

The Pembridge Association NEWSLETTER



The Newsletter of the Conservation Society for the Pembridge Conservation Area



Living Together The Government's proposals for brown-site redevelopment encourage the residential use of properties over shops through a range of tax breaks and allowances. The terrace in Westbourne Grove was photographed to illustrate a recent article in the Financial Times on the subject. Whilst it seems unlikely that Westbourne Grove would fall into a 'designated disadvantaged community', some of the same issues of contention do apply when it comes to retailers and residents living together.

Most of the retailers in Westbourne Grove would have lived above their shop originally. Between Colville Road and Ledbury Road there are a number of properties where this is still the situation. However, due to huge increases in rental values in the vicinity, we have all noticed that fashion outlets are rapidly replacing the antique shops with the consequence that a number of the retail properties are now operated by absent landlords. This has resulted in development decisions being taken which directly undermines the inner-city regeneration philosophy.

The recent growth in these new retail businesses moving into this stretch of Westbourne Grove has obviously changed the street scene. What is not obvious is how dramatically it has changed the environment at the rear of the terrace. These new businesses now

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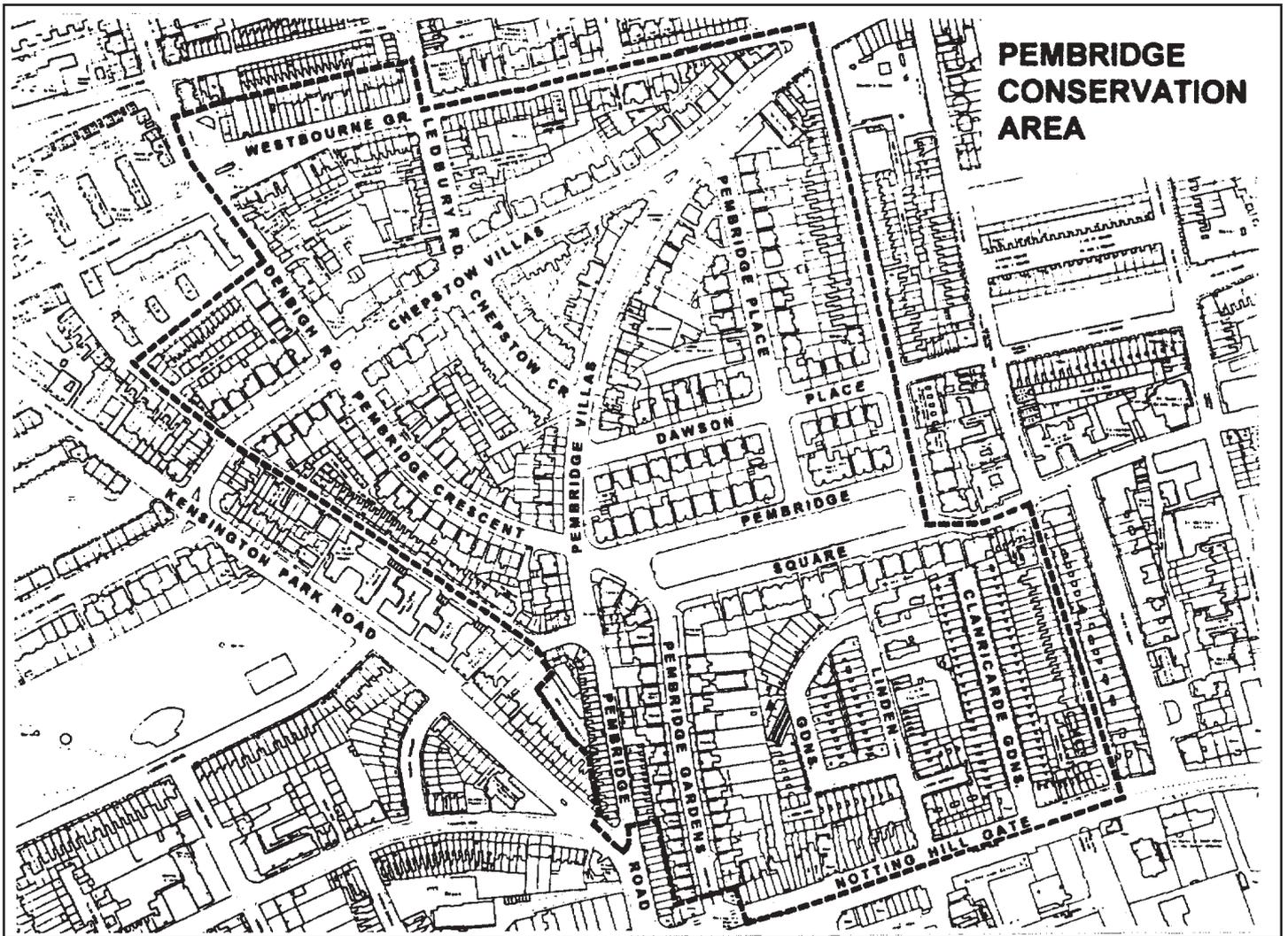
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**MONDAY
12th March 2001
AT 8 PM**

