

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter February 2015



Job Done !

Planning News

What is new on the planning front for 2015? Well quite a bit actually, so here goes.

South Thames College and Wandsworth Council site, High Street and Garratt Lane

This application for a major redevelopment for predominantly residential use was resolved to be granted on the 16 December 2014. The proposal includes some retail and ancillary space on the ground floor, but the loss of significant employment space has been overridden by the apparent need for more housing. The Society made an objection to the application (which appears on the website), but in this case the Council has acted as judge and jury and granted itself approval. We are considering what action we can take to allow a more objective view of the proposals; the calling-in of such a scheme would permit closer scrutiny of the heights, the massing and the lack of consideration given to listed buildings and the open space of the Old Burial Ground, and of how the proposals align themselves with Council policy approved by the Minister after detailed consideration. If any member has experience that could assist the planning group please get in touch.

Meeting with the Leader of the Planning Applications Committee

We proposed a meeting with the Leader of the PAC in the autumn as a follow-up to our letter to the Prime Minister last year. Councillor McDermott, the new Chair of this committee, indicated that she would be receptive to such a meeting, but after consideration stated that the Planning Forum was adequate for airing views. We strongly disagree, as we have no wish to criticise the Council or its officers in open forum. We are most concerned that the Council continue to regard their policies as 'guidelines' only, as stated by the Leader of the Council during a Wandsworth Society meeting before the local elections last year.

Skydec

The photograph on the front cover shows the end result, and we have received one or two 'well done' and 'keep at it' messages! Thank you to those who have let us know that our efforts are appreciated.

Town-centre gyratory system

In November TfL held a two-day consultation in Southside on the proposed works for the partial pedestrianisation of the High Street and the realignment of Armoury Way. We have a number of points of concern and hope to meet TfL soon.

Pocket Development, Mapleton Crescent

The planning group were invited to attend a presentation by Pocket, the developers of a scheme in Mapleton Crescent just off Garratt Lane. The scheme (a surprising 24+ floors) will provide mostly affordable housing in a triangular-shaped building with cycle parking (no car space). The developers will provide a short riverside walkway beside the Wandle, but this will lead nowhere. We have been asked to comment to Pocket before the application is submitted, however we find ourselves in some difficulty as, by accepting a substantial tall building in this location, our efforts could be seen as acknowledging that carts and horses can be driven through policies (the building is not in a conservation area and is shielded from King George's Park by the Southside car park).

Cross Rail 2

TfL are proposing to follow the completion of the current Cross Rail project with the north-south version known as Cross Rail 2. This will run from Wimbledon to Potters Bar. Part of the line is underground and reserve/safeguarding notices have recently been served. An interchange at Clapham Junction is planned, but no further information is currently to hand.

Winstanley and York Road Estates

The Council are proposing significant redevelopment of these estates, which are partly under its ownership. There has been public consultation with residents and, inevitably, differences of opinion have arisen. It is hoped that many social problems will be addressed, but the plans still have a long way to go. We understand that the Council will be promoting this scheme, and that funding is being sought from central government.

Book House

No application was required for the change of use to residential, thus deemed consent is in place. We are sorry to note that the shops at the top of East Hill will lose the support of yet another local employer.

PCSU, Falcon Road, Clapham Junction

While on the subject of loss of employment space, the PCSU building at the southern end of Falcon Road has also been given PDR (permitted development rights) to change to residential.

Cycle paths on Wandsworth Common

After last autumn's public inquiry on shared paths, the Inspector has agreed with the Council that the lines separating cyclists and pedestrians should be removed. We supported the Council's case.

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www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk

Wandsworth Society

February 2015

Out With the Old, in With the New

The Acting Editor hopes that you have all had a Christmas and New Year which has been enjoyable and fun with family and friends, and are now looking forward to shorter nights, warmer weather and a healthy and fulfilling time in the months to come.

The Society has continued on its path of providing a varied programme of events through the regular presentations at West Side Church as well as other activities – be they walks, musical evenings or gatherings of a few friends. We continue to seek new ways of extending the scope of the Society and I am pleased to report that we have been approached by Wandsworth Talking News to allow the newsletter to be transmitted in the spoken form to blind or visually impaired people in the borough. This is a service provided by volunteers based in Tooting who read the content of publications and then distribute them on memory sticks. It will be interesting to learn how this is received.

