



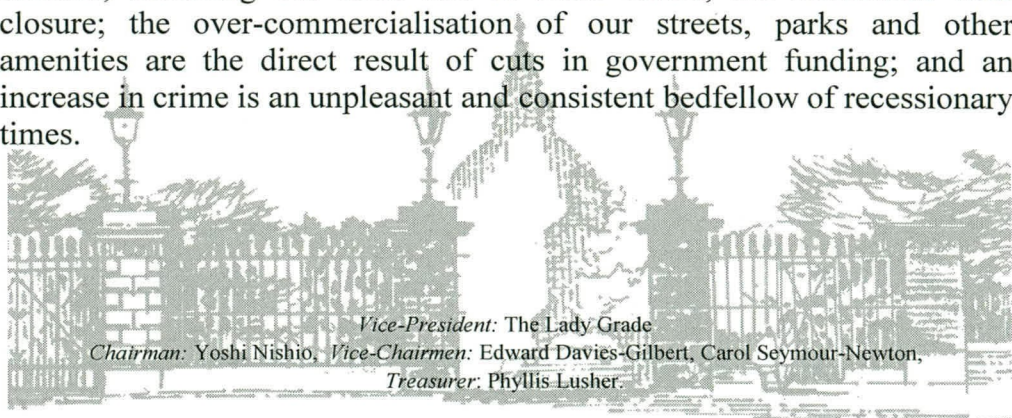
THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2013 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member,

As the first sunny days of the year try to break through what has been a relentlessly cold, wet, and even snowy winter, it is hard not to see a curious parallel with the work we do here. Since its founding over half a century ago, The Knightsbridge Association has doggedly endeavoured to keep the sun shining on this corner of London, while challenge after challenge has coalesced seemingly out of nowhere to obscure it. As dark as it may seem at times, warmth does indeed break through.

As you will read in the following pages the start of 2013 has been as busy as ever, and there are plenty of fresh dark clouds gathering. Ironically, they can be divided into two very distinct and opposing types. The first, in common with many parts of the country and indeed the world, are those caused by austerity and the general shortness of money: fire stations, including our local one in Basil Street, are threatened with closure; the over-commercialisation of our streets, parks and other amenities are the direct result of cuts in government funding; and an increase in crime is an unpleasant and consistent bedfellow of recessionary times.



Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Yoshi Nishio, *Vice-Chairmen:* Edward Davies-Gilbert, Carol Seymour-Newton,

Treasurer: Phyllis Lusher.

Then there is the second category of challenge which, these days appears to be particularly acute in Knightsbridge, and is the very opposite of the first: an excess of money looking for a playground. The summer time economy of Brompton Road, with the now well publicised problems of pedicabs, shisha-pipes and super cars; the almost obsessive digging of basements and over development of houses; and properties occupied for only a few weeks a year by their absentee overseas investors sucking the life out of the sense of community -- are all problems too well known to us.

But all successful communities are a delicate balance of the different opinions and priorities of the people and institutions that constitute them. Although we are, and will remain, primarily an association of residents for residents, we need to recognise and celebrate the dynamic character of Knightsbridge. It is a juggling act with more and more new balls being thrown at us all the time. We will continue to do our very best not to drop any of them.

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

FIRE STATIONS CLOSURES

After the proposal to close 12 London fire stations (including Basil Street) was voted down by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, Mayor Boris Johnson has ordered them to carry out a public consultation. Apparently the London Fire Brigade attends half as many fires as a decade ago, while fire deaths were down by a third – due in part to far stricter precautions. However, we need to be reassured that call out times will not be increased. We are waiting to hear when the public consultation will take place, and in what form.

HYDE PARK

Concerts

Residents will be delighted to know that the Parks have chosen new partners for the summer concert series and that the number of concerts has been reduced to six, from Friday 28th June to Sunday 7th July. The Royal Parks assure us that sound will be kept within the current licence conditions. The stage will be repositioned but still comply with the licence. They ‘hope that Hyde Park will be open and free to access during the event weekdays, with the weekend events being ticketed’.

International Showjumping and Dressage:

A planning application has been submitted to RBKC to hold international showjumping and dressage competitions in June, in the land to the south east of Kensington Palace, site of last year's The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe (LWW). If permitted, the event will take place on Thursday 6th to Sunday 9th June, and the area will be cordoned off from 17th May to 18th June to allow for setting up and demounting. The area to the north of the Palace, known as Perks Field will be used for stabling and there will be a designated path down the Broadwalk for the horses to access the arena, but part of the Broadwalk will remain open to the public cutting north/south through the Park. It seems a pity that new areas of the Parks are being commercialised. We understood that the only reason LWW was allowed to use this area last year was because the site north of the Serpentine, used for Peter Pan, was not available due to the Olympics.