**Pembridge Hall School
18 Pembridge Square
London W2**

**Nominations for the Officers and
Executive Committee members
need to be sent to the Hon Sec (see
page 6) prior to the AGM.**

*All residents are welcome - wine will
be available after the meeting when
you will also have a chance to
discuss individual matters with
Committee Members.*



PEMBRIDGE CONSERVATION AREA

From the Chairman's Desk

The Executive committee met six times last year in and with the kind permission of the New Church in Pembridge Villas.

The year 2000 brought with it further development in our area.

The Texaco petrol station on Westbourne Grove was demolished and the excavation work was started for a building that will, hopefully, make a substantial improvement to this particular site.

The three retail units, with apartments above, are to be constructed in the architectural style of the neighbouring properties, creating a sympathetic termination of the existing terrace and a natural link to the buildings in Colville Road.

The other Texaco petrol station in Pembridge Villas, which was more recently renamed "Jet", has still to be developed.

The continuing trend for fashion retailers to move into our area is having an impact on the character of the shopping streets; however, thankfully, small specialists are attracted to come here, rather than the big chains, so we are managing to retain the variety and uniqueness for which we are known.

On another topic. There is nothing more depressing than living with litter. I am increasingly concerned that our litter problem is getting worse and I feel ashamed sometimes when I walk around and find myself walking through piles of litter.

In our efforts to improve and enhance our streetscene we have previously focused our attention on tree planting, graffiti removal and ridding the pavements of unsightly street furniture. It is now time for all of us to turn our attention to the problem of clearing up the litter.

We should be making it easier for people to dispose of their litter appropriately. We need more litter bins which should

be regularly emptied. A few well worded signs posted that ask visitors to help us maintain an attractive litter free area, by using the litter bins or taking their litter home with them, might encourage everyone to be more aware.

We as residents should be setting an example by being more responsible for the appropriate disposal of items other than the normal rubbish that the waste collection company takes away as a matter of course.

Over the past couple of months, deckchairs, mattresses, even lavatories have been put out on the pavement and this was just in Ledbury Road. A call to the Town Hall (020 7341 5284) and a small payment will get these 'Too big for the bin' objects removed.

On a lighter note we now have a website so when you are next surfing, look us up. The address is:

www.pembridgeassociation.org.uk

Vicky Butler
Chairman



Air-conditioning equipment at the rear of Fresh and Wild in Westbourne Grove

(Continued from Page 1)

bring with them high tech air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment.

Most retailers are very aware of their relationship with the local community and the recent investment in shops has had positive benefits for all property values. The benefits of mixed-use property have now been officially recognised, making for a safer, more vibrant community. But it is necessary to maintain a careful balance between neighbouring needs. As we have seen in Westbourne Grove, this balance is often ignored and, with an out-of-site, out-of-mind policy in operation, the commercial properties are now using the rear of the properties to install often noisy and invariably unsightly machinery.

Chain stores such as Jigsaw usually have the luxury of high street commercial spaces that have been designed to cater for air-conditioning plant. So the problem of where to locate air-conditioning plant is probably not one they have had to consider carefully. The rear of their 190 and 192 Westbourne Grove properties is a very depressing sight with their 8 air-conditioning units in full view.

Given that we pay so much attention in our conservation area to the appearance of the fronts of properties we must now tackle the serious problem at the rear of these and other afflicted properties. As can be seen from the photographs, the sheer numbers of air-conditioning units and refrigeration plant being installed at the back of this terrace has created a dense industrial landscape within the residential environment.