We need new ideas for the spreading of the word about the Society, as the saying goes, ‘if you don’t use it, you’ll lose it’. Throw some new ideas at the members of the groups, we can only say – YES! We have the Society’s AGM coming up in March at which officers will be either confirmed or replaced, so if you feel that you would like to help in any way with the Society please let us know. We are not a closed body and would very much appreciate any ideas for the future. The Borough now has a very much more youthful population and, although we are aware that many are fully committed with work and families, we should love to have some younger people buzzing around, to keep those of us slightly longer in the tooth on our toes!

A very happy New Year to all and I hope to be able to pass the green eye-shield to the next editor before too long.

Philip Whyte
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Planning News Continued . . .

St Anne’s Church, St Anne’s Crescent

One of the mobile telephone operators is proposing to place antennae in the cupola of the pepperpot of the church. Permission is required as the church is Grade 2 and this would alter the external elevation; certainly it would not be possible to see through the structure as at present. If any member wishes to object or comment please get in touch and we will let you have the application number.

Last, but not least, the Ram Quarter

Demolition is almost complete and piling works for the basement area are expected to begin in February. Marketing has started and the developers are circulating regular updates on progress; certainly communication is a lot more positive now that the scheme is underway. I look forward to my stroll along the Wandle and a glass of something at one of the riverside cafés.

PW

We don't want to live in Croydon, do we? My art master didn't.

The front-page story in the local *South London Press* of 12 December was headed '[Wandsworth] Society chairman bemoans "depressing" rate of development – "High Rises Bringing Us Down".' Philip was commenting on the recent planning application for a 26-storey tower overlooking the Old Burial Ground in Wandsworth Town (see also his comments on p.2). The tall tower, he said, would impact adversely on the local environment: 'There seems to be no regard for intrinsic value – only commercial value.' The number of tall towers being built in SW18 was now rivalling the development of Croydon 50 years ago. 'Croydon had a reputation through the 1960s and 70s of putting up big buildings which then became socially unacceptable. Wandsworth is heading that way.' Philip was echoing the views of many local people on the planning application. The Chairman of the Tonsley Residents' Association, for example, wrote that 'we have chosen to make our homes in Wandsworth, NOT CROYDON'.

As he might expect, I largely agree with Philip about Croydon. Thinking about whether and why I did agree, I was taken back to the art room of Whitgift School, South Croydon, in the late 1950s. The centre of Croydon was starting to 'go up' when, as a ten-year-old, I started at Whitgift. We all know how influential some teachers can be. For the next two years I was held in thrall by the brilliantly theatrical performances of my art master, one of the most eccentric and remarkable teachers I have been privileged to meet. He lived in Reigate, a far cry from Croydon, travelling back and forth in a rather ancient 'motor'.

Frank Potter was bald, bespectacled and bow-tied, with a white military moustache – eminently imitable by schoolboys because of his stammer and curiously old-fashioned habit of droppin' the 'g'. He was, I confidently assured my parents, 'at least 80' (but, in fact, not 65 when he retired in 1959). Certainly, he belonged to another age, describing himself as 'the last of the Victorians'. Modern art to Frank meant the Impressionists, ending with Bonnard, whom he particularly admired. After Bonnard, there was little to admire, and very little to admire in modern architecture, either.

I realise now that the dominant influence on Frank's view of the world may not have been his Slade training – though he was a considerable artist. He had earlier served in the Great War and army experience was a frequent source of mysterious aphorisms such as 'the Army's alright if you're not in it' and 'a soldier doesn't foul his own nest'. He treated schoolboys as young soldiers who needed disciplining and civilising to enter the officer class (people with good manners who had 'standards' and appreciated their heritage), to which we should all aspire.

