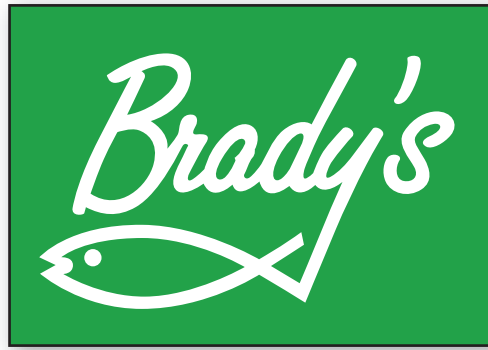


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The Wandsworth Society

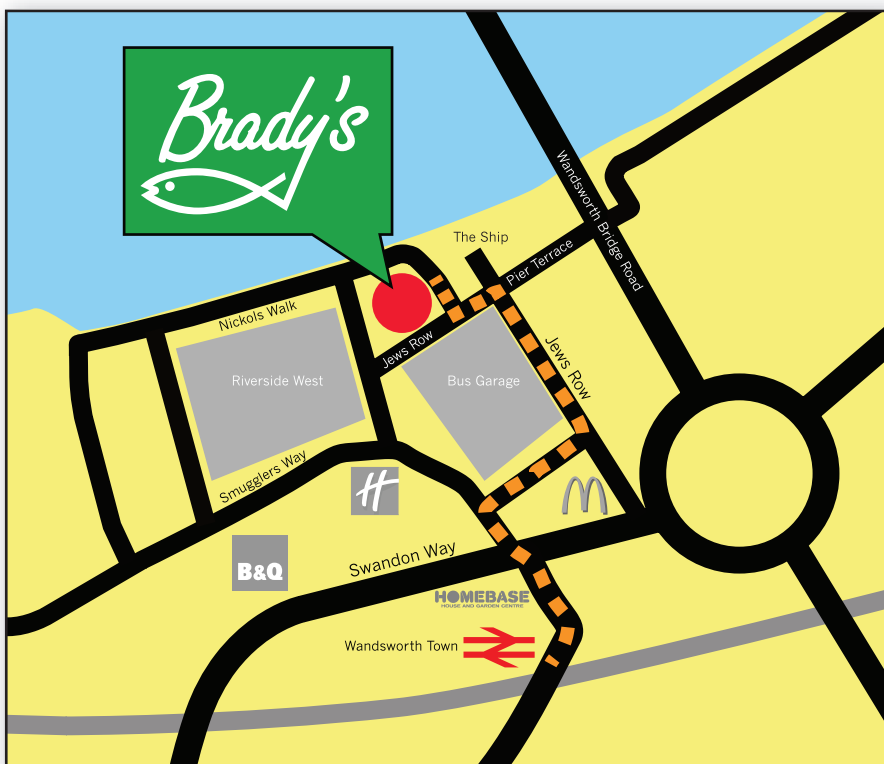


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Wandsworth Society events in early 2017

The Society organises a varied programme of events throughout the year. It usually includes a monthly meeting (except in August) on the second Thursday of the month, with a social event in the middle of the year and a Christmas party in December. We also arrange group walks and/or visits to places of (usually local) interest from time to time (none currently planned for early 2017).

Our website www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk has up-to-date news of our programme, as do our Newsletters published in February, April, June, September, November and December (Bedside edition). Every month or so we issue to members, by e-mail on request, a 'flyer' giving details of events over the next month and any updates. If you are or become a member, we strongly recommend that you sign up to receive these flyers. (Your e-mail address will not be used for any non-Society purpose.)

Meetings: Venue: West Side Church, Melody Road, SW18 2QQ (corner with Allfarthing Lane). Meetings are open to all at no charge – although we hope local residents will join after 'sampling'! Refreshments are served before the meeting (donation requested). No walks or visits have yet been arranged for this period.

Thursday 12 January, 7.45 for 8
Crossrail 2 – the way ahead?
A panel of speakers tba.

Thursday 9 February, 7.45 for 8
Wandsworth education issues
Helen Dorfmann, Principal,
Burntwood School – talk and
discussion.

Wednesday 9 March, from 7
Our **Annual General Meeting**
followed by three talks by
members – details tba.

Paris 1906

Paris 1906 is Called the City of Light .. the little group seen here having been to the cinema which only opened this year and is the first cinema to open in the world .. are now looking forward to eating in one of the best restaurants in the world .. it's all happening here ..

And what a wonderful picture the artist has conjured up for this Christmas Eve in Paris These Parisians have a lot of class ..look at the atmosphere of warmth and self-satisfaction that pervades them even on this cold winter evening .. the clothes worn with the assurance and the knowledge that they are the best to be bought in Paris .. nay in all France and the real furs that snuggle around the necks of their delightful companions each one would have kept a poor family in food and drink for a couple of years .. but that's the way of life and I don't think that for

a minute they will be thinking of anything except where they were heading .. and that is to a restaurant called Next .. which also only opened this year and is already the talk of this City of Light and when they have wined and dined the bearded gentleman (slightly fragile) will have two delightful ladies to support him on his way home to the Champagne breakfast and a long lie in on Christmas Day ..

I wonder who it was that said Two's company Three's a crowd .. maybe his Doctor might have mentioned it .. or maybe the other gentleman with the one lady (sensible) is his Doctor .. in that case there's no way it would be mentioned at all .. as we all know in life is there are definitely exceptions to every rule .. and if I had been in his



place on that wonderful evening the exception would have come into force with no problem at all ...

Will Holland

From the Chair: Caring about the local (and what a year!)

A Google search for 'Wandsworth Society' offers first www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk. Some 'helpful' listings follow, including a 2013 tweet by a Wandsworth Councillor, *Excellent document from Wandsworth Society on why the Council should turn down the Ram Brewery planning application*. Excellent it was – and its excellence deserved wider recognition. But its prominence in the 'Google search' also tells us that the Society is rarely tweeted... so are we doing enough to communicate our views? (And could you, reader, help in the Society's communications – or other – efforts? The work is unpaid, but rewarding!)

The Society has continued to take a close interest in the 'Ram Quarter', its towers now rearing their heads (the highest will be 38 storeys), with the cranes' red lights dominating the night sky. We have commented on further recent 'Ram' applications. And we enjoyed three lively presentations and discussion with the development team (see November Newsletter). The 'Garratt Place' site nearby is now almost empty – offering interesting views, but not for much longer; a 26-storey tower will dominate the adjoining Old Burial Ground, We shall soon have to consider major development proposals for both the Homebase and B&Q sites on Swandon Way; we have applied for local Tree Preservation Orders, partly in anticipation.

The Society's events this year have reflected a wide range of local issues, concerns and interests: a talk by its Chief Executive, Sue Morgan, about the Wandle Valley Regional Park – in which we shall always take a keen and supportive interest; two local history lectures; a member's latest travel book; another's account, in music, words and pictures, on the eve of Remembrance Day, of the young composer, George Butterfield, killed on the Somme.

We have also been playing a part in the judging of local design awards (featured in our June Newsletter) and making recommendations for the Council's 'local listing' of buildings of merit. Substantial numbers toured Burntwood School, winner of the 2015 Stirling Prize, in July, many then repairing to the Leather Bottle for a meal; we look forward to a talk by the school's Principal in February. Throughout the year we have, as now usual, also organised a variety of local and other walks and outings.

Not so long ago the Society was accused of 'nimbyism' – but we always seek constructive engagement and listen to one another! And I believe that we should welcome, for example, the Council's recent initiative to introduce new planning guidance that recognises the historic, architectural and community value of local pubs. 120 pub owners will now be required to gain planning approval for any proposed conversion of a pub to other uses. Wandsworth hopes that it will be regarded as the most pub-friendly borough in the country – and the news has evidently reached Moscow!.

2016 was of course the year of Brexit (or is that still to come?). And the year when we had a woman Prime Minister again – but the USA failed to elect its first woman President. Sadiq – the Mayor of London must be on first name terms with all – became the first Muslim mayor of a European capital. Boris became the leader of the Cabinet's three Brexiteers. (And Ken fell out with Jeremy, didn't he?) And Zac resigned his seat to fight a by-election over airport expansion, with Wandsworth Council voicing strong support.

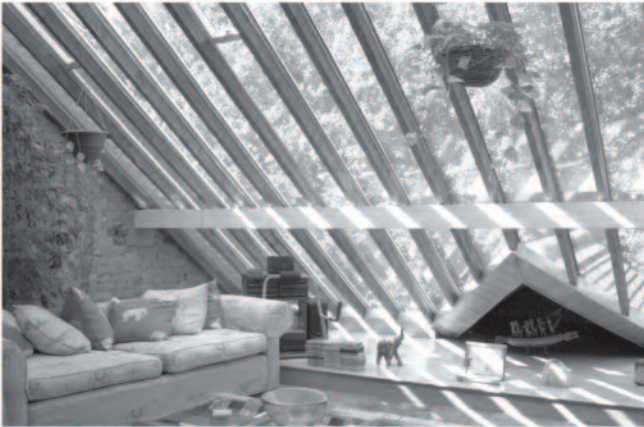
David Cameron's 'Heigh-ho!' may be the phrase of the year. But, as well as enjoying ourselves, we are bound to reflect at Christmas about the 'have-nots' in our communities, the appalling suffering wrought by wars in Syria and elsewhere, and the terrible plight of refugees. The message of Christmas is 'joy to the world' and 'peace on earth'. May joy and peace be with you.

David Kirk

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Making Records in Earlsfield

Thomas Going



The idea of preserving sounds 'in aspic' was a long-held but fanciful dream until the second half of the 19th C. In the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon, in 'New Atlantis' foresaw in graphic detail techniques akin to those we now use. Meanwhile, the first step was taken with Leon Scott, a Frenchman, who in 1857 recorded a representation of sound as a squiggle on a soot-blackened surface – his 'phonautograph'. This was for visual inspection only, until 150 years later, a way was found to make the old squiggles sound, a piece of news which caused the BBC R4 newsreader at the time, Charlotte Green, to have a fit of the giggles 'on air'.

It was Charles Cros, another Frenchman, who proposed in 1877 a method for actually replaying such a sound recording, but almost simultaneously the American, Thomas Alva Edison was developing similar ideas, and showed his 'phonograph' to the world in 1878. These devices both used a cylindrical sound-carrier, and they rapidly became available as recordings of some 2-4 minutes long. Edison foresaw the device as being an invaluable business aid for 'freezing' dictation for later transcription by an army of stenographers. The recordings were made onto wax cylinders which could have the surfaces shaved for re-use, after transcription. Edison was

not a musical man, and the possibilities of making money from entertainment recordings essentially eluded him. Not so others.

This idea of recording on to a waxy surface had come in 1881 from Bell and Tainter, who named their device the 'Graphophone'. Their invention, which included the chiselling of the recorded groove vertically into the receptive wax, instead of embossing a material 'à la Edison', joined the almost constant patent battle that followed over the ensuing years. Emile Berliner entered the fray in 1887-8 or thereabouts with his 'Gramophone', a device using a flat disc with a zig-zag or lateral groove, and not a cylinder, as the receptive surface. The earliest examples of Berliner products seem to date from ca. 1892

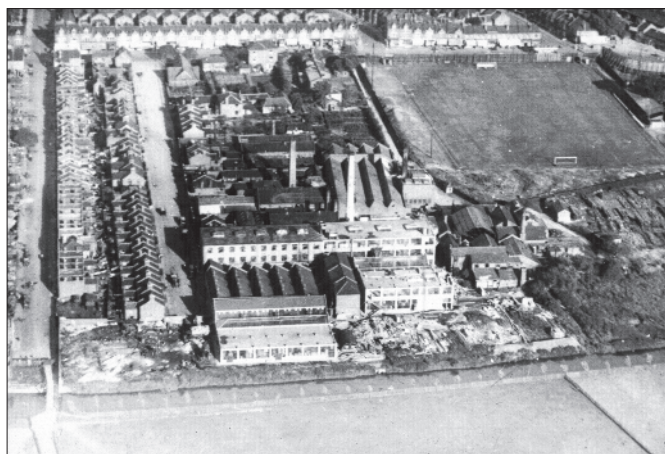
A major problem for the 'cylinder' form of recording was the economical production of replicas at an affordable price; the flat disc-shaped recording allowed for pressed mass-production and more

compact storage, and rapidly ousted the cylinder. Before that, though, multiple copies of songs were recorded by bellowing into a multiplicity of recording horns – five or six – and then repeating the programme until fatigue or ennui set in. Each recorded cylinder was, in a way unique, but 'can belto' rather than 'bel canto' was the main requirement. The singing voice recorded best of all, the piano had to have the felts sharpened to give a clangorous tone, but the strings fared worst of all, and orchestral music had to be 're-scored' to make a useful effect.

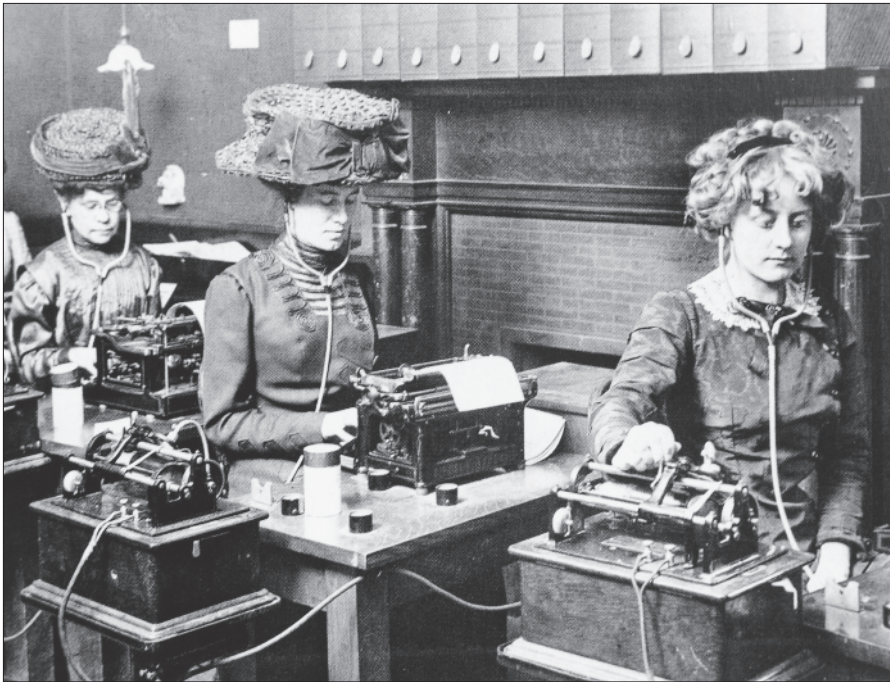
The Columbia Phonograph Company General began British operations in May 1900, but by importing all from the US parent company. In 1901, they began recording in Britain and in 1902 introduced flat discs as well as the cylinders. Initially these, though recorded in Britain, were imported from the USA, until 1905 when they opened their first pressing factory in Earlsfield. Columbia's great rival was the Gramophone Company, which set up a factory in Hayes in Middlesex in 1907.

Columbia was adventurous in repertory though, signing up Sir Henry Wood and a young Thomas Beecham. They also recorded the clarion tones of Dame Clara Butt.

The first decade of the 20th Century was very rocky for the gramophone trade, and certainly for Columbia. In 1909 they gave up selling cylinder



Columbia Factory in the mid 1920s. The builders are at work.



A boon to business... stenographers use the dictaphone

(phonograph) recordings, and after the recession of 1908-1909, the American parent company went into administration.

The saving of the British company, and the Earlsfield plant came in the form of Louis Saul Sterling, who came from the US in 1904. Sterling was a dynamic young man, and, after a number of moves, founded the Rena Manufacturing Company Ltd in Dec. 1908. He commissioned titles from the Columbia stock of matrices, and using cover-names, undercut the 'named' Columbia discs. However, he was able to place large pressing orders with Earlsfield and, not long after, Columbia bought out Rena, all records becoming Columbia-Rena until the First World War. Sterling himself came 'with the deal'.

The finances of Columbia were so bad that Sterling was only on commission, of up to £2000, which he earned in his first year as Columbia's general manager. Truly, he transformed Columbia, giving the rival Gramophone Company ('HMV') a headache in the process. Down at Earlsfield, Columbia built up a sizeable presence between Lydden Road and what became

Haldane Place, most particularly along the River Wandle, occupying in the end 3 acres of factory, with spare building land of about 4 acres on which the Henry Prince Estate now stands. By 1913, the company was using 60,000 gallons of River Wandle water per day to cool their busy presses. Unfortunately, before this point, in May 1912, the factory had had a serious fire.

The coming of the First World War was rather a shock to the record companies, though war-work and the loss of imports from the continent helped soften the blow. Sterling addressed the problem for Columbia by promoting patriotic songs, old and newly-written, and signing up the casts of successful London shows, the top 'numbers' of which might remind soldiers of 'Blighty' and happier times. One example, 'If you were the only boy in the world' remains well-known to this day.

Meanwhile, Columbia had re-grouped as the Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd., incorporated in Britain. It managed to buy the sequestered Hertford factory of the German Lindström company, and their British 'titles'. This was

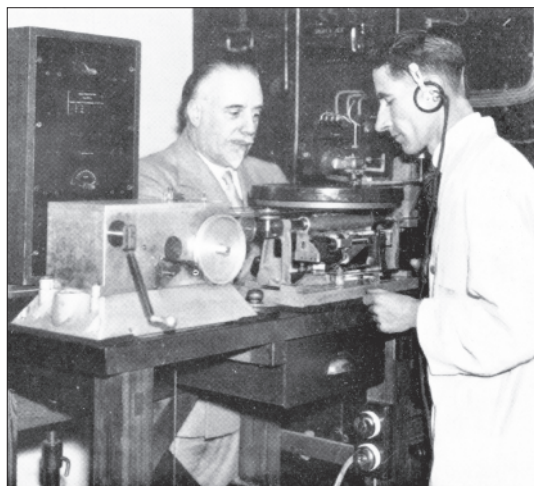
fortunate, because again the Earlsfield factory burned down, in May 1918, with 160 firemen in attendance. Very fortunately also, the all-important matrix stores and the plating department survived the blaze, and competitors generously offered capacity until the firm could recover.

The 1920s were a time of tremendous growth for the company, under Sterling's guidance. He employed first-class people including Isaac Shoenberg (from the Marconi Company). Up until this time all recordings had been made by the 'acoustic' process, whereby the brute strength of the sound from the performers, focused by a trumpet on to a diaphragm vibrating a minute stylus, created the recorded wave in the groove at the wax surface.

Murmurings of using new-fangled 'electrical' recording began to leak out, and most companies had secretly been attacking the problem after the end of the First World War. The bombshell, when it fell, was that successful electrical recording, by now using a sensitive microphone and disc cutter, had been perfected by an 'outsider', the Bell Telephone Laboratories, through their Western Electric subsidiary. Without a moment to lose, Sterling left for America on the Mauritania on Boxing day 1924 determined to get a licence for the process. Unfortunately, Western Electric would only license to American companies. American Columbia, the former parent, was by now struggling, so Sterling arranged to buy it, thus solving that problem. The Gramophone Company 'HMV' also took one of these onerous licences, so they and Columbia ran neck-and-neck.

Electrically-recorded discs, first commercially made in 1925, were startlingly better than their forebears. Understandably, overt

announcement was suppressed, there being decades-worth of expensive master recordings, and only a limited budget for any complete re-recording programme, and the news of this great development was allowed to trickle out slowly, lest it destabilise the



Thomas Beecham inspects the new Columbia electrical recording system, ca. 1931

market. Sterling's genius lay in recruiting a first-class team of engineers, charged with developing a system to obviate the Western Electric patents. This team, under Shoenberg, included Herbert Holman, Henry 'Ham' Clark, and Alan Dower Blumlein, and they succeeded triumphantly, developing the Columbia 'moving coil system' which, with further development served for almost twenty years, long after its launch in 1931.

All the while, after the 1918 fire, rebuilding and extending had been occurring, and the new factory buildings were equipped with the latest methods. Not least of the developments was the Columbia New Process 'Silent Surface' laminated record of 1924, which used a sandwich of high-quality shellac compound on the playing surfaces, and a cheaper material within. Other companies used a rougher mixture all through, responsible for the familiar 'snap crackle and pop' of 78 rpm discs. Sadly, the great depression that

followed the Wall Street slump of 1929 propelled a merger of Columbia and the Gramophone Company, in March 1931, to form Electric and Musical Industries (EMI), Sterling became the managing director of the combine, and Alfred Clark from the

Gramophone Company, the chairman. The following years were very turbulent, the ten years from 1929 to 1938 seeing a fall in combined record sales from 30 million to 5 million for the two companies; and unfortunately for Earlsfield, the manufacturing was concentrated at the Hayes complex of the former Gramophone Company, and the Earlsfield factory was wound down, to be sold at auction as five lots on May 29th 1934. Alas for record

collectors, the lovely Columbia laminated process did not survive the move to Hayes, though it was retained at former Columbia factories in Australia, Paris and Italy, and pressings from these plants are sometimes prized.

Through all of this lay the work of Sir Louis Sterling. He took British nationality in 1932, and in 1937 was knighted in the Coronation honours. He was a man of firm principles, and generous; in 1929, to mark his 50th birthday, he distributed £100,000 among the Columbia employees, possibly £5,000,000 in today's terms. He also established and endowed a company pension scheme. Sadly, the personal relationship between him and Alfred Clark was poor, and Clark engineered to oust Sterling in 1939, which did not do EMI a great deal of good. Sterling had additional irons in the fire, and was not wanting for things to do. In the course of his lifetime, Sterling gave away more than £1.5 million (cash value of the day). His extraordinary library was

donated by him to Senate House Library in 1954 with a generous dowry, and he died in 1958 at the age of 79.

Today, much of the old Columbia factory is incorporated in the Riverside Business Centre in Bendon Valley. Industries have come and gone from the immediate area, including famous names like Hunts Capacitors, and Airfix... ripe subjects for some more history delving. ■

Further reading:

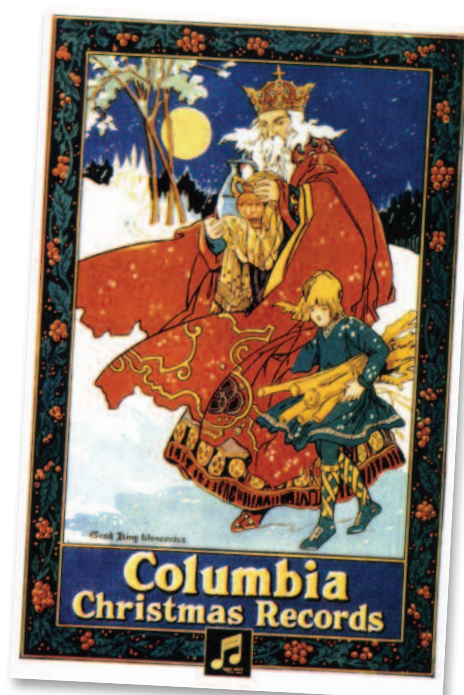
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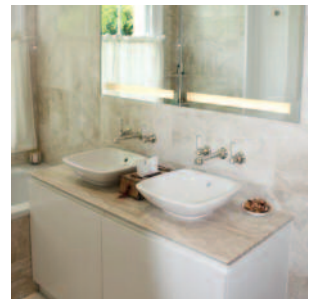
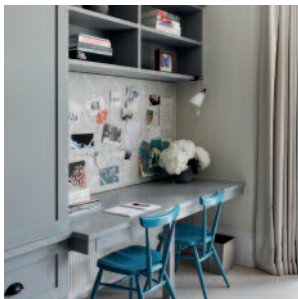
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A wider look at

Wandsworth's Heritage Assets

by Carol Rahn



Peterkin Custard ghost ad, St. John's Hill

Across Wandsworth, there are five Grade I listed buildings; 39 Grade II* and more than 160 with Grade II listing. Most of these elite groups, such as St Mary's Church on the river, the Granada Cinema in Tooting and Battersea Arts Centre, are familiar to all of us. We have some listed green spaces as well, most notably Battersea Park. In addition, there are some 500 locally listed heritage assets across Wandsworth.

