

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

September 2007

Dear Member,

“Rain, rain, go away....” we chanted as kids, when downpours kept us indoors. But hang on...one of the sheer joys of living in Knightsbridge is the unique patchwork of lovely garden squares which knit the neighbourhood together. And however depressing this summer’s incessant drenchings have been, they have been wonderful for our squares. Brompton, Montpelier and Trevor squares, Ennismore and Princes Gardens, Rutland Gate – as well as Hyde Park itself - are burgeoning, green and effulgent, looking wonderfully healthy and helping to breath fresh air into the atmosphere (and into us). And even without the benefit of this year’s rain, Ennismore Gardens, Montpelier Square and Rutland Gate lower garden all picked up prestigious prizes in garden awards competitions in 2006. So next time you get soaked, instead of “Rain, rain go away”... you might try “So when it’s raining, have no regrets. It isn’t raining rain you know...” ..Go on, it’s worth a try.

Planning and Conservation

One Hyde Park

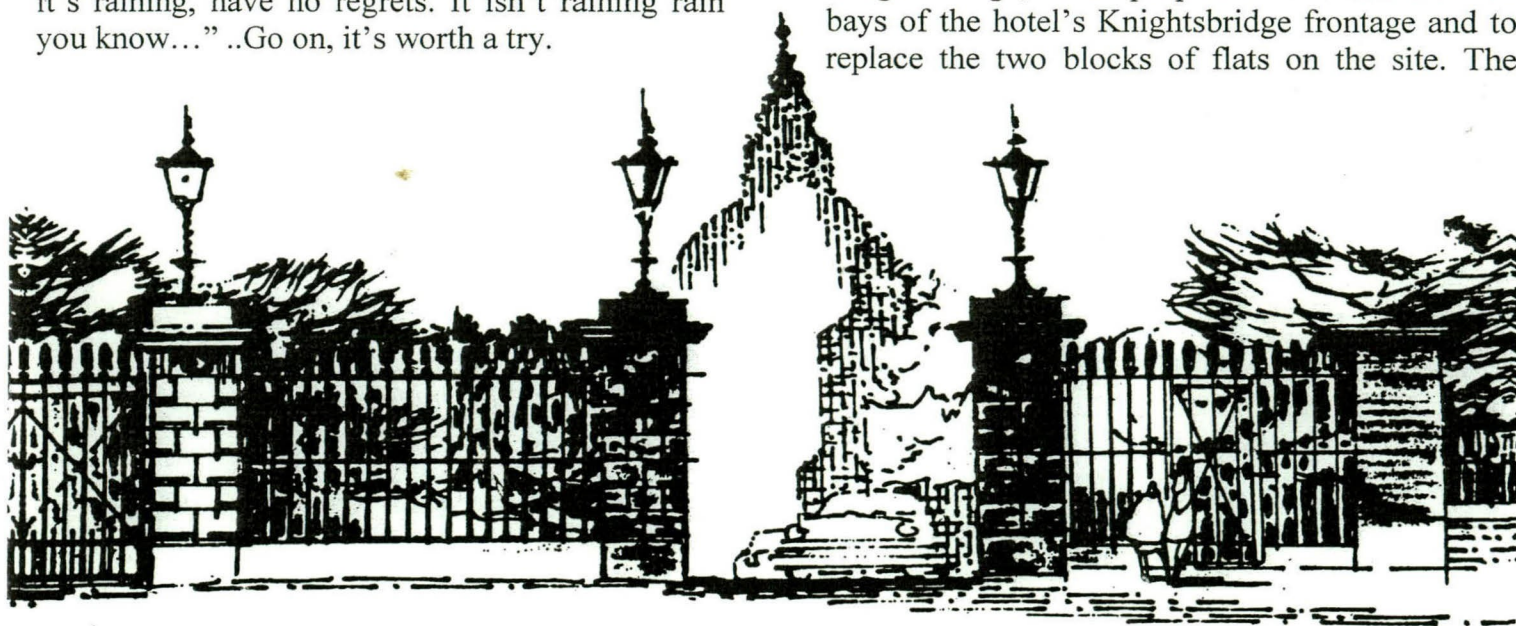
There is still little to see above ground but progress on the piling and basements continues satisfactorily. Steelwork for the concrete road deck for the new Edinburgh Gate has been installed.