Boys needed to be 'civilised', and civilisation was under threat down the road – in Croydon. Frank's mission was to teach young gentlemen (at the age of ten

we were always addressed as 'gentlemen') about beauty in art and architecture and civilised living. This meant standards in everything: cleanliness – one whole art period was once taken up with shoe-cleaning and then hand-washing; compulsory learning of the Italic script and correct format for addresses – envelopes (for school reports) addressed to parents were torn up many times to achieve perfection; our paintings – sometimes torn up too, if they looked, for example, like a 'disused Chinese lavatory'; typography – standards promoted via an ancient printing press; appreciation of architecture, mainly churches, on excursions to the countryside – sometimes to see a fox hunt as well (our coach got lost, somewhat to my relief). And boys needed to cross the Channel to see great art and architecture, but also to learn about wine and food. France was not, however, fully civilised – its people lacked manners. Greater civilisation was to be found in (Franco's) Spain, whose people had proper manners. And it was in the art room I first smelt real coffee.

We had to choose, Frank once opined, 'between A-A-Athens and . . . C-C-Croydon'. Croydon was becoming a 'sardine-can civilisation', with its ugly mimicking of American sky-scraping blocks. Modern cars parked at the school (mostly owned by other masters) were no more than sardine cans. Most shops were to be despised, but you could tell Sainsbury's was superior to Woolworth's by comparing the fascias of their shop fronts.

I remember vividly the thrill of Frank's brilliant mimicry of the long-serving Leader of Croydon Council (with inbuilt Conservative majority) and determined mastermind of Croydon's re-development. Whether or not other 11-year-olds reported his mimicry to surprised parents, I guess this was an occasion when Frank went too far. The mimicked Alderman Sir James Marshall, himself an Old Whitgiftian, was also Chairman of the Whitgift Governors – and it so happened that the Whitgift Foundation would benefit substantially from Croydon's re-development: its Trinity Grammar School was housed in a rather fine Victorian building in the centre of town; the land was sold in the 60s, the school, despite public outcry, demolished and, from the profits, rebuilt further away. The site now houses the Whitgift Shopping Centre. Croydon High School, across the road from Trinity, similarly 'benefited' from Croydon's too rapid re-development and property boom – the town centre did not.

What does this story tell us? Frank was an original: a radical, trouble-making conservative; a romantic aesthete and an authoritarian; a conformist and a non-conformist. He was often a joke, but he was right to inveigh against Croydon's 'progress'. Unsurprisingly, he was a founder of the Reigate Society. He cared about much that I now care about. He would have understood our Society's concerns about the future of Wandsworth, but never have wanted to live here – or in Croydon.

David Kirk

Inns of Court Tour

23 October 2014

Seventeen members of the Wandsworth Society met our Blue Badge Guide Angela Down outside High Holborn tube station and after a brief introduction outside the nearby Ship Tavern (founded 1549) set off to visit the Inns of Court: Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn, Inner Temple and Middle Temple, all of which date from the 14th century.

First stop Lincoln's Inn Fields, the second oldest square in London, conveniently located mid-way between the City, seat of money, and Westminster, seat of government. Originally owned by the Knights of St John, Lincoln's Inn acquired the land in the 14th century. We admired the west-side buildings: one built for the Dukes of Newcastle; another, Lindsey House, reputed to have been designed by Inigo Jones has a Dickens connection, appearing in *Bleak House* as Mr Tulkinghorn's residence. This was the first of many links the area has with Dickens. The author had a dim view of the legal profession, possibly as a result of early work as a lawyers' clerk.

We then moved into the middle of Lincoln's Inn Fields, the site of public executions for several centuries, but now tranquil gardens. Just to the north, occupying two houses, is Sir John Soane's Museum, crammed with the architect's eclectic collection of sculpture, architecture and paintings and well worth a visit.

Crossing High Holborn to Warwick Court Angela told us more about the legal profession. It seems that no formal qualification was required for a lawyer until 1840, although only the well-off could afford an apprenticeship to a barrister. Originally, all that had been necessary was to attend 36 dinners in the Inns' dining halls. This was later reduced to 24 and is now a mere 12. Angela also explained the role of clerks to barristers and solicitors and the money there was to be made – often up to 10 % of their chambers' fees.