Air-conditioning equipment at the rear of Zucca in Westbourne Grove

This is an issue that has kept the local environmental, planning and enforcement departments busy for over 2 years

Of the 26 retail properties on the north side of Westbourne Grove between Colville Road and Ledbury Road, we are aware of 13 that have installed air-conditioning units. However, only 2 properties have planning permission to do so. The issue has become such a hot potato that applications are being delayed as sound reports are submitted, quashed and resubmitted. There are a few applications currently logged with the planning department but some of these have been waiting up to 13 months to be considered by the Planning Services Committee.

Until the matter is properly addressed everyone loses. The retailers have no guidelines on how to install the units that they apparently need. Some are being told to place them inside while others are being encouraged to put units in full view of residential buildings. Businesses have had to incur unnecessary expense installing units only to be told that they are not acceptable in the previously permitted location. Other businesses have to run the gauntlet of delays, often resorting to installing units without planning permission just so that they can start trading.

Meanwhile, the residents are suffering from noise, vibration, unsightly pipework and increasingly large units in full view of their homes. The fact that these are out of sight of the road is not a good enough reason to ignore these issues in our Pembridge Conservation area.

Vicky Butler

Garden Party July 2000

Last year's Garden Party had a real garden party atmosphere. The weather was fine and the mood was perfectly complemented by the Mangrove Steel Band playing under the umbrella of a beautiful tree in the Pembridge Square garden which, as usual, looked magnificent.

Once again, our committee members supplied a splendid buffet and our raffle contributors excelled themselves with their generosity.

It was a pleasure to welcome Michael Portillo MP, as our Guest of Honour, and we much appreciated the time that he spent with our local residents during the evening.

We would, as we do every year, like to thank The Pembridge Square Garden Committee for allowing us to use the Square.

All in all, the 2000 Garden Party was an evening to remember. We hope that this year's garden party on 14th July will be a similar pleasurable date in our calendar and we look forward to seeing you all!

GRAND PRIZE RAFFLE 2000

Grateful thanks to all our generous contributors for their splendid gifts which demonstrate the high quality products that can be found locally:-

Notting Hill Gate

Chalmers & Gray
Discount Books
Frontiers
Lea & Sandeman
Tylers Homecare
Virgin Records

Westbourne Grove

Baywood Chemists
Dinny Hall
Fairman Carpets
Lambton Place Health Club
Parsons Skött
Sheila Cook
Wall
Wild at Heart
206 Cafe
Laundry Industry
Emma Hope
Nicky Webster

Judy Jones

Ledbury Road

Nick Ashley
Roger Doyle (Jeweller)
The Shirtsmith
Paul and Joe
Montana
Lulu Guinness

Elgin Crescent

Graham & Green
Mr Christian
D R Evans Pharmacy

Denbigh Road

Lanna

Ladbroke Grove

Le Leon

Portobello Road

Edwardian Butcher

Needham Road

Pentagram
Vicky Butler

Membership Report 2000

Membership development 2000

This year we are giving the membership status following the Garden Party in July 2000. This is the time when many people renew their membership or join the Association.

We had 201 paid-up members, with an average membership subscription of £9.86. This is an increase over the figure quoted last year, but the percentage itself would not mean much as the previous figure was not for a comparable period.

Once again I am pleased to report that the subscription development allows us to continue to maintain the minimum at a very low £3, a sum unchanged since 1992. We can do this only because many members generously pay considerably more than the minimum, with a few subscriptions reaching £20 or even £100. For example, 28 members (13.9%) paid more than £12, and 69 (34.3%) paid £10 or more. The former is a relative and absolute increase on last year, and the latter is a relative increase.

The number of members paying by standing order (SO) rose to 49% from 47% last year, a figure we would still like

to raise. This is a reflection both of a few more members paying by SO and the reduction in non-SO renewals. Standing orders simplify and reduce the cost of administration and, of course, raise the automatic renewal rate.

It costs only £3 to support your local conservation society, so please do join us now and make your own contribution to the week by week effort that we put in to help to maintain and to enhance the historic area in which we live!

Dori Schmetterling

Graffiti & Flyposting

The Council is continuing with its pilot project of targeting properties in the Borough with the intention of tackling the disfigurement of walls and getting them cleaned up.

The Council serves notice on the owners or agents for the properties concerned requiring them to clean up the graffiti or the Council would undertake the work itself and recharge the cost.

In Portobello Road the work undertaken last year, as a result of the notices, without the Council having to intervene, has made a long term difference. Particular thanks goes to all those residents in the southern section of Portobello Road who contributed to this clean-up operation.