Trees along South Carriage Drive perimeter

WCC decided the existing trees in the Royal Park, alongside the development, were rotten and of poor quality and removed them. A tree replacement and landscaping scheme is being funded by the developer and must obtain approval from the Royal Parks.

The Berkeley

Plans were submitted for approval in June. In addition to the demolition of the flats at 33-39 Knightsbridge, it is proposed to demolish two bays of the hotel’s Knightsbridge frontage and to replace the two blocks of flats on the site. The



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

reduced frontage of the hotel will be refaced to match the contemporary design of the new flats. These will incorporate some facilities – a larger leisure centre, main hotel restaurant and some suites – of the enlarged hotel.

The two blocks of flats have been designed with a complex structural system that involves the use of metal hangers. These project from the roofs of both buildings and, if approved, will seriously harm the appearance of Knightsbridge, especially the view from Hyde Park. KA has recommended that one floor should be removed from each of the three blocks (two blocks of flats and the refaced hotel). We have also objected strongly to the design of the blocks of flats. The existing hotel, which faces on to Wilton Place, will be refurbished and upgraded.

Normandie Hotel

Work on the redevelopment of the hotel is unlikely to start until towards the end of the year. Following a court order, squatters were evicted, and a 24-hour security patrol is now in place.

V & A Museum, Medieval and Renaissance Galleries Project

We attended a presentation of the proposed new Medieval and Renaissance Galleries which will spread over three floors of the east wing of the museum. Work is scheduled to commence later this year and be completed in 2009.

Natural History Museum

Darwin Centre Phase Two is due for completion next year. The outer envelope, which will protect the inner core where the insects and plants will be housed, has been built but is still encased in scaffolding and protective mesh. Plans have just been submitted for the Winter skating rink. This occupies a small part of the garden, and is greatly enjoyed both by visitors to the Museum and the community as a whole.

Imperial College, Princes Gardens

Good progress. The Southside halls of residence are nearly completed, and will be occupied by students next term. Contractors have taken over the East side residences, which should be demolished by the end of this year. In October the Medical Centre will move to its new premises in Southside, and the temporary Centre will be demolished.

The garden has been reopened on completion of restoration to its original character; in addition the new layout to the Square has been greatly

improved by the replacement of the cast iron railings and the planting of a holly hedge.

Exhibition Road Project

As part of the Exhibition Road project, Kensington and Chelsea are now proceeding with a South Kensington traffic management scheme which involves the area round the station. We await further news on the main project.

Hyde Park

Princess Diana Memorial Fountain

The ugly chain link fence has, at last, been replaced by permanent railings. Let us hope the teething troubles are over and the water feature can be enjoyed without further interruption.

Hyde Park Barracks

In our last Newsletter we referred to the Royal Horse Society's application to use part of the perimeter wall along South Carriage Drive for a display of 112 memorial plaques. In spite of our objections, WCC granted permission.

Christmas Wonderland

Located in Serpentine Road, east of the Dell Café, *Christmas Wonderland* will replace the Funfair of the last few years. There will be a skating rink, a little big-wheel (a mini-London Eye) and side shows for children. Using the bandstand north of Serpentine Road as a focal point, a semi-circle of market stalls are planned with Santa Claus holding court in the bandstand. There will be music, but the promoters have given an assurance it will be low level. It all sounds promising.

Forthcoming Events

8th September: Proms in the Park:

Parade Ground. From, 5.30-10.30pm

Build up and demount: 29th August.-14th September.

Road Closures: 29th August -14th September:
North Carriage Drive westbound closed.
September 7th-10th North Carriage Drive closed completely.

