

Wandsworth Society



The Bedside

1971 - FORTY YEARS ON - 2011

Mistletoe

Mistletoe, forming evergreen clumps on apple and many other broad-leaved trees, is a strange plant. It absorbs water and nutrients from its host trees, but as it has chlorophyll it is able to make its own food.

Pliny the Elder in the first century A.D. described Druids in France cutting mistletoe from oak trees in a ritual which involved golden sickles, dressing in white cloaks, slaughtering white bulls. Because of this, mistletoe was considered to be a pagan plant and banned from churches.

Mistletoe was associated with Christmas since the mid-17th century. By the 19th century this association was well established, and people who had mistletoe-bearing trees on their land were bothered by people who raided them. In 1876 it was recorded that one Lincolnshire landowner hired 14 'watchers' each year to protect the mistletoe in her park.

Kissing under the mistletoe seems to be a tradition which originated in the British Isles, but it does not appear to be an ancient one. It seems that it developed from the kissing bough which decorated homes in medieval times. This consisted of a bunch of evergreens, or a number of intersecting hoops covered in evergreens, which was hung from the ceiling, and under which people kissed. At sometime, probably in the late 18th or early 19th century, mistletoe became an important component of these boughs, and eventually, by the mid-19th century, the other greenery seems to have become of secondary importance, with the mistletoe becoming essential. Certainly,

as numerous illustrations show, the association of kissing and mistletoe was well established by Victorian times.



The situation is complicated by the fact that in some areas there were decorations known as 'mistletoe boughs' which appear to be identical to the kissing boughs and contained no mistletoe.

It is sometimes said that a berry should be removed every time anyone kisses under the mistletoe.

There are various beliefs about what should be done with mistletoe once Christmas has passed. In some areas some was kept indoors throughout the year to ensure happiness, love, food and money throughout the year. In other places, Christmas mistletoe was burnt under the pancake pan on Shrove Tuesday.

Mistletoe doesn't seem to have been much used in folk medicine. The only remedy which I've collected is from Somerset, where

it was remembered that a vile-tasting tea, made from mistletoe which grew on hawthorn, was used to treat measles. Other people have collected information on mistletoe being used to treat hysteria in Herefordshire and prevent strokes in Essex.

If sufficiently mature seeds are used mistletoe can be easily grown on apple trees. Seeds extracted from Christmas mistletoe are not mature, so it's necessary to collect berries in April, squeeze out the seeds and insert them in a notch cut in the tree's bark. After a couple of months small plants emerge, but many of these seem to die within a year. Survivors grow rapidly and live for many years. However, mistletoe produces female and male flowers on different plants, and although I've left a trail of mistletoe plants behind me as I've moved around, I haven't yet managed to grow one which is a berry producing female.

The London Natural History Society has recently started work on a new Flora of the London Area, and would welcome any records of mistletoe plants in Wandsworth, which might, of course, be in private gardens, to which recorders don't have access. At present I'm aware of only one mistletoe plant in the borough (planted by me about 40 years ago); if you know of any other plants, please contact me, letting me know if possible what sort of tree it's growing on.

Roy Vickery

<http://www.plant-lore.com>

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The Bedside 2011

There are those, even some in the upper echelons of Newsletter Press plc, who would have placed a serious sum on The Bedside having been a a fixed star in the firminant since time immemorial, or if not then, days of yore, mists of time, that sort of thing – apparently not.

No - a bit of a shock to the system, but it has only been some forty years that The Bedside has brought the comfort, joy and solace that only the packed pages of a Bedside can bring, and when you've said that, why what more can one say? (*Quiet at the back there ...*) So, top up the glass, light that pipe, pull up a chair, settle down, put your feet up, stretch contentedly – throw another log on the fire, I believe there's a good film on the other channel ...

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The Phantom of the Cinema

a Christmas ghost story



The birth of Streatham's Odeon cinema was a glorious affair.

On 30 June 1930 more than 2,500 people attended the opening night of what was then the Astoria. They had ostensibly arrived for the screening of the musical comedy *Paris*, but they had also come to marvel at the building itself. Standing at the junction of Streatham High Road and Pendennis Road, and designed by the architect E. A. Stone, the cinema's magnificent interior was modelled on an Ancient Egyptian theme, with dramatic red, green and gold paintwork enhanced by cleverly concealed lighting, and Egyptian-styled bas-reliefs decorating the circle walls.

It was all highly glamorous and it gave the building a frisson of thrilling mysticism, evoking a sense of Ancient Egypt's mystery and magic. But the uncanny event that occurred at the Astoria a few short years after that opening night seemed related not to distant Egypt but rather to the very ground on which the cinema had been built.

It happened on Christmas night, 1933. Lewis Amis, the Astoria's fireman, was patrolling the

empty building and undoubtedly looking forward to returning to the warmth of his home and family. Shining his torch into the gloomy shadows around him, he walked into the darkened tea lounge – and as he did so he was shocked to see a figure approaching him.

His first thought was that he had disturbed a burglar. He turned his torch directly into the face of the figure, and its light revealed what seemed to be an elderly man dressed in a long white gown. The gown's hood was pulled up, and the figure's arms hung stiffly at its sides as it drew closer to Amis, seeming to glide across the floor. As it

neared, Amis caught sight of the face beneath the hood, describing this to a reporter two days later as 'a wizened, wrinkled face (with) a short beard' (Daily Mail, 28 December 1933).

Then the figure turned away from him, moving towards a flight of stairs that led down to the vestibule. Nervous, and uncertain as to whether he had encountered a phantom or a mortal intruder, Amis followed it downstairs towards the large wooden fire-doors that led through to the stalls.

As Amis explained to the reporter, these doors were 'heavy, strongly fastened, and three men would have a job to get them open.' Yet, as the figure neared them the doors swung open.

Amis's sense of unease grew. Nevertheless, he followed the figure as it passed through the open doorway and down the centre aisle of the auditorium, and he watched in disbelief as it then 'leapt, or rather floated, across the orchestra pit, landing behind the footlights in front of the curtain.'

All at once, the apparition turned to face the now terrified fireman. It raised its arms and, in a 'weird, husky voice', cried out: 'I won't sell, I won't sell, I won't sell.'

With that, it vanished, and Amis was once again alone.

Lewis Amis was not someone who particularly believed in the supernatural, the newspaper describing him as 'a hard-headed citizen of Clapham'. He seemed to be telling the truth, but had the fireman been the unwitting victim of a bizarre prank, or had he really seen a ghost?

Amis had never heard of a man named Alfred Janes but if he had he would surely have suspected it was that man's ghost he had seen, for the Astoria cinema had been built on the site of Janes's old home – a home he had been most reluctant to sell.

In around 1901 Alfred Janes and his family had moved into a fine Victorian property called Chesterfield House, which stood surrounded by large gardens on the ground the Astoria cinema would occupy a few decades later.

Janes loved the building, and so he was highly irritated when, after living there for more than a quarter of a century, he began to be pestered by property developers who wanted to buy Chesterfield House in order to redevelop the site. He declined their offer. This was his home and he would not sell. They offered more money. He declined again. They made a higher offer, and so it went on, with the developers refusing to admit defeat.

Eventually, Janes conceded and, full of misgivings, he agreed to sell Chesterfield House. In 1929 he and his wife moved to a new home in Streatham Common South.

Chesterfield House was pulled down and in its place gradually rose the mighty new Astoria. Less than a fortnight after the new cinema's grand opening night, Alfred Janes died.

One cannot help wondering whether something of him remained after his death, something still attached to the site of the beloved family home he had been so reluctant to give up.

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Abridged from James Clark's forthcoming book, 'Haunted Lambeth'.

Find out more at www.james-clark.co.uk

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PRODUCTIONS



Collectors' item

Red Kickers (circa 1972?)

London's Greatest Cowboy

In the mid-1920s, a curious figure turned up south-west London. He had emerged from one of the harshest and most isolated regions of the Empire: the Rupununi Savannah of British Guiana. There, he'd owned a ranch that was not only the largest in South America but the largest in the world. Here is his tale.

Harry Prideaux Colin Melville was born in Jamaica, in 1864, the son of a Presbyterian archdeacon. Unlike his father, however, Harry had never had an appetite for matters spiritual, and preferred the sight of gold. At the age of 27, he decided to extract himself from Scottish Jamaica, and set off in search of ore. His gold-washing brought him to British Guiana. There, in 1891, he plunged into the forest, and was soon cooking up a case of malaria. At the moment of death – the story goes – he was found by some Amerindians. Harry had no wish to die in the dark, and asked for help to reach the light. With either payment or pathos, they agreed, and brought the dying Scot out onto the Rupununi Savannah. There, he liked what he saw and lay down to die.

Death on the savannah had suited Harry well. The next thing he knew, the grass was his home. He acquired two Wapisiana wives, and settled down to become a trader in the finest fish hooks and trinkets. It was good business, and – after twenty years – he was the most powerful man on the savannah. Not only was he now the father of ten children, he was also a cattle baron, a district commissioner, and the Laird of Dadanawa. It was the largest ranch in the world, and covered an area about the size of the Lowlands of Scotland.

'HBC', as he now called himself, had arrived. All Dadanawa needed was some sort of link to the rest of the Empire. On cue came the First World War, and a surge in demand. British soldiers would march to Berlin on Rupununi beef. It was an appealing image, and the funds flowed in. By 1917, Melville had begun work on one of the most ambitious private trails in the world. Soon, Dadanawa would be pumping cattle up into the heart of Guyana, and then off to the coast. Or so he said.

Dadanawa is still there, and life carries on much as it did in 1923.

Seventy miles from the nearest town, it sits on a rise by the Rupununi River. At the top of the hill is a large and shady Brazil nut tree. All around it are the ranch buildings, and the peeling grandeur of Melville's design. There are several workshops and saddle stores; barracks for the cowboys (or *vaqueiros*), slung with rows of hammocks; an abattoir; a tannery; two kitchens with huge ranges, and drying-lines dripping with buttery tripe; half-a-dozen water-towers, and an ancient wind-pump that sometimes stuttered and stopped; a small brick cottage for the foreman, and the enormous wooden halls of the management – all finished off in the Melville livery, balance-sheet white and Highland green.

Even now, the ranch is an enchanting place. It's not just the livery and the lovable staff, and the distant blue hills, melting together. It's the sense of a peculiar past, all around. The guest room is high up on stilts, and looks as if it has been quietly – and elegantly – flaking away since the First World War. Then there's the manager's house, which is like the officers' mess of an Edwardian army. Around the walls, there are weapons and saddles, and, at sundown, everyone sits on the balcony, drinking punch. As the ranch no longer has electricity, guests soon find themselves in the dark, and beginning to itch. 'Time for dinner!' says the ranch manager, and everyone fumbles their way downstairs. There, they sit in Melvillian splendour, dining on tablecloths adorned with his crest. During dinner (perhaps three great courses of soup and mutton and chocolate mousse), the bats come wheeling in through the windows, and squeal around the diners' heads.

But, even better, is the ranch store. This is the



place to buy a stirrup, or a beer, or a single cigarette. At night, people gather here to listen to the distant crackle of the BBC, or for the cook – armed with a needle – digs the jiggers from their feet. But, as well as a bar and a clinic, the store is also the repository of almost a century of grassland junk. There are jaguar skins, giant fish skulls, several antique guns repaired with tape, a truncheon, a pickled snake, and endless Landrover parts, going all the way back to 1950. Even things too big for the store are never thrown away. Just behind it is a collection of old army trucks, now green and hairy, and reverting to soil.

Every morning the cowboys assemble at the store. There are fourteen in all. With their long knives, El Greco faces, and leather gaiters – clinking with buckles and spurs – they're like some ancient, barefoot cavalry. Scowling and spitting, and shooting blasts of snot, they look impressively dangerous. I once watched them kill a calf. Their knives descended on it like a shoal of fish, and swam around through the trembling flesh until suddenly everything was gone. It's said that Wapisiana men liked their women like this, with razor-sharp teeth filed into points, just like piranhas.

Once I went to watch them, out in the corral. There was a bonfire for brands, and – high up in the rails – the boys clambered around, waiting for their moment to drop down and join the fight. Below them, in the arena, hundreds of animals swirled round, blind with dust and mad with panic. Whiplashes, forty feet long, sizzled over their heads, hissing and crackling like gunfire. Then the vaqueiros dropped, knives drawn. What followed wasn't so much sport as medieval warfare. Horn and withers became tangled in

rope, and – amidst the bellows of terror – the knives began to dart around, nicking ears and emasculating bulls. At one point, a steer seemed to explode from the melee, and, like some huge and bloody meteorite, smashed through the rails, and took off, over the savannah. No one seemed to notice that they'd almost been killed. Even when the work was finished, the vaqueiros weren't. Each found himself a furious steer, jumped on its back, and then rode it for a few exhilarating seconds, before the animal bucked him off.

'What can I do?' said the manager,
'It's the only life they know.'

I didn't see the vaqueiros again after that. By my last day, they were far away, rounding up distant cattle. Across the ranch, they still have over a million acres to cover. Whilst Dadanawa is not what it was in Melville's day, it's still twice the size of Suffolk.

HPC had, however, long-recognised that size was not the issue. The problem for Dadanawa was – and is – an old one. Being hundreds of miles from civilisation, it's one of the most inaccessible spots on the continent. Cows still have a long way to go before they are beef.

In 1923, therefore, Harry cut his losses, sold the ranch to some gullible investors, and slipped away. It was years before his purchasers realised their mistake. Melville had even diddled them on the number of animals and the quality of grass. As for the cattle trail, it was a gruesome failure. At the first attempt to use it, over seventy percent of the animals simply vanished in the forest. Dadanawa only had a moment of prosperity in the Thirties. Then came the age of the plane, and,

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in 1953, the trail was closed for good.

Meanwhile, Harry was long gone. Having abandoned his wives and children, he fled to Twickenham. There, he married for a third time, a nurse called Ethel Barker, and the couple settled down. Suburbia was a strange choice for a man who'd spent so much of his life owning the horizon. But then, in July 1927, for the second time in his life, Harry Melville died. He was rich, sixty-three, and intractably malarial. This time, he was carried to Richmond Cemetery, and has never been heard of since.

But it wasn't quite the
end of the Melvilles.

His semi-feral children had produced plenty of brats of their own. Evelyn Waugh had met several of these grandchildren, when he walked through the Rupununi Savannah in 1933. Waugh disliked most children but – to him the Melvilles were particularly beastly. And he may have been right. By 1969, the same grandchildren were numerous and boisterous enough to start a revolution. They rose in revolt, and declared independence from Guyana. But the Republic of the Rupununi lasted only a day before the Guyanese army appeared, and chased most of the Melvilles off into Venezuela. These days, not much remains of Harry's world, except a handful of thready descendants, and, of course, the ranch at Dadanawa.

John Gimlette is the author of 'Wild Coast: Travels on South America's Untamed Edge' (£15, Profile)

If you fancy visiting the Rupununi Savannah, contact Claire Antell, the Wimbledon-based representative of Wilderness Explorers www.wilderness-explorers.com on 020 8417 1585.

A visit to West Norwood Cemetery



The South Metropolitan Cemetery, West Norwood, is one of the great Victorian cemeteries of London – Highgate may spring to mind, Brompton and Nunhead perhaps; but our lesser-known nearer neighbour is another, comparable in the wealth of its monuments and the fame of its deceased occupants. Members of the Wandsworth Society and Friends of Wandsworth Museum made a joint visit on the morning of September 20th - a sympathetic day, fine but with a tinge of Autumn melancholy in the air, and yellowed withering leaves drifting round the weathered statuary.

The 42 acres at West Norwood provided the second of the large, inter-denominational commercial cemeteries to be opened, in 1837 - four years after Kensal Green, and two years before Highgate. Expansive burial grounds, financed by investment and the purchase of family grave and vault sites, had become necessary to supplement the limited graveyard space around churches, in face of the rapidly growing post-Industrial Revolution populace of the London area. Space was not entirely monopolised by the well-off, though it did become the most fashionable burial ground in South London and was known as the "Millionaires' Cemetery"; provision was charitably made for common grave "pauper burials." The cemetery was laid out following English landscaping tradition, with winding roadways and deciduous trees providing a pleasing foil to the yews and cypresses planted in association with the tombs.

Those are not the only constructions on site: besides a handsome gateway and lodge, surrounding walls and railings, there is an inter-denominational chapel built in the 1950s to replace the bomb-damaged Victorian Gothic Anglican Episcopal and Nonconformist Dissenters' chapels,

and the still surviving St Stephen's Chapel. This Grade II* listed building is sited within the section bought for the Orthodox refugee community which arrived here after the massacre on Chios in 1822 during the Greek War of Independence. Besides their chapel, wealthy Greek merchant incomers put up many splendid sculptures and elaborate mausolea within their compound.

The graves to be seen at West Norwood include those of many Victorian worthies, inventors and innovators, many of whose names resound through today's institutions and familiar brands: Mrs Isabella Beeton and her husband, David Roberts, William Burges, Henry Tate, PJ Reuter, John and Henry Doulton, CH Spurgeon, Thomas Cubitt and William Cubitt, William Marsden, Hiram Maxim, Henry Bessemer, Lucy Gallup, Douglas Jerrold and Thomas Letts. There is also a wide representation from the musical and music hall world of the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

The cemetery was taken over by Lambeth Council in 1965, since when it sadly suffered considerable depredation both official and amateur, but is now being lovingly cared for and gradually restored by the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery under the expert guidance of a multi-discipline Management Advisory Group. A thoughtful stroll among its myriad handsome and varied statuary is richly rewarding, and it is easily reached by rail from Clapham Junction to West Norwood Station. There is ample parking inside the gateway for those driving down the South Circular road and turning south at Tulse Hill.

Wendy Cater

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SEPARATION SILENCE



My wife and I went to the open evening at Wandsworth Museum, hosted by the Friends of the Museum for Society members, to see an exhibition of some of the works that had been made by prisoners in Wandsworth Prison ... there was a fair gathering to listen to Stewart McLaughlin, Wandsworth Prison Museum's Curator, who gave a very interesting talk about the prison from the day it was built to the present ... and how the inmates were treated over the years ... on show were examples of some of the crafts that the present day prisoners had made ... there were also some very creative photography on show, which was made to feel even more creative when one remembered that the photographers were limited to the interior of the prison as a subject ... the cushion below shows how the time spent inside can overflow into the works that they are creating ... although ... for symmetry of the pattern ... he/she seems to be working a four-day week ... the plus factor ... has just enough time to finish it in the last week before being released Will Holland

Let it snow ...



Just think ... just under a year ago we were looking out of our windows at this ... Great Britain had dropped to a crawl and in some places to a halt ... and then as it affected everyone, which included the high and mighty, a major Hue and Cry developed ... which did not get the planes flying or the trains running but which created news (It amazes me how cameramen and news gatherers always end up reporting from places where nobody else is moving) ... so we were treated to the normal "we have taken all this on board and learned the lessons" one would think it had never snowed before ... maybe like the rest of us it means that they are starting to watch the weather forecast ... but I wonder what would have happened if a heavy snowfall had fallen this November ... ?

Will Holland

You may or may not approve
of Occupy London, but you
can't help but admire their
sense of humour.
Taken one recent evening
at St Paul's.



The Banting Brothers

from the Emanuel School archives

Every year, in the School Archive, we make fascinating discoveries that add to the rich tapestry of Emanuel's history. A casual enquiry often leads to the discovery of an Old Emanuel that causes some excitement. Recently, such an email revealed that the artist John Banting was an old boy of the school. Banting may not be a household name, nevertheless, I quickly found out that he was one of the leading British Surrealist painters of the 20th Century, and as I delved deeper into his life I realised he really was a truly great addition to our cannon of illustrious old boys, as this article will reveal.

