

Wandsworth Society

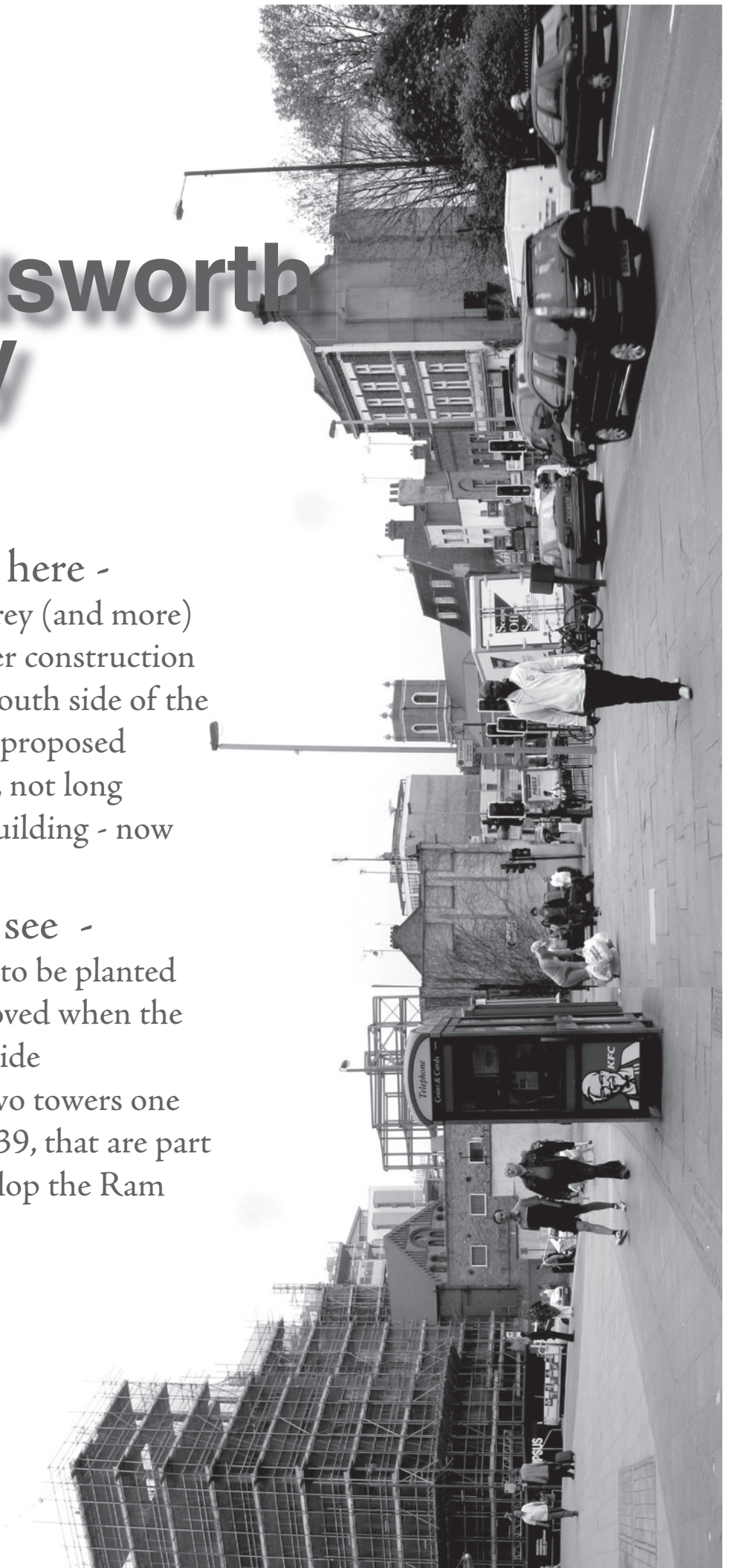
Newsletter May 2008

What you can see here -

- ♦ one of the new 10-storey (and more) developments now under construction that will run along the south side of the High Street – more are proposed
- ♦ the Huguenot Chapel, not long ago a fairly significant building - now seemingly buried

What you cannot see -

- ♦ the trees that have yet to be planted to replace the ones removed when the Arndale became Southside
- ♦ and to the right, the two towers one of 29 storeys, the other 39, that are part of the proposals to develop the Ram Brewery site



Local Yesterdays

Though many of us have trouble remembering what we did yesterday, most of us will recall Local Yesterdays.

If the name doesn't ring a bell, the face of Ron Elam and his mischievous, twinkling smile would quickly remind you of Saturdays in Bellevue Road and the enormous choice of postcard scenes of a bygone Battersea, Wandsworth, Balham, Tooting and much more you could have framed for you by Ron, often ably assisted by his better half Hazel.

