

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter November 2014



'Who doesn't like art? Only crazy people'

Were you a customer at the Toast Temple during the Wandsworth Arts Festival this year? This pop-up event visited all the borough's town centres, including the forecourt at Southside, 'a lonely and commercially dominated space', to gather feedback about the Festival and gauge the response to art in public places. The results have just been published. The lure of free toast – over 250 slices were eaten – and no doubt the jolly ladies making it, encouraged people to participate, and the findings are that overall we seems to like public art, that similar events would 'break down the physical commercial dominance of the centre' and that it would bring benefits all round. As one toast-eater said,

'I want more of this fun performance'

<http://www.urbanprojectsbureau.com/blog-urbanism/toast-temple-wandsworth-arts-festival-report/>

Cycle Tracks: The Public Inquiry

It was an exciting prospect: a Public Local Inquiry ‘in connection with the London Borough of Wandsworth (Wandsworth Common) Cycle Tracks Order 2013’ and a similar Order for Tooting Common. An independent Inspector would hear representations from objectors, the Council and ‘at the Inspector’s discretion . . . any other persons who may desire to appear and be heard. The effect of the Orders, if confirmed, would be to designate existing lengths of segregated cycle track as unsegregated cycle track . . .’

So on Tuesday 30 September in Room 123 of the Town Hall there assembled, in eager anticipation, a small Wandsworth Society group – including Shirley Passmore, our President, and Charles and Aviva Walton, Chairman and Secretary of the Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee (the MAC) – along with representatives of the Tooting Common MAC and the Friends of Tooting Common, and a few other Commons’ users. Most in the room seemed to be supporters of desegregation.

But where were the objectors? The Inquiry was prompted largely by an on-line petition of over 500 signatures against the proposal. Very few turned up to hear Jeremy Clyne of the Open Spaces Society argue the case for retaining the raised white lines that for many years have segregated (in theory) cyclists and pedestrians on certain Common pathways. His principal argument was that desegregation would put pedestrians, particularly children and the elderly, at greater risk of colliding with speeding cyclists.

The proposition that desegregated paths actually encourage more considerate behaviour by cyclists, and reduce risks to pedestrians, may appear counter-intuitive. As Shirley pointed out in the Society’s written evidence, ‘Safety for pedestrians, particularly the visually impaired, was the initial reason given for the necessity of segregation in 2002 . . . always a faulty decision, because the paths, although widened, were/are not wide enough for segregated lanes. Inevitably pedestrians and cyclists have to cross into each others’ paths.

‘Pedestrians have priority at all times across the whole width of the path, but cyclists do not seem to understand this limitation to their use of the paths and friction occurs. Since the number of cyclists using the common has increased considerably in recent years this friction is increasing.’ There is much

anecdotal evidence of ‘near misses’ and many pedestrians therefore avoid the paths.

The Wandsworth Society has ‘repeatedly sought to have unsegregated paths because we feel that segregation adds no advantages to either pedestrians or cyclists . . . The common is . . . as far as possible, an unenclosed piece of informal open land; the white lines detract from this ambience for no good reason that we can see.’ As Sustrans has commented, unsegregated routes can often ‘maximise usable width and minimise maintenance requirements and sign/line clutter’. The Department for Transport now encourages designers not to start from a default position of segregation. Research has found that levels of satisfaction among both cyclists and pedestrians tend to be higher on unsegregated routes than narrow segregated ones, where pedestrians often stray into the cycle lane. ‘The raised white lines’, Shirley concluded, ‘are at best an irrelevance and at worst an added hazard.’

The Wandsworth Common and Tooting MACs offered similar evidence. Charles Walton pointed out that divided pathways were too narrow for a cyclist and a pedestrian with a buggy and child, or two cyclists travelling in opposite directions, to pass each other safely and comfortably. ‘Segregated paths’, he argued, ‘define a space and give cyclists a mistaken sense of ownership and exclusivity on “their” side. This can lead to speeding and anti-social behaviour . . . An un-defined shared path for cyclists and pedestrians gives equal responsibility for considerate behaviour and mutual respect between all . . . Not only are the white lines a visual intrusion . . . They don’t assist either the visually impaired or children, who when walking across the paths are unable to tell which side of the white line is for pedestrians or cyclists.’ London cycling organisations now support desegregation.

It could have been a more exciting day. The only thing approaching drama was some ‘pre-segregation’ video shown by Jeremy Clyne. (Unfortunately for him, it appeared to suggest that cyclists and pedestrians behave better unsegregated.) Everyone in the room was very well behaved, courteous and reasonable. The Inspector took care to ensure the opposition’s concerns had been fully heard. He will now make a carefully argued case for approving or rejecting the Orders, to the Secretary of State, whose decision we shall receive in due course. A long-winded, expensive process? But we sometimes do ‘local democracy’ rather well.

