

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

June 2009

Dear Member,

Michael Wright Retires

For our Association, much the most important thing to have happened in the recent past has been the retirement of Michael Wright. Now in his nineties, Michael feels unable to continue to shoulder all the work that he has long done so willingly, and so thoroughly, on behalf of all of us. He started working for and with KA in 1980, and in the succeeding decades he has carried out many roles, most recently as Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Planning and Conservation Committee. His knowledge, commitment and wisdom will be sorely missed, indeed irreplaceable – though happily he has generously volunteered to continue to help us on an *ad hoc* basis, whenever he can. We wish him a very comfortable, and enjoyable, retirement from full-time KA business.

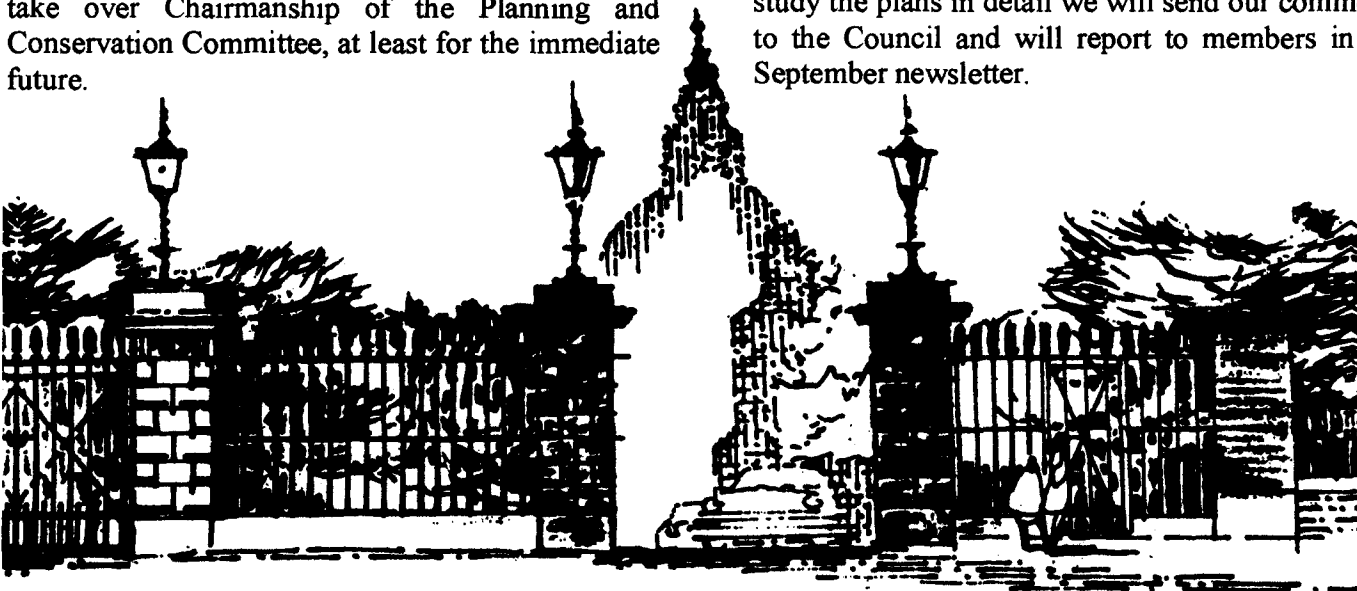
Edward Davies-Gilbert has kindly agreed to take over Chairmanship of the Planning and Conservation Committee, at least for the immediate future.

Planning and Conservation

Contrary to our expectations in the light of the recession, we have seen an increase in the number of planning applications referred to us in the second quarter of the year.

Imperial College

Members were invited to an exhibition on 29th May of the plans for a new building on the corner of Exhibition Road and Imperial College Road. Foster & Partners, architects of the Business Centre, were given the challenge of designing a building to find a balance between the contrasting styles of the neo-classical Royal School of Mines on the Prince Consort Road corner and the slender columns and glass elevation of Foster's Business School. This would replace the existing utilitarian post war building. The planning application will be submitted in July and the Committee will receive a full set of drawings. When we have had a chance to study the plans in detail we will send our comments to the Council and will report to members in the September newsletter.



*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.*

One Hyde Park

Comments on this building as it has risen are mostly unfavourable – more like an office than a residential building. Few feel that it enhances Knightsbridge. We hope the coloured louvres – not yet in place – may soften the appearance.

Exhibition Road Project

The first phase, south of Cromwell Road, is under way. We will report further in the September newsletter.

South Kensington Station

Development Plans

As reported in the March newsletter, architects John McAslan & Partners were given the brief for the Massing and Feasibility Study for the development of the station, and asked to report back. We have not yet received a copy of the report which was to have been submitted in May.

The major concern of all local amenity societies has been that any development should be conservation-led and of a scale and character suited to the South Kensington area.

Step Free Access

Separately from the development, to be financed by another arm of Transport for London (TfL), step free access was to be provided. It is something of a scandal that, in spite of South Kensington being one of the busiest underground stations in London and the main point of arrival for visitors to the Museums and Royal Albert Hall, there is still no way of accessing the platforms without having to negotiate two sets of stairs.

Sadly, due to the recession, the Mayor has cut back on some station improvements and to our consternation funding for step free access at South Kensington has been withdrawn.

KA and other major local amenity societies continue to press for step free access to the station, which we consider vital.

Knightsbridge Palace Hotel (formerly the Normandie Hotel)

Demolition began in April, should be completed by August, and the hotel is expected to be open for business in 2012. Access to the site is via Knightsbridge. KA is a member of the community liaison group (CLG) which meets monthly to outline progress and deal with problems which may arise.

158-166 Brompton Road and 35 Cheval Place

Plans for an ultra modern design were submitted to RBKC in April. Likened by some to a meteorite which has crashed into the Brompton

Road terrace and by others to the V&A Spiral (never built), the plans were greeted with horror by local residents and some local businesses. Many wrote objecting strongly to the Council.

Our objections were on several grounds – the height, bulk and asymmetrical and irregular design rendered it out of scale and character for the Brompton Conservation area; the cladding – ‘mirror backed glass panels with mesh interlayer’ was completely alien to the area; existing office use would be preferred to further luxury flats which are unlikely to attract residents who would actually live there – to mention a few.

The application went to RBKC’s planning committee as this newsletter went to press and we will report the decision in the September issue.

Natural History Museum

We and other societies still await sight of the Museum’s Masterplan. Our worry is the overuse of the east lawn for an ever increasing number of purely commercial events, unconnected with the Museum’s own activities.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

Peter Pan Theatre

Fencing for the 950 seat tent went up on 1st May and the whole construction was in place for the opening on 25th May. It will remain until 31st August. When the application was submitted KA expressed serious reservations, *inter alia*, about the impact on access and parking. The September newsletter will report whether these have been realised.

Park Events

- 21 June:** Exhibition Road Music Day - Kensington Gardens
- 26-28 June:** Hard Rock concerts - Hyde Park
- 2&3 July:** Blur concert
- 4&5 July:** Wireless concerts
- 7 July:** 7/7 Memorial opening ceremony
- 11 July:** Great Ormond St Hospital Peter Pan Picnic - Kensington Gardens
- 19 July:** Fun Run – Hyde Park
- 15 -16 August:** World Triathlon Championships, Hyde Park
- 29 August:** Steel Band Competition – Parade Ground, Hyde Park.

Noise numbers:

Parks Noise Line (during events only):

07896 295941

(WCC 24 hr Noise Line: 020 7641 2000)

(RBKC 24 hr Noise Line: 020 7341 5002)

Subterranean Development

We continue to be concerned by the number and scale of subterranean developments. The disruption and damage to neighbours' properties over prolonged periods is utterly unacceptable.

Work has ceased at 30 Brompton Square, where the garden has been excavated to a depth of 30 feet, leaving a gaping hole surrounded by scaffolding. The development appears to be a victim of the credit crunch, so how long this will remain a blot on the landscape is anyone's guess.

Local Development Frameworks (LDF)

KA representatives attended two RBKC LDF meetings to discuss Core Strategy proposals regarding South Kensington (including Exhibition Road, the Museums and the immediate residential areas) and Knightsbridge. At both we pressed for more emphasis to be given to the interests of local residents which we felt were under represented. WCC will be holding seminars on twelve of their LDF topic areas during July-September.

Swag & Tails

Sadly this popular local establishment closed at the end of May. It will be much missed. Our best wishes go to owners Anne-Marie and Stuart, who have asked us to pass on their appreciation to all their friends and local residents who have supported them over the years, and particularly in recent more difficult times.

Transport and Environment

Tube noise

Noise and vibration from the tube should not be a problem in the Knightsbridge area. However, some people comment that it has been noticeable recently, sometimes in the Brompton Oratory during services. This is clearly unacceptable and KA sought help from Darren Johnson of the Green Party and Mayor Johnson. After their intervention, a programme of works was agreed to repair some 2.5 kilometres of track, including four curves, on the Piccadilly line between Knightsbridge and South Kensington stations. We are very grateful to those involved for expediting and undertaking this work which is due to be completed this summer. Early reports are that tube noise and vibration are disappearing.

Double yellow lines

The Transport and Environment Committee has undertaken a detailed survey to identify sections of the local road network in the WCC area that need double yellow lines. These extra lines will stop vehicles parking legally, but blocking narrow sections of road for through-traffic. The survey has

highlighted the current inconsistencies adopted with regard to the use of double yellow lines. This project has been time consuming and the output is being submitted to WCC for inclusion in the forthcoming allocation of Ward Funding. Many thanks to those of you who have identified sections of road requiring double yellow lines.

London Cycle Hire Scheme

WCC and RBKC are looking for sites to locate docking stations for the London Cycle Hire Scheme. Mayor Johnson aims to launch the scheme in May 2010 with some 6,000 cycles and 400 docking stations across some 44 square kilometres of central London. Local suggestions for sites include Cromwell Gardens, the Natural History Museum, Exhibition Road, Imperial College, the Brompton Road end of Montpelier Street, Hyde Park Corner and several locations within Hyde Park. We welcome this scheme and would appreciate any suggestions you have for further local sites. Proposed sites will be subject to a planning application process in due course.

Law and Order

Safer Neighbourhood Teams

These Teams spend a good deal of time policing the nuisance behaviour related to begging and those who use children to beg. So residents will be delighted to hear that a Group Dispersal Zone (GDZ) has now been created around Harrods and on the raised pavement of Brompton Road. This extremely successful operation has, from 1st April, enabled both Police and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to require those people in a group (2 or more) who are begging, or likely to beg, to leave the area immediately and not return for 24 hours. Extra policing has been assigned to support these measures. If arrested and given anti-social behaviour orders, this will stop them entering some or all of the City of Westminster, the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, and RBKC. The orders will last for three years and anyone found in breach will be arrested and face a custodial sentence.

Plans have also been made to carry out some 'set-piece' operations against the noisy supercars which cruise around Knightsbridge late at night. Hopefully residents, who have been disturbed in the past, will have a more peaceful summer. Drivers of these cars may also be asked for valid insurance documents.

Since January 2009 the Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been holding 'Meet the Public' sessions - details are on the Safer Neighbourhood Web pages and on the Park Notice Boards. The new Parkwatch scheme is designed to improve communication between park users and the Safer Parks Team. The police are working with the Royal Parks Agency to promote considerate cycling and control anti-social behaviour.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens are amongst the safest environments in London, but when the sun shines the Parks becomes busier and therefore opportunist crime increases. Anyone visiting must take care of their property. There have been thefts from people who have left bags and coats unattended while playing football or eating at the restaurants.

In early April, there was a spate of overnight break-ins in some of the park kiosks. If you see anything suspicious, call the Parks team: 020 7161 9647 or e-mail SPTHyde@met.police.uk

The current terrorism threat remains 'severe' and security advice is being given to sports venues and shopping centres. Protective programmes for air, sea and rail travel continue to provide efficient security for passengers and staff.

If you wish to contact the police, and it is not an emergency you can use the new

Non- Emergency Telephone Number
0300 123 1212. Please note this useful number in your address books or mobile phones.
IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 999

ATM Machines

We advise members not to use ATM machines outside the banks. These are being targeted on a daily basis in Central London. New machines have been installed in Brompton Road with the latest security, but the criminals are already one step ahead. If you have to use one please try and use it during working hours, but it is far safer to withdraw money within the bank premises.

Licensing

An application by the Albert Hall for a licence for Boxing raised concern among nearby residents. The application was made over a holiday period and many objectors missed the deadline that was set. Despite a request from KA, the Council refused to take account of the circumstances and passed the application without a hearing.

After local residents expressed concern over street drinking outside the Tea Clipper on Montpelier Street and Place, KA backed an intervention by the neighbourhood police team. This resulted in an amicable agreement with the landlady to end outside drinking at 10pm. We will monitor its effectiveness.

The highest number of objections ever recorded by KA came in response to the application by the Al Arez café to remain open until 3am. This part of Brompton Road has never been a late night destination and residents feel strongly that turning it into one would do serious damage. In the face of so many objections, the Al Arez withdrew its application, but is free to file another one at any time – including the summer months when residents are away and cannot object. KA will keep an eye out.

Membership

A Membership form is enclosed. Please give this to any of your neighbours who are not members, and encourage them to join.

Apologies to those of you who did not receive a prepaid envelope with their renewal notices.

Events

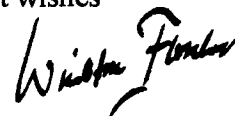
Thursday 24th September: *Afternoon tour of Clarence House, plus tea at the Reform Club.*

Thursday, 10th December
48th Annual General Meeting and Christmas Party - Concert Hall, Royal College of Music

London Open Squares weekend – 13-14 June:
Nearly 200 private gardens will be open to the public; tickets and information available from www.opensquares.org and in the gardens on both days. Ennismore Gardens and Rutland Gate lower garden will be participating on the Sunday only 10-5pm.

Thanks for reading, and have a great summer.

With best wishes



Winston Fletcher, Chairman

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