

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS...

The Pembridge Conservation Area is one of three Conservation Areas along the north side of Notting Hill Gate/Holland Park Avenue. The other two, the Ladbroke and Norland Areas have equally active Con-

servation Societies, and in this issue of the Newsletter they report on what they have been doing over the past year.

Linden Gardens is part of the Pembridge Area but is fortunate to have

its own residents' association to deal with the problems that come up in the area. We have a report from them on how they have been tackling the past year's problems.

LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION continues to flourish, and the Committee meets regularly once a month throughout the year.

Ian Grant, who took over as Acting Chairman after the sad and sudden death of Professor Carus-Wilson last February, was elected Chairman for one year at the Annual General Meeting in July.

This meeting was held in the hall of the Knights of St. Columba Club in Lansdowne Road, and was followed by a wine and cheese party for members and their friends in the adjoining garden.

STREET LAMPS

The Association's most continuous activity is the examination of planning applications, on which comments are frequently made to the Council, but the Committee has several other projects in hand.

A small sub-Committee is in touch with the Borough Engineer in order to try and introduce a more acceptable and traditional pattern of street lamp into Conservation Areas.

A photographic dossier of original and correct architectural details is being collected with the help of the G.L.C.

The Association also hopes to be able to accumulate a library of moulds, patterns and drawings for stucco and other vulnerable features, to assist in their replacement.

Various Committee members are working on the possibility of launching a Town Scheme for uniform redecoration and restoration of a terrace of similar houses, and towards the formation of a Gardens

PEMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

THE DECISION on the appeal allowing the change of use of the Sion Convent site from school to a Science Centre is a great disappointment to the Association.

It has caused major anxiety to our members whose children were expected to attend the school.

It was the first Public Inquiry which some of us had been to and the experience of a full day at the Town Hall on the 27th April while extremely interesting was not exactly enjoyable.

Much of the argument seemed to the layman to be irrelevant and at times contradictory.

The strain of having to keep quiet was at times unbearable!

NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Liaison Committee to explore matters of mutual interest to the various Garden Committees in the area, to their eventual mutual benefits.

STUCCO

A well-attended members' meeting was held in the spring, to hear Ian Grant's talk on preservation and restoration of stucco, which he illustrated with slides, and Dame Sylvia Crowe is to speak on planting and gardens at the next meeting in the winter.

The Ladbroke Association supported the Pembridge Association in protesting against proposals for the Sion Convent site, and also supported the Norland Society in its efforts to have the Norland Conservation Area extended to include the strip of land between it and the Ladbroke Area.

The Chairman gave evidence on behalf of the Association and the Kensington Society before the Parliamentary Select Committee which was considering the Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Bill, and various members of the Association have attended the local Planning Forums; the Association has sent comments on the relevant Context Papers to the Council.

The Ladbroke Association welcomes close collaboration with its neighbouring Amenity Societies, and the Committee hopes that this may become even more fruitful in the future.

Ian Grant
Chairman

WALMER ROAD

Nevertheless, one was impressed by the fairness and tolerance of the D.o.E. Inspector.

The speed at which the inquiry was convened (because of the Easter holidays we had scarcely a week's warning, whereas three months notice is not rare) compares with the two months it took for the Minister to come to his decision.

It should be noted carefully that there is a proviso with the authorisation of a change of use to the effect that the site is to be used only as a Science Centre.

While, of course, accepting the Minister's decision, the Pembridge Association will be vigilant to ensure that the proviso is also adhered to.

Douglas Richardson

NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY has had an active and prosperous year, and in terms of conservation a reasonably successful one.

Much of our energy has been devoted to dealing with a topic of great concern to our membership, traffic in the Norland Conservation Area.

Throughout most of the year, our concern with traffic focused on the continued use of Royal Crescent/St. Ann's Villas/St. Ann's Road as a through route to and from the north and east, alternative to the designated through routes over the M41 and Ladbroke Grove.

The Society and the Royal Crescent Association have been successful in at last provoking a certain amount of action by the Borough and London Transport.

The Borough have authorised funds to narrow the entrance to Royal Crescent, and they have proposed the installation of a width restriction in Bramley Road, the extension of the route to the north of the Conservation Area. The problem with the width restriction is that it would interfere with the passage of the double-deck buses used on the route, but London Transport have agreed to study the feasibility of introducing single-deck buses which could cope with the restriction.

WALMER ROAD

In July, we were informed that "local residents" had filed a petition to re-open Walmer Road where it has been closed at its intersection with Kenley Street.

We have lodged the strongest possible protest to this proposal.

The closure was effected seven years ago together with the closure of Princedale Road at Clarendon Cross.