The postcard was an enormously popular means of contacting a friend or even of announcing what time you would be home for tea but that golden age came to a sudden end when the rate of postage went up from a halfpenny to a penny. The Royal Mail had a way of biting the hand that feeds almost a century ago and still seems to enjoy the taste.

Out of the blue as I write has come an image of those sepia tones through an article in the Wandsworth Borough News. The WBN may no longer be the local rag it was but it's not entirely without merit these days and 3 column-widths is a well-deserved honour for the man who set up his stall every Saturday for 20 years as the shopfronts of Bellevue Road changed from the traditional butcher and baker, if not candlestick maker, to its present day mix of smart fashion salons, equally smart estate agents' windows and fine eateries and more.

Imagine you have a choice of today's Bellevue Road, Ron's 20-year occupancy or the elegance of the early 1900s. Which would you opt for?

Iain K S Gray

Early Wandsworth

from the Stone Age to the Saxons, in just over an hour

Dr Pamela Greenwood's talk to the Society at the AGM on

In an interesting and educational presentation, Dr Pamela Greenwood PhD, a local archaeologist and member of the Wandsworth Historical Society, took us swiftly, as if on a magic carpet, from a modern sketch of the path of the Thames at a time when Britain was joined to the continent and the river flowed through East Anglia into the Rhine, to sites of early prehistoric settlements, past a possible circular enclosure just south of Alvering Library where we were sitting. A brief glimpse followed of the location of Caesar's Camp on Wimbledon Common, which dates from 750 BC, long before the Romans arrived. A number of references were made to Roman Putney, and our speaker finished by showing us one or two finds from Saxon times, including a knife now in the Museum of London.

Near Felsham Road, a Neolithic settlement of 4000 – 3000 BC was found under a Roman settlement. Interestingly, there were signs that flint had been warmed on the site. This makes it easier to knap (chip

to shape). Clearing the forest in the area started at the beginning of the Neolithic period (4000 BC) but was much more extensive in the period 2400 – 800 BC.

A blurry black and white photo gave us a sight of an early excavation in Putney by the Wandsworth Historical Society in the 1970s, "Mortimer Wheeler style" with a series of square trial trenches in such close proximity to each other that this technique would not be practised today.

Dr Greenwood then showed us photos of a number of important finds, including the famous Battersea Shield, a dazzling piece of repoussé workmanship in bronze, now in the British Museum and an example of a shield boss, recently re-dated to 300BC, which was found at the mouth of the Wandle. Another fine piece, a Late Bronze Age pot, gleamed despite its age. She also showed us an impressive sword from the Middle Iron Age which some of us remember being in the Wandsworth Museum, though where it is now she does not know.

Other finds included a Roman sword,

found in its scabbard which was better preserved than the blade. A hoard of coins dating from 388 to 402 AD had been buried in the foreshore of the Thames and looked the worse for the experience. Our speaker explained that in Roman times coins were often buried in "exact half pots", whilst people were often buried in pottery "seconds" in pits beside the river. To the surprise of some of us we learnt that the Roman Putney site could be compared with the well-known Roman site at Ewell.

Dr. Greenwood stressed that a lot of finds came from wet places and it was particularly striking how many of these were sharp cutting implements such as axes, including adzes known as "Thames picks", daggers, rapiers, and swords. An arrowhead was found two years ago and an attractive late Roman bracelet was found floating after the Boat Race. Untold damage to the archaeology was caused, she said, by the big speedboats on the Thames for the Boat Race. Finally, an unusual find was that of a Roman beaver.

Josy Eldred

Wandsworth Society

May 2008

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What is going on in the town centre?

A great deal is happening in the town centre, some of it is being built now, – a lot more is proposed. It looks as if what has happened may already be too much. If what is proposed comes about the town centre will be unrecognisable – and not in a good way.

We want the town centre to thrive, to be an active and successful place. We want new

buildings to be considered, designed with care.

What we do not want is the town centre swamped by tall buildings.

The future of the town centre is one of the main issues developed in the Chairman's address on page 8

... but on a lighter note,



We press barons are not generally noted for our sentimentality. It was therefore with not a little surprise that we detected a stirring of emotion in the flinty heart. There is a nest, just visible in the foliage outside the penthouse eyrie that hoses the editorial powerhouse of Newsletter Press plc,

It is a grubby affair, the nest – not the penthouse, more plastic waste than twig, nestling, as only a nest can, in the crook of a branch. Not overly large, it seemed quite small even for the parent birds. We first noticed the beaks, gaping wide and raised to the sky not much more than a week ago. The change from featherless hatchling to fledgling was remarkably short. A few days ago there were four baby birds, bobbing and preening. Today all but one has flown the nest ... ahh.

and also in this issue ...