In Gray's Inn Gardens we stopped to look at a building that might have housed the office that Dickens worked in. He later described the penetrating fug, made up of a compound of smelly parchments and mutton-fat candles. On through the maze of buildings to admire Gray's Inn Hall. The Inn suffered badly during the war, and the extensive rebuilding is clearly visible even now. Outside the hall is a statue of Francis Bacon, one of their most famous sons. We then passed through a fine timbered building on High Holborn to the courtyard of

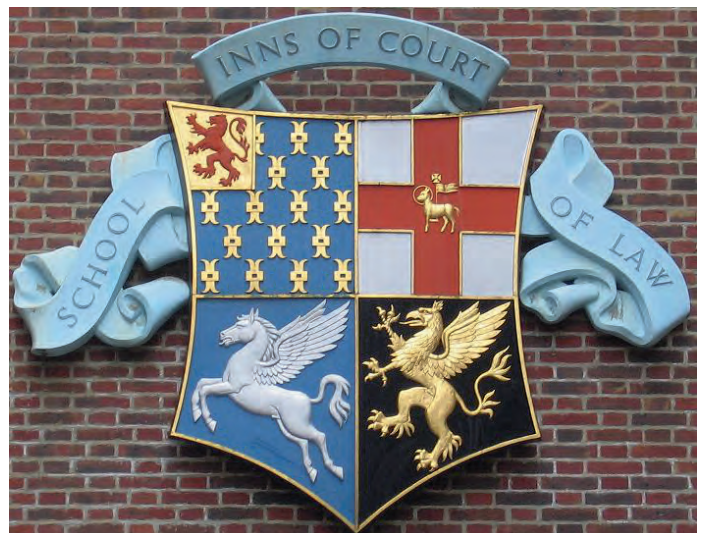
Staple Inn, one of the Courts of Chancery and mentioned by Dickens as a quiet place away from the hubbub outside.

In Lincoln's Inn we paused before the somewhat overpowering Victorian hall built in 1840 before entering the fine undercroft of the chapel on our way to the adjacent 15th-century hall – much smaller and more appealing than its replacement. Passing out into Chancery Lane, we followed a footpath to Ede & Ravenscroft, who have been supplying wigs and gowns to the profession since the 17th century. According to Angela, horsehair wigs, handmade on the premises, cost anything up to £700, gowns can set you back £1,200.

Moving south, we crossed the Strand to Temple Church and the Inner Temple Hall. Then into Middle Temple where the Lamb and Flag crest marks the boundary with the winged horse of Inner Temple. Busy Fountain Court with its ancient mulberry trees leads to Middle Temple hall, which miraculously survived the war. Here the first recorded performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* took place on 2 February 1602.

We ended our walk outside the Royal Courts of Justice, having had a thoroughly enjoyable two hours with Angela, whose depth of knowledge and wry sense of humour brought admirably to life the 700 years of history and two miles we had covered in her company.

John Roscoe



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Air Pollution in Wandsworth

We can expect to hear more about 'killer' air pollution in London, and so we should – pollution levels are still far too high; reducing them would benefit the community as a whole. Samantha Heath, Director of the London Sustainability Exchange (LSx), a 'think and do tank', gave us a lively talk in October. She argued that 'what makes a healthy street is largely the same as what makes a street vital, liveable, good for the local economy and good for the environment'. Samantha gave us an overview of the problem across our area, and the work currently being done by LSx and local societies such as ours to raise public awareness and stimulate necessary action. We should play a part in these activities during 2015. There is now a link on www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk to her presentation, and see also <http://www.lsx.org.uk/>.

DK

Industries Along the Wandle

A talk by Dorian Gerhold, 20 November

Some 40 members of the Society attended this most interesting talk by Dorian, local historian and sometime Chair of the Wandsworth Historical Society.

Unlike most of the other rivers that run into the Thames in and around London, the Wandle is fast flowing, with a drop of 124 ft in 9 miles. The cheap power, clean water, proximity to London and ease of communication with the city along the Thames enabled Wandsworth to become a prosperous settlement. Its industrial heyday was between the 17th and 19th centuries, but the origins of this prosperity lay further back. We know that by the time of the Anglo-Saxons there were water-mills grinding corn along the Wandle, and the Domesday Book mentions four mills near the Thames. These became known as the Lower, Middle, Upper and Adkins mills, while further south there was also the Iron Mill in Wimbledon parish.

