

FROM THE CHAIR

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Collectors' item

Red Kickers (circa 1972?)

A dear departed friend once explained to me that Christmas was a difficult time for most people as if we had bad or sad memories of Christmas Past we would of course be filled with dread and had we experienced wonderful ones as children it would be year-on-year anti-climax, so either way depressing!

After weeks of glitter, tinsel and influx of rich and costly foodstuffs in the shops, I am conscious of the bizarre if not grotesque contrast with the sight of fresh-faced young men in army uniforms selling poppies for Remembrance Day or collecting money in buckets in the tube stations for Help for Heroes. The cruelty and suffering constantly on our television screens, alongside advertisements for more and more goods is incongruous and one wonders if we have forgotten the difference between horror and grief, pleasure and happiness.

However, the Wandsworth Society continues its remit to strive and struggle to comprehend Section 106 agreements past, present and, with the changes announced by the new Minister, future, and the implications for Affordable and Social housing provision promised and provided or not, and to pore over documents pertaining to Development Management Policies and Site Specific Allocations, TfL Strategies etc., have meetings with Councillors, Officers, developers and other societies to pool experience. We also work to have a voice in the planning of the Wandle Regional Park with its implications for King George's Park and the Wandle Delta and to plan our public meetings for 2011.

I send my thanks to those individuals who have helped and supported the Society in pursuing these objectives during the past year.

With these thoughts may I, on behalf of the Executive and all the Committees, wish our members A Very Happy and Healthy Christmas of your choice, be it with family, friends, far away or "battening down the hatches" at home with a good book or two and the joy of the BBC. We look forward to meeting you in the New Year.

Valerie Taylor

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The Bedside Edition 2010

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Greetings

By the time you read this the wintry weather Wandsworth¹ is experiencing in these first few days of December will, we trust, be no more than a chill memory. But presently here at Newsletter Towers it is more than a little fresh.

Since time immemorial it has been customary for the domestic staff to gather in Garratt Wood for the felling of the Yule Tree. This year as the mulled gruel was quaffed the talk was of little else but the weather, there wasn't a one who could remember the moat freezing over before Christmas.

Back in the boardroom we warmed by the fire, a ~~small~~ glass of Scotland's finest to hand, and the thoroughly good read that is the 2010 Bedside. Does it get any better? Throw another log ... on the fire, there's a good chap.

¹*And by the by I am told I am obliged to say that places other than Wandsworth also had a bit of snow. It's something or other gone mad.*

We are indebted to the Wandsworth Museum for the illustration on the front cover, which is "Christmas on the Wandle – Ally Sloper's Christmas Holidays 1904" by W.F. Thomas, 1904 Pen and ink on paper. Wandsworth Museum No. 2007.116

An original cartoon showing a frozen Wandle River with snow piled high and the characters engaged in Christmas time activities. At the bottom are written the names of the characters in the cartoon. Alexander "Ally" Sloper was one of the earliest fictional comic strip characters. Red-nosed and blustery, he was an archetypal lazy schemer often found "sloping" through alleys to avoid his landlord and other creditors. Sloper has also been cited as an influence on the creation of Charlie Chaplin's "little tramp" character.

And it also features on a Museum card – well, there's a thought, should you be looking for a card this Christmas

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The Society Soirées

The Society Soirée Season 2010.

1st February : Violin and piano sonatas by Beethoven and Brahms: Elizabeth Wallfisch, violin, and David Breitman, fortepiano and piano.

14th February: Piano music and songs by Robert and Clara Schumann: Balder Neergard, fortepiano and piano with John McMunn, tenor.

May 3rd: Violin and piano sonatas by Schubert: Madeleine Easton, violin, and Danny Grimwood, fortepiano.

June 6th: Summer Soirée String Quartets by Mozart, Beethoven and Debussy: The Piatti Quartet.

November 21st: Piano music by Chopin, Enoch Arden by Tennyson with piano accompaniment by Richard Strauss: Timothy West, speaker, and Simon Callaghan, piano.

Another year and another five soirées have passed. We are extraordinarily lucky to be able to attract such an array of fine musicians who enjoy coming to Wandsworth to play for appreciative audiences in the intimate and friendly atmosphere of the Ward household in Patten Road. Some of our artists this year are already firmly on the international stage, while others are surely destined to be so before long.

Libby and David gave us an 'extra' concert last year so we were delighted to welcome them back to play sonatas by Beethoven with my copy of a 1795 Viennese fortepiano. We then turned the chairs round and listened to the beautiful Brahms sonata in G played on the Steinway with suitably appealing warmth.

My second fortepiano was brought in for the next concert - another Viennese instrument but about twenty years later than the first, thus larger with a wider range and more sonorous tone. Balder, a post-graduate student from the Royal College of Music, who has been specialising in the keyboard music of Robert Schumann, played some of his earlier works on this and accompanied John McMunn in songs by Robert's wife, Clara. Again the audience was turned round for the second half to allow Balder to play Schumann's 'Carnaval' on the Steinway and then end the concert with John in the great song cycle 'Dichterliebe'. This moving expression of the joys and pains of love was especially appropriate for St. Valentine's day.

The same fortepiano was employed again for the next concert devoted to the piano and violin music by Schubert. The young and very talented pair of Madeleine and Danny have been recording these works and performing them in the Wigmore Hall. Their playing was exciting and insightful, revealing the warmth and beauty of Schubert. As they were progressing brilliantly through the final piece, the very demanding Fantasy, Madeleine suddenly stopped: the hairs of her bow had become loose making it impossible for her to continue. As it chanced, our son-in-law to be, Peter, was in the audience (it was Maddy who had introduced him to our daughter Lucy!) and he immediately took the bow to see if hasty repairs might be possible. However, this proved not to be the case, so a bow was requisitioned from one of the children's violins stored in the music room. This was shorter than Maddy's bow and it had not been used for several years, but Maddy picked it up fearlessly and prepared to use it. Meanwhile, not wasting the opportunity, Danny had embarked on one of Schubert's Impromptus for solo piano, much to the delight and surprise of the audience. Eventually the Fantasy was resumed and completed with great panache, Maddy



seemingly unaffected by the unfamiliar bow. It is always good when things 'go wrong' - it wakes the audience up!

For the Summer Soirée we were treated to a wonderful concert by the Piatti String Quartet - Charlotte Scott and Michael Trainor, violins, David Wigram, viola and Jessie Ann Richardson, cello. They gave us two great classical works in the first half, Mozart's 'Dissonance' and Beethoven's 'Harp' quartets played with a marvellous combination of energy and refinement. After the supper interval, enjoyed in the garden, we heard a most exhilarating performance of the quartet by Debussy, full of colour and passion, an excellent ending to the concert and our 24th season.

The most recent soirée was held on November 21st: we were delighted and honoured to welcome one of the Society's most distinguished members, actor Timothy West. He recited Tennyson's narrative poem 'Enoch Arden' with piano accompaniment composed by Richard Strauss - a melodrama. The sad and fateful story was delivered with skilful variety and moving passion and the atmospheric music played with admirable

clarity and sensitivity by Simon Callaghan, a young pianist making his second visit to the soirées. In the first part of the evening he had given us a beautiful rendering of some Chopin - a Waltz, a Polonaise, three Mazurkas and the lovely Barcarolle. The whole evening was received with delight by the appreciative audience.

So what is in store for 2011? At present, nothing definite is fixed but there are one or two things in mind: a baroque concert using my harpsichord, an evening with singers, including duets and trios, Mozart string quintets perhaps... delicious delights!

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.
The motions of his spirit are as dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus.
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, V.i.

David Ward



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TWO MINDS WITH BUT A SINGLE THOUGHT THE STORY OF THE ZANCIGS

Curious books turn up on my shelves, and mostly I discover these while trying to have a clear-out. One such (probably inherited from my late brother Tim, who had an interest in this kind of oddity) was a shabby-looking cloth-covered red paperback, published in 1907, priced one shilling. And a very good shilling's-worth it was, richly illustrated with black and white photographs.

To put it simply, the Zancigs were a husband and wife mind-reading act, clearly famous in their time. The book is dedicated to "The Great British Public, between whom and ourselves, as Danes, there is a precious link – a single thought between two minds – namely: Homage to England's Beloved Queen." The Queen at that time was, of course, Alexandra, wife of Edward VII. We shall hear more of that later.

Skipping chapters I and II – "How to become a Zancig" and "No pretence to occult powers" – I began to read at Chapter III, "Julius Zancig's personal narrative". He begins:

"From my earliest childhood I have always been interested more or less in mental science. As far back as my memory goes, it seems, I exhibited certain traits in this line which attracted considerable attention.

"When a tiny child, in my home in Copenhagen, where I first saw the light of day some forty years ago, my friends were wont to let me upon a table so that I could give an exhibition of infant character reading. Certain people would be

brought before me, and I would say, without hesitation, 'That is a nice man,' or 'a nice lady,' as the case might be; and I would often give astonishingly correct readings.

"Some of these opinions were frank, even to the verge of rudeness, and it not infrequently happened that these judgments were absolutely correct...There were times when I was made to suffer considerably at the hands of some of the people whose personalities I summed up unfavourably."

Orphaned at an early age, he was more or less adopted by "a kind lady" at the age of four, and was a studious child at school in Copenhagen. Leaving school, he became an apprentice carpenter, but soon decided that foreign shores beckoned. Bidding farewell to his kind sponsor, he set sail for America in a Norwegian tramp steamer. This quickly proved not to have been a good idea, as he spoke no Norwegian and no-one on board spoke Danish. During the six-week voyage, however, he picked up a certain amount of the language, "not always of the most refined nature". Among his adventures on board, he was attacked by a knife-wielding cook, whom he felled with a belaying pin; and he twice fell overboard, but was (obviously) rescued. On arriving in Brooklyn, he rapidly made his escape, living in New York for a while, and then in Chicago.

Never lacking in enterprise, and wanting very much to see "the festival of the Veiled Prophet at St Louis, Missouri", he hitched a ride on the cowcatcher of an express locomotive – not a wise decision, but he did complete the journey successfully, if painfully.

After many more adventures, he then at last "met his fate", as he put it, in another of life's astonishing coincidences. Returning to New York, he managed to find himself a job of some sort in Port Chester, and one day his employer told him there was someone he would like him to meet: a Danish girl whom he had employed as a governess for his children. Who should this girl be, but one Agnes Claussen, whom he already knew as a friend in Copenhagen in his youth: "Can it be Agnes?" "Is it Julius?" "Some strange force undoubtedly brought us together." In the course of a few months they became engaged and were married.

Not unsurprisingly, married life revealed that

their minds were curiously attuned. Often they would plan little surprises for each other, then find that the other had forestalled them by buying an identical object, or theatre tickets for the same performance. So they decided to build on this, to see if something more could

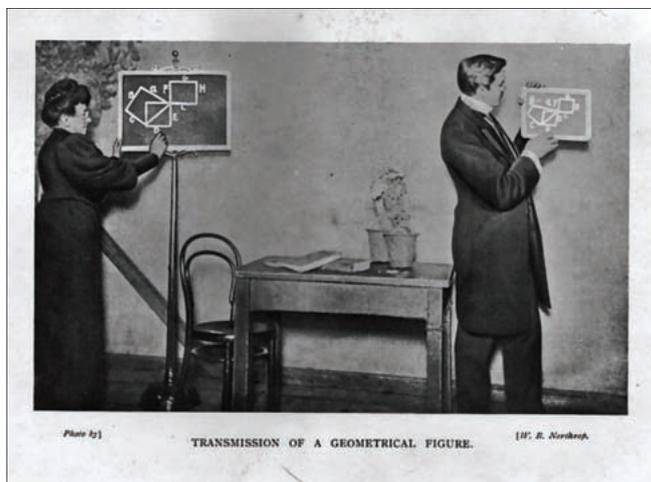
be made of this. What began as a party trick became a bit of a nuisance, as more and more people asked them to demonstrate their mental powers. This eventually became a commercial enterprise when Julius decided to try and ration these free demonstrations by charging for them. This did not have the desired effect of decreasing the demands, but they found that people were prepared to pay from five dollars (£1) to as much as twenty-five dollars (£5) for the pleasure of witnessing their “telepathic powers”.

Their first public appearance was at the Omaha Exhibition, in a little booth, where the organisers paid them a small salary. So successful were they, that they decided finally to embark on a public career.

It was hard going at first, and scepticism led to their being severely tested and ridiculed in the American press. But after many setbacks, a saviour appeared in the form of Oscar Hammerstein, no less, “today one of the leading and most successful theatrical managers in America”. “He was simply carried away by the little exhibition we were able to give him, and promptly gave us an engagement.”

Despite a huge success as far as audiences were concerned, the press continued its battering: “Is it telepathy, or what?” asked one of the New York papers, answering its own query by concluding, “Probably, What.”

Time went by, and their fame reached out beyond the USA. The time came for a world tour, and their first port of call was India, where they



witnessed all kinds of extraordinary mental and physical feats by the locals: levitation, snake charming, vanishing objects etc etc, performed by “adepts”, which must have put their mind-reading act rather in the shade.

Undeterred, they completed their world tour, ending up in England,

where their performances awakened “vast interest”. One experiment was carried out at the London offices of the Gramophone Company, where Julius and Agnes communicated with each other through gramophone horns on opposite sides of the room, Agnes identifying in quick succession fifty objects which she could not see Julius holding. The resulting recording lasted two minutes and thirty-five seconds. A triumph of modern technology.

The climax of the tour was an appearance before their Gracious Majesties King Edward and Queen Alexandra (yes, the Danish queen) “not only to appear, but to partake of their hospitality, under very pleasing conditions.” The exhibition concluded with a little test by which Queen Alexandra whispered, “I wish you a merry Christmas!” in Danish to Julius, which he then transmitted successfully to Agnes. The whole event came to a rapturous conclusion when a heavy snowfall at Sandringham resulted in an invitation to the Zancigs to spend the night there: “An invitation which we more than gladly accepted, coming as it did in the simple, heartfelt manner in which it was extended.”

And so, with this undoubted triumph, the little book draws to its close. What became of the Zancigs, so famous in their own time? Needless to say, the internet knows all about them: a fruitful resource for the long winter evenings, if you want to know more. But I prefer Julius’s own words from the scruffy red paperback.

Prue Raper

A city too far

It's now sixty-five years since the liberation of Europe. Inspired by the tales of his friend, an American veteran, John Gimlette sets off in search of liberated Paris.

'Paris was awful,' Flint told me, 'I'll never go back.'

Sixty years ago, Putnam Flint was one of thousands of Americans pouring off the battlefields for a few days in Paris. Back then, my elderly friend was a green lieutenant with the Tank Destroyers. Now, he's retired, and keeps bees in Massachusetts. Although he'd let me take him back to the mud of Alsace and the horrors of the Alps, he drew the line at Paris, and refused to come with me. The city had been on the brink of nervous collapse. Men fought over cigarette butts, and sex was cheaper than chocolate. 'Looking back,' said Flint, 'I don't think we ever truly understood what they'd been through.'

This suffering would have been nowhere more obvious than in Rue de la Huchette, which is where I stayed first. Today, it's much as it was on the eve of war - a short, vaguely raffish alley through the Latin Quarter. Then (as now) it saw few tourists, just those curious for medieval, pre-Haussmann Paris. It's been slow to gentrify, and several houses are derelict. During the thirties, the locals ate cats (*chat farci*) and fought everyone. Even the whores went on strike for the communists. Most of them would perish in concentration camps along with the Serbs, Jews and a beautiful Polish model.

Now the street is owned by Greeks, refugees from their own civil war. At night the air is oily with lamb, and the waiters break plates to bring in the trade. People still gossip window-to-window, and, in the 'Cuban' Bar, the dancers have been drawn from Lautrec. I often ate at the kebab shop, which the French found curiously exotic. It had been a brothel for German soldiers until 1940, when the *Madame* set it on fire. They say she was dragged away, singing *La Marseillaise*.

I stayed at Les Argonautes, which had once been the dairy. They gave me a room in the eaves, huge black tree-trunks over my head. This is where the milkmaid, Collette, slept, looking out over the Seine. She'd spent much of the thirties defending her rump

from the locals, and much of the Occupation trying to get them to buy it. It was the same everywhere. Five doors down, Mme Luneville had seen trouble coming and threw herself out of her window. The iron brace, where her petticoats snagged briefly, is still there, now festooned in postcards and berets.

I went all over Paris in search of *résistance*. Plaques to those who'd been shot began to thin out after my street. Most Parisians had resigned themselves to tyranny, and those that hadn't became troglodytic. One morning I found myself clambering around among the bones and damp of the Catacombs. This vast subterranean Roman quarry, now stacked with the victims of earlier catastrophes, had become the nervous system of those in defiance. Even now, no-one is sure where it all begins and ends.

The revolt finally burst above ground just over the river, on the Île de la Cité. It's odd that, in such an orderly city, it was the police that began the revolt. I talked my way into their *Préfecture*, which is still pocked with shell-fire and shot. Over 150,000 Parisians joined the fight, including Camus and Sartre, and 2,500 died. The wounded were taken to La Comédie Française (an exquisite place to die) and the Hôtel Dieu. This fantastic cloistered palace, which has served as a hospital for 600 years, is now about to close.

With victory came the Americans, or perhaps the other way round.

I rushed around the last scenes on the beautiful battlefield. At the Hotel Meurice, I could only stand and gape at the immaculate taste of the outgoing *Kommandant*. He'd had Room 213 until dislodged by African troops. Amongst all the gilt and silk, I noticed that a cup of tea cost the same as my room on Huchette. I hurried on, back to Notre Dame. In this Gothic masterpiece (the transept walls are two-thirds glass), there can be no better place to celebrate the wonder and freedom of France, which is what de Gaulle did on 26th August 1944.

Six months after that, Flint pitched up, on a 48-hour pass.

Although we'd both arrived at the Gare du Nord, our journeys were conspicuously different. I took Eurostar, and was so happily immersed in champagne and military records that I hadn't noticed we'd moved until Ashford. The statistics of comfort are bewildering; every day Eurostar staff wash 36,000 glasses and 80,000 pieces of cutlery.