Bizarrely enough, John Banting's brother, George Banting, also an OE, is a name which would be much more familiar to many of the older generations of OEs. George had a life-long career in the army and RAF, which began in the trenches of World War One with the Surrey Regiment. He joined the RAF when it was founded in 1918, and remained in service until he retired in 1951. In the Second World War he trained fight pilots in Africa, retiring with the rank of Air Vice-Marshal. He was awarded the CBE in 1943. There is much about George Banting's wartime exploits in the School Archive, and many of his service logbooks are held at the Imperial War Museum. So what about his little brother John?

Once I started researching into John Banting I began to wonder why there was virtually nothing about this man in our School Archive? Indeed, why was such a well-established artist not known as a famous Old Boy? The deeper I dug, the more I felt sure I had stumbled upon a fascinating OE, who may have hidden behind the distinguished military career of his brother. Career-wise, the brothers were as different as humanly possible; one a career soldier and the other, as I will reveal, an anti-establishment left wing artist, agitator, hoaxer, poet and satirist who seemed willing to try his hand at anything!

John was four years younger than George (born 1902) and was slightly too young to serve in the First World War. The only references I could find relating to him in our School Archive refer to an English class prize he won, and a few appearances in School Sports Day. His brother George was a rugby man, and played for the school 1st XV before joining the forces for World War One. Beyond school their lives were radically different.

So why is John Banting such an exciting find? Firstly, he is only the second professional, and renowned artist, to be identified as an OE (Derek Davis is the other), secondly, this colourful Surrealist artist continues to be widely exhibited 40 years after his death, and thirdly, he lived an incredible life that crossed paths with many of the great house-hold names of the 20th Century.



After leaving Emanuel, he worked as a book clerk whilst attending evening school at Westminster School of Art and spent sometime studying in Paris in the early 1920s. Banting began to frequent London art circles in the 1920s. Art critic Louisa Buck calls him "a cheekily handsome, gay working class South Londoner... who in his heyday was a conspicuous presence at parties and pranks where the Bright Young Things merged with Bloomsbury". By the mid 1920s he had his own London studio and knew most of the leading artists of the time, such as Duchamps. His surrealist paintings were often very inventive and elegant works of bizarre hybrids of organic forms and human body parts. Banting also tried his hand at poetry, and illustrated them with his own artwork, often satires on the class system, and different art movements. Always keen to try something new, he also designed and created book jackets (possibly to pay the rest?) and illustrations for authors such as Virginia Woolf.

Banting was also involved in one of the most sophisticated art hoaxes of its day; helping in the creation of a fictitious artist called "Bruno Hat".

In 1929 many of London's leading socialites and critics, included Winston Churchill, were conned into believing that "Bruno Hat" was a real painter. The "exhibition" of Banting's paintings (credited to "Bruno Hat") was hailed as a triumphant success in all the newspapers, only to be later revealed as a hoax. This threw custard into the face of the art establishment. Banting created many of the paintings, and a young author, Evelyn Waugh, wrote the exhibition notes. Churchill, apparently, hated the paintings.

Whilst continuing to paint and write prolifically Banting led an extravagant life. In 1932 he fought against racial hatred in America after befriending a coloured American poet, was in Spain in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War, where he met Ernest Hemingway, and tried to join the International Brigade. He became a Stalinist, and during World War Two, after being declared unfit for service worked as Art Director for the Ministry of Information's Strand Films, where he collaborated with the poet Dylan Thomas. This remarkable man was also the art director of the left wing magazine *Our Time*. Bizarrely enough, for a Communist anyway, Banting was also involved in the creation of a 3 minute film called "Birth of the Robot", which was an animated film which advertised Shell Oil and was widely seen on the cinemas. The puppets in this fantasy advert were designed by Banting, and stylistically, this pioneering mood piece was way ahead of its time.

Banting continued to exhibit widely in the 1950s, any Surrealist exhibition would not have been complete without an example of his work. However, by the 1960s the new work had all but dried up and Banting fell on very hard times, possibly due to problems with alcohol, but was saved from complete destitution by a grant from the Artists Benevolent Fund. He produced few paintings in his last years and exhibitions relied heavily on his earlier works. However, his work is still featured in major galleries such as the Victoria & Albert, The Tate, and the National Portrait Gallery.

John Banting had a very strong anti-establishment stance, and one wonders whether this could be in any way a reaction to his big brother, a career army man, who lived his whole life for the establishment? I don't think we'll ever know the answer to that question. I think the fact that the Old Emanuel Association Newsletter ran an obituary for George Banting, but not for John, was a clear sign



London Transport Museum © Transport for London





Summer choir tour to Italy

At the end of the summer term 40 members of the Chapel Choir set off for Tuscany on the annual choir tour. Before we went we had sung at the finals of Music for Youth in Birmingham where we received excellent comments from leading choral director Gillian Dibden. She commented **"We rarely hear one of the major church anthems sung from memory - and this was well done, and very confident, with an excellent response to your conductor's direction, you make a lovely blended and cohesive sound, enviable low bass notes. Keep being "yourselves" --this is your style of music and you do it well"**

With this endorsement we were confident that the tour would be a musical success. This proved to be the case and the party blended well too socially with the pupils being very well-behaved and good company.

We sang in wonderful venues to highly appreciative audiences. One "fan" even recorded our concert in St Stefano Florence and sent us a CD.

Other notable performances were in Pisa at the Duomo, Pistoia where the church had two historic organs, Castiglione del Lago, and Orvieto cathedral.

We stayed in Chianciano Terme in a friendly family run hotel and had splendid 5 course lunches and much time spent in the roof top pool. Very soon we will have preliminary details of the planned summer 2012 tour of Slovenia, a beautiful country situated to the East of Venice with lakes, mountains and wonderful resorts around lakes Bled and Bohinj.



NF Simpson OE

We were sorry to learn, over the holidays, that one of our most distinguished OE playwrights died at the age of 92. NF Simpson continued to write plays to the end and had recently returned to the West End with a new play in 2010 "Was He Anyone". Some of his best known plays included "One Way Pendulum", "The Hole" and "A Resounding Tinkle". As well as a novelist, he wrote

TV scripts and was widely regarded as a major influence on Monty Python. He remained in contact with the school until shortly before his death and there is a lot of signed, and rare, material by him in the School Archives. He was a true master with the pen and will be sorely missed.

Matthew Raymond-Barker wins the French X Factor

Congratulations to Matthew Raymond-Barker who won the 2011 French X Factor. Matthew left Emanuel in 2007 and is currently studying Modern Languages at Bath University. As part of the course he has been studying in Toulouse. **Well done Matthew!**



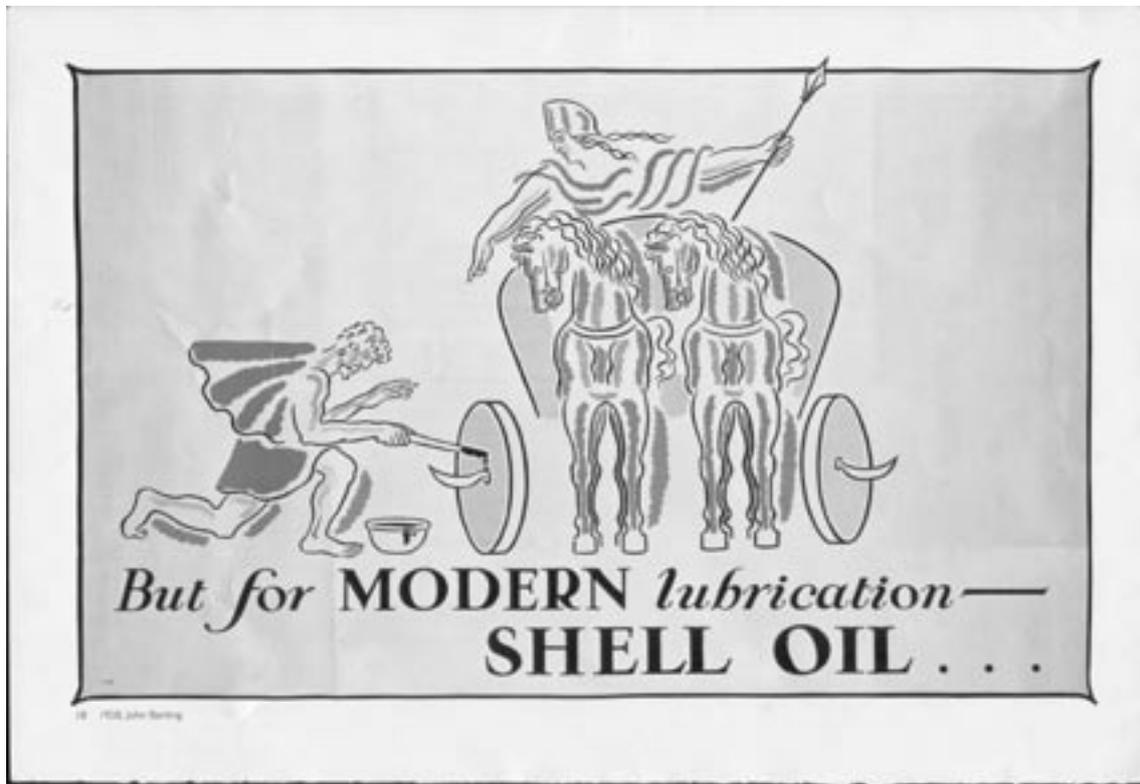
The Silence was Deafening!



On Thursday 8th September Chemistry and DT L6th Students made their way to Battersea power station where the ecovelocity exhibition 2011 was held. We explored the various areas and learned a lot. My aim was simple; to immerse myself into as many intuitive energy/resource saving methods (when it comes to vehicles) as possible. Particularly the development of alternatives to finite resources such as coal, crude oil etc. With this clear objective in mind, I was overwhelmed with the amount of information available to me from every exhibitor. There was so much to see and do including taster driving lessons! This enabled me to not only meet my principal objectives but to also to learn more about the proportionality between the advances in motoring technology and the reduced effects on our environment as a whole. My

visit to the ecovelocity exhibition was an extremely pleasurable and informative experience providing me with a wealth of knowledge and an enhanced insight into the increasing duality between modern vehicular technology and environmental science.





that John was the outsider and agitator. However, this was a role he obviously loved, and he spent his entire career living up to it.

Art critics believe, sadly, that this energetic maverick never fully fulfilled his early promise, in later years, as his drinking escalated, critically, his work became increasingly uneven and repetitive, and he died in relative obscurity in Hastings in 1971. However, within a year of his death there had already been two major retrospective exhibitions of his work. A year later, his brother George also died. The obituary of John, from *The Times*, notes that “he refused point blank to become a prey to the vultures of nostalgia. He preferred to live day to day, delighting with a certain impish glee in the refusal of young people to conform to what many of his contemporaries felt to be right and proper”.

I’m no art expert, however, anti-establishment fig-

ures such as John Banting appeal to me. He bucked the trends of his day, and is right up there with the OE anarchist writer Vernon Richards, as the two OEs I would most like to invite to a party! Also from *The Times*, a friend writes; “the last time I saw him he was swigging vodka and in high spirits, He knew he didn’t have long to go, but was as irrelevant and self-mocking as ever”. Two of Banting’s most famous paintings, used by London Underground, are now on display in the Marquand Room. Or if you can afford it, an original Banting will cost you around £10,000, if not, retrospective exhibitions seem to appear every few years.

The posters for the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum are from the London Transport Museum © Transport for London and can be ordered from their website <http://www.ltmcollection.org/posters/index.html>

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A Brief History of May Day at Whitelands College

Established in 2004, the University of Roehampton is one of the UK's newest universities yet one with the oldest roots. The origins of the University's four Colleges – Whitelands, Southlands, Digby Stuart and Froebel – lie in the nineteenth century, the oldest, Whitelands, being founded in 1841. From those early days when the Colleges were at the forefront of teacher education and pioneers of training women as teachers, the University now has a wide portfolio of courses, a world class reputation for research in Dance and Biological Anthropology and a very diverse and international student body. The histories and traditions, of the constituent Colleges are still celebrated and one of the more extraordinary examples of this is the May Day Festival at Whitelands College.

The first May Day Celebration was held in 1881, when the College was located on the King's Road in Chelsea, at the instigation of the Victorian philanthropist and art critic John Ruskin, friend of the then College Principal, the Reverend Canon John Faunthorpe. Initially, Faunthorpe wanted Ruskin to present academic prizes to the girls but Ruskin did not approve of prizes, at least not if there were any taint of competition about them. Ruskin did, however, present the College with a complete set of his works and went on to offer the College the means to organize a "May Queen" Festival.

The May Queen was to be the girl chosen, by her fellow students to be, in the words of Ruskin, '*the likeablest and loveablest*'. In each year he would present the queen with a gold cross for herself, and with some forty lavishly bound volumes of his books for her to award to her fellows at her will and pleasure.

The cross was different each year normally designed by Joan or Arthur Severn, artists who were Ruskin's closest relatives. However, in 1883 Ruskin asked Edward Burne-Jones to design the cross. Burne-Jones complained that the commission had cost him 'the most painful amount of work'. He drew fifty designs before sending Ruskin three to choose



May Day 1902 painted by Anna Richards and presented to the College in 1903



1883 cross designed by Edward Burne-Jones

from. The resulting cross, made by Ryder of Bond street, is still owned by the descendants of the 1883 May Queen, Edith Martindale, and is currently on loan to the British Museum.

Following Ruskin's death, in 1900, Canon Rawnsley, the Lake Poet and co-founder of the National Trust, gave the cross for the rest of his life-time.

Ruskin, who never attended May Day but saw the photographs, disapproved of the Robes worn by the Queens - they were too formal for his romantic ideas of May Day, too Victorian. On May 16th, 1881 Ruskin wrote from Brantwood;

*"Dear Faunthorpe,
When am I to have my photographs? I've been getting more and more excited at every post and there are two a day even here....."*

Then on May 22nd - *"Photos both quite safe, but I am rather frightened of my Queen. She looks to me between thirty-five and thirty-eight, and rather as if she would bring back the Inquisition and Trial by the rack. Photographs are horrid things!"*

In 1887 he asked Kate Greenaway to design a robe which was embroidered by the Royal School of Needlework, but Ruskin did not like it, he said that it made its wearer look like "Madge Wildfire"!

Subsequent dresses, up to the 1970's, were designed by College staff who taught embroidery. The Kate Greenaway robe is still on display in the Whitelands College archives, Roehampton.

May-pole dancing was not introduced until 1889; Mr and Mrs Oscar Wilde represented John Ruskin on this occasion. The College Annual gives the following account of the May-pole and dance;

"The May-pole, an entirely new feature, was crowned with a cowslip ball, and encircled near the top by two fairy rings of primroses and moss. All were delighted with the May-pole dance, in which the ribbons were dexterously plaited and un-plaited, twined and untwined by eight maidens."

Every year since 1881 the students of the College have elected a May Monarch - until 1986 a May Queen, but since that date a May King or a May Queen, according to their choice. The Festival has evolved over the 130 year history and now the May Monarch is installed by a visiting bishop at an impressive ceremony. A major feature of the day's events is the customary return to the College of many former May Monarchs who, where possible, wear their original outfits and who, after the Ceremony, process round the College Lawn behind the new King or Queen and their attendants. The formal celebrations conclude with May-pole dancing in the College grounds.



1881, Queen Ellen



1888 May Queen and her attendants. The Queen is wearing the Kate Greenaway robes



May Day 2011, University of Roehampton, Whitelands College

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Conflicted in the country

by Mark Haworth-Booth

Last time, I wrote about 'Going away' – leaving Wandsworth after 30 years for North Devon. Now – having celebrated our second anniversary here in October – we're settled. But conflicted. Perhaps you noted that a housing charity recently implored elderly folk to vacate their large houses and downsize to make way for young families. We have downsized. So, are we feeling righteous? No, because Mark Lynas tells us in his new book, *The God Species: How the Planet can Survive the Age of Humans*, that urban living is the key to solving the global population explosion: 'Forget the "back to the land" self-indulgence of some disgruntled people in rich countries', he remarks, wagging his finger straight at us. Allow me this weak riposte: we weren't disgruntled, we just wanted to muck about in a decent-sized garden.

It is great to have some space. The pond (roughly 20 x 25 metres) is already well-furnished with waterlilies, irises, watermint, water forget-me-not and what not. Nature doesn't hang around but moves right in. I bought a bag of 100 oxygenating plants and tossed them in the pond. They keep the water clear. Pond visitors this year included a Moorhen. He stayed a week, making use of the hedgehog shelter I placed on a floating hurdle as a raft. He had no mate and left, perhaps to find one. Or did he resent my presence, as I arrived in my summerhouse to read and sometimes write each morning at 6.45? Canada Geese and Mallards also thought about settling in but they didn't stay either. A Dipper has visited from time to time. He or she paces around the raft making territorial cries, directed at me - I think - as an irritating intruder. A Kingfisher, perhaps the same one as last year, fished for beetles for a couple of weeks. Swallows are plentiful and they hunt for insects above and on the pond, scooping them from the surface in a frenzy around 6pm. That's when I've returned to the summerhouse with a glass of wine. The pond now has a punt which I ordered from a man called



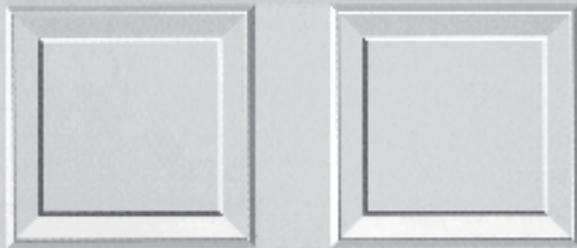
Mike Ivory of Clovelly Boats. I thought I was helping local artisanal industry but I think Mike is probably, like so many of us, a London escapee. One of the best moments of the year was holding a garden party in aid of the North Devon Greens in August and seeing the punt being enjoyed by lively young children (see photo). These latterday Swallows and

Amazons not only boated but swam.

Other special bird sightings this year included two species I'd always wanted to see. I set out to find them and did. First, a friend told me that a Red Kite had been reported on Codden Hill near us. I cycled up there one

hot afternoon. I'd given up on the bird and was focusing my binoculars on the distant chipboard factory at Hill Village when I saw a black silhouette which I realised could only be a Red Kite – it's large, with a wing span of five feet. It was thrilling when the bird banked to reveal the white patches on its underwings and a flash of red. On another sunny summer day I conceived a great desire to see my first Bittern which, like the Red Kite, has been hauled back from extinction by the great people at the RSPB and Natural England. I drove to the RSPB reserve at Ham Wall on the Somerset Levels and, yes, I did see a Bittern – but not until it had seen me and was up and flying to a more secluded reedbed. This too was a heart-squeezing moment, recognizing for the first time the Bittern's flight pattern and conformation (or 'jizz', as birders call it).

Our 18 photovoltaic panels are up and running. Thanks to the generous Feed-in-Tariff, enough sunshine and our miserly life-style, we reckon that our electricity bill will work out at zero for the year. We've learned to drive our Prius Hybrid more economically and now get 50 mpg, although our friends at the Summermoor vineyard next door get 55 with theirs. We've helped them pick grapes for two seasons now and basked in reflected glory when they won an award for their 2010 white wine. We love serving it to our guests. Our vegetables have done well this year, thanks to Rosie's efforts.