Lower Mill was sited at what is now Point Pleasant. At one point this mill ground wheat from 13 counties. It moved to oil-milling later but then reverted to corn before it burned down in 1777; rebuilt, it lingered on to 1893 and was demolished in 1899. Next came Middle Mill, in Wandsworth Plain, opposite the Armoury pub. Again a corn mill, which then began making bolting cloth used in the milling process which it carried on until c.1919. Upper Mill lay where Southside now is. The site contained two mills on it, which also ground corn until the late 17th century before branching out into various other products. It was rebuilt in 1818, re-equipped in mid-1920s and then finally destroyed by fire in 1928. Part of the structure remained until the construction of the Arndale Centre in 1962.

Sited behind the Old Sergeant pub in Garratt Lane, Adkins Mill produced flour and ventured into other trades as well – including cloth and hat making. Dyeing, especially scarlet, was a speciality of Wandsworth. Brazil wood was ‘rasped’ to get the dye, and for a while the mill was known as the Brazil Mill. This process continued until the discovery of chemical dyes in the 1830s. In 1634 iron battering started at Adkins: John Aubrey mentions the making of iron kitchen-ware at the site. Elsewhere along the Wandle iron mills made plates from iron bars, while the Lower Mill carried out the more precise work of manufacturing the plates into pans. Skilled workmen from Liège were brought over to do the work. Later production switched to copper, and frying pans continued to be made until 1891. Adkins, adaptable as ever, also made cannon, then paper. There were losses at first but from 1865 they prospered as Royal Paper Mills with high-quality newsprint using esparto grass from Spain and North Africa (the link is recorded in the street of that name off Garratt Lane). By the time of the almost inevitable fire in 1903, 160

people were employed and, although the mill was rebuilt, it finally closed in 1909 and was demolished a year later. This was probably the last use of water power from the Wandle.

Other industries developed in the area: bleaching, a process that took between seven and eight months, continued until chlorine began to be used from 1780s – when the ever-enterprising locals turned to calico printing instead. More dangerously, gunpowder was manufactured and stored by the river for easy transport and for safety; there was even a house built in the Thames to store this dangerously unstable product (see picture). Snuff, white lead and oil milling were all also local industries over the years.



© London Metropolitan Archives

The Huguenots were closely involved in much of the non-milling industry along the Wandle. The printing of patterns on to calico or fustian did not need power but did need clean water, and they took over the bleaching sites, eventually employing some 252 workers by 1792. Gradually, however, as wages in southern England rose, the industries began to move to the cheaper areas further north. One business closed in 1816, another in 1834. Other industries brought by the Huguenots were hat making and leather working. For a while sulphuric acid was also produced in the area: Dorian mentioned that the secret of the method was kept as only Welsh-speaking women were employed!

Industry on the Wandle declined through the 19th century; the reduced flow of water (largely due to the abstraction of water for domestic use in the developing Croydon area), the new chemical processes involved in manufacturing and higher wages all took their toll. The mills tried other low-status processes, such as bone crushing, but they gradually abandoned the fight.

As an aside: nothing changes. Dorian said there were notable numbers of foreign workers in the Wandle area – Dutch, Belgian, French, Swedish – were there perhaps mutterings even then about ‘our jobs’ going to foreigners?

Jenny Massey

Our Christmas Party 2014 . . .

. . . began the festive season for some 50 members and guests, all of whom seemed to enjoy themselves. St Anne's Church Hall was 'decked with boughs of holly' and romantically lit; there was delicious and copious food; the drink and conversation flowed; there was an innovative 'sort of raffle' (won by the last man standing); and a splendid cabaret – those who missed the party missed a treat. Three sparkling young professionals from A Bit of What You Fancy were led by singer/flautist Gary Albert Hughes, with singer Hannah Blake and keyboard player Sarah Kershaw. They performed in the tradition of witty and stylish drawing-room musical cabaret, but re-invented for our time. Noël Coward, transported to the current world, would have felt entirely at home. A Bit of What You Fancy delivered beautifully for us a joyous mixture of naughty wit, satire and melody.