Local listing certainly does not afford the fierce protection of Grade I or Grade II listing. It is merely an indication of merit, in the Council's gift to bestow and equally to withdraw. Still, those who propose to develop or demolish a locally listed feature must at least justify doing this. Local listing raises awareness of a heritage asset and makes it easier for the diligent planning committees of our amenity societies to know when one is threatened.

This year Wandsworth Borough Council decided to review local listings, with a view to including more buildings, open spaces and other features that are part of our heritage. Amenity societies in the borough were asked to take the lead on this, and I chaired the team for the Battersea Society. A

panel put forward suggestions, aided by some expeditions through SW11; Susan Hoffman and I took most of the photographs and did most of the research (benefitting greatly from "Buildings of Clapham" and the Battersea volumes of the Survey of London); the panel met to review and winnow the nominations and altogether we have put forward more than 200 heritage assets for local listing.

The majority of assets are buildings and distinction tends to accrue with age. We in the Battersea Society have nominated more than 80 buildings within Battersea to join those already locally listed. These include some gems that it is hard to believe were previously overlooked, among them the stately former J&B Stevenson bakery (now residences) on Parkgate Road. The bakery was built in the 1880s, one of a group of buildings mostly dedicated to the food industry. They clustered here after Allen Ransome extended the creek adjoining Battersea Foundry into what is now called Ransome's Dock.

We've nominated rare architectural styles, such as the massive, Greek-revival style homes found from 30-54 Altenburg Gardens (1868-69; built by Edmund Wood), and distinctive runs such as 2-30 Thurleigh Road, with their Doulton faience porch columns and stained glass (built by John Miller, 1885-87), 35-49 Lavender Gardens adorned by more fanciful terracotta figures and the unbroken, unmodified run from 1-52 Broughton Street.

Unsurprisingly, most of the homes we're nominating are Victorian, but we are also putting forward some of the fine examples of modern architecture in Battersea, such as the international-style semi-detached homes found at 105-115 Thurleigh Road, with curving brick and render facades and Crittall windows, designed by Pell & Clayton between 1934-36, the Civic Trust award-winning flats in Battersea High Street (designed by Walter Menteth for the Ujima Housing Association) and even the 21st century Thrive building in Battersea Park. Some of the buildings are valued more for their beauty and architectural merit, others for their echoes of





*Concrete bas-relief mural by William Mitchell,
Thomas Baines Road*

Battersea's industrial past. The latter include Propert's blacking factory and the Old Imperial Laundry, both on Warriner Gardens/Battersea Park Road.

We have nominated many of the structures in Battersea Park, including the three shelters and the Peace Pagoda altar because although Battersea Park itself is listed, most of its distinctive structures are not. Eleven other parks and open spaces are on our list, most of them small like Montefiore Gardens, Heathbrook Park and the Dorothy Road Lavender Gardens.

English Heritage blue plaques are already protected, but we have identified, photographed and nominated 20 other plaques erected by the Battersea Society, London County Council and other similar groups that would otherwise not be protected. Did you know that in 1864 Battersea Park was the site of the first football game played under the new Football Association rules intended to reduce the violence on the pitch? We've nominated the plaque mounted on the Cricket Pavilion that commemorates this event.

We have also mapped, photographed and nominated six boundary markers, making it easier to preserve and celebrate these physical testaments to our history. Perhaps you are already an inveterate inspector of postbox ciphers. If so, you'll know that those with ciphers for George V, George VI, Edward VII, Victoria, or no cipher at all, are relatively rare. We've nominated several examples of each found here in Battersea. Do you know where they are?

There are nine murals and two ghost ads on our list. The "Battersea in Perspective" mural by Brian Barnes is urgently in need of repair and shows how important it is for the Borough to protect and preserve these heritage assets as well as list them. This project has brought attention to forgotten works such as the

concrete murals of William Mitchell. Mitchell's work, for which there has been a resurgence of appreciation, can be found on public buildings across the UK, as well as in places as distant as San Francisco and Qatar.

We have catalogued more than 60 original blue enamelled street signs and the heritage white enamelled street signs with "Borough of Battersea" above the street name -- a welcome reminder, especially in those areas perennially mistaken for Clapham. The process has allowed us to catalogue everything from cattle troughs and original fleur-de-lis railings to granite kerbs, cobbled alleyways and York paving stones, electricity sub-stations, historic phone boxes and sewer stink pipes to original street lamps, shopfronts with chamfered corners, marble mosaic shop entrances and remnants of Georgian walls – in other words, varied artifacts that comprise our layered visual and architectural heritage.



*Doulton faience columns
and stained glass*

All of this is captured in an online application chosen by Wandsworth Borough Council with both a list view and a map view. Imagine if you will a map of Wandsworth covered with three types of little pins – one for buildings, one for gardens, and one for "other features." Zoom in on any one of these pins to see the exact location; then open it to find a photograph and brief description of the item in question. With this, you can make a fascinating tour of Wandsworth on your phone or from the comfort of your home.

It now remains for the Borough's heritage committee to review and accept nominations and to make this app available to the public. Ideally, all the existing listed buildings and open spaces would be incorporated. We in the Battersea Society are ready to get out there with our cameras and reference material to add the existing heritage listings in SW11 and I'm sure others would volunteer to cover other areas of the Borough. We also call on the

Borough to invest in preserving these elements of our rich heritage that we've now identified. ■



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The Rivers Wandle and Thames - habitat

Valerie Selby, Biodiversity Manager for Enable Leisure & Culture

"The Wandle Delta is hard for people to get to, and what should be great intertidal habitat is full of silt behind the half-tide weir. We'd like to see the whole area improved."

This was said by a participant in the community and stakeholder workshops held as part of the work to write a catchment management plan for the River Wandle in 2014.

It is readily recognised that as the key "gateway" to both the Thames and the Wandle the Wandle mouth or "delta" area has been lacking. It has remained tucked away behind industrial premises and construction projects. The river itself at low water has been unsightly, smelly and full of silt. Visible wildlife has been limited to herons and a few duck species. There is a physical and visual barrier to the Thames and all in all only the brave or those "passing through" have visited, and certainly no-one chose to linger for very long.

In 2015 Thames Water, under the auspices of its "Thames Tideway Tunnels" project, identified the removal of the half-tide weir as a key way to offset the impact of some of its wider works along the main river channel, together with helping both the Thames and the Wandle achieve the wider aims of improving water quality, and restoring lost wildlife habitats. Under an agreement subsequently secured through the planning process, Wandsworth Borough Council is currently undertaking the removal of the weir, and crucially, much of the silt that has been deposited upstream of it in the last 25 years, with all works funded by Thames Water as part of its off-site

mitigation and compensation policy. The scheme is also supported by the Environment Agency, the Marine Management Organisation and the Port of London Authority, all of whom have to provide consent for the works to happen.

Since the installation of the weir the silt build up has buried the natural gravel river bed of the Wandle, which is usually such an indicative feature of chalk rivers. Ecological and sediment studies have been undertaken across the summer of 2016, to identify the exact impacts (both good and bad), and to inform the design of the silt and weir removal processes. All silt is being removed by closed-bucket dredging; in total it is thought up to 5,000 m³ may need to be removed away to a specially licensed waste facility. This removal will prevent the silt washing out into the Thames and causing wider contamination and turbidity (quite literally "muddying") of the waters. Then the concrete structure of the weir itself, which has formed a barrier to natural processes, will be removed allowing the water to flow much more freely and naturally with the tides. Natural tidal action will then scour fine, muddy sediment from the area and restore the gravelly river bottom, restoring valuable sub-tidal and intertidal habitats for fish, invertebrates and wading birds over 1 ha of the Wandle mouth at its confluence with the Thames.

The River Thames supports fish populations in three key ways: it provides the conditions needed for them to spawn (lay eggs) and for

juvenile fish to grow; it is a rich feeding ground; and it allows migratory fish to move between saltwater and freshwater.

Sediment deposition, as has occurred around the R Wandle mouth, smothers important fish habitats, particularly spawning grounds, and also causes reduced water flow and reduced fish egg survival. Silt suspended within the water has now been understood to cause further problems such as obscuring prey items, affecting the mucus on fish gills thereby reducing their ability to uptake oxygen and causing stress.



Gravelly bottom

Evidence shows that, since 1964, 125 fish species have been recorded in the Tidal Thames, 22% of which are protected under local, national and international regulation. The variety of different fish species and their life stages in the river is influenced by the ecology of each fish species, and also by environmental conditions, such as

restoration and benefits to biodiversity

seasonality, temperature and rainfall. Fish that can be found in the Thames in the vicinity of the Wandle mouth throughout the winter include sea trout, Atlantic salmon, common goby, European eel and flounder. In the summer, amongst other species, they are joined by sand goby, European sea bass and roach.

Of particular interest and importance to Wandsworth is the European smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) which is a small predatory fish that inhabits cold-water estuaries including the Tidal Thames. Once common in the UK, it has suffered significant declines since the early 19th century due to water pollution, over exploitation and destructive river engineering. Improvements to water quality in the latter half of the 20th century have allowed smelt to return to 36 water courses in England including the Tidal Thames. The common smelt is an indicator of good water quality due to their sensitivity to pollution. They are listed as a London and UK Biodiversity Action Plan species, as a Features of Conservation Importance (FOCI) species for the Marine Conservation Zone process and as a Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Species of Principal Importance.

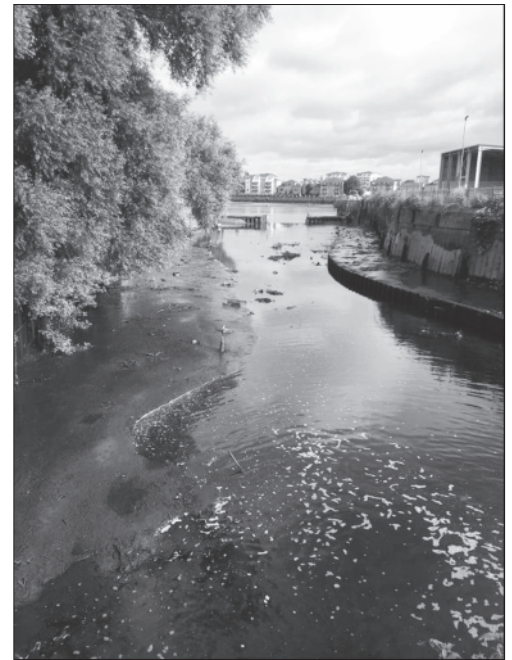
Although the Tidal Thames holds one of the largest-known breeding populations of smelt in the UK, the specific spawning location had not been identified until a project was started by Zoological Society of London (ZSL) in 2014. This work has pinpointed that the main spawning ground is a discreet area of the Thames between the Wandle and Wandsworth Bridge. This species in particular will therefore benefit

greatly from the improvements associated with the removal of the half-tide weir and in particular the removal of the silt depositions. It is hoped that breeding and juvenile fish survival rates will both increase as a direct results of the work to remove the half-tide weir. Additionally we hope to see flounder and dace returning the Wandle mouth to breed.

Other wildlife which we hope will become more frequent visitors to the area include a greater range of invertebrates including those indicative of cleaner waters such as freshwater shrimps and mussels. It is also hoped that fish-eating birds such as great crested grebe would become more frequent visitors whilst the kingfisher may choose to return and wading birds such as sandpiper may become a more familiar sight.

The growth in stable fish populations has already led to the Thames being used by predatory mammal species looking for a meal. Increasingly people are seeing seals and even on occasion whale (famously the northern bottlenose whale spotted by Battersea Park in 2006) probably as a result of them "chasing" shoals of fish up the Thames. The most recent sighting was of a grey seal spotted by Lambeth Bridge in early October who was happily feeding possibly on Dover sole or Nilsson's pipefish one lunchtime. Who knows, with the improvements to the habitats in the local vicinity these larger animals may be seen more frequently in the Wandsworth stretch of the Thames too.

It is anticipated that the works to



Half tide weir

remove the silt and the half tide weir will be completed by spring 2017 in time for the next smelt spawning season to begin.

A guidance document, *Conservation of Tidal Thames Fish through the Planning Process*, published by Zoological Society of London in October 2016 gives more background information on the way different fish species use the Thames and how, in particular, planners and developers can seek to protect and enhance the quality of the river and its associated habitats through careful timing of works and thoughtful design of features. This document can be downloaded from: www.enablelc.org/rivers

Best of all why not pop down to The Causeway, where Smugglers Way crosses the Wandle, yourself and have a look at the ongoing works and then during the summer as we begin to see wildlife recolonize the area. We'd love to know what you spot so please submit any sightings to us care of www.gigl.org.uk/submit



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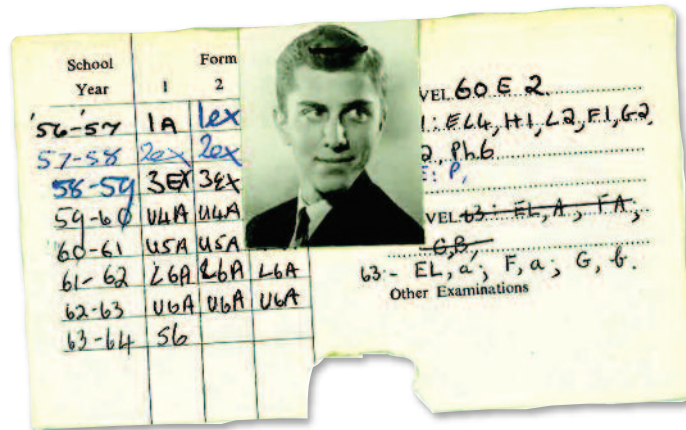


Mick Rock – 'the man who shot the seventies'

Tony Jones

Earlier in the year the Emanuel School Alumni Manager Emily Symmons interviewed legendary rock photographer and Old Emanuel

Mick Rock (OE1956-63). Often known as 'The man who shot the seventies', Mick took time out of his busy schedule to talk to us about his long and illustrious career photographing major stars including David Bowie, Lou Reed, Debbie Harry, Iggy Pop, Queen and more recently Snoop Dogg, Kate Moss and Janelle Monáe amongst many others.



whacking. At about 4 o'clock, the corridors were pretty empty as everybody was in class and I would sneak

down and scrub my name off and put a little squiggle on the end. So I actually got out of several canings by my guile.

Were you already getting into the music scene while you were at School?

No, it didn't really happen before I went to Cambridge.

Cambridge changed

everything in my life, partly because I picked up a friend's camera and got very excited and that is how all that caper started. It opened up a whole different part of my brain, brought me out of the highly cerebral world that my education had cultivated and into the more intuitive world of the senses. So how did things change at Cambridge? That is when it started to get out of order. Things were rumbling in the culture and I got very caught up in that. I started reading all these books

Do you have any strong memories of School?

I remember getting caned on a couple of occasions, young boys are always out of order. I used to row. I was a pretty good schoolboy rower, but I wasn't really built for long-term rowing, even though I did row at Cambridge in my first year there and participated in the bumps and maybe even in the Schoolboys' Head of the River. I rowed one year at Henley, although we got knocked out in an early round. I had stamina but I certainly didn't have a lot of musculature.

What I did do which I think may have been an early sign of let's say my initiative potential, was learn how to work my way out of a detention. They would put a list up on Friday of the boys who were either to be caned or who had to come in Saturday morning and different prefects would write them down. If this added up to more than two hours then you got a



and I was a bit of a hippy back in those days. It helped that the girls would respond to that. It had that level of shall we say attraction and I probably looked the part. I am sure in any other era I wouldn't have been as popular as I became, I had a certain look that worked. Let's be honest, the people I was interested in back in those days before I picked up a camera such as Bob Dylan, the Stones and John Lennon, were not good-looking people by the standards that had gone before but because they

Dylan, the Stones and John Lennon, were not good-looking people by the standards that had gone before but because they imposed themselves on the popular culture, the way they looked became I suppose hot in some way. That certainly helped me out and of course the name. Should have been called Micky Mouse probably.

You've said in other interviews that your break was really your friendship with Syd Barrett.

Seminal is the word. I had done three or four sessions before Syd but those are the first pictures that people take notice of now. In many ways, he was the beginning. Those pictures were the ones that excited me most in the early days. It was a totally different time in photography. People didn't take photography particularly seriously, there was no cable television, there weren't that many publications, and obviously no internet. The photos mostly got exposed on an album cover or as publicity shots to give away to the newspapers; it was mostly about the music press. So it wasn't necessarily an easy way to make a living but then I wasn't really in it for that. I remember my mother saying at one point, 'Are you still taking those pop photos Michael?' Obviously this was a little bit later and she said 'I know you are only doing it to avoid getting a real job.' I remember thinking, 'Yes, I don't like to get up before noon!' The idea that my work nowadays, besides all the books I've done, would be in museums and cultural centres and art galleries all over the world would have been absurd. Rock 'n' roll photographs were



absolutely disposable. Six months after they had been taken, nobody cared – but the internet changed everything.

I remember after my heart-bypass surgery in '96, my name started to get out there a bit. There were a few photographers who had taken pictures especially on album covers that had transcended their time and certainly certain figures like David Bowie for starters and Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Queen, Roxy Music, Debbie Harry, The Ramones, the Rocky Horror Picture Show and Bob Marley, etc. The work I had done for them wasn't

making me much money but those bands, those performers have established over the years a reputation for not just producing pop music or even just rock music but actually being artists that still have a large presence in today's culture. That word 'artist' didn't really rear its head back in the '70s in relation to rock performers but obviously when you look at it from a modern perspective, David Bowie was more than an artist; he became a totally transcendent cultural figure.

The culture in this new millennium has changed – often nowadays instead of a picture being an adjunct to the music, the image comes first and then people get interested in the music as opposed to the other way round. Because of the internet it all stays around, unlike in the old days. In contrast to a publication, it doesn't get thrown away now; it just stays there cluttering up the ether and every day, every minute, every second of every day it is being fed. People often ask me what I think of photography today and whether the internet trivialises photography. I say 'No, I love it!' It is the golden age of photography; the more, the better. Everyone has access and a forum to show their images. It has helped make me a lot more money, indirectly, because of the much broader interest. I mean if I didn't want to shoot ever again I certainly wouldn't have to. But I love to shoot. It's very therapeutic for me.

What was it like working with Bowie?

It was very comfortable. We established a rapport almost immediately. We had many interests in common. He was a huge Syd Barrett fan and the fact that Syd was my friend made him very excited. David wasn't so well known when I met him so my timing was good. It was before the release of Ziggy Stardust so I got swept up in that whole thing and shot David pretty regularly for about 21 months. Through him, I got to know Lou Reed and Iggy Pop and as a result of that Queen approached me and Roxy Music and these people who have become so significant but none of whom were very well known at that stage.

I also had total access to Biba on Kensington High Street. It was like a glummy hippy store and they weren't so bothered about selling. You could go and just hang out there, and they had the Rainbow Room at the top where they had a lot of great parties. Lou Reed became a very good friend of mine and I shot him throughout the '70s and of course I did his most famous album cover, Transformers. Debbie Harry and Iggy Pop remain friends of mine to this day, two of my all-time favourite subjects!

It all kept relentlessly moving along and then at Xmas 1996 I had my quadruple bypass surgery and that straightened my life out in a very important way. Certainly, I could always take photographs – creative



Writing the music for James Bond

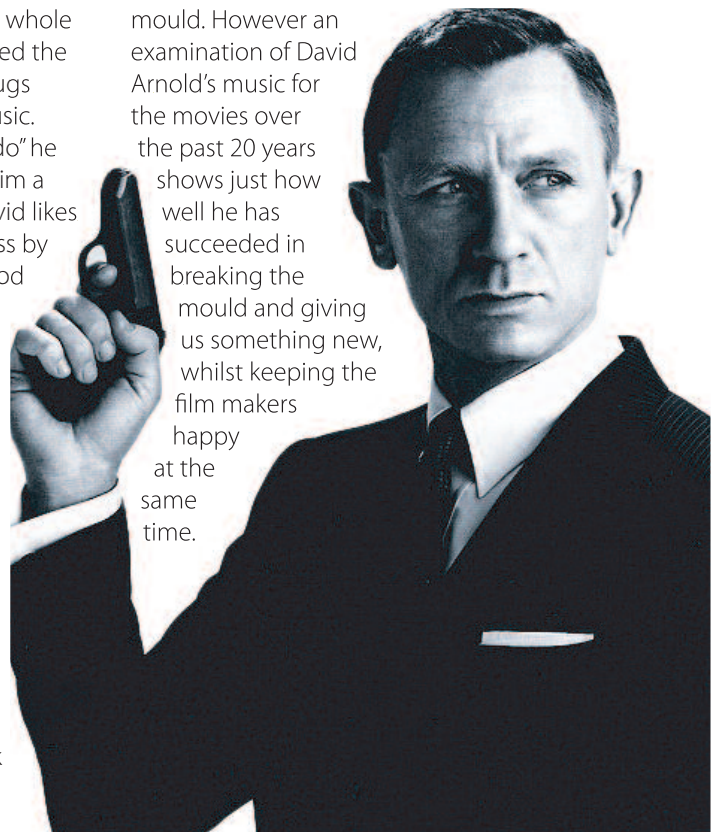
Our guest speaker last Thursday was David Arnold. David has written the music for five Bond movies including *Casino Royale* and a *Quantum of Solace*. He also scored the music for *Independence Day*, *Stargate* and *Godzilla* as well as writing the music for TV shows such as *Sherlock* and *Little Britain*. Not content with this, he was also the Musical Director for the London Olympics.

During his talk, David gave us a wonderful insight into the world of filming making and the creative process. First of all he dealt with the fear factor, explaining that being offered the chance to write the music for a major feature film is rather like standing at the foot of Everest and wondering how you are ever going to manage it. However, by taking it a step at a time, eventually you get the job done. This is how he avoids the problem of "writers block": he just tries something, and if it doesn't work, he tries again and keeps going. He made it clear that he is a pragmatist and that, in his view, this is necessary if you are ever going to write for film or TV. So, if the director changes his or her mind during post production, and

decides to reduce or cut a whole scene after David has scored the music for it, he simply shrugs and writes some more music. "That's what I am paid to do" he said. Directors must find him a pleasure to work with! David likes to start the creative process by getting a sense of the mood of the film, given that his music is there to help reinforce this mood and to help manipulate how the audience feels during each scene. To illustrate: for the main theme of *Sherlock* he wanted to write some music which would reflect the analytical nature of the main character, but also give a feeling of the quirky approach which Stephen Moffatt and Mark Gatiss wanted to bring to the show.