Local Yesterdays - a memory of a recollection on page 2

Early Wandsworth - a brief history of quite a lot of history, well more prehistory than history, although a lot depends on how history is defined – these are deep waters Watson: ... on page 2

Gordon Passmore - amongst many other things, an alderman, an aviator and an artilleryman, annoyingly that seems to be the end of alliteration, otherwise ... page 4

The Planning News - for the avoidance of doubt this is local planning news, not news

from across the pond, on page 6

Housing - facts and figures, all interesting, some worrying ... page 7

The Chairman's address - a look back at 2007 – and a look ahead, on page 8

Roads and Transport and River and Open Spaces - our committees get on their bikes, stand on the slipway and put on their walking shoes, all on page 11

Events - some dates for your diary, on page 12

Gordon Passmore

Honorary Freeman of the Borough

Gordon has been a member of the Wandsworth Society for many years. We are pleased to be able to reproduce this, the text of the presentation made to Gordon when he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Borough last year.

Gordon Seymour Passmore was born in Brighton, Sussex, in 1923, the eldest of five children, but he spent his early childhood in France, enjoying the simple village life-style in rural Normandy where his parents had settled after the First World War. Just before he was eight, the family returned to England and in the local school he attended he had to have extra tuition in English, which had become a second language.

The family were now living in Upper Beeding in West Sussex at the foot of the South Downs, close to the flood-plain of the River Adur. Here he spent an absorbing and uncomplicated boyhood for the next seven years. He joined the local Scouts, became a King's Scout, and was thrilled to be selected for the Sussex Contingent that went up to London in 1937 for the Coronation of King George VI.

Village schooling had not been academically challenging, so in 1938 Gordon was sent to stay with relatives near Virginia Water so that he could travel to Kingston to further his education and where in 1940 he succeeded in passing the London Matriculation exam.

World War II was now well under way and the 16 year old Gordon joined the Local Defence Volunteers (soon to become the Home Guard). With a forage cap, armband, a .303 rifle and five rounds of ammo strapped to his bicycle, he had to report to an old mill at the foot of St. Ann's Hill, Chertsey, when a siren sounded, ready to repel the enemy.

He then became a temporary Civil Servant in London. Based at Portland House near St. James's Park underground station, and taking his turn at fire-watching duties. In early 1941 he was transferred to the Dept. of Tank Design at Egham where his job was to catalogue for assessment the various defects that had occurred to tanks and armoured vehicles in France and Africa, which made depressing reading at times.

Later that year he volunteered for flying duties in the Fleet Air Arm and was called up in December 1941, the very day that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and

the USA entered the war. He obtained his wings as a wireless operator/gunner in December 1942. Thereafter he was posted to operational squadrons in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

He flew in Fairey Swordfish 'Stringbags' on anti-submarine patrols in the Straights of Gibraltar and later on 'Find, Fix and Strike' operations against U-Boats in the North Atlantic from the escort carrier HMS Campania. In 1944 he was transferred to a Barracuda Squadron on HMS Implacable, flying off the Norwegian coast. Later the Implacable, with the squadron now re-equipped with American Grumman 'Avenger' torpedo bombers, met up with the East Indies Fleet at Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, and then went on to join the British Pacific Fleet until the end of the war in 1945.

Gordon was shot down by anti-aircraft fire whilst on a night raid on a Japanese fleet anchorage. Fortunately his plane crashed into the sea and he was picked up a few hours later by the destroyer HMS Teazer and transferred back to Implacable by breeches buoy. Later he took part in the first bombing raid by British aircraft on the Japanese mainland.

When the war ended his carrier returned to Sydney, Australia, and all Fleet Air Arm personnel put ashore. Gordon returned to the UK in time for Christmas 1945. He had considerably exceeded a normal tour of duty and as a result was 'demobbed' early in 1946.

Now nearly 23 years old, he was faced with the problem of what to do for a living. His childhood dream had been to become a country auctioneer and land agent. He was advised to apply for a grant to qualify as a Chartered Surveyor with the College of Estate Management in London. This he did and he travelled up to London every day to college.

During 1947 he succeeded in becoming a trainee in the Estate Department of the old Metropolitan Water Board. The Water Board was arguably the largest landowner in Greater London and it provided him with very good professional experience. Gordon moved to London permanently in 1947 and found cheap 'digs' at Crescent Grove, Clapham Common (then in Wandsworth). He stayed there until he passed his finals and became a qualified surveyor in 1951. He then moved to a flat-share in Combemartin Road, Southfields.

Leaving the Water Board in 1965, he joined Camden Council where he helped to set up a new Valuer's Department at the formation of the London Boroughs.

Retiring from Camden in 1982 he became a Consultant Surveyor for a further 12 years.

