

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter June 2016

A heritage plaque should surely state historical facts?



Walpole had no connection with this building or with the Booker Prize and its 'original home' was not here

Planning News - June

Philip Whyte, Chairman of our Planning Group reports:

The Council continues to receive an enormous volume of planning applications: we are advised of them weekly and it falls to one of the Society's Planning group to go through the list and identify those likely to be of interest to us (no mean task - our thanks to Tony Taylor). While the bulk of the applications are for domestic extensions, the ever increasing height of buildings proposed in larger developments continues to be a major concern.

I understand, however, that the new Mayor has been asked to consider a review of the impact London-wide of these significantly tall buildings, in the context of their environment and the impact on local surroundings. You would have thought that this would have been one of the fundamental principles written "in stone" for consideration in the past. But it seems that, in an attempt to provide, particularly, new housing, it has been "overlooked".

The new Housing and Planning Act will add to confusion and disarray in the delivery of new residential accommodation. Under the new legislation, local authority and housing association accommodation is intended to be offered to existing occupiers at a discount to market values - "nothing bad in that" I hear you cry. The problem is that all proceeds have to be reinvested in new accommodation. If you lose 20% or whatever of the market value, it has to be made up from somewhere!

Could this result in increased government borrowing - just what the government does not want to happen? Oh no, the private sector will find a way! This is likely to lead to higher prices. Rocks and hard places come to mind.

Homebase, Swandon Way

Consideration of this application (including a 17-storey tower, see April Newsletter), recommended for approval at the April PAC meeting, was deferred at the applicant's request. We have now seen the revised plans, which the PAC is likely to consider on 27 June PAC meeting. The proposals involve no reduction in the height of the 17-storey tower. We had earlier objected strongly and will express our continuing concerns to local Councillors and the PAC.

The Fishmongers' Arms ('Alchemist')

We have objected to this application (2016/0647) whether "submitted to meet the terms of an enforcement notice or as a retrospective application for approval to unlawful demolition and the development of the site". Watch this space for more news!

Battersea Old Town Hall

Applications were made for the rebuilding of the Grand Hall after last year's fire. Planning group members attended presentations of the proposals, which were well received and rapidly approved. A striking element, discussed in our April Newsletter, is the approved treatment of internal wall surfaces.

Garratt Place

Those of you who use the town centre will have noticed the hoardings erected around the site, following its disposal by the Council and South Thames College to London and Quadrant Housing. Demolition will follow, so please look out for large lorries when shopping!

Crossrail2

A report has been issued on the last round of public consultation. Largely a collection of statistics, it merely confirms what we knew already: great concern over building on open spaces and disruption to local amenities, and an apparent preference for the line to be confirmed as



Book House (before the plaque) - whose conversion into flats the Society opposed (see Editorial opposite):

first proposed. There is much information on the Crossrail2 website. We understand that conclusions from the consultation will be announced by the end of June.

Feathers Wharf

We still await more information on the S.106 Agreement. It may be held up because the requirement for additional space on site is not yet settled and the timing of the move from Cringle Dock remain unclear. Those who wish a bird's-eye view of the Waste Transfer Station will have to wait!

Point Pleasant, Osiers Road

This is a recent application by Frasers Property (2016/2296) for a 19-floor tower on the corner of their site at the confluence of the Rivers Wandle and Thames. The site has approval for a 9-storey building. This new application seems out of all proportion to existing developments nearby. We expect to object to the density *continued on page 5*

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Wandsworth Society

June 2016

From the Chair — Fake Heritage

A few weeks ago, walking up East Hill, I quickly spotted it. Blue plaques - one expects them to be English Heritage plaques, but they may not be - catch the eye. There was a new one on the brick gate post of 'Book House', which stands where East Hill forks, with the Huguenot Burial Ground beyond. The building now houses 'stunning apartments' - '75% sold' in this 'heritage landmark building'.