David Campion

Planning Report

Between March 2000 and February 2001 there were 98 planning applications in the Pembridge Association area of the Royal Borough's Pembridge Ward.

47 of these planning applications were granted, with or without conditions, 5 were refused and the balance have still to be decided.

8 of the applications relate to the rear of the Westbourne Grove terrace of retail and residential properties that are highlighted on the front page of this issue of the Newsletter. Of the 22 Enforcement Notices issued by the Council, 2 relate to

these same buildings.

The number of planning applications received by the Council for work in the Pembridge Association's area are not very high compared to some other areas of the Borough.

One of the more important considerations of the Association is the effect of car parking in front gardens which, although often regarded as important by owners, usually has a degrading effect on the street scene from the point of view of conservation. In general, such applications are normally refused by the Council on highways grounds where the construction of a cross-over would reduce the amount of on-street parking for residents.

Vicky Butler

Arboricultural Report

Over the last year there were 59 applications relating to the felling or pruning of trees in the Conservation Area.

Permission was granted to fell 5 Lime, 1 Oak, 1 Hornbeam, 1 Cherry and 1 Eucalyptus tree.

In general, where permission is granted to fell trees, the Council tries to ensure that replacements are planted wherever this is possible.

Vicky Butler

Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group

Although the Pembridge Association is not directly involved with the work of NHIG, we are consulted on matters that relate to the Pembridge Conservation Area.

Councillor David Campion, Chairman of NHIG, represents the Pembridge Association on the NHIG Executive Committee.

Further information about NHIG can be obtained from its web site:

www.nhig.co.uk

Vicky Butler

The Association's Millennium Project

The terrace, consisting of 178-228 Westbourne Grove, was originally built as a row of houses and the shops were built on to their fronts at a later date.

The Pembridge Association decided to work up a scheme, as its contribution to mark the Millennium, to encourage the restoration of the architectural features of the facades of the buildings above the shops.

The Association also decided to encourage the provision of ornate iron balustrades along the fronts of the roof terraces immediately above the shop frontages to match those at 209-225 Westbourne Grove opposite. It is hoped that all the leaseholders and freeholders will undertake their own work so as to create a uniform effect along the whole terrace.

The Chairman of the Pembridge Association, Vicky Butler, has very much made this her personal bid to mark the millennium and she has received the full support of the Executive Committee.

The scheme has been worked up as a result of collaboration with officers of the Council's Planning and Conservation Department and the Association wishes to put on record the considerable help and encouragement given to the project by Steve Davies and his colleagues.

In order to overcome a number of technical, legal and aesthetic problems it is proposed that the balustrades will be 740mm high and set back 1,000mm from the front of the terrace.

The scheme was reported to the Council's Planning and Conservation Committee on 26th February 2001 and the following recommendations were approved:

1. To undertake a consultation exercise to cover all the residents of the terrace 178-228 Westbourne Grove. To seek their views on the installation of balustrades and the formal creation of roof terraces,
2. Request officers to report back to the Committee with the results of the consultation and a recommendation on whether the balustrades should be sup-

ported in principle,

3. To note that the Pembridge Association intend to apply for grant funding for both elements of this project from the Brighten-up the Borough fund at a later date.

David Campion

The Electric Cinema

Although not actually within the Pembridge Conservation Area we do very much welcome the reopening of the historic Electric Cinema in Portobello Road now that it is has been very substantially refurbished. The associated restaurant next door to it, which will be open later in the year, was only given planning permission in order to improve the overall financial viability of the redevelopment.

David Campion

Sinfonia

Kensington and Chelsea is home to many of Britain's great national institutions, where work of global significance is carried out. The grand buildings of the great museums declare their presence clearly enough. The Royal Marsden and Brompton hospitals somewhat hide their brilliance behind rather sooty exteriors. Imperial College, for all its vastness, lies set back from the main roads, rather out of sight and mind for many Borough residents. It may be easy to forget that its research work in science and engineering has few rivals in the whole of Europe.

Some might find it surprising that Imperial College, not thought of as any sort of haven for artists, has an orchestra in residence, Sinfonia 21 by name. But that really is the point: students of science and engineering can be, should be, and often *are* well-rounded personalities, capable of enjoying music as much as any student of literature or art. Having a chamber orchestra on the premises helps students to maintain and develop their contact with music.

Of course there are strong connections

between science and music. The ways in which musical sounds are produced are the province of science. There are connections between mathematics and the rules of musical composition and the patterns that composers use in their works.