David Kirk



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www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk

Wandsworth Society

November 2014

Whither or Wither

Change is inevitable, life is like that, but what can we do to accommodate and embrace the future?

The Society has been in existence for just over 40 years – no mean feat – and the enthusiasm of our members has sustained the changes that have occurred during this time. The makeup of the borough has altered significantly: there has been a decline in the employment-base of central Wandsworth and we are fast becoming a dormitory for a workforce travelling elsewhere for employment. While this may be no bad thing in an area that has suffered a significant decline in its environment, we do not believe this to be the case here. However, the borough does stretch from Vauxhall's Nine Elms (where did they go?) to leafy Roehampton – it has one of the highest areas of green space of any London borough – and we are all most grateful to the guardians of this environment. The Society continues to do its 'bit' on its patch but we do need additional support from members, old and new, to build on the excellent work of the past. Membership is not increasing and a greater burden is placed on those who continue to put the Society at the forefront of their busy lives.

We should like to encourage new and younger members who can help take the Society forward to its golden anniversary and beyond. What changes do you, the membership, need to ensure that the Society continues to prosper? Would you like a different slant put on our approach to meetings, the music events, the outings to places of interest – what else should we be doing? Let us hear from you.

Philip Whyte

Thanks

Members may not be aware that since the AGM there have been some changes in the Executive Committee.

Valerie Taylor stepped down in April but remains leader of the events group. Valerie and her group organise an enormously varied programme of events, which encompasses interests of all sorts. It is sometimes difficult to nail speakers down so far in advance but Valerie's persuasive insistence has never left us speakerless or guideless.

Peter Farrow, he of this Newsletter for many years, decided that it was time someone else took over this particular responsibility. I cannot blame him! Peter remains on the planning group and provides expertise on various aspects of the planning process, besides writing pithy and succinct letters when required.

Linda Ulrich recently moved from Wandsworth, and felt that she could not continue on the executive or with her work on the roads and transport group that she, with Valerie's support, re-formed about four years ago. We wish Linda well – she will always be welcome to come and take the minutes again!

My thanks go to all three for their support.

PW

Planning News

The Ram Quarter

This is the new name for the brewery site, which we shall use in future. As those close to the town centre will have noticed, a new construction has appeared at the north-eastern corner of the site, which we understand to be the marketing suite. The developers, Greenland, have produced a newsletter, *The Ram Quarterly*, which presents images and information on progress and tells us that demolition is proceeding as the first stage of the redevelopment. A 'meet the construction team' was held on Monday 20 October, members of the planning group attended; it is pleasing to see that work has started at long last and we will be keeping an eye on progress.

South Thames College and the Borough Council's site, High Street and Garratt Lane

Since the last newsletter no formal application has been made for the redevelopment. We asked various statutory consultees whether they had been informed of the proposals and a somewhat muddled response was received. English Heritage said, yes, they had made comment but no, they had not indicated that they were happy with the proposals! We are strongly of the belief that the proposals do not conform to the approved structure plan and will be making our objections to the application when this is submitted to the Council for consideration. We are also concerned that the Council may have a significant conflict of interest with this application and we are investigating whether there is any statutory duty to have it considered by an external source (for example a planning inspector).

Book House, East Hill

An application (no. 2014/5309) has been made for a

change of use to residential. This prominent building at the top of East Hill has been a landmark since its construction. We believe that it was once the town hall for the borough. Our main concerns are that yet another commercial building will be lost for employment purposes and that the proposed new use will have no outside recreational space for the residents. The adjoining Huguenot Burial Ground makes it impossible to extend the curtilage, and to alter the external façades would be to destroy the integrity of the building. We expect to be objecting to the proposed change of use.

Gyratory System, Armoury Way

TfL are due to start the promised public consultation in October but at the time of writing no timetable for the consultation has been made public.

Meeting with the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee

We are awaiting confirmation of a meeting with the new Chair of the Planning Applications Committee to discuss the Council's planning policies and the implementation or acceptable variations of them. As members know we have expressed our serious concerns to both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Council and we hope that the dialogue with the new leader of this Committee will lead to a greater understanding of the position of both the Council and the Society.

Please let us know if you have any gripes, comments or applause for what we are doing. We can react only when we know there is a problem.

Philip Whyte



Panorama of the Thames: An Update

Some readers will recall the impressive introduction to the Panorama of the Thames project offered to Society members at our meeting in the Royal College of Art's Dyson Hall in March. The project's aim is to digitise the 60-foot Panorama of the Thames from Westminster to Richmond, published by Samuel Leigh in 1829, and to match it with a contemporary filmed panorama from the Tower to Hampton, with drop-down information on the waterfront, old and new.