I was keen to discover how the plaque might record the history of this rather pleasing 1888 Italianate building. For many years it housed the municipal Board of Works and then various commercial offices. It became 'Book House' in the 1980s, the home of, among other organisations, the National Book League. I was astonished, therefore, to read the plaque's wording (see our cover). I became very angry when I checked the facts.

Hugh Walpole, a very popular novelist of the early twentieth century (less read these days), has no known connection with the building. There is no evidence that he even visited Wandsworth. He was a 'founding father' in the early 1920s of the Book League (later Book Trust) - which for a period administered the 'Booker'. But the prize was first awarded in 1969 (28 years after Walpole's death); the League moved into Book House in 1985. The building was in no sense the Booker's 'original home'.

I looked at the Heritage Foundation's website (not to be confused of course with English Heritage). It is proud of its part in fund-raising for the Hyde Park memorial to Bomber Command. But the charity mainly celebrates - with blue plaques - entertainers and sportsmen. I spoke to its Chairman. He was surprised to hear about the plaque and put me in touch with the MD of the Malins Group, the building's developers. She believes that Book House is, or can be made, in some sense Walpole's 'literary home' - a portrait of him now hangs in the lobby. Nonsense, nonetheless, to be frank.

We trust that the plaque will very soon come down. As it stands, it is 'fake heritage', misleading to all - visitors and local residents, of all ages. So long as it remains, it devalues the many excellent heritage plaques - which do inform and educate - erected elsewhere in our borough by English Heritage, our Council and this Society among others.

David Kirk
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Philip Whyte reports on **The Wandsworth Design Awards**

Wandsworth Council holds an annual competition to find the borough's best designed buildings. Awards are presented for recent building projects that have made a positive contribution to the local environment and 'set a good example'. Nominations (34 this year) are invited from local amenity societies, other groups, businesses, architects, residents and people working in the Borough.

Nominations can be made for all types of development. They include new buildings of all sorts; residential extensions (including loft conversions!); other restoration/conversion projects; public spaces landscape projects; buildings that show excellence in sustainable design and construction; and, not least, improved provision for access for people with disabilities.

I represented the Society on the judging panel for this year's awards, along with representatives of other local societies, Councillors, local architects, the Wandsworth Design Review Panel and the Wandsworth Access Association.

The winners (both pictured here) were:



Graveney School, Tooting, SW17- the new sixth form block



Under the railway bridge, Balham, SW12

Graveney School's new sixth form block – for an imaginative and contemporary design; and

Artworks in Balham High Road, including the colourful frieze attached to the wall under the railway bridge – an imaginative enhancement of the town centre.

The winners were presented with commemorative plaques by the then Mayor, Cllr Nicola Nardelli, at a ceremony in April at Battersea Power Station, which sponsored this year's awards. The awards panel also commended:

Abbott House, Nightingale Lane, Balham – additional accommodation to the roof of a block of flats.

18 Malbrook Road, Putney – a well-considered contemporary extension to a residential property.

65 Medfield Street, Roehampton – an elegant contemporary extension to a residential property.

St Paul's Church, Battersea – restoration work of a high standard.

143 Lower Richmond Road, Putney – a well-mannered restoration of commercial property.

Banham HQ, Thornsett Road, Earlsfield – a contemporary approach that significantly improves a local building development. (Picture on page 6)

Tooting Triangle, Tooting Bec Common – restoration of a popular play facility.

37 Manville Road, Tooting – landscape planting brightening up a front garden in a residential street.

Have a look at the award winners, see what you think and let us have your views. It would be even better if you could let our Planning group have any suggestions for projects you think are worthy of an award, when they next come to be considered (we shall publicise the Council announcement when appropriate). You can contact me or another member of the Planning group at the usual addresses.

I am grateful for the Council's help in the preparation of this article.

philip.whyte@fraserwhyte.co.uk

Elephant Complex

Jenny Massey reports on 'Elephant Complex' (our Wandsworth Arts Fringe event) – a talk by local author John Gimlette about Sri Lanka

Over 60 people came to West Side Church on 12 May to hear one of the Society's 'regular speakers' – John Gimlette. Well, a regular speaker every few years, anyway – it was certainly good to have him back.