I have joined the board of Sinfonia 21, partly because I will enjoy listening to their playing, and partly because I am attracted by what this Orchestra wants to do with music. For example, music can clearly be of therapeutic value. Even people who have reached such a stage of mental degeneration that they seem to react to very little around them, can still be stimulated and comforted by music. So the Orchestra and the College are embarked on an incisive research programme into how music can be used to best effect in the alleviation of dementia.

The Orchestra provides musical education programmes to local schools, where some children may have had no opportunity to hear or think about classical music. Sinfonia 21 performs concerts in the community too, taking music to places where music is rarely heard, and to people who would find it difficult to travel far.

Many young people find using the internet the most natural pathway to learning and enjoyment. The Orchestra is associated with a ground-breaking project to enable music students to go on-line to create music. A website will introduce them to the science of music and the rules of harmony, as well as allowing them to compose and orchestrate their pieces on the screens of their personal computers.

I am very pleased to be associated with a group of people devoted to musical excellence; but more than that, devoted to bringing the gift of musical appreciation to those who would otherwise go without, and to advancing the ways in which music can help those whose mental faculties have declined.

Sinfonia 21 gives public concerts at Imperial College and around the country, and their programme is obtainable from (020) 7584 2759 and the website address is www.sinfonia21.co.uk.

The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo MP



Notting Hill Gate Library

While it is not the role of a Conservation Society to get involved in political controversy, the Pembridge Association was very concerned about the possible closure of the Borough's local library (shown above) in Pembridge Square.

The problem faced by the Council was that the government central support grant to the Royal Borough for the next financial year 2001/2002 was £4.6 million short of what was needed to cover the expected expenditure.

The result was that the Education & Libraries Committee was asked to make a pro-rata cut in its expenditure of just over £1 million which included the £158,000 cost of running the Notting Hill Gate library. This library was singled out for closure because its book issues over the year had dropped by 11% which was a lot more than any other library in the Borough.

Apart from the loss of amenity to local residents that closure of the library would have entailed, the building itself contributes greatly to the rather grand entrance to Pembridge Square from Pembridge

Villas from the conservation point of view.

While the three Ward Councillors fought hard within the Council to persuade their colleagues to resist the proposal to close the library, local residents formed "The Friends of Pembridge Library" and organised a petition against closure that contained just over 2,000 signatures to provide external pressure on the Council.

As a result of the campaign, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Merrick Cockell, recognised the strength of local feeling and agreed to recommend to his colleagues that there should be a two year reprieve to give the library a chance to survive with the cost coming out of corporate funds rather than the stretched Education and Libraries budget.

The downside is that only £130,000 is available in the budget during 2001/2002, compared to the previous £158,000; this means that the hours of opening have had to be cut.

The library will be open, from April onwards, on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Friday from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. until 5 p.m.

Councillor Barbara Campbell has been asked by the Leader of the Council to set up a group to look at the current use of the library and to see how facilities could be improved so that there is much greater use by local residents to justify the cost of keeping the library open. The use will be reassessed in 18 months time when the matter is reconsidered.

David Campion

Bijou Twentieth Century Theatre

For so long the hidden gem of Westbourne Grove we must welcome its re-emergence as a centre of live activity. The theatre built in 1863 is of the rectangler style with a balcony, it seats about 300 and in its early days it was one of the five patented theatres. The theatre, which is a grade 11 listed English Heritage Building, has been lovingly restored by its new owner Sandra Kamen, who is ably assisted by her co-managers, Missy Hymans and John Reilly.

Recently, the theatre owners have been granted planning permission and a three day entertainments licence, which is to be welcomed but still seriously restricts

public live performances that can be staged at the theatre.

In recent times the theatre was used as a furniture warehouse but, prior to that, many famous groups and people had performed at the theatre. An early programme (1866) advertises a performance by the Great Western Railway Dramatic Society, accompanied by part of the band of the Grenadier Guards.

Over the years many famous people have performed at the theatre. In 1870 Mr Henry Irving, later to be knighted, played Brown in the Spitalfield Weaver. Sir Herbert Beerbolm Tree, Marie Lloyd, Albert Chevalier and Lena Ashwell are among others who appeared. In recent years Laurence Olivier, Margaret Ruthertbrd, Rex Harrison and Bob Monkhouse also performed at the theatre.