In terms of regrets, David said that his biggest regret is that many movie makers want the composer to recycle tried and tested techniques when writing the music for chase scenes, love scenes and suspense scenes. So it can be hard to break the

mould. However an examination of David Arnold's music for the movies over the past 20 years shows just how well he has succeeded in breaking the mould and giving us something new, whilst keeping the film makers happy at the same time.



Edinburgh Fringe

August saw Emanuel's third visit to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Following sell-out runs with *Antigone*, *Trojan Women* and *The Shakespeare Revue*, we returned to the Festival with a stage adaptation of the children's classic, *The Suitcase Kid*. The play focuses on the aftermath of divorce on a young girl called Andy and her rabbit friend, Radish. 20 students from Year 10 to Upper Sixth were involved, with two students working as sound and

lighting technicians on the show.

This year we moved into a larger venue, right on the Royal Mile, with capacity to hold 75 in the audience. This was an exciting, but daunting step as there are over 3200 performances at the Festival and the average audience size is eight! However, our decision to stage a production written by the former Children's Laureate Jacqueline Wilson certainly paid off as we sold out every performance, filling the theatre with young families and allowing the actors to develop new skills

in performing for children, something we had not attempted before.

Our focus was on creating a vibrant, energetic and colourful production, inspired by illustrator Nick Sharratt's cover image for the novel, which he kindly agreed to let us use on our marketing material. We were listed as one of 'Seven Top Shows to See at the Fringe' by *The Daily Record* and one of 'The Top Ten Children's Shows at the Fringe' by STV and were put forward for a Children's Choice Award.

people are like that. You may have a messed-up life but you can still produce. Now I do yoga every day and ten-minute head stands, chanting, meditation and get acupuncture. I also have a meditation machine from my friend Deepak Chopra! You name it, I probably do it and regularly.

Life is very positive for me all over. I've just come back from Toronto shooting a special set up for a new version of the Rocky Horror Picture Show. I did a TV programme with Mark Ronson and shot Snoop Dogg, Lenny Kravitz, Karen O'Pharrell and Janelle Monáe recently. I have this very unconventional documentary called SHOT! backed by VICE Films and exhibitions all over the place constantly. I did a beautiful limited edition co-signed book for Taschen with my dear friend Bowie just before he died. They are going to reissue the co-signed limited edition book I did with my other great friend, Lou Reed. I'll be in London in September to do a big exhibition. It's going to be a major one.

I won't go away that is for sure. I remember my mother before she died asking me when I was going to retire. I said, 'I don't really know what you are talking about!' I look at people like Picasso, who was in his 90s and still producing, and I look at Mick Jagger. He is 72/73 and he may have been a pensioner for a long time but he is still out there today. It's a very different world today, a different concept of health, a different concept of photography, a different perception of so many things. It's a good time for me.

How have you managed to stay relevant over the years?

I can't really answer that. I think my yoga etc keeps my mind open to the changes that are constantly taking place. They all nurture my openness and curiosity about the new. They maintain my energy and enthusiasm. I had my down period; I mean, I had a serious 20-year drug habit and I ended up getting heart bypass surgery in 1996. I remember I did an interview about 15 years ago and I mentioned the word cocaine and my mother wouldn't talk to me for three months because she thought I was in some way infecting and polluting the minds of young people! Although I certainly wasn't advocating it! Quite the opposite... I couldn't really tell her that young people didn't really care what I was doing, they had their own mischief to make. Anyway, that was her perspective. She was of that earlier generation; she had been a teenager during the war, she had lived through all the bombing and I think the '60s shocked that generation. They had gone through this horrendous experience and they wanted a quiet stable life and then along came the '60s and all that hullabaloo and then the hair – that was such a huge deal back then when I was at Emanuel. I remember my

mother saying, 'You can't go to School looking like that! Your hair is over your ears and over your collar.' Different times indeed!

Check out Mick's website at: www.mickrock.com.

STOP PRESS: OE SNAPS OE: Dan meets Mick!

How often do you get to take the portrait of the most famous music photographer in the world? Probably never. But that's exactly what happened on 8th September when Daniel Kirmatzis (OE1994-01) caught up with Mick Rock (OE1956-63) who was in London to promote his new book of photography about the rise of David Bowie in the early 1970s. It has commonly been said of Rock that musicians haven't truly made it in the music business until he has taken their portrait. He's that famous. So how Daniel managed to take this great photograph in the middle of the hustle and bustle of a packed public event makes the photo even more terrific. We also love the idea of OEs photographing other OEs, especially in circumstances such as this. Dan also enjoyed talking to Mick about his time rowing for Emanuel in the early 1960s, which is featured in Dan's first book The History of Emanuel School Boat Club. Mick also signed "Glam! An Eyewitness Account" with "To Emanuel, rockin' Mick Rock". His name really is



North Devon

Mark Haworth-Booth

As some readers may recall, my wife Rosie and I left Wandsworth – after 30 years of married life in the borough – in autumn 2009. We have just completed our seventh year in North Devon. It is good to keep in touch with our old friends via the Bedside Edition. I'm still an Honorary Research Fellow at the V&A and continue to do some work on photographic history – but these days I really enjoy the expertise of others. My subject this time is North Devon's farmers and naturalists.

Just before we left for an early September holiday in Provence, our farmer neighbour Chris rang. It might be nothing, he said, but he'd noticed that one of his fields was exceptionally wet. As it is where our water pipe runs, from the mains supply, he thought he should mention it. We drove to the spot where our water meter is, at the edge of another of Chris's fields – and couldn't find it. It's a while since we'd last checked it and the grass was long, ready to be grazed by the Bickle Farm cows. We heard an approaching quad bike. Mark, Chris's son, had come to see what we were up to. He looked around for a second or two and immediately located our meter.

I tell the story because it shows how well farmers know their land. Mark had a very exact memory of where the meter was in relation to the hedge and the nearest gate. He grew up on this farm. His own son, now eight, is gratifyingly keen to follow in his dad's footsteps. Being a farmer is a role he plays out with total conviction with his well-equipped toy farm. When called for a meal, Jack will shout back – just like his father and grandfather – 'can't come right now – I've got to finish unloading this silage' which happens to be real silage which he has brought in from the yard. Another farmer, John Bartlett, recently gave a talk about the changes he'd seen in agriculture over the past 50 years. Born in 1942, John

remembers working with horses on his father's farm. Two workmen helped run a farm of 140 acres. It was mixed, as most farms were in those days, with 12 cows, a few sheep and some arable. Now, John's own son – still with two workers – runs a farm of 400 acres and 200 cows. The huge increase in cattle and milk yields are due essentially to mains electricity, which reached the farm in 1970, and mechanisation. Also



to be taken into account are new ranges of fertilisers, herbicides, improvements in crop plants and the introduction of artificial insemination, allowing the use of top genetic material from countries like Denmark rather than relying on the local bull. John told a story about the daughter of one his father's workers taking a cow to the next farm to be served by the bull. She met her schoolteacher on the way who asked what she was doing and, when the girl had explained, inquired: 'Shouldn't your father be doing this?' 'No, sir', she replied, 'he thinks the bull should do it'.

Tractors arrived on the farm the year John was born and he was driving a Fordson Standard by the age of six. With horses his father could reckon on ploughing an acre in a day. With a tractor he could plough two or three acres. In those days milking was done by hand. John said he could milk two cows before his hands got sore. His mother could milk for a lot longer. John was delighted when the first milking machines came in. There was no refrigeration in those days, apart from

a simple water cooling system. Milk churns were collected from a stand at the farm gate and taken to the Torridge Vale Dairy in Great Torrington. There each churn was examined by the Sniffer. If he didn't like what he smelt the churn would be back at the farm on the lorry next day with a label round it's neck, bearing a reason for rejection. Sometimes cows would get into a small wood on the farm and eat wild garlic – the smell of that in the milk was, understandably, one of those reasons. There would be some pigs on the farm and they got any spoiled milk. Thanks to the milking machines, the number of cows on the farm went up from 12 to 20.

When electricity, and thus refrigeration, arrived in 1970 the picture changed completely. (Does it surprise you to know that some farms and outlying cottages in North Devon still don't have mains electricity?). Ice tanks came in, as did insulated lorries and the Sniffer was redundant. In the latest milk parlour on the farm, 100 cows can be milked in an hour. The tanker picks up every other day and delivers to the Taw Valley Creamery at North Tawton where it is made into different kinds of cheddar, including the renowned Tickler cheese. Cattle and sheep are a North Devon speciality for two reasons: rolling hills (rather than flat fields) and a lot of rain. The costs of the new milking parlours turned most farmers away from the old mixed farming and made them dairy specialists.

Some people, John said, think that farmers just 'accept' that they often happen to live in beautiful landscapes. Not so. John and his family have always loved their farm's setting, with its 60-mile view and not another house in sight. 'We feel blessed every day.' He also spoke of the quad bike as an extraordinarily useful machine. When John first bought one, his accountant asked if it could honestly be claimed as

a business expense. On the contrary, they are the best way for one person to move a herd of cattle – something very few dogs can do. Nowadays, as soon as they hear the quad bike arriving, the cows know that it's time to walk up to the milking parlour or to a grassier field.


Haymaking, given all our rain, used to be a real problem but these days machines can cut, bale and vacuum wrap so quickly that only two dry days are needed instead of a week. John remembers the old days of haycarts with high loads tottering along the lanes, always likely to fall off. This happened one day and the local vicar found a boy scrabbling with a huge mound of fallen hay. 'I've been wanting to have a word with you, young man', said the vicar, with confirmation lessons in mind. 'I can't do that right now sir, my father wouldn't like that' answered the boy. 'Your father not want you to hear the Word of God?', asked the vicar. 'And why not, pray?' To which the boy replied: 'Because he's underneath this hay'.

The farmers I know are very observant of the wildlife around them. This year, I've been involved with a couple of surveys with members of the Devon Wildlife Trust branch in Barnstaple. In May, a DWT-led group walked the lanes and fields around our hamlet and recorded 126 vascular plant species in two hours. One of these was Hemlock Water-dropwort, about which a story is told in our village. Dr Joyce Helsby gathered some leaves from this appetising looking plant and mixed them into a salad. She was about to serve it when her husband, also a medic, took a look and asked the provenance of the leaves. It was lucky he did, as they are – as the name suggests – highly poisonous. Some time later Dr Helsby was greeted at a party with 'Ah, so you're the doctor who tried to poison her husband.' Later in life Dr Helsby became rather forgetful about what was in her fridge, which was memorably described by a son at her funeral as 'a temple to penicillin'.

The crack DWT naturalists also found an otter spraint on a rock in our local

stream, a hazel nut chewed by a dormouse (they chew much more neatly than the careless grey squirrels) and even – excitingly for some – a badger latrine. In August, other DWT specialists brought bat detectors and moth traps to our garden. If our plant names are magical, English moth names are equally marvellous. Among the moths identified were Flame Carpet, Black Arches, Rosy Footman, Pale Prominent, Ruby Tiger, Flame Shoulder, Marbled Beauty and Setaceous Hebrew Character.

I've probably said before that North Devon is wage poor but wildlife rich. I was staggered by the numbers of birds I saw, in a couple of hours, on a recent visit to the banks of the River Taw around Isley Marsh below Barnstaple. The highlights were 270 Blackheaded Gulls, 211 Curlews, 10 Grey Herons, 18 Little Egrets and no less than 356 Oystercatchers. Mornings like that reconcile us to the plentiful North Devon rain. *Country Life* named Devon the best county in England to live in – but please don't go spreading that around. ■



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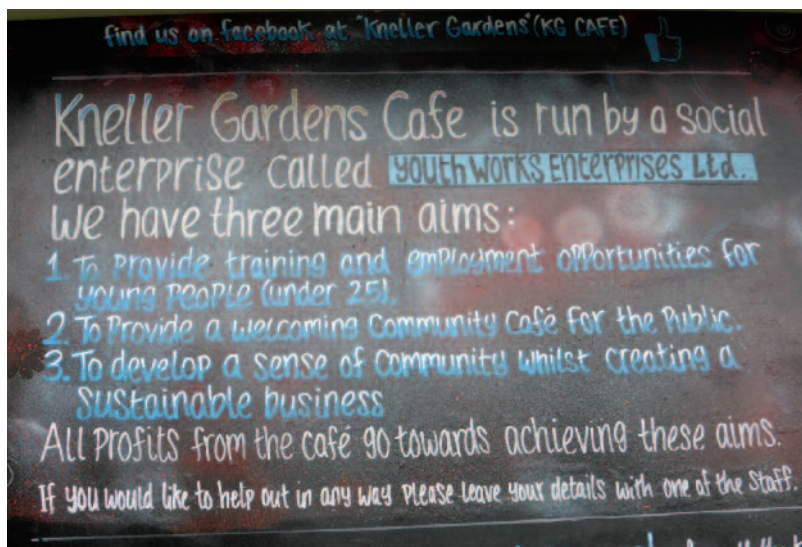
Collectors' item
 Red Kickers (circa 1972?)

Park Cafés

Caroline Pook

Those who have walked with the Wandsworth Society over the last couple of years have drunk many cups of coffee in the parks of London – and even stopped for a bite of lunch. Park cafés are often legacy buildings, usually owned by a Local Authority and leased – or licensed – to a third party to operate. The cafés often reflect the demographic or visitor traffic of the area where they operate. Sadly, this means that in poorer areas – like Beckton in East London – we have encountered sad, vacant, buildings which once housed a local meeting place but are now abandoned to graffiti. But others thrive often due to the energy of the operator; there are clubs, classes and events, often for parents and carers but also for crafters and one small chain is running monthly farmers' markets.

These following are some of the most interesting we have visited, ranging from small Mom and Pop outfits (on a licence from the local Council) through to the large scale up-market operator Benugo. Each has their own merits! For each one we suggest a walk or outing that you may like to try. All are within Travel Zone 6.



KG Café – Kneller Gardens

This café is little more than a kiosk but deserves a mention due to its convenient location for the walk and the fact it is unusual in that it is run by a youth and community project delivered by the social enterprise Youth Works Enterprise. There aren't many tables under cover but the team working here on the day of our visit were cheerfully

dispensing the dishes of the day of baked Polish sausage in a roll and vegetable soup to dog walkers, parents watching children in the adjacent playground – and walkers along the River Crane.

Suggested walk: start at Twickenham Station (having downloaded a map from the internet: look for The River Crane Walk) and end on the A314/Hanworth Rd from where you can get a bus to Hounslow Station. 2.7 miles.

Pavilion Café – Victoria Park Hackney

A very popular, not very large, café in an ornamental lakeside pavilion. The clientele mid-week, is quite hip and this is reflected in the food like "Chargrilled Chicken Hearts, Coconut Roti and Green Chilli Sambal" which was on the menu the day we visited, together with notices about the provenance of the food. Excellent coffee, artisan breads, friendly staff serving Sri Lankan Chai (and "Builders' Tea") and the kitchen is open to view – but quite pricey. Looking at reviews it might be better avoided at weekends!

Suggested walk: Hackney Overground Station, via London Fields to the Grand Union Canal and follow the canal through Mile End Linear Park to Limehouse Basin and Canary Wharf to catch the Thames Clipper back to Central London. 4 miles.

Serpentine Bar & Kitchen – Hyde Park

The Serpentine Bar & Kitchen is in a glass-walled pavilion in the middle of Hyde Park with views over the Serpentine. It's a large café with a big outside area but gets very crowded at weekends in Summer. It's run by the chain Benugo and the menu includes pizzas in the wood-fired oven, fish and chips, hot sandwiches and salads – and unlike many park cafés this one is fully licensed and offers draft beer and wines. It's a tourist honeypot – complete with tame heron – with prices to match!

Suggested walk: start at Westminster and walk the Five London Parks, St James' Park, Green Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens and Holland Park. 4 miles.

Poppy Café – Coulsdon Memorial Park

This small café with only 7 tables inside is run by a delightful quirky couple who cook all the food from scratch

– and they do it their way. They offer a good a fry-up at any time, lunch of home-made dishes like chilli con carne and filled baked potatoes – and panini including that childhood favourite with a 21st century twist, cheese and Marmite filling!

The joy of this park gem, and its £1 mugs of tea, is that it makes a welcome end to one of London's best country walks. But beware, they close at 4pm.

Suggested walk: start at Coulsdon South Station for a circular walk on Farthing Down, along Ditches Lane to Chaldon Church (with its famous mediaeval murals) and back to the start via Happy valley... and the Poppy Café. 5 miles

Unity Kitchen Café – Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

This is the largest café in the Park, in the Timber Lodge in the northern section of the park; it has lots of seating inside and out as it is designed for the 21st century unlike most other park cafés. It is notable that it is a slick professionally-run social enterprise with delicious food, training young people in the catering business. The café is a perfect place for children as it is next to an amazing adventure playground.

Suggested walk: start at Stratford Station and follow the signs for the Olympic Park. The park covers 560 acres so you should be able to walk as far as you like.

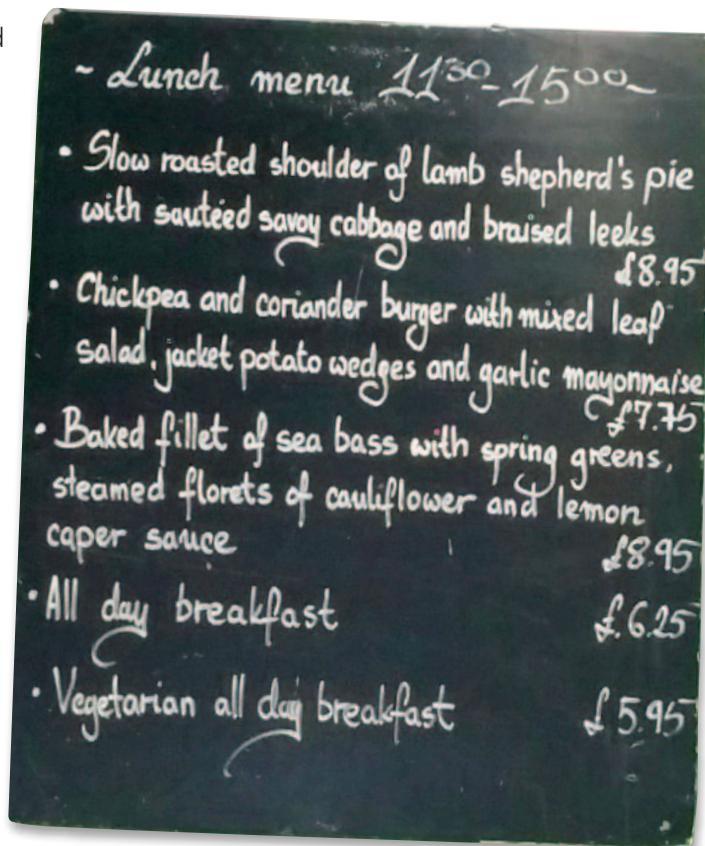
Holland Park Café – Holland Park

A small café in the centre of this lovely lesser known, but varied, park with a surprising wooded area and peaceful Japanese Garden. The Holland Park Café has limited internal space, some of it in the form of comfy sofas, but lots of room outside. Any lack of space is made up for by excellent good value food (could this reflect the competitive effect of nearby Kensington High Street with its competing cafés and coffee shops?)

The menu is varied and although limited it is imaginative, home-made and claims to be seasonal food, sustainable and locally-sourced – and there

is no reason to doubt the claims.

Suggested Outing: This is close to the new Design Museum in the nearby former Commonwealth Institute (and close to a 28 bus stop direct from Wandsworth!). Or visit Leighton House a couple of hundred yards away. Or end the Five London Parks Walk here (see above). ■



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Going Home

Veronica Cecil

‘What are you going to do on your last day?’ Huma asks. I’ve invited her to join me for an English breakfast in Flashman’s hotel in Rawalpindi.

‘Not sure’ I say. And then, on impulse, add. ‘What I’d really like to do is to go back to Nathia.’

Nathiagali, where we stayed every summer to escape the heat of the plains, is only an hour or two away from Pindi by car. I went back soon after arriving in Pakistan. Perched on a ridge in the foothills of the Himalayas, it’s now a thriving holiday resort. But the feeling of the old British hill station was still there as was our little wooden house with its steep in roof, its tiny turret and its latticed windows. It was the highest in the British hill station and involved a hard climb to get home. ‘But it’s worth it for the view’ my mother would say. I didn’t really appreciate views in those days, but, from our veranda, we could see layer after layer of mountains with Nanga Parbat sticking up higher than the rest. ‘She’s called the naked lady’ my mother said.

‘Why don’t you?’ Huma asks as she slices through a piece of yellow leather that calls itself a fried egg.

‘In mid winter?’

‘You could always try. I’ve never known you not to ...’

I’m flattered by being seen as the intrepid traveller by Huma who, besides being beautiful, is Chief Inspector for Schools in Pakistan. She is also someone with whom I feel I can be entirely honest. She’s a Pathan, as are most of the people in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. But, while admitting to finding the Pathan way of thinking about women incomprehensible, she still holds to her culture.

‘You know’ she says as she kisses

me goodbye, ‘In a way I am quite envious of you. You have been able to move about our country and see and do things I never could.’

‘Really?’

‘Even if I hadn’t felt constrained by our customs, I’m not sure I would have had the courage. We all make chains for ourselves.’

Spurred on by her faith in me, I step out into the street and stop a taxi. I ask him if he’s prepared to take me up to Nathia and, to my amazement he agrees. It’ll be my third visit.

After the first I’d gone back again. The gardener, the *mali* who’d shown me round, had told me that my old house was now let out to summer visitors, so I’d asked a friend to book it for me. They’d built a road since my day and, as we drove up the hill, I saw the *mali* standing at the little wicker gate as if he’d been waiting for me. He carried my suitcase up the steps and, as he put it down in the bedroom, I was overwhelmed with joy. This was where I’d slept all those years ago. I would wake to the warm smell of sun-soaked pine needles and the caw of the mountain crows.

My euphoria was short lived. A ratty-faced man arrived with a book. He pointed at a page of squiggles and indicated that my name was not there. I pleaded but he was intransigent. Summoning up my dignity, I said I’d walk down to the bazaar and sort it all out. I found the place virtually deserted; the offices had been closed down for the winter. I went into a small guest house called ‘The Blue Heaven’ for help, but they had no telephone directory. ‘You can stay here’ the affable owner offered solving my problem to both our advantages. ‘It will only cost you fifty rupees.’

The climb back up the hill was long and hard. ‘You arrange?’ the *mali* asked

hopefully when at last I got to the top. I shook my head. And then, for no reason, I burst into tears. ‘Why you sad?’ he asked, massaging my legs. But having started I couldn’t stop.