There are two pieces of very good news. Earlier this year the project signed a contract with Thames & Hudson to publish a 'Georgian guide to the Thames riverside', hopefully in 2016. More recently a website was launched, www.panoramaofthethames.com. This incorporates the full Georgian guide - including Wandsworth, with excellent historical information provided by the Wandsworth Historical Society - and the first tranche of the contemporary photographic panoramas (not yet including Wandsworth). The site

should work well, but if you want to offer feedback contact director@panoramaofthethames.com.

Further substantial funding will be needed to complete the project. There have been contributions from individuals, local societies and a couple of City Livery companies - for all of which the not-for-profit company is of course very grateful. As John Inglis, the director, has noted, 'It seems many people share our view that the riverside we know should be recorded for the future, as it changes before our eyes. Many of the buildings we have photographed for the project have already gone.'

The plan is for a phased release of the remaining photographic panoramas as funding becomes available. To this end, any donations, however small, will be very welcome and can be paid directly into the Panorama of the Thames Ltd bank account: Sort Code 08-92-99; account no. 65699074.

David Kirk



Wandsworth Waterfront from the Georgian Guide

Wildlife Crime in Wandsworth

A talk on 25 September

There is no fox hunting in Wandsworth, and that is no surprise. However, at our September meeting our speaker Laura Manuel surprised and alarmed me (others may already have been aware), with talk of badger baiting, the poaching of deer, hare coursing, trapping songbirds, trading ivory and the roasting of swans. Now, while not all these crimes against wildlife are routinely perpetuated in Wandsworth, they all feature in the London-wide work of the Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit.

Laura is a Wildlife Crime Officer, a police officer from the Tooting Sector Neighbourhood Policing Team, and she gave us a very informative and interesting talk on the work of the Wildlife Crime Unit. She explained that there are both general and specific laws that afford protection to wildlife. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to harm wildlife and destroy wildlife habitat. This Act includes all wildlife, both flora and fauna, alive or dead; for example both harming wild birds and having a collection of their eggs are illegal acts. Some animals are specifically protected, badger baiting was made illegal in 1835, and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 makes it illegal to harm a badger or a badger sett.

It was depressing to hear of the horrors that occur, and almost impossible to believe that such activities as badger baiting and dog fighting still continue. However, there is comfort to be had in knowing that, as ever, it is a very small minority of people who engage in such activities. And it was pleasing to be made aware of the extent and variety of the wildlife we have in Wandsworth.

Laura also brought some artefacts, disturbing in different ways. Animal traps that will have caused terrible suffering, and carved ivory objects, the end product of deliberate acts that will have undoubtedly involved death and suffering. The trade in endangered animals is proscribed by CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), it is 'an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.' This and the laws in the 180 countries that have signed it are intended to protect wildlife, but we do not need to be told it is wrong to harm wildlife unnecessarily. It is sobering to think that these laws and those who enforce them are required.

Peter Farrow

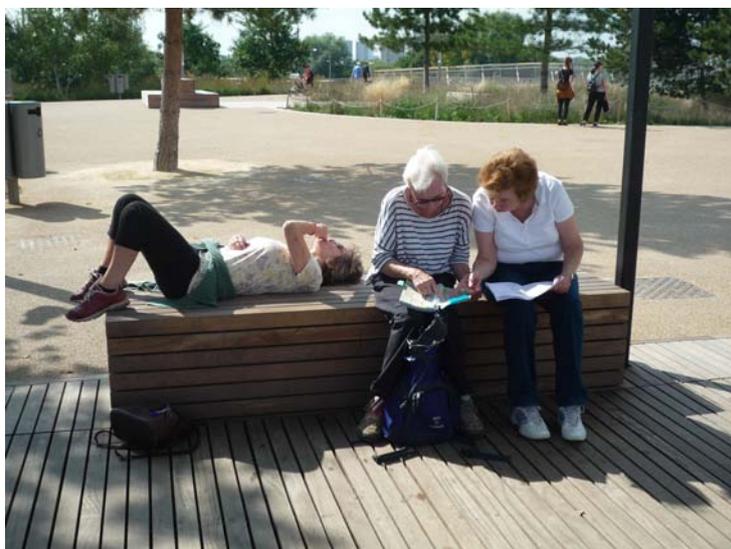
Rivers of London Walk

On a warm September day a dozen members – in two groups – walked the lower six miles of the River Lea, or Lee, the longest of London's Thames tributaries. The walk is mainly along the navigable stretch – quite different to the other rivers in this series of walks with the lines of house boats and rowing clubs. There are enormous contrasts along this stretch, from the evocative Walthamstow Marshes Nature Reserve and extensive playing fields through to old wharves – some still working and some converted into flats.