World Triathlon Grand Final will take place in Hyde Park from 11th to 15th September using the identical course to that of the Olympics.

Restoration Work Following the appalling damage done to the park last year by a combination of too many events and torrential rain, the Parks have written to tell us of progress with restoration work to the various areas which suffered: (a) Parade Ground - the wood chippings will be removed, the ground prepared and improved and new turf laid, all during this year's spring growing season. The returfing will be completed by the end of April, but will need to be protected for four to six weeks. Meanwhile a number of footpaths will be kept open to maximise access for visitors. (b) The Bandstand and Serpentine Road - restoration should be completed by the end of March. (c) The Cockpit north west of the Serpentine, hosted two Olympic events - repair work began immediately after the Games and was quickly completed, other than some areas which needed extra time to dry out. Completion due by the end of March. (d) The Old Football Pitches - work has begun to restore the eastern section which housed the Olympic Shop and should be completed by the end of March 'as part of a wider project to improve this section.

HYDE PARK BARRACKS

There has been no further news since we reported in our Annual Report that the Ministry of Defence was seeking ‘expressions of interest’ from potential developers.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (NHM)

The annual Christmas ice skating rink was dismantled during the 1st week of January and the site is being prepared to accommodate the Butterfly House. Local residents have welcomed the improved management of the ice rink in December resulting in toned-down music and the removal of the two “shacks”, which in previous years blighted the east lawn. Following the refusal by RBKC last year of the planning application for Museum Lane, the NHM has begun consultations with residents’ associations and local stakeholders about possible improvements to their property. Free entry to the Museum has meant that the 5 million visitors anticipated by 2020 has already been exceeded. They are currently trying to deal with the pinch points within the museum as an interim measure. In a recent meeting between the museum and resident associations it was generally agreed that they should prepare an overall masterplan that would accommodate an even greater number of visitors in the future.

ALBERTOPOLIS – IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC REALM

The 1851 Royal Commission, heir to the group of eminent Victorians responsible for staging the Great Exhibition of 1851, has prepared a proposal, ‘Re-imagining Albertopolis’. With the co-operation of other members of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group, they are seeking funding from the City of Westminster and other bodies to ‘create better connections between the area’s attractions and institutions; implement a programme of improvements to a network of pedestrian routes and interconnections while safeguarding the area as a calm and dignified place, befitting its architecture and heritage’. At this stage they are having discussions with all the interested parties including the KA and the nearby mansion blocks. We will report further as things progress.

BASEMENTS

Both councils are working up what we hope will be tighter regulations concerning the excavation of basements: limiting the amount of excavation under gardens, requiring structural engineering reports, water and land reports and traffic management schemes. But we fear that these will not make a great deal of difference – see the staggering proposal in the Pelham area of South Kensington which has just received approval from RBKC. A similar proposal for 3 sub-basements in Walton Street had been submitted to RBKC in November but has since been withdrawn.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE SUMMITS – WCC/RBKC MEETINGS

These meetings began two years ago at KA's behest to discuss the problems and general deterioration in Brompton Road. Attendees include the council leaders, councillors and officials and include representatives from the Met. Police, the Knightsbridge Business Group as well as the KA. They have been very successful in highlighting cross council border problems such as cafés/licensing/boy racers/pedicabs/beggars. One outcome has been RBKC's decision to be more in line with WCC's tables and chairs policy, rolling back to 10.30pm the terminal hour cafés in Brompton Road are allowed to have furniture outside. This is a significant achievement for the area and we applaud both councils for their action. We look forward to reporting on further progress in our Summer Newsletter.

Park Mansions

We opposed the proposal for an extra floor to Park Mansions (built 1897 – 1902). Although unlisted it is considered a building of merit. WCC's Conservation & Area Audit Management Proposals – Knightsbridge (2009) notes: 'building which has a distinctive roofline and is a completed composition.' The proposal to add an extra floor detracts from the roofline particularly with regard to the chimney stacks and the ionic corner tower overlooking the Knightsbridge junction with Sloane Street and Brompton Road.

31-32 Rutland Gate

At last there is good news to report about these two derelict buildings owned by the Sudanese government. They have been sold to developers and a planning application has been submitted to WCC. The proposal is to return the building to two single houses, plus a separate mews house in Montpelier Walk, no doubt with the inevitable subterranean excavation to accommodate swimming pools, media rooms and the other seemingly must have facilities of 21st century Knightsbridge living! We shall study the plans carefully.

26-31 Princes Gate – ‘Garden Strip’

This strip fronting the Princes Gate buildings at the corner of Exhibition Road is in private ownership and has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that it has become a rubbish tip for all and sundry. Railings and lights are missing; stonework is falling off; pillars have been knocked crooked; and what greenery there is has been neglected. All this has encouraged (if they needed any encouragement) the public to use it as a dustbin. The KA and WCC are making another effort to get the owner to take responsibility for cleaning things up and carrying out regular maintenance.

LICENSING

Many are worried by the application from The Rib Room in Sloane Street for a full blown licence to 3.00am. This includes a licence for music and dancing and would set a dangerous precedent as no other restaurant in the area has such a licence. Many of the licensed premises nearby would love to open into the small hours and residents fear the opening of a nightclub. The KA has been fighting for years to prevent Knightsbridge becoming a late night destination. We will continue to do so.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Boundary Changes

The KA, together with associations in RBKC, is strongly opposing the proposals to split Brompton Ward and hive off Brompton Square and the Knightsbridge part of the Ward into Queen's Gate or Courtfield Wards.

Brompton Square is part of the old parish of Brompton which extended down to where the tube station now is and both historically and indeed today, residents of Brompton Square and the streets around it are an integral part of the South Kensington rather than Queen's Gate neighbourhood.

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Neighbourhood Forums

Under the aegis of the wonderfully Soviet sounding Minister for Planning and Development, neighbourhoods all over the country are being conscripted into forming formal Neighbourhood Forums, that would then take responsibility for formulating and implementing a plan for development and the use of land within the locality.

The KA has thus far been cool to this concept. However, we are meeting with WCC Councillors and officers in mid March to see what it would involve and if it would be right for us. We will report once we have further details.

Class Uses Order Proposals

There is a good deal of disquiet about government proposals to permit development rights for change of use from B1(a) Office to C3 Residential purposes. In short this means that developers won't need planning permission to convert offices to housing. While this may be sensible in parts of England and Wales, this would not benefit Central London, which is home to many small and medium sized businesses. The effect would be to push up rents and drive these companies out of the capital. Particularly worrying is that so many recent developments have become luxury flats that have been bought as investments and remain empty, to the detriment of the area.

Boundary Changes for Parliamentary Seats

There will be no parliamentary boundary changes for the foreseeable future, as it was voted down in Parliament. The proposed change might have seen Knightsbridge and Belgravia Ward move from Cities of London

and Westminster constituency to Kensington constituency in a reconfigured Brompton Ward. If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

We've made real progress in the last few months. Martin Low, WCC's Transport Commissioner, has made a significant breakthrough with help from Transport for London (TfL) with the phasing of traffic lights at Scotch House Corner. Together, they seem to have achieved near miraculous improvements in the flow of traffic eastbound from Knightsbridge. Apparently taking a 'quart from a pint pot' these gains seem to have been achieved without creating problems in Brompton Road.

TfL was able to identify a number of changes that could be made to improve the 'egress' of traffic from Knightsbridge. Some of these have been implemented immediately and have resulted in an increase in green time to Knightsbridge. TfL is testing some further changes with their offline traffic models, seeking to make further improvements to the operation of this busy junction. Together, our aim is to ensure the junction works well for all users.

One question we have asked WCC and TfL is to investigate why we need a single traffic light near the Mandarin Hotel, on the left side where the Sloane Square traffic comes in. Occasionally, it is currently necessary to pull up suddenly because that single light has gone red.

We thank and congratulate Martin and his team and TfL for their success in making progress tackling this long-standing problem. As always, we thank also our councillors for their encouragement and support.

LAW AND ORDER

Please be on the look out for these common scams:

De-Humidifiers

Despite repeated warnings from the police and the KA, residents continue to open their front doors to strangers, both during the day and at night. Of course most are genuine but some are con-men who prey on the

trusting nature of people. One scam presently doing the rounds has men dressed as builders who say they are working in the house next door and that water has leaked into your property. They come in pretend to look, throw water on the wall when the owner is not looking and then ask for an exorbitant amount of money for de-humidifiers to dry it out. Do not let them in. Call the 101 police number and report it.

“Gold” Rings

A person is stopped in the street and offered a gold ring for sale. Even though it looks genuine and has a marking which looks like a hallmark it is not gold, it is just a brass washer. Ring the 101 police reporting number and describe the person who is trying to cheat you.

Charity Muggers

Just because someone is wearing a yellow high visibility jacket and shows a badge doesn't mean they are genuine. Never give your bank details to strangers in the street or at your front door. There are safer ways to arrange donations to charity. If you think they are suspicious then report them to 101 immediately.

Burglary

Burglars have been working in the area and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams are treating this as a priority. Residents are not closing and double locking their doors carefully enough. Ensure you have security locks on your windows. Use your alarm.