Other people had come to appreciate my mother’s view. A grand house, with Victorian cupolas and pseudo empire nostalgia, was in the process of being built right beside us. The workmen were having their lunch break and a young man came over and asked me if I wanted some food. He was the *khansamen*, the cook, and he brought over a dish of spicy dahl, the nursery food of my youth.

But, even with food and kindness I couldn’t stop weeping.

‘You too many troubles’ the *mali* said. ‘You too old.’

That did it. I’d noticed a guest house close by with an equally lovely view and I told the cook and the gardener that I would stay there. That night the first powdering of snow fell, and when I woke Nanga Parbat, my naked lady, along with the peaks around her had turned white ...

Now, driving up the Margalla hills, I think about Alexander’s armies. I’ve been told they marched through here, and it strikes me that I, too, am part of the history of this landscape. As we climb, the air grows colder and the dustings of snow turn into layers. I find myself chatting to the taxi driver about himself and his family.

‘I am a Pathan,’ he says with a certainty that explains everything about him. He is rooted in his culture. He knows who he is. But I am rooted nowhere.

The burned out remains of Murree brewery, built to slake the thirst of the British army after the Mutiny, appear suddenly and dramatically on a white hill. It brings with it sounds of

military bands, and a lump of sentiment.

‘We hate the British’ one young woman told me. ‘Even though you left fifty years ago you are like the scorpion, you left your tail behind. Did we? And what exactly did that tail consist of?’

‘Why do the Pathan need to fight?’ I ask the taxi driver.

‘It is in our blood’ he answers proudly.

Blood. We all have the same blood. Historically the Pathan have been bred to be warriors. But does that make us any different? Blood carries our genetic inheritance; but not our feelings.

There is no other traffic now; no painted buses flaunting their cheap costume jewellery, no little boys running beside us with summer daisy wreaths, just the driver and me alone in a new white world. As his taxi slithers on a new fall of snow covering old ice, my idea of going to Nathia seems crazy. I half expect the driver to come to a halt and refuse to go any further. And, indeed, part of me would be quite relieved if he did. One glance at the fir trees, their trunks thigh deep, striding down the near perpendicular slope of the mountainside, however, makes me realise that to try and turn round now would be more dangerous than going on.

Possibly the driver has made the same reckoning as me, or he feels that having got this far he can’t give up. Possibly he’s even enjoying the risk. Certainly he doesn’t complain. And I find myself infected by his fatalism. It’s light and bright and where the sun penetrates the trees, it glints off the prisms of ice and dances through the crystalline world of snow-burdened branches. We will get there, In’Shallah, and if we don’t so be it.

‘Where I go now?’ the driver asks when we reach the bazaar. It is completely deserted but the roads have been kept salted. I point up the hill not expecting him to attempt the climb, but he revs his engine and pushes his taxi up the twists and turns

of the road until we reach the old British hill station. The little English green is now covered in snow, and with its black and white church it only needs some children in long knickerbockers playing with hoops and balls to turn it into a scene from a Victorian Christmas card.

There’s no way the taxi can possibly go any further and, besides, I want to be alone, so I ask him to wait for me while I make the rest of my journey on foot. Although the snow is deep the path up to my house has been cleared. The icy air is laced with a smell of resin. At the top the fence round my garden is all but drowned, but the steps up to the wicker gate have been scraped and a corridor cut through the snow to the veranda. It’s as if the little wooden house with its steep roof, its miniature turret and its ridiculous gothic windows, has been waiting for me.

‘*Kya hal beh?*’ I look up to see the young cook, the *kbansaman*, who’d fed me lentils in my moment of despair, standing like a God on the slope of the hill. The pseudo empire building is almost finished.

‘*Teekb takb?*’ I shout back.

The *kbansaman*, now dressed in a thick *choga* and Chitrali pancake hat, comes bounding down, his scarf flying. He flings his arms round me and hugs me. I am his mother, his sister, his long lost friend. He loves me and I love him.

‘Your house’ he says triumphantly as if we have won and I am forever the rightful owner. ‘I *chokidar* now.’ He produces a key from his pocket and starts to open the door.

‘I’m not staying’ I try to explain, but he doesn’t take any notice.

Inside the house has been put away for the winter. Wood lice and spiders have taken repossession, furniture is stacked together, and a smell of damp pervades. He disentangles a rattan chair and carries it, along with a cushion and a fold up table, out onto the veranda.

‘You sit’ he orders and disappears.

All around is thick virgin snow. In

front the layers of mountains have turned into an undulating sea of white with Nanga Parbat, my naked lady, standing up clearly above the rest. I used to imagine her as a gigantic white goddess who ruled over her never-ending white kingdom; a goddess who enfolded me in her large bosom, keeping me safe for ever-and-ever-amen.

I think of how comforting snow is; a layer of cotton wool on raw emotions; a blanketing of reality. I came back hungry for a time of imagined innocence but found something else instead. My mind flits back to the coloured patchwork of small happenings that have brought me to where I am. The cry of ‘firengi’ when I was travelling in a bus and, unbeknown to me, my sleeping bag had fallen off the roof. How the bus driver stopped while two young men leapt, gazelle-like down the ravine we’d just crossed to retrieve it. Another time, desperate with tiredness after travelling all night in a bus, I’d knocked on the door of a hotel and a sleepy proprietor had appeared. Even though the place was full he insisted I lie down on his bed until a room was freed-up later in the morning. Encounters like these are what have made up my journey.

I look at my watch. I can’t help worrying. I’m feeling guilty about the waiting taxi driver. The *kbansaman* has been away for some time. Is he getting the house ready? Does he really imagine I’m actually staying? Quite apart from the fact that it’s a fantasy, I need to get back to Pindi while the weather is still clear to catch my plane. Then the *kbansaman* reappears, carrying a tray. It isn’t silver with a lacy cloth or laden with bone china. It’s tin. On it there’s a tea pot, a milk jug and a thick, white china cup and saucer. He has also rustled up a plate of homemade biscuits.

‘*Memsabil?*’ he says putting the tray down on the table.

‘*Mebrbani?*’

The *kbansaman* starts to pour and steam billows out, warm and fat, into the ice-tight air. ■

A House in Spain

Prue Raper

My Cousin Molly was a remarkable woman. Some would have called her eccentric, but there was much more to her than that. She was born in 1896, the daughter of an Indian army colonel – if that is the right description of a British citizen, born in India and serving in the army there. Like most army families, Molly and her parents lived an itinerant life and by the time I met her she had seen much of the world.

In looks, she was not a beauty, but very attractive, in a *jolie laide* manner. Her fierce father drove most of her suitors away, as being unworthy of her; but after his death she eventually married a widower, in the same mould as her father, also a colonel, born in India, and equally peppery.

It was through his rather remote family connection with my mother that I first met Molly and Gordon, when they came to live in East Devon, quite close to the boarding school I was at, and consequently lined up to provide a haven on exeat weekends.

They lived in a perfectly square Georgian house, looking across the common at the village church. It had a ghost, but quite a nice one which manifested itself in lovely floral smells – roses, lilies, magnolia, out of season but quite distinctive. Nice, but at the same time slightly unnerving.

When Gordon died (he was almost twenty years older than her) she took to holidaying in Spain. Somehow, before she married, she had attended art school, and was a dedicated painter in watercolours, mostly landscapes, and really quite good. She particularly liked the area on the coast

opposite Gibraltar, at that time beloved by English ex-pats whose pensions stretched further there, which enabled them to cross to Gib on the ferry, to buy their tea at Liptons and change their books at the Garrison Library.

Molly's health was not strong, and her doctor in England said she would do better to leave the damp house in Devon permanently and settle in Algeciras. Which accordingly she did.

By this time, Molly and I were good friends. We both loved art and antiques, and exchanged books. Her taste was eclectic, and she subscribed to some rather outré literary journals. In due course, the

Spanish authorities stopped the ferry, so the Garrison Library was unfortunately out of bounds, but the Reina Cristina Hotel up the road (part of the Trust House Forte group) kindly established a lending library there, and the hotel became the mecca for the expat tribe in Algeciras.

Molly often lent some of her own extensive library to friends, though on one occasion she was worried when a young man she did not know well asked to borrow Paul Theroux's "The Great Railway Bazaar". In this book Theroux described visiting a brothel during one of his travels. She did not feel comfortable about

lending the book to this young man, who would realise that she too had read this passage. Her solution was to tear out the relevant pages before lending it, which must have surprised and tantalised the young man.

I went out to visit her in her little house on several occasions, and met a number of her friends and neighbours there. This I was particularly keen to



do, as she had made me an executor of her will – something that made me rather anxious. The idea of tangling with the Spanish legal system made my head spin, especially as she had a deep distrust of the local lawyer (with some justification) and had made her obligatory Spanish will (alongside her English one) with the notary rather than the lawyer.

The expats were a very varied bunch, especially those who had taken up residence at the Reina Cristina. There was one old lady who modelled herself on Queen Elizabeth I, had stored all her belongings in the hotel basement in steamer trunks, and insisted on being escorted to her table at mealtimes by a waiter on either side. Then there was an elderly chap who had lived in the tropics, where he had acquired a parasitic worm that lived happily – it seemed – inside him, occasionally popping out into the light of day, usually through one of his ears. He had the habit of approaching new visitors to the hotel with a pair of tweezers, proffering them, and his ear, for examination, and exhorting the alarmed visitors to “have a look, and see if you can see the little fellow, and give him a tweak”! Luckily I managed to avoid him and his tweezers.

On one occasion I visited Molly together with a friend of mine, a musician, telling her beforehand that if she wished to hear me sing (which she had often asked me to do) and could source a suitable keyboard, we could perform some songs for her. She quickly took up this idea, and in a flurry of letters (she was a terrific correspondent) told me what she was planning. One point she made was that on no account were we to include any songs written after 1800, as she would be inviting the local Catholic priest, “who didn’t like anything modern”.

When we arrived, she waded straight in: “Your recital is to be in the main lounge at the Reina Cristina tomorrow at 11 o’clock”. Me: “But isn’t that where all the coach parties congregate?” Molly: “No, I’ve spoken to the manager and there won’t be any tomorrow.” So that was that.

Unfortunately for my poor friend, the regular pianist, Maria, refused to unlock the piano until half an hour before we were due to perform. Besides which, our carefully chosen programme of early music wasn’t designed to be accompanied on a grand piano. That was irrelevant, as it turned out: the priest had not been invited, as Molly had invited the Marchesa, and she wouldn’t come if he came, for various personal reasons.

The next morning, being unable to rehearse, we had a swim, changed into our glad rags in the bathing huts, and went to meet our public. All seven of them were sitting in a snug semi-circle, admiring the bruises on the Marchesa’s legs after a fall the previous day. One other little group of hotel guests sat in the far corner. We gave our recital. Polite appreciation was shown. Then a teenage boy from the group at the back came rushing over. I waited coyly for his congratulations, but that was not what was on his mind: “How did you get the key to the piano?” he demanded, then, not waiting for a reply, rushed up to the longed-for instrument and began to play a jazzy number. Luckily the priest wasn’t there.

The years went by, and finally I received a letter telling me that Molly had died. The letter was from her London solicitor, a Mr Stubblefield. Molly had, in fact, chosen a second executor, another girl of about my age. She, unfortunately, had told me some time before that she had no intention of carrying out this role, but refused to tell Molly, simply saying airily that her mother “would help” when the time came. She didn’t.

Luckily Mark, my musician friend, happened to be free at the time, and reckoned to be able to speak some Spanish, so off we went on our mournful errand.

Fortunately the networking I had done over the past few years came into its own. Kind people came out of the woodwork to provide help and advice. Molly had told me that one of her neighbours, an aristocratic lady living in a huge ancient house, had said she would take her cat, Tithy, if anything happened to her. I rang this lady to thank her, and thus received an invitation to visit for a drink. She lived with a companion, Bidy, who in some mysterious way had recently lost all her household goods and was only too happy to take over the cooker, the pots and pans and anything else in the house that needed a home. She duly arrived with the local blacksmith to cart it away. A small carriage clock, not on the list, also disappeared at that time, but that wasn’t too painful a loss.

Another kind lady with an unused store room, kindly agreed to house all the really valuable stuff – silver and the like – which we would have to return by car to collect in the future.

Nuns were run to ground who would accept clothing, bedding etc. Eventually the house was cleared except for the furniture, which had been left to the absentee executor. I had the better of

the bargain in inheriting everything that wasn't furniture – plenty to remember her by.

On my return to London the fun began. The Spanish will which had been made with the notary had a mistake in it. Because of their lack of fluency in each other's language, the wrong word had been used for "property". The Spanish will by law had to deal with the house, that is, the real estate. This had to be left to the nearest relative – in fact the mother of the absentee executor; but the word that was used included all her goods and chattels, all of which had been carefully allotted in the English will. This meant getting an expensive Spanish lawyer in London to swear an affidavit that the English will took preference over the Spanish. I was highly relieved when that was finally sorted out.

I miss Molly. I miss her letters describing the pleasures and perils of life in Algeciras in the '70s and the doings of her colourful acquaintances. I kept up with some of them for a while, but they've all now disappeared. I can't find the copy of the Theroux book, though I'm sure I've got it somewhere, minus its torn-out pages. I have some of her watercolours. But most of all I have the memories of a remarkable friend. ■

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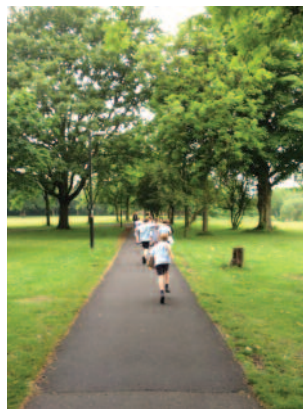
FINTON HOUSE SCHOOL



Year Five Local History Walk

In June 2016 some of our Year 5 pupils (aged 10) went on a “Local History Walk”. Here are some of the things they discovered:

“Finton House was built in 1878. We know this because the date is engraved on top of the door. It is interesting that this is the same year that Wandsworth Common was established. The common was very different in those days. It was quieter because there were no cars, no railways and no aeroplanes. Wandsworth Common had gravel pits , people could graze their sheep and lots of houses were being built nearby. Many people came to live in the area as the new houses were being built. One of them was author Thomas Hardy who lived on Trinity Road from 1878 – 1881.”



On our walk we saw some Parish Boundaries. This one separates Wandsworth from Battersea.

The Bedside Manner

Dr Nicola Jones

Could Christmas show us how to be better together?

The meaning and experience of Christmas is increasingly broad to those in our ever more diverse borough. For many, the focus at this time of year is on the excitement and anticipation of children and young people.

However, in the health and care services we are also more aware of those in need and in particular the older and more vulnerable people in our community.

Our job as a Clinical Commissioning Group is to plan and pay for services that ensure that the population of Wandsworth has the best chance of good health and wellbeing, and we must do this in a way that reduces inequalities. Often people who need care the most are the least able to access it, and the least able to help themselves.

Giving children and families more control

We know we need to do much better in bringing children's health and social care services together in a way that is co-ordinated and works for them and their families. We commissioned an investigation and report on children's services in 2015 and now we are working on implementing the recommendations. The report showed us that there are ways we can work with our council that will improve the outcomes for children by understanding the needs of the whole family. Personal health budgets can give families more control over the services their child needs so that they have a better experience. We are making sure this option is available to families who want it.

We've also done a lot to improve mental health services for children and young people, through projects like the Place2Be, which offers counselling in schools and means that children can get support more easily, in familiar surroundings. At a more local level, GP practices in Battersea spotted the need for more support for struggling parents and set up parenting classes to help them and their families.

In Wandsworth we have a Youth Health Jury. If you know anyone aged between 16 and 24 who wants to know more about health matters, and is keen to be involved, then we would welcome their input. The Youth Health Jury meets once a month and takes a friendly approach to learning more about health issues through group work, creative and fun activities, confidence development, relationship building and facilitated discussions. To find out more, email: youthhealthjury@wandsworthccg.nhs.uk



Avoiding a hospital stay

People are living longer lives and because of that, there are more people with long term health conditions. These are conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung conditions, arthritis, and mental health conditions. We estimate that there about 78,000 people in Wandsworth living with more than one long term condition. These patients account for about half of all GP appointments, 64 per cent of all outpatient appointments and over 70 per cent of all hospital bed occupancy.

Our aim at NHS Wandsworth CCG is to improve care for this group of people so that they don't have to go to hospital unless absolutely necessary. We want to reduce the risk of accidents such as falls and illnesses and so make it less likely that frail older people will have to go to hospital in an emergency.

Our solution is what we call "Planning All Care Together" or PACT. You could say it really is a pact, between GPs, the patient and a wider team of health and social care professionals who provide this service for vulnerable patients with long term conditions. PACT allows GPs to spend extra time with patients, working with them to understand what will help them to stay as well as they can and avoid unplanned stays in hospital. Last year we provided about 16,744 extra appointments, extra time with over 9,731 vulnerable people, 1,039 carers' consultations and 2,618 assessments for risk of falls.

We all have a role to play

Family, friends and neighbours also have a huge role to play in helping more vulnerable people to stay well. Cold weather can be harmful, especially for people age 65 or older: it weakens the immune system, increases blood pressure, thickens the blood and lowers body temperature, increasing risks of high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, and chest infections. For those with long term conditions, cold weather and winter illnesses such as flu, can make health problems like these far worse.

There are a number of things which can help people prepare against the cold weather.

It is important to keep warm in winter – both inside and outdoors. Heat your home to at least 18°C (65°F), and if you can, you might prefer your living room to be slightly warmer.

For coughs and colds get help from your pharmacist and make sure you know about medicines you should have in stock to help get you and your family through the winter season. Make sure you pick up your regular prescription medications before the Christmas holidays start, as many GPs and pharmacies will close over the holidays.

Many NHS staff will be working over the festive season and this can be a time of great strain on services. We all have a role to play in keeping ourselves, our family, and neighbours and friends healthy so that the NHS can care for those who need it the most. ■

Vote Conservation!

And to preserve Parliament we may all have to, writes Jane Ellison MP

Weddings do rather focus the mind. And I only really began to focus on the seemingly ever present building works at the Palace of Westminster in the run up to mine back in autumn 2014.

Before that I had got rather used to the ladders and screens everywhere, the floors and statues periodically shrouded from view, the paintings removed for weeks whilst walls were painted. But as the time ticked towards our nuptials in the chapel of St Mary Undercroft, I watched restoration scaffolding work its way around Westminster Hall – the oldest and, I think, most impressive part of the Palace – before, predictably, coming to rest exactly over the entrance to the Chapel the week before. Although an unusual portal for our guests, it did make the surprise beyond it that much more glorious as they emerged into a splendid mix of Victorian ecclesiastical decoration and medieval Gothic architecture.

But it did bring home to me that, what with all the hustle and bustle of life in Parliament, as an MP it's easy to forget one works in a very famous and historic building – Grade 1 listed and part of the Westminster UNESCO World Heritage Site. More than a million people pass through its doors each year, including 40,000 school children. It has had an extraordinarily colourful history, with its fair share of ups and downs, but today there is a rather large question mark hanging over its future. To understand why, it is helpful to know a little about the Palace's history.



A winning design

The Palace of Westminster is a wonderful example of 19th century 'perpendicular Gothic' or neo-Gothic architecture. Easily identifiable by its vertical lines, intricate stonework and pointed arch windows, this style was particularly popular in the 15th century, but later enjoyed a Victorian revival. At the time of the fire which destroyed much of the palace in 1838, neo-Classical architecture, styled on ancient Athens and Rome, was all the rage; The White House is perhaps the most famous example of this movement. For the

'Mother of Parliaments', however, the revolutionary associations of the neo-Classical style just wouldn't do, and it was felt that a more traditional style was needed. A public competition was held in 1836 to come up with a neo-Gothic blueprint for the new Parliament. To ensure fairness and avoid favouritism, the 97 leading architects who submitted designs had to do so anonymously, their sketches only identified with a simple logo or pseudonym. The winning entry – number 64 – was by Sir Charles Barry (with help from Augustus Pugin, who designed the interior). Number 64's identifying emblem is still used in Parliament today – the Portcullis.

Construction of Barry's plan began in 1840 with a budget of £725,000 and was expected to take six years to complete. In the end, it took 30 years and £2m. Excluding some parts of the building which were repaired following bomb damage in WWII, many parts of the Palace have never undergone renovation. Time has taken its toll and today it's really starting to show its age.

From the outside, the sand-coloured limestone of the Palace (sourced originally from Yorkshire) looks crisp and clean – at least from a distance. Closer-to, however, it becomes clear the Palace is in desperate need of almost total renewal. Some of the limestone was of poor quality to begin with and was easily corroded by the Victorian smog. Even the acidic excrement of the many pigeons and herring gulls has done its bit, eating away at the masonry (despite the best efforts of the professional falconer retained to drive most of these birds away). Sadly, decades of neglect, pollution and inclement weather have decayed the wonderful stone carvings on many parts of the Palace.



A cast iron roof covered in rust and peeling paint (Images © Parliamentary copyright)

Of mice and Men's

But there are some who fight back. The Palace maintenance teams work day and night on what is, sadly, becoming a losing battle. Along with regular maintenance, some areas of the Palace have been restored recently – the intricate tiles of St Stephen's Hall and some of the stonework in Westminster Hall, for instance. However, the vital organs of the Palace, those that let it function as a workplace – the heating, ventilation, plumbing and miles of electrical cabling – are slowly decaying. To say these systems are outdated is rather an understatement – the temperature control in my Parliamentary office is operated with a hand crank! Some of the pipes, I am reliably informed, are over 100 years old, significant quantities of asbestos makes repair extremely difficult and many roofs are leaking – one colleague had to abandon his office for days after water from the Men's loos above showered his desk. My personal bugbear are the mice that scuttle around tearooms and corridors seemingly unconcerned by events around them. I have to fight the instinct to tuck trousers into socks...

So, if we want to keep this wonderful building largely as it is and as the home of Parliament, we're told that big decisions have to be made – and soon.

Today, the cost of restoring the Palace for future generations – of MPs and the people they serve – will be significant and will take several years. The heritage status of the Palace and the asbestos will mean it will have to be done with particular care. Just how to approach the repairs is already the subject of some discussion. The Palace of Westminster has been the permanent home of our Parliament for over 500 years, but for the first time, both MPs and Lords may need to move the business of the Houses to another location – at least for a while.

A monumental decision

A new Joint Select Committee on the Palace of Westminster was formed in July last year to carry out an Independent Options Appraisal. The Committee reported back in September this year, and concluded that the Palace of Westminster 'faces an impending crisis which we cannot responsibly ignore' and that there is a substantial and growing risk of either a single, catastrophic event, such as a major fire, or a succession of incremental failures in essential systems which would lead to Parliament no longer being able to occupy the Palace. In the Committee's view, the old 'patch and mend' approach to maintaining the Palace is no longer sustainable and they recommend that a major programme of works is now essential. The Committee came to the view that the lowest risk, most cost-effective and quickest option to carry out these works would be for all MPs, Peers, and staff to move out of the Palace temporarily and in one go. Before that can happen,

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Ageing steam and electrical systems side by side are unsafe and often fail (Images © Parliamentary copyright)

however, Parliament has to establish a Delivery Authority to develop a full business case and prepare a final budget for Parliament's approval – it is, of course, vital that taxpayers' money is spent wisely. Whatever happens, the programme of works itself is unlikely to start before 2020/21.