Flint, meanwhile, was bungling himself up on K-rations, in a train that was freezing, broken and foul. The Americans joked that this was to deter them from leave. This was hardly true; in Paris, Eisenhower had provided over 10,000 beds for his weary troops.

In order to understand Flint's feelings for Paris, I moved to Pigalle. Although the usual sights were open to soldiers, it was 'Pig Alley' they wanted. Even now, this knot of hills and cobbles and overhead railways is determinedly *louche*. It's the Paris that one either loves or loathes, with its dog-pee grating, sexy ads and gypsy quartets. Back then, it was only sex that mattered. There was nothing new in this; Degas and Lautrec had both sprawled Pigalle's girls across canvas. War, on the other hand, had brought on a sex boom.

Fortunately, I didn't have to copy Flint with participation. As a newly-wed, he'd decided to save his GI condom, to protect his rifle. Instead, we both did the shows. Separated by two generations, we went to the Moulin Rouge. I still despise myself for enjoying it so much. Momentarily, our cruel world was entirely filled with girls wearing only coloured feathers. Then one of them stripped off and dived into a tank of pythons. All around me, I could hear the sound of Koreans, dying of happiness. Sure, it was overwhelming entertainment but - at 95 a pop - it was hardly soldierly.

Next-door was more promising: a '*spectacle sexy*' without feathers or snakes. To my horror, I soon discovered that I was the only member of the audience, and that I was the *spectacle*. Ten seconds into the show, I was covered in half-naked Serbs frisking me for Euros. Twenty bought a whisky, they said, and fifty – them.

"It was a bar of soap in my time," said Flint, later.

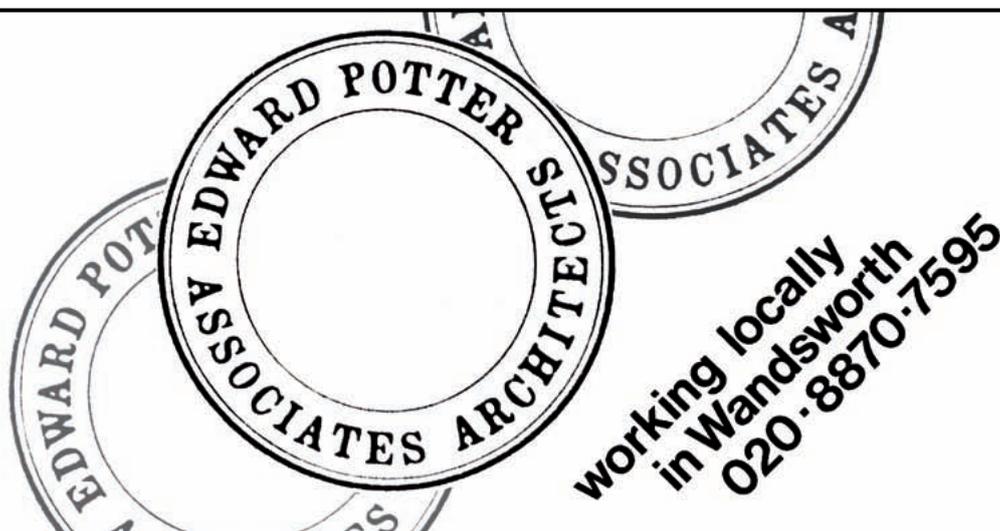
A new underclass, however, had taken over my hotel. Instead of Monmartre whores, I now found myself amongst North Africans. They were some of the most charming people in Paris, though drastically poor. They kept their food on the window sills, and dried their clothes in the hall. At night, Saharan sounds were carried up, through the plumbing, to my attic but, by day, the Tunisians were gone - out cleaning, begging, roasting chestnuts and cultivating invisibility.

By day, I too was out, after the ghosts of *la libération*. I visited the stars of that era, at least in their graves; Piaf and Gertrude Stein in Père Lachaise, and Sartre, (now *non-existentialist*) in Montparnasse. I even attended the funeral of a fighter ace at Les Invalides, all mink and drill. But the great American ghosts were in the heart of the city, at The Ritz. Hemingway, Gellhorn, Salinger and Marlene Dietrich were all here at the end.

The Ritz fits neatly into the love-or-hate-it debate. With its gold light-switches and swan-shaped taps, it occupies the sublime end of the hospitality spectrum. Not all Americans like it. I overheard one *fashionista* say it needed a swipe with a baseball bat. Even Hemingway was given to moments of overload, and once machine-gunned his bathroom.

But at least I can report back to Flint: Paris is more magnificent than ever. Depravity and chaos are now the exception. If anything, it's gone too far the other way; too controlled, serious and over-designed. After all, where else can one buy a contraption '*for carrying twelve shopping bags*'? Or a rucksack for dogs?

John Gimlette is the author of 'Panther Soup: A European Journey in War and Peace' (Arrow books)





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AFC Wimbledon, from our lady on the terraces



Aficionados of our favourite non football-league team will not need this annual report, but the armchair fans might like to read of its progress. Happily it does continue to be progress.

As I write the team sits at the top of the Blue Square Conference (Premier Division). The Conference is the top rung in the non-league pyramid but, just like the Conference South that Wimbledon was in last year, it is extremely difficult to get out of. Only one team goes up automatically, the next four have to play-off until a second team wins through. Up there with Wimbledon are 3 other teams doing equally well and frequently swapping places for top spot.

By the time you read this we shall know if the team has progressed to the third round of the FA Cup. Milton Keynes Dons (the metamorphosed Wimbledon FC) and AFC Wimbledon could have met in the third round, but the MK Dons lost their second round match, and so the grudge match has been avoided. Even if AFCW lose their match, it is impressive for a non-league team to have got this far.

The Reserves are top of the Suburban Premier League and the youth teams (both boys and girls) are flourishing, although the boys have the edge. The boys are currently 1st, 2nd or 3rd of 5 age-related leagues, the girls tend to be around 4th to 7th.

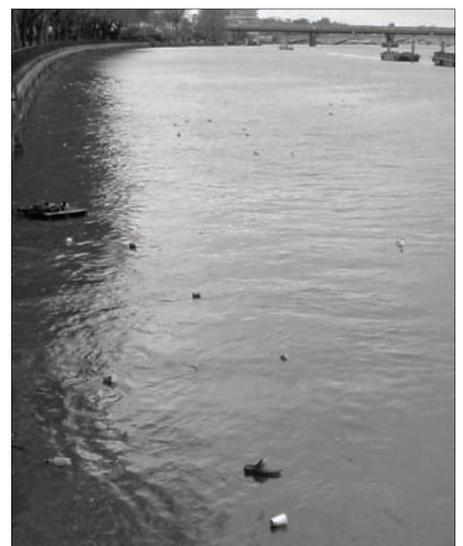
Wimbledon is, believe it or not, a football club run by volunteers as an Industrial & Provident Society. It is more than just a football club. It runs a considerable number of community events, to fund raise for charities or just for fun. These are mostly held in Merton because the fans want to keep the link with Wimbledon. There is always the hope that a new Wimbledon Stadium will one day become a reality.

It is unlikely that a Russian oligarch will put funds into AFCW just yet but for reasonably near, affordable, football the club takes some beating.

Shirley Passmore.

Croc in the Thames, amazing first sighting

Thanks to Mr Wibberley a vigilant local resident, who prefers to remain anonymous, we are able to bring you this exciting scoop – a photograph of a croc in the Thames off Wandsworth Park, just visible at the bottom of the image, see page 21 for more on this story



Going away

by Mark Haworth-Booth



The two roofs of our house with last winter's snow – both roofs soon to be clad with photovoltaic panels.

It is a year since we left leafy Jessica Road on the West Side of Wandsworth Common for the even leafier, but much narrower, lanes of North Devon and the village of Swimbridge. (Motorists here ruefully refer to the 'Devon Stripes' on the sides of their cars, caused by the hedgerows along the narrow lanes.) What have we experienced in the past year? Well, to start with, the most severe winter weather since the Last Ice Age (Was that in 1960 something?) At first we guiltily supposed that the record-breaking bad weather was aimed directly at us and had to be retribution from the divinity, the town council or even the Wandsworth Society – surely not! – because we had had the temerity to leave SW18 after a mere 38 years (in my wife's case, 30 in mine). The snow and ice were so treacherous that we were forced to abandon our (non 4WD) car in the next village for nine days. We slipped and slid on foot to the post office for papers and mail.

The Devonians have been very welcoming, perhaps because so many of them are, like us, incomers, known locally as Grockles. The pace of life is slower, the amount of eye contact higher, the friendliness palpable and heartening. We had to keep our cat imprisoned indoors on arrival, otherwise he would have – involuntarily – set out for his proper territory in Jessica

Road. At first, so great was the void – no bright lights, no big city, no buzz and no friends – that I was pretty sure that I too was in danger of setting out, somnambulistically, for the old home. I imagined the pair of us travelling – a latterday Dick Wittington and Tommy – with large spotted handkerchiefs tied on sticks containing everything required for the journey. But now we have, cat and all, settled in.

It's been energising, beginning a new life. We have a few good friends scattered around this large county – second only to Yorkshire in size – but there has been a great impetus to get out and about. We have found new friends through the beautiful 14th century church of St James in Swimbridge. It has an intricately carved rood screen which Pevsner describes as 'glorious'. I was elected a churchwarden in March and am now responsible for making sure the heating comes on in time for the Sunday morning service at 9.30 am, for baptisms, weddings, funerals and choir practice. I know – it is a great and terrifying responsibility. I also belong to Coastwise, a group of high-powered naturalists expert in marine life. Lectures are held every Thursday morning in Barnstaple, which is four miles away. I also belong to the Devon Wild Life Trust and Devon Birds which include many

brilliant birders. Last autumn a coach-full of us went to Slimbridge, the famous wetlands reserve founded by Sir Peter Scott. I've been recording birds for the great survey being run by the British Trust for Ornithology. My most exciting sighting is a Merlin, Britain's smallest hawk, which I'd never knowingly seen before. Although half a dozen buzzards mew in the sky above us, our garden is full of song-birds, including many goldfinches. On the strength of having a 'flock' of two chickens, we belong to DASH – the Devon Association of Smallholders. The chickens are ex-Battery Farm and seem highly temperamental. They used to roam freely around the garden and play with our neighbours' cows in their field but now – as Rosie doesn't want them to destroy her seedlings – they've been given a pen in the paddock. Whether because of this, or because they are past it, we've had no eggs for months. I flick through the DASH newsletter looking for a course on dispatching chickens and preparing them for the table. The garden is overrun by rabbits and I find I'm getting interested in 'dressing' them for the table too. We are also members of the North Devon Green Party and campaigned for our candidates in the election. We are gearing up for campaigning in the local elections next May and plan to stand as 'paper candidates' – ie appearing on the ballot paper to give Greens a chance to vote for the party, but without going round speechifying. The paddock referred to now houses not only a hen house and pen but a new vegetable plot (fenced against rabbits, deer, etc) with four raised beds, plus one fine Egremont Russet apple tree which we are planning to prune as an espalier. It was given to us by our kind Jessica Road neighbours, Malcolm and Judy, who came to visit in the summer. We are going to plant around eight standard and semi-standard apple and pear trees this winter. So, we became members of Orchards Live, which promotes the revival and creation of orchards in these parts. I have been drafted in as photographer and so we have been visiting lovely orchards in the past few days to capture the trees laden with fruit. Soon the apples will be harvested and

milled, pressed and turned into delicious juices and ciders. There's a vineyard next door to us so we have been helping to pick the grapes. First tastings of the wine in progress have been promising. We've put our name down for a few bottles with which to regale our guests.

I have a brother in Sussex who has dug out a vast number of ponds in his time. He and his chaps created one for us this summer – around 20 by 25 metres. We are furnishing it bit by bit with underwater, surface and marginal plants. Already the water lilies, irises and water mint are doing well. A pair of kingfishers have been regular visitors. They seem to be diving to catch water beetles. They sit on a rock waggling their bills to get the wriggling things down their gullets. I watch them from a summerhouse I built – by which I mean ordered and had delivered and put up - on a slope above the pond. Swallows swooped down all summer and until the end of September to scoop up their prey. Since their departure, the dragonflies have taken over. Using a pallet, plastic bottles for flotation and a willow hurdle, I've made a duck island – a topic which always provokes sniggers about expense claims – but no ducks have yet taken up residence. Our next projects: photovoltaic panels on the roof and a plastic greenhouse so we can grow vegetables through the winter.

Leaving Wandsworth and London left a huge void, of course. A year ago I started a blog called Swimbridge Cottage (easy to find with Google) partly to record our new lives and partly to lessen that sense of a void by reaching out to real and virtual friends. It helps, I think. However, things aren't perfect down here - we still haven't found a local equivalent of the Wandsworth Society.

Mark Haworth-Booth

Nicholas Maudyt

a Wandsworth Knight

by Margaret Hunt

We know very little about any of the people who lived in Wandsworth in the later middle ages. There exists, however, a brass in Wandsworth Parish Church that bears the date 1420 and the name 'Nichus ----', and from documentary evidence it is possible to obtain a glimpse of the life of the Wandsworth knight represented by this much-worn effigy. He is in armour, thirty inches high, damaged and badly mutilated, with just enough left of him to make out some details. The coat of armour is worn smooth and the head is missing. From the right-hand side at the waist there hangs a small truncheon. It is this that gives us the clue that he was a Serjeant at Arms. The inscription is in black letter and about three-quarters of it is left.¹

In his *Survey of London* the antiquarian, John Stow, is quoted as saying it was 'before the Table without the Rails, the figure in brass of a knight, the head torn off ... with an inscription partly gone'.² Stow's book was first published in 1598, so the slab must have been mutilated before then and the head already gone. Stow gives the inscription which, when translated, reads approximately: 'Here lies Nichus ---- servant of King Henry V after the conquest at arms who died on the 26th day of January in the year of the Lord 1420. May God have mercy on his soul. Amen our Father.' The aftermath of the Black Death and recurring plagues were probably within his living memory, as was the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. This was an era when men were turning outwards, money and cash payments were becoming more important, and the feudal system was breaking down.³ Men were writing in English instead of Latin: William Langland produced his *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer wrote several works, and a translation of *The Imitation of Christ* of Thomas à Kempis was published in 1415.⁴ Richard (Dick) Whittington, who was three times Mayor of London, would have been a contemporary, since he died in 1423.

What did the title 'Serjeant at Arms' actually mean? In the British Library there is a pre-sixteenth-century document entitled, 'The Office of a Seriante at Armes Attendinge the Kings Matie'.⁵ In the document the Serjeant at Arms is given power to apprehend and

arrest any subject of the King and terms are given for making arrests, starting with archbishops and dukes and with decreasing ranks of nobility until finally it deals with the arrest of 'commonpersons'. The commonperson attracted a much lower sum of money in payment. Records show that the man memorialised on the brass was Nicholas Maudyt and fortunately several of the incidents in his life were recorded in the Patent Rolls and Close Rolls of Henry IV and Henry V. Henry IV had usurped his cousin Richard II's throne. He reigned from 1399 to 1413 and had much to contend with, and so Maudyt's activities were mainly concerned with arrests.⁶ On four occasions individuals had to appear before the King. On 10 May 1404, for instance, William Englishe was handed over from the Tower of London, though in contrast men were set free on two separate occasions, one at Kenilworth castle. Piracy of ships at sea occurred eight times. Men from Devon and Cornwall were often the culprits and on 12 September 1408, Nicholas with others had to arrest about thirty men who had attacked eleven ships. The piracy cargoes were in one case herrings, and in others rye flour, oat flour, wax, linen cloths, peas, salt, 'chynes of pork', and 'jambouns'. Nicholas could have been no weakling, as we see him careering about the country over a wide area, pursuing the lawful business of the King, taking people in charge and sometimes getting the wrong man.

To this day the Queen appoints a Serjeant at Arms by patent under the great seal 'to attend upon her Majesty's person when there is no parliament' and to attend the Speaker of the House of Commons when there is.⁷ He has to keep discipline in the Palace of Westminster and is very much involved in running the affairs of the Chamber. The mace which the Serjeant at Arms carries has now grown to a substantial size, and signifies by its position on the table whether the House is sitting or not. The little truncheon that Nicholas carries on his right-hand side on his memorial brass would have been his mace. It would have been marked with the Royal Arms, and was used as a warrant of authority in days when many men could not read.⁸

What of Nicholas Maudyt's connection with Wandsworth? He seems to have had associa-



tions with Devon, Yorkshire and Middlesex as well as the City of London. He must have got around on a horse and presumably was a good rider, and Wandsworth would have been within commuting distance for Westminster and the City of London by horse or barge. Did he live here? We know that the church at Wandsworth was anciently appropriated to the Abbey of Westminster and we know, of course, that he was laid to rest in that church. People in those days lived very close to the life of their church, and his tomb in All Saints' accordingly points to the probability that he had connections with the area. Wandsworth's own mediaeval knight indeed.

Notes

This is a shortened version of an article that first appeared in 1984 in the *Wandsworth Historian*, the journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society, and is reprinted with permission. For more information about the WHS and its activities visit the Society's website at - www.wandsworthhistory.org

Subsequent in-depth research by Rita Ensing in the Westminster Abbey Muniment Collection has confirmed that Nicholas Maudyt did indeed live in Wandsworth, and that he was a major landowner in the manors of Allfarthing and Doune, and in the Wandsworth part of the manor of Battersea & Wandsworth. Her findings were published in the *Wandsworth Historian* in the autumn of 1999.

The accompanying image is of a brass in All Saints' Church, Wandsworth, commemorating Nicholas Maudyt, Serjeant at Arms, who died c.1420.

References

- 1 Mill Stephenson (compiler), *A List of Monumental Brasses in Surrey* (1921), p. 512.
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- 3 G. H. Trevelyan, *English Social History* (1944), ch. 1.
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- 8 Jerome Bertram, *Brasses and Brass Rubbing in England* (1971).



The key.

Recently, we've been talking a lot about local know how. People ask us, what does it mean and why is it important?

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LET'S CUT FORWARD NOT BACK!