Car Crime

A “door bender,” particularly targeting Peugeots, has recently been released from prison and is operating in Knightsbridge and Pimlico. If you get into your car and see that someone has been inside or if you find your car unlocked when you are sure you locked it then report it to the police on 101 even if there is nothing missing. Smart phone technology is allowing thieves to identify when laptops have been left in the boot of cars. Shoppers are targeted when they leave their property in an unlocked car or boot for a few minutes to call in their parking payment.

Card Fraud

Someone pretending to be a police officer from the Fraud Action Team calls, saying that the victim's bank details have been compromised and that they will send a courier to collect their bank cards. Amazingly people are falling for it. Do not give your cards to anyone and report this immediately to 101.

Noisy Political Protests and Processions:

The frequent use of loud megaphones, disruption to traffic, shouting and sometimes unacceptable language is making life intolerable for some residents living near embassies, sometimes for weeks on end. Some residents have complained that they feel uncomfortable or even afraid to walk down the street, find masked faces frightening and have been offended by the anti-British language used in some protests. Residents can complain to the Events Office of the appropriate Council or to their Borough Commander if they feel the event is too disruptive.

Any incident of anti-social behaviour or noise at licensed premises should be reported IMMEDIATELY. If it happens again, report it again. When the premises applies for another licence or a renewal of their existing one, a long history of logged complaints from residents is the most persuasive evidence to refuse it or to attach restrictive conditions. For WCC call 7641 2000. For RBKC call 7370 6065.

MEMBERS SECTION

New Members

A very warm welcome to new members who have joined us recently. We look forward to meeting you all and to serving you.

Ms A Apthorp, Aspect Property Management Ltd, Mr L Bird, Boodles Ltd, Mr G Bourdalis, Mr A Broadbent, Bulgari Hotel & Residences, Mr Chow Restaurant, Friends of Music at St Peter's Eaton Square Ltd, Mr M Grazebrook, Mr & Mrs A Green, Mr I Griffin, Harrods Ltd, Ms T. Hayes-Wallace, Mr J Howes, Institut Francais, Mr & Mrs M Keating, Baron and Lady Lenzie, Millenium Hotel, Mr S Patel, Ms J Redfern, Ms T Randall, Ms R Sadik, Mr S Sobey, Strake Investments Ltd, Ms S Séré-Annichini, Mr P Udeshi and family, Mr B Wagner, Mr R M Worrall, Mr S Younis.

Please feel free to contact me directly at any time if you have suggestions, concerns, whatever. (chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.com).

Executive Committee

We are pleased to announce three new appointments: Olivia Cox will be taking up the post of Treasurer, and Satya Jeremie Crystal and Andrew Newton will be handling Membership. All long term residents and members, we very much look forward to working with them and are certain that their enthusiasm and drive will bring fresh impetus to the work we do.

As I never tire of reminding you, keeping Knightsbridge in top condition would be a full time job for a paid committee of a dozen people. But we need to rely on volunteers, and the one certainty is, we never have enough of them. Please get in touch (chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.com) if you would like to help or have a friend who would like to do so.

SPRING SPECIAL OFFERS

Eaton Square Concerts

Friends of Music at St. Peter's Eaton Square, a new member of the KA, supports Eaton Square Concerts.

Dates for the Spring 2013 series (Thursdays, concerts start at 7:30PM):

March 21 Choir of Clare College, Cambridge. Fauré Requiem.

April 11 Castalian Quartet, St Peter's Prize Winners.

April 18 Tippett Quartet & Nick Van Bloss. String & Piano Quartets

KA members are warmly invited to enjoy these evenings and can purchase tickets for £10, a **£5 reduction from the standard price**. Please call 7823 9103 or email info@knightsbridgeassociation.com for the KA discount code that can be used when purchasing your tickets. Other information at www.eatonsquareconcerts.org.uk or call 7288 6511.

Mari Vanna Restaurant

A new Russian restaurant in Wellington Court in Knightsbridge, is offering KA members a **20% discount for lunch or afternoon tea to the end of April**. Members will need a certificate of membership to present at the door. These can be obtained by telephoning 7823 9103 or emailing info@knightsbridgeassociation.com. Call 7225 3122 to book.

Le Chinois Restaurant

A new Chinese Restaurant at the Millennium Hotel, 17 Sloane Street, is offering KA members a **20% discount from the final bill** when they order from Le Chinois á la carte menu. Call 7201 6330 to book, and mention the Knightsbridge Association.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We are in the process of putting together an exciting programme for all our members for 2013. Details will be published on the website (www.knightsbridgeassociation.com) as they become available.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

As usual, the AGM will be held in December – date and place to be confirmed.

Yoshi Nishio

Yoshi Nishio

chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.com

The Knightsbridge Association
6 Montpelier Street, London SW7 1EZ
www.knightsbridgeassociation.com