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She single-handedly created six new beds in our plot. She also selected a dozen assorted – but compatible (pollination-wise) – fruit trees: apples mainly but also pears and cherries. So, now we have the makings of an orchard. We also, despite the instruction manual, managed to assemble a Keder plastic greenhouse. This looks more a good deal pleasing than your average polytunnel. We are filling it with vintage horse manure, of which we had three tons delivered in the summer. I cropped well with my potatoes but my main contribution is eggs. When the last of the four ex-battery chickens we inherited had died, I started to think about acquiring some new ones. I flirted with the idea of some beautifully marked special breed but then I went to see a poultry woman at Knowstone. She raises chickens and ducks on a hillside on the edge of Exmoor. I liked her so much that I bought four ‘point of lay’ hybrids and they’ve been great. Each hen has a different lineage and each lays a different coloured egg. Missis lays a nearly white egg. Champers – the star, with Cream Legbar in her ancestry – lays a green egg. Chox lays a mid-brown one, while Fanny (the youngster) produces a dark brown speckled egg. As a former curator, I encourage them to sign and date their work.

There used to be horses in the paddock where we now have the pond, plastic greenhouse, orchard, hen run and new veg. plot. Since the horses departed, nettles and brambles have been stealthily advancing into the paddock from the hedgerows. After the bees and birds had finished with these outgrowths for the year, I set about the intruders with my scythe. It’s been the most pleasurable gardening I’ve done here. The main benefit has been to reveal a hedgerow that’s about 160 meters long, plus a freshet that runs beside the hedge for about half of its length. I’ve let the light in and now we can reinforce and diversify the hedgerow with some local Land-key Plum trees, roses, honeysuckle and perhaps Sea Buckthorn, which grows well in these parts. That’s been the main highlight of my year but we have done more – philosophically and practically – than ‘cultivate our garden’.

Rosie is the leading spirit of the North Devon Save the NHS campaign and is press officer of the North Devon Green Party. We are both members of the North Devon Anti-Cuts Alliance. We’ve been back to London to take part in anti-cuts and anti-war demos but – no – we didn’t return for the riots. We also help our lovely church in Swimbridge (where I’m a churchwarden) and support Orchards Live, Coastwise, the Exmoor Society, Devon Birds, the Devon Wild Life Trust and so on. That’s us in Barnstaple High Street, waving banners, proffering flyers, rattling buckets. We’re not really conflicted – but certainly involved.

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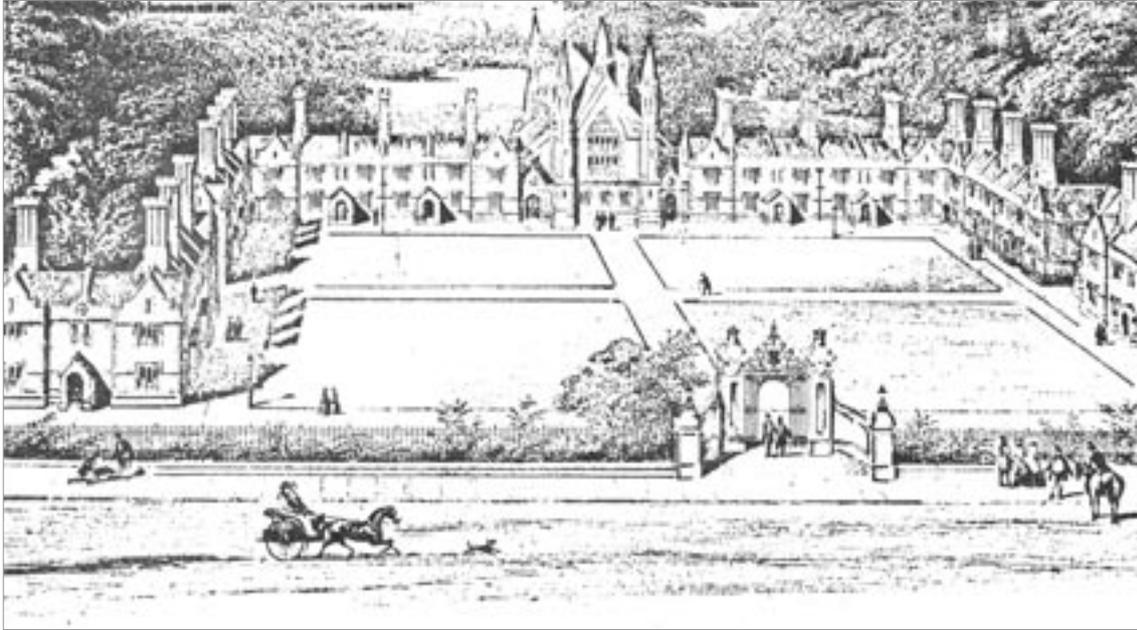
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St Peter's Hospital

East Hill, Wandsworth

by Jean Thomason



An artist's impression of St Peter's Hospital dating from 1850 before the institution was completed, showing the gateway that still stands on East Hill. (*The Builder*)

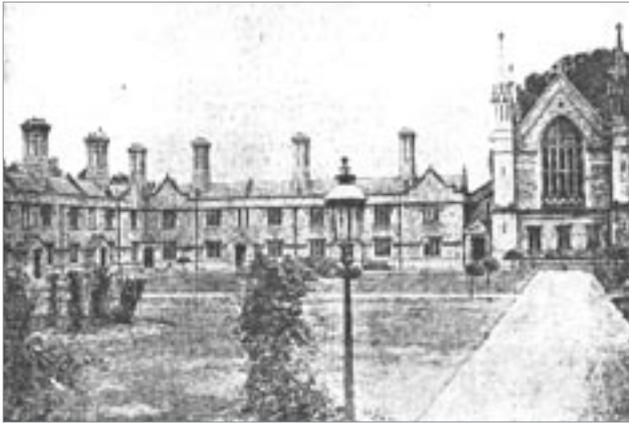
Today only the ornate gates to St Peter's Hospital, a block of almshouses belonging to the Fishmongers' Company, survive at the top of East Hill, Wandsworth, their true origins obscured by the plaques on them marking the London County Council (LCC) housing development known as the East Hill Estate. The Fishmongers' Company, one of the City of London livery companies, had provided almshouses in south London from the seventeenth century. In 1615 Sir Thomas Hunt willed £20 10s per year so that the Company could build a hospital for six poor freemen, all of whom were to receive small pensions. In the same year letters patent were obtained from James I to establish almshouses, which were built originally in the parishes of Newington and St George in Surrey.¹

In the 1840s the Fishmongers' Company decided to replace the old hospital at Newington, which had been named after the patron saint of fishermen, and bought land on East Hill. The position was described in the *Illustrated London News* at the time as 'as open and airy a spot as any in the environs of the metropolis', and the site offered a clear view towards the railway line and the Thames, across a foreground of open fields on which sheep grazed, according to the illustration accompanying the article.² The Fishmongers' Company architect, Richard Suter, was responsible

for the design and it is interesting to note that the Company looked at the St Clement Danes almshouses in Garratt Lane, amongst a number of other institutions, when considering Suter's scheme. The Garratt Lane buildings (now known as Diprose Lodge) survive today and there is a useful comparison to be made between them and St Peter's Hospital, both of which were conceived as three sides of a quadrangle with a chapel at the centre.

The first stone of the new almshouses was laid on 23 June 1849 by Mr W. Flexman Vowler, the Company's prime warden, and they were to cost £25,000 compared with the figure of £400 for the erection of the old ones at Newington in 1617. The style was Tudor, with lofty chimneystacks as a prominent feature. For the dressings Caen stone was used.³ The quadrangle was about 255 feet by 235 feet in size, with its southern side opening onto the high road and fronted by a fine pair of gates and railings (the latter were removed in June 1983). The quadrangle's centre was laid out as four lawns divided by paths. The new hospital was opened in 1851, and its appearance stayed relatively unchanged until the almshouses were demolished in 1923.

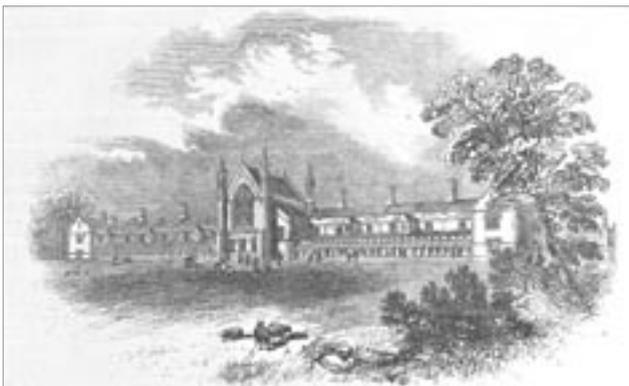
There were forty-two houses, each self-contained with three rooms, with additional rooms for the



St Peter's Hospital in 1923 shortly before it was demolished
(*Manchester Guardian*)

medical officer, clergyman and paymaster. The forty-two alms people were both men and women aged 50 and above. Between 1850 and 1857 annual disbursements averaged about £1850. The residents received between 9 shillings and 15 shillings per week. The regular weekly allowance was 9 shillings for a single person and 14 shillings for each married couple. In addition, one of the almsmen was chosen by the Company as the upper keeper and he received £16 extra per year by way of compensation. The fine chapel was served by a chaplain whose salary was also met by the Company.

The almshouses were sold in the early 1920s, the former inmates were granted pensions, and the demolition of the buildings to make way for the LCC housing estate was of sufficient interest to feature under the heading of 'The Passing of Old London' in the *Manchester Guardian* during the summer of 1923.⁴ It was a mark of the prestige of the new project that it was one of the two LCC



The northern façade of St Peter's Hospital viewed from the railway.
(*Illustrated London Newss*)

housing estates chosen to receive a visit from King George V and Queen Mary on a cold winter Saturday in 1927.⁵

A number of the flats on the LCC's East Hill Estate were damaged during an air raid in April 1941, and the whole development eventually suffered the same fate as St Peter's Hospital.

Today newer housing stands on the site, but still residents pass through the old almshouse gates, with only the Wandsworth Society plaque dating from 1996 to give them any background to the symbolism of the fishes carved on the gate posts.

Note

This account is a modified version of an article which first appeared in 1985 in the *Wandsworth Historian*, the journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society, and it is reprinted with permission. For more information about the WHS and its activities visit the Society's website at www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk, where you will also find details about how to buy a copy of the newly released 'Wandsworth Historian Digital Archive 1971-2011'.

References

- ¹ Go to www.fishhall.org.uk for more information on the history and heritage of the Fishmongers' Company.
- ² *Illustrated London News*, 24 May 1851, pp. 451-52.
- ³ *The Builder*, 2 Feb. 1850, pp. 49 & 54.
- ⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Jul. 1923, p. 7.
- ⁵ *The Times*, 21 Feb. 1927, pp. 15 & 16.

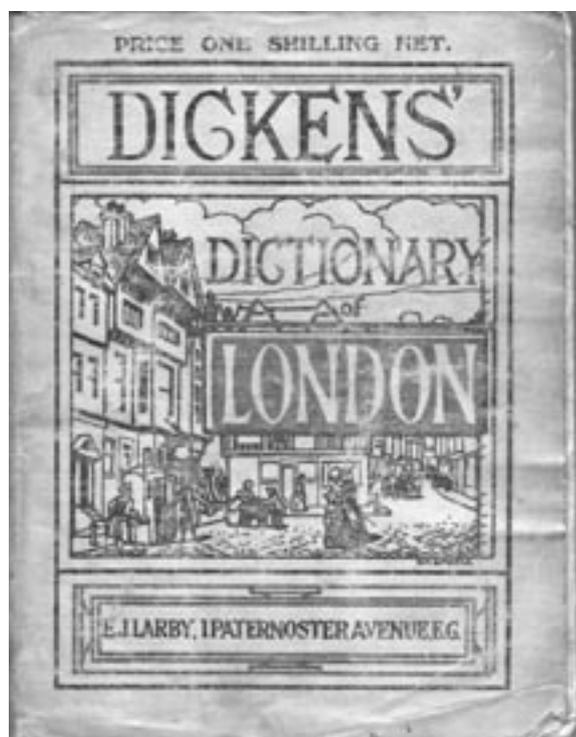
'King and Constitution': the Wandsworth Volunteer Infantry 1794 to 1809

Thoughts of Dad's Army and a fear of invasion generally conjure up pictures of England in the Second World War, but that was not the first time the country was forced to react to threats from an overseas power. During the long Napoleonic Wars between France and Britain, Wandsworth, merely a village in Surrey at the time, raised a company of armed Volunteers to counter the menace of attack from the other side of the channel. This new book from the Wandsworth Historical Society tells the stirring story of those parish forces and shows how a small community responded to a great event.

The author of the book is Dermot Jones. He is a retired Conservation Officer with family roots in Battersea. Dermot was born, educated and spent much of his early life in Balham, and now lives in Clapham. Over the years he has contributed a number of articles to the *Wandsworth Historian* covering a wide range of subjects connected with the history of the Borough of Wandsworth.

Copies of 'King and Constitution': the *Wandsworth Volunteer Infantry 1794 to 1809* are available price £4.00 plus £1.50 for post and packaging from Neil Robson, 119 Heythorp Street, London SW18 5BT. Cheques should be made payable to 'Wandsworth Historical Society', please.

How we were ... Dickens' Dictionary of London



Ever with an eye to a bargain, I recently snapped up a treasure from the Wandsworth Historical Society's second-hand bookstall: "Dickens' Dictionary of London – an Unconventional Handbook".

The Charles Dickens who compiled it was not the great writer himself,, but his elder son. What I have is in fact the New Edition (circa 1909) "Thoroughly Revised and Brought Up to Date" by the publishers, E.J. Larby of 1 Paternoster Avenue. Price One Shilling Net. (I paid rather more for it - £1 - but it's worth every penny.)

It is an absolute mine of information, certainly "unconventional" as it styles itself, so I give you a few excerpts from the early pages.

Prue Raper

ADVERTISING appears a very simple affair, but it is really a difficult art. It is possible with a comparatively small sum, judiciously expended, to produce an almost startling result. On the other hand, there are few things more easy than to fool away £1,000 without producing any result at all. The man who could spend £50,000 in advertising any speciality would probably make his fortune. To do that he would either consult an advertising agent or engage the expert. The ordinary advertiser, however must be careful to lay out every shilling that it shall ensure, at the least, a fair twelve pennyworth of publicity. (Various pointers are given here in the way of advice of how to achieve this.) In recent years a revolution has taken place in the daily papers by the insertion of large type and illustrations in their advertising columns. It is not an unmixed advantage to the reader to have thrust upon his notice a whole page advertisement of some patent speciality in type and design of the most aggressive character.

(At the end of the article, a list of names and addresses of the leading agencies is given, among them T B Browne, Mather & Crowther, S H Benson and Street & Co. – still going strong well into the middle of the century. I got my first job at Mather & Crowther!)

ASHES, with all other refuse, are cleared away from time to time, as required, by the carts of the regular dust contractors. If the carts do not call often enough, or you have any difficulty with them, write to the clerk of the Council in which Borough you reside. No vegetable or animal refuse ought, under any circumstances to be thrown into the dustbin. NB – the scavengers are not bound to remove trade refuse.

BARGAINS are to be had in London by those who know very well what they are about, but many of the announcements, "bankrupt stocks," "tremendous sacrifices," and so forth, are traps for the unwary. The only safe

guide is the advice of some London friend who will be able to tell you the best or cheapest market for any class of goods you may be desirous of purchasing. You will probably find in the most exclusive neighbourhoods of the West End goods of the very highest class, the price for which may be prohibitive; but in Regent Street or Oxford Street there are many establishments whose prices are within the reach of the majority.

BEGGARS – Visitors should bear in mind – what residents should know already – that the impostorship of street beggars is the one rule to which, as yet, there has been known but few exceptions. If you wish to relieve "distress" of any deserving, or undeserving, object, inquire according to your personal predilections of the parish clergyman, the Little Sisters of the Poor, or the relieving officer, and you can find plenty. Charitably disposed persons, who by reason of their public position, or even from the fact of their



names being in the Court Directory, are objects of interest to the great army of begging-letter-writers, cannot do better than become members of the Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity.

CHOPS AND STEAKS – It is only recently that a great superstition as to chops and steaks has been exploded. It was for very many years a popular delusion that west of Fleet Street chops and steaks could not be had – or, at all events, could only be had in a very inferior style. The West End chop or steak, it is true, was for a long time difficult to come at, and, as a rule, exceedingly bad when you got it, although the grill-loving Londoner was even then able to go to Stone’s in Pantons Street with a tolerable certainty of finding what he wanted. Grills have of late grown up in all directions. The restaurant has developed with the hotel, and today you can get your chop or steak at “Ritz’s” in Piccadilly, at the “Hotel Cecil” or the “Savoy” (the

latter has a splendid restaurant). *Many others are recommended – possibly having paid for the privilege – the best-known still around today being the Cheshire Cheese off Fleet Street.*

CISTERNS – All cisterns should be thoroughly cleaned out about once a month, and the careful housekeeper will not only order the job to be done, but will himself see that his orders are executed. The family medical man and the family chemist would make much smaller incomes than they do now if all cisterns were regularly seen to.

DRESS – The changes in the way of dress in London have been considerably altered during late years. The silk hat, frock-coat, gloves etc., still hold their own in the clubs and amongst gentlemen in the West End, and to some extent the City, but the younger city men, and, indeed, men all over London have apparently forsworn the

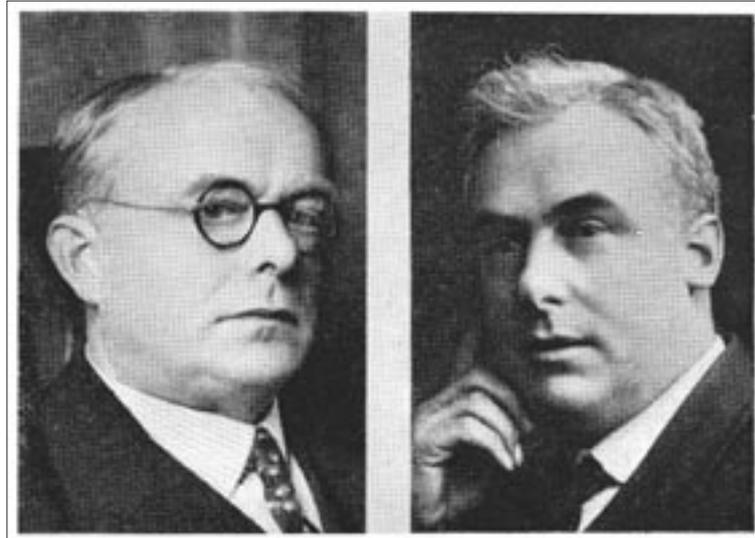
use of anything but the bowler and the jacket suit. It is an undoubted fact that in London today the unconventional is much more accepted. Evening dress is worn in the stalls and best parts of the theatres, and at the Italian Opera is rigorously enforced in every part except gallery and amphitheatre.

Ladies’ dress can be seen at its zenith at the different functions which take place during the London season, the church parade on Sundays in Hyde Park, and, indeed, on any day or evening whenever society congregates. It is not always, however, that the loudest dressed people, at least in public, constitute the cream of London Society. What is sometimes a popular fashion is so distorted as to lose the taste, which it originally possessed, by its extravagance and unsuitability to the wearer.

DUST – (See ASHES.)

Furnishing a Legacy

The E & A Wates Story



Anyone travelling down Mitcham Lane in Streatham and glancing into the windows of E&A Wates may be surprised to see a large furniture shop with some pretty creative window displays. It might seem a little out of

place and few would imagine the contribution that this local business has made for over 100 years and the fascinating history it has to tell.

The company was founded by Edward Wates my great uncle in 1900 when he was aged 27. He came from humble origins; his grandfather was a bankrupt licensee of the Prince of Saxe-Coburg in the London's Old Kent Road and his father, William the 11th child in the family, was a carpenter and joiner. William moved several times in the course of his work and finally settled in Mitcham Lane. His crowning glory was to set out the dome of Croydon Town Hall. He also fathered an 11 strong family with five sons and six daughters.

Edward and Arthur were his eldest boys and whilst they got on very well it was during a school boy scrap that some boiling water was knocked off the living room stove over half of Edward's face resulting in acute deafness in one ear. Because of this disability he was taken out of school aged 11 and sent out to work gaining employment with a fishmonger in Croydon. We next hear of him cycling to a different job, this time a daily trip from Addiscombe to Shepherd's Bush working in a furniture shop.

By the late 1890s he was engaged on a salary and commission basis as a salesman in a furniture shop in Kennington Rd. He had developed a keen nose for business and took an order to completely refurbish the nearby Antelope Pub. His employer said the commission was too high to pay and consequently Edward resigned on the spot, rented

a shop on Mitcham Lane and started his own business.

His brother Arthur was his best man at his wedding and one of his duties was to deliver the wedding cake to the home of the bride's parents. This simple

task was made more difficult by that winter's heavy snow fall. Arthur, stumbling blindly through the swirling flakes, clutching the cake, lost his footing and fell on top of the fragile parcel.

Their close friendship survived despite the incident but times were hard and Arthur lost his job with Freeman Hardy and Willis. In his best suit he was running to attend an interview for a city appointment and again tripped, this time into the murkiest of puddles, he abandoned the interview, returned to Streatham and joined Edward in 1902.

Sarah, Edward's wife made curtains and roller blinds and the brothers sold furniture. Cash flow was always tight and one day Edward had no hesitation in selling their own bedroom suite complete with bed to a customer who insisted on immediate delivery!

Brothers William and Herbert were builders but were also laid off around this time; they too joined the firm and persuaded the older brothers to invest in some land in Purley. There, it is said, in approximately 1904 Wates built their first two houses.

Others quickly followed in Streatham and Croydon and by 1914, 139 houses had been built. The demand was high as the suburbs were being created and whenever possible people wanted to move away from the polluted centre of London. Houses became a great investment and the phrase "as safe as houses" was born. Where possible Wates furnished the new proper-

ties, provided linoleum flooring and undertook the removal work.

It was now that a one-horse, four-wheeled canvas-covered van was acquired and only one man, a Nero Simpson was able to control the splendid black Shire horse called Boxer who pulled the vehicle. He was kept in the yard and his stable can still be seen today.

The oldest article that we have in our archives appeared in the Streatham News dated 1909 described the complete house furnishers as "able to show a tremendous lot of furniture, the value of which is marvellous"! It also describes freehold residences as available from £635.

Needing to expand the staff an advert was placed in the shop window "smart lad wanted, five bob a week". Frank Harvey obtained the job and was still employed 53 years later after seeing service in Egypt in World War II.

All building work stopped in the First World War. William Wates joined the navy and Frederick, the fifth brother joined the Royal Naval Air Service. He was however in charge of an armoured car division in France and on his way there he billeted in his whole division in the shop in Mitcham Lane! Sadly, his was the only car to survive in France.

It was between the wars that the building side mushroomed with 26,000 properties being built, most of them being in Norbury and Streatham. Some five million bricks were supplied in nine months and sixty houses were sold in one week. A reputation for fairness was gained and Irish staff were paid at the standard rate, not as some contractors, who paid at 4d per hour less.

It was in the late 1920s that the building activities of the firm became a separate legal company from the furnishing business as building had become a rapidly expanding activity in its own right. They were to become experts in pre-cast concrete and consequently heavily committed to the war effort building air raid shelters, coastal defences, army camps, aerodromes and RAF stations. They were commissioned to build large parts of the Mulberry Harbours for the D Day landings including 450 pontoons, 500 mooring bouys and 12 bridgehead pontoons. These were constructed in secret by 3000 staff who worked night and day in Mitcham, Balham, the South India Dock and Southampton.

During the war news was posted on the shop windows and crowds were attracted to read the scarce material. Our shop windows were blown out and replaced with small glazed panels to avoid potential flying glass should they receive another bombing.

Peter Wates, Frederick's son joined his uncle's business after serving in India and set about securing the property, preventing the rain from entering the roof and cascading down four floors to the basement.



Selling well made utility furniture wasn't a problem but the Government allowed so little margin from the fixed selling prices that cash to pay

staff and maintain the property was always tight. Taxes were steep, 100% purchase tax on luxury items and 50% on lino, carpets and non utility goods.

In the early post war days a multitude of products were sold from radios, TVs, refrigerators, electric heaters to 'maid savers'- these were kitchen units with drop down flaps covered with an enamel surface and were ideal for rolling pastry and thus avoiding the need to employ a maid! The business did well and expanded adding another store in Tooting and one in Upper Tooting which both grew in time and traded for fifty years.

After forty years in the business Peter could name 41 competitors who had come and gone in the local area. Perhaps it was his commitment, dedication and enthusiasm for marketing that were the keys to success. He organised our own Ideal Home Exhibition, our flat roof was advertised as having "helicopter landing space available", windows were framed with mock television sets and a range of 'furnivision' furniture was created!

One of his most memorable jobs was the removal of Lord Norry in 1952 who was appointed Governor General of New Zealand. We needed to move his furniture from Tetbury, Gloucestershire to Streatham for storage and some 24 van loads were required. It was first class furniture and included 50 Queen Anne chairs. After 4 years in storage he wanted to view it. Staff were called in from 3am and moved his furniture into the yard for inspection. His furniture was viewed, the restoration work discussed and it was all stowed away again before night fall.



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He also organised a competition to find our oldest customer invoice. Our winning customer responded with an invoice from the 1930's to carpet an entire house in Axminster carpet and lino for £34. Another customer came forward to say that they had bought a bedside table from us in 1901 for 2 Shillings and that it was still in excellent condition.

One letter from a customer in 1977 regarding a 4'6" Divan bought from us said "The new bed has done more for my back trouble than any doctor or osteopath have been able to do for over 20 years or more"

Nevil Yates joined the company in 1968 and his son Ian Yates three years later. They ensured its success and managed the Tooting and Streatham stores. Ian became joint managing director with Peter's son, Roger in 1990. At one stage with two Wates's, two Yates's and a carpet fitter called Thwaites it was all quite confusing.

For many years we exhibited at the Ideal Home exhibition and later the House and Garden fair but more recently we now show three times a year at the Decorative Fair in Battersea Park. This is a must for all who are interested in interiors and antiques and is a visual feast. As a result of exhibiting there we have gained some overseas work, recently supplying curtains and blinds for a villa in Ibiza. This was not our first overseas work as we have furnished entire properties in Moscow, Paris and Switzerland and supplied furniture as far away as Kazakhstan and Sakolin the Island north of Japan.

As well as a four floor furniture store displaying furniture in helpful, creative room settings the company has its own workshop on site. Here a team of craftspeople are still employed and undertake reupholstery, French polishing, antique repair and restoration together with the related skills of caning, rushing and gilding.

Having all these specialities on hand enables complicated projects to be undertaken, for example the restoration of a Bergère sofa may use our cabinet maker to re-build the frame, replace mouldings, veneer or carving work, our caner to repair or replace damaged panels, our polisher to strip, stain and repolish the decorative frame and of course our upholsterer to web, spring, stuff (often still using horse hair fillings) and cover the sofa. Add to this some distressed gilding and the benefits of providing every service are obvious.

Annual tours of the workshop allow the public to

see these skills at first hand, to feel the veneers, check for woodworm, spot the needy drawer runners and smell the glue pot! Talks have been given during the local Furzedown and Streatham festivals on William Morris, Georgian and Victorian furniture, the Art Deco Movement and Interior Design.

On the first floor, three rooms hold one of the largest collections of fabric sampling in South

London and here many interior design schemes are planned. Curtains, blinds, loose covers, wallpaper and carpets complement the service. Advice is freely available and home visits frequently follow.

Whilst the majority of our customers are regular householders from south of the river we are also pleased to work for a good

number of commercial clients based in town. These include embassies, casinos, hospitals, hotels and major oil companies along with property companies and global retailers. With a couple of Royal societies and some celebrities comes huge diversity to our work and from day to day you never know if you will be inspecting work in an office overlooking parliament, a basement of a London gallery or a livery company in the city. The variety of furniture that we work on is as broad as the nature of the work; from Jacobean chairs, Steinway pianos, and writing slopes through to 20th Century classics.

The furniture market is constantly changing but the help you receive for any of your furniture requirements whether it is to restore your Granny's nursing chair, curtain your living room, carpet your staircase or buy a new sofa will always be enthusiastic and straight forward. The pictures of Edward and Arthur that hang in the boardroom are sufficient to keep us on the straight and narrow!

Roger Wates

The next Decorative Fair in Battersea Park is the Winter Fair from January 24th – 29th; free tickets are available on request from our store in Mitcham Lane



Great concerts in Wandsworth

Nine years ago the St Luke's Music Society was formed to present performances in the beautiful St Luke's Church in Thurleigh Road, SW12. An enthusiastic group of people got together to run these events all bringing a vital skill to raise money, choose the performers, buy the wine and also get training to hold a liquor licence, market the concerts, attract a Friends group and source printing. Many of this group are still involved and feel a great sense of satisfaction that the Music Society is flourishing still, is presenting an ever better series of concerts and remains solvent.

The 2011/12 season began in October with the brilliant young soprano, Lucy Crowe. One of the most exciting singers in the UK today Lucy gave a programme of German lieder, Berg's Seven early songs and a lovely selection of English song and Irish folk songs. Her performance of "She mov'd through the fair" totally unaccompanied will live long in the memory. She was superbly accompanied throughout the evening by Anna Tilbrook.

In November, John Lill gave an amazing piano recital. Playing a lovely Fazioli piano he wowed his audience just before the interval with a performance of Prokofiev's toccata. Mozart, Schumann and Brahms also featured in his programme which culminated in a deeply moving interpretation of Beethoven's Appassionata sonata. A packed audience really appreciated the opportunity to hear one of greatest pianists.

The December concert brings the Festival Chorus to the stage. Formed 35 years ago this locally based choral society gets better and better under its conductor David Fawcett. The choir celebrates the feast of St Nicholas with Haydn's Mass dedicated to the saint and Britten's Cantata on the life of Nicolas (sic!). Joined by the St Luke's Junior Choir and Anthony Gregory in the title role, this promises to be a superb concert.

2012 brings back to St Luke's Tasmin Little for a violin recital with John Lenehan as her accompanist. Anyone who heard her Elgar violin Concerto in the Proms in August will know in what fine form she is in. I am not sure how many people know that Grieg wrote a violin sonata – well you certainly will after her recital on 12th January.

They say that policemen get younger all the time. Well, it is also true of flute players! The youngest principal flute of any orchestra in London, in this case that of the London Symphony Orchestra, Adam Walker gives the first ever flute recital in the Series on February 11th. This is part of the Music Society's determination to support the development of young musicians destined to have a major career.

After the Festival Chorus's March concert of great 21st century choral works by Bob Chilcott, Jonathan Dove and Cecilia MacDowall, we welcome the American Jazz singer Stacey Kent and her band on 28th April. Stacey is really popular among the jazz fraternity and brings an amazing chansonnere quality to her repertoire and performances.

Finally our final performance on 19th May is Johann Strauss's Die Fledermaus. This fun piece will have a strong community flavour with professional soloists and orchestra combining with community and school groups from the South Battersea area. Directed by Derek Carden, the performance will be that mix of semi-staged and concert performance and will bring opera back to the Music Society after several years.

Do come and join us in 2012
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St Luke's Music Society

Bringing Music to the Battersea and South West London Community

With a reputation for presenting international artists in beautiful surroundings **St Luke's Music Society** is now established as one of south London's premiere arts organisations. In this, our ninth season, we are proud to present has these diverse and outstanding artists.

Saturday 14 January 2012 at 7.30pm
Tasmin Little ~ violin with John Lenahan ~ piano

A return visit to St Luke's by the brilliant British violinist **Tasmin Little**. Her *Naked Violin* concert was a highlight our 2007-8 season, so we are delighted she is returning for our first concert in 2012. Tasmin had a big success at the BBC Proms in August 2011 with her performances of Elgar's Violin concerto. This recital with her regular accompanist will be eagerly anticipated, and early booking is recommended.



Saturday 11 February 2012 at 7.30pm
Adam Walker ~ flute with James Baillieu ~ piano

We are proud to present Adam Walker, one of the finest young flautists in the country, as part of our commitment to young artists in the early stages of their careers. He is the youngest Principal Flute of the London Symphony Orchestra, and has played concerti with many orchestras around the UK. His programme will include music by Barber, Schubert and Martinu, and the rarely performed Suite for Flute and Piano by the great organ virtuoso, Widor.

Adam is supported by the Young Concert Artists' Trust.

Saturday 28 April 2012 at 7.30pm
Stacey Kent and her band

"*devastatingly stylish.... a beauty in any circumstances*" wrote *The Observer*, perfectly describing this season's jazz programme. With the style of Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holliday and the clarity of Nat King Cole, Stacey Kent has performed across the world with her band, which includes the brilliant saxophonist Jim Tomlinson, and has a big following in this country where she performs regularly at Ronnie Scotts. For our many jazz lovers this is an evening not to be missed.



Saturday 19 May 2012 at 7.30pm
Concert performance of *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss

Opera returns to the series with a concert performance of Strauss's great comic opera. This promises to be a truly community performance, with professional singers and orchestra joined by members of the Festival Chorus and local schools for the opera which fizzes with love and champagne!

Box Office www.slms.org.uk or 07951 791619
Obtain a 5% ticket discount when becoming a member of the Society
See website for details

All tickets £16 (£12 concessions)

Postal bookings

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Personal bookings only

Northcote Music Shop
155c Northcote Road
London
SW11 6QB

Edward and Helen Thomas

in Battersea and Wandsworth

This article is based on the talk given by Richard Purver, illustrated with readings in prose and poetry by Anne Harvey, on behalf of the Edward Thomas Fellowship at the Wandsworth Society AGM on 24 March 2011. For reasons of space the readings have not been included here but can be found in the works mentioned in the text. Richard started the talk by referring to his own family background in the area, his mother Hilda Evershed coming from Wandsworth and his father William Purver from Battersea, and past Fellowship activities held locally, including readings

by Anne Harvey of Edward Thomas's poetry, for example at Wandsworth Museum in October 2005 to coincide with the exhibition *Our Country: the Battersea and Wandsworth of Edward Thomas*.

Readers may be particularly interested in Anne Harvey's *Adlestrop Revisited*, about the wide response to that poem from readers and other writers over the years, and the recently published *Now All Roads Lead To France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas* by Matthew Hollis.

The writer and poet Edward Thomas was born in March 1878 in Lambeth and moved with his parents to Battersea when he was about two. After his marriage to Helen Noble they moved to Kent and then Steep in Hampshire, and finally High Beech in Epping Forest. He was killed in the First World War at the Battle of Arras in April 1917.



In this article I would like to concentrate on the idea of locality and the way our lives unfold within surroundings which acquire a lasting meaning for us. In the case of Edward and Helen Thomas they left a record of their memories and experiences and we can still visit the streets and houses where their descriptions and vignettes evoke real lives lived in these particular places in the late Victorian and Edwardian period.

Edward's father and mother Philip Thomas and Mary Townsend were born in South Wales and came to London when Philip obtained a post as a civil servant with the Board of Trade. He was involved in local Liberal politics and gave

lectures at Battersea Town Hall for the Battersea Ethical Society. Edward was the eldest of six brothers.

The first house the Thomases lived at in Battersea was 49 Wakehurst Road, near to Wandsworth Common. In his posthumously published autobiography, *The Childhood of Edward Thomas*, Edward talks of his explorations of the varied habitat of the Common and games played there, and gives a precise description of the nearby roads and the house itself, explaining that even when new the "little semi-detached one-storied pale brick houses" had distinguishing features, for

example the beginnings of creepers on the wall or flowers in the gardens, and because the people were different.

Edward Thomas attended the local Board School, Belleville Road as an infant and was admitted to the main school in April 1886, his name appearing in the register in the Welsh form of "Edwy". The school of course is still there and housed in the original building. In his autobiography Edward describes his teachers and fellow pupils, the lessons and the games in the playground, remembering "crawling in and bursting out ... We were huddled close together in great lofty rooms with big windows and big maps and on Mondays a smell of carbolic soap". He tells how boys gathered in large groups for mock battles on the Common and these could become more serious when the local grammar school boys, probably from Emanuel, taunted the 'Boardy Blags', that is blackguards, from the Board School.

Edward Thomas's waking life as a child was divided, as he says, "between home, school and

the streets and neighbouring common". There was much to interest him: fishing in the ponds left by gravel workings on the Common, touring the various shops, hanging round with friends for hours smoking brown paper cigarettes, mooning about hoping to catch sight of girls he liked and visits to the blacksmith and pigeon fanciers. He took to keeping pigeons, rabbits and white mice himself and says of homing pigeons that "Their high circlings visible from our back garden, and their rushing lower flight between the chimney pots, were sublime to me".

Inspired by his admiration for the writings of Richard Jefferies, Edward kept diary notes of his natural history observations, recording for example on 13 April 1895 "Swallows, house-martins and sand-martins came to Wandsworth Common in fine blue weather". These diaries formed the basis of his first book, *The Woodland Life*, which was published in 1897, when he was nineteen.

The family moved to 61 Shelgate Road in 1888, where a plaque in memory of Edward Thomas was placed in 1949. After attending a private school for a while Edward won a scholarship to Battersea Grammar School at the top of St John's Hill, on the site later occupied by the Granada Cinema, and in due course went on to St Paul's in Hammersmith.

Edward was now nearer to Clapham Common, which he says on foggy nights "was in many ways like desert undiscovered country, yet perfectly harmless" and where on one occasion he was proud to have his middle stump bowled clean out of the ground by the famous socialist MP John Burns (who has his own

plaque at 110 North Side).

The children attended the Unitarian chapel in East Hill at the insistence of their father. Although it has to be said that Edward detested the constraints of Sunday School and being expected to discuss the evening sermon afterwards at dinner, his connection with the Unitarian Church did have a profound effect on his life as he received the support of the minister, Reverend Tarrant, with his early writing and it was



through his recommendation that Edward met another member of the congregation, the literary critic and journalist James Ashcroft Noble and his daughter Helen.

Helen Noble was born in Liverpool in July 1877 and attended Wimbledon High School when the family moved back to London in 1893, after a previous stay of two years. They lived initially at 15 The Grove in Wandsworth, which later became 37 St Ann's Hill. The house was part of a section called Agincourt Villas, which was destroyed in July 1944 by a flying bomb. This was where Helen and Edward first met, as described by Helen in her memoir *As It Was* [collected with the sequel, *World Without End*, in *Under Storm's Wing*].

The Nobles moved to 6 Patten Road, close to the west side of Wandsworth Common, in December 1895. James Ashcroft Noble became a mentor to Edward Thomas, who dedicated his first book to him after he died in 1896. The funeral service was

conducted by Mr Tarrant at the Unitarian chapel. James Ashcroft Noble and in 1907 his wife Esther, were buried in Wandsworth Cemetery, where the gravestone carries a touching inscription recording the admiration and love of his 'comrades in letters'. We are told that Edward and Helen tended the grave with wildflowers. I came across the tombstone by chance in the 1990s when looking for those of my Evershed ancestors.