After his move to Southfields in 1951, Gordon decided to get involved in local affairs. He joined the Putney Branch of the Young Conservatives (more for its social activities than for politics) just before the 1951 General Election. He soon found himself on the YC Political Committee and was Branch Chairman from 1954-1956.

He first stood for the Borough Council for Fairfield Ward in 1956 but was unsuccessful. The following year he was selected as one of the three London County Council Conservative candidates for Putney and was narrowly defeated in the 1958 election. However, he was invited to become a co-opted member of the LCC Education Committee and he served on the Schools Planning and the Special Schools Sub-Committees for three years. He also was asked to fill a Governor vacancy at Wandsworth Technical College (now South Thames) and remained a Governor for 36 years becoming Chairman from 1969-75 and overseeing its amalgamation with Putney College. He stood again unsuccessfully for Fairfield Ward in 1959 and in a subsequent by-election, and again in 1961 for the LCC.

His career as a councillor began in 1960 when, in a by-election, he was finally elected for Fairfield Ward. At the creation of the present London Borough in 1964, he was elected for Putney Ward, firstly to a shadow council as it produced the policies and structures for the new authority before it took over the following year as a fully functioning council. Re-elected for Putney Ward in 1968 he was chosen by his fellow councillors to be an Alderman. The position of Alderman was subsequently abolished. In 1974 he was elected as a councillor for Northcote Ward and was re-elected for that Ward in 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002. Deciding not to stand in 2006, he left the council with a record of service unequalled in Wandsworth.

Not surprisingly, over the years, he has had plenty of opportunity to serve on most, if not all, of the Council's main committees and has been able to bring experience, knowledge and skills to all aspects of its functions and duties.

During eleven years in Opposition, Gordon was the Minority Party spokesman on finance and therefore it was natural that when political control changed in 1968, and again in 1978, he should become Chairman of the Finance Committee. He was also Chief Whip of the Majority Group in 1968-70 and 1990-91 (a particularly

onerous task in the landslide of 1968)

Latterly he became the acknowledged expert amongst members on planning and development control and for 10 years was Chairman of the Planning Committee. He was the Council's authoritative voice on planning issues and was respected for the way in which he sought to apply the rules and regulations fairly and on merit for each planning application. His interest in planning matters was applied to good effect on behalf of the Council when he was appointed to the London Planning Advisory Committee and similar bodies.

Apart from all the above, Gordon has been actively involved in other public bodies and charities such as:
The Greater London (South West) Valuation Panel (1967-89) being a Panel Chairman.
First President SW London Valuation Tribunal (retired 1996)
Governor of Emanuel School (10 years)
Management Committee of Richard Cusden Homes (35 years).
Trustee of the Sir Walter St. John Educational Charity.
Trustee of the Wandsworth Peace Memorial Fund.

He was elected Mayor of Wandsworth in 1970/71 and again in 1989/90. He was made an MBE in the 1996 New Years Honours List for services to local government in Wandsworth. In 2005 the Council conferred on him the title of Honorary Alderman. Gordon showed remarkable staying power during his years as a Councillor and gave sterling service not only to the Council but also to past and present residents of Wandsworth.

Unusually for a naval man, in 1959 he joined the Honourable Artillery Company and was a Gunner (TA) for 8 years. Since then he has had a ceremonial role in the City of London with the Company of Pikemen and Musketeers.

Gordon married a local Wandsworth girl, Shirley Pritchard, who has herself been active in local affairs and was given a Civic Award in 1998. They have three surviving children (James, Emma and Sarah). Their eldest son (Hugh) died from leukaemia when nearly 5 and the youngest at birth. They also have a 6-year-old granddaughter.

The Planning News

with apologies to E Annie Proulx and Mr Kevin Stacey

It has been a busy few weeks, as might have been said after the thaw in Nova Scotia!

Ram Brewery site, Capital Studios and Buckhold Road sites.

We are now considering our response to the application submitted towards the end of March by Minerva plc for the comprehensive redevelopment of these sites in central Wandsworth.

As members will know the Society has been involved in discussions over the last two years with the developers. Our principal concerns have been for -

- the lack of any proposals to the link the development to the River Thames by way of a bridge over Armoury Way
- the excessive height of the two tall blocks
- the lack of open space

The recent presentations at the Old Picture House show the schemes very much as before, with some amendments to the height and alignments of the tall blocks on the Ram Brewery site.

We have made our views clear to the developers.

If these proposals are approved we believe the Council will be repeating the disastrous mistake of the 1960s to allow the Arndale Centre to be built.

The Capital Studios site will have 9-16 storey residential blocks, and will contain the only public car parking for the three sites, with just under 80 spaces. Can you imagine the scramble for these spaces at times of bad weather! We believe that the developers have got the car parking provision for this major scheme very wrong indeed.