In 1911, with the advent of films, the Bijou became a cinema. Children were admitted for a penny and included in the admission price was an orange and a bag of sweets.

In 1918, Lena Ashwell made it the peacetime home of a war-time enterprise and renamed it the Century Theatre. The Lena Ashwell Players had been famous for entertaining the troops at the front. It was during Lena Ashwells time that Sir Laurence Ohvier got his first professional job with the Players.

In 1936 the Rudolph Steiner Association took over the theatre and renamed it the XX Century Theatre. One could now see performances based on the art of Eurythmy created by Rudolph Steiner and involving colour and movement. Amateur groups still used the theatre from Harrods, D.H.Evans and the B.B.C. One

group, the Guild Of Friendship, had been started by two local doctors, Dr Robinson and Dr Mary Belier, for their women patients who didn't have much of a social life in the thirties. A third doctor, Sylvia Ellison, was to produce a lot of their plays. This all came to an end in 1963 when once again the theatre became a furniture warehouse.

Now the theatre has been reborn we wish the new owners the best of luck with the venture. We hope that the Authorities will see the value of a live theatre in North Kensington, for us and the wider community, by extending their entertainment licence so they can become a full working theatre again.

Eddie Adams

(The theatre is situated between Portobello Road and Kensington Park Road)

The Association Web Site

The Pembridge Association Web Site was created by David Campion during

2000 to provide both a means for publicising the work of the Association and a means for recording information that would be accessible to a wider public interested in conservation matters. The

web site may be accessed on the Internet using the following URL:

www.pembridgeassociation.org.uk

The Pembridge Association
The Conservation Society for the Pembridge Conservation Area

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www.pembridgeassociation.org.uk
Registered Charity No 267406


Pembridge Square North Side


Entrance to Pembridge Square


Pembridge Square South Side

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Welcome to the Pembridge Association Web Site

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COMMITTEE 2000/2001

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Mr. William Clarke 13 Pembridge Gardens, W2

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Cllr Doreen Weatherhead 15 Clanricarde Gardens, W2 4JJ

The position of Hon Planning Secretary needs to be filled as soon as possible. The 2000/2001 elections for the Committee will take place at the Annual General Meeting on 12th March 2001.

THE AIMS OF THE PEMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

1. To encourage and promote high standards of architecture and town planning in the Pembridge Conservation Area,
2. To stimulate and promote public interest and care for the beauty, history and character of the neighbourhood,
3. To encourage the preservation, conservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest within or affecting the neighbourhood.

These aims are pursued by charitable means only and the Association has no affiliation with any political party.

Our job is to show that conservation is important, and to provide a channel for the views of the community. To do this effectively we need your active support!

Membership is open to all those who are interested in the aims of the Pembridge Association. Anyone who is interested in becoming more closely involved with the work of the Association should initially make contact with the Hon. Sec. and will be welcome to attend a Committee Meeting,

If you have a point of view you would like to express about Conservation matters or issues raised in the Newsletter, write to the Chairman or the Hon Secretary whose names and addresses are shown at the top left of this page.

GARDEN PARTY

The Pembridge Association is holding its annual Garden Party in Pembridge Square Gardens on Saturday 14th July 2001 from 6pm until 8pm (by permission of the Garden Square Committee).

In the past, many residents attending the Garden Party have expressed their delight at the great opportunity that this gives to meet other people living in the area, whom they might not otherwise have come across.

Non-Members are welcome to come to the Party to support the Association. The Garden Square Committee do not allow dogs to be brought into the Square and this must be respected.

14th JULY 2001

Newsletter edited by Vicky Butler. Art Work set up by David Campion using Aldus PageMaker 6, on an Elonex PTX-6450 Microcomputer, and printed on a Lexmark Optra E310 Laserprinter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you would like to support the Pembridge Association please complete this Banker's Order Form and send it to the Membership Secretary:

Mr Dori Schmetterling, 11a Dawson Place, W2 4TD

If you would prefer to pay your subscription by cheque, or charity voucher, please complete the name and address section below and send this form with your remittance (payable to "The Pembridge Association") to the above Membership Secretary.

To: The ManagerBank/Building Society

(Address)
.....

Please pay £ (pounds) to "The Pembridge Association" at the Royal Bank of Scotland, 78 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 Account No: 13467221 (Sort Code 16-00-82) A/C No 13467221 with the first payment on (Date) and annually thereafter until cancelled.

Signature: Date:

Name: Account No:
(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Address:
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