The two closures brought an end to the "rat run" traffic which had plagued residents in the Norland and the Ladbroke Conservation Areas as well as the area between them, and we are totally opposed to any measure which would create an opportunity for the return of such traffic.

We have also made a successful effort, supported by the Ladbroke Association, to convince the Borough that it should expand the Norland Conservation Area.

The Borough have now agreed to make

LINDEN GARDENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

OUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS have been kept occupied over the past year by a fairly constant outflow of letters and phone calls to the various Council departments in order — for instance — to support residents whose homes are collapsing around them, deter music lovers from indulging late and loudly, arrange for an intermittent skip to provide for the beds, television sets and three-piece suites that are otherwise displayed on the pavement.

We have also negotiated for special street cleaning and managed to organise a long-sought trimming of the trees.

Planning applications and resulting conversions/demolitions have needed a very persistent watchfulness.

We have made recommendations regarding new applications and have requested the Council to use its authority over the reinstatement of demolished balustrades and broken iron railings — this seems to be a very lengthy business where the Council's powers are still somewhat unclear.

We have stressed the importance of photographs and/or front elevations of existing buildings to be included in all applications for conversions, as we have found this was rarely the case in spite of the Council directive.

DUSTBINS

We have come across two situations where access by all the residents of a house to the basement dustbin area has been threatened — one where no allowance was made for this in plans for a new conversion and the other where a basement flat was sold without, apparently, the new owner being made aware of the need of other owners and tenants to have access to the basement area.

We feel that this is something we need to watch out for, with many flats being sold off individually and some new residents not knowing where rubbish is stored.

representations to the G.L.C. that the Area should be extended to include (a) the small sliver lying between our western boundary and the western boundary of the Royal Borough and (b) the wedge lying between our eastern boundary and the western boundary of the Ladbroke Conservation Area.

Robert L. Norgren,
Chairman

VIEWPOINT

The Russian Embassy Saga

Members of the Pembridge Association may have heard one of a number of rumours that have been circulating for some time about proposals for a new large building or buildings to accommodate the Russian Embassy and its staff.

Those who attended last December's Annual General Meeting will have heard Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, the Member of Parliament for this area, give an account of the situation as it then stood and of what he described as a most serious threat to the environment.

Briefly, discussions have been going on for a considerable time between the Soviet and the British Governments concerning the Russian wish to erect two large new buildings at the top and bottom of Kensington Palace Gardens — "Millionaire's

PLAY GROUPS

We have talked with officials from the housing association which has bought and intends to convert the large, empty, one-time hotel in the centre of Linden Gardens.

Hopefully building work will begin soon and there is a possibility of it becoming some sort of community activities centre, with space for meetings and play groups. There has recently been a gradual increase of children in the Gardens, with a need for a play space.

Our Association as a whole is very much against the proposed demolition of the north end of Palace Gardens for new Russian Embassy buildings. One of our Committee members has taken photographs of the existing houses and we are in process of organising a meeting of local associations to write jointly to the Department of the Environment and other relevant bodies about the preservation of nos 4,5,6 & 7 Palace Gardens.

At the beginning of the year one of the Association's members organised a Fair on behalf of the Committee in aid of "Help the Aged". This raised over £400.

Virginia Cutler, Honorary Secretary

Row".

The buildings in question would house all the Russian Embassy staff and their families and would also include such things as a supermarket for their use as well as a complete range of cultural and leisure facilities and schools for the children.

This accommodation would be provided in a tower block, similar in type but appreciably taller than the Czech Embassy to be built on the site opposite that embassy and facing onto Bayswater Road.

This would involve the demolition of listed properties and the use of the adjoining site currently used by National Car Parks.

The other proposed building would be a walled compound at the bottom of Kensington Church Street on the site of the old barracks.

The wall would surround the shops and various cultural facilities.

In addition, the Russians would retain one or two of the larger houses currently occupied by them in Kensington Palace Gardens.

Both schemes seem equally undesirable in environmental terms and it would be socially unfortunate if a section of the busy Kensington Church Street in the heart of the shopping area should be cut off from general use by a blank wall variously described as from 10 to 20 feet high.

One of the alternative proposals which has been put forward is that the embassy building should be set back some fifty feet from Church Street and that this area should be occupied by shops with offices above which would fill some social need and would also pay rates.

One of the practical problems of the Royal Borough is that the growing number of embassy and other official users are exempt from normal rates thereby increasing the financial burden on residents.

The details of the designs for these schemes are not known as they have not been made available for public inspection.

It is understood that these designs are the work of an eminent Russian architect for whom the architectural firm of Mayell Hart and Partners of Cromwell Road, South Kensington, are acting in this country.

Elizabeth Aslin