have received from the Royal Parks a list of this year's schedule of events. Only one takes place before June, and we will therefore publish a full list in our June Newsletter with times (particularly of the concerts) and road closures.

19th May – Moonwalk: Annual power walking marathon starting in Hyde Park at midnight. Around 17,000 walkers are expected, raising money for breast cancer research and patient care.

Storm Damage – The Royal Parks Appeal

The storm in January caused considerable damage in all the Royal Parks. Hyde Park lost twenty-five mature trees, a large greenhouse roof, and damage was also done to fencing; Kensington Gardens lost seven trees. Many more were damaged. Sadly the Parks are not covered for funds to replant trees and rebuild structures. The Royal Parks Foundation, the charity which manages the parks, is asking the public to donate to a Parks' Restoration Fund. Members may remember that a former KA chairman, the late Neville Labovitch, was instrumental in raising the funds needed to restore the damage to the Royal Parks after the 1987 storm.

The Association has agreed to make a donation of £1,000 from its own resources. Members who may like to make a personal contribution can make a cheque out to The Royal Parks Foundation, and send it to the Association – we will forward them as a collection to the Royal Parks. Further details can be obtained from the dedicated website:

www.justgiving.com/parktrees

Miscellany

Ennismore Gardens Mews Arch has at last been repaired and, by the time this Newsletter goes out, work should have started on the replacement of the boundary wall to **1-7 Rutland Gate....The Exhibition Road Project** is currently stalled due to lack of funds, the application having been turned down by the Lottery.

Transport and Environment

As well as commenting on numerous consultations and writing to various authorities, we have focused on three particular areas.

Air quality

We announced on 1 February the formation of the Campaign for Clean Air in London as a cross-party campaign under the auspices of The Knightsbridge Association. The campaign has the single aim of achieving urgently World Health Organisation recommended standards of air quality throughout London. The campaign has already received pledges of support from leading politicians of all the major political parties as well as London First, the Central London Partnership, The Knightsbridge Business Group and over 25 leading London amenity societies. Having won this 'critical mass' of support, our next objective is to work with the Mayor, WCC and RBKC to improve local air quality. For further details, please visit the website for the Campaign for Clean Air in London at:

www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/G1956

Sloane Square

With regard to the plans to improve Sloane Square, from a transport perspective our primary concerns relate to the possibility of the changes causing more rat-running, and the need to implement the right turn from Knightsbridge eastbound into Brompton Road at Scotch Corner.

Western Extension of the Congestion Charge

The extension of the Congestion Charge Zone was implemented on 19 February. We have argued strongly that it is a blunt instrument to tackle congestion in a largely residential area. We therefore will continue to press for more sophisticated road pricing that would reduce rat running around current boundaries, and avoid the impact of a 'one-size fits all' approach on smaller local businesses (by allowing cheaper access outside peak periods).

Law and Order

Reporting a crime

Some residents have not reported incidents, particularly motor vehicle crimes, because they don't have the time to go to the police station. You can report incidents to the police in other ways: You may ring Belgravia Police on 020 7730 1212 and ask for the Control Room at Belgravia. Tell them you want to report a crime by telephone.

The Controller will decide if either an Officer needs to be dispatched to you or if a Forensic Team needs to attend. Alternatively you will be given a reference number and your details passed to a Telephone Reporting Team who will contact you within three days. If you live in RBKC ring 020 8246 1212 and ask for the Kensington Control Room. Then follow the above procedure. Non-Urgent Crime can also be reported through the Metropolitan Police Website via www.met.police.uk following the instructions from the Reporting Crime link.

Attending the Police Station in person may mean a long wait. Many criminals are now caught through forensic evidence so try and preserve the scene if possible. If the suspects are still at the scene or you feel in any way threatened then 999 is still the fastest way to get police response.

Mobile phone thefts

Eastern European children in groups of 3 or 4 aged between 10 and 12 have been reported stealing mobile phones from local cafés. When they spot a phone they enter the café, cover the phone with something like a piece of paper, and speak to the owner in a foreign language. Then they rush off, taking the phone which they covered. Keep your phone out of sight. If you become a victim try and call 999 straight away. And please warn friends, relatives and neighbours about this dodge.

Street briefings

The Knightsbridge and Belgravia Police Safer Neighbourhood Team plan to invite residents and businesses to join them 'in the street', to discuss any concerns they may have. Do please support our Team by making the effort to attend when they come to your street.

Social Events

We have a truly excellent schedule of events for 2007:

Barracks Lunch – Thursday 8th February:

Sixty members and friends of the Association viewed the Queen's Life Guards during inspection, visited the forge, were given a view of life in the stables and a look around the state ceremonial stall. All followed by a most enjoyable lunch, on a bitter winter's day.

(N.B. Household Cavalry Pageant 12th June 2007: see flyer enclosed)

KA/Imperial College Centenary Dinners - 14th and 15th March

Members have already received details – a few tickets are still available. Owing to lack of space, it was decided to have dinners on successive nights to accommodate demand. The evenings include a guided tour, reception and musical recital, followed by dinner.

(NB Imperial College Centenary celebrations: for further information visit:

www.imperial.ac.uk/centenary or Tel. 020 7594 6708).

Chinese Lecture, St Wilfred's Hall, the Oratory – Tuesday 15th May:

Lecture with slides by a renowned expert on Chinese art, on the subject: The Secrets Behind the Walls – the Story of the Grandeur of the old Forbidden City in Beijing. Champagne and eats will be provided. Details to be sent out nearer the time.

Scottish Evening at the Caledonian Club – October: Date and details to be finalized.

Imperial College Sports Centre – Concession for members

Imperial College has generously offered us concessionary membership of their sports facility centre in Princes Gardens – see the Ethos flyer enclosed. If you are interested in joining, please e-mail the KA – Seymour@skymarket.org or phone us on 020 7823 9103 and we will send you a letter certifying membership of the Association, signed by the chairman, for presentation to the Sports Centre.

Another busy time for the Association, and I am grateful to the members of all our committees for the enormous amount of time they put in to help. You too can help – as I hope you will – by recruiting new members, and completing the brief questionnaire. Meanwhile, thank you for reading.

With 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 long-standing committee member, Kevin Gardner. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Trixie and all his family.

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