This time he spoke about his latest travels in Sri Lanka and the resulting book, 'Elephant Complex'. Sri Lanka had obviously got under his skin. The affection in which he holds this beautiful island was easy to see, and he responded with such sympathy to the strangeness and oddities that he came across. There was beautiful scenery, stunning palm-fringed, white sandy beaches; spectacular ancient monuments and temples; leopards, crocodiles, kingfishers, blue whales – and elephants, more than 7,500 of them (and most of them wild) in a country about three times the size of Wales.

But this was no ordinary travelogue type talk. John took us through the earlier history of this remarkable island which was known to the Romans and later was conquered by the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and of course the British. He explained how, after 26 years of fighting in a civil war that ended in 2009, the island and its charming, curious, generous people are still coming to terms with the devastation of a war that cost thousands of lives and billions in financial terms. There is ghastly wreckage still there in places, seven years after the war ended, far away from the more

familiar images of a beautiful country. Not only did people suffer – but wildlife too, such as the poor elephant, which we saw a picture of, with a foot missing due to a mine.

Many Tamils fled the fighting – and there are some 6,000 Tamils now living in our own area of Tooting alone (a Tamil candidate stood in the London Assembly elections) – a larger number than the total of Britons who lived in Ceylon at the height of the British empire.

John told us too of the remains of British Hillman and Austin cars; a Victorian railway 'just like a Hornby train'; an Irishman who bred horses on Delft (an island off Jaffna); an ancient road now lost in the undergrowth; of trumpeters and soothsayers; of the ancient Vedda people who inhabited Sri Lanka for 18,000 years – of whom only 500 now remain; and even how he sat up in a tree overnight, singing to keep the elephants away from the paddy fields.

An entertaining evening – and I have his book to enjoy and learn more!

John Gimlette's well illustrated book, 'Elephant Complex: Travels in Sri Lanka' (Quercus Publishing Ltd, 2015), can be obtained from a good bookseller – for a reasonable price. (Ed.)



Planning News - June Continued from Page 2

and massing, and the increased pressure that this will put on local transport services, medical facilities and schooling (they don't have babies in high rise blocks, do they?). This is a prime example of an area where a comprehensive development plan should have been agreed and enforced. Another concern is that the Thames Path may be "diverted" behind the building, thus affording only residents use of a walkway that

should be available for all.

Requests

A now urgent plea for suggestions for additions to the 'local list' of buildings, landmarks or anything unusual which you feel should be noted before they disappear (see April Newsletter)! And let me know if you wish to bring anything to the Planning group's attention or wish to attend one of our monthly meetings.

Other news and events

We and the Putney Society, and others, had hoped to hold a joint 'London mayoral hustings'. We began to plan early - hence the booking of St Anne's Church for the large audience we hoped to attract - but, perhaps predictably, we were unable to find 'time in the diary' for both Sadiq and Zac. Across London other mayoral candidates, including some impressive challengers, found it difficult to get a hearing in a 'big beasts' contest.

We did, however, hold a successful hustings in St Anne's Church with our London Assembly constituency candidates. The event was ably chaired by Jonathan Callaway, Deputy Chair of the Putney Society. There was a lively debate, focused on local issues (the candidates seemed to have read our websites!), enjoyed by an audience of over a hundred, including members of at least five local amenity societies.

While Sadiq was widely predicted to win, it was a considerable surprise that Cllr Leonie Cooper (Furzedown, Labour) beat David Dean, a Merton Councillor (unlike Leonie, contesting the seat for the first time) to win, with a majority of over 4,000, a 'Conservative seat' held for eight years by Richard Tracey. As in London as a whole, so in Merton and Wandsworth, however: about 80% of the total vote went to Labour and Conservative candidates; the Green Party candidate came third, the Lib Dem fourth and UKIP fifth.

The Green candidate, Esther Dede Obiri-Darko, was unable to join us for the hustings but was represented by Liam Morgan (very ably, many thought).