So how would you preserve the Palace – one of the most important and iconic parts of our national heritage – for future generations? It would be great to get the views of amenity societies that know a thing or two about conservation ahead of any vote. It goes without saying the

sums involved are very large, especially at a time when the public finances remain under pressure.

Despite the urgent need for renovation, it is important to stress that the Palace is still a fantastic place to work. However, it is not just for the politicians – over the years, the House authorities have really made great strides opening it up to the public. As a Member of Parliament, I am in the position of being able to organise tours for constituents and school groups in the Battersea constituency. In addition to tours, there's a lot of other things for young people to do. Last year, Professor Brian Cox opened the first ever Education Centre aimed at schools, complete with Parliamentary themed rooms, augmented reality, and immersive learning experiences. Visitors explore the past and present of our Parliament and democracy using cutting-edge technology. More information about how schools can book tours can be found online here: <http://tinyurl.com/ParEdCentre>

See it for yourself

Happily, Battersea's proximity to Westminster has meant a large number of local people have been able to visit. I can also get tickets for constituents to watch debates in the House of Commons. PMQs is always heavily over-subscribed, but if you are interested in foreign affairs, the economy, international development, or a whole range of other issues, there's a debate for you. So, if you're a constituent reading this and if you would like to see the state of the Palace for yourself, on a guided tour or to come along to watch a debate, don't hesitate to contact my office at jane.ellison.mp@parliament.uk. Other MPs will be able to organise similar opportunities for those living in their areas.

I still remember standing in Central Lobby in May 2010 with some other newly elected MPs as we pinched ourselves at the thrill of working in such extraordinary surroundings. But as its heroic maintenance teams might remind us, keeping the Palace working is no thrill at all. Time for us all to Vote Conservation? ■

*With thanks to Parliament for the source material:
www.restorationandrenewal.parliament.uk*



The Palace of Westminster was rebuilt after a fire in 1834 (Images © Parliamentary copyright)

G F Watts 200

Perdita Hunt

Watts Gallery – Artists' Village is facing an exciting year ahead. 2017 will mark 200 years since the birth of George Frederic Watts OM RA (1817–1904), the great Victorian artist who, together with his second wife, Mary, founded a collection of buildings in the Surrey Hills which continue to provide art for all. His birthday, 23 February, is shared by the famous musician George Frederic Handel, a fact which inspired Watts's father – a piano maker and tuner – to give his son the same two forenames.

Launching on 23 February 2017, our exciting exhibitions and events programme will span across this whole historic year.

Highlights include an unprecedented display of the artist's epic murals, an

unparalleled exhibition of masterpieces borrowed from both public and private collections, a concert of music beloved by both Watts and his eminent friends, and a timely conference focusing on science and art in Victorian Britain.

In his own time, G F Watts was widely considered to be one of the world's greatest artists. He was not only an outstanding painter, but also a talented sculptor, highly proficient draughtsman and notable muralist. During his long career, Watts became a cultural icon who championed a new role for art as a means of symbolically expressing the progress of humanity, and as a tool to assist in philanthropic projects. By 1884, when he was lauded as the first living artist to have a solo retrospective exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Watts had achieved international fame.

Yet for much of the twentieth century, Watts's vision of a social role for art seemed old-fashioned and consequently his reputation suffered a decline. This was mirrored in the fate of Watts Gallery, the purpose-built picture gallery that he and Mary established in the Surrey village of Compton in 1904. By 2004, Watts Gallery had fallen into such disrepair that it was placed on the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register. Fortunately, with contemporary artists once again seeking to engage with social and political issues, interest in Watts has renewed, and the Gallery and its collection have been saved for the nation thanks to the support of

the Heritage Lottery Fund and many generous donors.

Since reopening to the public in 2011 to great acclaim, the Gallery has been reunited with our co-founders' former studio spaces, the Watts Chapel and the Old Pottery Buildings to create Watts Gallery – Artists' Village, a unique window into the Arts and Crafts Movement and a source of

inspiration for visitors once more. Indeed, in March 2016 *Apollo* magazine declared that: 'one of the most remarkable turnarounds in any Victorian artist's reputation is almost complete'. By marking the 200th birthday of 'England's Michelangelo' – the enduring epithet conferred on G F Watts by his close friend Frederic, Lord Leighton – we fully intend



G F Watts - *After the Deluge: the Forty-First Day*

to continue decisively reinvigorating the artist's reputation.

Next year, Watts Gallery will stage three special exhibitions to celebrate Watts 200: *A Life in Art: G F Watts (1817–1904)*, *Monumental Murals* (both 28 February – 5 November 2017) and *G F Watts: England's Michelangelo* (20 June – 26 November 2017). *A Life in Art* will provide the spectator with an introduction to Watts by offering a chronological journey through his illustrious life, which will be illustrated by some of his most exquisite drawings. By highlighting key occasions in his seventy-year career, this show will tell the story of 'England's Michelangelo' and his rise to prominence, from humble origins to world-famous artist. Often his slight, delicate drawings sowed the first seed for elaborate compositions which went on to become sizeable paintings or sculptures, allowing for intriguing glimpses into his creative processes.

On an entirely different scale, *Monumental Murals* will showcase and unpack Watts's mural projects. Colossal, sculptural and highly admired, these creations were central to his agenda and practice, but remain rather overlooked. Our dramatic and dynamic display will focus in particular on two extremely rare, large-scale murals which were painted by Watts for private homes in the 1850s. For the first time, we will be presenting his compelling *Apollo and Diana*, which has never before been exhibited in public. This fascinating fragment originally formed part of a larger mural cycle at 7 Carlton House Terrace and was produced

for the artist's patrons, Lord and Lady Somers. It depicts the two divinities silhouetted against a golden backdrop: the goddess of hunting, Diana, draped in blue with her bow and arrows to the left, and her brother Apollo in red, holding his lyre and trampling a python underfoot to the right. At 2.86m high by 1.87m wide and weighing in the region of 300kg, this wall painting is truly immense!

We will bring together this forgotten masterpiece with Watts's classical *Achilles and Briseis*, painted for the Marquess of Lansdowne at Bowood House, which has been recently restored. Additional exhibits in a variety of different media will help to illustrate Watts's other mural projects, such as that at the Villa Carreggi in Florence; at his former home, Little Holland House; the public, prize-winning designs for frescoes at the Palace of Westminster, and of course at Lincoln's Inn, where his gigantic *Justice: A Hemicycle of Lawgivers* presides over the Great Hall. *Monumental Murals* offers audiences the chance to appreciate this most ambitious art form, to which Watts was devoted, and will illuminate his methodical refinement of a difficult technique. At the apex of the artist's visionary aspirations stands his unrealised 'House of Life' project – a vast and ambitious chronicle of man's progress from creation: such was the value he placed on mural painting as an artistic vehicle to convey compelling messages.

Our principal exhibition, *G F Watts: England's Michelangelo* (opening 20 June 2017), will bring together and showcase a selection of his finest and most striking works in our historic galleries, designed by the artist himself to best present his imagery. Paintings will be assembled in a series

of thematic clusters, drawing attention to the wide range of topics Watts treated, from symbolism, social realism and spirituality to portraiture, philanthropy and pictorial allegory. Highlights will include one of the nation's top ten favourite paintings – the iconic *Choosing* (National Portrait Gallery), which portrays Watts's charismatic teenage muse, Ellen Terry, as well as the vibrant *Jeanie Senior* (National Trust) and his captivating *Countess of Cork*, generously loaned to us from a private collection. His celebrated portraits of male contemporaries will likewise be represented by works such as the Royal Academy's distinctive depiction of Lord Leighton, adorned in his magnificent presidential robes, and the eccentric poet *Algernon Swinburne* (National Portrait Gallery). Other masterpieces – many of which have never before been exhibited at the Gallery – include the prime version of *Love and Life*, famously shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (private collection), and our own symbolic *After the Deluge*, which recently returned from Marseilles.

These three exhibitions will be accompanied by a series of events which will revolve around three central themes – all of which were of special interest to Watts during his lifetime and which will help us build upon his legacy – music & theatre, philanthropy and science. Passionately devoted to music throughout his life, Watts looked to this art-form as an example of how beauty and emotion could be expressed without literal description or representation. He often employed lyrical language to describe his compositions, such as his Royal Academy diploma piece, the colossal *Denunciation of Cain*, about which he



declared: 'If I were a poet and musician like Wagner, I could make a fine cantata or oratorio of the subject'. We will be hosting a range of musical and theatrical productions in the historic gallery spaces next year, including *An Evening of Victorian Song* (24 May 2017) and *A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Freshwater* by Compton Little Theatre (Friday 24 and Saturday 25 May). The former event, compered by the composer David Owen Norris, will recreate the musical world of Watts and his circle, with pieces known to have been enjoyed by them, such as those by the great violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim.

A lifelong social campaigner, Watts's philanthropic activities will be reflected in the imagery selected for our displays, especially his emblematic *The Good Samaritan* – gifted to the people of Manchester in honour of the great prison reformer Thomas Wright – as well as the enigmatic *Love and Death*, which has the unique status of being the first work acquired by Whitworth Art Gallery, once again donated by the artist. The former canvas links compellingly with our 'Big Issues' project, where we work over 800 people affected by social exclusion to create and exhibit their own artworks: the transformative power of art was of course continuously and convincingly advocated by Watts. This ethos will likewise be alluded to in several events, including a proposed Philanthropy Symposium held at The Charterhouse in London, which will explore social investment and new ways of giving in the light of lessons learnt from nineteenth-century philanthropists. We also hope to host a one-day seminar in partnership with Tate's British Art Network, which will focus on the theme of artists as reformers in British art during the period c.1850-1900.

During the latter part of his career, Watts became fascinated by the latest scientific discoveries, especially in evolution and astronomy. He saw in science the essential underpinning of the principle of social progress which he had championed. In several of his late works, Watts aspired to express modern scientific thinking through the poetic visual language of art. A conference on *Science and Art in Victorian Britain* (October 2017) is planned, which will investigate the relationships between science and art in the nineteenth century. Taking Watts's great images inspired by astronomy and evolutionary theory – such as his 1902 *Sower of the Systems* – as a starting-point, speakers will show how scientists and artists inspired one another during this period.

A forthcoming book, *The Art of G F Watts*, by Dr Nicholas Tromans, Brice Curator of Watts Gallery – Artists' Village (Paul Holberton Publishing, February 2017), will also be published during this landmark year. As the author states: 'this book... is intended as an explanation of why Watts is still worth bothering with, which I am convinced he is if we could stop expecting him to live up to the saintly accounts of his contemporary admirers and recognise him as something more like a modern conceptual artist whose

works are by-products of original intellectual and social experiments'. We certainly believe that Watts is worth 'bothering with', and our bicentenary exhibitions and events programme seeks to ensure that Watts is properly understood and appreciated by the public as being an original, significant, attractive and profound artist. It will reinforce the continued relevance of the artist's life and works, while looking forwards to future ambitious projects that will likewise disseminate his imagery and values to a modern-day audience. Dr Tromans, talking about Watts 200, declares: 'At his best – and we will be showing his best works – he is one of the most compelling creative spirits of the nineteenth century. He had the most wonderfully optimistic hopes for art – he really believed art could change your life and even change society as a whole for the better. He had a kind of mystical belief in the progress of humanity, which he felt art alone could fully express'.

We are really looking forward to inviting as many people as possible to explore, enjoy and engage with Watts and his works – peculiarly charismatic, mysterious, powerful and experimental as they may be. Combining colour, cosmos and celebrity in a visual spectacle not to be missed, we would welcome the members of the Wandsworth Society to visit. For further information please refer to our website, www.wattsgallery.org.uk. Why not enjoy free admission for the year by becoming a Friend, or gift a Watts Friend membership to your own friends this Christmas? ■



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A Postcard from Ron Elam

Ron Elam has just produced his third book in the *Through Time* series in conjunction with Simon McNeill-Ritchie.

Here he reflects on a few examples from his collection of 35,000 postcards.



How a photo can be a surprise

When looking for relevant postcards, many of them are originally produced by a photographic process. Some are faded but I am ready to buy regardless of state if it is within my geographic interest.

Although some cannot be improved, others can be made clearer. This one of Three Island Pond was important to a customer as it is the only one I have that shows the house she lived in as a child – since demolished.



Is the place in my area?

The card is entitled Southfields. It is franked "Wandsworth SW". The message on the back is: "As I am staying with May – am sending you a P.C. of Southfields. Do you remember this place – we walked up this way when we walked over to Southfields." It must be our Southfields. But whereabouts precisely in Southfields? The publisher has drawn in a distant train immediately to the right of the house (identifying the train line).



Behind it is a building (real, not drawn in) larger than other buildings in the distance – that could be a church (see page 80 of my new book). On the 1916 O.S. map, at the corner of Granville Road and Sutherland Road a single building is shown with an outline corresponding to the one on the card. The road in the foreground of the card must therefore be Sutherland Grove. Hurray.



This is not a postcard but a photograph. The words in lines pencilled on the back are: "Bolingbroke Grove Wandsworth Common Time 7.30 The Spring of 1888 or 1889 J E Currie John Timothy". I hope that it could show Three Island Pond. Research needed by me.

Social aspects

I have some 35,000 old postcards, mainly of street views and often with children in them. But I have only one card with children who are barefooted. It is in Landon Road SW9. The very low percentage is not an indication that the photographers did not want to show poverty. They were trying to earn a wage. People were very keen to buy postcards, partly to collect, partly to send to friends and relatives, partly to send a message at half the price of a letter (postage of ½ penny for a card or 1 penny for a letter). People would buy cards of their own street. The



photographers were aware that sales would be low in poorer areas. (Note on this card there is a mixture of children with no shoes (in the road) and well-dressed children (on the right).

The message on the back of the postcard can also be illuminating of the period. This card of Oakhill Court in Putney posted in 1906

has this message. "Dear Mrs Wilson I was very please to hear from you, glad you are all keeping well, as it leaves me. We have moved to Putney but not for long, we are in the bottom flat on this card, they are very large flats but I would sooner live in a house. Dear Mrs W, the house we lived in was there own and they are trying to sell it, but it is a job to, so my Misses told me that I should have to leave, if she cannot keep me up, to get a cheaper maid. I shall no with in a week. I do hope I shall be able to stop, she does not want me to go, Putney is a very nice place, kiss little Willie for me and remember me to Mr W, love to you from Ada."



The new book of *Wimbledon and Southfields Through Time* is now available priced at 14.99 but for the next two months it can be obtained for £12 if you mention Wandsworth Society by contacting Ron on 020 8874 8544 or by mailing ron@localyesterdays.demon.co.uk. Free delivery for local buyers. Some *Battersea Through Time* books are also available at the same price.

Taking the 'now' pictures for the book

Simon McNeill-Ritchie and I always aim to provide the modern view from the same position as the original photographer. But we have to wait some time especially as we try to include vehicles and people in the positions as in the old view. Arthur Road in the new book (see page 63). I provide the old view and Simon takes the modern view by taking some twenty (or more) shots to ensure we have an exact match: However I have the more important role – of pulling him back to the pavement before he is run over. Always successfully so far.

Ron Elam

The Story of Elm Grove, Roehampton

Gilly King

Very little is known of the Jacobean mansion that once stood on the site that is now Digby Stuart College at Roehampton. It was built c1620; a large house having some 20 hearths, certainly built of brick, and Rocque's map of 1741- 1745 shows an E-shaped structure. No views of the house survive¹. From 1640 to 1661 it was owned by Eliab Harvey (1589-1661), brother of Dr William Harvey, who was personal physician to King Charles I and famous for his theory of the circulation of the blood.

Dr William Harvey spent the last 11 years of his life at his brother's house in Roehampton. Saddened by the defeat of his beloved master Charles I, shattered by the King's execution in 1649 and debarred by the Parliamentarians from exercising his functions at St Bartholomew's Hospital, he accepted the hospitality of his brother Eliab and devoted himself to research work. Dr Harvey died in 1657 and was escorted to his burial place at Hemel Hempstead by the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians, an organisation of which he had been the most famous President.²

In February 1795 the mansion was destroyed by fire but underground vaults, associated with the house, survived. These vaults, beautifully constructed of Jacobean brick, were subterranean chambers built at irregular intervals along a central passage at some distance to the south-east of the house but connected with it by a barrel-shaped passage 4 feet 6 inches in diameter through which a man could crawl. There can hardly be any doubt that these were Cavalier caches, for much plotting went on at Roehampton during the years between the Civil War and the Restoration: the Harveys



Elm Grove in 1804, drawn by John Hassell

were Royalists and Christiana, Dowager Countess of Devonshire who acquired Roehampton Great House in c.1650, was active in the Stuart cause. It is believed that all the vaults were filled in during the rebuilding work that took place after the Second World War.

The owner at the time of the 1795 fire, Mr William Galley, built a small house with extensive stabling on the east side of Roehampton Lane and called it The Rookery, but he probably never lived there. Around 1796 The Rookery and the land to the west of Roehampton Lane was leased to, and subsequently purchased by, a wealthy banker and philanthropist, Benjamin Goldsmid. Benjamin was not satisfied with The Rookery on the east of the Lane, so he commissioned the architect James Spiller (c.1761-1829) to build Elm Grove. This Georgian villa was built over the Jacobean vaults which lay at some distance to the south-east of the original mansion. These vaults provided Goldsmid with spacious underground storage at no additional expense.

Elm Grove owes its name to a thickly wooded deer park which once covered the hilly ground between the lower reaches of the Beverley Brook and the common fields of Putney. According to a description of 1805, the considerable pleasure grounds (to the house) were closed by lofty elms which entirely encircled the back of the house and stretched away down the lawn. The house was described as, '... a square stuccoed building, [it] is of a colour tending to an ochre, and has a semi-circular projection in its centre, supported by fluted Corinthian pillars.'³

The estates on either side of Roehampton Lane were connected by a tunnel, commissioned by Goldsmid, parts of which survive to this day. In his book, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, Sir Richard Phillips described this tunnel: 'The object which most particularly called to mind the unbounded wealth of the former proprietor [Benjamin Goldsmid] is a subterraneous way to the lawns on the other side of the road. It is finished with gates resembling those of a fortified castle

with recesses and various ornaments, all of Portland stone.⁴

The records of Benjamin's time at Roehampton are abundant. His great wealth and open-handed generosity earned him the title 'The Benevolent Jew' and his influence in the financial world brought him visitors from every rank of life. Pitt, the Prime Minister, who lived in Roehampton village, was often at Elm Grove, and Lord Nelson was a close friend. Lionel Goldsmid, one of Benjamin's sons, described Nelson thus: 'He was walking the last



The east entrance to Goldsmiths tunnel, which survived until the tunnel was lengthened in 1957

morning arm in arm with my Mother, up and down the Drawing Room, a large room with two immense Glasses [mirrors], then a rarity, from the top to the floor of the room, at the upper end. My youngest sister and myself were on the armless side of his body and each time he told us two to look at "that old Fellow Lord Nelson" and see what a funny looking Fellow he was. He was generally, and indeed always, dressed in a Naval coat, white Naval breeches with Naval buttons at the knees, silk stockings, invariably lunging out if not pulled up, and shoes rather high in the quarters – large, with buckles. He was kind in the extreme and we all loved him; I, particularly, wished to go to sea with

him but I was too young.⁵

Lionel also described a visit by King George III: 'I have shown the Performance [Punch and Judy Show] to our good old Queen Charlotte and George III who was in great delight and gave me, as he said, his Miniature – a Guinea... His Majesty frequently called on Government Business.'

Benjamin Goldsmid was subject to fits of melancholia and in 1808, during an acute attack, he took his own life. He was mourned by all, and King George III himself 'rendered to his memory a marked respect and grief'.⁶ In 1810 Mrs Goldsmid sold Elm Grove to Lord Ellenborough. Edward Law, 1st Baron Ellenborough, chose Elm Grove as his country residence for his large family. He was a Cabinet Minister in 'The Ministry of all the Talents' and Lord Chief - Justice of the Court of the King's Bench. Lord Ellenborough's burdensome work commitments meant he frequently travelled the muddy roads between Roehampton and Westminster, some of which were infested by highwaymen: he would travel with loaded pistols.⁷

Edward Law, the eldest son of the Judge, succeeded his father as the second lord Ellenborough in 1818 at the age of 28. In 1820 Lord Ellenborough's young wife, Lady Octavia Stewart, died; devastated by her death but determined to marry again, in 1824 he married 17-year-old Jane Digby. Jane was the granddaughter of Thomas Coke, Coke of Norfolk; widely

regarded as the most important and powerful commoner in England, later being the 1st Earl of Leicester. In 1824 Jane Digby was the beauty of the London Season, very young and very naïve. Her short marriage to Ellenborough was never happy, and in 1830, after Jane was involved in a scandalous affair, it ended in a notorious divorce. 'For weeks [after the divorce] the name of Lady Ellenborough was in every newspaper and Jane's misdemeanours became the breakfast-table tittle-tattle of the entire country, causing her name to become a byword for scandalous behaviour for generations.'⁸ She fled to Europe and after two more marriages and many affairs she finally settled in Syria where she married a Bedouin Sheik 20 years her junior. She died of fever and dysentery in Damascus on 11 August 1881, and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery there.

At Roehampton, Lord Ellenborough had severed his connections with Elm Grove. Immediately after the divorce he sold the house and grounds to a Manchester merchant, James Harwick Oughton. Details of the life and times of the Goldsmids and Ellenboroughs are plentiful, but little is known of James Harwick Oughton or his time at Elm Grove. In 1850 it was put up for sale and purchased by the Society of the Sacred Heart to establish a religious community and girls' boarding school. It was the first of the Roehampton villas to pass into institutional use. The school flourished and a large chapel, classrooms and dormitories were built around Elm Grove House.



Convent of the Sacred Heart Roehampton c.1856

By 1939 the Society of the Sacred Heart school at Roehampton was one of the foremost girls' Catholic boarding schools, whose pupils at the time included nine European princesses and three daughters of the American Ambassador to Britain, Joe Kennedy Sr. When the Second World War broke out the girls returned to their home countries or were evacuated to other parts of the UK. In the summer of 1940 Lord Haw-Haw, in one of his propaganda broadcasts from Berlin, proclaimed that the Luftwaffe would bomb Roehampton in order to snuff out those rogue German royals.⁹ In the autumn of 1940 the Convent was severely bombed. The chapel and the community wing, Elm Grove House and the main school block were gutted; these buildings remained derelict until the War Damage Commission sanctioned their demolition in 1957.