THE WANDSWORTH MUSEUM'S FIRST AGM

It was fitting that the guest speaker at the first AGM to be held in our newly opened museum should be Professor Jack Lohman for he is not only Director of the Museum of London and an eminent figure, nationally and internationally, in the museum world, but he is one of our own trustees, and a "local" with happy memories of Wandsworth and particular pride in the borough's special heritage, as he made abundantly clear in his opening remarks.

Jack's enthusiasm for museums and their importance to society was evident throughout his erudite and engaging talk in which he spoke of the way in which museums have moved away from being static, publicly funded institutions to become entrepreneurial, establishing themselves at the heart of communities, responding to change and seizing the opportunity to widen their thinking and to become a vital part of a country's overall social and economic goals.

He believes that all museums, and that includes Wandsworth, should be engaging with their communities and drawing people in, exciting their interest so that they want to share and become part of the "work" being done. Artefacts, according to Jack, and I am sure we all agree with his opinion, lose their power to attract if they are shut away behind doors that people are unwilling to open. He is putting this belief into practice at the Museum of London, particularly at the Docklands Museum, where he aims to involve local people, both as visitors, and more excitingly, as creators of galleries. The wide variety of "voices to be found in a multicultural city like London are being heard. Such projects, he considers, are part of a museum's social responsibility which covers a range of issues not least environmental matters. The Museum of London is a leader in energy conservation,

for example, and we are doing our bit herein Wandsworth with the installation of LED lighting!

The vision of museums as a vital part of our cultural future is a large one, and could be under threat in the current economic climate where the talk is all of cutbacks, redundancies and even, in the case of smaller institutions particularly, closure. Jack's vision, however, is a positive one. He believes we should cut forward not back with larger establishments such as his own supporting and working in partnership with smaller colleagues. Such collaboration would indeed help us here at Wandsworth for we could share resources – training programmes or even exhibitions which would be prohibitively expensive for a local museum to mount – and gain access to valuable expertise and experience. His remarks about the place of volunteers in helping museums to thrive were especially pertinent to us. Wandsworth Museum needs a large, enthusiastic body of people willing to learn and do and so become a "professional" amateur team helping to build an exciting, vibrant place at the heart of the borough. I'm sure many Friends will have been inspired by Jack's comments to join the existing band already helping on a regular basis.

If Wandsworth Museum is to succeed, as it must after all the time and energy that has been expended on ensuring its survival, then we have to support Ken Barber and his staff's efforts to bring in the visitors, maximise every opportunity to support the museum that presents itself and, most importantly, give our time so that our museum will fulfil Jack's belief that it can develop into the best possible local museum.

Christina Dawson

Burst pipes,

I confess to being thrilled that Iain asked if I would like to contribute to this issue, as 'Goodbye to all That' (Beside 2009) seemed to be finally closing a door on Wandsworth. It's so flattering to be treated like a Wandsworthian Emeritus and being approached as if one was Deborah Ross or Posy Simmonds. I hope I won't let you down with this reflection on life, not so much 'in-the-sticks', as occasionally 'almost-stuck'.

Take, for example, a little outing we had a few Sundays ago. We wanted to visit our nearest fruit tree specialist nursery to check out apple trees as we fantasise with the idea of mega-orchards here (well, at least six trees). Arriving, we found it was closed, so made off for our next pilgrimage point, an already installed array of photovoltaic panels in a nearby village. We need to see these because we are deeply engaged in getting some of our own and want to get first hand experience of the visual impact they may have. All this was considerably out of our usual way, and Mark thought he would try a cross country route, as on the map it looked rather more direct if a little more tricky to follow.

"Ah ha" he cries, when we reach a road discreetly decorated with a sign reading "not suitable for motor vehicles" "this is the road".

"Are you sure? It's got a sign that says ...

"Oh well, that's alright - let's go"

"Hmmm"

"C'mon"

"Mmm - I'm not sure ...

"Oh come on, let's just do it".

So, at first it's not *toooo* bad, but a few rather deeper than usual potholes. I'm driving. "I don't like the look of this" I venture as we get further along and there begin to appear huge cliffs and gullies in the road, like lots of model versions of

Beachy Head all, kind of, stuck together. We have to hug one side of the very narrow lane, very but very close to the hedge so we can hear brambles tearing into our poor little Prius. Then the cliffs and gullies switch position - so how do we get over to the other side without tearing up the undercarriage ... ?

After about ten minutes of driving at literally one or two mph Mark says "I think it'll be fine but it would be better if I drove."

We swap seats, and after another ten minutes or so we get to a place where we could just about turn round.

"Do you want to turn round?" I proffer, but it's not really getting me a result - he just ploughs on - ploughing being the operative word - even if at 3 mph he's speeded up 'cos he's a man!).

It's getting more and more traumatic (there's a gorgeous view but you don't get to see it as your eyes are glued to the bomb-cratered ground) until we do actually get to a point where there appears to be a mini- waterfall (well, perhaps I exaggerate slightly but it looks like a drop of about 12 inches and lots of water) ahead of us. Mark does actually now stop the car and gets out to inspect. He comes back with the wrong sort of expression (or maybe I mean right sort) on his face. "We'll have to go back".

Hurrah - but that means a bit of reversing until we can turn round, fortunately not more than about 50 metres. Driving back is no honeymoon either, but at least we know what lies ahead. We do eventually get out back to the 'proper' road and Phew - what a sigh of relief!

I don't think we'll be going down any more "unsuitable for motor vehicles" although I have to confess, I have often wondered what they are all about - ah ha, now I KNOW!

Maybe it's just as well that our priorities entail spending a lot of time at home and we haven't had a lot of time

and other fun things to do

by Rosie Haworth-Booth

for going on such jollies, otherwise who knows where we might end up. As it is, however, I spend quite a lot of time on such mindless activities as artfully arranging tatty, half used tins of house paint on the shelves, which, like the little red hen, I have built myself. Arranging paint tins is the kind of reward needed after the Herculean epic of hammer-drilling into stone, measuring and sawing exact timbers. Hammer-drilling, however, is chickenfeed compared with the stress of dealing with burst water pipes, especially if you have a 'thing' about wasting water and won't let anyone else so much as rinse out a teacup in your house because you just know they use too much of it. As you probably won't recall from last year's newsletter from Devon, our arrival here was not a little enlivened by a rather dire plumbing problem. Our half a mile or more of supply pipe was very old and very incontinent.

It took us all of nine months to get it sorted, which included exploring for a bore-hole. This was real 'There Will Be Blood' stuff - but we didn't get oil or water, just primeval grey gloop which seeped into the stable and splayed itself out stealthily at the back, beneath an Edwardian wardrobe (too tall to get in the house, too useful to part with) until we discovered it there some months later, giving the wardrobe gangrene in its nether regions, and realised that the drain taking surface water from the yard had been

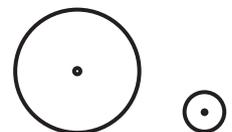
completely blocked by this sludge and had backed-up. £140 lighter and later - after a state-of-the-art 'jet' cleaning - we now have a dry shed but keep our fingers crossed for the coming winter. The chaps who drilled for the borehole told us they'd only ever had one other property in Devon where water could not be found - we are clearly Guinness Book of Records material but that didn't make us feel any better. Then, a neighbour, also newly arrived, proposed we might like to share one with him. Wow! - after a few investigations with lawyers and engineers we thought this could work. But, weirdly, as it had been his suggestion not ours, after months of prevarication and unanswered phone-calls, we finally got a message from him that he could no longer afford it. So, back to square one and regular South West Water supplies. This entailed considerable investigation of our legal position vis-à-vis 'easement' payments for your pipes crossing someone else's land - which if you had a mean and grasping neighbour could add thousands to the already mortgage-attracting sum for laying new pipes. We also had the additional caveat of not disturbing our neighbours' (different ones this time) business of holiday-cottage guests during the Easter period and from half term onward. The local farmer, who fortunately for us was far from grasping or mean, had also only a small window of opportunity between silage crops for our 'engineers' to tear up his field with their

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JCB and throw our pipe in. It all made hedge-fund management seem easy-peasy. (For those who may be unaware: “The primary aim of most hedge funds is to reduce volatility and risk while attempting to preserve capital and deliver positive returns under all market conditions”...).

Nevertheless all was finally achieved and although for some months afterwards I have been nervously checking the meter (also over half a mile away of course) which hitherto had been racing round at a rate of knots as gallons leaked away, we so far have had no problems. Irony of ironies, Mark’s lifelong ambition to have a water feature in his life which amounted to more than a bathroom shower, resulted in the excavation of a Walden-style pond right in the very spot where we reckoned the worst of the leaks to be. If only we could have somehow siphoned it all off and re-cycled it! But filling the pond from scratch from our garden taps ran up a bill with South West Water even excelling that of the leak. The Chaps in the SWW office must be bemused to say the least.

I found it difficult to concentrate on much else while the water saga was in full flow but we did have to go on living and the winter was certainly one of alarms and excursions even if not exactly of discontent. On the first day of the ‘Great Snow’ way back in January, we made the mistake of driving into town, anticipating a need for milk, flour and Mars Bars for the upcoming siege. Foolish or what? After considerable slithering down Codden Hill we were forced to turn back even before we’d got to the first roundabout. However, not before Mark had gotten more excited by the photo-opportunity – of the car doing a balletic three-point-turn-in-one quite without any prompting from the driver – than by the near-death experience of sliding down the ice to the bottom of the hill. After a somewhat convoluted effort to drive back to the house we eventually abandoned the car and walked.

We got home, had some lunch, and I was beginning to relax as the talk about walking to town to get a train to London the following morning had sort of waned a bit. But then what does Mark do but say that he is going to walk back to the car to move it. Whether this means attempt to drive it home (impossible, but I give up trying to say so even before I begin) or just move it to a less vulnerable spot, is difficult to say,

but as he is so determined I think, well, maybe best to go with him, if he’s going to get lost in the deep dark woods I’d rather get lost with him, or maybe I can even lure him away from them (who do I think I am??). So off we go and by now the sun is absolutely brilliant, the snow is sparkling off the trees and fields, little black shapes against the skyline, lovely little hills covered in white. Exquisite, pity about the maniac.

Still the winter is long gone, in fact the next one, as I write, is practically upon us. The summer, full of raspberries, plums, kind neighbours, new friends, green campaigning, digging out the triflids in the herbaceous border and growing quantities of spinach, was mostly blissful and although we don’t look forward to more snow, we think we can cope. Today I bought ten kilograms of bulbs to put in the garden for spring – heavenly.

More on the amazing croc in the Thames story

And here is a close-up image of the croc, one of what is suspected to be a mating pair, the other has not yet been found. So, those of you joining the traditional Boxing Day Dip – take care !

(Traditional Boxing Day Dip ? Exactly how long has this been a tradition? Ed)



A night at the opera, different thing to different people

I worked my way through the November issue of The Newsletter when my eyes became riveted by the headline on the back page – A NIGHT AT THE OPERA ... WOW ... I read on, 'where we will be entertained with works by Offenbach, Saint-Saens, Gilbert and Sullivan ...'

Who-ha there ... Where's Groucho, Chico and Harpo? That is the only NIGHT AT THE OPERA I know of, one of the funniest, and most creative films, the Marx Brothers ever made.

There we were in a smoke filled cinema – the projector light trying to carve a way through the smog and we laughed – everyone laughed in a way that now seems to have gone out of fashion, maybe because we were a packed audience, and the laughter maybe was infectious, but whatever it was, we laughed ourselves silly. Of course a great deal was to do with those three gentlemen up there on the screen. To watch Harpo, still dressed in his clownish clothes and his curly wig, take the audience in the palm of his

hand, and reduce them to silent admiration as his face took on a heavenly faraway look and his fingers plucked the harp ... Chico playing the piano in a most unorthodox way to an audience of children and conveying the feeling that he was enjoying it as well – and of course, the ringmaster Groucho, who kept the whole thing cracking along with immaculate timing, and presenting dialogue in a way that made it seem as though he had just that moment thought of it, and every now and then letting himself off the leash, as in this film, when he performs in front of a mirror with his own reflection. Watch it please – the three of them in the crowded ship's cabin sequence ... I must put a halt to this ranting, as it could go on a bit. Laugh, I'd love to ... but laugh along with the canned laughter of today, no I'm afraid not ...

A very Happy, fun-filled, Christmas to all

Will Holland



Oh – those Sunny Nights



I remember holidays when you headed for the sun ... Littlehampton, or if one was feeling really flush we would go abroad – to the Isle of Wight ... loaded down with cases ... arms being stretched to gorilla length ... but there, slotted in the jacket top pocket were the sunglasses because well you never knew.

How times change ... for that accessory has now become a celebrity status symbol ... but as the sun is

now old hat and available to all and sundry ... sunglasses are now worn in the dark. Yes of course they are ... Arriving at the night club they stumble in and are led to a table which is so dimly lit that they only bother to send the meter man around once a year ... their irises already under extreme pressure try to accommodate the extra gloom as the hands grope on the table for the glass ... all he can see of his companion are the glittering diamonds that surround the rim of her sunglasses and knows he must check before they leave that he is going home with the right chick ... do they wear them in bed ... that I don't know ... but it

would not surprise me if they did.

For myself I like to see eyes ... more truth comes out of the eyes than between those lips. I liked the story of American cop who asked the person he had stopped to take off his sunglasses and the guy said 'You take yours off and I'll take mine off' ... he's probably still inside ... but I would have loved to have said it ...

Will Holland

THE MEDITERRANEAN COMES TO TOOTING!

One of London's newest wild plants is Mediterranean nettle (*Urtica membranacea*). This species was first recorded in the British Isles, in Warwick, in April 2006. However, the label of a specimen in the Natural History Museum's herbarium, collected by Christopher Davis in Portobello Road later in 2006, states that the plant had been known there for 'several years'. This colony still survives, and specimens collected from it in 2010 are preserved in the herbarium of the South London Botanical Institute.

Since 2006 Mediterranean nettle has turned up in various places - usually at the edge of neglected pavements or in neglected plant tubs - in north

London. The first known record in the borough of Wandsworth was made in June 2010, in Fishponds Road, Tooting, where about five plants were found growing in a crack between the pavement and garden wall of no. 167 (just north of the Selkirk pub). The plants persisted throughout the summer, and young plants have appeared.

As its name suggests Mediterranean nettle is native to the Mediterranean region and western Europe, northwards to northern France. In size it is intermediate between the small nettle (*U. urens*) and the common, or stinging, nettle (*U. dioica*), and like these species it has a vicious sting. It is also intermediate between the two as far as its flowers go: each flower spike (raceme) of small nettle has a mixture of both male and female flowers, common nettle has male and female flowers on different plants, and Mediterranean nettle has male and female

flowers on different racemes on the same plant. The racemes of Mediterranean nettle are long and catkin-like, and the male ones become a deep chocolate brown colour, or purple, as they mature.

It is probable that Mediterranean nettle arrived in England with imported pot plants. It appears to be becoming well established, at least in the London area, but it seems that the Tooting colony is the only one known south of the River (there are rumours of a solitary plant being found in Deptford).

Eric Clement, the great expert on 'alien' plants, suggests that Mediterranean nettle's arrival and persistence may be a further instance of the effects of climate change; Britain may be acquiring a more Mediterranean flora element to its flora.

Roy Vickery

The air over Wandsworth Common

Five generations of my family have walked, pushed and played on the Common, My mildly hypochondriac grandmother claimed she felt better here than she felt in any of the other places where her Methodist Minister husband was appointed to serve. She used to tell us how Queen Victoria was told to get as near to Wandsworth Prison as she could in order to recuperate from an illness. We had better continue to keep this a secret though or else everybody will want to live here, and there will be lots more estate agents settling in Bellevue Road. I remember when a clockmaker, an ironmonger and a fishmonger and three grocer shops including one called Waitrose could be found in this precious part of Upper Tooting which nobody used ever to call 'Bellevue Village'. And I am blessed with even earlier memories.

I remember going for walks on the Common where I had some rather frightening experiences. An enormous woman in a brown hat would tower over me and say very strange things like boosey boosey boosey - whitcha whitcha

whitcha - and tickle me while my mother would stand by, smiling and betraying me. And there were some huge, wobbly monsters which she expected me to like too. I could not get home to Lyford Road soon enough.

There comfort and peace was to be found. This was especially on nights when my grandparents, parents and myself would all go down, together, under the stairs to sit and talk. That was so cosy and nobody said boosey boosey whitcha whitcha and there were no wobbly monsters. But from outside did come some mighty roaring, squealing noises which the grownups seemed to find extremely interesting making comments like 'was that a bomb or a plane?'

I liked being there, in my carrycot, with my family, in the dark - so safe and sound underneath the stairs of my grandparents' house.

Penny Baird



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A recent graduate of the Benjamin Britten International Opera School, Sophie Bevan has burst onto the music scene with acclaimed performances for English National Opera and as *Susannah* for Garsington Opera.

"The luscious soprano of the Sophie Bevan" *The Sunday Times*



Saturday 5 February 2011

Andrew Brownell ~ piano

The outstanding young pianist Andrew Brownell, winner of 2nd prize overall and the Benjamin Britten prize at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, returns to St Luke's, showcasing his astonishing technique in works by Chopin, Liszt and Bach.

Saturday 26 February 2011

Natalie Clein ~ 'cello with Julius Drake ~ piano

Since first coming to international attention when she won the BBC Young Musician of the Year award at the age of 16, Natalie Clein has performed with many of the world's top orchestras and given recitals around the world. Her recent recordings of the Elgar and Kodaly have received enormous critical acclaim. Her debut recording in 2005 won her a Classical Brit for Best Young Performer.



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St Luke's Music Society

... a continuing success

Wandsworth residents have continued to flock to St Luke's Music Society this winter. With its wonderful acoustics and beautiful ambiance, St Luke's Church, just off Nightingale Lane, is the perfect venue for music, and the St Luke's Concert Series attracts some of this country's best performers each season.

The 2010/11 Season has been no exception. The opening concert in October brought The Sixteen, conducted by Harry Christophers, to St Luke's. A lovely programme of Tallis, Byrd, Britten, MacMillan and Tippett was performed superbly in a packed church, fully justifying The Sixteen's worldwide reputation. The Society's deep roots in the local Wandsworth community were demonstrated by the fact that at least 80% of the audience was from Wandsworth area post codes. Following that, the Festival Chorus performed Haydn's *The Seasons*, again to a packed church, with David Fawcett, organist at St Mary's Balham, conducting. The Festival Chorus is locally based and open to all, regardless of experience or ability, and always welcomes new members, so if you would like to perform in this wonderful venue, do make contact.