Thanks to all who 'did their bit' to make the evening sparkle. If you missed the cabaret, or would like to enjoy it again, a selection of video clips of A Bit of What You Fancy can be seen on You Tube: <http://tinyurl.com/nc8vnr5>.
DK

Exploring London Walks

Since last May we have been running monthly walks – starting with five river walks which as winter approached morphed into shorter walks ending at a place of interest. The latter have included visits to Strawberry Hill House, the Red House in Bexley and the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow. In the late winter and spring we continue with the visit programme and then return in the summer to the longer walks when we will explore some lesser-known rivers.

Everyone is welcome and there are always jumping-off points for those with less energy or less used to longer walks. All travel is within Zone 6 and free for those with a Freedom Pass. Entrance charges are shown where applicable. Lastly, we normally have a companionable lunch stop with some, but not all, taking picnic lunches, depending on the weather.

Tuesday 10 February: Hampstead Heath and Kenwood House. A walk of about 3 miles followed by a visit to Kenwood House. Entrance free. Meet on Platform 1 at Clapham Junction to catch the 9.45 Overground train to Hampstead Heath Station. **On this occasion** please let Caroline Pook know if you plan to come, so that in case of bad weather we can cancel or amend the plan: caroline@pookfamily.co.uk or leave a message, text or voicemail, on 07836 254065.

Monday 16 March: Enfield Country Parks and Forty Hall. A 4-mile walk and visit to this Jacobean manor house. Entrance free. Expect some muddy footpaths! Meet at Clapham Junction Station outside M&S at 9.30 am to travel together.

Thursday 23 April: Eltham Palace. A 4-mile walk and visit following part of the Green Chain walk from Sundridge Park Station to this house with Art Deco interiors created by the Courtauld family and an interesting garden, perhaps at its peak in April. Entrance to the house and gardens: £9.20 (concessions), free to English Heritage members. The walk can be extended to Falconwood Station on a clearly marked path for those not interested in the visit. Meet at Clapham Junction Station outside M&S at 9.40 am.

Monday 18 May: A 5+ mile walk along the River Cray with a diversion into the gardens (or even the building) of Hall Place, a Tudor house in Bexley, for those who are interested. Full details to follow.
Caroline Pook

Wandsworth Museum Fund-Raising Event

Thursday 19 February, 7 for 7.30 pm at West Side Church, £6 collection at the door

The contributions of two unusual women in the Second World War: two speakers, two stories, two books. When *Elisa Segrave* discovered a cache of her mother's wartime diaries, she was surprised to discover an adventurous young person who left the world of hunt balls for Bletchley Park, then Bomber Command and, eventually, liberated Germany. After the Germans occupied Paris in June 1940, *Francelle Bradford White's* French mother, a teenager, stole blank ID cards from her workplace at Police HQ. For the rest of the war she travelled extensively in occupied France as a courier for a resistance network.

Wandsworth Society Talks and Events

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.

Tuesday 10 February

Walk Across Hampstead Heath to Kenwood House

For full details of this and other spring walks see page 7. Please remember to contact Caroline Pook on caroline@pookfamily.co.uk if you plan to come.

Thursday 12 February

Re-designing Our Streets

John Dales, Trustee of Living Streets and Director of Urban Movement, will discuss how to make streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians; how to rid our streets of the plethora of signage; and whether 20 really is 'Plenty'.

Thursday 12 March

Annual General Meeting

7 pm (please note earlier time)

followed at 8 pm by 'New Wandsworth?' an illustrated talk by local historian Timothy Walker on the late 19th- and early 20th-century development of the area 'Twixt the Commons'.

Monday 16 March

Walk across Enfield Country Parks to Forty Hall

See p. 7 for full details.

Thursday 9 April

Parliamentary Election Hustings

Local parliamentary candidates from the Conservatives, Greens, Labour, Liberal Democrats and UKIP have been invited to speak.

Thursday 23 April

Walk along the Green Chain Walk to Eltham Palace

See p. 7 for full details.

Thursday 14 May

To be arranged

Monday 18 May

Walk along the River Cray

See p. 7 for full details.

Thursday 4 June (note date)

Plots, Plans and Goings-on Beneath London

An illustrated talk by Michelle Welbourn.