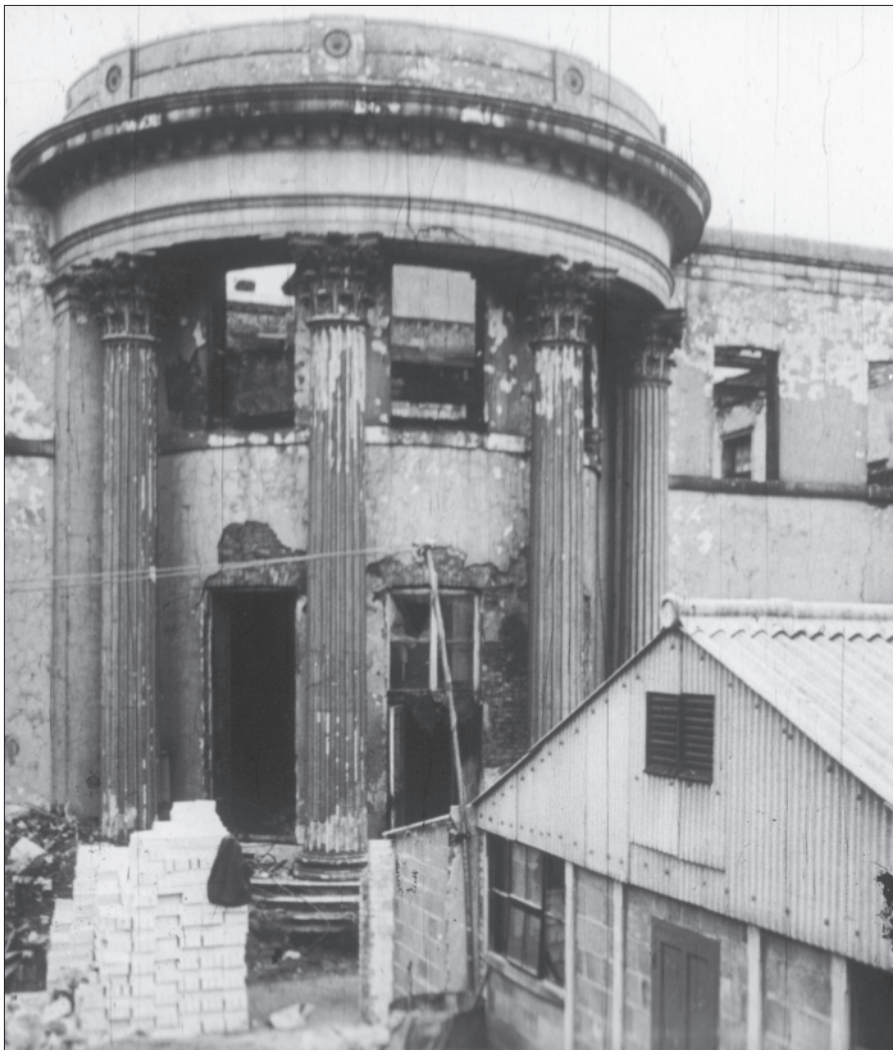


Elm Grove Hall of Residence and Conference Centre

At the end of the war it was decided to move the boarding school to the Surrey countryside and to establish the Society's teacher training college at Roehampton, for its premises in St. Charles's Square, Kensington had also suffered from enemy action. In 1946 about 100 students commenced their teacher training surrounded by the

ruins of war. The college was renamed Digby Stuart College commemorating Reverend Mother Digby and Reverend Mother Stuart, each of whom had been instrumental in the success of both the school and the teacher training college.

Digby Stuart College is one of the four constituent colleges of the University of Roehampton, and this summer a new hall of residence and bespoke conference centre was completed on the Digby Stuart campus. The building is to be named Elm Grove Hall in recognition of the rich history of the site. ■



The bombed portico of Elm Grove

- 1 Dorian Gerhold, *Villas and Mansions of Roehampton and Putney* (Wandsworth Historical Society, 1997)
- 2 Hilary Davidson, 'History of Elm Grove, Roehampton', in *The Chronicle*, Digby Stuart College, 1958-61
- 3 Dorian Gerhold, *Villas and Mansions of Roehampton and Putney* (Wandsworth Historical Society, 1997)
- 4 Sir Richard Phillips, (1767-1840), *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew* (1817)
- 5 From the unpublished diary of Lionel Goldsmid by the kind permission of the late Dowager Lady Swaythling
- 6 Diary of Lionel Goldsmid
- 7 Hilary Davidson, 'History of Elm Grove, Roehampton', in *The Chronicle*, Digby Stuart College, 1958-61
- 8 Mary Lovell, *A Scandalous Life: the Biography of Jane Digby* (Richard Cohen Books, 1995)
- 9 Jeff Dawson, *Dead Reckoning: the Dunedin Star Disaster* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005)

The Pub Hunter

Mark Justin laments the loss of local pubs

Some people collect beers. That is to say they write down, or “tick” all the beers they taste throughout the year. They are called “tickers”. Others, like myself, tend to collect and catalogue pubs themselves. We tick or underline pubs visited usually with the aid of a new edition of the best selling Good Beer Guide. I have been to over 2,000 pubs across the length and breadth of Britain.

The 3rd round draw of the FA Cup is a red-letter day for both types of Pub or Beer Hunter. An interesting away draw in the Cup will take us to new places. Obscure 3rd or 4th division grounds. Perhaps even a non-league football team that sits in a hot-bed of “Free Houses” up North. Free houses are public houses that are not tied to a specific brewery and are “free of

tie” to purchase their beer from whoever they please. My own hostelry, Le Gothique, on Wandsworth Common is a Free House. Sadly it doesn’t mean the beer is free.

Free Houses are quite rare. Especially in London. Most public houses in the London area are owned either by the brewery, like Fuller’s, or by what are known as pubcos. Most pubcos exist out the remnants of a very bad piece of Government legislation known as the Beer Orders.

Back in the 1980s 80% of Britain’s 64,000 pubs were owned and run by just 6 mega breweries. The “Big 6” became a byword for mediocrity and their disdain for anything local or different had led to advertising campaigns like “join the Red Revolution” with beers

such as Watney’s Red Barrel or even worse, Tennants Super, a beer noted only for its strength which was strangely favoured, despite its name, by the homeless.

The second revolution brought about by the “Big 6” was the promotion of a range of continental-style lagers. Mass advertising, catchy TV adverts and a blandness of flavour that was thought to appeal to a wider, younger audience soon became the norm.

The Beer Orders were an attempt by Parliament to restrict the growth of the Big 6 by forcing all breweries to own no more than 2,000 pubs. Staggering as it may seem some brewers like Grand Metropolitan owned 6,000+ pubs across Britain. The merger of Bass of Burton and Charringtons brought about a chain of some 4,000 pubs. Some towns and even complete cities soon found that they only had one beer to choose from at their local. There was a complete loss of choice.

To circumvent the Beer Orders these megabreweries either ceased to brew or ceased to own pubs – one or the other. Thus Grand Met became a pub-owning company with no brewery as did Whitbread. Others continued to brew beer but owned no pubs. But they weren’t stupid. They hived off their huge chains to a board of directors of former brewery men then tied these pubs to sell only beer from the brewery that once owned them. A clever, but exceedingly easy sidestep of the Beer Orders. Thus, the pubcos of today’s market were born. Government intervention effectively red choice to the consumer although the Beer Orders were intended to increase choice.



Battersea’s oldest pub - The Raven

What followed was an insane race by these pubcos to buy up as many public houses as possible, a strategy fuelled by cheap, borrowed, City money. But, one by one, the pubcos came unstuck and, burdened by excessive debt, came to attempt to dump unprofitable sites on to a depressed market.

But in London these enormous, largely Victorian-built public houses, some with huge gardens or airstrip sized car parks, suddenly attracted that 1990s demon... the property developer.

Pub closures have continued at an alarming rate across the Capital. Not because these pubs are necessarily unprofitable, but because their size and land footprint mean they are worth considerably more as residential blocks than they are as pubs.

This dramatic loss of pubs (running at more than 20 a week across the country as a whole) is fuelled by another piece of Government mismanagement: local authority planning rules. Back in the 1980s pubs sold beer and supermarkets sold food. All plain and simple. Then slowly planning and licensing rules changed to allow supermarkets first to sell alcohol at permitted times (like a pub) then eventually throughout the day. Pubs themselves underwent change. A new breed of gastropub like Le Gothique, the first of its kind in South London opened in 1987 which not only sold draught beer on handpump but high quality meals. So a situation has arisen where both supermarkets and pubs sell the same things... beer and food.

So why has this led to pub closures? Well it's because the Government has been slow to close a loophole that allows developers to buy an existing public house and turn it into a Tesco Express, Sainsbury's Local, Co-op or any such branded retail food chain, as no planning consent is required. Furthermore, really clever developers can apply



The Prince of Wales Battersea Bridge Road awaits conversion to residential flats plus a 4-bed detached house in the former garden

to demolish the building altogether, build a block of flats, then reinstate the pub on the ground floor upon completion.

Wandsworth Council has taken a lead in an attempt to close this loophole and has decreed that 120 of its pubs and bars will require consent for demolition or change of use, regardless of there being no national Governmental requirement to do so. But sadly most of the damage has already been done. The roll-call of lost Wandsworth pubs reads like a Who's Who of dead pubs.

The Castle, Battersea finally succumbed to the developers despite a lengthy campaign waged by CAMRA and local residents.

This pub was arguably of no architectural merit, having been rebuilt in the 1960s after suffering a direct hit during the blitz. But its demise was sealed by its large rear garden: perfect to concrete over and build flats.

Currently, the Prince of Wales opposite where I live in Battersea Bridge Road is closed awaiting conversion to flats and perhaps a small supermarket. There is room for a 4-bedroom detached house in their old pub garden. So you can see the attraction of the site to developers.

The question arises "do we need these pubs?" Is this some kind of natural wastage? Has the pub had its day? Well, to answer this I have

Three course set menus

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Smoked chicken and mango salad

*Coarse rabbit and pork pate with
toast and home made chutney*

*Melted goats cheese on crostini with mixed dressed
walnut and apple salad (V)*

*Loch Fyne whisky smoked salmon salad with finely
chopped cucumber and dill*

*Fresh steamed mussels in white wine, shallots, garlic and
parsley*

Moroccan tagine in filo pastry tart (V)

Fillet salmon, with lemon butter sauce

*French imported magret duck breast with orange zest and
Cointreau sauce*

*Slow cooked Lamb shank, mash
and onion gravy*

Prime sirloin steak & chips

*Traditional Roast Turkey, chipolatas, stuffing,
cranberry and bread sauce*

*Strawberry, lemon and mango sorbet
with raspberry coulis*

*French upside down apple tart
with scoop of vanilla ice cream*

*Liquid centred cup cake with vanilla ice cream
Cheese Board*

Buffet and Bowl Food

Some suggestions for canapés £15 per head

Shredded duck in filo with dipping sauce

Loch Fyne smoked salmon triangles

Mini fish cakes with tartare sauce

*Choux pastry cases with prawn cocktail
served in them with fresh dill and avocado*

Roasted red onion and goats cheese

Tempura of prawns with a light dipping sauce

Ricotta and spinach filo

Rolled Parma ham "cigars" with cornichons and herbs

Creamed Roquefort on bellini

Chicken Satay with peanut dipping sauce

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to refer to a third piece of Government mismanagement. Currently the sale of alcohol in supermarkets is destroying the viability of public house sales. Drinking at home is much cheaper than drinking in a pub.

Personally, I would ban the sale of alcohol in supermarkets. But you are guessing that, as a publican, I would say that. But alcohol is a drug. In a pub this powerful drug is sold in a controlled measure and in a supervised environment. At home you can drink yourself to oblivion without a care in the world. The UK must be the only country in the world where you can happily buy two litres of vodka to take home and yet not be permitted to purchase two packets of paracetamol. I lost my brother to alcoholism. He would be an angel when drinking at any of my establishments. Always the gentleman, never drinking to excess. But back in the seclusion of his own home, via a stop off at Sainsburys he would consume



Author Mark Justin is the longest serving publican in the London SW region and celebrates 30 years at Le Gothique in 2017.

enough Bell's whisky to anaesthetise a horse. So that's my reasoning for banning the sale of alcohol in supermarkets. Not the reasoning you thought I would use, I am sure.

The trip to the pub remains a quintessential English tradition. Be sure to visit your local this Christmas and into the New Year.

Do so now! Before it turns into a block of flats or another mini-supermarket.

Happy Christmas to you all. Have a tippie at home with your Christmas dinner but save the real drinking for the pub. Save Our Pubs. ■

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The Joy of By-Elections

Councillor Stuart Thom

To most sane people by-elections are a tiresome distraction. After all, you have voted in a General or Council Election and why would anyone want to turn out yet again. But by-elections are a significant part of the democratic process and often produce surprising results. The reasons by-elections are called vary enormously. Sometimes simply a Member of Parliament may decide he or she can no longer support the government of the day on a point of principle. Another factor might be that the MP has been found to be so discredited he is forced to stand down by his peers and the electorate. A more positive reason might be that the MP is promoted to a more senior role, incompatible with him or her continuing being a MP. Other justifications are more obvious in that an MP may become seriously ill or die, thus causing a vacancy.

Electorates take the cause of a by-election seriously, and are not pleased if it is seen as a poor one. So, when former Prime David Cameron stood down in his Witney constituency, the electors were not impressed, as he had previously assured them he was going to continue to represent their interests. As a result the Conservative majority was cut from 25,000 to 5,000, also due to a vigorous campaign by the Liberal Democrats picking up on Brexit. Zac Goldsmith has always taken a principled view that he would resign his seat in Richmond, if the third runway at Heathrow went ahead. With the decision announced, he has duly stood down. He may find however, that his cause overtaken

by other issues not least of which will be a strong campaign by the Liberal Democrats to bring out the dissatisfied "Remainer" vote in a highly europhile constituency.

Here in Wandsworth this year we have seen more elections and by-elections than ever before over the last eighteen months. If we take the General Election, and then the London Mayoral Election, as the first two major events, we saw Sadiq Khan returned as MP for Tooting. However, shortly afterwards he stood as Mayor of London, and fought a successful campaign to win against Zac Goldsmith. This meant a by-election in Tooting. Labour shrewdly chose Dr Councillor Rosena Allin-Khan as their candidate. With her background as a junior doctor at St George's Hospital, that helped her to be returned as the new member. Though she has not yet given up her Council seat she will presumably do so, as she gets into the full responsibilities of being an MP, thus leading to another Tooting council by-election. Mind you, Tooting has already had such a by-election as Labour Councillor, Ben Johnson, stood down to join Sadiq Khan at City Hall.

In Battersea in November there has been a serious contest between the Conservatives and Labour for the Queenstown Ward seat. This covers the area from Battersea Park through the "Diamonds" and on to the Patmore estate, Battersea Power Station and Nine Elms. There are two sitting members, Councillors Nicola Nardelli and Marie Hanson. However the third member was Labour's Sally-Ann

Jephson who had a debilitating illness and sadly died a few months ago. This meant the necessary by-election threw up several challenges, given she had won the seat by 75 votes. The Conservatives were anxious to win the seat back as having a ward with three members of the same party makes for much more effective ward management from their point of view rather than a split ward. Labour for its part was anxious to retain the seat and build on their successful campaigns in the south of the borough. The Liberal Democrats buoyed up by the London "Remain" vote were keen to capitalise on this theme with their candidate, a local banker.

Despite the Conservatives having an advantage in the leafy Prince of Wales Drive there were still residents who could not forgive the Council for staging Formula E in Battersea Park. The fact that it was a great success should not be overlooked. The event was only run twice and generated £2.5 million to the Council of which £850,000 went into the Park. But by-elections put the local priorities in perspective.

With a low turn-out such local issues assumed a much higher degree of importance. And so it proved. A combination of concern about affordable housing at one end of the borough and a lingering resentment at the inconvenience caused to some residents in Prince of Wales Drive by the Formula E event, meant that Labour held on to the Queenstown seat by 564 votes. So if a by-election shows one thing - your vote counts! ■

The Tigers of Wandsworth (and other rebels)

Although we never knew it, Sri Lanka's Civil War (1986 to 2009) was seldom far away. As **John Gimlette** discovered, Wandsworth became a hotbed of rebels and insurgents. To Colombo's media, it was a lawless, unspeakable place, a sort of English Mogadishu.

A few minutes from my house in south-west London is a large, and yet barely visible community of Sri Lankans, in Tooting. They're all Tamils, mostly refugees and mostly from a single town, Velvettithurai. Nobody knows exactly how many there are, although the usual figure is 8,000. Whatever the number, there are now more Sri Lankans in Tooting than there were ever Britons in Ceylon (even in 1911, at the height of the Empire, the British population numbered only 6,000). But Tooting, of course, is only part of the picture. Across the country, there are 110,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, with twenty-two temples in London alone.



For years, I've been intrigued by my Tamil neighbours. Perhaps it's their seclusion that's fascinated me. They demand little of the outside world; they have their own shops, their own after-school academies, their own charities, their own leaders, and their own cafés (where lunch still costs £4). There are also Tamil newspapers and a special Tamil Yellow Pages, which offers a curious glimpse of another London: coy, jewelled and Asian.

The Tamils even have their own internal crime wave, vicious gangs with names like 'The Jaffna Boys' or 'The Tamil Posse', who go at each other with knives, tasers and samurai swords. In one year alone (2005), sixteen Tamils died at the hands of their own. London hardly seems to notice.

As Sri Lanka's civil war drew to a close, I decided to explore this shy community further, and to begin with the Temple. Tamil friends from elsewhere had plenty of advice about what I must do (I mustn't wear any leather, and I mustn't eat any beef for two days before), but none of them would come with me, and nor would they ever allow themselves to be named or quoted in anything I ever wrote. That, of course, made me more curious than ever.

I made several visits. Although the building's still there, it's no longer a temple and now lies empty. Its tiled art deco façade – cracked and grimy like old eggshell – had previously housed the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society. When I first went there it still looked like a little department store but it had also housed the Sri Muthumari Amman Temple. Once over the threshold, a new world appeared, which I always assumed was Sri Lanka. My eyes would prickle with incense, and the air was greasy with the smoke of



coconut lamps. Upstairs, there were twelve deities arranged around the old shop floor, and the walls (once a delicate Bakelite green) were darkened with soot. The gods, all made of silver and bronze, were tended by twelve priests, each half-naked with hair down to the waist. It would have been easy to forget where I was, except for the odd London bus, glimpsed through the vapours.

I was always the only white face amidst the crowds. The older men often offered me snippets of information, perhaps as a way of gauging my intentions. 'Our deities weigh 650kg each' they'd say, or 'Five hundred people worship here every day.'

From time to time, the most important deity, the goddess Mari Amman, would be ritually bathed in gallons of milk, rosewater and orange juice, before being dressed again in a fresh silk sari. Around her, the worshippers would prostrate themselves on the floor, and stuff her coffers with money. I'd never imagined such devotion in England, let alone a mile from home. On the notice board was a

letter, asking every devotee to give the temple £10,000.

There was also a shrine to the Tamil Tigers. It looked like a 4-poster bed, but with photographs and flowers. For many people around the world, the LTTE or 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' has been the most heartless, cold-blooded terrorist organisation mankind has ever known. But not here. In this temple, the pictures staring back were of martyrs; a boy who'd died in a hunger strike; pretty girls in that distinctive Tiger-striped camouflage. 'And these ones,' one of the worshippers told me, 'were poisoned, with nerve gas.'



The civil war in Sri Lanka may be over but, here, in Tooting, it's never quite gone away. You can still buy a LTTE calendar with a daily picture of either a martyr or some other figure inspiring to Tamils (an inexplicable mix that includes Marx, Churchill, Captain Cook and a Japanese *kamikaze* crew). Then, there are more photographs of famous guerrillas hanging in the shops, and – every November – the Tamils gather together for *Maaveerar Naal*, or 'Heroes Day'. To the Sri Lankan press, Tooting was always a nest of terrorists and anarchy. One newspaper, *The Asian Tribune*, even accused the temple of gun-running – shipping out ball-bearings and bomb kits in crates marked 'Tsunami Relief'.

Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised. This bit of London was once a hothouse of Tamil revolt. It was here, in 1975, that one of the earliest guerrilla groups was founded, called EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students), and it was from here that

they set off to Syria for training. This borough was also once the home of the Tigers' political strategist, Anton Balasingham ('the brains behind the gun', as William Dalrymple once described him). Both Balasingham and the founder of EROS ('a visionary... steeped in communist ideals') spent their lives fighting for a separate Tamil state within Sri Lanka, and then both of them returned here to die. It's said that, when, in December 2006, Balasingham's body was laid out at Alexandra Palace, 60,000 people filed past to pay their respects.

The old war-horses may have gone, but there are still plenty of survivors of this struggle. Balasingham's wife, Adele (known to newspapers as 'The Australian Tiger'), was once head of the LTTE's women's wing, and now lives down the road in Mitcham. Meanwhile, in Tooting, you might come across the wife of another notorious rebel – Arul Pragasam – now working as a seamstress. Their daughter, Mathangi or 'Maya', would never forget the upheavals of her guerrilla childhood in

Jaffna, and would become one of the most outspoken singers of her generation, better known as 'MIA'.

Then of course, there's everyone else: witnesses to pogroms and death squads and area bombardment. 'Everybody has

lost something,' they say, 'Everybody is traumatised'.

Tooting, I learnt, had also done its bit to pay for this war. Its Tamils were part of a vast diaspora, spread across four continents, and including 50,000 in Switzerland, 200,000 in Canada, and 100,000 in Indian camps. Not much united them, except a sense of horror and their Tamil pride. Many of the exiles detested Prabhakaran's tyranny and his variant of Marxism, and yet, somehow – together – they'd provided his income.

Of course, they weren't the only source of Tiger funds. Not only did the LTTE own a shipping line, it also ran gas stations, studios, shops and charities. Then there was crime, which had always been a healthy earner. The Montreal Police have said that the Tamils run their heroin trade, and so have the Swiss. Meanwhile, in London, the great wheeze was skimming credit cards, particularly in Tooting. But all this was small beer. Still the greatest source of money was the diaspora, and, altogether, it had donated around \$250 million a year, or 90% of the Tigers' budget.

In the area where I live, the giving had worked like this. First, the LTTE's agents had done a tour of Tamil homes. Most people told me they'd been happy to give, and saw no problem in supporting 'The Boys'. Each family was expected to pay £200 a year, and each



Former Temple, Tooting



business £2,000. As the war went on, the amounts increased, and, by 2009, Britain's Tamils were donating a healthy £250,000 a month. This money then went out via the *undiyal*, a shadowy network of brokers and bankers and high street jewellers. Every time I went to Tooting, I'd pass one of these places, now innocently selling great ropes of gold.

Not everyone had paid up immediately. Sometimes, I was told, the LTTE had been forced to apply a little pressure. The United Nations once accused the Tigers of 'mafia-style tactics' amongst the diaspora but, in Tooting, the coercion was never very florid. Most people still had family in Jaffna or the Vanni, and it was usually enough to remind them that, out there, it was the Tigers in charge.

I once asked a shopkeeper if anyone had ever gone to the police.

'You serious? Once you go the cops, you're a traitor.'

Tooting's Tamils often behaved as if the war was still going on. It wasn't just the shrines in the Temples, or the portraits of Prabhakaran hanging in the shops. Sometimes, they'd all set off to a rally in the West End, and, once, I followed. It was a magnificent black-clad occasion, the Tamils easily filling Piccadilly with their red Tiger flags. Although, since 2001, it's been illegal to wave this big-pawed, bullet-spangled banner, the police were in no mood to

intervene. The crowd groaned with anger, and a grim coalition of priests and communists spat out their speeches. Occasionally, the masses would part, disgorging a veteran, still in his Tiger fatigues. Then the crowd would swirl round, and he'd disappear again before anyone noticed how many laws had just been broken.

Nobody wanted to talk much, except a woman who gave me her flag.

'We must never break the rules,' she said, 'we're here as refugees.'

Back at the temple, I often had tea with the man who'd kept the Tigers' books, and who was now a 'spiritual leader'. Mr Seevaratnam was always happy to see me, and would order his priests to bring us a tray of *iddlis* and *vadai* – or cakes and croquettes – and a pot of frothy 'milk tea'. He looked frail amongst his well-bellied, bare-chested minions, and his eyes were rimmed with great coal-dust smudges of weariness and age. Holiness, it seems, had only come late in life, and – if Colombo's press were to be believed – it hadn't come at all. To them, Mr Seevaratnam was 'The Terror Guru', and the owner of a one-man front called Sivagoyam.

'And is that true?' I asked, 'Are you?'

But Mr Seevaratnam wouldn't be hurried. It was several more visits before his story emerged: a tale of persecution and flight, and a peripatetic life. By the 1970s, he was in London, and until

1991, he ran the Tigers' International Fund, and thirteen accounts. These were big accounts, he said, for buying arms. 'Procurement would ring me with a message like 'Pay three greens to the man out east', and I'd always know what he meant. I'd go down to Barclays on Tooting High Street, and make out a draft to some East European, perhaps £300,000. That's how it worked...'

But the Tamil community were soon at each other's throat. Mr Seevaratnam said he'd made many enemies over the years. 'You've seen our golden chariot?'

I had. It lay out in the car park, a tower of charred black stumps.

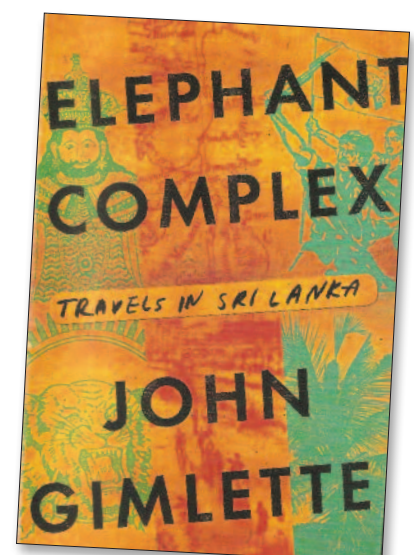
'Someone is trying to kill me.'

'Maybe you should go to the police?'

'I am protected by the goddess Mara Amman.'

Perhaps he was, but even a goddess can only do so much. Eventually, the temple was closed down under a court order, and Sivagoyam was evicted. I only saw Mr Seevaratnam once more after that, out in Croydon. He was disappearing under a welter of writs, and had turned the colour of clay. Even his priests were suing him, he said. He didn't know who to trust anymore, or what would become of his gods. A fractured, runaway community, it seemed, was gradually falling apart. ■

John Gimlette is the author of 'Elephant Complex; Travels in Sri Lanka' (Quercus, £25)



The Wandsworth Paper Mills

Alan Crocker

The main paper mill site at Wandsworth during the Victorian period was 500 metres south of the High Street in a section of Garratt Lane previously called South Street. During much of the eighteenth century it had been a copper mill.¹ However by 1792 it had become Henckell's iron works, and dramatic descriptions survive from 1808 and 1817 of the casting, wrought-iron manufacture, forging, shearing and boring of cannon which was carried out there.^{2,3} Then in 1836 it became Thomas Creswick's paper mill⁴ with excise number 380.⁵ It seems that Creswick moved to Wandsworth from a mill at Hatfield owned by the Marquess of Salisbury and took his papermaking equipment with him. The Marquess disputed the ownership of this equipment but the case was dismissed with costs.⁶ Creswick described himself as 'Papermaker and Card Maker to His Majesty'⁷ and was indeed well known as a manufacturer of playing cards. He is said to have supplied a large portion of the London trade with cards, Bristol boards, drawing papers, tinted papers and the like.⁸ He died aged 66 in 1840⁹ and on the tithe map of 1841 the 'mill, yards, etc.' are marked as 'unoccupied', but W. Creswick held the adjacent garden, owned by James Watney, the brewer.¹⁰ Then in 1842 Sarah Creswick, paper and pasteboard maker, became the new occupier.⁵

George Miller, papermaker, took over the mill in March 1845.⁵ He was replaced in February 1846 by John Edward Spicer and Cornelius Poulton, who were already making paper at Alton in Hampshire, but by November they were bankrupt.⁵ In the following April they were succeeded by John Henry Spicer at mill 3805 and Edmund Gimson, pasteboard maker, at mill 48, a new number, also in Garratt Lane.¹¹ Spicer was bankrupt by October 1847⁵ and Gimson's stock and utensils were put up for sale by public auction in February 1848.¹² The Spicer bankruptcy proceedings continued for nine years.⁵ Meanwhile in 1849 James Easton and Charles Edward Amos acquired the

mill, presumably as assignees.⁵ They were described as papermakers but Easton was an engineer and Amos a paper-mill engineer. They had gone into partnership in 1836 and the firm was an important manufacturer of steam engines and other engineering equipment at their works in Southwark.¹³ It seems likely that James Easton was related to Thomas Easton who was the papermaker at Alton from 1802 to 1826 and therefore had close links with the Spicers. Easton and Amos only stayed at Wandsworth Paper Mills for a few years. They were last mentioned in an 1852 list of papermakers.¹⁴ The mills at this time had four beating engines for making pulp, but only three of these were working.⁵ They were powered by a 16hp waterwheel.^{1,15} The next papermaker appears to have been Robert Blackburn who in 1855 with William Lundi Duncan deposited with the Commissioner of Patents provisional specifications of an invention for improvements in bleaching cloths and yarns.⁵ In the same year George Stiff was said to be the papermaker at Garratt Lane,⁵ but in practice the mills had closed by 1854.

In December 1853 William McMurray's Royal Mills at Esher, which with thirteen beating engines was easily the largest paper mill in Surrey, was destroyed by fire.^{5,16} McMurray did not rebuild at Esher but moved instead to the empty site of the Wandsworth Paper Mills, taking the title 'Royal' and the Esher excise number 130 with him.⁵ He was a native of Glasgow and went into business with his younger brother James, supplying mills with wire meshes for papermaking machines.¹⁷ They opened the Esher mill in 1847 and, following the fire, established their Royal Mills at Wandsworth in 1854.⁵ Two years later John Pinchin, an employee of McMurray at Garratt Lane, was killed in an accident in the engine house.⁵ Although William McMurray was nominally in charge, James supervised the Wandsworth business.¹⁷ At first they had one machine producing printing papers but soon added another

for finest newsprint, supplying *The Times* and the *Illustrated London News*.¹⁷ From 1860 the *Paper Mills Directory* provides increasingly detailed information about the mill; at first it was making 'long elephants and printings', but later 'news and plate papers, lithos, cream laid, writings, fine printings and super-calendered' were added. It had two machines 76in and 84in wide, and the output increased from about 60 tons per week in 1889 to 90 in 1901.¹⁸

Much of the paper was made from esparto grass imported from estates



Royal Paper Mills from the south-west, c.1900. (Wandsworth Heritage Service)

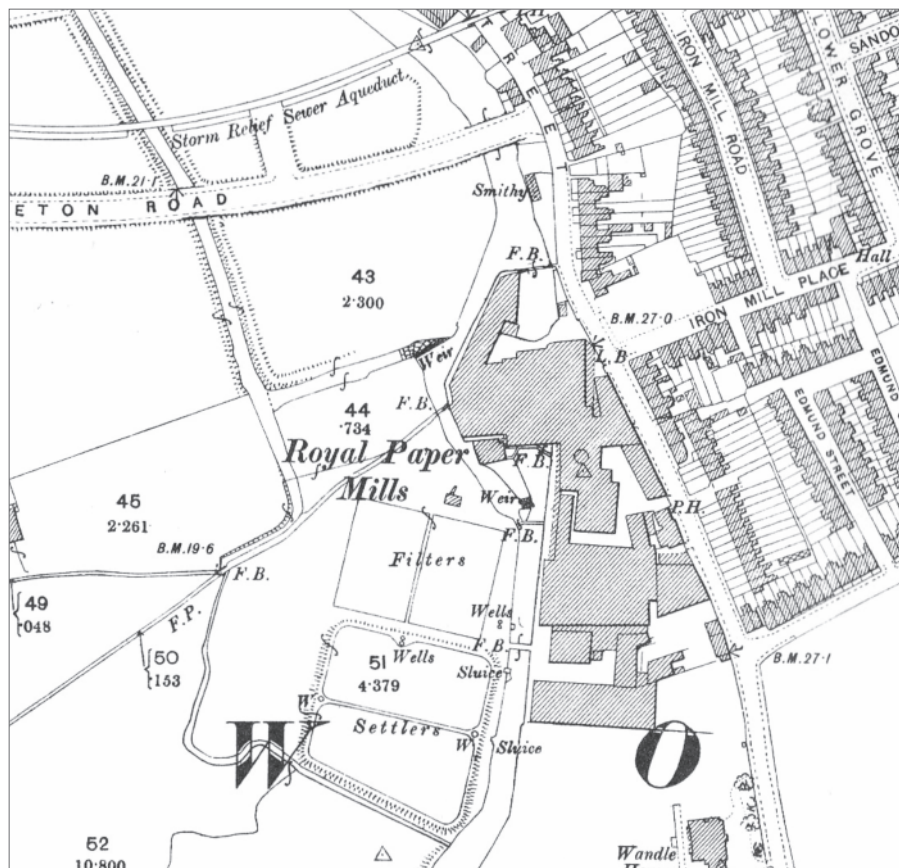
owned by McMurray in Spain and North Africa.¹⁹ It was unloaded from barges at the dock or basin communicating with the Thames at the northern end of the former Surrey Iron Railway which had closed in 1848. McMurray had acquired the dock and it became known as 'McMurray's Canal'.² In 1865 promoters connected with the Wandsworth Gasworks Company deposited plans for a 4km-long canal with two locks linking this basin with Wimbledon. A Bill was introduced but lost in Committee because of McMurray's hostility to the scheme, which would have resulted in his losing control over the basin.²⁰

William McMurray was certified a lunatic in 1883, shortly after executing a codicil to his will revoking all interests of his brother James and substituting Herbert Spicer, of Catteshall paper mill at Godalming, who had married McMurray's niece Martha Arnott. William died in 1888; James disputed the will, and the judge pronounced against the codicil. When the will was proved James received £71,000 and his sister Anne, Martha's mother, £50,000.²¹ Later that year James McMurray was in conflict with Mr Cadwell, a fireworks manufacturer on the opposite bank of the Wandle. It seems that following an explosion three girls had died and a second explosion had caused considerable damage close to the paper mill and McMurray's house. In practice Cadwell was allowed to continue his business.²² In an interview published in 1892 James McMurray recalled that Wandsworth Paper Mill was where Thomas Creswick had made his celebrated playing cards and where Stiff, Blackburn and Easton & Amos had been ruined.¹⁷

A fascinating account of the manufacture of paper at the Royal Wandsworth Paper Mills was published in 1898.³ The material used was a kind of rush known as 'Esparto' from Spain or 'Tripoli' from Africa. This grass, which had been sorted abroad, was dusted by beating, boiled in caustic soda, passed into washers and breakers to produce a brown pulp, bleached and strained to make a kind of thick blotting paper termed 'half-made'. This stuff was then again passed through the beaters, washed and broken to give a thin milky fluid, which was passed to the large vats above the papermaking machine and made into paper in rolls from five to eight miles long and weighing 10 to 15 cwt.

There was a serious fire at the mill in 1903 when twenty-two of its thirty-nine buildings, particularly the breaking, straining and bleaching houses, were gutted or severely damaged.²³ The reports described it as the largest mill of its type in London

and about 160 people were thrown out of work. They received over £800 raised and distributed by a local relief committee.⁴ Although it was claimed that the works were a major cause of pollution of the Wandle and therefore should not be rebuilt²⁴ they were soon reopened.⁴ However, by 1909 they were standing idle⁵ and a year later they were demolished. The site was then used by a varnish works, a gas-mantle factory and the engineering works of Benham & Sons.^{1,2} In the 1980s it



OS map of 1894 showing the extensive Royal Paper Mills to the west of Garratt Lane just south of Mapleton Road

was occupied by 'In-Wear', a clothing manufacturer, and is now a branch of Big Yellow Self Storage. The present buildings still straddle the millstream but otherwise bear little relation to the former paper mill. Indeed, the nearby Esparto Street is a better reminder of the local paper industry.

Garratt Mill, about 400 metres south-west of Earlsfield railway station, also made paper for a brief period in the nineteenth century. This was an important linseed-oil mill until at least 1853,¹⁻³ but by 1862 the site was occupied by the Wandle Patent Pulp & Paper Co., with Henry John Ryde as managing director.⁵ The change probably took place after 1860, when taxes on paper were removed,¹⁹ as otherwise the new mill would have been allocated an excise number. It is marked as 'Garratt Paper Mill' on an 1865 map¹ and in 1866-68 Henry William Knight was the papermaker.⁵ However, by about 1873 he had converted it into a bone mill.³ Today a small bridge at the site gives access to some light-engineering buildings and an auctioneers' premises. ■

Notes: This article first appeared in 1986 in the *Wandsworth Historian*, the journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society whose website address is www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk. It is reprinted with full permission of the author. At the time of writing Prof. Crocker expressed his indebtedness to Michael Wilks of the Wandle Group, Robin Clarke of the Wind and Watermill Section of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and Peter Thomas of the Wandsworth Historical Society for providing some of the information on which his account was based.

The text was later incorporated into a series of three articles on the paper mills of Surrey in the journal *Surrey History*: refs 4(1) (1989), pp 49-64; 4(4) (1992), pp 211-30; and 5(1) (1994), pp 2-23.

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Did you ever...

... hold a buttercup under a playmate's chin to see if she liked butter? Play conkers? Try to get rid of a wart by rubbing dandelion sap on it?

If you did any of these things, or if you planted your parsley on Good Friday, or dyed your Easter eggs with gorse flowers, then your memories are needed for an exciting new book, provisionally entitled *A Folk Flora*, the typescript of which will be sent to Orion at the end of 2017, for publication in 2019.

The *Flora* covers all aspects of the folklore and traditional uses of wild and cultivated plants in the British Isles, and aims to give some indication of where these beliefs and practices are known elsewhere, particularly in Europe and in English-speaking lands, so contributors are asked to say when and where they did or believed things.

This work is the culmination of over 30 years' collecting, resulting in some 7330 items of information received from almost

2000 contributors, but new, previously unknown plant-names and herbal remedies are still being received. For example the use of comfrey leaves to treat nappy rash appears to be a recent practice, and new names, such as railway chrysanthemum, dog's parasol and singerweed (it grew on the site of a destroyed Singer Sewing Machine factory) continue to be recorded for rosebay willowherb.

Have you ever been told not to bring lilac blossom or snowdrops indoors? Why? Do your grandchildren play games with goosegrass, otherwise known as cleavers or sticky willy?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, or if they stimulate any memories of games using, superstitions relating to, or odd uses of, plants, please send them to roy@plant-lore.com, or Roy Vickery, 9 Terrapin Court, Terrapin Road, London, SW17 8QW.



Rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*, formerly *Epilobium angustifolium*), from O.W. Thomé, *Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* (1885).

Thank you!

Roy Vickery

Air pollution in London in 2016

Jonathan Thomson

In July of this year we had a short talk on the subject of air pollution. This article brings that talk up to date and is printed here for the benefit of Members who missed it.

In 1900 pollution of London's streets was obvious and noxious although it provided good sustenance for the City's roses and allotments – there were lots of horses pulling carriages and drays of various descriptions leaving behind piles of manure for all to see. The horses were replaced by the internal combustion engine, coal was king and by 1950 London was in the grip of dense, and very visible pollution and its killer smogs. So coal was banned, gas and electricity took over in our houses and pollution levels appeared to improve. In the background however, the internal combustion engine had become king with diesel increasingly a favoured fuel for even the smallest cars. We didn't know it but we were marching into a trap of our own making.

By 2010 air pollution in London had become all-pervasive, dangerous and largely invisible. In 2015 the World Health Organisation Europe estimated its cost to the UK economy as £54bn, twice that of obesity. A King's College London study estimated that in 2010 there were 9,416 early deaths in London caused by the twin pollutants Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PMs). In May this year the Evening Standard chimed in with a calculation of '1,000 deaths in less than four months'. Whatever the actual figures they are frightening and clearly in the 'something must be done' category.

The short-term effects of such pollution are said to range from sore/itchy eyes and throat to an inflammatory response resulting in hospitalisation (eg an asthma attack). While the long-term effects are not fully understood they include low

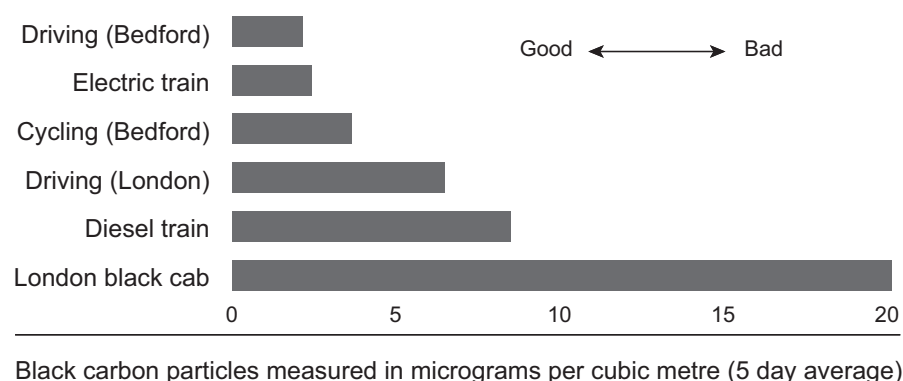
birth rate, poor lung development in children, an increased risk of stroke and cancer and exacerbated heart and lung conditions. Frighteningly, the smallest particles, known as PM_{2.5}, can be absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream and across the placenta into growing foetuses. This is all very alarming, with children being particularly vulnerable especially when their schools and housing estates are sited near to main roads.

The sources of this pollution are many and include some blown in from the continent; no doubt a good westerly will blow some of it back. Diesel engines are said to be the big culprits, particularly for the rise in Particulate Matter, with other sources being non-diesel combustion engines, industry, our houses (because we burn a lot of domestic fuel and our houses are poorly insulated) and power generation. Our mainline stations are probably pretty dangerous places to be in because of the constant running of very large and stationary diesels (that's an opinion by the way, not backed by research but it can't be far wrong). Fingers are increasingly being pointed at river tugs as sources of pollution because they will mostly be diesel driven and may burn quite low grade fuel. Concern is being expressed at the new cruise ship terminal at Enderby Wharf, Greenwich, due to be with us next year. Large ships burn low-quality

fuels, as was demonstrated recently by the Russian aircraft carrier, steaming through the Straits of Dover trailing a large plume of black stuff. A modern cruise ship will be a bit cleaner than that but will be propelled by very large fuel burning engines nonetheless.

Earlier this year, BBC reporter Tim Jones, working with the Environment Research Group at King's College, strapped on a measuring device and went out and about. The readings he recorded are shown in the little chart below and bear-out another finding which is that we are subjected to more pollution when in our cars than when on the streets. Tim also took his measuring device into a deep underground tunnel and recorded 77 which suggests we should not spend too much time on deep underground trains.

So what's to be done? Well, there seem to be two levels where action should be taken – individual and government. As individuals we can opt to use less mechanical and less polluting means of transport – easy to say but hard to do. Our vehicles shouldn't idle when stationary; new cars increasingly do turn off when stopped (although that function can be disabled). We could go electric, and Wandsworth Council's recent initiative to expand the number of charging stations in the borough is to be applauded, even though they will reduce the number of parking places



020·8870·7595



available to us all and electric vehicles don't run entirely pollution free. We should use public transport whenever possible and we should learn to 'Travel Smart', as it is known, in other words, walk or cycle when possible and practicable. So clearly we, as individuals, can do our bit – it's worth looking at what Living Streets has to say on the matter.

Government and City Hall should press ahead with the electrification of all railway lines and require train operators to phase out their old diesels; a similar action could usefully be taken over the river tugs mentioned above. Public vehicles (buses, trucks and vans) should all become low-emission, something that is starting to happen but there is a long way to go. Vehicles should be prohibited from idling for long periods, particularly buses on their stands and taxis when on their ranks – not popular with their drivers in winter in though. These actions are all possible – they just need political will, and funding.

But there is some good news. Just as technology (in the form of the internal combustion engine) got rid of the horse-driven carriages that polluted London's streets so

thoroughly until the early 20th century, so it is gradually attacking today's sources of pollution. Auto Express reported in their 'Driver Power' survey of 2015 that electric cars came out surprisingly well. Norway (which admittedly is not London!), aims to have only electric cars and vans on sale by 2025. Closer to home the '20's plenty' campaign will reduce pollution because cars should burn less fuel when they move more slowly. Awareness of the dangers referred to at the start of this article is now becoming much more widespread: the Evening Standard reported on the 11th March this year that it was now 'Parents' top concern' for their children. And lastly, Zhejiang Geely Holdings, owners of the company that produces the black cab, are said to have raised £275m to electrify its next-generation cabs, aiming to manufacture 36,000 a year at its new plant in Coventry. Coming our way 'by 2018'.

Clearly something must be done, and quickly. Perhaps in ten years time London's air will be cleaner but we'll need to be careful of the unintended consequences; piles of redundant car batteries that will need re-cycling; a big increase in our electricity

requirements when we are already near to running out; more pedestrians (especially children) run over by near-silent electric cars, and so on. We can only hope however, that just as the horse and carriage, with its very obvious large piles of pollution was defeated by technology, so its replacement, the internal combustion engine and its much less obvious but much more toxic pollution, will meet its end. It will take time though, unless we have firm action and we clearly all have a responsibility to take some action.

Lastly, in "A City for all Londoners", an important document released on 24th October 2016, The Mayor says:

"I want air quality to be back down to safe levels as soon as possible, and by 2050 I want London to be zero-carbon – which we can achieve in part by introducing measures for cleaner, more efficient energy production and use. In addition, for the city to be green, healthy and more attractive, I will look to reduce traffic and encourage cycling and walking on 'Healthy Streets'."

It's a document well worth reading, in particular Part 4, Environment, Public Transport and Public Space. ■



Things Rick Astley will never do...

- GIVE YOU UP
- LET YOU DOWN
- RUN AROUND
- DESERT YOU
- MAKE YOU CRY
- SAY GOODBYE
- TELL A LIE
- HURT YOU
- ALL OF THE ABOVE

AND NEITHER WILL WE!