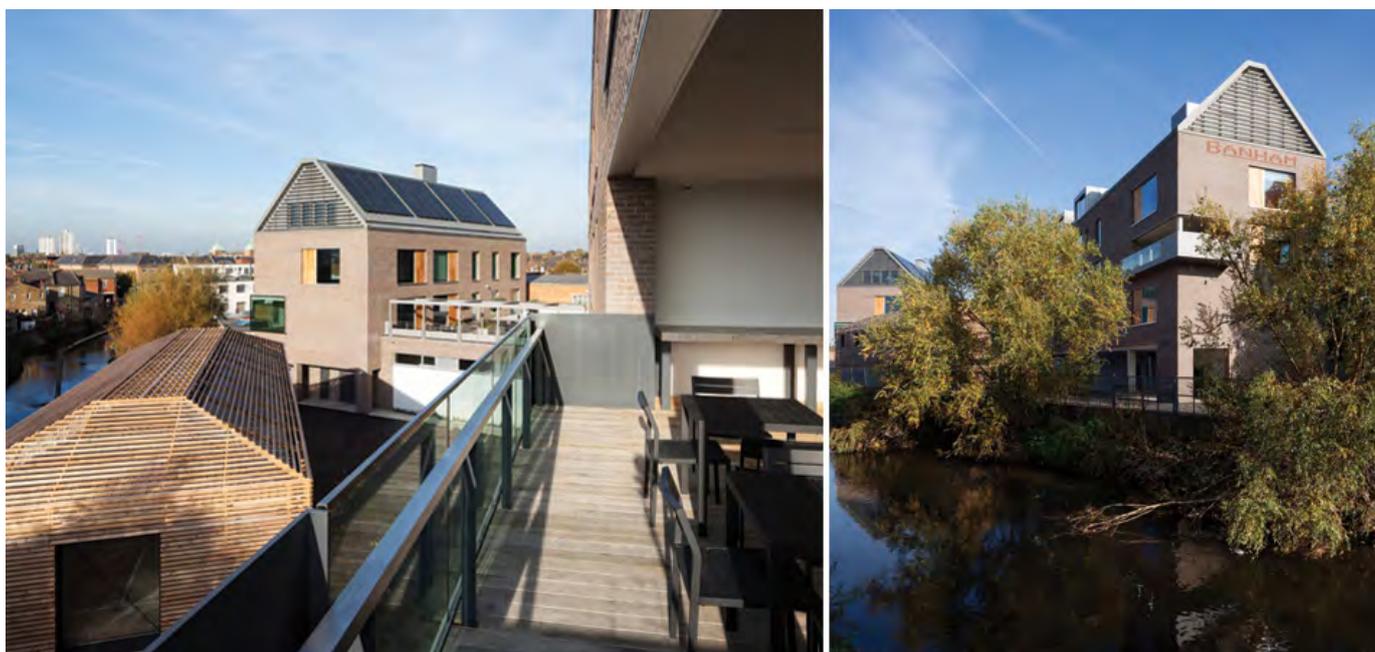
Unsurprisingly, the Lib Dem (Adrian Hyrylainen-Trett) and UKIP candidate (Elizabeth Jones) vigorously offered some diametrically opposed, if equally 'independent', policies. An actual 'Independent' candidate, Thamilini Kulendran, who was unable to join us for the hustings, won over 1,000 votes. Interesting to note - three of six candidates were women.

Voters in the Tooting by-election on 16 June will have no fewer than 14 candidates to choose from as Sadiq's successor. Some names may now be familiar. Both the Green and the UKIP candidates for the Assembly seat are standing, as is the Conservative Dan Watkins, who has been 'nursing' the constituency since he failed (quite narrowly) to win it in the general election. The Labour candidate, Rosena Alin-Khan, is a Wandsworth Councillor (Bedford) and NHS junior doctor; the Lib Dem, Alexander Glassbrook, is a local barrister.

The borough's own Mayor, unlike London's, has of course a largely ceremonial role and is elected annually by the majority party's Councillors. Wandsworth's new Mayor is Richard Field (Nightingale ward), who succeeds Nicola Nardelli (Queenstown); Wendy Speck (Latchmere, Labour) is Deputy Mayor. Labour Councillors now have a new leader: Simon Hogg (Latchmere) has taken over from Rex Osborn (Graveney).

It will be interesting to see what effect the change of London Mayor may have on local decision-making. There could also be quite significant changes in the way that the Council works when (now soon) Wandsworth's senior staff structure is 'merged' with Richmond's (with a single chief executive - Frank Martin of Wandsworth - and several hundred jobs to go) - a major change that the Society and others will be following closely.

The Wandsworth Design Awards *Continued from Page 4*



Banham's HQ, Thornsett Road, Earlsfield and the River Wandle, SW18

Wandsworth Common and the Annual Public Meeting (APM) of its 'MAC' (Management

7pm, Monday 20 June, at Naturescope on the Common, next to the Skylark Café (Neal's Lodge), near Dorlcote Road, SW18 3RT.

On Wednesday 18 May, Charles Walton, MAC Chairman, led about twenty Society and MAC members and guests, all clutching umbrellas, on an 'early evening complete circuit' of the Common. I understand that not quite all stayed the full course – some may have got lost when darkness fell...

By all reports, however, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening, saw parts of the Common they had never discovered before, and learned much they did not know about the history, management and varied ecology of this beautiful, diverse piece of *rus in urbe*. There is, indeed, much worth learning about the Common. All recommended that Charles should repeat the excursion soon!

Wandsworth Common, the 'lungs' of its suburban environs, and largest local open space in our area, has always been a central concern of the Wandsworth Society. For the past 30 years or so the Common has been managed by the Council in consultation with a Management Advisory Committee (MAC). The Society helped to set it up, with a view to ensuring that the concerns of local residents and Common users are properly taken into account in management decision-making.

The MAC consists of up to 24 members, elected (or re-elected) at an annual public meeting. The committee normally meets six times a year (including the APM), to discuss all aspects of the Common's management with the 'professionals' (including the Parks and Events Police). For almost a year now, however, the Common has been managed under contract by 'Enable Leisure and Culture', a social enterprise, established in October 2015, which inherited, among its responsibilities, the roles and staff of the Council's Parks department. From my own perspective, as a MAC member, it has been 'business as usual', as we and the Council had hoped: there continues to be a constructive – and productive – dialogue about all aspects of the Common's management. (Enable, incidentally, now has a website – www.enablelc.org – which includes some news about all Wandsworth's open spaces.)

The Common is of course an increasingly popular local resource for a range of recreational, sporting and other uses. It is one of the MAC's roles to keep an eye out for the impacts of all sorts of activity on the Common, including 'events', as we do. A quite recent development has been the establishment of an Enhancement Subcommittee to serve as a vehicle for fund-raising for special projects and to engage with the wider public.

All local residents and users of the Common are invited to the APM. Enable staff, police, contractors and a Crossrail 2 representative (given the MAC's keen interest in the implications of that project for the Common) will attend to give progress reports and

answer questions. Come along to have your say about any aspect of the Common's management that concerns you. And you might like to consider joining the MAC and/or its Enhancement Sub-committee yourself. I can tell you, from personal experience, that the work of the MAC is very interesting and worthwhile.

David Kirk

Tour of Burntwood School, Burntwood Lane, SW17 0AQ, Tuesday 12 July (meet at main gate), 6pm

Burntwood School (a girls secondary school and sixth form, with academy status) was the 2015 winner of the Stirling Prize, the UK's premier architectural prize, awarded to the building judged to have "made the greatest contribution to the evolution of architecture over the past year". The judges concluded:

Burntwood School is the clear winner of the 2015 RIBA Stirling Prize. It is the most accomplished of the six shortlisted buildings because it demonstrates the full range of the skills that architects can offer to society. It encompasses great contemporary design and clever reuse of existing buildings as well as superb integration of artwork, landscaping and engineering. It is a genuine collaborative project. There was a wonderful working relationship between the head teacher and the architect: a true partnership of equals." Speaking at the awards ceremony, RIBA President Jane Duncan said, "Burntwood School shows us how superb school design can be at the heart of raising our children's educational enjoyment and achievement.