December featured an evening dedicated to the great jazz clarinettist Benny Goodman, with the brilliant young British clarinettist Julian Bliss leading a group of some of London's finest jazz musicians in the world premiere of a project which is likely to be touring the world's music festivals in 2011. We are privileged that the St Luke's audience could say "*we heard it first*"!

New ideas are the key words for the 2010/11 season at St Luke's. January and February sees our regular sponsors, Gregsons Solicitors of Wimbledon, sponsoring a trio of concerts by young musicians in the **Gregsons Young Artists'**

Series. Young they may be, but all three are already gaining major reputations on the world stage. The soprano Sophie Bevan opens the series on 15 January 2011 with a recital programme of music by Debussy, Mendelssohn and Richard Strauss, following her triumph at Garsington Opera in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and in English National Opera's new production of Handel's *Radamisto*.

Following that, on 5 February Andrew Brownell gives a piano recital, making a welcome return to the series after an absence of three years. Andrew, who lives in Wandsworth, was second overall and winner of the Benjamin Britten Prize at the Leeds International Piano competition. It has been said of him that his "*technique is fabulous, as is his innate musicianship, sensitive and powerful*", so make sure to book early. On 26 February the Series ends with the brilliant former BBC Young Musician of the Year, Natalie Clein, giving the first cello recital in St Luke's with a programme featuring the Martinu Cello sonata that has won her major acclaim for her recording.

At a time when government money for the arts is reducing very seriously, St Luke's Music Society is very fortunate to be so generously supported by the local business community. In addition to **Gregsons**, this season **SDS Security** and estate agents **John Thorogood**, both from Northcote Road, have provided sponsorship, allowing the Society to continue to present world class artists. With our sponsors' support and that of local programme advertisers St Luke's Music Society continues to go from strength to strength. We are very grateful to all our supporters, not least the PCC of St Luke's itself, for making that possible, and we look forward to the future with confidence; planning for the 2011/12 season has already begun!

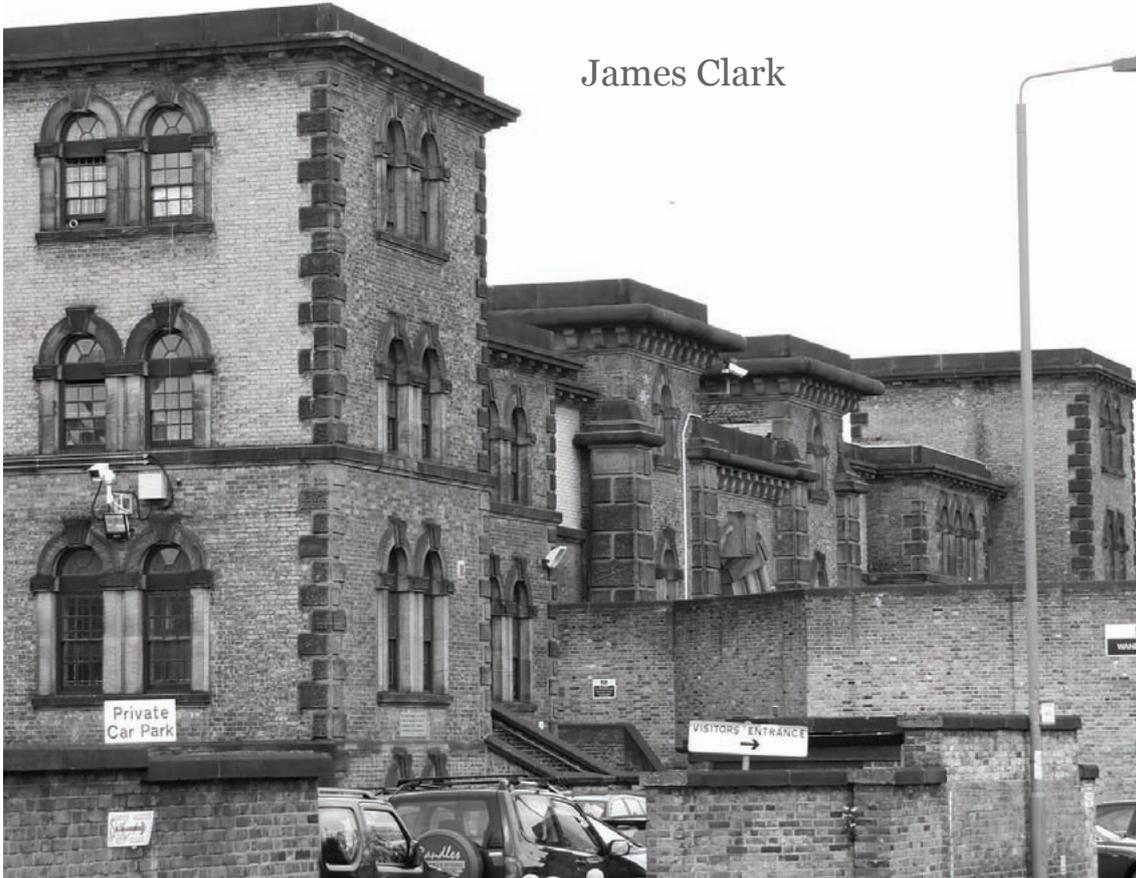
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The Grey Lady of Wandsworth Prison : a first-hand account

James Clark



For over a century and a half, the forbidding Victorian bulk of Wandsworth Prison has dominated Heathfield Road, a short distance to the west of Wandsworth Common. Within these sombre walls, the sad figure of a gloomily attired woman has from time to time been reported drifting silently through the corridors, but her presence will not be found on official registers of either inmates or staff. For this is the ‘Grey Lady’, otherwise known as ‘Wandsworth Annie’, and she is the prison’s resident phantom.

According to an article in the *Wandsworth Borough News* of 23 December 1976 [1], the ‘Grey Lady’ is believed to be ‘the ghost of a middle-aged woman who had died in the prison some 20 years after it was opened as a house of correction for men and women’. If so, this would date her death at around the 1870s. Construction of what was originally the Surrey House of Correction began in 1849 and the building began taking in male

prisoners in 1851, with female prisoners being admitted for three decades starting from the following April.

Different stories offer varying suggestions as to the ghost’s identity. One version of the tale is that the ‘Grey Lady’ is the apparition of a female prisoner. A female inmate at this time would have been made to wear a dark veil to conceal her identity, which is consistent with one description of the ghost as a veiled figure wearing shabby grey clothing. Perhaps, it has been suggested, the ghost is that of an inmate who committed suicide, or perhaps it is the spirit of the murderess Kate Webster, executed on the gallows here in 1879 [2]. According to another story, though, she is the ghost, not of an inmate, but of a woman who worked as a cook in the prison and who died in the 1870s.

In the first-hand account that follows – given here publicly for the first time – the description of the

apparition appears to favour the idea that the 'Grey Lady' once worked in the prison in some capacity.

The Prison Officer's Tale

James Bonser was born in 1944 and grew up not far from Wandsworth, in Mitcham. He got in touch with me in early 2010 after finding my online account of ghostly lore connected with some interesting old ruins close to where he had spent his childhood. In fact, he remembered the ruins in question very well and was able to add much useful information to my article [3].

When he learned that I had also written about Wandsworth Prison, he told me of his own ghostly encounter that had taken place while he was a prison officer there some 30 years ago. His story begins long before that, however. As he explained: 'The events that led up to my experience of the "Grey Lady" are in my view relevant to the story.'

As a young man during the 1960s, James worked as a Merchant Seaman until, still aged just 19, he decided the time had come to stop sailing and seek a new life on dry land. He returned to his hometown of Mitcham – now a suburb of south London but then still retaining much of its old character as a Surrey town – hoping to find work in that once-familiar environment.

His mother was a woman of a philosophical turn of mind, who had spent many years seeking answers to the mysteries of life and death, and when mother and son were reunited James learned that she had become a Spiritualist in his absence and that she now regularly attended the Spiritualist church in Morden. To a young man accustomed to the hardships of life at sea, the stories she told him of communication between the world of the living and the world of Spirit were difficult to believe but one evening, after what James describes as 'a serious brow-beating' from his mother, he reluctantly agreed to accompany her on her next visit to the church.

And so, recalled James, 'I went along, telling myself all the time that it was just a load of mumbo-jumbo, and I was going just to please my mother.' As it turned out, however: 'Nothing was further from the truth.'

Spiritualists believe that after the physical death of

a person some aspect of that person's personality or mind continues to survive on a spiritual plane. Intrigued by what he saw at the church, where mediums would apparently make contact with the spirits of the deceased and pass on messages to the living, James unexpectedly found himself drawn towards their strange new world.

'The next few months saw an increase of my interest in all things supernatural,' said James, 'which included séances, open and closed circles, direct voice, demonstrations of transfiguration, automatic writing, guide painting, and the subject that held my interest the most, spiritual healing.'

Discovering that he seemed to have a talent for healing (a form of mediumship in which it is claimed that the healer directs energy from a higher source into the patient, thereby repairing damaged or diseased tissue) James acted for a short time as a spiritual healer. He took no money for these services. 'The spiritualists believe that any such gift you may have is a gift from God,' he explained, 'and as such is given freely to and for the church.' Later in his life, he would work as a professional healer but that, as he says, is another story. For now, he needed to find paid employment and so he returned to the Merchant Navy.

'My interest in travelling was as strong as my interest in the paranormal,' he said. 'I never returned to the church as a healer, only on certain occasions as a visitor.'

He did not remain in the Merchant Navy for long. By the time he was in his mid-20s he had turned his back on that life for good.

'After having tried several jobs, I realized I just could not settle and what my father called the wanderlust prevailed. In 1967 I found myself on a journey to Israel.' There, he spent time visiting and working in two kibbutzim. His time in Israel, he said, gave him 'two things'. The first was the 'opportunity to visit the holy sights of the Christian faith', while the other, 'a little more unexpected ... was the Six Day War' (the Arab-Israeli conflict of 5 – 10 June 1967). In early 1968, James returned home.

He arrived back in England with the firm intention of becoming a teacher. 'But life,' he said, 'doesn't always follow the plans we make for it. I became a carpenter instead. Not a great one but

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good enough to form my own building company and to be employed by several councils in the south of London.'

During the mid-1970s, his life changed course again: 'After my second marriage, I was introduced to one of my wife's friends' husbands, who at the time was a prison officer in H.M.P. Wandsworth. We spent many hours together discussing the benefits of a life as a prison officer. But my view of life and the philosophy by which I lived, I felt, was somewhat in opposition to that of a prison officer. It was proved to be a call of judgement, and not from any form of understanding, knowledge or wisdom on my behalf. A few weeks later he told me

that the prison building section was now looking for civilian carpenters and bricklayers, and would I be interested. He was as good as his promise: six months later I was a full-time employee at one of London's biggest prisons.'

As James settled into the routine of his new job, so he became more familiar with the finer details of life in the environment of Wandsworth Prison. It soon became evident that there was a divide between the uniformed and civilian staff, between – as he put it – 'carpenter civilian and carpenter prison officer'. It became clear that those in uniform were viewed as 'the rightful occupants of the prison', while those not in uniform were 'untrained personnel, thus making them a security risk.' It was a view that he would later come to appreciate, but not until he had become a prison officer himself.

He was encouraged to do this by one of the prison officer/carpenters. This gentleman, recalled James, 'had moved from Yorkshire some years before and being a Yorkshireman he was blunt and to the point, one of the many things I liked him for. He convinced me that becoming a prison officer

didn't mean changing the way I saw life, or indeed my philosophy.'

James turned the matter over in his mind for a long time, and discussed it at length with his wife, before he finally decided to approach the prison governor. It was a major decision for him. If he passed the examination for entry into Her Majesty's Prison Service, he would find himself wearing the Queen's uniform for the first time in his life. Many of the other prison staff had worn that uniform before – 'under different colours and under different circumstances' – but James had always enjoyed a certain free-spiritedness, first as a sailor in the Merchant – rather than the Royal – Navy, then as a wanderer and afterwards as the owner of his own business. 'Pride,' he explained, 'is a strange animal.' Nevertheless he sat the examination and he passed. He was sent to an open prison in Gloucestershire, where he stayed for almost three months undergoing the training required.

As the preliminary training drew to a close, James and his colleagues were asked to nominate which prison they would prefer to be sent to. 'We were given three options,' he stated. 'I chose Wandsworth three times.'

He got his way and, now in his late thirties, he returned to HMP Wandsworth:

'On my return to Wandsworth the training began in earnest. For the first three months, I followed the routines of a discipline officer, working on my designated landing, and at the same time moving around the prison to gain as much experience as possible. Every week I was to report to the education officer with a written report on my observations concerning the tasks I had been allotted for that week. It was in one of those reports that I recorded my encounter with a strange apparition that I now know as the "Grey Lady".'

'It was wintertime [during the late 1970s or early 1980s] and I was working late one night in a separate part of the prison. All the numbers were in and all the doors were locked. Some nights the inmates were noisy, shouting messages to one another via their cell windows, but on this particular night it was completely still.

'The other officer was on his way to the kitchen with two inmates to collect the last warm drink of the day. I walked slowly along the lower landing

– in semi-darkness – but there was enough light to see clearly along the whole landing. [...The] stillness made me alert, it created an awareness of something impending, it was bringing back memories long since put aside, and then came that feeling that is so congruent to that of a visiting spirit.

‘It was like a cold breeze to start with. I turned, fully expecting to see the return of the other officer, but I was still alone. Then there came a musty smell, not a smell I could say was associated with death, more a smell of age and decay. It lasted only for a brief moment and then was gone. But the coldness became intense. My feet and my lower legs were extremely cold. I was now sure that I was not alone.

‘The silence continued. It was as if I was being given an opportunity to share – albeit only for a brief moment – another dimension in time. And then she appeared, and yet, when I think about it now, did she appear to me or did I appear to her? It was like a veil had been removed from between us, thus allowing us to share the same space and time. I could do nothing more than watch her walking away from me.

‘In her hand she held a candle lamp, giving off this soft yellow light. As far as I could see she was wearing a long dress that touched the floor [and which] to me in the half-light seemed to be grey. The dress was buttoned at the back. And then she turned just slightly in my direction, and I saw clearly an apron of white material covering the forepart of the dress.

‘She was not a young woman: [perhaps in her] late thirties [or] early forties – not so easy to correctly estimate her age in that light.

‘Turning once more in the direction she had been travelling, she gently disappeared through the end wall of the landing. There I stood alone in my silence, the coldness that had affected my legs and feet was all but gone.’

Until that night, James had had no idea that Wandsworth Prison was supposed to be haunted. But after he detailed what had happened in his report to the education officer, the latter told him that there had been other sightings of the prison’s ‘Grey Lady’. Such stories have tended to stay within the prison walls, however, and this is the

first time James has publicly described his encounter. He only did so after learning that the prison’s resident ghost is mentioned in my book, *Haunted Wandsworth* [4].

‘I naturally believed that all sightings and knowledge of the “Grey Lady” were in-house,’ he said, ‘and were not in general circulation outside the prison. I know it sounds odd, but I was a strong believer in “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas”.’

Musing on his memory of that night, James commented: ‘Why do we always wish that someone else had been present? Just to confirm what we have just had the privilege of seeing. I am aware of what I saw that night and yet to explain it is impossible. [...]

‘One more thing I don’t understand - why do so many people say: “I hope she will find rest”? What I recall of that night was in no way a soul in turmoil. She was doing her job and I was doing mine. We just happened to be doing it at the same time....’

Update on the Wycliffe Road Poltergeist
Regular readers of this magazine may recall that I have previously written here about a fascinating poltergeist case that began in 1956 in Wycliffe Road in Battersea. For the last few years I have been working on a book about this, with the help of Shirley Hitchings who was at the very centre of these events. I am pleased to report that the book is nearing completion and I hope that it will be finished some time in 2011. If you would like to find out more, or to be informed when the book becomes available, please visit my website at www.james-clark.co.uk or write to me at: James Clark, c/o Shadowtime Publishing, 102 St James Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 2DB.

Notes:

1. ‘The vanishing convict – and other ghostly tales’, *Wandsworth Borough News*, 23 December 1976.
2. For more about Kate Webster, see Clark, J. (2006) *Haunted Wandsworth*, The History Press, Stroud, Glos.
3. See ‘The “Haunting” of Hall Place’ in *Mysterious Mitcham*, available free online at www.shadowtimepublishing.co.uk/mysteriousmitcham.html
4. Clark, J. (2006) *Haunted Wandsworth*, The History Press, Stroud, Glos.

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Wandsworth Common

a potted history

How far did the common once stretch?

If one goes back far enough in time, to our hunter/gatherer existence, then all land was common in ownership and use but when we became farmers growing crops and breeding animals, then the use of land gradually became regulated and 'owned' in some form or another.

There are records from Anglo Saxon times of shared-use open pastures in some areas of England. Wandsworth certainly had Celtic and Anglo Saxon communities, but for detailed knowledge of local land use we have to begin with the Middle Ages.