For many the highlight of the trip was the diversion

into the newly opened Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to see how the river has been transformed from an urban ditch to the key landscape feature of the Park. The flora was at its best as it had originally been planted to produce August and early September colour for when the Games were in full swing. What an extraordinary transformation it has been, from contaminated land to a great community asset appealing across the age ranges with its exciting and original play equipment.

Caroline Pook



Winter Walks Programme

Several of those on the River Lea walk are keen to carry on walking as a group over the winter. The consensus was to have some shorter walks, ending at a place of interest outside our local area. Although many potential venues have no, or only limited opening days over the period November to March there are five suitable candidates. Please note these walks are no longer confined to Tuesdays, by request.

Monday 3 November: Walk along the Thames to Strawberry Hill House (visited by the Society in the last couple of years, but not by all), which is open 2 pm–5 pm. Meet at Kingston Station at 1 pm; we will return home to local stations from Strawberry Hill Station. Cost of entry: £5.30 for over 60s, National Trust members and Art Pass holders (double this for others).

Friday 5 December: The Red House, Bexley (the house William Morris created for himself). There is not much walking around here but we will visit Danson Park. Meet at Bexleyheath Station at 11 am (from Waterloo East, London Bridge or Victoria). Cost of entry £7.20 (free to National Trust members).

Thursday 15 January: William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. Meet at Walthamstow Central station at the end of the Victoria Line at 11 am; this will be an urban stroll in line with January weather. Free entry.

Tuesday 10 February: Kenwood House. Meet at 9.45 am on Platform 1 Clapham Junction station to take the Overground to Hampstead Heath Station. Walk across Hampstead Heath. Free entry.

For these winter walks only, please let me know in advance (by 8.30 am on the day) if you are attending: this will allow us to confer on whether the walk proceeds in the event of poor weather.

Caroline Pook

caroline@pookfamily.co.uk; 020 8870 2963; mobile contact on the day 07836 254065

Wandsworth Historian

The autumn issue of *Wandsworth Historian*, the journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society is now out and includes articles on Walter, a vinedresser in medieval Southfields, artist orderlies who worked in the military hospital on Wandsworth Common in the First World War and an entertaining selection of letters sent by angry Victorian ratepayers to the Board of Works.

For further information go to www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk.



Elsewhere in the Borough

29 November

The National Opera Studio will give a carol concert at All Saints Church, Wandsworth High Street. For further information go to <http://nationaloperastudio.org.uk/>.

Until 14 December

The Trouble with Painting Today, an open exhibition at the Pump House Gallery, Battersea Park, co-curated by members of Wandsworth U3A. For further information go to <http://pumphousegallery.org.uk/exhibitions/the-trouble-with-painting-today>.

17 January

Pianist Mitsuko Uchida will be performing Mozart sonatas and Schubert impromptus in a recital organised by St Luke's Music Society. For further information go to <http://slms.org.uk/2/>.

Come to the Society's Christmas Party!

Saturday 6 December at 7.30 for 8 pm
St Anne's Church Hall, St Anne's Crescent, SW18 2RS

with a sparkling cabaret entertainment by

A Bit of What You Fancy

£10 per head, includes buffet supper and a glass of wine
(cash on arrival)

Please let Valerie Taylor know how many tickets you want
before Wednesday 3 December, after which tickets will be £12 each
vtaylor@wandsworthsociety.org.uk, 020 8767 3814

Monday 3 November

Strawberry Hill Walk

For full details of this and other winter walks see page 7.

Thursday 13 November

Industries along the River Wandle

In an illustrated talk, local historian Dorian Gerhold will explore the significant industrial past of Wandsworth and its river.

Thursday 8 January

Just What is Planned for Nine Elms?

A Presentation by Helen Fisher, Programme Director of the Nine Elms Project, who oversees 450 acres of redevelopment from Lambeth Bridge to Chelsea Bridge.

Thursday 12 February

How can we make streets safer for cyclists and for pedestrians; how can we rid our streets of the plethora of signage; is '20 Plenty'?

John Dales, Trustee of Living Streets and Director of Urban Movement, a consultancy specialising in transport planning and the design of urban streets and spaces, will give his answers to these and other questions of interest to

Date for your Diary: Thursday 12 March, AGM. Full details in the next Newsletter.

Unless otherwise stated, events will take place at 7.45 for 8.00 in West Side Church, at the corner of Melody Road and Allfarthing Lane, SW18 2QQ. For any updates, see the Events programme page on www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk.