

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

September 2009

Dear Member,

As you know, we put a great deal of emphasis on our social events, because we believe they help members feel part of a real Knightsbridge community. And I believe we have for some years provided a better schedule of events than any comparable residents' association: certainly your response suggests this is true. All our recent events have been sell-outs, and we have had to turn away late applicants (which we hate doing).

If you have been a disappointed applicant I hope you will accept our sincere apologies. Even professional impresarios find it hard to estimate sales levels in advance – and we are mere amateurs! We make no 'profit' on events, nor should we, but this means we have to judge them pretty finely, as we generally have to make firm advance bookings.

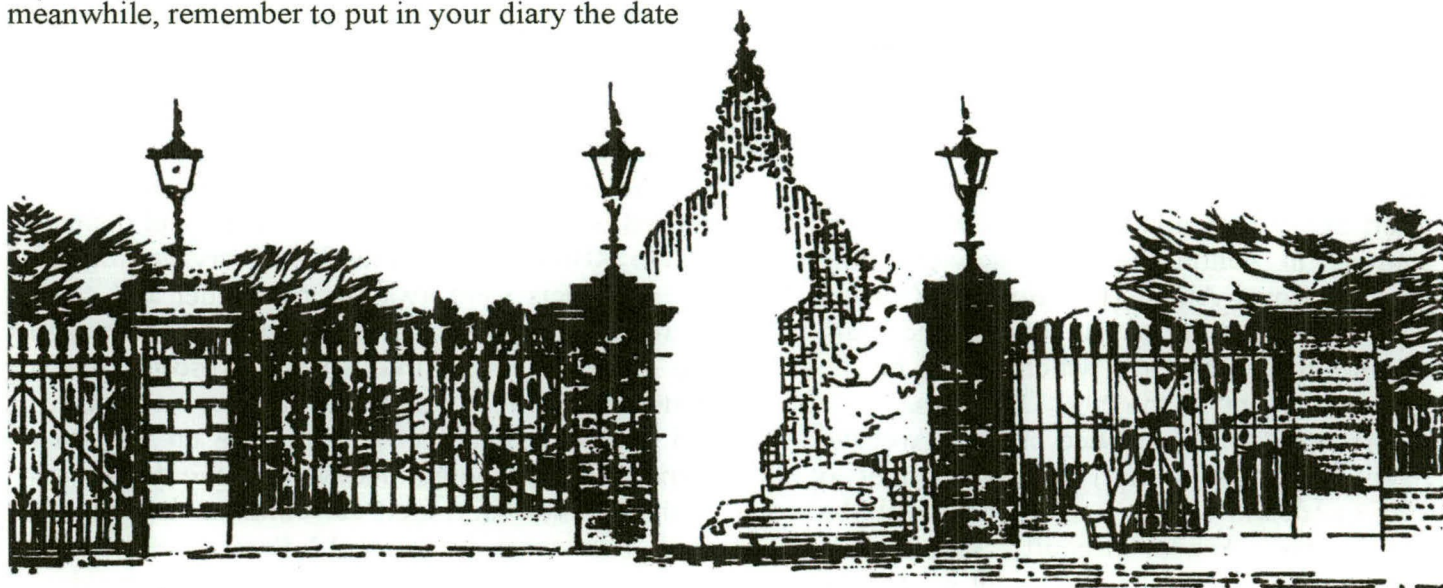
That said, if you have any ideas for events you think members would enjoy, do let us know. And meanwhile, remember to put in your diary the date

of our most important annual fixture, **the AGM: Thursday December 10th**. Details to follow, but we will be returning to the refurbished Royal College of Music, so it should be a particularly splendid occasion!

Planning and Conservation

Imperial College, Eastside, Princes Gardens

The new halls of residence will be open to students for the autumn term. The road from the north side of the square re-opened at the end of August. This completes the ambitious plan to restore the square to its former proportions which has been successfully achieved. The monthly meetings, organised by the College, of the local residents' liaison group kept them informed and helped to solve problems that arose along the way. The College is to be congratulated on its handling of the scheme.



President: The Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Winston Fletcher, Vice-Chairman: Edward Davies-Gilbert

Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, Hon. Treasurer: Phyllis Lusher.

South East Quadrant. Exhibition Road

The College's Exhibition Road Building project (not to be confused with the Exhibition Road Project - see under Transport and Environment) comprises several different phases stretching over a period to 2016. The first two involve the demolition of the poorly designed four-storey 60s building on the corner of Exhibition and Imperial College Roads, and of the 'Black Tower', which is within the colonnade of the Business School. The corner building would be replaced by a new seven-storey faculty building; a new four-storey Research Block is proposed to replace the 'Black Tower'. This block would be elevated off the ground to facilitate the formation of a new 'Front Door' to Imperial College – a major single street entrance to provide access to the Exhibition Road buildings and the wider campus beyond.

The College held a public exhibition in May and made a presentation to our planning committee in June. Initial reaction was that the design was generally acceptable but would benefit from a reduction in height, setting back the top storey and other modifications. A full copy of the planning application with drawings and supporting documents was sent to us by WCC in mid-August and we will be commenting formally to the Council when we have discussed the proposals.

South Kensington Station

Members of the committee attended a presentation of the architect's report on the Massing and Feasibility study for the development of the station at Kensington Town Hall on 23rd June. Some of the points made by the Brompton Association, the Kensington Society, the Chelsea Society and the KA had been taken on board including the need to retain the Thurloe Street terrace; however London Underground continued to maintain that there was no funding available for step-free access. The associations made it absolutely clear that without this the plans were a non-starter; South Kensington is one of the busiest tube stations in central London, servicing the Museums, the Royal Albert Hall, Imperial College and other institutions, it is also one of the main arrival points for Hyde Park which would be the focus of several events in the 2012 Olympics.

The full report was published on LU's website in mid-July and we have until early September to comment in detail. These comments will be reported in the Annual Report. (See under Transport and Environment for relevant roadworks in that area.)

Knightsbridge Palace Hotel

By mid-July the old Normandie had been demolished. Work on construction of the new hotel and excavation of the basement levels is on hold pending final approval from Westminster City Council.

158-166 Brompton Road and 35 Cheval Place

As reported in the June newsletter, the plans went to RBKC's Major Planning Applications committee at the end of May. In spite of a large number of written objections and an eloquent representation made to the committee by Sophie Blain on behalf of the Brompton and Knightsbridge Associations, they decided by a majority vote of six to three to approve.

We felt that the ultra-modern design would be fine on a stand-alone site, but not shoe-horned into a terrace of 4-storey houses in a conservation area. Interestingly one of those presenting the case for the proposal assured objectors that it would be hidden behind the foliage of Brompton Road's plane trees for roughly half the year!

7-10 Cottage Place

This house, part four-storey part two-storey adjoins the garages of the Brompton Square houses on one side and the TA building and former Brompton Road Tube station building on the other. The developer has opted for a modern design, in London stock brick, with asymmetrically placed windows. The proposed house would have three storeys above ground across the site - stepping down towards the rear facades of the Brompton Square houses - with two further floors at basement level. There were some concerns about rights of light and overlooking the backs of the Brompton Square houses, and worries as ever about the amount of excavation, but we felt that the design was acceptable for this site.

19a & 28 Basil Street

The designs on the original application were greeted with horror by local residents, and disliked by the RBKC's architectural advisory committee. The architects went away to reconsider and came up with something more acceptable. The site is on one corner of Basil Street / Hans Crescent, with a contemporary building on the north corner; Harrods and another Edwardian building are on the other corners. The proposals necessitated the demolition of the 60s two-storey corner building, leaving the small two-storey house at 19 Basil Street, which abuts the site, somewhat isolated. The new building steps down towards no. 19. The application received approval on 27th July.

31 Brompton Square and Ennismore Gardens Mews Arch

All work ceased on 31 Brompton Square some months ago. Meanwhile the alarm system on the scaffolding protecting the arch was removed, and almost immediately a burglar shinned into the window of an adjoining mews house. The council removed the scaffolding and the future of 31 Brompton Square is unsure, but we hope that it will be settled before too long.

WCC Consultation on Knightsbridge Conservation Areas

We responded to this and some of our comments were taken into account.

Natural History Museum master plan

Our main concern has always been the over-use or abuse of the east lawn for purely commercial events, so we were disappointed that very little reference was made to this point. They are developing 'a Grounds Strategy in the near future' which sets out how they intend to use grounds in line with our open spaces development principle, stated in the master plan. This does not augur well. However, London Fashion week, where the lawn was covered with two-storey marquees for several weeks will be going elsewhere.

Hans Road / Basil Street junction

At a meeting with residents on 18th June, RBKC put forward four options for changing the layout of this junction. The preferred option was one that offered the least change; no semi-pedestrianisation; more double lines and enforcement. At the request of residents, RBKC have already installed double yellow lines on Hans Road between Hans Place and Walton Place. The council has agreed to start the statutory consultation for double yellow lines on two of the remaining corners. Residents would like the extended pavement for Laduree reduced to where it was but this is not possible legally.

One Hyde Park

The four blocks have now reached their full height, the lift pods are being installed and the copper privacy fins attached. (Details of Edinburgh Gate opening under Transport and Environment.)

Local Development Frameworks (LDF)

RBKC

Following the workshop meetings in May, the KA commented in some detail on the two concerning Knightsbridge and South Kensington. We have now been sent a further Draft Core Strategy document that incorporates some of the comments made in the previous consultation, and

have been given the opportunity to comment further by early September.

WCC

Westminster conducted a series of workshops on their LDF in July and August and we are in the process of commenting on some of their proposals.

Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Park Events (look out for road closures)

6 September: 5km Women's Fun Run, Hyde Park.

12 & 13 September: BBC Proms in the Park, Hyde Park

11 October: Royal Parks Foundation Half Marathon, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, St. James's and Green Park

Nov 2009-Jan 2010: Winter Wonderland, Hyde Park

Parks noise line (during events only): 07896 295941

WCC 24-hr noise line: 020 7641 2000

RBKC 24-hr noise line: 020 7341 5002

Transport and Environment

Edinburgh Gate

Westminster City Council has decided not to re-open Edinburgh Gate as planned in early August. They made this decision in part due to pressure from the Royal Parks who have had safety concerns. Edinburgh Gate is not due to re-open now until the One Hyde Park development is completed in late 2010. The KA is lobbying WCC to ensure that the eventual reopening does not result in increased 'rat running' to or from the southwest.

South Kensington roadworks

RBKC has done its changeover of traffic flows on the roads immediately around South Kensington tube station. Part of Cromwell Place has switched from two-way traffic to one-way northbound; part of Thurloe Place has two-way traffic; Exhibition Road, south of Thurloe Place, is access only; and part of Thurloe Street is closed to traffic. Further changes are expected in a few months' time and the scheme is due to be completed by late 2009.

Double yellow lines

WCC has accepted the KA's proposal to use some of the Ward Funds to introduce double yellow lines where they are needed. After conducting a detailed survey, the KA recommended double yellow lines where legally parked vehicles can currently block access - on street corners with dipped pavements for disabled people, where roads are too narrow to allow through-traffic to pass; and at the entrance to 'driveways'. WCC hopes to implement the scheme by end 2009.

Law and Order

Rickshaw trouble

This summer there have been serious problems with pedicabs (rickshaws), which have spread from the West End into Knightsbridge. The police have powers to arrest dangerous riders and residents would like to see safety standards with clear lines of accountability in the event of an accident. We have contacted local authorities, the police and Mark Field MP to see if something can be done.

Fast and loose

A regular problem, which has been reduced this year, is the number of high-powered, mostly foreign-registered vehicles, whizzing around the area. Local police teams mounted successful night-time operations, and embassies were informed that new legislation meant that if imported vehicles did not have the correct paperwork, insurance and number plates they would not be allowed on our roads and could be fined or seized.

Beggars beware

The police have introduced a six-month Group Dispersal Zone to tackle the problems caused by groups of aggressive beggars. Since its inception in April, there has been a significant decrease in the number of individuals coming to the area to beg.

Meet the judges and have your say

At the June meeting of the Law and Order Committee, Helen Clutton, a Senior Crown Prosecutor invited members to attend a meeting in November at West London Magistrates Court and question judges and magistrates on sentencing policy. To attend ring Madeline Elsdon on 020 7589 4006.

If you need to report a crime

Emergencies - always dial 999 for an immediate response to a crime or a dangerous situation. **Non-Emergencies - ring the police on 0300 123 1212. Note this useful number.** Certain categories of crime can now be reported online at www.online.met.police.uk/report. Any Law and Order issues, contact Madeline Elsdon on 020 7589 4006 or Law&Order@knightsbridgeassociation.org.

Licensing

The Natural History Museum

Application to extend its licensed areas into part of its gardens: KA has expressed concern over the potential for noise disturbance late at night.

Al Arez and Mamounia, Brompton Road

As yet there is no renewed application from Al Arez or the Mamounia Lounge. KA will monitor.

Wellington Club, Knightsbridge

An application for dancing, music and the sale of alcohol until 2am was vigorously opposed and the application was withdrawn.

Membership:

May we remind those who have not yet paid their annual subscriptions that these are overdue: £10 single, £15 for couples/families, £40 corporate.

Knightsbridge Association Events

Thursday 24th September: Afternoon tour of Clarence House, plus tea at the Reform Club (fully booked).

Thursday, 10th December 6pm:
48th Annual General Meeting and Christmas Party – Concert Hall, Royal College of Music.

Other Events

16th- 20th September: British Art Fair:

The 20/21 British Art Fair is offering KA members complimentary entry. Sixty of the country's top art dealers will be showing the great names of the 20th and 21st century art at the Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore. See www.britishartfair.co.uk for details. For free entry, email info@britishartfair.co.uk or phone 020 8742 1611 quoting 'The Knightsbridge Association'.

19th - 20th September: Open London House:

Visit, free, nearly 700 of London's architectural gems, including the Foreign Office, Marlborough House, Kensington Palace and the Ismaili Centre. www.openhouse.org.uk or tel: 020 3006 7008.

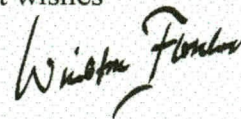
Until the end of the year:

Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace

Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill and Henry VIII: heads and hearts! Visit the Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the throne. For more information visit <http://www.hrp.org.uk>.

Thank you as always for reading. I look forward to seeing you at the AGM, if not before.

With best wishes



Winston Fletcher, Chairman

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