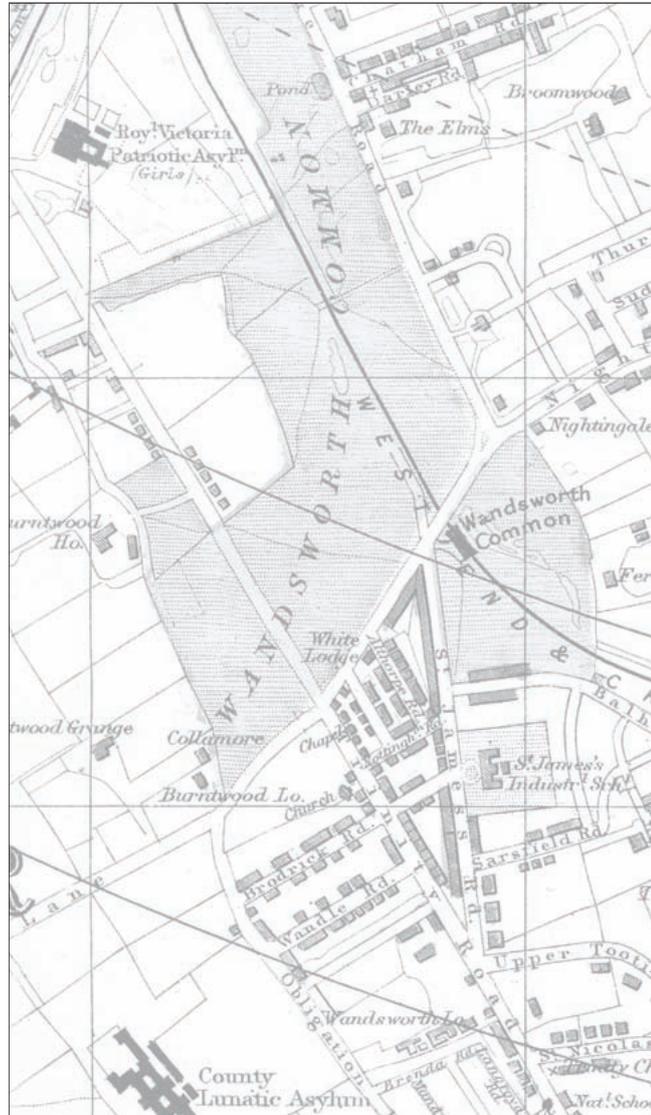
Commons as we know them today are remnants of the self-sufficient manorial system, the basis of the economy. The lord of the manor was the land owner but the tenants of the manor had recognised rights of use over it. There were open fields for arable crops, and areas of common pasture. The unproductive, poor quality land was common waste. Our Manor was Battersea with Wandsworth.

Common Waste

We are lucky that the areas of high land in our part of Surrey were scrubby heath, not suitable for the plough. Tending to be boggy in winter and too dry in summer it was ideal for rough grazing, wood gathering, and perhaps fishing. Places where the locals could gather and hold their fairs. These heaths did not get enclosed into farms, they remained unfenced. What we now call Wandsworth Common was just such a piece of unfenced waste. It was later to have a value as a source of gravel.

Battersea West Heath/Wandsworth East Heath

The common was originally called a Heath



but not Wandsworth Heath. The largest part, in Battersea Parish, was known as Battersea West Heath. The smaller part in Wandsworth Parish was Wandsworth East Heath. The first indication of the whole as Wandsworth Common is on the John Rocque map of 1740. Parish boundary marks and stones still exist.

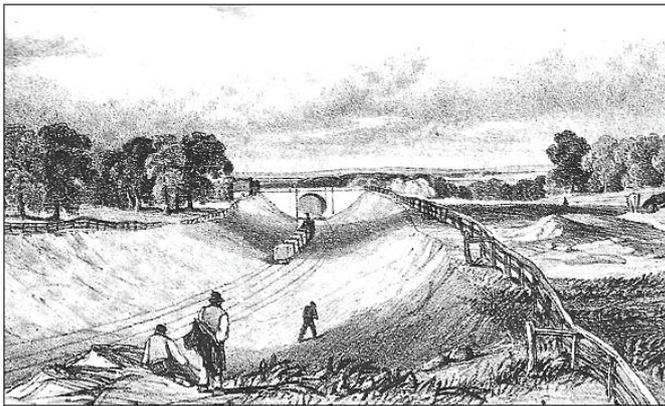
Other common in Wandsworth

The open pastures and arable fields of the manor were the first to be fenced and eventually to disappear under bricks and mortar. These fields are often referred to as part of Wandsworth Common when

what is meant is common in Wandsworth. This has given rise to the myth that Wandsworth Common was once a vast area. Our common was indeed larger than today, and probably linked to the Tooting and Clapham commons, but its boundaries were fairly well defined. Garratt Green is probably our smallest surviving piece of common pasture..

Population increase and the railways

By the mid 1800s industrial expansion had resulted in a movement of people from country to town and a consequen-



tial increase in urban populations and decrease in rural ones. As rural tenants with common rights diminished in number, and the towns spread outwards, Lords of Manors seized the opportunity to sell fields for housing. There was a great tidal wave of housing flowing across the landscape so that by the 1860s it seemed likely that all open space in or near the towns would disappear.

The advent of railways made it possible to spread housing even further away from the centre of towns. The wealthy in particular could move to more pleasant spots and still reach their offices. Curving their way through our common the railways cut it into three unlinked sections. The Cat's Back Bridge was built to uphold the continuity of just one footpath. One railway cut off the end of a water-filled ex-gravel pit known as 'The Black Sea' and so

a wind pump was installed to pump water out of the cutting and back into the lake. It is still there today; a listed building in Windmill Road.

Saving the Common

The loss of space for air and recreation resulted in a Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry that led to the Metropolitan Commons Act of 1866. Henry Peek, MP for Mid Surrey, gave a prize for the best essay on how to legally save commons from development (Wandsworth Heritage has copies of the winning entries, published in book form). In Wandsworth

land sales were diminishing the common and people were putting up fences to grab bits to add to their private estates. Peek and other local men, notably James Dubuisson, gave money to a growing campaign to save it from further loss. John Buckmaster an ardent local campaigner and political reformer sometimes resorted to the seemingly illegal acts of fence removing and he roused bands of protesters to do the same. John Jenkinson, the Vicar of Battersea saw the need

to keep within the law and got together a team of influential local men who gave the Wandsworth campaign respectability and money.

Failing to get the Metropolitan Board of Works to take action under the Metropolitan Commons Act, the campaigners stepped up their efforts. Influential support and national coverage certainly helped but in the end it was the deal done by Earl Spencer (Lord of the Manor) over Wimbledon Common and the personal negotiations of two local men, Edwin Ransome and Thomas Watson, that secured Wandsworth Common from development.

The last hurdle in the negotiations was the status of the Black Sea. It adjoined an early enclosure, called the Wilson Estate. The Wilsons had closed off its northern

Wandsworth Common, a potted history



edge and extended their estate up to the lakeside. In 1866 Earl Spencer had reacquired the lease of this estate and was planning to build on it, including the lake area. Was the lake already enclosed and part of the Wilson estate or was it still open common? This was hotly argued and never legally settled but after some haggling Spencer made an offer. He would hand over the common including the lake for an annuity of £500 (for loss of gravel rights) or for £250 if he could keep the lake. A proviso was that it should be filled in. With this in mind, the cheaper deal was accepted. The Wandsworth Common Act of 1871 put the common in the hands of a body of Conservators. The annuity was being paid at least until the demise of the GLC, and probably is still.

What has happened since?

A very great deal. Much related to something that had occurred 19 years previously, the purchase by the Royal Victoria Patriotic Commissioners in 1857 of 52 acres of the common for a girls' orphanage school (asylum) for daughters of men killed in the Crimea. There is no recorded objection to the loss of so much common land. Situated within its boundaries rather than on its edges, the site and its use has been a significant factor in the history of Wandsworth Common from that time to the present.

The RVPA opened in 1859 and a building for boys was also erected on the site. In 1880 this latter was sold with 12 acres of land to Emanuel School. Twenty more acres were sold to the LCC in 1912 and restored to common. After a chequered existence from 1914 to 1945 the building and all the remaining land was bought by the LCC. It sold the building but eventually 18 of the 20 acres became two separate housing estates, the Fitzhugh blocks of 1952 and the more recent Windmill Estate. Two acres in front of the building were returned to common.

Thus the common has reclaimed 22 of its lost 52 acres and there is a new access across the railway linking its east and west sections. On the other hand there are now 18 acres of housing within its borders

The underpass/dual carriageway ...

is the other most significant change to the common's boundaries. Cutting a swathe through the northern common in 1970 it might have been an unmitigated disaster. However, the LCC restored to the common as much land as was taken. Trinity Road already divided the common, so extra land elsewhere was indeed a bonus, particularly as the restored land was in front of the prison and by the removal of Marcilly Road that continued across the common



Above, before Trinity Road became a six-lane dual carriage way, and below, after.

One of our not-so-old members (although he does travel for free) remembers waiting as a small boy with his mother on the Common by the side of Trinity Road. The interminable wait was to catch a glimpse of Princess Elizabeth, or possibly the Queen, he's not too sure of the date, and Prince Philip as they drove by most likely on their way to open something.

And that, oh best beloved, is how republicans are made.



from North Side.

The biggest mistake ...

was undoubtedly the handing over of the common from Conservators to local authority control. No longer owned and controlled by a body with a single duty...to protect the common, the local authorities, from the Met Board to WBC, have numerous duties to perform and protecting the common often takes second place to other demands. Today no one person, or body, is charged with protecting the common or with seeking compensation if harm is caused. We are protected by legislation but it needs the constant vigilance of interested people.

Management regimes ...

have changed from barely managed chaos to manicured municipal perfection, and now to a more enlightened attempt to have a mixture of 'amenity' and 'environmental' areas. It is not easy for the parks service to resist the calls for cut grass everywhere, or to have no bushes for fear of men intent on physical harm, or to resist demands for yet more facilities. That it has produced a place as beautiful as it is a quite remarkable achievement. There is a Management Advisory Committee that helps by discussion to hold the balance.

There are so many stories connected with the common. From demands for extra burial space in the 1850s, to questions being asked if a cow was trespassing. Of reports during a cholera epidemic of tents erected on the St Marks field and of Spencer's Agent making consent efforts to get the noble Lord interested at all in this paltry piece of open space whilst his mind was on greater things as Governor of Ireland. The early tales of naked gypsies washing themselves on the common or of Edward Thomas' descriptions of boyhood delights there make the study of its history truly fascinating reading.

Shirley Passmore

Seymour Pike

from
Emanuel School
to the
Raid of St Nazaire



The Emanuel School records show that Seymour Charles Pike was a fairly ordinary pupil. Brief scans of the relevant school (Portcullis) magazines, which cover his years of 1933-37 in the school, reveal very little about the boy who was to play a pivotal role in one of the outrageous and dangerous commando assaults of World War Two. An attack, which was seen to be so dangerous it had been previously shelved, before finally being given the green light. Many of the OEs we know who died in WW2 were great school leaders, they were ex-school captains, sports stars, rugby captains, senior prefects, heads of house or cricket stars. Boys who walked tall along the school corridors, with their names shining brightly. Seymour Pike did none of the things that made a schoolboy shine in his youth. Nevertheless, his star went on to burn even brighter still when he joined the Navy when the War broke out. Indeed, the only confirmed photograph we have of him is an unofficial rowing photo from 1937, which was donated to the School

Archive by his family. I haven't, as yet, been able to name the remainder of the boys in the photo.

When the War broke out Seymour was one of hundreds of ex-Emanuel Schoolboys to join the services. How he became involved, in what had become known as the Raid of St. Nazaire, remained a mystery until fairly recently. A surviving family member was able to fill in some details. She told us that Seymour was a gifted linguist, and was chosen for the assault because of his excellent grasp of German.

Why is this particular battle so famous? Well, 622 sailors took part in the raid, 168 were killed, over 200 ended up as PoWs, 5 Victoria Crosses were awarded, along with many Military Crosses, DSMs and totalling nearly 90 awards, if you include the multitude of references in Despatches. This was the highest number of awards given in any single battle in WW2. The basic aim of the attack was to destroy, heavily fortified docks in North France (St. Nazaire), which were currently being occupied by the Germans. The attack was to take place at the end of March 1942. If these docks were destroyed this would force German submarines and warships to travel much further for repairs, throwing a spanner into their repair schedules. Thus, this was an extremely strategic attack and the planning went through several stages before the raid was given the green light, even then it was deemed to be exceptionally dangerous and high risk.

Once the attack was underway a destroyer (HMS Campbeltown) was accompanied by 18 smaller boats (Pike was on the boat that led the attack - Gunboat 314), the destroyer rammed the St. Nazaire lock gates and was later blown up (by remote detonation) ending the use of the dock. Commandos then tried to land on the docks to destroy as many dock and military structures as possible : before attempting to fight their way out. Out of the 622 soldiers who entered the

St. Nazaire harbour, around only 200 made it at far at the docks. The fire was so extreme the sea caught fire. All but 27 of the commandos that landed were either killed or captured: 22 escaped back to Britain by boat and five escaped overland to Spain via France. Most of those who died never touched dry land. This is the main reason this attack has remained legendary : it reads like something out of a boy's comic, or a computer game for today's generation, picture the scene - a destroyer is used as a battering ram to destroy a dock, 18 smaller boats with very little defence support the attack against a heavily defended German dock. They succeeded, but with heavy casualties. The Germans had around 5000 troops in the local area and the dock was guarded by more than 28 heavy guns and searchlights. Perhaps one of the reasons it was successful was because they had the element of surprise, U-Boats regularly patrolled these waters, and few Germans ever thought an attack would be possible, never mind successful.

What was Pike's precise role in the attack? Could it be identified after all this time? Why was he awarded the Distinguished Service Medal? (DSM). All good questions that took some time to unravel after I stumbled upon the fact that an Old Emanuel had been there at all! I was able to find out that Pike served on MGB (Motor Gun Boat) 314, which led the St Nazaire Raid, and for this is listed as a recipient of the DSM for his part in the Raid. This can be verified in the London Gazette. An account of the raid by Alex Williams shows that "*Pike played a major role in confusing the German defences by deception.*" Lucas Phillips has written the fullest account of the raid in his book "*The Greatest Raid of All*", in the book he goes further and explains, "*just before Gunboat 314 sailed, a very special hand, to whom a very special role had been assigned, joined the Gunboat. This was Leading Signaller Pike. He was what the Navy called a headache rating – a specialist and not a seaman – but he was also a very staunch character. He had been employed in that secret department of the Admiralty which*

had certain dealings with enemy wireless signals and he had been sent to Ryder's force in answer to a request for someone who could signal in German".

In actual fact Gunboat 314 had a pivotal role in leading the destroyer to the docks. The German searchlights were so bright that the light was blinding, and the signal that the destroyer was approaching the dock, would be when the 314 Gunboat veered sideways, under intense fire. However, before the firing started Pike helped delay the shooting by confusing the Germans with his signalling, Lucas writes: "*Pike, the specialist in German signals, is near at hand, his night lamp and his German signals ready ... Pike had been quick to grasp what was needed of him, was standing ready at his elbow on the bridge of the Gunboat with his night signalling lamp, as the harsh white light burst on them.... It worked like magic ... Pike, cool and steady, complied, making 'EB' followed by the Morse name.*" These delaying tactics held back the Germans shooting for precious seconds. Surprise and confusion had helped them again. The Germans were expecting a torpedo assault, not a full size destroyer acting as a battering ram! After the hit the smaller boats were much more vulnerable to attack, and many of the commandos never made it ashore. Those commandos who did make it ashore were then left to fight it out with the Germans, destroying as much of the docks as possible. The skeleton crew on the destroyer abandoned ship, and it was detonated remotely, completely destroying the HMS Campbeltown. The battle raged all night, and by 10am the following morning all the commandos were either dead or captured, with around 200 being taken to various PoW camps. The last mention of Pike appears again in the Lucas book after the landings had taken place: "*Ryder (the Commander) set off along the quay, but he was not alone, for Leading Signaller Pike, having now no task, appointed himself bodyguard, and, picking up a broken bayonet on the quayside, accompanied his commanding officer.... He and Pike dodged quickly into the lee of the hut and from there Ryder and*



Open House: Celebrating the Capital's Architecture



For a number of years Emanuel School has opened its doors under the Open House scheme and we welcome an increasing number of people to the school every year. There is the opportunity to inspect the archives. Everyone in the local community is welcome to attend.

Emanuel School, which was founded in 1592, moved from Westminster to Wandsworth in 1883, taking over the buildings of a Crimean war orphanage. The buildings had cost about £40,000 in 1871 and were for sale at £30,000 because the Royal Victoria Patriotic Fund had fallen into difficulties.

Henry Saxon Snell, the architect, had worked as an assistant to Sir Joseph Paxton and made his reputation as an architect of hospitals, industrial schools and workhouses. Voysey worked for a time in Snell's office.

Within twenty years the school had outgrown its accommodation and in 1896 a new wing was added. The architect was Mr J Emes. The wing, which now houses the music department and science laboratories, has very distinctive windows and a high level of attention to decorative detail.

The chapel is worth a special mention. The pulpit, lectern and altar table are from the Old Emanuel Hospital, as are the large prayer boards on the two chapel staircases. In 1895 and 1896 the first of the chapel's stained glass was fitted to the east window. The series of impressive heraldic stained glass windows (all associated with the Dacre family) were the result of a collaboration between the eminent historian and heraldry expert C W Scott-Giles and the Stafford-born designer Moira Forsyth. The organ was originally installed in 1892 and is used for daily hymns and anthems.

Master Class with Timothy West

Timothy West is a veteran of both stage and screen. He has had many years at the top of his profession and was kind enough to come and share his wisdom with an audience of drama lovers.



Mr West started by talking about the differences between stage and screen acting, giving valuable tips to our young performers as he went along.

One of the best pieces of advice involved the importance of using your eyes when acting - if you don't believe what you are doing, and if you don't believe in your character, your eyes will give you away.

Mr West then teamed up with Upper Sixth drama student Zoe Thomas-Webb (pictured), and gave her practical tips and advice for her Drama school audition pieces. Zoe performed two speeches involving Shakespearean females. The master class ended with a question and answer session during which Mr West was asked about his favourite role; whether he prefers films, TV or stage acting and whether he still feels nervous before productions (he claims that he is fortunate enough to never have experienced nerves as an actor - lucky man!)

Overall the talk was very entertaining, and we all took a little something from the wise words of Mr West.

Visiting Emanuel School

Emanuel School is open to the public as part of the London Open House Scheme. The next Open House is September 2010. All visitors will be most welcome.

Prospective parents are invited to tour the school by telephoning reception to make an appointment.

It is possible to view our archives by making an appointment with our Senior Librarian and Archivist, Tony Jones.

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The Longest Day

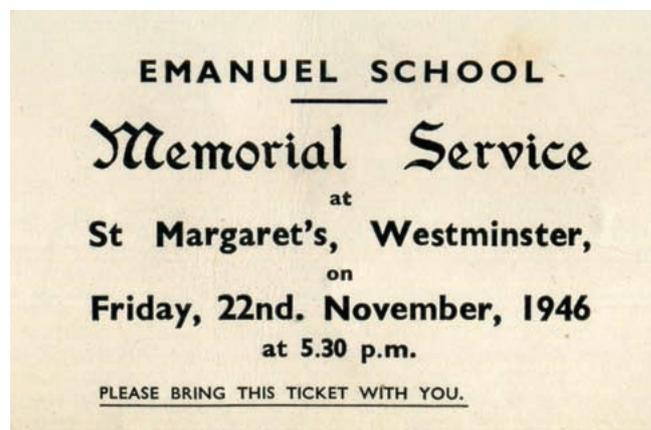
More than half of year 9 went on the History department trip to Ypres and the First World War battlefields. The weather was fantastic and we saw a tremendous amount, visiting Hill 60, the trench system at Sanctuary Wood, the German cemetery at Langemarck and the British cemetery at Tynecote, where Father Hunt led a short memorial service and wreaths were laid in the names of Emanuel old boys who died in the Ypres salient. We were very lucky to have two splendid guides, both ex officers in the British army, who made a big impression. We finished at the reconstructed main square in Ypres, close to the Menin gate. The guides were particularly impressed by the knowledge and excellent behaviour of the Emanuel pupils. We got back to Emanuel at 10pm after a long but fascinating and thought-provoking day.



Pike watched the destroyer sink after a series of explosions.”

Sadly, although the internet has become an incredible tool for military research it is limited by human data errors and this hasn't done justice to Seymour Pike's role in the raid. For instance, in the London Gazette (which lists all military citations) has his name indexed incorrectly, therefore, you won't find him unless you dig deeper into the search engine. Likewise, many published resources award someone called "F C Pike" the DSM. However, this isn't correct, and this person didn't exist and has been confused with Seymour Pike. One early source quoted this fact, and all subsequent publications seem to have followed. The London Gazette confirms the Old Emanuel: Seymour Pike was awarded the DSM for his part in the Battle of the St. Nazaire attack, and the Commonwealth Graves Commission also credits him with the DSM. His surviving family also made this clear. It is a great shame, that on official records, his name is usually incorrect.

Seymour Pike certainly had a colourful War, as did many Old Emanuels, as they were scattered across Europe, North Africa, the Far and Middle East. He survived the Raid of Nazaire and was awarded the DSM for his part in the action. What he did in the subsequent two years is a mystery, however, he obviously remained in the Navy, and perhaps retrained as a war correspondent, as one of the school magazine references refers to him as a "Petty Officer Writer". A good guess would be that remained a sailor on the many battleships guarding the convoys in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Baltic Seas. Almost exactly 2 years, to the day, Pike was serving on HMS Laforey, the Laforey was a Destroyer which, between 1941-44 spent most of its time either guarding convoys in the Mediterranean or anti-submarine patrols. Over a few days at the end of March the Laforey was one of four destroyers trying to locate U-boat-223 by dropping depth charges. The commander of the U-boat was obviously very skilful, as after surviving hours of depth charges



it surfaced and fired 3 torpedoes, which hit, and quickly sank the Laforey. Only 65 of the 247 sailors on board survived. Seymour Pike wasn't one of them. U-boat 223 was sunk shortly afterwards, crippled by earlier hits, 23 Germans died, 27 were taken as PoWs.

Seymour Pike was an only child. A last surviving relative visited the school recently, on a holiday from Australia. She told us that Pike's mother never really recovered from the loss of her only son. She donated various items to the School Archive including Seymour's school cap, tie and various chapel and remembrance notices that were sent out by the school after the conclusion of the War. She held onto them for 40 years after the War, before passing them onto another family member before her death in 1985. They are now in the School Archive. Emanuel School had exceptionally high active service (and casualty) rates in both Wars. We shouldn't forget that many of those who served were no older than many of our 6th form pupils. Seymour Pike was only 22 when he took part in what is known as "The Greatest Raid of All" and I'm sure there are many other fascinating stories of heroism to be told about schoolboys who became legends with their school peers. Much has been written about the likes of Bomber Harris and Mountbatten, however, in war, loss is the only winner, and men like Seymour Pike who tried to do as best as they could.

*Tony Jones
Emanuel School Archivist*

The Mighty Dollar

by W Stanway Gray

My brother Andrew found a notebook amongst our father's possessions and it contained his recollections of key points in his life. Some but not all of its contents were stories we knew well and loved to hear time and time again as he was a fine raconteur. This one is Chapter 3 and the events take place at one of the most turbulent periods in New York's history. Now read on... IKSG

I had been working on an estate down on the Island as a dogsbody. Any job that nobody else wanted to do was mine. Among my jobs was to keep the boiler going for the central heating when the regular man was absent. If I was called away to another job the boiler – a coal-fired one – from upstairs would come the threat of the sack if I did not send up more heat. It was disheartening.

On a visit to the city on my time off I got a tip about a job that was going. A retired

businessman with vast interests in coal-mining and finance found that he could not endure the emptiness of life without the stimulus of business.

With a large staff in his home and his downtown office he was able to maintain the illusion of a busy life. The foundation which dispensed his money to numerous charities was his pet preoccupation.

There was a place on his staff which I was told I might be able to fill. I applied for the job and went for my interview. The size of the place impressed me: though it was not a house but several flats knocked into one. This has been done in order to accommodate the mass of furniture from the town and country houses which he had given up on the death of his wife.

His establishment was run by numerous staff. I would live in. My duties would be light, and the pay good. With luck I might stay for long enough to make the money I needed.

I was ushered into the Presence. He was a small man, seated in a bath chair which, I was to learn, he seldom left. Behind his steel-rimmed glasses gleamed one eye: the other socket was empty. The eye that remained gave the impression of seeing all that was necessary. It gleamed with intelligence and the light of battle. His most striking feature was the large cranium.

For what seemed an age I stood while he surveyed me. Then he said: "You want to work for me". It was a statement rather than a question.

"Yes, sir." I answered.

"Tell me about yourself."

I told him I had recently arrived from Scotland. I did not think it necessary to elaborate on my activities of the past few months. I told him I had assisted my father in his business. And finally I informed him that I had been to college, omitting to mention that it had been a veterinary college. This was good

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strategy. My tale seemed to satisfy him. I think he had already made up his mind, but did not want to give the idea of being easily impressed.

After a short pause he looked up and said "I'll give you a trial: but if you are not satisfactory I'll fire you. Start tomorrow." Honour having been saved by an exhibition of toughness he indicated that the interview was over.

As the Scots butler showed me out I told him what had happened. He smiled "You're in." If he hadn't liked you he'd have said so."

Mr M was a man of regular habits. He rose at 8am, and was dressed by his valet. Breakfast was served on a hot plate by the butler at 8.30. At 9am sharp his chauffeur arrived to announce that the Cadillac awaited his master. At 9.10 Mr M was taken in his chair to the elevator by his valet, accompanied by the chauffeur and ushered to his limousine by a retinue swollen by the hall captain.

The morning done, a one and a half hour odyssey at a stately pace was timed to return him to his room in time to attend to his correspondence at 11am after which visitors were received. Lunch was at 1pm prompt, then he rested.

The visitors were not many. A messenger from the office brought papers for signature. The doctor often called. Former employees retained a tenuous connection by enquiries after his health.

He had no immediate family but there were nieces and nephews who found uncle's flat a convenient pied-à-terre. The nephews, who now operated the mines, and who came to give first-hand reports, arrived with their families.

The men discussed business, and their business was coal. Their wives made forays to the stores and the theatres. At dinner there were cultured discussions that were mostly quotations from a digest which saved one the labour of actually reading a book.

One of the ladies was chronically short of money and descended on her rich uncle at intervals to obtain assistance. She was invariably successful, but as the old man was very deaf and her pleas had to be made in a loud voice, the entire household was made aware, despite the closed door, that her mission had been a success by the penetrating squeal, "Oh Uncle George, You're so Wonderful!"

A more interesting visitor with a like mission and a better cause was Commander Evangeline Booth of the Salvation Army. This lady, a statuesque figure in blue uniform and poke bonnet, was usually in need of funds, and never more than at this time. Her stentorian voice, accustomed to addressing audiences in adverse circumstances, had no difficulty in penetrating the door. Everyone knew the boss's money could not be put to better use, and they all wished her well.

The flat, which had once featured in an article in a popular British newspaper as "The Biggest Flat in the World", had a large number of rooms that occupied two entire floors in an apartment house overlooking Central Park.

The pleasantest room in the house was the library. Here the interior decorator had been really successful with oriental rugs, and chairs that encouraged relaxation. The walls lined with the accepted books in beautiful bindings encouraged the idea of a wealthy owner of scholarly tastes. Unfortunately many of the books had uncut pages.

My living conditions and future prospects had now taken an amazing turn for the

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better. I had leisure for study, which was a good thing since my long-term plan had as its aim a return to college or university. Of even greater importance in practical terms was the accumulation of money. The family at home were relieved to know I was safe; and I could now help my mother.

From our eyrie high above the avenue we looked over the park where in spring the Japanese cherry trees burst into a flamboyant display of pink and white. The broad acres of greensward with a hundred varieties of trees spread out across to the West Side and south to 59th Street.

It was a long time before I lost the feeling of unreality about this life in luxurious surroundings where money was the energy that kept great operations in being. Gradually the tension relaxed however, allowing me to enjoy my new life. Each day I crossed the park to the

Y where in the gymnasium and swimming pool there was good company, and the means to keep in good shape.

Bill Vaughn, in charge of the pool, took an interest in my swimming, and encouraged my efforts to improve my style in the crawl. One thing I did on my own. At the beginning I had no great stamina for distance. I would swim a length and stop. I found this habit hard to break.

Being a theoriser, and aware that people can do much more – twice as much, under pressure, I decided to experiment. At the pool I dived in and swam two lengths. If my theory stood up I should therefore be capable of four lengths. Next day I swam four lengths, and the day after that eight lengths, and so on, doubling my distance each day.

I have speculated on the distance I might have achieved if I had gone on, but I was limited by time. Sixty lengths was the distance I could attain during my free time, and at that it remained. It remains one of the “Ifs” of my life.

Another “If” of this period is a financial one. After my unfortunate venture into share buying in Summer '29 my firm rule was to take no chances. My money would go straight into a bank. Banks, in my limited experience, did not fail: they took your money, and gave you it back when you needed it, with a little interest if they kept it long enough.

In fact in 1931, when I was beginning to feel secure, the bank where my money then was did fail and I narrowly escaped losing everything for the second time since coming to America.

It happened in this wise: after the crash on Wall Street, when I got out with only a few dollars to show for all the furious work of that Spring and Summer, my hope was to find an institution where my savings would not vanish overnight. Such an institution seemed to be a bank whose name suggested that it bore the same relation to the American government as the Bank of Scotland does to the British



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government. To the Bank of the United States (or it might have been the Bank of America, I forget) I took my money. One of my friends had lost all he possessed in a bank failure, but with the assurance given me by the bank's name I felt safe. However, one of our visitors who knew where I had put my money said as he was leaving, "You have your money in Bank of the United States, haven't you?"

"Yes, why?" I answered.

"It's none of my business", he went on, "but if I were you I'd get it out. I hear it's in a shaky state."

It was 2.45pm. I was free for the rest of the afternoon. I put on my coat and walked round the corner to the bank I used. I told the clerk I wished to close my account. To the clerk's almost tearful protests I had to turn a deaf ear. He paid out the money which I put in my wallet. The hands of the clock stood at 2.55 as I stepped into Madison Avenue. At three o'clock the bank closed its doors. Business had ceased.

Another example of my financial wizardry deserves relation. Historians of the period, or those whose memories are jogged by painful recollection, will recall that in 1931 Great Britain went off the gold standard. The confidence of the world in our financial stability was shaken and the pound fell in value. I well remember the headlines in the New York Times announcing that the pound had fallen to half its value: it was now worth ten shillings. The corollary of this was that the dollar was worth twice as much in British currency. I saw a chance to help myself and my country at a stroke. If I could convert my money into pounds before the inevitable rise, we would both benefit.

There was one snag. The American government had passed a law forbidding the export of US currency, unless it was necessary for dependants abroad. I felt I could honestly claim that my money was necessary for the maintenance of my mother, but in order not to attract attention by withdrawing all my money

at once, I would take some out now and more at intervals.

The next question was how to send it. I wanted it to reach Scotland while the exchange was heavily in my favour. That meant telegraphing it. Since money sent by wire is fairly expensive I would lose quite a sum before it arrived. I decided to send it by cashier's cheque and letter. Over the next week or two additional sums were dispatched. In the meantime the British pound recovered from the initial shock and, though it never again reached its former eminence, it became once again one of the great currencies. I did succeed in improving my finances by a third.

W Stanway Gray

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Now we're 64

This article was a contribution to my old school journal as part of a series called "Where are they now?"

by Iain K S Gray

"Caritas" refreshes the parts that "The Watsonian" couldn't reach.

It seems appropriate at the age of 64 to write about the experience of a member of "the class of '64". The rarity of any mention in Caritas of my contemporaries suggests that we may have been, like Groucho Marx, the sort who wouldn't join any club which would have them as a member. Memory suggests that this may really have been the case. Then again, may we be a generation which didn't recognize the term "class of '64" as referring to us? I believe it's a handy American moniker for those who left school in that year rather than, perhaps, entered the first form then. I learn fast.

In hindsight our teens are probably a time in which we have to deal with many conflicting experiences, but what is it like at the time? In some senses I came from a privileged background, brought up in the Chilterns, father a veterinary surgeon with a very large and varied practice extending into a number of counties, mother teaching at a boarding school where there were about 6 girls to a class. Papa took Wednesday evenings off to go to the local cinema with my mother who was regularly abandoned in mid-film while some animal emergency was attended to. Every other Saturday was a day out for the family and often spent in Oxford where tea at Fuller's was obligatory. Mama lived in a social whirl and I think I loved her friends as much as she did. Some of them, former colleagues at Bletchley Park where much of Mama's war was spent, were fascinating and sometimes as eccentric as some of Papa's clients at both ends of the social scale. I gained in many ways from my upbringing but collided head-on with Papa over religion and his view that life was black and white while Mama saw the nuances and subtlety of it all. Papa was a superb raconteur while Mama was a linguist and an entirely different sort of communicator.

By the time I hit my stride at Myreside I had learned to play rounders in my primary school's orchard as well as starting to learn French at seven

years old. I had also enjoyed schools broadcasting and a lot of wonderful '50s radio. At prep school I'd learned to make friends, a lot of them, been taught by a staff of mavericks, one of whom graduated from living in a tent in the grounds to a woodman's hut in the hills, and started French again.

"Games", as schools usually call sports, began to play an important part in my life and I rarely went anywhere without a ball in my hand or my pocket. In company with the delightful girls my mother taught I had learned the true social savagery of croquet, moving on to cricket, football and athletics in which I scored a few successes. I honed these skills through my teens and ended up in the first XV and first XI as well as stealing Mike Mayer's javelin crown from under his nose.

French was important from the moment I encountered Miss Gwendolyn Roberts at prep school. This fearsome woman was as different from her colleagues as each one of the others was from the rest. She was an inspiration and a life force. Chief among the other educational conspirators was Tam Black who shaped my artistic side.

Uprooted from the rich and intense pleasures of middle England I found myself in Presbyterian Edinburgh where schooling was focused on a narrower area of study than I was used to. That focus grew narrower still when, at 14, we chose the subjects that formed our timetable till we sat our Highers. No more history or geography, no more science of any kind, I was not going to be a polymath though I did pursue maths to "O" Grade with "Tiger" Jameson whose classes were a constant, barely controlled riot, an inexpertly wielded belt being aimed frequently at our evasive hands.

By contrast Archie "Papa" Hendry was the most effective of disciplinarians and legendary for his methods. And he could teach. He was one of several, perhaps all, my teachers who gave me a free hand in what I read and wrote, what prep I produced, what sort of person I was becoming.

As far as I can remember I had only 3 other masters from then on, not counting Roger Young with whom we spent an hour of philosophy each week which I still value. The Head of Languages,

whose nickname I won't mention, Geordie More and Michael Robson.

The greatest benefit from French classes was the exchange with the Lycée Henri IV. Paris was a life-changing experience, releasing me from an oppressive existence and positively encouraging me to swim against the tide. Bohemian Paris is hard to find these days but it was thriving then and I plunged into it. Two years later I spent the final weeks of my schooldays in Nice on the twinned-cities visit which cemented my love of France and of their language.

By then I had written a lengthy thesis on Harold Pinter rather than read Scott and Austen and was reading Samuel Beckett in the original French versions of his work. Beckett had been a fine cricketer and Pinter a lifelong enthusiast too. But I was in good company on the cricket field as well as the rugby pitch with the benefit of excellent coaching from the age of 12.

A small group of us were invited to the indoor net beneath the stand at Myreside where one of the most famous of post-war cricketers, Gilbert Parkhouse, gave us superb coaching. I went on to play top class club cricket in London where I also played rugby at Rosslyn Park. I never found time to learn the art of squash during my schooldays, much to my later regret, but these days it's my main sport.

After 30-odd years of working in business as part of a team, and most of those years as a leader and sports captain, I decided to go out on my own and start my own business which, 10 years on, is flourishing.

My teamwork these days is a key element of the charities I chaired for several years, stepping down by rotation and throwing myself into fundraising or putting on an event. Those are just two of many things volunteers have to do if they play any major part in running a charity. Volunteering itself is a vital part to play since experience tells me that there are usually two choices when it comes to getting people to offer to do something active for a charity: one is to buttonhole a likely candidate and stir them out of their modesty or else to do it yourself. Of

course, doing it yourself compounds the problem because the real solution lies in delegation and in spreading the load and I count that as one of my chief skills.

All too often I've seen excessive zeal resulting in burn-out when an enthusiast gets carried away and reveals workaholic traits. Zeal can come with a lot of baggage, not least a little less tolerance of others' quirks than is welcome and passions can run high and collide with one another. One of the joys of my life has been to bring together those on such collision courses.