Edward was still a student at Oxford when he and Helen married at Fulham Register Office in June 1899 and Helen went to stay with his family at 61 Shelgate Road while expecting their first child Merfyn. Helen would take Merfyn to Clapham Common and enjoyed looking for signs of spring flowers in the large overgrown gardens of the old country houses of bygone city merchants in the surrounding streets.

Most children were born at home at this time and the event recorded in private letters and diaries, but we have a published account by Helen of Merfyn's birth at 61 Shelgate Road in *As It Was*, with a detailed description of their room at the top of the house as it became vividly memorable to her when the labour started. It is interesting to compare this passage with Edward Thomas's identification with a similar place in his poem *The Long Small Room*.

Edward and Helen Thomas lived for three months from November 1900 in a 'half-house' or 3-room upper flat at 117 Atheldene Road, a new street in Earlsfield, "obviously doomed to become a slum" according to Helen, although it had a good sitting-room which they had distempered in a warm French grey. She says there was "a little kitchen

with steps leading from it to a tiny squalid back-yard, used by the downstairs people for keeping ramshackle rabbit hutches and hanging out washing which was always wet and never clean". The tenants downstairs, whom she regarded as "terribly poor and degraded" often moved out in the middle of the night to avoid paying the rent. No 117 has now gone. It may be this street which is referred to in an essay of 1902, *Recollections of November*, in which Edward Thomas contemplates the moon and fragments of nature seen from his room.

They then lived from February to October 1901 at 7 Nightingale Parade, Nightingale Lane in Balham. This was a flat above a parade of shops which is still there on the corner of Blandfield Road, close to where Edward's parents moved to, 13 (now 12) Rusham Road. Balham and the surrounding district is the explicit setting of Edward Thomas's only novel, *The Happy-Go-Lucky Morgans*, published in 1913. The centrepiece of the story is an imagined dwelling, Abercorran House, based on the large old houses with grounds still existing locally, many of which would be knocked down and replaced with new villas.

The novel also contains an interesting description of 'Our Country', which seems from its reference to The George Inn to be the area around Merton and Morden, then still a rural location beyond the suburbs, which is also mentioned in *The Childhood* as a favourite place that Edward and his friends used to walk out to from Battersea. His life-long capacity for walking long distances was shown early in these treks; he also often walked

to Wimbledon Common or Richmond Park, sometimes taking the train to Barnes from Clapham Junction in the latter case or to go further afield. Starting very early on a Sunday on occasions he "walked to Kingston and back in time for morning service". Helen later joined him on some of these expeditions.

The theme of another early essay, *Broken Memories*, is that of walking out across the railway bisecting Wandsworth Common and through the encroaching streets to the fields and woods, and *The Happy-Go-Lucky Morgans* features a detailed description of a typical long road leading north into the suburbs from the London countryside, past building sites fronted with hoardings, a new cemetery and a factory, isolated blocks of new houses, an old inn with a Gypsy's cart outside and then the Victoria Hotel, "built in the Jubilee year of that sovereign", old cottages and the overgrown gardens of empty or soon to-be-abandoned dwellings.

Although Edward Thomas deplored the crowded brick streets of the city he was also fascinated by and saw beauty in them, and despite his move away in 1901 and his role as a chronicler of the countryside in prose and verse, his involvement in the South London suburb he grew up in continued all his life. Edward visited his family and friends there regularly over the years and it was from the house in Rusham Road that he set off on his bicycle on 21 March (Good Friday) 1913 to ride all the way to the Quantocks to gather material for his travelogue, *In Pursuit of Spring*.

Edward continued his early

practice of making natural history notes in his diaries, observing on 8 July 1913, "Rusham Road: 6-7.15 a.m. one thrush hammering away at one triple cry, message or whatever anyone else likes" and on 1 February 1915, "How I noticed the one thrush near the tip of poplar 250 yards beyond Nightingale Lane in opening of Rusham Road – he was singing, the only one". This sentence was adapted for use as the second verse of his poem *The Thrush*.

Edward and Helen's own children came to know the area in turn through staying with their relatives. Their third child Myfanwy remembered being taken for long walks on Wandsworth Common by her paternal grandfather and the fierce Welsh cook named Emma who occupied the basement of the "tall, dark house" in Balham.

Another overnight visitor to Rusham Road was the American poet Robert Frost who encouraged Edward Thomas to write poetry after years of producing a series of prose books on a wide variety of subjects as a professional author. Edward wrote some of his early poems while billeted with his parents after enlisting in the Artists' Rifles in July 1915. As recorded in his *War Diary*, it was at Rusham Road that Edward had supper with all his brothers on 11 January 1917 and said goodbye to his elder daughter Bronwen and his mother and father the next day, before embarking for France on the 29th.

The last quotation in my talk for the Wandsworth Society in March was a passage from *The Childhood of Edward Thomas* where Edward gives an account of walking to

Wimbledon Common with other boys and girls. In it he refers to the paper factory which was located on the the river Wandle where it runs parallel to Garratt Lane. The Royal Paper Mills was demolished in 1910 but a nearby road, Esparto Street, carries a reminder in its name, as esparto was a type of grass used in paper-making.

I felt that Society members would enjoy this mention of the Wandle because of the great interest they have taken in the restoration and management of the river, and perhaps even more the reference to a location with special relevance to where the AGM was held, West Side Church, at the corner of Melody Road and Allfarthing Lane:

The three-mile walk was ... good in itself, whether we went by Wandsworth, Earlsfield or Wimbledon ... Allfarthing Lane was worth going down for its name's sake. We invented explanations and repeated those of our parents. At the top dwelt an old woman in what looked a one-room hut who presumably knew and had something to do with the origin of the queer name. But above all, whichever way we we took, the Wandel had to be crossed ... best of all was the middle way through Earlsfield, crossing the Wandel at the paper mills. The smell of the mills wafted over a mile and a half on certain still evenings gave me a quiet sort of poetic delight. Hereby the water ran over a steep artificial slant, swift, glittering, and sounding; and sometimes we stayed here and caught minnows instead of going on to Wimbledon. It was the first place where I saw and realized the beauty of bright running water. We paddled with our stockings in our shoes and our shoes tied together and slung over our shoulders. We talked and laughed and shouted and splashed the water. I cannot remember cold or rain or any clouds there.



Anne completed our talk by reading a small selection of Edward Thomas's poems, starting with one of his most popular, *Adlestrop*, followed by *Birds' Nests, March, Helen* and *Good-night*.



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For Squash, club night is on Mondays for all-comers, mix-ins every Sunday afternoon, 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 Wednesday evening, 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 for more details.

THE 
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CLUB

A strawberry and (limewash) cream treat!

... the Society's visit to Strawberry Hill on 24 June

Easily reached some 5 minutes from its namesake station on the Kingston loop, the original, small, plain dwelling was once to be found in the depths of the countryside outside London, surrounded by market gardens, bounded by the Thames and close to the great and the good of the day and their estates along the river at Twickenham, Richmond, Hampton and Kingston.

The dwelling was purchased by Hugh Walpole's son Horace in 1747 who, over time, found the funds and inspiration to expand it to become a 'society' icon!

The extravagantly decorated interiors and the architectural excesses externally, would hardly seem out of place today if built for the home of one of our current 'bling' celebrities. For that is just what Horace Walpole was of his time: a celebrity. However it was his home which eventually was to become the true celebrity, as it was extended, remodelled and redecorated inside and out with Gothic motifs. These were borrowed from cathedrals and similar distinguished buildings, altered in scale and purpose and adapted as the style for fittings, such as tomb inspired fireplaces and surrounds, bookcases based on a doorway at old St Pauls, screens - one echoing a screen at Rouen, and ceilings. One such ceiling, amongst many, is to be found in the heavily scaled down, first floor "gallery". The ceiling is decorated in extravagant gilded patterns and mouldings derived from the fan tracery of Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey, but, instead of stone vaults, Horace used paper mache to replicate them!

Some aspects of the house - which has only very recently been reopened to the public following a £9.5 million repair, refurbishment, and partial rebuilding where the fabric of the original build-

ing was found to be structurally unsound - exhibit a somewhat sounder architectural purpose: the exploitation of light and shade, and outlook. The entrance hall, for example, was designed to be a subdued space within the heart of the building



which explodes into bright light at its top lit second floor landing where Gothic armour and weapons were once displayed as, sadly, unlike most of our historic houses, the contents of this one were the subject of one of the 19th century's largest and longest auctions

lasting 32 days as Horace Walpole's extensive collection of archaeological artefacts, books, prints, paintings and furniture were disposed of in 1842 by the new owner of Strawberry Hill.

The restoration is first class; the building sits amidst spacious lawns, and new planting which is replicating the landscaping of Walpole's era, gleaming in limewash creamy-white like a giant jewel box waiting to be opened and explored. It is worth exploring but allow plenty of time as the guidebook is most informative (as is the indispensable Pevsner) or, if you prefer, an excellent guide will show you around.

On a glorious summer day, the 17 Society members who visited Strawberry Hill were enchanted by it and its history. Afterwards, 7 hardy souls, armed with picnics, walked along the Thames back towards Wandsworth. However, after the picnic stop, the party became distracted en-route by Twickenham's St Mary's Church by the river, and Orleans House and an exhibition of Richard Dadd drawings and sketches from Bedlam, so by the time it reached Richmond for a well earned cup of tea and slice of gateau, the train was unanimously selected as the best way home where we arrived just before an evening downpour.

John Dawson

The Society Soirées

"Take thy lute wench. My soul grows sad with troubles.
Sing and disperse 'em if thou canst ..."

"Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,
Bow themselves when he did sing ...
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing die."

(Shakespeare, Henry VIII, 3.1.)

It is obvious that Shakespeare was a great lover of music, and a believer in its powers to restore health and happiness or bestow other qualities (or "humours") as required. At 4 Patten Road the master is a musician and his wife and two children are doctors. Music and medicine are both healing arts.

Although not specifically planned the 2011 series of concerts had a pleasing symmetry. At either end there was a song recital with very different repertoire. In between we had two instrumental concerts, one with wind instruments and the other with strings.

In February the German tenor Norbert Meyn with David Ward at the fortepiano and clavichord performed some rarely heard songs by Haydn, Mozart and C.P.E. Bach. These were perfectly suited to the drawing room where it was possible to savour each word and nuance, subtly and sensitively projected by both artists.

The first of the instrumental groups was a young quartet of clarinetists playing a variety of clarinets, large and small, low and high. Their programme explored a number of 20th and 21st century pieces, some written especially for this unusual combination. Thanks to Diana Godden, who wrote a glowing review of this concert in the summer newsletter, ending with *"I think we all went home buzzing with joy."*

For the Summer Soirée we were privileged to welcome again the Ceruti Ensemble who performed a memorable Schubert quintet for the society in 2008. This time we had another marvellous quintet, Mozart's G minor, surely one of the greatest works for string ensemble. This was played before the interval, which allowed the audience to appreciate the fineness of the music before eating and drinking too much! The wetness of the evening did not spoil our enjoyment, despite not being able to spread ourselves out in the garden. After the interval we were treated to a glorious quartet by Haydn, nicknamed "The

Sunrise". Wendy Cater wrote in appreciation, *"It was altogether a deeply satisfying performance ... a group of friends, spouses, colleagues in harmony - playing with passion and finesse, evidently relishing communicating the music they love to a close and appreciative audience."*

So to another song recital after the summer break. This was a lovely evening of French song, beautifully performed by soprano Marie Vassiliou and baritone Marc Callahan with eloquent and skilful accompaniment from local pianist Nigel Foster. The programme was well designed to have plenty of variety, from the lyricism of Fauré and Duparc to the witticisms of Ibert and Poulenc. The evening began and ended with two lovely duets by Saint-Saens and Chausson.

This concert marked the beginning of our 25th season – or is it the 26th? It continues to be a pleasure to organise and host this series of concerts and to welcome our appreciative audiences



February 6th

Norbert Meyn, tenor with David Ward, fortepiano.
Songs and keyboard pieces by Haydn, Mozart and C.P.E. Bach.

April 3rd

'Clariphonics'
a clarinet quartet

Benjie Del Rosario, Helen James, Helen Pierce,
Stuart Smith.

Mozart, Tomasi, Brahms, Elliott Carter, Sondheim,
Jim Pywell, Piazzolla, Arrieu, Mike Curtis.

June 12th

Summer Soirée.
Ceruti Ensemble.

Peter Nall and Ben Harte, violins, Anthony Byrne
and Rebecca Harte, violas, Lucy Nall, cello.
Mozart Quintet in G minor, Haydn Quartet in B
flat.

October 9th

Marie Vassiliou, soprano, Marc Callahan, baritone,
Nigel Foster, piano.

A French Evening. Saint-Saens, Fauré, Lili
Boulangier, Duparc, Ravel, Ibert, Debussy, Poulenc,
Chausson.



2012



The next Soirée will be on February 19th 2012 – an evening of speech and drama. Local professional actor, Martin Wimbush will present his acclaimed one-man show

Wellington

Co-written by Martin Wimbush and director Ellis Jones, with music by the distinguished violinist, Benedict Cruft, the play is an intimate portrait of the first Duke of Wellington, set at Walmer Castle Kent, where the Duke was Warden of the Cinque Ports. Here in the confines of his small room, we come face to face with the old Duke, as he guides us through his personal and public life and in so doing we get closer to the private man, beneath the public face. The result is a moving, sensitive and often passionate portrayal of the great man's life.

Telephone the Wards on 8874 4938 or e-mail davidwb.ward@virgin.net to secure places for this event.



Other dates for next year are March 25th when a recently established piano trio will be playing for us; the programme is to be confirmed but it will almost certainly include Beethoven's wonderful 'Archduke' trio. The Summer Soirée, as yet unplanned, will probably be on June 10th or 17th.

Please continue to support these events - but remember to phone us early to avoid disappointment!



"Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory ... "
(Shelley)

"Music, the greatest good that mortals
know,
And all of heaven we have below."
(Dryden)



Events dear boy ... events

Thursday 19 January 2012

7.45 for 8 pm

West Side Church, corner of Melody Road and Allfarthing Lane

The Peabody Clapham Redevelopment

explained by

Project Leader Richard Stanway-Williams |

Peabody Principal Development
Manager | Development

The next Putney Society Meeting to which we are invited is on

Thursday 26 January 2012

St Mary's Church, Putney Bridge

7.30 pm

Looking Forward to Growing Old in Wandsworth?

Come and share your concerns. With all the changes that are happening with services and facilities for those over 50, it's hard to know what's available, and how the changes will affect you. Wandsworth are moving forward with the Open Access style services and this will have some impact on a lot of residents. The Putney Society have organised a meeting as a result of all these changes in the hope that we will learn more about them. We hope to outline some of the problems and to offer some solutions and ideas on how to support and help those who need it. On the Panel will be Councillor Jim Maddan, Cabinet Member Adult Care and Health, Dawn Warwick, Director of Adult Social Services, and Rachel Corry from Age UK Wandsworth. We will all be affected at one time or another, so please make a note of the date and come along.

Thursday 23 February

7.45 for 8pm

West Side Church

What is going on at St George's?
Why do they want to become a
foundation trust? What is meant by
"Transforming St George's Healthcare?"

Miles Scott, newly appointed Chief Executive of St Georges Healthcare NHS Trust will explain.

Miles has been chief executive of Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust since August 2005 until his appointment in September 2011.

Women as Spies, Saboteurs and Resistance Fighters

by Hugh Davies



Women have been active as spies, saboteurs and resistance fighters since the dawn of history. There are three factors that are common to most of them. Their fighting is usually prompted by a reaction to an occupying foreign or perceived to be a foreign force. They are women who may take an active rôle bearing arms or a passive role which is equally important that manifests itself usually as a group that refuses to cooperate with the occupier. The factor that is common to them all is that they were not forced or coerced to do anything, they could have remained totally passive with an attitude of "if you have done nothing wrong you have nothing to fear". However these women chose to do something, they were determined not to sit idly by and do nothing.

These women who chose to do something have existed from ancient to modern times. Not all cultures regarded women as second class and warrior women were quite common in ancient times. We all know of Cleopatra of Egypt and the nature of her resistance. Later in Britain we are familiar with Boudicca who led a revolt against the Roman occupation of her kingdom and she was joined by other British kingdoms some of which were led by women. The Romans had no regard for women as leaders, indeed they introduced the concept of women as being the property of men and so judged the British by their standards not the indigenous ones. This concept has been common throughout history of an occupier imposing its standards and laws on the occupied on the assumption the occupier is superior. One can see

it today in corporate take overs. The British Empire certainly imposed their laws and norms on others as did all the other colonial powers.

Along with the status of women in most western cultures went a strange idea that they were intellectually inferior. During the American war of independence there were women spies on both sides but there was a common attitude that a woman's presence in a room where military strategy or tactics was being discussed was not a threat since they were not intelligent enough to understand it. Women were particularly adept as couriers or messengers since they were not regarded as a threat and indeed ignored if accompanied by a man. I am sure many of us have experienced the car salesman insisting on selling to the man and ignoring the woman whose car it will actually be. Surveillance even today is often carried out by a couple as they will be ignored even though the lead person is the woman not the man.

An interesting period concerning women spies is the inter-war period. In the 2nd World War the Soviets did not appear to regard women as of no use as they had all women army battalions and their top snipers were women. That attitude seems to have existed since the revolution and women spies were very active as Soviet agents between the wars. The handler in Moscow Centre of the Cambridge five was a woman. Kim Philby was recruited by a woman Edith Tudor Hart. Women were at the heart of the Communist Party of Great Britain including Eva Reckitt the heiress to the Reckitt and Coleman empire.

In World War One there were the glamour spies, including the most well-known woman spy of all, Mata Hari. There certainly were women who were prepared to use their female charms as exponents of the pillow-talk process. Although Maxwell Knight who was a publicly known figure on BBC television as well as an agent handler for MI5 said women were more successful at obtaining information by staying out of the arms of a man than by falling into them.



Women played highly significant rôles In World War Two as agents. The FANY Corps into which many were recruited were awarded three George Crosses and the deaths of fifty-four women are recorded on their memorial in London. A cynic may assume these women who participated in active rôles were of a less feminine nature, nothing could be further from the truth. Nancy Wake who commanded seven thousand Maquis Resistance fighters was described as "The most feminine woman I know until the fighting starts then she is like five men". Christine Granville of whom it was said animals and men fell at her feet, and she could do anything with dynamite except eat it. These agents were trained along with the men in the secret training schools of the SOE, the Special Operations Executive. They were parachuted into occupied countries along with the men and fought alongside them. Women as couriers could often easily charm their way through checkpoints manned by young soldier lads even though, as did Lucia Festeri an Italian Partisan, her bicycle bags were loaded with dynamite with detonators taped to her fingers inside her gloves. They were certainly capable of killing their enemy as did another Italian partisan sent to assassinate a German Officer. The Americans had a parallel British-trained operation known as the OSS, the Office of Strategic Services, which unlike SOE continued after the war and became the CIA. They also had some outstanding women such as Virginia Hall, the limping lady of the OSS.

Passive resistance is as important as active resistance and was particularly effective in France with such activities as a thriving underground newspaper, and the Scandinavian countries. Norway possibly had the most effective resistance of all both active and passive. Thousands of Norwegian women acted in concert to totally neutralize the treacherous Quisling government. As Dr Goebbels said of the Norwegians "if they will not

respect us then they will at least learn to fear us". What also made the Norwegian resistance so effective was their concentration on what would happen immediately post war when the German occupiers left and to plan for it so that one occupation was not succeeded by another. As they said occupation is occupation regardless of by whom or for what apparent reason. The IRA in Ireland had a similar attitude to the British occupation of their island even if it happened four hundred years before.

Women were active in many backroom rôles in wartime. They were very active in political warfare where, as Molly Izzard said, "We spread & cultivated ill-ease, suspicion, spitefulness" using the most dirty of dirty tricks including some against our own allies. Behind SOE were many many coders and wireless operators who were the agents' essential links with home. At Bletchley Park the code-breaking centre there were three women to every man. And most of the actual wireless interceptors were women serving with the ATS, The WAAFs or the WRNS. Without them there was no Bletchley Park.

Post World War Two women have full equality as agents and fighters in the secret services and the armed forces. There have been two women directors of MI5 the domestic Security Service and the outstanding Baroness Daphne Park was a controller in the Secret Intelligence Service MI6 dealing with overseas. She learnt her craft in the rubble of Graham Greene's, Harry Lime's immediate post-war Vienna.

Perhaps the most fitting tribute to women is the existence of the women's cenotaph in Whitehall. A Memorial to all the women of World War Two. Half of the British population that on the whole contributed such an essential element to the Allied victory. In contrast Hitler virtually ignored that same half of his population, a fact that may have led to his downfall.

In the public memory women who chose to do something are as famous as the men, Cleopatra, Boudicca, Joan of Arc, Mata Hari, Violette Szabo, Odette, Stella Rymington, Granny Norwood. The list is endless as I am sure will be the women's contribution in the future.

Ω

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!

B o l i n g b r o k e 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.

E & A Yates: Founded in 1900 and found in SW16 this business is bang up to date but offers all the furniture-maker's crafts and products. Offers tours of its showroom and works not to be missed.

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 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.

Marsh & Parsons: Mr Marsh and Mrs Parsons may have passed on but M & P have grown bigger and even better in troubled times.

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

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

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.

Eulogy

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.

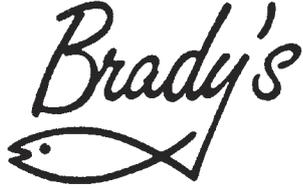
Young & Co's Brewery: Still getting a quart into a pint pot and these days many Young's pubs are the ideal places to eat a really good meal too.

Iain K S Gray

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.

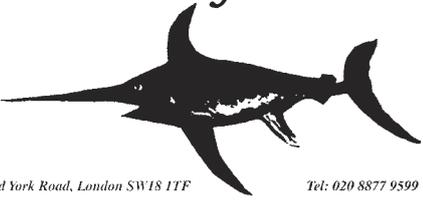


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AFC Wimbledon 2011 THE DREAM

WELL THEY'VE DONE IT!

The fairy-tale result dreamed up by a group of fans sitting round a pub table nine years ago and thinking the impossible. "Let's start all over again". This as a result of their beloved local team (begun as a humble old-boys side for Wimbledon Central School in 1889 but which rose through the amateur ranks to reach the Premiership and the winning of the FA Cup in 1988) was snatched from them and relocated to Milton Keynes. The story is now in the football history books. They did start all over again, on Wimbledon Common in 2002, and they have made it back to the Football League by clawing their way up 5 minor leagues in 9 years.

THE PLAY-OFFS

This time last year, Wimbledon was wondering if it could possibly be in the 'play offs' for promotion out of the Conference. The play-offs are a strange system. The team that comes top gets automatic promotion, but the next four have to enter a knock-out competition to decide who also will go up to the next division. To come second on points is no guarantee of promotion. If AFC Wimbledon could win the play-offs they would go into (or get back to if you believe AFCW to be a continuation of WFC) the Football League.

The club won through to the final against Luton, an experienced side of long standing that was desperate to return to League football after being demoted only the previous year. The big day arrived on 21st May but the match ended in a draw and had to be decided by a penalty shoot-out. Oh the drama, the nail-biting tension. Nothing was settled until the final kick by Wimbledon's Danny Kedwell who, with much jubilation, sent AFCW into the Football League, Division Two. The fairy tale had come true.

UP WITH THE BIG BOYS AGAIN

The team may be back with the big boys but they don't just have to play well to remain. The ground they bought at Kingston* has to conform to FA standards, it has to be able to seat a given number of spectators, to have the correct ticketing systems in place, to accommodate a TV and Press area, to have safe entrances and exits and good quality accommodation for visiting teams. And of course they will also need good players able to compete with the best. A hefty financial bill, but offset by some payment from League funds.

HOW ARE THEY DOING?

The season began very well, AFCW stayed near the top, there was little to choose on points between the first 7 teams. Then the better teams, those with money to spend on players perhaps, began to pull ahead and currently Wimbledon is almost exactly half-way up (or down, if you are a pessimist). Most fans are convinced the team will do enough not to be relegated back to the Conference. (Read the 2012 Bedside to get the next thrilling installment). Wandsworth Society's esteemed Membership Secretary tells us her father once played for Wimbledon FC. Many Society members are supporters of the Club. It is not unknown for our planning sub-committee to have a non-agenda item about AFCW's current position.

* 'The Cherry Red Records Fans Stadium' is the mouthful official title. 'Kingsmeadow' is the traditional name of the ground.

Shirley Passmore

Wandsworth Environmental Update

Whilst economic issues are understandably in the foreground currently, environmental challenges remain high on the agenda internationally, nationally and locally. In Wandsworth, the Council continues to work towards achieving its challenging headline environmental targets. These include; reducing carbon emissions; reducing waste and increasing the proportion recycled; improving the quality of open spaces and wildlife sites; and improving air quality. The Council also continues to campaign on behalf of residents on issues such as Heathrow night flights and the impact of the Thames Water 'super sewer'.

There are in fact a very large number of ways in which the Council's work touches on environmental matters. Some of these are listed below:

Some of the Council's environmental responsibilities...

Parks, Street trees, Water pollution, Conservation, Carbon management, Recycling, Waste collection, Allotments, Flooding, Home energy efficiency, Planning policy, Air pollution, Transport planning, Emergency planning, Litter, Food safety, Noise pollution and Public health.

The Council is committed to encouraging further resident and community involvement, not just where it asks for your views or assistance, but also where you think it could do something differently or even if someone else should be doing it instead!

To that end, the Wandsworth Big Society Fund has been launched to 'help communities help themselves' by enhancing people's quality of life, taking greater responsibility for the fabric of their neighbourhoods or by improving local services. A recent successful example is of groups bidding to take over the role of beautifying open spaces in housing estates - with Council funding to buy tools, plants and materials. Grassroots organisations are invited to apply to the fund to kick-start their projects. For more information visit the Council website or call 020 8871 6205.

An issue which cuts across every area of the Coun-

cil's work and one which the Council can only address fully with the partnership of residents, is the risk posed by climate change and the consequent need for us all to reduce carbon emissions (emissions from homes and private transport make up the vast majority of the borough's total). The Council has reduced carbon emissions from its own activities for several years consecutively, but is not being complacent as this challenge will only become more difficult as the easy and cheap changes are all completed, and financial penalties for being 'carbon inefficient' increase.

The Council is keen to share information with, and learn from, its partners in the borough. There are relatively few large organisations based in the borough, but a majority of them, including HMP Wandsworth, the NHS trusts, New Covent Garden Market and Roehampton University, are now participating in the new Wandsworth Environment Managers Forum. This group is bringing together local experts to focus on combining forces to address carbon reduction, energy saving and other environmental challenges. The Council also works with small businesses on their environmental performance under the Go Green Plus programme, and has helped over 150 businesses so far in finding cost-effective ways to reduce their impact and strengthen their business. From 2012, the Council - in partnership with a number of south west London boroughs - will be commencing a significant further project in this area to help small businesses.

In the last year, the Council has made the decision to install solar photovoltaic panels on the roofs of the Town Hall and another office building. These large installations will, when fitted, make a significant contribution to meeting electricity demand. The Town Hall installation will be hidden behind the ramparts of the roof - protecting the appearance of this listed building.

Another major development in 2011 has been the move to using an energy from waste plant in Bexley, which is now diverting almost all municipal waste from landfill (and reducing associated emissions of methane). This plant is capable of generating elec-

tricity and usable heat from the waste it processes. If the contribution made by recycling ash (into new concrete) and recovering metals from the energy from waste facility is taken into account, this development has also contributed to a significant rise in the recycling rate in the borough in 2011 – to around 42%. Improving recycling rates in London continues to prove a challenge – not least because of the complexities of high-rise and shared ownership residences – but the Council is making some progress in reducing the amount of waste produced in the first place. Reducing waste produced in the first place is at least as more important as addressing the recycling rate, and is increasingly a focus of efforts.

In the area of sustainable transport, the growth of Car Clubs in the borough is one of the big success stories of the last few years, with resident membership of car clubs now exceeding 11,000. Very soon the borough will have multiple operators with on-street bays and hundreds of cars available to members to hire at short notice. Car club users tend to drive less, are likely to give up or avoid buying a car, and car club cars are also fuel efficient. All of this helps to address local issues including pressure on car parking space, congestion and air pollution.

Air pollution of course continues to be a major concern – and an issue that is attracting much attention across London and nationally. The Council is implementing its own longstanding air quality action plan, as is the Mayor of London, but there is certainly a lot more to do on this issue, which cannot be resolved by one area or one organisation in isolation. For example, in Wandsworth, a large proportion of traffic is merely transiting through the borough, often on trunk roads not managed by the Council. Examples of initiatives taken to address the issue in Wandsworth include anti vehicle-idling campaigns and the promotion of school travel plans (to reduce car use). Of course, the Council also measures air pollution regularly at a number of sites in the borough.

As winter approaches and energy prices continue their apparently inexorable rise, the usually 'boring' subjects of heating and insulation attract a bit more attention. The Council continues to take steps to address energy efficiency and thermal comfort in its own housing stock – for example with a rolling programme of window renewals – but is also aware that a lot of the private housing in the borough is not well insulated. A Council led project, called RE:

NEW, has recently gained funding to work in wards in the south of the borough offering insulation and energy saving assistance to residents.

However, looming on the horizon is a new Government initiative called the Green Deal, which aims to remove the financial barriers to improving energy efficiency for homeowners, private tenants and small businesses. A 'pay as you save' scheme, it should enable a whole-house retrofit for energy efficiency at no upfront cost to the resident. This scheme will launch in the autumn of 2012 and the Council is actively looking at how it can support this hugely ambitious project.

On the other hand, an area which becomes less interesting to many as the nights draw in and the wildlife retreats for winter, are the borough's extensive parks, commons and other open spaces. As well as all the

usual hard work pruning and lopping (and maintaining the number of street trees in the borough), two exciting projects will continue to be worked on throughout the winter – if mainly from indoors. These are the new 'linear park' that will thread along the large Battersea-Nine Elms redevelopment and the proposed Wandle Valley Regional Park, which aims to open up the Wandle corridor for wildlife and public amenity.

As with other local projects, both of these proposed parks are of course hugely complex, with numerous organisations working towards their completion, many stakeholders to please and many constraints to manage. Neither will be complete this year (or the next!) but the work - and the dialogue with interested parties - continues.

Ewan Delaney



More information is available on
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/sustainability

Paper versions of the Council's Environmental Action Plan update and 'Wandsworth 2018' are available on request. Please call 02088716182 or write to Environmental Policy Analyst, Policy Unit, Town Hall, Wandsworth SW18 2PU.

Transition Town Wandsworth

Let me start with a challenge

As you sit and read this take a moment to cast an eye over where you're sitting. If you can, try and identify as many objects in this space that weren't manufactured, finished or transported using some sort of fossil fuel. Unless you're lucky enough to own some antiques or discerning enough to have sourced handmade objects and had them brought here on foot or bicycle (which of course would still had to of been manufactured with inputs of energy), the chances are that, in common with most people of the Western world, you're surrounded, clothed and fed by materials that would not be possible without easy available oil.

In fact it is impossible to overstate the impact, good and bad, this resource has had upon humanity and the planet. An energy source so rich – just one barrel of the stuff equating to 25,000 hours of human labour (12.5 years at 40 hours per week)¹ – it was inevitable that we would make use of it to 'progress' to where we are now. However, nothing in nature is infinite and it now seems that we are close to a 'peaking' in the worldwide supply of easily available oil. No major discoveries have happened in the last two decades and existing reserves are by and large located in politically unstable and/ or hostile regimes. What that means is the cost of extraction will become increasingly costly, diminishing return on investment and pushing up prices on everything. You may have already noticed what reverberations in the price of oil can do to the worldwide economy following the price spike of 2008.

Peak oil, the theory that most of the cheap and easier to extract oil has already 'peaked' in terms of discovery and extraction, has slowly gained ground over the last few years; tellingly the October 2008 report of the UK government's 'Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil & Energy Security (ITPOES)', plainly sets out its expectations for a supply 'crunch' around 2011 – 2013. These realities, coupled with the ever present challenges of climate change, have resulted in a decisive shift in recent years towards clean technologies and sustainable, local commerce.

But you don't even need to be familiar with this

concept or buy into climate change, or even economic collapse (although the latter is probably very much visible at the time of writing), to see the evident need for some sort of change in the way we're doing things. Only the most obstinate observer would deny that fairly shattering problems seem to arise with startling regularity; you might ascribe that to ever prevalent media or you might just have noticed that the writing is very much on our collective wall. Whatever your point of view, its plain that there's no time to wait for someone else to take care of business; plenty of people are already starting to do something about the way we do things currently.

Given the current and continuing trajectory of industrial society, it might be a given that most resources are going to be in much shorter supply in the years to come; collective institutions such as governments and the all powerful markets—which are geared to the fantasy of perpetual growth—are unlikely to change direction until it's too late to do anything useful. Looks like individual action focused on learning to get by with much less is therefore essential to any viable path to the future

The model that Transition Town Wandsworth, and its collective decision makers have elected to follow takes lead from the (now) worldwide transition movement, originally conceived as a student led 'social experiment' formulated by Rob Hopkins in Kinsale Northern Ireland. His thesis was to see if a population could formulate a workable strategy to adapt to resources shortage thereby ensuring a degree of 'resilience' in the face of the challenges resulting from climate change and/ or peak oil. . It might be noted at this point that every single natural process on this planet has such alternative strategies as part and parcel of its makeup.

The experiment was a success through its conception of a 12 point 'energy descent action plan' – a formula for rebuilding structures focused on local food production, education, transport etc that could be designed, and carried out by, individuals within a community framework. Accordingly, transition initiatives have sprung up throughout the land. It's proponents don't easily fit into a single camp, which indeed is the beauty and efficacy of the concept. One of the reasons the movement may be gaining ground so quickly, may be because

it manages to neatly sidestep obsolete and useless right-left divisions associated with conventional politics. By appealing directly to the individuals specific interests and skills; requiring nothing more than a sharing and inclusion it manages to reach most people 'where they are' now.

Picking up on this trend from back in 2008, residents and community groups in the Wandsworth area decided to try and combine their local knowledge and neighbourhood spirit to address and tackle these issues by volunteering their time for projects, workshops and skills swaps in the Wandsworth Town area. Transition Town Wandsworth, spurred on with support from the burgeoning movement, began to formulate ways for local people to take a direct hand in planning their local resilience for tomorrow by getting involved in sustainable projects today.



Right from the beginning it

seemed appropriate to conceive a project in which everyone could get involved with, and be passionate about, regardless of experience or skill. The answer was one very in-keeping with the transition ethic of localising food production - a community garden. Beginning with an approach to the council in Nov 2008 followed by continual consultation, proposals and information sharing, the site for Wandsworth first ever community garden was finally arrived at: Bramford Rd community garden (the project earned its founder Dan O'Neill the Wandsworth Green Champion commendation in 2009 and was named winner of 2011 Green Champion Award). Starting on the land in May 2010, the site is anticipated to be awarded permanent status any time soon (indeed the groups original assertion right through the consultation period was that 'we may have to lobby the council now but give it a few years and they'll be asking people to take projects like this on' - we shall see)!

Gardening is only the cornerstone of Transition Town Wandsworth though. The group also hosts skills share workshops and music & culture events (such as last years 'Low Carbon Carnival' hosted at the Battersea Arts Centre), and is committed to creating projects and finding ways to engage everyone from the area; to strengthen the community and educate on the issues.

As people increasingly recognise the need for action to tackle these pressing issues directly affecting their everyday lives - dependency on cheap imports, increasing instability in fuel markets and unsustainable levels of consumption - Transition

Town Wandsworth believe the community holds many solutions to the local manifestations of these problems, that some of the answers to the Boroughs most pressing concerns are likely to be found with the people.

Although working with pre-existent initiatives to create community gardens, growing projects, green transport solutions and skills share projects, whilst recognising the need for close cooperation with the local authority, Transition Town Wandsworth want as many volunteers from the community as possible to come forward, join in and make Wandsworth a model of cooperation and sharing. For example, many members of the Borough's

older generation may hold skills, such as clothes repair, beer brewing and kitchen gardening that are lost on today's generation - now's the time to pass them along!

Already comprising

members of the Wandsworth Environment Forum and Food up Front, the initiative is committed to involving every member of our diverse community in its plan to provide local resilience against climatic or oil 'shocks' for Wandsworth in the coming years.

We should all become well acquainted with the people and possibilities of where we live. Pretty soon we may have to find allies in the former who can help us fully make use of the latter. If we strengthen our ties to our locality, we're all the more likely to ride out any big waves of change headed our way. Natural systems employ a lot of redundancy, in our love affair with 'efficiency', which is its opposite, we've left ourselves exposed from many angles. Some might say that its simplistic to believe that getting to know your neighbours and community could make a jot of difference now that so many of our bridges are already burned? Transition towns believe otherwise. And really, even if every doomsayer prophecy or scientific prediction turns out to be way off base, there are only great things to be gained by working together.

Dan O'Neill

References

- 1 <http://www.theoil drum.com/node/4315>
- 2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_oil

Thereby hangs a Tale.

Do you notice that life is full of little coincidences? Well here's a little Filmy one ... I was on the phone talking to a friend ... who at the time of writing was seeing so many films that when he walked out of a screening he was never sure if the street scene was real or if it was the opening shot of the next movie ... Hey! Can we please move to the task in hand ... OK OK ... now where was I ... right got it ... I mentioned to him that I had just purchased a DVD of The Tales of Hoffnung "No no" he said "you mean Hoffmann ... The Tales of Hoffmann" ... I hesitated and then agreed laughing as though I had known that all along and had only been sending him up ... But the Hoffnung connection gnawed away and later that day I got out the Chambers (Product Placement) Biographical Dictionary and looked him up. Lo and Behold this guy Hoffnung was in there ... very clever chap ... Musician ... Broadcaster ... Cartoonist you name it ... anyway the BBC commissioned Halas and Batchelor to make a series of animated films using his cartoon caricatures. What do you reckon they called it? ... Yeah of course they did ... what else could they call it except The Tales of Hoffnung ... so how about that ...

The 1948 film The Red Shoes is being given a lot of screen space recently bringing that impeccable pair Powell and Pressburger who directed The Red Shoes and also directed The Tales of Hoffman back into the limelight and they are the reason that I bought the DVD in the first place ... So having bought it I had to see it of course ... though I must say without much enthusiasm ... as I'm not a Ballet freak ... anyway I give it a whirl and settle down to watch without the slightest expectations ... then Wham Bam! I'm caught hook line and sinker ... It is Magic ... absolute magic ... mind bending ... anyone who has not seen this enchanting film should do so now ... Are you into Design or Art direction? Are you into Film? ... Well in this movie you could turn the

sound off ... an alternative which might just have the edge and still watch mesmerised ... I read that Hoffmann was nominated for Oscars in the design and art categories but no Oscar forthcoming ... maybe the fact that the same two gentleman ... Hein Heckroth and Arthur Lawson had already picked up Oscars for The Red Shoes could methinks have had some bearing on that decision ... but this film is so far ahead of the Red Shoes in these categories that even that should not have been a reason ... ah well it's all history now ... Excuse me can you tell me if you going to tell us about the film ... well I have been ... Will you please get on with it

Well then ...
... at the start of the film Lindorf (Robert Helpmann who is Absolutely Brilliant throughout) arrives on the scene wearing a ground sweeping cloak ... pauses to look at the theatre announcement and as he sweeps away the Directors cut in to medium close up and we see the end of the cloak disappearing round a column ... then they cut again to the top of a door as the camera tilts down and the end of the cloak just makes it though the bottom of the closing door and with two cuts they have managed to move the actor from outside to inside the theatre in a most beautiful way and within the space of a few minutes into the film the directors have me in the palm of their hands ... this is film making ... What I did not realise at that point in time was that they were weaving their magic around me until I was to end up bound like a fly in a spiders web For goodness sake don't be absurd ... just get on with it ... Well
within the theatre Helpmann moves into voyeur mood and is seen standing behind the scenery casting a secret eye in the direction of Stella (Moirá Shearer) who is writhing sexually about on the floor of the stage in a skin tight costume as she emerges from the Nymph stage to fully fledged Dragonfly and then to dance a most beautiful sequence with

Frederick Ashton ... I thought you didn't like Ballet ... What was all that stuff about I'm not a ballet freak you spouted earlier? ... I know I know ... but this was something completely ... different ... she looked great ... and she danced like a ... a ... a Dragonfly ... Absolutely Mesmerising

I can't say that I was quite that enamoured with Robert Rounseville as Hoffman (a Poet) unfortunately we see quite a lot of him in the film ... a flaw in an otherwise perfect diamond ... I'm sure that if you love his voice you will forgive him for acting like a tent pole ... I'm afraid I'm not that forgiving ... he did not even look as though he could pull any chicks which seems to be his only aim in life and in fact during the film he manages to loose every one he fancied ... even a clockwork doll ... I mean how could you blow out on a Clockwork Doll ... but I suppose his singing was more important ... and in the early fifties one could not presumably sing, act and be good looking ... unless of course you were female ... and Ludmillar Tcherina is all of that ... she plays Giulietta who is a Venetian Courtesan (how much nicer than Prostitute) who we first see in a gondola accompanied by Dapertutto (Helpmann again) ... the scene of them moving along the canal to the music of the Barcarolle ... her beauty and her singing are a joy and on top of that we have the

Heckroth Set of the canal which again is something else ...

The Lighting of the D/P Chris Challis together with the technical expertise of the Technicolor Colour Consultant Joan Bridge ... plus of course the magic worked by the Art department all came together to have the colour dripping from the screen which puts the look of the production into a class of it's own and leaves The Red Shoes wallowing in it's wake ...

So what did you think of the film as a whole then? ... What do mean what do I think? ... It's all up there... what do you think I have been writing about? Well all I can see is that you're all frothy mouthed about the women and running down poor old Rounseville ... you're not a Ballet freak ... but you write that you love it ... Look just see it ... I know it's not in the book of the '1001 films to see before you die' (Product placement again) ... even though five of Powell Pressburger films are ... but if it was my list The Tales of Hoffman would be in the top ten ... there you go ... see what you think ... In the meantime like me you don't have to be into Ballet to see Black Swan but it's interesting to compare two films made on the same subject Sixty years apart ... see what you think Will Holland

The next time you go out for a drink with friends or a bite to eat why not consider somewhere completely different. The grade II listed high Gothic splendour of the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building houses the discreet, hard to find oasis that is... Le Gothique. This is not a chain or a rolled out theme pub. Le Gothique is just a quirky bar and French biased restaurant. Perhaps you should think of us as a BistroPub.

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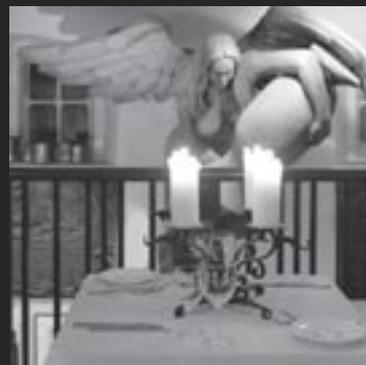
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A TRUE LOVE STORY

VERONICA CECIL

When Mai left her perfectly good Welsh husband, Dai the JCB, for the lures of Richard, the English plumber, there was a furore. Not since Charles the builder's wife ran away with another woman had there been such universal tut-tutting. Guto Cabli, who'd known and loved Mai since she was a little girl, swore he'd never speak to her again; her two sons refused to even acknowledge Richard's existence; while the Dai the JCB was incandescent. He was not normally known for a fiery disposition but, when he spotted the usurper coming out of a driveway, he bore down on him in a fury so that Richard was forced to back at speed all the way down the narrow lane. Their next encounter was on the Morfa Nefyn golf course where Dai was digging out a bunker. Seeing the red plumber's van, he once again pursued it till it reached the edge of the cliff. Abandoning his vehicle, Richard legged it down the steep path to the pub on the beach where he was due to unblock a drain. Dai, unused to physical exertion, was in no physical shape to follow. Besides, even if he had, the publican's wife, who had a fondness for Richard, would have intervened.

Richard, or Rich as Mai called him, was known to be a bit of a ladies' man. He'd had two wives already and had made the mistake of bringing the third, a blond who was fond of city life, to North Wales. With a partiality for shops, which were in relatively short supply on the Lleyen Peninsular, the marriage didn't last long. Wife number three soon took herself off back to the material delights of the West Country, leaving her husband to sample the local talent. Richard not only appreciated women, he loved nature. His job entailed driving round the countryside. He would sit for hours watching a buzzard swoop and swirl round the wide Welsh sky, or stop his van as it breasted a hill struck by the familiar face of the mountains in an unfamiliar mood. Every spring he'd go out of his way to walk up beside the Dwyfawr River to reconnect with the host

of tiny wild daffodils that had made their home close to Lloyd George's birth place.

It was not surprising that he should fall in love with Mai. She was a dark haired beauty. Her great great grandfather was an Italian whose ship, carrying porcelain, had hit rock and floundered off the coast in the Irish Sea. Abandoning the boat along with all its cups and saucers, he'd swum ashore and found consolation in the arms of a local Welsh girl. Mai had inherited his wild, Mediterranean nature – her grandmother had been sacked from her old age home in Porth Maddog for hurling her shoe at a fellow inmate and breaking his arm – and at eighteen she'd married Dai the JCB who'd been young and slim and handsome in those days. By the time her two sons had grown up, however, she was thoroughly bored, and she was still only in her thirties. But Mai was not a one to stay at home moping. All her married life she'd worked for the Social, caring for the very old and lonely as well as the children from abusive homes, and she'd squirreled a large proportion of her salary into her own deposit account. When she had enough, she bought a humble little terraced house in Edern, not far from the sea, renting it out to summer visitors and scrubbing it clean between lets. Mai became Mai the business woman.

It was rumoured that there a cruel streak to Richard. But if there was, Mai wasn't phased. She'd watched her father Emlyn, the fisherman, beat her mother black and blue when he came back from the pub – he may have done the same thing to her, only if he had, she wasn't telling. Mai was certainly no victim. It was possible that she was attracted to the smell of danger in Richard. She probably also sensed the sensitive soul under the plumber's overalls. Within a short time of meeting, and ignoring all the disapprobation, she moved in with him. Taking him firmly in hand, she taught him not to leave his muddy footsteps on her carpet and was working on his compulsion to tell unfunny jokes.

Mai's house owning career coincided with the start of the property boom at

the beginning of the new millennium. Her father Emlyn also bought a house at that time. His was a beautiful old stone farmhouse; the sort that was becoming popular with the rich second-homers from Liverpool and Manchester. By this time he'd left Mai's mother and had married a young physiotherapist with a mission to reform. She didn't like living in the middle of nowhere, so he bought another house in Aberdaron, taking out a bridging loan until he sold the farmhouse. When the bottom started to fall out of the market he hung on, manfully, sticking to his price, convinced that the market would recover. Eventually the bank was forced to repossess. Their current valuation was a good deal less than his and Emlyn took it personally. In a fit of rage he climbed on the roof of his beautiful old historic farmhouse and, sitting astride the ridge, started tearing off the slate tiles and flinging them to the ground. It probably did a great deal for his frustration, but it did nothing for the value of his property.

By the time the bank got round to putting the house on the market, it was a wreck. The new asking price was, even by the standards of the Lleyrn, derisory. Mai sold her house in Edern, which had, by this time more than washed its dull little pebble-dashed face and bought her father's historic stone farmhouse for a song. She then dragooned Medwyn, her brother, who was a builder, into replacing the roof, as well as anything else that needed doing, in his spare time. Rich put in a new central heating system and replaced the bathroom furniture. When it was up to her standards she decorated it, buying silk flowers and matching crockery, and let it to the type of summer visitor who was prepared to pay a lot of money for class and ambiance.

In the meantime, she and Richard had moved into the lodge on the estate of the Welsh equivalent of a stately home – the Plas. The rent was minimal as the owners valued Richard's skills and Mai's reliability. Having cut down the weeds and unwanted bushes, and planted the garden with bargain azaleas and bulbs from Lidl's, the happy couple settled down; even entertaining the people who were prepared to forgo their principles and drink Richard's wine.

Mai chose not to marry Rich. She had by this time resigned from Social Services and hired herself out as a cleaner. With benefits producing a comfy cushion, local women prepared to clean were in short supply and Mai had more than enough

work. Her prices tended to reflect supply and demand – particularly in the summer months when the visitors changed over. With the help of school girls and impoverished students, she created a thriving business. But there was more to it than that. Mai loved her work, and it wasn't so different to what she'd done for the Social Services. She would bring sunshine and order to the grey lives of the old and infirm, Hoovering up years of neglect and attacking the spiders, who thought they'd taken up permanent residence, in the damp little cottages.

Although Richard would have been contented with gazing at the sunset and cultivating his vegetable garden, Mai had higher ambitions. She bought herself a sports car and she and Rich would drive round the peninsular and dine out in style – or at least what style the Lleyrn could muster. She particularly loved holidays. The couple cruised round the Mediterranean and gazed in wonder at the Norwegian fiords. And although Rich had never before been in an aeroplane, they took package tours to places like Tenerife and Majorca. They even spent Christmas in Greenland wondering at the northern lights. Mai's favourite country, however, was Turkey. The summer before last she decided to go back there and booked herself and Rich on a holiday which included sunshine and water sports. They even signed up for a white water rafting experience in spite of the fact that Rich couldn't swim. "Are you sure you want to go?" Mai asked as they put on their life jackets. Rich, though apprehensive, said "of course." With Mai he was prepared to try anything.

They set off down the river in high heart, a whole raft load of ordinary tourists seeking adventure. Then they hit the thrills of the rapids. Whether it was the incompetence of the leader, or one of the other passengers leaning the wrong way, Mai didn't know, but, at a particularly swirly patch, the raft capsized, dumping its passengers in the fast-flowing river. Mai was beside Rich when they capsized. Knowing he couldn't swim she tried to stay close to him. But it all happened so fast. Before she knew it they were underwater in a swift current. And, although she tried to grab hold of him, Rich slipped through her fingers. She kicked for all she was worth for her own survival until eventually she surfaced. Other bedraggled passengers made it to the bank. Rich wasn't among them.

Frantically Mai pelted up the hill peal-

ing the river with her eyes to see if he was floating further down. There was no sign. Back on the bank there was mayhem. Traumatized trippers were being comforted and someone had sent for help. Eventually after hours of searching, Rich's body was fished out. Mai was asked to identify it. His forehead had hit a rock and was gashed open. Whether it was that, or a simple drowning, there was no bringing him back. The initial horror was added to by the Turkish authorities. They insisted on a post mortem and an inquest. Not being the official spouse, Mai was drowned in Kafka-like bureaucracy. What's more it turned out that, as white water rafting was officially categorised as a dangerous sport, her lover was not insured. Mai returned to the Lleyn alone and waited for them to release the body. Being unmarried meant she had no claim to his property, and his estranged family descended like locusts. They even took his van and all his tools.

Eventually Mai was allowed to achieve what she called closure. She had arranged a service in the little English church. It was packed with mourners, including her two sons and their new families, though not Dai the JCB. Most of the congregation were local; customers as well as friends. Dick the carpenter not only made the coffin, he swelled the ranks of the Welsh male voices who sang Cwm Rhonda and filled the little church with a sound so magical Rich would have wept.

Although she stayed on at the Lodge by herself – she even put in central heating, which Rich had refused because he preferred his environment more natural – Mai was not suited to widowhood. After a year or so, she moved in with a new partner in Pwllheli. He's said to be reliable, though not a patch on Rich. But at least he's Welsh.



Shortly before her recent talk to the Society I had the good fortune to run into Veronica Cecil at Waterstone's in Putney where she was doing a book-signing and meet-the-readers day. The book was her wonderfully gripping *Drums on the Night Air* about her early family life in the Congo. We still have many members who will remember Veronica's husband David, a key figure in the early days of the Society, who is commemorated by a tree beside Lyford Road. IKSG

The bird recorder

Each month Peter White visits Wandsworth and Tooting Commons and records the birds he has seen and heard. He then prepares fascinating monthly reports, with lists and comments on the month's observations.

Peter also leads free-guided walks four times a year. Next year these will be -

		Wandsworth Common	Tooting Common
Winter	9:00	8 January	15 January
Spring	8:30	29 April	6 May
Summer	8:30	15 July	22 July
Autumn	8:30	18 October	21 October

Discover more about the 100 + species of birds that visit and use our Commons; learn to identify them by sight and sound, and find out about their natural history and behaviour.

For the Wandsworth Common walks meet by Wandsworth Common station ticket office off St James' Drive.

And for the Tooting Common walks meet by the Council Yard on Dr Johnson Avenue opposite Hillbury Road

Meet for the walks at 8:30 (except for the Winter walks, which begin at 9:00). The walks last up to 4 hours, but you can leave at any time. It's best to wear stout sensible shoes in case of mud, and clothing suitable for the time of year. Bring your own binoculars if you can, but please don't bring young children or dogs.

Enjoy the walks!

For further information, please contact the Parks Office on 020 8871 7530.



of the Commons

seen
 heard only
WANDSWORTH COMMON BIRDS
OCTOBER 2011

DATE	1	5	10	15	19	23	30	
SPECIES	27	30	26	29	33	31	31	
House Sparrow								NOTES Visits 7 Species seen 41 Heard only 3 Total 44 Daily Average 30 CROSSBILL On 23rd whilst leading a public birdwalk of about 10 people I brought to their attention the calls of Crossbills as they flew over Trinity Road Wood. It was quite impossible to see them as our view was blocked by trees. It is only the 3rd time I have recorded Crossbills on this common, previously being on 29th August 2002 when a flock of 10 were heard and seen and on 22nd February 2003 when one was heard but not seen. As usual, at this time of year, there is a large influx of Crossbills from the continent and flocks are being recorded all over the country. GREY WAGTAIL On 19th, one heard to call in flight over Lake but not seen despite looked for. LESSER REDPOLL (1) twice heard calling in flight on 19th but not seen. (2) on the Birdwalk on 23rd everyone was delighted to see 6 feeding closely in a silver birch by the Lake. A new bird for most participants. SISKIN Very few as yet. Numbers should greatly increase when cold weather sets in. On 19th heard calling in flight three times but not seen. First encountered last year on 11th October. Small party heard and briefly seen fly over Lake Exe on 23rd. CHIFFCHAFF (1) 2 on 1st, one still singing; (2) 3 on 5th; (3) one showing well by Lakeside on 10th and (4) the last, one heard calling on 19th on sedgion portion of common but not located. Last recorded last year on 19th October, so very done. 6th October 2009. GOLDCREST 1-2 birds heard but not seen on 5th, 15th and 23rd but one seen with mixed tit flock on 19th.
Starling								
Woodpigeon								
Stock Dove								
Common Crow								
Jackdaw								
Magpie								
Jay								
Blackbird								
Mistle Thrush								
Robin								
Wren								
Dunnock								
Goldcrest								
Chiffchaff								
Blue tit								
Great tit								
Coal tit								
Long Tailed tit								
Pied Wagtail								
Greenfinch								
Chaffinch								
Goldfinch								
Gr. Spot Woodpecker								
Green Woodpecker								
Ring N Pouter								
Mute Swan								
Canada Goose								
Egyptian Goose								
Mallard								
Tufted Duck								
Shoveler								
Coot								
Moorhen								
Comorant								
Grey Heron								
Black Headed Gull								
Sparrowhawk								
Herring Gull								
Siskin								
Lesser Redpoll								
Grey Wagtail								
Crossbill								
Grey Lag Goose								
Common Gull								
Lesser Black Back Gull								

(continued page 2)



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Planning matters

Another year rushes past! What have we considered and achieved?

The year started with some pretty terrible weather and the climate change lobby may have to do some rethinking on global warming, it certainly seemed to have missed south-west London.

One of our main concerns this year has been about changes to planning regimes. The Localism Act (as from mid November) and the National Planning Policy Framework (still in Bill form) are likely to have a radical effect. This latter proposed legislation hopes to “simplify” over sixty years of evolved legislation, guidance and planning practice, which seems to the planning group to have worked pretty well. Unfortunately governments have a habit of trying to change systems almost for the sake of change, rather than fully understanding where things are and where they will be after the change. Plus ça change!

In the November newsletter there was a somewhat expanded piece on this particular topic, thus I will not repeat the content at length.

We have also been involved with the Borough Council in considering and formulating responses to the evolving Local Development Framework. The Council, with all credit, is well advanced with this complex process seeking to balance many alternative interests and possible situations and all to be judged “sound” by an experienced Planning Inspector. This Framework, when confirmed, will form the basis of the next ten years of Borough Planning policy. My thanks, once again, to the members of the Planning Group who have considered, drafted, redrafted and emailed our comments, reports and proposals at ungodly hours of the night, to our MPs the Department in Whitehall and the Council on these subjects.

Turning now to individual matters which may be of interest to members:

Ram Brewery. We attended an exhibition of revised proposals in July after some months of inactivity following the refusal of the proposals in July 2010. The revised scheme we felt went some way to addressing the main points of our objections. However, we have serious concerns about the height of buildings on the site, and in particular the tall tower. During the period of inactivity the developers Minerva plc had an offer from a third party to take the company over which resulted in a successful bid and the company was taken over in August.

In the autumn we were invited to attend a meeting with the architects for the scheme during which we inspected the latest thinking, again an improvement. In mid-November a public exhibition was held on site at the Brewery at which final proposals were revealed. The overall scheme is proposed to have 452 apartments, approximately 5,000 sq m each of offices, heritage and shops/showrooms and a small leisure content. There will be very limited visitor car parking and no real shoppers’ car parking. The scheme content includes a tower of 34 floors on the Capital Studios site, buildings of up to 11 floors on the main site but the retention, improvement and reuse of the heritage buildings. These should be most attractive if properly refurbished. The promoters expect to lodge the planning application before Christmas. We will be submitting our comments and objections to the proposals at the appropriate time.

The Planning Group would like to hear from members with any comments on the proposals presented at the recent exhibition and public consultation. We are keen to ensure that the group’s view reflect those of the members of the Society.

Buckhold Road site (part of the previous application for the Brewery). This site was sold by Minerva during the year to a third party, who we understand will be developing the site in conjunction with Workspace who own the adjoining consented site.

Skydec Earlsfield Road. A site very close to the heart of one of the planning group’s members. During the year we continued to pursue the Council and the developers for action on the implementation of the Enforcement Notice, alas with little response. We were asked by the building owners to comment on alternative designs for the roofs, which we felt had the potential to achieve a satisfactory outcome, after doing so we heard nothing. Very disappointing but we have not given up!

Battersea Reach, Wandsworth Bridge. St George proposed the next phase of development for the block on the corner of the site by the roundabout. We objected to the loss of commercial space and a density higher than London Plan guidelines, but after some minor alteration the scheme was consented. We are pleased to report that the developers are now proceeding with the affordable housing for the scheme to the south of the eastern most river frontage block. This was a matter which we took up with the local Councillors as we were aware that only open market housing had been provided so far. This block is well underway and looks massive behind the Shell petrol filling station.

Springfield University Hospital, Burntwood Lane. A public Inquiry was held into an appeal by the Hospital Trust from 8th to 18th November following the refusal of the Council to the application made by Trust for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. The Society's planning group has been supportive of the general principal of redevelopment for many years and we believe that the Trust were appreciative of this support. The appeal scheme was worked up with the Council and appeared to meet virtually all criteria, however there was local opposition to various aspects of the proposal, which was ultimately refused on highways grounds. The Inquiry sat in the Conference facility of the hospital, with the Trust represented by P. Brown QC, the Council by Mr Lyness of Counsel. Experts were called by both sides. The Society prepared and submitted evidence in support of the Trust's aims and spoke at the Inquiry. We await the outcome and hope that a satisfactory resolution will be found to the continued use and advancement of the mental health facilities provided on site and to the satisfactory implementation of the plans. Inevitably not everyone will be happy with the outcome but we believe that a balanced view will be taken by the Inspector in making her recommendations to the Secretary of State.

Thames Tunnel. This is a major proposal by Thames Water to provide a storage tunnel under the Thames from West of Hammersmith to the Beckton Sewage Treatment Works in east London. The tunnel will collect the wastewater and sewage mix from the sewer overflows and store it until it can be released for treatment at the Beckton works. I am sure most of you will be aware of the general proposal. Wandsworth Borough has several sites which could be affected by the tunnel construction shafts. Those within the Society's specific area are at King George's Park, Dormay Street (Armoury Way) and Jews Row (by The Ship public house). At the start of the second round of consultation in mid November, thankfully the Jews Row site seems to have been released. An alternative site at Dormay Street was acquired by Thames Water and the Council in May 2011 and will be providing one of the dig sites required, thus saving the Panorama Antenna works. It appears that the King George's Park site has also been downgraded in respect of land take but this will not be confirmed until after the final site selection process has been completed. This is a major infrastructure project, which has been questioned and Lord Selborne's report may lead to further consideration of the necessity.

General. The planning group of Shirley Passmore, Tony Taylor, John Dawson, Peter Farrow and myself has met monthly during the year to consider many other planning applications or matters of interest in the planning sphere. We have been joined for some meetings by other members of the Society and an invitation is extended to all members who wish to attend to let me know and I will advise of the venue of the next meeting.

Happy Christmas, I hope that you have not nodded off before you have reached the end of the missive.

Philip Whyte

The 26th season of Society Soirees in Patten Road could not have got off to a more propitious and richly enjoyable start. An evening entirely of French song was an irresistible draw for those many members who are obviously aficionados of that genre, and the noted accompanist and recital promoter Nigel Foster had arranged for us a thrilling programme by two singers of outstanding accomplishment and charm. Were it not for their names, Marie Vassiliou and Marc Callahan, we would have assumed from their sympathetic phrasing and projection of their material, and their perfect enunciation – notoriously difficult for non-Gallic performers to achieve – that they were indeed French, rather than London-Cypriot and Pennsylvanian respectively.

But both these warm and attractive singers are widely experienced, award-winning performers in the international field, in concert and in opera. Baritone Marc, after training in the States, continued his studies in France and is now based in London. Soprano Marie has sung in all our leading concert halls, at Proms and on radio stations, and her work encompasses Baroque and cutting-edge contemporary in equal measure. Before our Soiree the two had not met, but formed a perfectly matched pairing in their delicious selection of melodies by Saint-Saens, Faure, Duparc, Debussy and Poulenc, plus two exquisite little-heard songs by Lili Boulanger – the sadly short-lived sister of Nadia (who was by the way one of our host's teachers). Marc Callahan treated us to an fascinating comparison of songs written in competition for a film on Don Quixote by Ravel and by Jacques Ibert; the latter was the winner at the time, but posterity has rewarded Ravel more richly in performances!

Ravel's love songs from the Don to Dulcinea range from the jaunty Chanson Romanesque and solemn Chanson Epique to the joyous drunken jumping rhythm of Chanson a Boire, which finishes with descending piano notes – the Don descending drunkenly? Ibert's four songs chronicling the pitiful tale ended with Chanson de la Mort de Don Quichote – Marc's final almost breathless high note tenderly personifying the Don's last gasp.

Marie described Debussy's Trois Chansons de Bilitis as "sensual... from a mysterious world of antiquity", and she thrilled us with a performance of ravishing delicacy. She ended with seven short songs written for children by Poulenc, which varied engagingly in mood and rhythm; the rapid Ba,Be,Bi,Bo,Bu! prompting the thought: could this be how French children learn vowels?

Nigel Foster accompanied on piano with sensitive expertise, and introduced the items with a winning humour. Everything on October 9th: the delights of the performance, the unfailingly gracious hospitality of our hosts David and Elizabeth Ward - for which we thank them most warmly – and the familiar vibrant atmosphere of our soirees, added up, as Nigel wrote afterwards, to the distinct feeling of a Parisian salon of the Belle Epoque. That was an impression only enhanced by the stately entrance at one point of a sumptuous Ward cat weaving its elegant way through the audience and onto the performing area, installing itself on the baritone's chair. Such cavalier insouciance merely added to the fun of an evening of pure delight!

Diana Godden and Wendy Cater

Flying on West Hill

A Wandsworth link to the beginnings of aviation

If you were driving up West Hill at lunchtime on October 28th this year you might have been surprised to see a small group of people gathered outside the West Hill Fire Station. In fact, we were just to the west of it celebrating the unveiling of a Council green plaque to one of Britain's legendary pioneers- AV Roe, who effectively created the British aircraft industry.

The Heritage Department of Wandsworth Council tries to recognize distinguished citizens who have lived in the borough, so the connection with AV Roe is an interesting one. Alliot Verdon Roe was born in 1877 to a middle class family, and had brothers who went on to become a doctor, soldier and clergyman. However "AV" was not of that bent, and after spending time in British Columbia, he returned taking it in turns to be a racing cyclist, ship's engineer and design draughtsman in the motor industry. His passion was building model aeroplanes, and he stayed with his brother, the local doctor at 47 West Hill. The house no longer exists, but based in its stable block, he used to throw his model planes out of the window where they often landed in the grounds of an adjoining mental hospital. No one was quite sure who was the more disturbed – the people who collected them or the one who was guiding them out of the stable block! However he kept at it and in 1906 won a 'Daily Mail' competition for a model plane going more than 100 feet. In 1909 he took the chassis of a tri-plane he had designed up to Wimbledon Common for a trial. However Wimbledon Common was not deemed a suitable place for aviation work, so in a search for more space he moved to Brooklands in Surrey, which had just opened as a motor racing circuit. On June 8th 1908 he achieved the first recognized flight by a British national in a British-made aircraft.

He and his brother Humphrey formed the company AV Roe & Co which developed the Avro 504 biplane trainer. This was to become at the time the biggest selling aircraft in the world, being used in the Great War by the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, and then post-war as a trainer by the RAF for the next 40 years. The company licensed manufacture in the USA, Canada Japan and the USSR and over 11,000 were to be built. AV Roe & Co was taken over in 1928 by John Siddeley, and then again in 1935 it was transformed into Hawker Siddeley Aircraft, soon to develop a close link with Rolls Royce for the provision of engines. The factories within the group became immersed in the Second World War, producing some 7000 of the famed Lancaster bomber. AV Roe had by this stage moved to the Isle of Wight, where he set up Saunders Roe to produce top-quality flying boats and ultimately light helicopters. Sadly, he had lost two sons in the war, though his second son took over the Saunders Roe interests in Anglesey post-war, and he himself died in 1958.

And who were the people who were at the green plaque ceremony? AV Roe's direct descendants, including his grandson, Eric, who joined us at the Museum afterwards to recount their pride in a life that made a great contribution to his country.

Stuart Thom



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Diaghilev, all debts and charm

Diaghilev was indeed a charmer. In his opera hat, monocle, white streak in his black hair – which earned him the nickname of chinchilla – and aura of violets around him as he invariably chewed little violet bon-bons, he was the epitome of elegance.

He was homosexual, but many women became lifelong friends. When he bowed over the hands of society hostesses, murmuring *Chère Madame*, they would open not just their hearts, but also their purses. And make no mistake about it, that was the name of the game. Diaghilev was invariably over-budget with his productions. From the start of his working life he needed wealthy and sympathetic patrons.

He was born in Russia in 1872 and brought up in a musical family. Naturally enough he went to St Petersburg conservatory to study music. Rumour has it that he showed an early composition to the maestro there, Rimsky Korsakov, who suggested a cut – preferably from beginning to end.

Diaghilev was later employed by the Imperial Theatres in St Petersburg but he was invariably involved in some entrepreneurial scheme. The artist Alexandre Benois remembered Diaghilev infuriating his university friends by walking down the aisle in the theatre, his enormous head flung back in a lofty way, smiling charmingly or warmly greeting those who held potentially useful positions in society or the civil service.

Diaghilev was arrogant and this brought him enemies who finally engineered that he was fired from his job at the Imperial Theatres in St Petersburg. A further element might have been his homosexuality. This was illegal in Russia and though the aristocracy got away with it, and it was lightly referred to by the serfs as ‘Gentlemen’s Mischief,’ Diaghilev’s boss warned him his behaviour was ‘inappropriate.’

In the early 1900s, Diaghilev, now in his early thirties, decided to go to Paris for his next venture. Sponsored by the wealthy Russian Prince Volkon-

sky, he put on a highly successful exhibition of Russian paintings before deciding to stage excerpts from the opera *Boris Godunov*. Then catastrophe. Prince Volkonsky died. There was now no money and Diaghilev and Alexandre Benois had to go round Paris flea markets looking for headresses and materials for the opera. Diaghilev slipped out of his hotel without the formality of paying the bill.

It focused Diaghilev’s mind on the ballet rather than the opera, as it was cheaper to produce. Ballet had been around for decades, but Diaghilev’s genius was to take it and shake it like a terrier with a rat. He brought in a heady mix of young avant-garde composers, painters and choreographers. And, crucially, he introduced the powerful male dancer.

The first of these was Nijinsky. With the brilliant ballerina Tamara Karsavina in *Le Spectre de la Rose*. Nijinsky entranced Paris with his enormous leaps. Asked how he did this he said vaguely, ‘I just leap in the air, stay there a little, and then come down.’ His performances, often with sexual ambivalence, made the Ballets Russes a constant talking point. Paris was dazzled by Nijinsky, and so was Diaghilev and the two men became lovers.

Despite the success Diaghilev still needed patrons. He was welcomed to the Parisian social and artistic salons and there met Misa Sert, who was married to the Spanish painter Jose Maria Sert. She and Diaghilev shared remarkable similarities; both born in Russia in 1872, both their mothers died while giving birth to them, both were passionate about music. And gossip. Misa became a life-long friend.

The fame of the Ballets Russes had spread to London and in 1911 the company at last arrived there. This time, there was no slipping out of hotels. Diaghilev and his entourage, including Nijinsky and Picasso, stayed at the Savoy. Diaghilev particularly liked the Savoy restaurant. There he learned the only three English words he ever spoke: ‘More chocolate pudding.’

The company’s first appearance at a Royal Gala to

celebrate the coronation of George V was a sensational success. At the end, Diaghilev waited for a storm of applause but heard only a strange murmuring. The audience was indeed clapping, but tradition decreed that when royalty was present, they had to wear kid gloves.

Diaghilev still needed to cultivate society hostesses. His first English patron was the society beauty Lady Ripon, daughter of the politician Sidney Herbert. Six foot tall, hair elegantly piled high and with a graceful dazzling beauty, her life was an incessant social round. She was delighted to sponsor the ballet as it gave her a worthwhile cause to embrace. She gave Diaghilev a black pearl stud, which he always wore unless it graced the pawnbroker's.

Another contact was Lady Ottoline Morrell, who was on the fringe of the Bloomsbury Group. She gave constant lunch and tea parties for Diaghilev and through her he met the artistic intelligentsia like Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell. Such men provided ideas: life's blood to Diaghilev. They in turn tried to interest Diaghilev in their friends' work. Why not use English painters rather than European ones, he was asked. 'Are there any English painters?' said Diaghilev.

Lady Cunard, another patron and one of the best-known of London's society hostesses, was mesmerised by the richly exotic costumes and sets designed by Leon Bakst. She had rented her house from the Asquiths, who had moved into No.10 Downing Street, and she casually changed their entire interior décor, installing curtains of arsenic green lame, carved porcupines, naked figures of nymphs and hangings of painted giraffes. Their reaction remains unknown.

Diaghilev may have constantly sought money from patrons, but he was exceptionally mean in handing it out. He himself lived on credit – he would have fitted into today's world very well – and often owed several months' back pay to his principal dancers. They supported themselves by giving paid appearances in private houses.

He would spend lavishly on his productions, but on one occasion when the corps de ballet beseeched him for new shoes, as theirs were totally dilapidated, Diaghilev's voice became shrill with fury as

he refused to discuss this, saying, "I am NOT a shoemaker." He passed on his fervour for saving money to his administrative staff. Grigoriev, his manager, was once approached by a ballerina who said her ballet dress was in tatters, and if it were not immediately replaced she would soon be dancing naked.

Grigoriev looked her up and down and said, 'That will be charming, Madame.'

Diaghilev also treated individuals who worked for him in an equally cavalier fashion. For instance, he would commission work from Stravinsky and badger him for it, but give him no money on which to live meanwhile. It placed a constant strain on their relationship. He expected Picasso to pay for his own materials and Nijinsky accused Diaghilev of not paying him a salary for years – perhaps forgetting Diaghilev had always paid for Nijinsky's clothes, food and hotel.

Yet Diaghilev maintained a close relationship with his company. They regarded him as their father and he, in turn, regarded them as his children. So all seemed well. And then the Great War started.

The summer season of the ballet had just ended and Diaghilev, believing the war would be over in months, expected to see them for the next season. Members of the company scattered around Europe and Russia and, like Humpty Dumpty, couldn't be put together again. From 1914 to 1918, the Ballets Russes struggled to survive.

Fortunately Diaghilev knew Otto Kahn at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and booked a tour in America. Without these, the Ballets Russes may well have folded. Diaghilev went with his company to America, despite his great fear of the sea after a fortune-teller predicted he would die on water. He rarely got out of his lifejacket.

On its return to Europe, the company went to neutral Spain. Diaghilev went, cap in hand, from European country to European country, trying to raise funds. But in war-torn Europe there was no money, no interest in the ballet.

By 1918, the company was aware it had overstayed its welcome in Spain. With the help of the King of Spain, Diaghilev took his company to England, which at least was not the scene of a battlefield. There, he would turn up at the houses of friends, by coincidence at dinnertime.



By chance on what turned out to be Armistice Night, Diaghilev was meeting Osbert Sitwell and the evening turned into a wild party, which included all the members of the Bloomsbury Group saying things like 'how exquisitely civilised', along with Augustus John who came in uniform with a bevy of landgirls, and Saccheverell Sitwell, who had slipped away from his military manoeuvres at Aldershot. He kept saying, 'I must get back to Aldershot' and Diaghilev finally asked 'Aldershot? Aldershot? Who is this Aldershot? Is she your mistress?'

After the war, Diaghilev still needed money. In 1920 he wanted to restage the ballet composed by Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*, which meant paying a large orchestra. Diaghilev was complaining about this to friends at a lunch in Paris when they were joined by Misia Sert and her friend the couturier Coco Chanel. Chanel later offered to pay anonymously for the whole production and make the costumes in her own couture house. Perhaps her current affair with Stravinsky had a bearing on this.

But Diaghilev was never far from disaster. In 1921 he asked the theatre manager C.B. Cochran to join him and his party in Seville in 1921. They had a jovial meal starting with a choice of 50 hors d'oeuvres. The hors d'oeuvres came up trumps and Cochran arranged a London season at the Alhambra.

Diaghilev had been impressed by the long-running musical *Chu Chin Chow* and decided he would put on a much longer ballet, *The Sleeping Princess*. Sir Oswald Stoll advanced Diaghilev £5,000 and was promptly asked for another £5,000. But the venture proved disastrous: on the first night the machinery failed, the scenery was too cumbersome. Audiences disliked a long ballet instead of the usual two or three shorter ones.

The ballet closed amid enormous debts. Both sets and costumes were sequestered and, worse, were stored under the stage at the Coliseum. The next show there involved a swimming pool, which naturally leaked and destroyed the lot. Diaghilev was threatened with legal action if he returned to England and was banned there for some three years.

But back in Paris, memories of the war had finally faded. Scott Fitzgerald called 1924 the year of 'a thousand parties and no work.' The Riviera had become fashionable and Parisians took the Blue Train down there. Diaghilev successfully launched his new ballet, *The Blue Train*, set in the Riviera. It featured Anton Dolin, a high-spirited dancer who constantly turned handstands in the wings. Dolin was 20, and Diaghilev 52. The two men had a brief affair. Perhaps Dolin's light-heartedness reminded Diaghilev of Nijinsky, who sadly had been diagnosed schizophrenic a decade ago.

Another patron who came on the scene now was Lord Rothermere, the wealthy newspaper magnate and owner of the *Daily Mail*. Lord Rothermere loved the ballet – and also ballerinas. Indeed, when he became close to one called Nikitina, the *Mail* journalists joked that he was suffering from Nikitina poisoning.

When Rothermere, who had funded two of Diaghilev's seasons in London, suddenly pulled out of the third season in 1929, it took one of Diaghilev's early patrons, Lady Juliet Duff, the daughter of Lady Ripon, to avert disaster by contacting some 100 people to raise the money. But she wrote to Diaghilev in French in 1929 to say, Dear Darling, Even for you I could not do this again next year.

There wasn't to be a next year. By now the diabetes from which Diaghilev was suffering was having its effect. When, as usual, he went backstage at the last performance that summer, his company were horrified at his deterioration: ashen-faced, he could hardly walk. He ignored medical advice to cut down on his diet. A friend remonstrated when Diaghilev cracked open a bottle of champagne. Diaghilev looked at him in surprise: 'But it's Sunday' he said. Another time when told to get out in the open air more, he merely booked a table for dinner in the Bois de Bologne.

At the end of the summer season Diaghilev went off to his beloved Venice. Had he forgotten the fortune-teller's prediction that he would die on water? He was joined by his former lover, the dancer Serge Lifar, and his secretary Boris Kochno, then urgently telegraphed his long-term friends and patrons, Misia Sert and Coco Chanel, who were on a nearby yacht, to come to his side.

He recovered briefly and Chanel left, though Misia stayed. Within a few days he had died, leaving his unpaid hotel and medical bills. Misia Sert was just about to pawn her diamond necklace to pay these when Chanel returned and saw to it. She also paid for the black gondolas to take the funeral procession to the burial island of San Michele.

It seems to me so fitting that in death, as in life, Diaghilev left all his bills to be paid for by a patron.

Joy Melville is the author of 'Diaghilev and Friends' (Haus Publications, 2009)



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