The Buckhold Road site (previously the offices and a depot of Young's) will be virtually all residential, with both open-market and affordable housing. We believe that the density proposed is too high, access for deliveries and car parking too restricted, although the views across King George's Park will be good.

The Council require comments and objections by the 2nd June - we will be there! If you have any observations to make please let us know.

Clapham Junction

The Society was invited to a presentation by the developer for a major redevelopment of the station

entrance. The scheme includes additional shopping and two 30 or so storey towers for residential use to be constructed between St John's Hill and the first platform, no 17. A new high-level access to the platforms is proposed, but would you believe it, using the existing 80+ year old pedestrian bridge refurbished!! Lifts to provide wheelchair access to the platforms are proposed.

The Mayor for London has exempted the developers from providing affordable housing. We see no reason for this and will be making sure that the council knows of our concerns. We see no reason for excusing developers from this contribution, just because they say that it cannot be afforded. There is also virtually no provision for a satisfactory transport interchange.

We are to liaise with the Battersea Society, no application has been made yet.

Putney Place (opposite East Putney Station)

There are two proposals close to East Putney station each of which involve the demolition of existing office buildings with high-rise and high-density residential blocks.

We are again liaising, this time with the Putney Society.

The Borough is in danger of becoming overwhelmed by the massive scale of these new schemes, which appear to be being considered individually. Your Society believes that the Council should not consider these schemes in isolation.

Springfield Hospital, now the Springfield Garden Village

The planning group has continued discussions with the team planning the regeneration of the Springfield site. We attended a most useful presentation in February and we were conducted on a site walkabout.

A further public consultation has taken place following which a number of local voices were heard, expressing concerns particularly about the height of some of the residential blocks planned close to existing low rise housing close by. We expressed our concerns at the last meeting We are meeting Andrew Simpson of Springfield again shortly to take discussions further.

Philip Whyte

Housing

demand and supply in Wandsworth

At a Society meeting on Wednesday 30 January Dave Worth the Head of Housing Services at Wandsworth Borough Council described the current situation in relation to 'affordable' housing, rentable housing and a great deal more.

These notes provide a synopsis of a very informative and excellent talk

Housing stock

34,000	total owned by WB Council
	of which
17,000	are rented out
17,000	are leased under the Right To Buy
1,480	owned by housing associations
1,366	forecast to be built during 07/08
612	bedsits – 4000 on waiting list
513	2 bedroom

Waiting list

There are 9,000 people on the waiting list - some of whom could be on waiting lists of other Councils. 25% will be single people, 75% families.

This figure also includes

- people needing to be re-housed for Council's needs such as: decanting properties in areas required for redevelopment;
- people needing to be moved for their own protection;
- people needing Supported Housing – people in hostels, perhaps with special needs; cross borough mobility

Housing allocation

Wandsworth has a residential population of approximately 250,000 – approximately 25% will live in Council properties. The majority of people on the housing list will be in private rented accommodation and allocation is on a points system (see website for details). Under the WBC those on the top of the list will be given some choice, i.e. they will be circulated regularly with the list of available properties and may "bid" – but only twice. National government advocate strict allocation system but WBC consider it an investment to have people living where they prefer to when possible. 1000-1200 dwellings fall vacant each year.

Homelessness

It is not the responsibility of the Council to house all homeless people in the borough. Traditionally priority will always be given to children, those with

disability, and those homeless through fire or flood. New categories include 17-18 year olds and those "institutionalised" e.g. ex army or prison. Homelessness must not be intentional.

At the end of December 2008 some 80 people were in bed and breakfast. They will not be there long as rather than keeping people in bed and breakfast for extended periods it is Council policy

- to provide the deposit to enable them to go into private rented accommodation, this is both cheaper and obviously better for families, than bed and breakfast accommodation.
- to promote out of London moves (to areas where housing is available)

In situations where there is violence in a family, for example a woman with children with a violent partner, the Council will reinforce the home to prevent violent entry – and, where necessary, provide a "safe room" within the house.

By these measures £300,000 is saved which could otherwise be spent on keeping 100 families in temporary accommodation.

Other means of finding housing

No one will be forced to leave a family home, where the dwelling is under-occupied because the family has left, but £1,000 / bed will be offered to such individuals to persuade them to downsize for example to smaller "new build" accommodation.

Hidden homes

The transformation of disused areas into accommodation, for example old boiler rooms, storage areas and garages under blocks of flats, has provided the opportunity to create 200 new homes to be let. There are another 150 similar projects in the pipeline.

Rent and shared ownership

Rents range between £85 and £105 per week. Shared Ownership is very popular. It used to be that a 50% split was offered, but because of increased house prices 25% and even 10% shares are now offered.

Dave Worth made it clear he does not make policy, his job is to implement it – but he really knows his subject, and clearly takes pride in his department.

Valerie Taylor

The chairman's address

at the AGM 2008

I am starting my report this year by discussing the “slog”, the Society's backbone.

Through regular executive and sub-committee meetings, the work of the Society moves on and somehow, miraculously at times it seems to me, public meetings are arranged and appear on the calendar; committees meet; functions such as the summer picnics at King George's park, walkabouts, visits – last year to a recycling plant, I note – are organised; letters are written and telephone calls made; e-mails sent and circulated; meetings with Wandsworth Councillors and Officers, the press, planning consultants, developers and their consultants and very senior TfL officials arranged etc, etc – a long list.

This work is generally carried out by colleagues in their spare time and “excuse-boots” from work to whom I owe a huge debt of gratitude for their energy, commitment, encouragement and argument through the last year. I would, like to remind you what has been organised for the members and public alike, and how this has been managed.

- 6 Public meetings – ranging from talks on Sacred Spaces to Lee miller to planning matters.
- 4 Musical Soirees courtesy of the Wards
- 4 “Jollies” – ranging from picnics to walkabouts to parties
- 8 Executive Committee meetings on a monthly basis
- 20+ Sub-committee meetings
 - Planning every first Wednesday of the month dealing with a wide range of topics such Springfield Hospital and developments by Minerva
 - Transport
 - Rivers and Open spaces
 - Meetings

Somehow all these fall into place around each other: few dates seem to clash. I have never yet panicked that an arrangement will not be made or clangours dropped – my main concern at our public meetings being that the modern, over- sophisticated equipment such as digital projectors actually functions!

What works very well is our bi-monthly, award winning Newsletter! Whilst not quite meeting my ambitious target for the number of issues to be produced which I set last year, five have been, including the Bedside. They are pithy, cover a wide variety of topics, often with humour, and are extremely well edited. It is a very demanding task. The Society owes a debt of gratitude and our congratulations to our editor – Peter Farrow!

Over its three and a half decades, the Wandsworth Society has led discussions on leading topics, campaigns, made a stand on major issues, often involving the failures of Councils and Government - for example, the two great road threats. It has always attempted to be positive and suggest alternatives to issues to which it objects. This has been a consistent theme of the Society's work. I repeat it from time to time to remind ourselves that we must continue to try to seek solutions to what, at times, seem quite insolvable issues. Two such issues stand out this year – the closure of the Museum and two local libraries. March 2008 saw the Society's Executive lobbying the Council to

stand back from its proposals to close West Hill and Alvering libraries and the Museum. It did not do so, but was embarrassingly snookered by the extraordinarily generous gift of £2 million from the Hintze Foundation. Since then, Wandsworth Society members, Sheila Allen and Shirley Passmore, have formed and chaired the Friends of Wandsworth Museum and the Museum Campaign Group respectively. They have put in countless hours in their determination to save the Museum. Our Society's and their groups' message is that the Museum must live on and rise, phoenix-like, from the quite senseless, and some would argue crass, mistake made by the Council to close it. Support for the Museum has, for the first time I can recall, brought all the local societies supported by over 20,000 petitioners, together to try to steer the Council away from its decision to close the Borough's Museum.

Last year, we led discussions about the future of Wandsworth's town centre. We campaigned for joined-up thinking, taking a measured view of the town's future; making strategic decisions to draw together the huge riverside developments with those currently being planned nearer the town centre and in the future. This year, we have written to the leading participants, met the Leader of the Council and the Planning Committee Chairman, developers and top Council officials, but they are all set in their ways, with the developers finding individual and significant sites and drawing up their proposals privately with Councillors and officials alike. The Chief Executive explained to us in response to our serious enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act that developers and their consultants meet the Leader, Councillors and Planning staff at un-minuted meetings prior to schemes being prepared and put out to public consultation. We have also stressed to the Planning Committee and Council Leader that the value of the sites is not a material consideration in planning terms.

The outcome of such private deliberations is now quite clear – a 16 storey slab block has been approved by West Hill; at Young's, 32 and 42 storey blocks, towering above a high-density, high-rise development of 6-10 storey blocks together with another 16 storey block at Buckhold Road have been submitted by Minerva for planning permission, and the Society is approaching consultants for assistance in preparing our response. We are approaching Young's and Minerva to ask then to consider releasing part of the corner "heritage" site of listed buildings as a home for a major museum perhaps relating to the local, industrial and social history of SW London.

A further instance of the Council's deliberations with developers is the recently proposed 39 storey housing blocks behind the listed Falcon Inn at Clapham Junction – on the periphery of our area. This was followed, during March, by the announcement by developers of a 19 and two 25 storey blocks on high ground at East Putney Station. Together, these five tower blocks, proposed not in response to a carefully considered Borough Plan in which the issues of the future siting of tall towers and their aesthetics and townscape impact both near and afar, reveal the complicity, expediency and the sheer greed of developers and their consultants, who see the door open to such developments thanks to the Mayor of London, a weak, leaderless Government on these issues, and a weak Council here in Wandsworth who do not wish to offend developers and which seems deaf to arguments to avoid the destruction of the town centre in Wandsworth. We suggest too that it is arguable whether blocks of this magnitude are indeed suitable for homes; whether families in need of housing are being exploited? As more affordable housing is required of developers, it seems allowances are being made to ensure their profits by driving up densities and massing to excess. Many such homes are investments, often to overseas investors; some indeed are left unused for resale as and when time is ripe. We question whether

The chairman's address

AGM 2008

these tall blocks, especially at Putney, will not invade the privacy of private gardens and homes in the surrounding streets.

What we are experiencing is not rational town planning but a series of reactions, with planning officials and Councillors alike not leading but reeling at the end of a pre-emptive strike by developers – this is government and planning on the hoof. The need for tower blocks of this magnitude should be questioned and be based, at the very least, on forward-looking local plans and, indeed, a consensus for their siting if any are to be built at all.

Another example of developers' greed and the weakness of the Council to take a stand, is the partial development of major sites which is stopped, the land reappropriated and new planning applications made for the undeveloped half to a much higher density, as has happened twice at the Gargoyle Wharf and Riverside Quarter sites. The latter only gained planning permission on Appeal, the second major Appeal for this site. For the developers to be able to have such decisions overturned to their huge advantage and contrary to the Appeal verdict in matters like density, traffic generation, etc., is flouting a system which relies on public participation to reach a rational and fair decision. It is little wonder that the public is turning its back on its representatives as the Council will not face up to this particular pressure from developers!

To explain how development can be genuinely tackled with public support, I move to Springfield Hospital – the future "Springfield Village". We have liaised, indeed been asked to do so, with the Director of Development and his consultant team whom we have met several times this year. There have been two public consultations. The NHS Trust has respected the concern raised by the public – reducing planned building heights facing the Metropolitan Open Land, for example. This is a continuing and evolving process. Really good consultants are being employed; issues are quite transparent. Neighbourhood involvement and access through existing streets to the future Village is critical to its success in our view, and we will continue press this point.

We have addressed too the recent selling off by the Council of small, light industrial sites, homes to a small number of businesses, in Earlsfield and Battersea, for example, for housing. We have also

addressed this year the rolling out of the Local Development Framework (currently called the UDP) documentation, and the "Sustainability Approach Review" documents, both ticking box exercises – consultation in name only.

To cap all the topics I have touched on, a new Planning Bill is currently going through Parliament which, I am sure, will be full of surprises, including, I gather, the prospect of local Councillors deciding local planning appeals, presumable as a government cost cutting exercise to save on independent Planning Inspectors. If this happens, it will take our breath away!

Traffic and public transport remain hot issues. Trains are at bursting point, yet new developments continue to stress their links to trains and buses (but not roads). We are regularly in touch with TFL through Linda Ulrich. We await – and have done so for 30 years! – plans to sort out the Wandsworth Town gyratory system. Clapham Junction (and I gather Putney Station) is being lined up for improvements. Clapham Junction Station should be a study for redevelopment as a smart 21st century, European style railway junction, capped with a new village development thus cancelling the need for tower blocks, rather than tinkering with a run down, 100 year old set of platforms, access bridges and tunnels. Heathrow – the third runway – we have left largely to others but have offered our strong support to stop expansion of Heathrow. Cars, congestion, signage and deteriorating roads will figure in the Society's rejuvenated Roads and Transport Sub-committee convened by Lynda. Hopefully, we can make a fuller report next year.

Bruce St Julian-Bown is reviving the Open Spaces sub-committee and seeks members' support.

I will finish by offering my sincere thanks for the support I have received from an enthusiastic and hardworking Committee. They bully me, e-mail me, ring me, but we do all work well together, and the Society's affairs continue to roll. It is vital that they do and that we continue to take a lead on local environmental issues, and that we strive to ensure that the Wandsworth Society does not lose sight of its aims to lead the argument for the continuing enhancement of the qualities we all associate with living in the Borough and in London.

John Dawson

Roads and transport ♦♦♦

... a committee is re-born

The Roads and Transport Sub-Committee took up the fight again on 1st May; we hope to be small but powerful. However, there are still seats around the table if someone else would like to join...

Our agenda at the moment covers three main points: Heathrow, the quality, or not, of the roads, and a continued vision for the Town Centre.

- Heathrow: there will be a meeting at Heathrow on 31st May. This promises to be something of an event for all the family: assembly time is 12.00 noon at Hatton Cross tube (but check the websites of HACAN, NoTRAG, PlaneStupid, The 2m Group or the Campaign Against Climate Change for up to date amendments). Programme: a carnival-style march followed by a festival-style event at Sipson Village.
- Road Conditions: potholes, lakes and exposed cables abound in Wandsworth. We shall be alerting the Technical Services department about these and insisting that, even if the roads belong to TfL, then it is WBC's duty to dictate to TfL – not the other way round!
- Town centre: the Wandsworth Society worked hard substantial plans to revitalise the Town Centre with 2-way traffic both to and from the High Street to East and West Hills. Even if there is no funding available at the moment, this campaign for the centre needs to be kept alive

Forward planning : we hope to -

- invite a speaker from the London Buses to update us (the Society) on plans for new or improved services in the area
- create a green list, that is, to consolidate the information borough-wide about green transport issues such as electric car energy points, and pay-as-you-go car-sharing.

Linda Ulrich

Rivers and open spaces ♦♦♦

... a committee will be re-born

We are pleased to announce that Bruce St Julian Bown has volunteered to be co-ordinator of the Rivers and Open Spaces sub-group which has not been functioning for some time. Bruce represents the Society and Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce on The Wandle Valley project which aims to develop a continuous urban park from source in Carshalton to mouth at the Thames in Wandsworth. He sees this work linking in with the Society's role in helping maintain and enhance our Open Spaces particularly as concern about perceived threats to Wandsworth Common led to the formation of The Wandsworth Society.

If you have a particular interest in Open Spaces or just want to contribute please do get in touch with Bruce, 0208 874 6966, who will be delighted to hear from you. No expertise is required just some of your time. July is the start date so you have time to consider joining and we do hope you will

THURSDAY MAY 22ND
7.45 FOR 8PM
DANCE 1050 – 1660
FRANÇOISE CARTER

DANCING WAS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR PASTIMES THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE AGES AND RENAISSANCE. THIS TALK WILL SHOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL DANCING, AT COURT AND IN THE COUNTRY, FROM 1050 TO 1660, AND WILL BE ILLUSTRATED WITH A BROAD RANGE OF SLIDES FROM MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS, MURALS AND PAINTINGS.

THOSE PRESENT AT FRANÇOISE'S LAST TALK ON THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF JAPANESE GARDENS WILL BE PARTICULARLY DELIGHTED AT HER RETURN VISIT AS THAT WAS A VERY SPECIAL EVENT.

Sunday 8th June 12 Noon - 4pm
THE WANDLE VALLEY FESTIVAL
the local contribution being in
King George's Park

Programme leaflet should be available shortly

Thursday 26th June
John Gimlette
will present his new book
Panther Soup

... the mud of Western Europe in which the armoured divisions brawled – is a subtle book, with telling testimony from the survivors of what it was actually like to fight a war with few rules ... The Independent

John is the author of
At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig
and Theatre of Fish

Sunday 8th June
Summer Soiree
“My Prettiest Perdita”

Performed by
Karin Fernald (actress) and
Ian Honeyman (singer & fortepiano)
Music and songs of the period arranged by
Richard Burnett & Graham Sharpe,
with an idea or two thrown in by *Ian*.
Mary ‘Perdita’ Robinson, *actress, courtesan and icon of fashion*, became notorious for her glamorous and much-publicised love affair with the Prince of Wales, the future George IV, after he fell for her playing Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale*. However her life was far from easy ... Mary spent a year in the *debtors’ prison* with her baby daughter following an ill-advised youthful marriage; her career was cut short owing to an accident which left her crippled. She turned to writing romantic poetry as a source of solace and income, and she also wrote articles under the pseudonym *Tabitha Bramble*. This *highly entertaining and moving* dramatic and musical performance is based on Perdita’s memoirs, published in 1798.

6.30 Drinks in the Garden, 7.00 First half of the concert, 7.45 Dinner interval (food provided by the audience) 9.00 Second half of the concert.

We are lucky to have this unusual and outstanding recital - prices need to be raised for these special performers ...

Places at £15, concessions £10 may be reserved at the Wards, 020 8874 4938

Post script

This is the Newsletter of The Wandsworth Society, a registered charity no 263737. The Society is concerned with the quality of life and the environment in Wandsworth town centre, Wandsworth Common and adjacent areas. If you are not already a member and would like to join please contact the Membership Secretary Gill Gray, details on page three.

Please address Letters to the Editor, any comments, or, even better, contributions to -

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or e-mail to - wandsworth.society@mac.com