I must leave others to decide if school taught me anything other than by default.

by Iain K S Gray

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Gray's Eulogy

ALS Architects: Now bigger and even better thanks to a merger with Andrew Catto Architects with our own John Dawson designing a 2IC 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!

Bolingbroke Bookshop: Everybody knows that Michael Gibbs is back at the shop he founded and that means that everything that made it your favourite is still there, including lots of support for local authors.

Brady's: Luke's fish comes straight from the coast which explains why you're cramming this famous fish 'n' chippy to the door and now you can have lunch there too.

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.

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: We all have potential if we did but realise it. Julie and Sheila do realise it.

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

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.

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?

Siena: No need to go to Bond Street for the best and most elegant fashions. Ladies, Bellevue Road can be the centre of the world.

thorough and good. Tick both boxes.

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 Motors: You know you know where the tréma comes from

Wimbledon Village Stables

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.

Sullivan Thomas: Gregory and his team occupy one of Bellevue Road's key sites. Well, key sites is their business – rent or buy.

Wimbledon Club: You all know how beautiful Capability Brown's Wimbledon Park landscape is. The club there offers golf, cricket, hockey, tennis and gym, a restaurant, a bar... and 5 squash courts.

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



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This year Whitelands College celebrated its 80th year in Wandsworth

Whitelands College has been located in Wandsworth for eighty years; from 1930 until 2004, on West Hill, Putney, and now it is situated in the heart of Roehampton Village. But what of its earlier history and why did the College move to Wandsworth?

The Church of England's National Society founded the College in 1841 as a teacher training college for women. It took its name from Whitelands House, a Georgian building in the King's Road, Chelsea, previously used as a school - the College's first home. The stated aim of the new establishment was 'to

The twentieth century saw marked improvements in the conditions and the academic life of the students. Whitelands College continued to flourish and came to be regarded as one of the foremost women's teacher training colleges in the country. Not surprising, therefore, that it was decided after the end of the First World War that Whitelands needed a new home, removed from the grime and noise of the King's Road and more conducive to study. Winifred Mercier, the then Principal, set about the task of identifying a new site and eventually chose land on West Hill in Putney. Determined that nothing but the best would do for future teachers, she persuaded the College Council to employ Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, architect of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and other



Whitelands College in Chelsea

produce a superior class of parochial schoolmistresses'. During the early years the conditions at Whitelands were cramped and unsanitary and students were forced to work long hours with little or no leisure time.

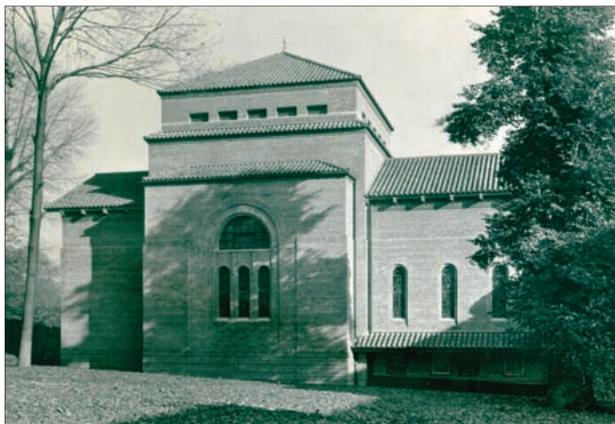


Whitelands College Putney, 1930

prestigious public buildings, to design the new college. Thus it was that in 1930 Whitelands vacated the King's Road site with its many inconveniences and moved to Putney.

The new College was built on a freehold

site of 12 acres, and there were playing-fields within the grounds. The buildings were of brick, with tiled roofs. The architect used the natural slope of the land in his design and seen from the south-east the College rose in a series of steps. The accommodation consisted of 200 study-bedrooms, lecture rooms, a library, a gymnasium, art rooms and science laboratories. All the interior woodwork was light oak and, reputedly, boasted the largest area of parquet flooring in Europe. The cost of the building, about £155,000, was met by a debenture scheme approved by the National Society and the Board of Finance of the Church Assembly.



The Chapel, Whitelands College Putney, 1930

Facing the main door was the Chapel. As well as being architect to this building Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designed all the fittings even the altar-cloths. He incorporated the stained glass windows which Edward Burne-Jones designed for the old chapel in Chelsea and the reredos designed by William Morris for that building.

The truly impressive 'Giles Gilbert Scott Building' was officially opened by Queen Mary on 1st June 1931. Our College archives hold a wealth of primary sources that describe the celebrations.

The following are extracts from the National newspapers and journals:

(Daily Telegraph 02/06/1931) White-clad

students, wearing wreaths of ivy leaves in their hair, lined the drive to greet the Queen. Her Majesty was received at the entrance by the Mayor and Mayoress of Wandsworth, Lt.-Col. Bellamy, J.P., accompanied by the Mayoress, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Cosmo Lang, who presented to her Majesty the Chairman of the College Council, the Hon. Mary Pickford, and the Principal, Miss Winifred Mercier.



Queen Mary arriving

(Daily Mail 02/06/1931) The Queen was conducted to the stall of honour in the beautiful new chapel, which embodies several features of the old chapel at Chelsea, including windows designed by Burne-Jones and the richly-panelled reredos designed by William Morris. After the dedicatory service the Queen passed into the main building and, with her characteristic energy and thoroughness, insisted on seeing every part of the handsome new buildings.

(Daily Mail 02/06/1931) The most picturesque incident of the afternoon, delightful in its spontaneity, took place during the Old English May Day dances, which Her Majesty witnessed from a canopied dais in the grounds. Miss Edna Cottam, the May Queen, presented Queen Mary with a gold replica of the cross and chain worn by May Queen students on the day of their election. Everyone was delighted when the Queen, instead of formally accepting the gift, invited the May Queen to clasp the chain around her neck, so that she could



The Queen Talking to three May Queens; Queen Minnie – 1884, Queen Elizabeth II – 1892 and Queen Agnes 1899. (Her Majesty was very interested in the two characters in the College play, seen behind the Queen. The Queen asked what their dresses were made of and how their “babies” were.)

wear it during the rest of her visit to the College

On the evening of Monday 1st June 1931, Queen Mary wrote in her diary:

In the Afternoon I went to Putney to open Whitelands College the Church of England teachers college, moved from Chelsea. Met by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Miss Mercier the Principal etc. Service in the Chapel, then speeches in the Hall, went over the fine building, saw dances in the garden by the students etc. All very well arranged.

And on Tuesday 2nd June 1931, the Principal received the following letter

Dear Miss Mercier,

I am commanded by the Queen to write and tell you how delighted Her Majesty was with the ceremony yesterday, and all that she saw, and to convey her grateful thanks to all those responsible for the perfect arrangements. Her majesty especially appreciated the beautiful speeches and thought the service in the

Chapel lovely – we wondered who wrote the words of the Processional Hymn? – so beautiful!

I cannot tell you with what pleasure the Queen spoke of the whole proceedings on the way home, and she thought the students looked exactly what would be wished.

May I add my own thanks for all the kindness shown, and my own great appreciation. The garden scene was enchanting! They looked so young and happy – under that glorious horse-chestnut.

I hope that you were not very tired?

Yours sincerely,

Ethel Desborough



Maypole dancing

But perhaps most poignant are the memories of the students themselves that made the transition from Chelsea to Putney.

Memories of Dorothy Brownin
1929 – 1931

At Chelsea we felt in the swing of London Life – theatres, museums, churches, shops. We

*frequented the Old Vic – in the “Gods” which cost five pence! In Putney, my first impression was of being “in the wilds” – but we grew to appreciate Putney Heath and Wimbledon Common, as well as “The Spinney” *later sold for development.*

In Chelsea, I was one of five in a room; there were no partitions or curtains, we soon became friends. Putney brought beautiful study bedrooms attractively furnished with differing Indian cotton bedspreads. It was strange to be alone, but we had been allowed to choose neighbouring rooms.

The opening of the College by Queen Mary remains vivid. The rehearsals were endless for those performing. Several of my friends were involved in the tableaux and in the dancing. The entertainment was a cut down version of what had been presented on May Day. I was one of many detailed to line the drive to welcome the Royal Party. We were all in our “High Whites” and had been instructed to cheer as her Majesty approached. In the event, Queen Mary appeared so haughty and formidable that the wave froze, and the cheers were stuck in the throat! However, as time passed, the Queen became more gracious, and when she left the College was smiling.

And what happened to the buildings at Chelsea? The original building was sold, in 1933, to the British Union of Fascists where it established its National Headquarters. This NHQ became known as the ‘Black House’ and it contained extensive offices, dormitories, gymnasium, dining hall, mess rooms and parade grounds. It was also the London base for the ‘I Squad’: a mobile defence force that could quickly be dispatched to any part of London to protect Blackshirt meetings from violent attack by left-wing opponents - a far cry from the pioneering world of the first female teacher training College. In the late 1930s it was demolished and replaced by a block of flats, Whitelands House – which still occupies the site.

Gilly King
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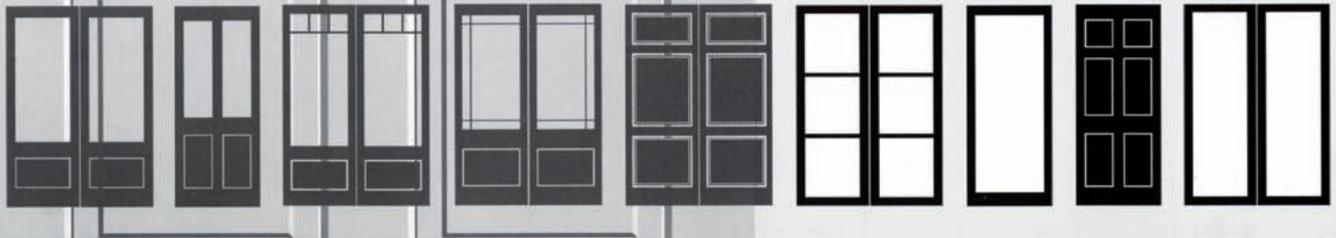
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A Silver Soirée celebration

It was a full house, and no wonder, to inaugurate in celebratory style the 25th season of Society Soirées on Sunday November 21st. In David and Elizabeth's elegant, welcoming drawing room our very distinguished member Timothy West delighted with a superb performance of Tennyson's narrative melodrama Enoch Arden, accompanied by the fine young pianist Simon Callaghan.

Simon started off the evening with a flourish, marking Chopin's 200th birthday this November with a brilliantly fluent rendering of three mazurkas, a waltz, a polonaise and a barcarolle – vividly illuminating four of the composer's characteristic varied moods. After the interval he changed tack, with Richard Strauss's sombrely dramatic underlining of Tennyson's moving verse-tale recounting the fleeting joys, the sufferings and noble fortitude of a sea-faring Lincolnshire community. Enoch Arden had been translated into German in the 1880s and in the fashion of the time

was adapted for drawing-room performance, hence the incidental piano accompaniment supplied by Strauss – in somewhat unfamiliar-sounding early vein.

Timothy's recitation of the hour-long text was masterly: his warm, heart-felt delivery holding the audience spell-bound in rapt concentration, sympathy and suspense over what might seem from the page a banal and predictable tale. It was a performance of the greatest subtlety – which is only what we have come to expect from Tim. Tennyson would have been thrilled – we certainly were. Thank you, Tim and Simon.

And thank you too, David and Elizabeth for an incredible 24th season of wonderful soirées: always occasions of musical and social delight. What better combination could there be?

Wendy Cater

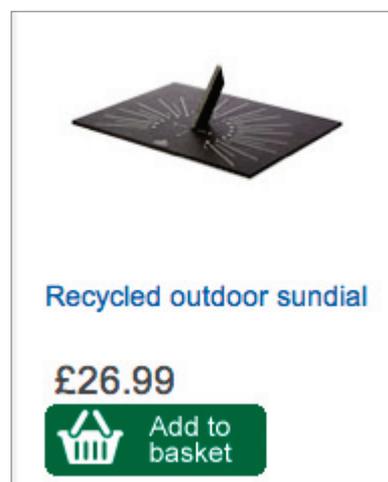
Batteries not included

This was an item left over from last year, cannot now remember why it didn't get in.

Disappointingly Oxfam no longer have it in their catalogue, although currently John Lewis is selling an Eclipse Outdoor Sculpture Sundial On Plinth.

Oh how we laugh, but – do you share the nagging doubt that there may be such a thing as an indoor sundial?

Horas non numero nisi serena



Pile them high

And talking of last year, here's a photograph of the boxes of Bedsides piled up on the doorstep of the Newsletter Press plc's logistic depôt handling facility. With a steady hand they could be stacked 2.47m high (for those of you with metrical phobia, that's the better part of 8'). The purpose of mentioning this is to encourage those who would prefer to receive their newsletters and flyers via the interweb to send their email addresses to

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If God is dead should Jeff Beck be promoted?

an OTT review of guitar heroes' recent performances

The 'god' I refer to is of course Eric Clapton. He gained the title in the 60s by taking the guitar, a Fender Stratocaster, to ethereal heights never before experienced in the annals of rock, pop or rhythm and blues. His success and innovation was followed by Peter Green (prior to forming Fleetwood Mac). Both in their own way transformed the basic plugged-in guitar into a uniquely customised instrument capable of delivering sounds that transcended the melodic quality of their material in spite of that material's own inherent excellence. (Note to Pseuds' Corner editor: Is this what you meant? If not how about next para?)

Rather like the exquisite violins made by the Stradivarius family, both their Strats' created a quality of sound that was virtually impossible to reproduce no matter how hard people tried at the time. Clapton ironically did make his Strat sound like a Strad, well a violin at least, on the famous John Mayall Beano Album while Green, still some years prior to his breakdown, created an evocative and unique dreamlike sound. I have no idea what combination of pedals, and distortion techniques they used but they must be the equivalent of the wood combinations that give the Strad its distinctive tonal qualities. With their unique guitar sounds both Clapton and Green made millions of people ecstatic and a few million for themselves.

Clapton, who became the popular face of the blues in Britain, a status endorsed by his many two-week-long blues gigs at the Albert Hall, recently invited the less well known guitar aficionado, Jeff Beck to join him in front of the O2's 20,000 capacity audience this summer. For me (a fan of both) the concert was not a success. This was in part because both appealed to a divided audience. They both appeal to pop and blues fans and there is little tolerance between these tribes. Clapton was under pressure to play his pop hits *Layla* and *I shot the sheriff* whilst Beck virtually refuses to play his Yardbirds No.1 anthem *Hi Ho Silver Lining*.

Both wanted to demonstrate new directions, Clapton out of necessity - you can only earn big bucks from the blues for so long, whilst Beck has been evolving quietly and exploring new, less definable, directions followed by a smaller fan base, ever since he left the Yardbirds. Anyway the concert was a mish mash of Clapton trying his hand at crooner standards and pop whilst Beck did not have sufficient time to reflect the range of his avant garde excursions.

Fast forward to Oct 27. The Albert Hall presented Jeff Beck with a whole show to himself, his chosen guests

Family Tree for Blues Groupies:
Jeff Beck replaced Clapton in the Yardbirds when Clapton left for John Mayall's Blues Breakers. Peter Green then joined Mayall, replacing Clapton who went solo (Derek & the Dominoes). Green later went on to set up Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac. He subsequently retired for some years following a well-documented breakdown. In recent years he has returned with his own 'Splinter Group'. Jeff worked with many different bands including collaborations with Jan Hammer and others before producing his current long list of solo albums.

and a twelve-piece British Philharmonic string section and choir.

The first thing you notice about Beck is the heavy metal dress code contrasting with Clapton who favours Armani style jackets. Beck also handles his instrument with extreme delicacy continuously holding the vibrato lever on his Strat' unlike any other axe virtuoso. The second is that his style can unify such diverse repertoire as the Beatles *Day in the life of...*, *Someday over the*



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Jeff Beck ... a further riff

Rainbow, *Nessun Dorma* and an addictively exquisite *Brush with the Blues* into a cohesive continuum that appeals across the board because of its innovation, clarity and the ease with which these pieces can be interpreted in his style. His guitar's voice is a pure sound that warps from the delicacy of Aled Jones to the power of Tom Jones – or rather the power of Elvis singing 'O sole mio'.

Beck went on to solo with the beautiful Irish singer and violinist Sharon Corr, Imelda May a raunchy rockabilly belter and his own band's beautiful leggy bass player (OK I know its blues but it's also rock 'n' roll) but any hint of cynicism evaporated when she let rip with the most startlingly exciting bass break I've yet heard. At the risk of boring you the drum break was also 'a best' (a brilliant 15 stone percussionist with a polished head) and unusual in that it wasn't just the usual drummers' technical showcase but a coherent piece of music throughout – altogether the best concert

without a conductor with a baton that I have ever experienced. In fact there was a batonmeister for the string section and very in tune he was too.

Rather endearingly Beck's stage presence when playing is restrained but he's very much in charge however when taking his final bow or speaking to the audience he is still an embarrassingly gauche schoolboy – now that's something Mr Clapton, always at ease when bidding the audience farewell, could help him with. So let's leave further eulogising to Iain Gray, let's not create another deity and just add Jeff Beck to the pantheon of musical heroes whether they play Strads or Strats.

Bruce St Julian-Bown

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For Squash, club night is on Mondays for all-comers, plus monthly internal leagues for all standards. SRA tournaments are played here, and we have teams in the Surrey leagues from the first division down, with vets and ladies also well represented.

Coaching is available for all standards.

For Tennis, club night is Wednesdays, and we run regular American tournaments, plus club summer and winter competitions. Coaching is available, with both group and individual sessions. Teams are well represented in national and Surrey leagues at all age levels.

Just ring 020 8971 8090 after 12 noon or all day at weekends for details.

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TIME TO REDUCE STREET CLUTTER?

BY COLIN DAVIS



‘We are being worn down by scruffy signs, bossy bollards, patchwork paving and railed off roads.’ and ‘Unnecessary street furniture is a waste of taxpayers money and leaves our streets looking more like scrap yards than public spaces.’

Not the rants of well meaning campaigners but the wisdom of the Secretaries of State for Communities and for Transport, Eric Pickles and Philip Hammond, respectively.

They could have been the words of Gordon Cullen or Ian Nairn, stalwarts of the mid 1950s and 1960s campaigns against poor road design and street clutter.

Both died disappointed men, convinced that all that was needed was for them to point out the problem and the town planning system would sort it all out.

It didn't. It wasn't intended to.

Pickles' and Hammond's words are important not because of what they say but because of who said them.

Yet to swipe out at the local highway authorities misses the point that much

of the problem rests with central government which for decades under all administrations has urged an over-sufficiency of signs.

The poor old highway engineers got the impression that belts as well as braces were essential to save them from serious liability litigation for their employers and loss of pension for themselves.

These fears are largely unfounded.

Fortunately the tide is beginning to turn. There are isolated examples of high streets and villages where unnecessary signs, equipment and railings have been swept away, resulting in improved safety and far better amenities. The City of London aims to remove 500 items of street furniture each year from the Square Mile. Transport for London has a programme this year to remove thirty-five miles of guard railings.

The Department for Transport's more recent practice notes to local council engineers begin to recognise the problem and put forward sound advice. But it has yet to take hold everywhere or become mainstream practice.



Roundabouts don't need signs



Informal crossings work just as well as zebra crossings and don't have zigzag lines

So if you are wandering around the streets of Wandsworth, with nothing better to do, see how many of these ideas could apply to your own locality, because this is what some local councils have already done to reduce the ugliness of street clutter.

They have:

- taken away keep-left signs (they are not required by law);
- taken away signs on roundabouts (again not required by law);
- put in informal mini-roundabouts that don't need signs;
- fixed traffic lights to lamp post, to save the cost of special posts;
- taken away the white edges to traffic lights (not required by law);
- taken away the back-up set of traffic lights in some places;
- replaced zebra crossings and their inexplicable zigzag lines with neater informal crossings;
- taken away warning signs (drivers are meant to drive safely and look where they are going);
- taken away all white lines (except the few that the law requires);
- taken away guard railings (they have no proven safety purpose and encourage drivers to drive faster and

- with less care);
- taken away bollards (if they were there to protect the pavements from being broken by heavy vans, they have put in stronger pavements).

How, you might think, do drivers manage without so many signs? The answer is that they manage very well. It helps them see the road ahead more clearly and to concentrate on the few signs that are really important. It encourages them to take more care. The whole caboodle is tidier, safer and costs far less.

For more information go to www.publicrealm.info and click the Civic Societies page

Colin Davis is an architect, town planner and highways & transportation engineer. He is a founding director of the Public Realm Information and Advice Network, PRIAN

A history of Du Cane Court : land, architecture, people and politics

by Gregory Vincent

Du Cane Court is a popular art deco block of flats in Balham: one which, exceptionally, has become known both near by and far away. It has featured in property programmes on television; and has benefited from a wide compass of residents and visitors, who, in the fullness of time, have spread the news about what it is like to live there.

To compile the underlying data for the present work, the author visited various libraries, accessed the Register of Electors, examined the council records, and interviewed long-term residents – including several who arrived in ‘the Court’ before or during the war, and even one who provided an insight into what it was like to grow up there in the 1950s.

‘Du Cane Court was our whole world,’ he said. ‘I would play around the garages with my friends, but we got chased off. If we turned on a tap at the back of the building, we would be told off. The porters were like the Gestapo, screaming at us whenever we stepped out of line.’

‘We were not allowed in the boiler room, nor anywhere in the basement, on our own, but a certain Mr Philips took a liking to us, and under his kind patronage such places became accessible. Coal was used in the early days to heat the water for the building, with chimneys belching smoke into the atmosphere. The boiler room became known as The Dungeon, or Aladdin’s Cave. To us, it was a place of enchantment where strange old fellows pitched great piles of rubbish (probably from a skip, or from the dust chute collection areas) into the mouth of a huge furnace, whilst flaming tongues licked the sides of the walls. It was like entering a dragon’s lair.’

The house which Du Cane Court replaced was very similar to 222 Balham High Road. Robert Addington describes the wonderful landscaped grounds which his grandfather owned on a lease from the Du Cane family, and which were later sold to make way for the new block:

‘... the land at the back of the property was actually on three levels, and my mother told me that, because of the mist on her wedding day, she could not see to the bottom of the garden! And the house was no less incredible. It had a self-contained pharmacy, and was home to four children and eight staff: including the gardeners, three maids, a cook and a coachman named Mr Faithful.

The period of art deco was an ambivalent age for architecture. On the one hand, a series of imposing and memorable structures were erected, many of them blocks of flats, and all with the hallmarks of a new style. On the other hand architecture was not fully recognised as a profession. Reflecting this was a certain tongue in cheek humour. In response to an article in JRIBA, ‘The Case for a Learned Society’, one elderly member of the Royal Institute of British Architects said: ‘If you know of a learned society for architects, tell me, I’d like to join’; while another remarked that he knew of one good case for a learned society - a coffin! So this was the atmosphere that the builders were up against.

George Kay Green, the architect, was born in 1877. He was well-connected, being the son of Mr William Green, the founder of William Green and Sons, Law Publishers, which became the most reputable firm of its kind in Scotland. The middle name, Kay, was probably introduced by George’s mother as a social-climbing exercise; and George’s wife certainly thought she was greatly transcending her working-class background when she married him. Her son vividly described her feelings and her behaviour ...

‘Once she had stuck her talons into him, she wouldn’t let go,’ Charles told me, ‘but since the two of them hailed from different worlds, their respective

Dec 6 1935

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For convenience and accessibility to all parts of London, these flats excel. Just think of this, for instance! There are 493 Southern Railway trains daily between Balham and Victoria, and a two minute service by Underground to the City and West End during many hours of the day. The bus and tram service is exceptionally good.

For health, Du Cane Court is ideally situated. The delightful commons of Wandsworth, Clapham, Tooting Bec, Streatham, and Mitcham are all within easy reach.

The amenities of DU CANE COURT include electric lifts, roof gardens, large restaurant with low tariff, central heating, constant hot water, many private balconies, and radio and electric clock to every flat. Electricity for lighting, heating and cooking is available at 1/- per unit, plus a small quarterly rate.

You should call and see the show flats of this wonderful building, which are now open for inspection.

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families refused to speak to each other.' And the problems did not end there. Her husband was very dedicated to his work and, one day, when he failed to return home for the anniversary of their wedding, she flew into a rage and chucked her wedding dress into the fire!

Mr Green was involved in the creation of a number of large blocks of flats, including Sloane Avenue Mansions and Nell Gwynn House. His employer, The Central London Property Trust, purchased the underlying land that to be used for the creation of a marvellous new property in Balham from one Charles Henry Copley Du Cane, whose family name was given to the building. The Du Canes were actually French Protestants, or 'Huguenots', who had fled from their homeland to escape persecution. The Huguenots brought with them skills in banking and finance, and Wandsworth Museum itemizes a whole range of other trades, which they practised in the locality: dyeing, enamelling, and making wigs and hats.

The Construction of Du Cane Court was certainly not without its problems. Even in the mid-1970s, deaths in construction industry numbered just over one per day; and, apparently, there was a particular individual who worked on 'the Court' who came to a most unfortunate end. One day, he

fell from the scaffolding into a cement pit – and I do not know whether his body was retrieved.

The scale of the whole enterprise was truly something to be reckoned with. It sits on about 4.5 acres of land, and has been variously estimated to contain four or six miles of corridor (although I feel that two miles would be nearer the mark), so it is hardly surprising that there are problems with the post. The place is so big, it has even been assigned different postcodes. Indeed, one lady was surprised to find that the cost of her contents insurance fell after moving to a different flat, but still within the building. This is in spite of her new home having two bedrooms, and her previous home having only one. Apparently she now has a better postcode!

The building was erected between 1935 and 1938, and has pleasing curves and a magnificent 84-foot-wide foyer. The design also included a stylish restaurant, and there were plans for squash courts and a children's crèche area, as well as roof gardens. Indeed, people remember sunbathing on the roof. The building has changed a lot over the years, but it still has a beautiful foyer and attractive Japanese gardens, landscaped by Seyemon Kusumoto; and, when it was completed, it had the distinction of being probably the largest block of privately-owned flats under one roof in Europe. All of the companies involved in its construction were researched for the book, and an account is given as to how this edifice – encompassing around 676 flats – reflected a period of change in architectural history. The window frames, for instance, were created in the style of Crittall Manufacturing Co Ltd. They were metal rather than wood, which allowed the window to be broader (about eight feet wide in the case of our own building), and so admit plenty of light and make a room of moderate size seem quite voluminous.

One resident vividly describes the restaurant on the seventh floor:

'There was a piano played by Eddy Wheeler, and perhaps a violin and saxophone. The dais was near the window and could support a

A history of Du Cane Court



Celebrated comedians who lived in Du Cane Court: above, Tommy Trinder and Richard Hearne, otherwise known as 'Mr Pastry'; and below, two pictures of Derek Roy. (Courtesy of Max Tyler, British Music Hall Society.)

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two-piece or three-piece band. The bar was the venue for wonderful new years' parties. People would join hands and sing and dance in the corridors. And a barman called Jimmy made wonderful beverages (Tommy Trinder would simply have a light ale), but I never saw anyone drunk up there. Then one day Jimmy closed the bar down and made off with the money. I couldn't believe it.'

Apart from the restaurant, the focus for social gatherings was a club of ample proportions on the seventh floor of H block – where there are now three apartments: H71, H72 and H73. The décor was green and black, and the facilities included a billiards room, a cards room, a reading and writing room, a bar, and lavatories; and there was the opportunity to play table tennis or darts. In the architectural drawings, special provision was also made for the staff. A flat on the ground floor of block B was reserved for the use of the manager; and on the eighth floor, or the roof, there

were (besides two tank rooms) a staff dining room, a kitchen and a scullery.

There are many famous individuals who were reputedly there – actresses Margaret Rutherford, Elizabeth Sellars and Hermione Gingold; comedians Tommy Trinder, Derek Roy, and Richard Hearne alias 'Mr Pastry'; band leaders Harry Roy and Harry Leader, and also most of the Tiller Girls; cricketer Andy Sandham, and table-tennis ace, Ernest Buble. Today, 'the Court' numbers Arthur Smith and Christopher Luscombe amongst its theatrical celebrities – both of whom were interviewed at length.

Some interesting stories are told about those associated with the block. Margaret Rutherford suffered from mental illness in her later years. Evidently, the problem ran in the family. In fact, she inherited her mother's maiden name because her father, William Benn, murdered her paternal grandfather, the Reverend Julius Benn, by battering him to death with a chamber pot. William was later admitted to Broadmoor. Yet to her credit, she transcended this dark past, and became a Dame of the British Empire in 1967. Tommy Trinder, the comedian considered himself competition for Max Miller, but felt impregnable when it came to life's knocks, for, unlike Max, he could take a joke against himself. Nevertheless, he could not have liked it when the newspapers were full of news of his divorce after the war; and it is said that he was actually robbed so many times that he once put a notice on his door for forthcoming burglars: 'Don't bother – you've already taken everything!'

There are some wonderful legends about Du Cane Court. It is said, for instance, that Hitler intended to use it for his headquarters when he invaded Britain; and that the Luftwaffe may have found it helpful as a navigational aid – for, in spite of its size, the estate appears to have survived World War II completely unscathed. It is also rumoured that the building was once a hotbed of spies.

A history of Du Cane Court

BREAKFAST.	
ENGLISH.	
Tea or Coffee. Kippers or Haddock. Toast and Butter. Marmalade or Jam. 1/3	Tea or Coffee. Bacon and Egg. Toast and Butter. Marmalade or Jam. 1/3
Tea or Coffee. Sausages and Tomato. Toast and Butter. Marmalade or Jam. 1/5	Tea or Coffee. Bacon and 2 Eggs. Toast and Butter. Marmalade or Jam. 1/6
AMERICAN.	
Fresh Grape Fruit. or Orange Juice. Choice of Cereals or Sweet Corn. Coffee. Toast and Butter. Honey or Marmalade. 1/-	Stewed Prunes or Fresh Grape Fruit or Orange Juice. Coffee or Tea. Toast and Butter. Honey or Marmalade. 1/-
CONTINENTAL.	
Pot of Coffee or Tea. Toast and Butter. Marmalade or Jam. 8d	Orange Juice. Pot of Coffee or Tea. Toasted, Buttered French Bun. 8d
LUNCH. Our Daily Menus from :	
1/3 Fish or Meat (2 veg.) Coffee or Sweet.	
1/6 Soup, Fish or Meat (2 veg.) Coffee or Sweet.	
2/- Soup, Fish, Meat (2 veg.) Coffee or Sweet.	
OTHERWISE SEE LA CARTE.	
Don't forget our Sunday Chicken Lunch.	
DINNER.	
Table d'Hote 1/6	
Choice of Soup, Fish or Joint and 2 Vegetables, Sweet or Coffee.	

À LA CARTE.	
Pot of Tea (per person)..... 3d	GRILLS.
Pot of Coffee (per person)..... 5d	Cutlets (?)..... 1/-
Cup of Coffee..... 3d	Rump Steak..... 1/-
SPECIAL Coffee (black)..... 5d	Fillet..... 1/6
English or French Chocolate... 4d	Mixed Grill..... 1/9
Horlicks..... 5d	Sausages (2)..... 8d
Bovril (small)..... 4d	Veal Cutlets..... 1/6
Bovril (large)..... 6d	
Stewed Prunes..... 4d	COLD TABLE.
Portion of	Ham, Tongue, Roast Beef or Lamb..... 2/-
Bread and Butter..... 2d	One only..... 1/-
Dry Toast..... 2d	Roast Chicken (hot or cold)... 2/-
Buttered Toast..... 3d	
Marmalade..... 2d	EGGS.
Jam or Honey..... 3d	Boiled Egg..... 4d
Tomatoes on Toast..... 6d	Poached Egg on Toast..... 6d
Spaghetti on Toast..... 6d	Poached Eggs on Toast..... 9d
Baked Beans..... 6d	Scrambled Eggs..... 10d
Welsh Harebit..... 6d	Scrambled Eggs (Portuguese)... 1/-
Back Harebit..... 10d	Two Fried Eggs..... 6d
Bacon (2 rashers)..... 8d	Omelette (plain)..... 9d
Kidney on Toast..... 9d	Omelette (Ham)..... 1/-
Sweet Corn..... 6d	Omelette (French or German)... 1/-
	Egg Mayonnaise..... 9d
CEREALS.	SOUPS.
Puffed Rice..... 6d	Soup (see Menu)..... 4d
Corn Flakes..... 6d	Soup Heinz (Tomato or Ox Tail)..... 6d
Shredded Wheat..... 6d	Soupe a l'Oignon Gratinée..... 6d
Creamed Barley..... 6d	Consomme (home-made) (hot or cold)..... 6d
Honey Grains..... 6d	Consomme with Poached Egg 5d
Porridge..... 6d	Bovril..... 6d
ALL WITH JUG OF MILK.	Bovril with Poached Egg..... 9d

In 1971 the Tenants' Association was founded, and the ensuing decades saw a mixture of noble aspirations and conflicts of interest take root within it. The Association was involved, among other things, in the creation of a Pet's Register. And so we hear of a portly old woman with a walking stick, who used to stand in one of the courtyards with a Burmese cat on her shoulder, whilst smoking a pipe of herbal tobacco. Another resident kept an iguana in the bath, and the bathroom was always hot and steamy like a sauna, in order to simulate the humid conditions of its natural habitat.

There are endearing stories of community spirit; and some sad exceptions, where residents cannot stomach each other's company or each other's noise. There have been battles with the landlords, or their representative managers, on account of the considerable service charge expenses – and the disturbing flat conversions which they have been responsible for. Certain disputes have even reached the courtroom.

Other events have included what was, perhaps, the first invasion of pharaoh ants in a London block of flats; and a dramatic boiler explosion in the basement, from which a visiting engineer sustained horrific injuries,

even though the rest of the building was unaffected.

Many people have lived in Du Cane Court for so long that they have grown senile, or passed on. When one old lady's flat was visited by relatives after she died, a remarkable discovery was made. A mummified baby was hidden away in one of the cupboards, which a certain pathologist, Rufus Crompton, later estimated to have been between 40 and 70 years old.

The book contains innumerable illustrations: photographs of famous residents, pictures of the building taken recently and in the 1930s, original architectural plans, and interesting letters. A few cartoons have even been drawn to highlight the comical side of life at Du Cane Court. And, if they are not enough to raise a smile, the book has various quaint stories of eccentrics and elderly people making their mark.

Lastly, there are the pros and cons of attempting to gain the freehold, and of getting the building listed; and an assessment of what the future may hold, and of the measures which might be taken to further improve an environment which is already, most of the time at least, a pleasant place to call your home.

A FIRM FAVORITE THE SOCIETY'S FAMOUS CHRISTMAS FRUIT CAKE

For this recipe you will need a large bowl, an electric mixer, a small screwdriver and a comfortable chair.

Preparation time

Best to allow plenty

Cooking time

Will vary according to the

Ingredients

1 cup water
1 cup sugar
4 large eggs
2 cups dried fruit
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 cup brown sugar
lemon juice
nuts
1 bottle of whiskey

Method

Firstly check that the whiskey hasn't gone off, then -

Take a large bowl, and check the whiskey again to be sure it is of the highest quality. Pour one cup level and drink.

Repeat.

Turn on the electric mixer; beat one cup butter in a large fluffy bowl.

Add 1 teaspoon sugar and beat again.

Make sure the whiskey is still OK. Cry another tup. Turn off mixer.

Break two legs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit. Mix on the turner. If the flied druit gets stuck in the beaters, pry loose with a screwdriver.

Sample the whiskey to check for tonsisicticity.

Next, sift two cups of salt, and check whiskey.

Now wish the lemon juice and strain your nuts, add one table. Spoon. Of sugar or something. Whatever you can find.

Grease the oven and turn the cake tin 350 degrees, membering to beat off the turner.

Throw the bowl out of the window.

Check the whiskey again. Go to bed.

Who the hell likes fruit cake anyway!

This delightful recipe comes from Cook-in-g Book collated by Lorna Denholm (Banwell Caves).

Bingle Bells one and all !

Cherry Mistmas

Drive carefully!