But don't take our word for it.

Over 95% of both buyers and sellers who completed our online survey rated us better than any other agent they'd used. Here's just one of them...

“ A pleasure — in a challenging sector you guys differentiate.
Used you to sell once before and will do so again if I need to buy or sell.

Jason — Buyer, Winsham Grove. August 2015



Please be advised that all similarities to Rick Astley end there.
We don't sing, we can't dance and we never wear roll-necks.

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john-thorogood.co.uk


JOHN THOROGOOD

Gray's Eulogy

Andrew Catto Architects: Now bigger and even better thanks to a merger with ALS Architects with our own John Dawson designing a 21C Wandsworth.

Archetype Productions: Computers pose problems from time to time for everyone from the novice to the expert. When problems occur call the expert's expert – Archetype!

Brady's: Luke's fish comes straight from the coast which explains why you're cramming this famous fish 'n' chippy to the door. He's now just behind the Ship by Wandsworth Bridge and with lots of space for lots of hungry people.

Cockburn & York: With lines like "Who owesya baby?" and those red boots, difficult debts suddenly seem collectable.

Edward Potter Associates: Yes, Ed Potter's back. He's never really been away, just very very busy designing houses and lots more.

Emanuel School: This centuries-old school proves it pays to advertise, even if you're a leader in your field. An old school but with a new head since September '04.

Finton House School: 169 plus 171 add up to a great deal. Play hard, work hard but don't wish away these happy schooldays.

Glug: Nestled snugly next to the famous Ma Goa restaurant, fine wines, craft beers and artisan cheese. Nature at its best.

Le Gothique: The Royal Victoria Patriotic Building is such a romantic name and the building itself so wonderful that a visit to its very own restaurant for lunch, dinner or perhaps a wedding reception – and I've done all three! – is a must for all our readers.

Harrison Allen: Most of us need help to get through exams. Julie and Sheila provide that help.

IntypeLibra: The Bedside edition of our newsletter is proof positive of the very high quality of IntypeLibra's digital printing.

John Thorogood: Buying or selling, if it's a house or a flat, you want an estate agent that's thorough and good. Tick both boxes.

Lavender Framers: Ah, the scent of the sweet sunny south neatly framed in Barmouth Road. Picture perfect.

London Door Co: Door-to-door salesmen are one thing but a business that sells such beautiful doors – I've been to the workshop – makes every entrance and exit a pleasure.

MWR Motörs: You know you know where the tréma comes from but you just can't think. Yes, it's Citroën. Of course! A special car? You bet. Your car needs special care.

Northcut: Dermot must be a locksmith, no, a tress counsellor, well, a magician. Oh, all right, he's all three.

Olivier's Lounge: Fashion accessories make all the difference. Olivier's Lounge is that difference.

Oranges & Lemons: All the latest in sounds from the tiniest and subtlest to the loudest, pounding bass and, if like me you don't have the state of the art, they'll apply all the necessary care and attention.

Richard Cullinan Joinery: It's great to see Richard's name gracing our pages again and a timely reminder to think about fitted furniture. Definitely on my shopping list.

St Luke's Music Society: This music society has gone from strength to strength. The latest concert (by the home-grown Festival Chorus) won loud and prolonged applause from a large audience. Were you there?

Stratton Cycles: Still peddling their wares after all these years (and we're still pedalling them!) I wonder if the 'perfect' saddle publicised recently has gone into production yet.

Wimbledon Village Stables: My riding habits go back a long way – to a 4-year old in the Chiltern Hills – but the 29 years at SW19 have really taught me. Surely the best-run stables in the land.

Young & Co's Brewery: Still getting a quart into a pint pot and these days many Young's pubs are the ideal places to eat a really good meal too.

Iain K S Gray

Of Migrations & Music

Wendy Cater

Well, it's been another good year for my Old Home Town, hasn't it? Maybe not up to the regal razzamatazz of last year's right royal Reinterment, but winning the Premiership wasn't bad – and after all, these days premiers pip princes, don't they? And though, or perhaps because, the OHT population is now over 50% migrants (another First) – mostly Asian (to replace our reluctant hosiery workers) plus a less familiar spicing of Eastern Europeans – Leicestercians voted solidly anti-Brexit.

I myself was in the forefront of that inflow, my father's and mother's OHTs being Stockton-on-Tees and Nottingham respectively. Father Will was an economic migrant from the shipyard slump of the 1920s; naval architects being no longer required, he came south to transmogrify as a land surveyor as far from the sea as you can get in England, and found career hospitality for the rest of his life with the Local Authority. Mother Kit, having met him through her sister being married to his brother, naturally for those days abandoned a pioneering back-room career with the nascent BBC in their Nottingham and Manchester studios to follow Will to rural transport-free, employment-free, companionship-free, interest-free Leicestershire until she could stand the isolation no longer and we moved to a western suburb when I was 4.

There, more migrants joined us: to my primary school came some of the Kindertransport kids: tall, good-looking but tantalizingly aloof Tommy Oplatek; Mathilde Roth and Estelle Myerson - more approachable and quickly



befriended - all to me exotic and interesting. There was even a girl trailing the awesome glammers of London, whose father's manufacturing business, essential to the war effort, had relocated from that perilous zone. Later other such refugees became leading lights illuminating the otherwise dim world of Leicester intelligentsia, and were encountered with fascination during my secondary days at Wyggy (v Bedside 2015 – or don't bother.)

After further troubles in Czechoslovakia came Lineker pere, to a profitable perch on a Leicester market greengrocery stall and make his inestimable contribution to the next generation of English footie – even if a recent lapse of confidence in the Old Home Side should have recently necessitated the dropping of everything except underpants – a fate even more undignified than eating one's hat.

Hereby a shameful confession: not once in all the years until I joined the Huguenots in migrating to Wandsworth did I attend Leicester footie – or indeed footie anywhere. Rugby was more my thing, because that was connected to dance: specifically the post-match dances in the handsome pillar-porticoed 18th century posting-house in the city centre, hard by the Leicester

worthy-encrusted Clock Tower: the Bell Hotel (demolished, of course in the modernising mania of the 1960s). So I went to the rugger with the boyfriends and they took me to the dances at the Bell. Especially special was the one following the annual Boxing Day match of Tigers against Barbarians, and favoured by the Attenboroughs, or one of them anyway – but that's another story. But I'm firmly with the Foxes now, in my heart, whether on English fields or international ones - and who knows, maybe I'll make it to Filbert Street (are they still hunting there?) on one of my rare return visits to the OHT. No family left there, you see, for the lone child of immigrants.

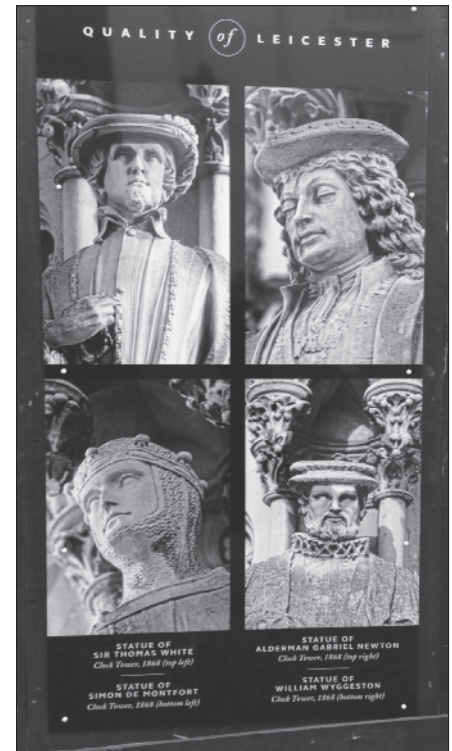
I may have eschewed the footie, but I certainly followed the music. At my international primary school we were initiated by Mr Pettifer – Pongo as we unkindly and inaccurately called him – as he paced, stern and stocky, leather-faced and wire-rim bespectacled, between the desk rows, rapping knuckles to right and left with his ruler as we stumbled over our multiplication chants, and ensuring that our ABC went EGBDF and FACE. With him we sang "Linden Lea", "Farewell and Adieu to you, Spanish Ladies" and "The British Grenadiers". ("Nymphs and Shepherds" caused me grave puzzlement with its apparent line: "For this is for us holiday". Because of my birth date I hadn't joined until the second term of the scholastic year, so missed the initial induction to song and had to go with my understanding of the warbling flow and accommodate to what I felt to be very unfortunate grammar.) Later, the lyrics of the Last Night of the Proms came as no surprise to me. Pongo was mad about Handel and when he made mention of a new film about his life in London, my mother duly took me, a rookie film fan, to see it. So the wonderful Wilfred Lawson joined my icon list

alongside Shirley Temple, Deanna Durbin and Sonja Henie. The abiding image from the Handel film was of him holding the recalcitrant soprano upside down out of the window in Brook Street – apocryphal probably, but once seen, never forgotten. That image recurs now every time I pass the Brook Street house. Pongo was, of course, a sweetie in disguise, and had the most gracious, beautiful, white-haired wife imaginable. My mother often talked with her at the bus stop.

At secondary school alas, musical disillusion set in immediately. Wyggy's Head of Music compulsorily auditioned all new entrants for the choir, separating them, as she said, into the sheep and the goats. First time I'd heard that expression, but I instantly intuited its meaning: I must be one of the goats. Too true. Unused to rejection I withdrew into musical muteness and opened my mouth to

song only in late middle age when I dared to join the Can't Sing Choir at Morley College. That off-putting music mistress, by the way, left Wyggy the following year to found the National Youth Orchestra, where, according to her Guardian obituary in 2001 "those who endured her auditions were apt to describe them as the most harrowing of their lives." She became a Dame. You may have heard of her: Ruth Railton. She became a mistress elsewhere too, eventually marrying Cecil Harmsworth King, notoriously influential press baron. I encountered this (as the obituary opined) unlikely pair once, in the 80s, in a coffee merchant's in the Brompton Road. We were the sole customers. I refrained from reminding her of our earlier capric acquaintance.

This idle reminiscence was supposed to be titled "Of Boxers & Ballerinas", but I don't seem to have



got to them, sorry. Afraid you'll have to wait till next year. More of the music then, too. Happy Christmas! ■

There it was again. That niggling feeling of familiarity, as if she did – or should – know the way home after all. Or was that the alcohol? She had, to be fair, polished off almost half a bottle of white.

The thin drizzle was even chillier than expected, but it was still a relief to be out in the night air. She hated parties. The sweaty heat, the pounding thumping that passed for music these days, the enforced jollity and the press of too many bodies in that cheap hotel function room. Paula was too old now to enjoy such nonsense. Ha! Who was she kidding? She had never enjoyed parties, and work dos were the worst. And who the hell had decided on a combined Christmas do for the whole cluster? She bet it had been the area manager. It was just the sort of 'team-building' claptrap that prick loved.

She pulled her collar tighter. Beside her, Mike was continuing to enthuse about the history of the local area. His voice was pleasant – strong and mellow – but Paula was finding it hard to concentrate. Something about the shape of the buildings ahead pulled at her mind, murmuring just below the range of her senses.

Close by, a dog howled. The sound was low and long, and it

sighed past on the cold wind. It made her think of Jess, and for the first time she was struck by the absence of traffic. Not yet midnight yet the road was utterly empty save for the three of them. Perhaps everyone else was still stuck at their Christmas parties.

'He's boring the wildlife as well,' slurred Connor.

Paula wished it was just her and Mike. At the party Mike had admitted feeling out of place too and had suggested getting them another drink. Although tempted she had declined, explaining that she couldn't risk getting too drunk. She knew it was silly but, never having been to that hotel before, she was worried about finding her way back to Wandsworth Road station afterwards. She couldn't afford to miss her last train.

'That's not silly at all,' Mike had replied, immediately offering to walk her there as soon as she was ready. He could do with getting away himself, he'd said.

Just as they had reached the door an overweight bald man – a stranger to her but apparently an ex-colleague of Mike's – had begged a favour. One of his young clerks had been over-enthusiastic with the booze and would they mind seeing him safely to the station too, make sure he got onto the right

The Long Walk Home

James Clark

train? Of course Mike had agreed. Paula wished he hadn't. Then again, perhaps it was for the best: who knew what gossip would have developed had Sue (or even Uzma!) seen the two of them slip away unchaperoned?

Mike was still talking, giving no indication he had heard Connor, gesturing now towards the boxy metal rail bridge a short distance ahead. She listened as his words evoked the sights and sounds of an old-fashioned train clattering and rushing and whistling over the dark road in a roaring cloud of steam. For a timeless moment past and present co-existed.

Paula smiled. Mike was so quiet in the office. She'd never seen him so enthusiastic about anything before and he seemed transformed. She'd had no idea he knew so much or was so passionate about local history. Actually, she realised, she knew next to nothing about Mike outside of work, other than that he was a widower.

Her gaze was drawn back to the bridge. There was something about the way the metalwork met the old bricks, about the particular arrangement of the dark shapes of the surrounding buildings. The sense of not-quite familiarity was back. It was still vague, although she could feel something beginning to stir in the unlit depths of her memory.

'You seem to know this place pretty well, Mike,' she said, wondering what had just made her think of Jess again.

'Sorry,' he said. 'I've been rambling, haven't I?'

Connor's face made it clear he agreed. 'Trains,' he scoffed. 'Can't you talk about something more interesting?'

Paula was impressed by the patience of Mike's reply: 'What sort of something did you have in mind?'

'I dunno. It's Christmas, yeah? So what about a ghost story? That's, like, traditional innit? Any – woooooooh – haunted houses around here?' He grinned at Paula. She did not smile back.

'As it happens,' said Mike, 'we're coming up to a site right now.' He nodded towards one of the storefronts that stood a short way ahead on the left, just before the road dipped under the bridge. 'That's the place.'

Until a few weeks earlier it had been a fast food outlet, he explained, one of a succession of similar enterprises that never seemed to survive more than a few months.

Graffiti already fouled the metal shutters on both the windows and the door.

'This is a true story,' continued Mike. 'Back in 1962 that was a fish restaurant. Not long after it opened the staff started seeing a mysterious black dog in the evenings. It happened on about six or seven different occasions, each time when there were no customers on the premises. On one occasion, the dog actually brushed against the owner's wife's leg – she said that it felt quite solid, so they weren't imagining it, yet nobody could work out where this dog was coming from because on each occasion the back door was locked. But there they'd be, sitting together at a table in the empty restaurant when this – the owner called it a 'large black and beautiful dog' – would

wander out from the rear rooms, and just pad through the restaurant before heading out the front door into Wandsworth Road.'

Paula shivered, feeling even odder than before. She definitely shouldn't have drunk so much.

'And?' asked Connor.

'And it would turn right and lope away up the road until it disappeared.' Mike looked pointedly at the pavement they were walking on. 'Right across where you are now.'

Connor looked sceptical.

'Oh, it was all documented at the time,' said Mike. 'It was looked into by experts from the Society for Psychical Research. They discovered that one of the building's previous owners had once had a black dog which was run over and killed at a crossroads near here. Some people think that explains the haunting, but who knows? Maybe there was another explanation, one they never found.'

Paula swallowed hard, trying to force down a grief she had thought long-buried but which was suddenly filling her throat. Without warning there were tears in her eyes.

They stopped outside the metal shutters. Mike turned to face them, and Paula was surprised to see he looked nervous, apparently wondering whether his story had made him sound a fool. His expression changed to horror when he saw she was on the verge of crying.



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'Yes!' cried Connor. 'That's more like it! Who you gonna call? GHOST-BUSTERS!' He spun around and drummed his fists against the shutters. 'Woooooo!'

A rush of contempt washed away Paula's sadness. Why did people do that these days? Whoop like bloody animals.

'Here, doggy dog!' called Connor. 'Come on, dog. Let's see you!'

Quickly, Paula and Mike steered their embarrassing charge away from the building.

'Come on,' she hissed. 'We've still got our train to catch.'

Connor giggled as he stumbled along with them, letting his feet drag as the pavement dipped. The night felt oppressively silent after the rattling of those shutters. Paula glanced around to check nobody was coming out of the other buildings to see what had happened, but the road remained empty.

'Are you okay?' whispered Mike. 'I hope I didn't say anything that...'

Paula shook her head. 'It's nothing. Just...' She sniffed, then was struck by a thought. 'Is there a park around here?'

'Just a little further, yes. On the other side of the bridge.' Even as he said it, the shadow of that same bridge closed over them. 'Heathbrook it's called. Why do you ask?'

The name slotted into place, opening a lock. Memories welled up, rising so fast they threatened to drown her.

'I used to live around here,' she gasped.

But it had been a long time ago, and only for a few weeks. Small wonder she hadn't recognised the hotel's name. Most likely it hadn't even existed back then.

'I'd walk my dog in that park sometimes. When I was a little girl. When Mum wasn't around to do it.'

'Thought you said you didn't know your way home?' sneered Connor. He laughed, a nasty bark that lacked true humour. 'Or was that just a story to get lover boy on his own?'

Paula ignored him. 'We weren't here long,' she told Mike. 'Dad moved us on. He wanted to make a fresh start.'

His voice was gentle. 'What happened?'

Before she was aware of it, Paula was telling Mike her story. Of how her mother had taken their black Labrador Jess for her evening walk around that park, getting her used to their new neighbourhood. How they had been crossing the road on their way home when the car hit them. How the driver sped off in panic, leaving her mother broken and bleeding in the gutter.

'She was dead before the ambulance arrived,' she finished.

'I'm so sorry. Did they catch whoever it was?'

Paula nodded. Yes, they'd caught him, and he'd as good as admitted being stoned out of his skull, claiming that a bright light had appeared from nowhere and dazzled him, making him lose control. Thankfully the judge had seen sense.

'And was Jess hurt too?'



'paws' by Yutaka Seki

'I don't know,' said Paula. 'We... We never found her.' She swallowed again to keep her voice from cracking. 'She must have been scared and ran away. She wouldn't have known her way back home.'

They stood in awkward silence outside the station entrance, warm light spilling down the half-dozen concrete steps. On the far side of the road the corner of Heathbrook Park sat in darkness.

'Well, that's brought everyone down innit? Supposed to be Christmas. C'mon!' Connor whooped again – to be cut off by a loud bark. Startled, he swore.

There was another bark, and an inexplicable feeling of recognition engulfed Paula.

'Jess?'

Pushing Connor aside she looked back the way they had come, to see a large black Labrador padding into view on the other side of the railway bridge. Unlike in Mike's story, however, the dog did not turn right. It had heard them and this time it looked left, and as it saw Paula it gave a third, excited bark before starting to race towards her.

Connor leaned against the wall, looking as if he had been switched off, as Paula dropped to one knee, opening her arms just as she had done so many times in the past. Laughing, she gathered Jess into her embrace, and she knew.

She didn't understand how. She didn't need to. She simply knew beyond any doubt that this really was Jess, looking, feeling, smelling exactly as she had done on that terrible day so long ago. Paula knew this, just as she knew why that look of puzzled shock was spreading across Mike's kind face as, leaning down, he read the tag on Jess's familiar collar. Just as she could still picture the name and address printed there, unfaded, in Dad's neat handwriting.

Just as she knew that Jess's final walk home had taken a route far longer and far stranger than any mere human would ever be able to comprehend. ■

Author's note: this story is fiction but is inspired by the true account told by Mike and recorded in my 'Haunted Lambeth' (The History Press, 2013: www/james-clark.co.uk).

From A to Z with horses

Antony Lewis-Crosby

What is it that connects Newton Abbot, Perth, Redcar, Killarney, Wexford and Sligo? Or York, Bath, Warwick and Galway?

I am sure that there are many answers, but in this case they are all horse racecourses and just a few of the 87 racecourses across the British Isles.

Over the last 7 years I have visited every one of the 87 courses in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England uniquely in alphabetical order and have raised over 66,000 (in Euro and Sterling) for Cystic Fibrosis.

The Racecourse Challenge for Cystic Fibrosis came about on my retirement in 2009 when I decided that a good way to see as much of the country as I could was to indulge myself, and my pocket, by going horse racing. And so I dreamt up this Challenge. Inspired by my son (also a Wandsworth Borough resident) who has Cystic Fibrosis, I decided that to add to the Challenge by fundraising as I went for CF.

As background, Cystic Fibrosis is the most common genetic condition which affects the lungs and pancreas very severely. David was diagnosed almost at birth and has had continual treatment for CF throughout his 40 years. Physio and an enormous amount of medication kept him well for his first 15 years, but his condition declined and after many hospital stays in the Brompton he was offered a double lung transplant in 2004. As a result he has been mostly very well since, but he still has CF and continues to take medication several times a day. There is no cure for Cystic Fibrosis as yet and research continues apace to eradicate this condition. Sadly, at present too many young people with CF die far too young. The Racecourse Challenge has been able to provide some vital funds for this research in the UK and in Ireland to support the improvement of hospital conditions for CF sufferers.

The Challenge started, or should have started, at Ballinrobe in Ireland in August 2009, but surprisingly the planned meeting was cancelled as the course was waterlogged (yes, it does rain occasionally in Ireland!). And so Bellewstown in the Irish Midlands was my first racecourse. Despite being an August day it was bitterly cold at the top of that hill, but we were up and away.

Aintree was the first UK course closely followed by Ascot and Ayr.

There are so many stories from the Challenge and many involve people I met at the racecourses. Perhaps the most heart-rending was the family in Clonmel in

Ireland who came to support my bucket collection after racing there. They had had five children - four with Cystic Fibrosis, three of whom had died young. But there they were telling their story and supporting my Challenge with all the enthusiasm that could be imagined and very welcoming to me in that part of Ireland. There were many others who came to talk to me in both countries and they clearly appreciated the work that was going on to find the vital cure.

I could not have done this Challenge without the support of the managements of almost every racecourse that I visited and I was very grateful for the support of so many friends who came with me and helped, many from the Wandsworth area, including your editor. Many came racing for the very first time and realised what fun it can be, even the betting (responsibly of course).

Racecourses are mostly in lovely parts of the country and I am often asked for my favourites. They are all so different, but among the major courses I particularly enjoyed Cheltenham, Newmarket (the July course), Leopardstown and Punchestown in Ireland and Aintree. But the smaller courses had their charms too, not least because they were small and very friendly. Newton Abbot had some of the best food; Cartmel, home of sticky toffee pudding, was so intimate. Downpatrick in Northern Ireland was, for the horses, like climbing Everest three times each circuit and Killarney, where one minute the sun can be shining on some of the most glorious mountains in the British Isles and the next it can be throwing it down with rain with not a mountain in sight. The 5 and 10 euro notes from the bucket collection there had to be dried out on the hotel room radiator!

Mention of Everest brings me to my conclusion at York in September this year when many of my family and supporters came to support the final thrust. One of my guests was Nick Talbot, the first ever person to climb Everest who has Cystic Fibrosis. Breathing for CF sufferers is difficult enough, but to manage the thin air of Everest, having been caught in a major avalanche on a previous attempt, is amazing. That Challenge makes my Challenge seem very small, but what fun I have had throughout these seven years for a very important and worthwhile cause.

If you would like to support Cystic Fibrosis this Christmas I would be very grateful. Just visit www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk ■

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