16th September: 5km run for women:

Build up and demount: 14th-17th September.

Road closures: September 15th -17th:1200 noon to 5am, South Carriage Drive.
September 16th: 5am to 2pm, all park roads.

7th October: 10km run:

Build up and demount: 5th-8th: October.

Road closures: October 6th-8th: 12noon to 5am, South Carriage Drive.
October 7th, all park roads, 5am to 2pm

Noise numbers:

WCC - 24 hour Noise Line:
7641 2000

Parks - Noise Line during events only:
07896 296941

Transport and Environment

We have made good progress on several fronts in recent months.

Scotch House Corner – Knightsbridge junction

In mid-August the major intersection at Scotch House Corner was reorganised, in close to its final layout. After months of disruption, the intersection has been simplified and you can now turn right from Sloane Street heading east. In a few months, Edinburgh Gate will be reopened at the western end of the development. Thereafter, we expect little change until the project nears completion, when the pavement will be reopened along the full length of the south side of the new building. Signage for pedestrians and diverted traffic has already been much improved, at our request. Most helpfully, the Royal Parks have made a special concession to allow some development construction traffic to access the site through South Carriage Drive. This should help ease congestion in Knightsbridge. We continue to press WCC for the implementation of the planned right turn from Knightsbridge eastbound, into Brompton Road.

Congestion Charging

Transport for London says there has been 10%-15% less traffic and a 20%-25% reduction in congestion in the western extension of the Congestion Zone. We have seen a 10% or so cut in air pollution levels this year compared to 2006, which could be due to less traffic - or to three months record rainfall, or even to some other factor.

We continue to press Mayor Livingstone for a fairer version of road pricing, instead of the “blunt instrument” of the Congestion Charge. The new proposals for Emissions Related Congestion Charging should further reduce traffic and improve air quality. If the scheme proceeds as planned in 2008, small vehicles with clean engines will pay nothing to drive in the Zone and large vehicles and some older ones will pay £25 a day to drive in the Zone - but with no discount for residents.

Buses

A significant change is taking place, with several bus routes moving from Queen’s Gate to Exhibition Road. We have supported this move as many major attractions are in Exhibition Road.

Flooding

A number of properties and roads experienced flooding on Friday 12th July. RBKC aims to work with Thames Water to ensure any inadequate infrastructure is replaced (though this will be a long term project). If you are a K&C resident please contact David Broadley with any information you have, by e-mail: david.broadley@rbkc.gov.uk or ‘phone 7361 2061, if you wish us to register particular concerns about flooding with the Council.

Law and Order

The Knightsbridge and Belgravia area is one of the largest Civic Watch/Safer Neighbourhood areas. It includes Hyde Park Corner, Wellington Arch, The Royal Albert Hall, Knightsbridge Barracks, Imperial College and several large hotels. The police Safer Neighbourhood Team has been focussing on several issues within the area, including begging, and thefts of pedal cycles and from motor vehicles. The Cadogan Estate has generously provided a new base for four Safer Neighbourhood Teams in Pavilion Road, which will increase visibility of the police and enable all the SNTs to liaise closely on a daily basis.

In the Streets

One of the priorities set by the K&B Ward Panel is a reduction of car crime. Happily, this is down 29% compared with last year. Good lighting reduces crime and fear of crime, and at KA’s request WCC has recently upgraded the lighting in Ennismore Gardens. The police have also put posters on lampposts reminding people not to leave items on display in their cars. Leaving valuables on show is as sensible as leaving cash on the dashboard. If valuables are visible, the car owner may be visited or sent a letter, warning of the high risk.

Another priority of the K&B Ward Panel is the reduction of pickpocketing (“dipping”). The number of Romanian and Eastern European beggars/dippers in London has increased. Bus stops, the tube, cafés and Harrods have all been targeted, as usual. Police patrols have focussed on these areas and are pursuing a positive arrest policy, as well as distributing crime prevention advice and leaflets. TfL police are operating at bus-stops along Knightsbridge, to deter offences and provide a reassuring presence.

In the Parks

The last three major events held in Hyde Park have taken place with very few problems, thank goodness. Reported crime was very low.

In the Home

The third priority is burglary. We have had several burglaries recently in Knightsbridge. Opportunist thieves carry out most burglaries, and during the summer it is especially important to close ground floor or basement windows if you leave the room. Remember to lock all windows and doors, even if leaving home for only a few minutes. Always keep all keys out of sight, as letter-box burglaries have been reported and this method has been used recently to steal a number of costly items. Use your burglar alarm if you have one, it is amazing how many people don't bother!

In the Brompton Road

The influx of visitors to the area has tempted some restaurants and cafés to extend their pavement tables along their neighbours' closed shops in the evenings, and to place them on the railings side of the raised pavement. RBKC officers took prompt action after receiving complaints and found some of the premises were not even licensed for exterior seating.

The Ward Panels

The Ward Panels have been asked to recommend London-Wide Policing Priorities for 2008/9. To see what happens at Ward Panel Meetings you can read the Minutes posted on the WCC CivicWatch website and the Knightsbridge/Belgravia Safer Neighbourhood website.

Our Autumn Event

Following the success of our Ladies' Personal Safety and Emergency First Aid evenings, we plan to hold a Fire Safety Evening at Bonhams in October. Full details will be circulated shortly.

If you would like to share your thoughts about crime or to discuss anything relevant, please call: Madeline Elsdon, 7589 4006.

Licensing

Some possible good news for residents worried about the nuisance of late night drinking. Following big increases in drink related crime, Gordon Brown will review the Licensing Act that has allowed 24 hour drinking. And how about looking at the upsurge in illegal pavement drinking resulting from the smoking ban?

Social Events

Thursday 20th September: Reception at the Serpentine Boathouse and cruise on the Solarshuttle: 6-9pm, buffet, wine and soft drinks, piano music. Invitations were sent out in

July. Ring 7823-9103 to see if tickets are still available.

Please note the following dates. Full details will follow in due course.

Thursday 25th October: Traditional Scottish Evening & Dinner at the Caledonian Club. We are delighted to announce our guest speaker will be Dame Judith Mayhew.

Monday, 12th November: Bonhams Reception and Private View – for the third year running, another generous invitation from Bonhams for KA members.

Tuesday 11th December: Annual General Meeting and Christmas party at the Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road.

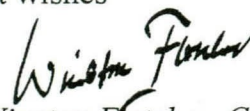
Other Events

20/21 British Art Fair: 12th–16th September: Once again, the 20/21 British Art Fair is kindly offering KA members complimentary entry. This is the premier event for modern and contemporary British art and is now celebrating its 20th anniversary. Some 55 of the country's leading art dealers show all the great names of 20th and 21st century art in the prestigious galleries of the Royal College of Art. See www.britishartfair.co.uk for full information. **If you would like to take up this offer, please email info@britishartfair.co.uk or 'phone: 8742 1611 quoting 'The Knightsbridge Association'.**

The Chelsea Antiques Fair: 20th–24th September: 30 elegant and exclusive stands of finest quality antiques and fine art. Thursday-Sunday 11am-7pm, Monday 11am-3pm. For further details: www.penman-fairs.co.uk or <http://www.penman-fairs.co.uk/> or phone 0870 350 2442. **Your complimentary ticket for two is enclosed.**

It's been another very busy summer, and as we now prepare for an even busier autumn I wish to thank, as always, the members of all our committees for the immense amount of work they do on the neighbourhood's behalf - and to thank you, our members, for your continued support, and for reading.

With best wishes


Winston Fletcher, Chairman

The Knightsbridge Association
6 Montpelier Street, London SW7 1EZ
www.knightsbridgeassoc.org.uk
Tel: 020 7823 9103
Registered with The Civic Trust