A senior member of staff will be our 'tour guide' and the visit is likely to take about an hour. The tour is open to members of the Society (new members always welcome!) and their guests. There is no charge for the visit, but the school will need to know numbers in advance (which might have to be restricted) – so please book now with Valerie Taylor (vtaylor@davies@gmail.com or 8767 3814). Please assemble at the main school gate in Burntwood Lane by 6pm on 12 July.

Summer social at The Leather Bottle,

Garratt Lane on Tuesday 12 July, 7.30 for 8 pm.

We have booked the 'Shepherd's Hut' in the gardens of the Leather Bottle pub – conveniently close to Burntwood School (for those going on the school tour – see above). We hope for a warm, dry summer's evening, but the hut will provide protection from the elements, if needed – whilst also affording some fresh air!

We shall need to book places on the long table and give the pub advance warning of numbers – and choices of menu. Full details, including booking arrangements, will be included in a Society 'e-flyer' in June – sent to all Society members whose e-mail addresses we have. If we don't have yours (or you don't usually receive flyers), please tell wandsworth.society@mac.com (Peter Farrow). It really does help us in running the Society to have your e-mail address. (We normally send out 'flyers' no more than once a month, and we only use them (and your e-mail address) for Society matters, nothing else. Valerie Taylor

Wandsworth Society Summer Calendar

The Wandsworth Heritage Festival 2016 ends on 12 June. The programme is available on our website** or at a local library.

Meetings

Thursday 9 June, 7.45 for 8pm, West Side Church, Melody Road, SW18 2QQ

Making Records in Earlsfield: illustrated talk by Dr Tom Going (Heritage Festival event)

Tom looks back to the time when Earlsfield became home to Columbia Graphophone, one of Britain's first record companies. In the early 20th century the Columbia factory in Bendon Valley was a major employer. Illustrated with recordings and a contemporary local film; a look at what was once a cutting-edge industry.



Tuesday 12 July

A Wandsworth Society Summer Evening for members and their guests

See page 7 for further details of both (separate) events:

6 pm, Guided tour of Burntwood School, SW17 0AQ

A guided tour of the school that was last year's winner of the Stirling Prize

7.30 for 8, Summer Social at Leather Bottle, Garratt Lane, SW17 0NY

A social event (involving food and drink) at the Leather Bottle public house

Wednesday 20 July, 2.30 pm, The Hive Honey Shop, 93 Northcote Road, SW11 6PL

'Bees make honey and..' Talk by a bee-keeper and private tour of The Hive Honey Shop.

While the shop will be closed to the public at the time, space will be limited, so please book in advance with Catherine Headley, catheadley136@gmail.com. The visit is likely to last about 40 minutes.

Thursday 15 September, 7.45 for 8pm, West Side Church, Melody Road, SW18 2QQ

The future of our trees in Wandsworth

Illustrated talk(s) and discussion. Details to be announced.

Thursday 13 October, 7.45 for 8pm, West Side Church, Melody Road, SW18 2QQ – to be arranged

Walks

The June and July walks will be led by Caroline Pook, the walk on 18 August by Rose Harley. For all the walks, the group will assemble at 9.30am outside 'M&S Simply Food' at Clapham Junction Station. If you want more details (or plan to join a walk at a later point), e-mail caroline@pookfamily.co.uk. .

Monday 20 June

Pymmes Brook Walk between Barnet, Southgate and the New River

Wednesday 13 July

Dollis Brook Greenway, southern section from Totteridge to Hampstead

Thursday 18 August

A walk linking some South East London Parks & Woods (led by Rose Harley)

**To learn more about what the Society does, for latest updates, or to join the Society, visit www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk.