



# A note from the Chair, Christmas 2014

Another year has flashed past with highs and lows. Do we believe that the Society has achieved anything this year? Hard to say.

Christmas should be a time for cheerfulness and celebration, seeing the old year out and welcoming in the new. A time for reflection and stocktaking (Father Christmas will have done his weeks ago) as all deliveries will have been programmed for dispatch if not by him personally then by his good friend Mr Amazon.

Red is a colour generally associated with this time of year, holly berries, red noses and Father Christmas's warm jacket. This year red has also been associated in a slightly different way with the remembrance of those who gave their lives during the First World War. The Tower of London was surrounded with a field of red up to mid-November, a most impressive sight and one that is unlikely to be repeated. At least the writer will not be around in another 100 years to inspect!

Our regular newsletters have reflected much of the work of the various groups of the Society and once again I would like to thank all of those who are concerned in any way with the running of the Society for their help and support during the year.

We had one big (for us the planning group) success as the result of dogged persistence of one who will be identified as PF, in that Skydec was started to be reconfigured at long last. Quite what the changes will be, we are unsure but it has taken some seven years to get to this stage. Some might say "Was it worth it?" The answer is that principles have to be pursued.

As members will be aware, the Society was party to a major report which was addressed to the Prime Minister in the spring in which various planning decisions of the Borough Council were questioned. This received polite replies from the principal parties to whom the report was copied but the Society was named as NIMBYs by the Council in the press. We are not NIMBYs, as we seek to rationally comment on matters, using as the basis of comment plans and policies agreed and approved by the Council through rigorous scrutiny by officers. Localism does not seem to be heard when there are big fish to fry!

The Executive send their best wishes for a joyful and trouble free Christmas and hope that the New Year will bring health and happiness to you all.

**Philip Whyte, Chairman**

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# Meandering Rambles

by Caroline Pook

**D**uring 2014 groups of Wandsworth Society members have ventured out to explore five of the "other" rivers of London which are in parts similar to the Wandle. We set out with the twin objectives of *compare* and *contrast* with the Wandle... but in practice we have just enjoyed the treat of leisurely exploring unfamiliar territory. We got great pleasure out of crossing busy – but familiar – arterial roads, changing our perspective for ever of these routes and how they fit into the natural landscape.

The rivers were selected to represent the waterways of the London with all but the River Lea rising in the great geographical basin which has the city at its centre – and all flowing into the Thames to contribute to making this artery flow so strongly.

We have visited the rivers in no particular order, reflecting only whether the Leader did or did not need to do a recce of the walk in advance. Prior knowledge of the routes was essential in parts as, perhaps the most surprising attribute of the walks, is how little known most are as an entity (with the exception of the largest, the River Lea, which is a national cycle route and a long distance footpath). The rivers are sporadically signed – and public access to the river bank in places non-existent. In places we had to find our own routes which allowed us to follow the trail to be sure of re-emerging on our chosen river – rather than a busy A-road. This is such a pity as they are a great resource – in places clearly valued (judging by the signage) by the borough through which it is running,

but then lost as you cross the borough boundary.

On a beautiful day in May we walked the lower 6 miles of the **River Ravensbourne** which gurgles its way from the North Downs to emerge at Greenwich. We picked it up where it passes through the little known – but most attractive – Beckenham Hall Park, to disappear between the houses before we were able to follow it again at Sydenham. The industrial heritage here is downstream with corn mills at Lewisham and wharves and power station of Greenwich Creek, where there are still barges to be seen loading building materials – but not for long as the riverside residential developers look over the warehouses with a greedy eye with blocks of flats in mind.

In June we enjoyed the 7-mile long **Hogsmill River** which can be followed from the source in the pretty Ewell Ponds, through the water meadows

until it passes under the A3 near Tolworth (have you ever even been aware of its existence as you drive down the Kingston By-Pass?). These pretty upper reaches are interesting given their association with pre-Raphaelite artists Holman Hunt and Millais. You can easily imagine Ophelia in the famous Millais picture lying in the weedy stream (although the model actually lay in a bath!). Sadly once the path reaches the edge of Kingston we pass by (and smell) acres of sewage works which are a feature of many of the rivers reflecting their past as useful conduits for waste water.

The July walk was the full 6½ mile length of the **Beverley Brook**. This is highly recommended as a local amble from New Malden Station, through the back of Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park to the Thames at Putney. The walk is well marked, starting from New Malden Station and



The lower Ravensbourne in transition

if you are only minded to do one of the walks then this is the one to do!

We tackled the lower 7 miles of the River Lea (or Lee) in early September, with a popular diversion to see the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. And what a contrast the Lea is to the other rivers, with its many houseboats and several rowing clubs using the navigation section. In parallel other parts of the river flow alongside, meandering through the Walthamstow Marshes and Leyton playing fields. The impact of the Olympic Park is still to be felt as works are still in progress along the navigation arm. Unlike the other rivers the banks are crowded with new housing developments and closer to the mouth there is significant new housing in fashionable Greenwich as the commercial users are gently giving in to the residential developers.

The walking season ended with a 6-mile amble along the River Crane. This rises north of the M4, passes through Cranbrook (note the name association!) and along the Eastern edge of Heathrow. The walkers picked up the river just South of Hounslow Heath and followed the parkland developed by Hounslow Council beside this stretch of the river. Near the Richmond border we followed the Duke of Northumberland's River, through waterworks and behind rugby stadia, crossing back and forth over the Great Chertsey Road dual carriageway, to emerge where the



The Shot Tower in Crane Park, Hounslow

river joins the Thames at Isleworth. This river is delightfully rural in parts (despite the jets thundering overhead, airport bound – which you can't see in the picture, luckily!).

So what have we learnt? It is quite clear that the issues of "our" Wandle are not unique, whether we are talking about visions for access shared by several boroughs, inappropriate riverside development, treatment of the riverbanks or the issue of littering and pollution. We enjoyed the journeys down the rivers, and indeed for some the pleasure was in the joy of discovery and the fact that we were not being spoonfed down a popular and well-trod path. Interactions with people we met suggested that walking the length of the river was an unusual pursuit. The river paths are a great,

but rather undervalued, resource for walkers although they are well used locally, in places, for outdoor recreation – and particularly by dog walkers.

As a last thought, it was fascinating to see how the rivers under-pinned the early industrial development of the metropolis. The Hogsmill, Crane and Lea, were critical to the armaments industry to support the Napoleonic and American War of Independence. Gunpowder mills on the rivers were located away from settlements because they regularly blew up! On the River Crane there is a surviving shot tower (see photo), sadly not often open to the public. On the Lea we started close to the Royal Gunpowder Mills at Waltham Abbey which supplied the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich – carried there by water of course. As population grew, and the railways developed, armament manufacture moved out of London where the mills could explode without such dire consequences.

But why is there no mention of industry on the Beverley Brook? Luckily for us it flowed too slowly to be of much economic use and has been protected by flowing through common land.

The walks have given much pleasure; they will continue through the winter marrying up a shorter walk with a visit to a place of interest. Dates and destinations are shown in the latest newsletter and on the website. Do join us.

If you want to know more, or explore the rivers yourself, there are a number of web sites to look at:

River Ravensbourne: [www.londonslostrivers.com/river-ravensbourne.html](http://www.londonslostrivers.com/river-ravensbourne.html)

Hogsmill River: [www.londonslostrivers.com/hogsmill-river.html](http://www.londonslostrivers.com/hogsmill-river.html)

Beverley Brook: [www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/visiting/attractions/beverleybrookwalk.htm](http://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/visiting/attractions/beverleybrookwalk.htm)

River Lea: [www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show\\_path.php?path\\_name=Lea+Valley+Walk](http://www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?path_name=Lea+Valley+Walk)  
[www.walklondon.org.uk/route.asp?R=4](http://www.walklondon.org.uk/route.asp?R=4)

River Crane: [www.londonslostrivers.com/river-crane.html](http://www.londonslostrivers.com/river-crane.html)

# Wandsworth Museum – the continuing story

Sheila Allen

Last year I was happy to provide news of a remarkable story of tenacity and success in the Museum Saga. The Phoenix that is Wandsworth Museum was bright, shiny and eager to spread its wings. The year since then has seen Friends' support grow both financially and socially with an expanding programme of events and more contributions to help fund activities. The committed staff has ensured growth in visitor numbers and our Learning department has provided innovative and popular programmes eagerly anticipated and enjoyed by a growing number of

school and pre-school children. The latest exhibition, "Keep it Clean" proved popular and has been retained.

The business background to all this however gives cause for concern as outgoings stubbornly exceed income, our rent-free tenure to March 2015 looms and our Hintze funding approaches the end of its lifespan. The Council has not been able to extend the special conditions which we have enjoyed in West Hill. The financial strain has necessitated harsh cost-cutting resulting in loss of staff and reduced opening hours whilst the Board considers options including moving to smaller premises.

Remarkably our Learning programmes and other services have continued with increased numbers taking part. The café and book shop have shared managers and volunteers have been ever more active at the front desk and behind the scenes. Nevertheless it was decided that the Museum had to conserve funds to allow for a partial continuity of provision whilst alternative options were examined. And so we closed to the public whilst negotiations proceeded and options were scrutinised. Progress is slow but is being made and our Interim Director, Sue Walker, has made an energetic start and brought a most refreshing new perspective to the work. There are exciting prospects for the future.

To those of you who pass by the closed Museum it may seem more like a swan than the Phoenix, hardly moving on the surface but there is lots of energetic activity underneath. Friends and volunteers have a full seasonal programme planned - coffee mornings, visits and fund raising Nights at The Museum, and children still crowd in for the Learning activities.

If you have not already attended any of the above do pay a visit. Your support will help us hugely.

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# Yuletide Thoughts on the Referendum

Stuart Thom

It all seems long ago now, but September 18th was an important day in the United Kingdom's constitutional calendar. It was the "day of judgement" or put another way –the referendum on whether Scotland should remain in the UK. As a Scot, I took this very seriously, and therefore I took a week off from my mayoral duties to go up to Scotland and campaign for a "NO" vote which was the answer that those who wanted to maintain the union between Scotland and England wanted.

I had been invited by an old friend of mine, an East Lothian farmer, who had developed as his main business, document archiving in his former farm sheds, now suitably modernised and air conditioned, for the Edinburgh financial community. If the Edinburgh financial scene collapsed or moved south his business would go to the wall and with it the employment of ten employees. Simple as that.

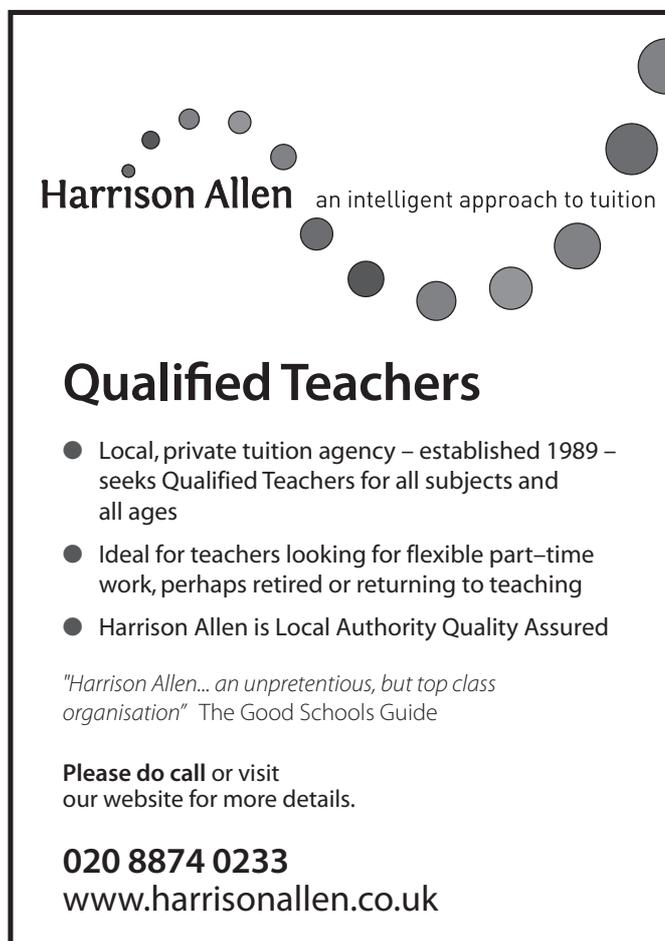
Our task was to visit the "don't knows" and persuade them that they were better off to remain within the union. The arguments were clear enough. There were major uncertainties on what the currency would be, what arrangements there would be on the border, what the position on pensions was and just what were the reserves of North Sea oil. All issues of some importance. I found it immensely satisfying talking to people on the doorstep and going through these issues. I found too, once they had heard the arguments for the union, they would vote against separation. It was amusing to come across householders who would say "I have got a daughter living in Wandsworth" or "my son works in London" and they did not want them to be foreigners in their own land. This was actually the most powerful argument –why separate when we have so much in common through our family ties.

Of course one had to recognize the emotional case. If you were from one of the large housing estates in Glasgow and felt you had been left behind, you would be sympathetic to the argument you had nothing to lose. The nationalist party had worked hard over the years to convince that element in particular, that they would be better off in an independent Scotland. But it was all based on emotion. "Head or Heart". "You are not a Scot unless you vote "YES". In fact the nationalists over-reached themselves because of their intimidation. Frequently if you put up a "NO" poster it would be torn down or your car damaged. This meant

that a lot of people put up "YES" posters for safety and not because they supported the independence cause.

I found myself at the polling station in Haddington in the unusual role of standing shoulder to shoulder with the former Leader of the Scottish Labour Group in Holyrood, Iain Gray, MSP, with opposite us a gaggle of characters in kilts shouting "freedom". You have to wonder-what oppression were they suffering from? What were the English doing to them? Freedom is a precious commodity and not one to be compared with in the UK, against the real lack of freedom in so many countries in other parts of the world.

Well, as they say, "it was alright on the night". Apart from Glasgow and Dundee, Scotland voted overwhelmingly for the Union. The real challenge now lies ahead -how to make a union with substantial devolved powers work for the benefit of all citizens of the United Kingdom. But that is another story.



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# Poppies: towards the history of a symbol

by Roy Vickery

Since early in the nineteenth century poppies have been associated with those killed in battle; they are said to have sprung up from the blood of soldiers (who, of course, in those days wore scarlet) who died during the battle of Waterloo:

In the twentieth century the poppy became a symbol of remembrance of those who died in the First World War and subsequent wars. The development of this symbol is traditionally traced back to John Macrae's 1915 poem:

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow,  
Between the crosses, row on row ...*

After re-reading Macrae's work in November 1918 by Moina Michael, an American woman, was inspired to expand the poppy motif:

*We cherish too, the poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led,  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies ...*

She took to wearing a poppy to 'keep faith in those who died', and at the same time in France, Anna Guérin, had poppies manufactured to sell with any profits being used to help people returning to war-devastated areas.

Thus runs the 'official' history, but other things were happening elsewhere. It appears that during its early history in the United Kingdom the poppy, now largely associated with the 'establishment', was initially used by people of left-wing inclination. In June 1918 when

the Papton Adult School visited the Derbyshire home of the socialist and philosopher Edward Carpenter, he spoke on 'War and Reconstruction':

*'literature was distributed along with red poppies. The ... poppies were symbols of a grassroots patriotism, for the mighty wartime state had overlooked the wounded men discharged from the forces, and two left-wing organisations had taken on their welfare: the National Association of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors, and the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors.'*

When the British Legion organized its first Poppy Day, 1921, it used poppies imported from France. This event raised £106,000 and the Legion thought it should find a British source to supply its poppies. By June 1922 Major George Howson had established a poppy factory, employing five disabled men, in east London. Initially only lapel poppies were made, but in 1924 wreath making was added to the factory's activities, the first large wreath being laid by the Prince of Wales on 11 November 1924. By 1925 Howson's workforce had grown to 50 making it necessary to search for larger premises, which were eventually found at Richmond, Surrey.

Since 1933 white poppies have also been worn during the run-up to Remembrance Sunday. Initially these were promoted by the Co-operative

Women's Guild as a 'pledge to peace that wars must never happen again'. It was intended to extend 'the narrow nationalistic and militaristic view of Remembrance to remembering all the dead in wars, irrespective of nationality, civilians as well as those in the armed forces'. The use of white poppies reached its peak in 1938, but they continued to be used sporadically until 1980, when they were adopted by the Peace Pledge Union. The Union organizes an alternative wreath-laying at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London, at which a wreath of white poppies is used. By 1988 the Union expected to sell 50,000 poppies.

In the 1990s black poppies were produced to commemorate black and Asian people who died in war, and in 2011 purple poppies, 'remembering the animal victims of war', were produced Animal Aid.

There is obviously much more to be discovered about the history of the remembrance poppy, but it appears that during its early days it was promoted by the very people who would feel uncomfortable wearing it today.





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# The Bathhouse

by Mikhail Mikhailovich Zoshchenko, 1925

**B**athhouses in America, citizens, are said to be excellent. The citizen, for instance, walks in, throws his clothes in a special box – and off he goes for a wash. Doesn't even worry, for instance, that his things might get lost or stolen, doesn't even bother with a ticket.

Well, perhaps some anxious type of American has a word with the attendant: 'So long. Keep an eye on my stuff, will you?'

Simple as that.

And when this American's done washing, back he comes and picks up his clothes – all laundered and ironed. Foot-cloths whiter than snow no doubt. Drawers all patched and darned. Some life!

We've got good bathhouses too. But less good. Still, a man can get washed in them.

There's just one problem – tickets. I went to the bathhouse last Saturday (I can hardly, after all, go to America) and they gave me two tickets. One for my clothes, another for my hat and coat.

But where can a naked man put tickets? Quite frankly – nowhere. Not a pocket in sight. Just belly and legs. It's no joke. You can't tie tickets to your beard.

I tie a ticket to each leg. So I don't lose both at once. And in I go. Now the tickets flap against my legs. Walking's no fun. But walk I must. I need a tub. How can you wash without a tub? It's no joke.

I look for a tub. Then I see a citizen getting washed in three tubs. He's standing in one tub, soaping his head in another and hanging onto the third with his left hand so it doesn't get swiped.

I give the third tub a pull. I want it, you see, for myself. But the citizen doesn't let go.

'Wotcha think yer up to?' he says. 'Thieving tubs as belong to others! I'll smash you with this 'ere tub,' he says. 'right between yer eyes. That'll take the smile off yer face!'

'It was in the days of the Tsars,' I say, 'that people were smashed with tubs. Egotism I call it, plain egotism!'

Other people, says I, need to wash too. We're not at the theatre.'

He turns his backside to me and goes on washing.

No point, I think, in standing over the soul of a man like him. Do that, I think, and he'll carry on washing for the next three days.

I walk on.

An hour later some fellow takes his hand off his tub. Daydreaming, I guess, or bending down for his soap. Anyway, I nick the tub.

I've got a tub but there's nowhere to sit. And a standing wash isn't what I call a wash. It's a joke.

Very well. I stand on my two feet, I hold my tub in one hand, and I wash.

And all around me, merciful heavens, it's laundry day. One man's washing his trousers, another's scrubbing his drawers, a third's wringing out some other item he owns. Soon as you get clean, you might say, you get dirty all over again. The bastards know how to splash all right. And all this laundering makes such a racket you no longer feel like washing. Can't hear what you're doing with the soap. It's no joke.

To hell with them all, I think. I'll finish washing at home.

I go back to the changing room. I hand them a ticket, they hand me my clothes. Everything's mine, I see, except for the trousers.

## The Predicament of the Foreigner

As I was preparing some fruit an elderly gentleman walked into the kitchen and said something in Bulgarian in such a hoarse voice that it sounded like the honk of a goose. I was unable to respond for several seconds as I prepared a reply, during which time he scratched his freckled head and opened a stiff cupboard door. The door also honked like a goose and the man left, whistling through his teeth contentedly.

Alex Billington

## News from the East

Many of our readers will be aware that here in Great Britain we are east of nearly everything which is west of us. Up to the point at least at which everything has become east of us.

Alex Billington

'My own trousers,' I say, 'have a hole just here. But look, citizens, at the hole on these here trousers!'

'We're not here,' says the attendant, 'to look after your holes. We're not at the theatre,' he says.

All right. I put on the trousers and go to collect my coat. But they won't give it to me - they want a ticket. And I've forgotten my ticket, it's on my leg. I have to undress. I take off my trousers and look for the ticket - it's gone. The string's there, tied to my leg, but where's the paper? Gone. Washed away.

I hold out the string. The attendant won't take it. 'I can't give out clothes,' he says, 'on the strength of string. Every citizen can cut himself pieces of string. We won't be able to lay in enough coats. Wait till the public's gone home, I'll give you what's left.'

'But comrade,' I say, 'what if what's left is rubbish? We're not at the theatre,' I say. 'Give me my coat,' I say, 'on the strength of distinguishing features. One pocket's torn,' I say, 'and the other's gone missing. And as for buttons, well, there's a top button, but I doubt you'll find many others.'

So I get back my coat. And he didn't even take the string.

I got dressed, and out I went. Then I remembered: I'd forgotten my soap.

I went back. I'm not allowed in with my coat on.

'Take your coat off,' they say.

'I can't, citizens, undress a third time. We're not at the theatre,' I say. 'At least give me back the price of my soap.'

Nothing doing.

Nothing doing - then nothing doing. Off I go with no soap.

The reader may, of course, wish to know which bathhouse I'm talking about. Where is it? What's the address?

Which bathhouse? Any old bathhouse. A ten-kopek bathhouse.

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# A Scot in America

Andrew H N Gray

**W**illiam Stanway Gray was my late father. He was what is called, in Scotland, a "lad o' pairts", meaning a man who had done much with his life. Born in 1904, he was lucky enough to have been too young to have fought in the First World War, though his two older half-brothers were to fight through the whole conflict and to survive, unwounded, to carry on their lives after the Armistice concluded with Germany in 1918.

Brought up in Edinburgh, Stanway was fortunate enough to have been given an excellent education in one of Scotland's oldest private schools, George Heriot's School, named after "Jingling Geordie", King James VI and I's jeweller. He was given the name due to having a pocket which was always full of cash in what was still a very poor country before the Union of the Crowns in 1603. He would jingle his cash as he strolled about Edinburgh's streets. He would disburse this to the many beggars who thronged the crowded streets of the "Old Town" of Edinburgh, perched on the slope that runs from Edinburgh Castle, down the High Street (known to tourists as the "Royal Mile") to Holyrood Palace where his royal patron lived.

At school, Stanway was in the school cadet force's cavalry squadron, which first prompted his love of horse-riding, though the sergeant-major was often to be heard, when he or another boy had fallen off, demanding of them, "Who ordered you to dismount?"

To his (and his father's) surprise, on the night of the 2nd/3rd April 1916, the War was brought close home to him. His father came up to his room, still wearing his riding breeches, to wish him goodnight. To their surprise, as his father, Thomas Gray stood at the open bedroom window, they beheld an awful sight. A German Zeppelin, a long balloon, with compartments for the crew suspended beneath the vast, hydrogen-filled sack which kept it airborne was to be seen, escaping the scene of the first aerial bombing of Leith, Edinburgh's port and, indeed, of Archibald Place, opposite his very school. The evil, shark-like German war machines could be seen quite clearly in the ruddy glow of the fires their bombs had started.

Suitably ironic justice allowed him, his fellow pupils and the population of Edinburgh to watch in late 1918, less than two-and-a-half years later, as the German fleet sailed into the Firth of Forth to surrender to the Royal Navy, probably from the top of Calton Hill in Edinburgh's city centre.

Peace, however, came at a price. Hundreds of thousands of British military personnel were allowed to return home and, soon, the economy of the United Kingdom was suffering as businesses laid off men, or simply closed down due to a lack of demand for their products and services. Stanway's father's business was no exception. Indeed, as a consequence of the lack of business, Stanway had to give up his veterinary studies at the Dick Veterinary College and find work himself, serving an apprenticeship as a

plasterer in the family company.

After the Great War, there had been near revolution. Troops marched on Downing Street and tanks were on the streets of Glasgow. After the Russian Revolution and German hyperinflation Europe was in a state of turmoil, but he had no time for Communism or fascism and his thoughts turned, instead, to the west and the New World.

By April 1929, he had convinced his mother that the only way that he could help her to bring up his younger brothers and sister, as well as to help her out financially, was if he were to sail to the USA. Accordingly, very soon afterwards he went to Glasgow, accompanied by his mother who gave him a parcel to open only when he reached his cabin. When he opened it, he discovered two red handkerchiefs. His mother was no fool. She wanted to know which of the hundreds aboard the SS "Cameronia" was her laddie... and, when everyone else was waving farewell with their white hankies, her boy was the only one who was waving red ones. She thought that she would never see him again, but, only four years later, he was to return, with money in pocket to complete his examinations and become a qualified veterinary surgeon.

It was not an easy time for Stanway, however, for he arrived barely six weeks before the Wall Street Crash of 1929 when New York "rained" stockbrokers, who committed suicide in considerable numbers by jumping out of the "skyscrapers" (a name

which once described sails on ocean-going vessels, but by then had become synonymous with the multi-storied, high-rise buildings that typified New York and especially Manhattan).

"Even at this point I could not have admitted defeat and returned home a failure. Faith in my star still burned though its once bright gleam was now but a glimmer. Reason told me that I was beaten. My land of dreams was now a land of nightmares."

Stanway was a man of resource, however. Having settled into a flat, where he was mothered by a splendid English lady named Miss Perceval, he made sure that he would never be out of work. However, he expressed his view quite frankly in his memoirs, which (with any luck) may be published in the not-too-distant future.

Opportunities for employment had to be explored, sometimes resulting in brushes with elements of society with whom he was entirely unacquainted. On one occasion, as a case in point, he answered an advertisement "young man wanted", giving an address somewhere in the sizeable dockyard area. He climbed an outside staircase and knocked on a door. A voice barked at him to come in and he found himself in a room, furnished with only a desk, behind which sat a huge man who looked like a boxer who had gone to seed, wearing trousers and an open-necked shirt.

The man scowled at him when he explained that he had come in answer to the advert. "Will you do it?" He growled in a gravelly voice.

Stanway replied, innocently, "Do what?"

The reply was the same. "Will you do it?" to which Stanway explained, nervously, that he did not know what he was being asked to do.



*A very dapper Stanway Gray in a New York street*

Again, the man asked, with a perceptible pause between each word, "Will-you-do-it?"

Having decided that whatever it was was not something he wished to associate himself with and, being fairly sure that this strange man almost certainly had a gun concealed about him, Stanway swung open the door and raced away, not stopping until he was several streets away. Of course, this was hardly unusual in a country which was not only in a state of economic chaos, but which also was suffering from the well-meant, but ill-thought-out "Prohibition".

Prohibition outlawed the sale of alcohol which spawned the production of "bootleg" wood alcohol which was sold by criminal gangs. It also led to the smuggling of decent Scotch whisky from British ships which heaved to just outside American territorial waters. Stanway saw the fast speedboats hidden in creeks along the Eastern Seaboard which collected booze at night and then melted away before dawn could

reveal them to customs men.

It was, eventually, to one of the rather more prosperous customers of such illegal Scotch, that Stanway turned for employment. Having worked in all manner of jobs from digging drains, being a handyman, a butler and a night-watchman, to working as a plasterer on scaffolding that was no more than one plank resting on two other beams, finding a job with a millionaire sounded like a good idea. Indeed, this was no ordinary millionaire, but one who is still to be found online, for those who care to search. He was John Markle, a friend of JP Morgan, no less and a man whose favourite joke (oft-repeated to his staff) was, "I've got more money than you!"

"Yes, sir, Mr Markle. You do indeed." Stanway would agree with him. In fact, he not only had more money, but he also had a house full of staff from the Old Country and Stanway found himself rubbing shoulders with English and Welsh people, plus a butler who was a fake Englishman and who had a taste for the Old Man's booze, with consequences fatal to his career in the household. Stanway got the job mostly because he had "been to college", something by which Mr Markle set great store, as he used Stanway as a "Man Friday", by dint of his academic background, energy and physical strength, as he himself was wheelchair-bound.

Of course, being the Prohibition era, as well as the immediate aftermath of the Wall Street Crash, there was a lot happening in east coast America. Naturally, when the sale of booze was banned, it became a must-have item. If you were wealthy, as John Markle was, it was no problem to have someone else find and buy the whisky you wanted to drink. Indeed, Mr Markle had a fine cellar of all kinds of drink and his butler was someone



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who was a man who also liked his (or rather, his boss's) drink.

Now, in many Americans' minds, there was a certain cachet about having an English butler. In John Markle's case, though most of his household was indeed British, his butler was actually from Oklahoma. Carter, as he seems to have been called, was a fake Englishman.

Carter's liking for Markle's drink was almost his undoing one Thanksgiving, when the entire family for whom he was then working, plus relations, had appeared for dinner. He had gone to his room for "a rest", or so he said. However, Stanway was worried by his failure to come down as the time was approaching for the most enormous turkey he had ever seen in his life to be served. He went up Carter's room and entered when there was no reply to his knocking. To his horror, Carter was lying, half-clothed and completely drunk, on the bed.

Drastic measures were clearly called for. He whistled up gallons of strong coffee and washed the half-conscious man's face with cold water. He dressed him and made him drink the coffee, then had him helped downstairs. More strong coffee followed and he had one of the maids take him outside for a walk, with only ten minutes to go till the meal was due to be served.

At last, the vast turkey emerged from the oven and it was time for it to be carried through to the large family gathering. By this time, the rather pale butler was helping prevent the wall collapsing by leaning on it. Somehow, he managed to announce dinner, but Stanway and a maid had carried through the soup course and the nibbles before the main course.

Seeing the sheer scale of the turkey, he offered to take it through himself, being a strong lad, but the butler demurred. He would manage, he



*Calton Hill*

insisted. Somewhat sceptically, Stanway watched Carter swaying backwards and forwards on his heels as they stood outside the dining-room, with the immense bird in his charge. Standing by the door, he waited until Carter judged that the momentum was just right, with the enormous fowl balanced on a silver platter on his arm and, at just the right moment, he swung the door open and Carter swept in, leaving him in a wake of alcohol which the slightest spark could have ignited.

There was a silence in which a pin could have been heard dropping. Carter, having initiated his own momentum, it seemed, had found that it had a life of its own and that the problem then became one of actually stopping. To the seeming perplexity of the gathered family of his employer, Carter treated them to not one; not two, but three circumnavigations of the dining room while heroically supporting a bird which only narrowly avoided being listed in the Guinness Book of Records.

Defly, on his last circuit, Carter deposited the bird before his open-mouthed employer without revealing that he had only prevented the creature from taking off for a last flight, by holding on, very firmly, to its tail!

Sad to say, fate eventually caught up with Carter and his drinking of his boss's booze came to a final, cataclysmic end. In what one might be tempted to recount with a wry smile, it was another kind of rye that precipitated his debacle. Serving drinks in the drawing room, he helped out the proceedings by having one too many himself. As he then attempted to descend to the hall from the drawing room, he tripped and rolled in a confusion of broken glass and whisky to the foot of the stairs. He was promptly fired and driven immediately to the station. Stanway then became butler in his place.

His experiences in that far-off America of the silver screen, of speakeasies, the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre and the "talkies" were far from over, but he was beginning to realize that he could and he would survive the Depression and that he would manage to keep his family back in Scotland supplied with funds. There would be enough money to feed and educate his siblings and to supplement what little money his mother could bring in. Yes. There would be enough for all that. There would also be enough for him to resume his veterinary training and qualify as an MRCVS in 1938.

For now, however, that still lay in the future.



# St Luke's Music Society

Bringing Music to the Battersea and South West London Community

## 2014/15 Season

Following our tenth anniversary season in 2012/13 and the triumphant return of *The Sixteen* to St Luke's in October to open our 2013/14 season **St Luke's Music Society** is once again proud to present a series of international artists, performing in the beautiful surroundings of St Luke's Church.

**Saturday 13 December 2014 at 7.30pm**  
**Artists of the National Opera Studio**  
**Christmas scenes from *La Bohème* and other great operatic moments**

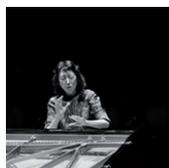
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The National Opera Studio, located in Wandsworth, provides the final training to some of the finest young opera singers from around the world. Puccini's glorious music from *La Bohème* is just one of the treats that they will perform, providing a wonderful start to the Christmas season.

**Saturday 17 January 2015 at 7.30pm**  
**Mitsuko Uchida (piano)**

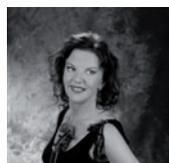
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We are delighted to welcome Mitsuko Uchida for her first concert in St Luke's, adding to our reputation as a venue to hear the very greatest pianists in the world. The London based Japanese pianist's stellar career has taken her all over the world, giving concerts to great acclaim in the most famous concert halls. In St Luke's she will play three sonatas by Mozart followed by four of Schubert's second set of sublime Impromptus D935.

**Saturday 28 February 2015 at 7.30pm**  
**Tasmin Little (violin) with Martin Roscoe (piano)**

Proudly sponsored by



Tasmin Little has become one of our favourite performers, having appeared twice before in St Luke's, most recently supporting with her talents a fundraising concert for the National Brain Appeal. She is joined by Martin Roscoe, one of this country's outstanding pianists, whose concerts and recordings have received rave reviews, as has Tasmin Little's recent recording of Walton's Violin concerto. Tonight they will perform four early Beethoven sonatas.

**There will be a pre-concert interview in St Luke's for ticket holders at 6.30 before each of these concerts**

**Box Office [www.slms.org.uk](http://www.slms.org.uk) or 07951 791619**  
**Obtain a 5% ticket discount when becoming a member of the Society**  
**See website for details**

Tickets £18 (£14 concessions) ♦ Mitsuko Uchida £24 (£20 concessions)

### Postal bookings

St Luke's Concert Series  
St Luke's Community Hall  
194 Ramsden Road  
London SW12 8RQ

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155c Northcote Road  
London  
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# Stars come to St Luke's Music Society

**Antony Lewis-Crosby**

**A**s General Manager of the St Luke's Music Society my task is to put together a programme each season that is of both excellent quality and full of variety. Over the 12 years of the concert series in the beautiful St Luke's church acoustic we have increasingly been able to attract top international performers who fit the bill of both quality and variety easily and this season is no exception.

The first half of the season this autumn has seen the first appearance of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment playing Schubert's Octet and Beethoven's Septet in October and the brilliant singers from the National Opera Studio here in Wandsworth performing a lovely programme of operatic excerpts. We also had a very emotional performance of the Verdi Requiem by the Festival Chorus when we said goodbye to our Music Director, David Fawcett. He conducted a superb concert with lovely soloists and a choir of over 170 singers – the largest in the history of the choir. David leaves us after 27 magnificent years to move to the South Coast. As I write his successor has not been announced, but the signs are that David's replacement will also be of a very high standard.

January (17th) sees a piano recital by one of the world's greatest exponents of the instrument, Mitsuko Uchida.

Japanese by birth, Mitsuko settled in London early on in her career and has travelled the world performing to sold out audiences with orchestras and in recital. Her concert for St Luke's of three sonatas by Mozart and 4 Schubert Impromptus is a preview of a recital that she is giving at the Salzburg Mozart Festival.

February (28th) brings the return of Tasmin Little performing Beethoven Violin Sonatas with Martin Roscoe playing the piano. A dream team if ever there was one. As for Mitsuko Uchida tickets are selling fast.

The Festival Chorus perform Handel's Israel in Egypt with their new conductor on 21st March and the early results of this relationship will be eagerly awaited.

Variety for the final two concerts of the season comes with the Budapest Cafe Orchestra (18th April) performing jazz, folk and klezmer ("Music with goulash" as they describe it) in April and Voces 8 singing a wide range of a capella music from the Renaissance to modern popular music on 16th May. There will be a singing workshop open to all earlier in the day.

2014/5 has been a joy to put together and a joy to hear. Do come along and perhaps become a Friend of the St Luke's Music Society which brings further opportunities to enjoy musical life in Wandsworth and further afield.

**020·8870·7595**



# Walking on the Wild Side

Unspoilt and untamed, Romania's Carpathians offer a tempting alternative to a hike in the Alps.

John Gimlette finds out why

**M**eet Ileana, a high-altitude beauty, now almost 88. Blonde and russet-skinned, even in her homemade clothes and woolly socks, she looks strikingly defiant. She and her husband are typical of those who live up here, in the walls of the Bârsa Valley. They built their own house; they grow their own food; they keep six cows and eight sheep. The doctor hikes by once a month, and the nearest bus-stop is two hour's walk away (more in the snow). During the communist time, Ileana's neighbours used to go down every day to work in the ammunition factory. Once it employed 16,000 people but now it's gone, and all they need worry about is the bears.

I almost choked. 'Bears? Even here?'

In fairness, the scene all around was improbably pretty: great swoops of green, fringed with hornbeam and ash; barns built from enormous joints of oak; giant hayricks, and meadows seething with campanulas and burdock. It was like the Alps, except more antique and compact.

'Da, da!' insisted Ileana. The bears come for apples and ants.

'And your livestock?'

That too, she shrugged. Last month, they killed six lambs in the next village, and two donkeys. You can't turn your back for a minute.

Bears haven't been the only inconvenience here.

Almost everyone has tramped through the valley at some stage, including Tartars, Goths, Huns and Slavs. It's easy to see why. Romania, about the size of the UK, is cut in half by the Carpathians, a wall of limestone, almost 1,000km long. Midway, the mountains change direction, and a break appears. For centuries, it's been funnelling invaders in and out, and the first thing they see – or the last – is the Bârsa Valley. What (I wondered) happens there now? And what's still hidden away, in Transylvania's natural redoubts? My wife and I packed our walking boots, and set out for a week.

We began on the valley floor, at Zarnesti. It was established by the Romans after defeating the Dacians (a struggle memorably depicted on Trajan's column). Although they left only Christianity and a new language,

the Romans were happy here, and renamed the region Dacia Felix. I can understand their contentment. At 750m, the valley was grassy and cool, and rimmed with a magnificent brocade of Carpathian purple. Storks were huddled along the river, tossing back frogs and waiting for the first rains and their return to Egypt. Zarnesti itself was a town of orange manor houses, with a small piața, mostly occupied by the water-melon man. At night, the whole place barked itself to sleep, and then woke up drowsier than ever.

Our guesthouse had once been a farm. Rebuilt by bear-watching scientists, it was chunky and practical, and yet fabulously welcoming. After the day's hike, Elena would appear with smiles and firewater (țuica), followed by a heroic feast of soup and stews. Her husband, Gigi, had hung the walls with ancestral costumes – felt greatcoats and embroidered tunics – which made it all seem strangely populated, like a hall of the mountain kings.

Each day we'd set off by car to the start of our walk. Our guide, Radvan, was born in the valley, and knew all its secrets. That week, we covered an area the size of an English county, and no



two places were ever the same. One day, we'd be clambering through pine forests, and the cathedral-like pinnacles of the Ciucas range; the next, we'd be in a gorge, up to our knees in gentians and thyme. Then, another day, we'd be walking the wind-scoured plateau of Bucegi, peering down on the valley from above the clouds.

There were always two quite distinct worlds: one orderly and grand, the other shy and bucolic. It's all down to two distinct ethnic groups, who were here by the 1220s. The first were the Saxons, sent to establish an imperial frontier. They'd settled only the valley floor, which has hardly changed since: farms gathered into towns; the land ploughed in strips; churches with battlements, and vast fortresses dangling off the valley's walls. They'd also re-named it

Burzenland, a name which has stuck.

The other group, were the Vlachs, who were always more inclined to the mountains. They'd avoided the troubled tablelands, preferring farms that were remote, unobtrusive and dispersed. If ever we stumbled on their hamlets, we always enjoyed them. They'd all been chopped from the forest, and then delicately fretted and shingled. Some – like Ileana's – were only tenuously connected to the outside world. Others were a hub of horses and carts. But it wasn't all quaintly medieval. The modern-day Vlach has a scythe and a satellite dish, and wears a tracksuit.

Of all these villages, my favourite was Măgura, which means 'The Hill'. It was strung along a brilliant green ridge, its pear

trees regularly raided by bears. Everything was made of wood, or rust. There was only one shop, which had just enough stock to fill a trunk. When we chose a packet of biscuits, the shopkeeper looked at the sell-by date, and hurled it aside as if it was toxic. I don't think she had many customers. The big business here was hay-making. One of the farmers (aged 82) showed me how to use a scythe. This is no mean feat when the field falls away like a hangar roof.

But the real heroes of our walks were the shepherds. Guarding sheep has been an esteemed profession since Ottoman times (c.1541-1699), when a vast Turkish army had to be fed. It's also a hard and lonely life. We'd often see them up in the păsune, or high pastures, with their whips and their dogs and the river of bells. We even found

them on Omul (2,505m), which, for half the year, is under snow. Most evenings, we'd follow them down to a stâna, where the cheese was made. These shacks, smelling smokey and sour, are not a place to linger. The shepherds are up here – alone – seven months a year.

The biggest problem, they said, was wolves. Romania has over 3,000 of them (more wolves here than in the rest of Western Europe put together). Even on Piatra Craiului, the ridge above Zarnesti, there's a pack of twenty-five. That's what the dogs are for, huge matted creatures, with branded noses. It's also why the shepherds have to sleep up here, every night, amongst their sheep. You see their shelters all over the mountain, like little polythene coffins.

I asked one old herder how long all this would last. 'My son's already in Italy,' he shrugged, 'making good money. He sells pizzas all night.'

Meanwhile, down in the valley, the Saxons had all but disappeared. Successive wars had not been kind to Germans here. The last straw was the revolution of 1989. Unable to cope with more uncertainty – and after nearly 800 years – most had gone 'home'.

On the days we weren't walking, we'd clamber through their old fortresses. I loved these places. From Rasnov, we could see our entire week, spread out below. Then there was Bran, which, despite its lofty exterior and some spurious marketing ('Dracula's Castle'), was surprisingly cute. It's still owned by royalty, and a tiny secret staircase leads up to the music



Viscri

room, where the little Habsburgs had played.

But best of all was Viscri, or Weisskirche. Although it was an hour's drive from the valley, it beautifully encapsulated the Saxon age. A long avenue of farms wriggled up the hill – through fruit trees and geese – to the fortified church. In times of siege, the whole village could hide in here, perhaps for months. At moments, it felt as if nothing had changed. There was still Bach belting out of the organ, and a side of bacon in the Speckurm (or Tower of Lard). But, in reality, only twenty-two Saxons were left. Most of the villagers were now Tġigani, or gypsies, including the blacksmith. For 15 Lei (£2.70), he swept the beer bottles off his anvil, and made us a horseshoe. His wife helped, hammering away in her long coloured skirts.

We spent our last few days in Braşov, formerly Kronstadt. With its guildhouses, Benetton, 'Massaj erotic' and swaggering baroque, it didn't seem to belong in this story, and yet – really

– it's Burzenland at its most extreme. This is where Vlad did his impaling in 1460, and then – for a long time – only Saxons were allowed inside. After that came the communists, packing it with factories and uprooted peasants. But, despite all this, what's emerged is exquisite; a mini-Prague, slightly crumbled, and undiscovered.

Before leaving, we went looking for bears. This involved a ranger and a gun, and a drive through the woods. We didn't need to go far. There are now over 6,300 bears in Romania, and so they're often bumping into Braşov (and pillaging the suburbs). Once in our hide, four youngsters appeared, attracted not by us but 10kg of corn. I tried to take a picture but, at the sound of the shutter, they vanished. That's Burzenland for you, I suppose: something utterly remarkable, but blink and you'll miss it.

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John Gimlette is the winner of the Dolman Travel Book Prize 2012, with 'Wild Coast; Travels on South America's Untamed Edge' (Profile £8.99).

# Passion, Preludes & Pianos in Majorca



How fortunate are we that the lamented departure to Chorleywood of David and Elizabeth Ward, the founders and 25-year-long hosts of superb Society soirées has not meant, as feared, the end of our cherished sociable musical evenings. The Wards' near neighbours, Society members also, Stefan and Arjan Byron, have happily stepped in to continue the tradition. So, another beautiful drawing room along Patten Road is our prized new venue, and we are deeply grateful to the Byrons for their warm and generous hospitality.

Since September last year we have enjoyed songs Spanish, Tudor and modern, artists from the National Opera Studio, a clarinet and piano recital – performances all of the highest quality – and our last soiree for 2014 was a rare treat indeed: a presentation in music and words by, respectively, the President of the Chopin Society UK, Lady Rose Cholmondeley and the actor Charles Grant, about the famously turbulent sojourn in Majorca of Chopin and George Sand in 1838-9. Rose is a greatly accomplished RCM-trained pianist who gives Chopin recitals world-wide, for which she has earned the Polish Gold “Gloria Artis” medal, besides being a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians and a Freeman of the City of London. Charles leads a busy life doubling stage, TV and radio work with being the Administrator and Concert Director at St Paul’s Church, Covent Garden.

This formidable pairing of talents dazzled us not only with their festive appearance – she in flowing florals, he in bottle-green velvet smoking jacket and black velvet pumps – but with their rousing account of the polonaises, preludes, ballades and mazurkas with which poor consumptive Chopin attempted to rise above the discomforts of a cold wet island in winter, and of the written descriptions of their unexpectedly wretched circumstances. It all made for a fascinating, eye-opening tale underlying the familiar brilliant surface of the glorious music.

Sand and Chopin were in the first intoxicating months of their passion, and as their friend Marie d’Agoult, Liszt’s companion, observed, “George has decamped with Chopin to pursue a perfect love in the shade of the myrtle trees of Palma!” But alas, George had not

done her researches on Mallorca: after initial delight at “sunshine all day, at night long hours of song and the sound of guitars,” the rains descended and their rented villa fulfilled its inauspicious name “House of the Winds”, becoming “like a sponge... like a cloak of ice on our shoulders.” Chopin was struggling with a dreadful hired piano, his beloved Pleyel not having yet arrived from Paris; he started coughing badly and spitting blood: “from that moment, we became the objects of horror and dread for the Majorcans”. The party – which included George’s two children and an overworked maidservant – were turned out of the villa and fled, on foot the last part of the steep rocky way, to the abandoned Carthusian monastery at Valldemosa. There they enjoyed at least the beauty of the site - “the most romantic spot on earth!” said George; the children rambled and drew, George wrote and Chopin composed diligently, hard at work on his Opus 28 Preludes (passionately rendered to us by Rose Cholmondeley) – eventually on his own piano, ransomed from Spanish customs by George at enormous expense. But the locals still regarded them as pariahs, stole from them, and stoned the children in the fields. George ran the household and paid the bills, cooked, taught the children, and nursed Chopin; but he grew steadily weaker and more despondent. A return to Paris for treatment was imperative: “Another month in Spain,” wrote George, “and we would have died, Chopin of melancholy and disgust, and I of anger and indignation.”

So ended what many assume was an idyll of romance and music. But it elicited from Chopin a body of exquisite compositions, some of his very best works – and what a privilege it was to hear them so passionately and rousingly brought to life by Rose, and in the appropriately elegant intimacy of the Byrons’ drawing room. We thank them all most warmly – and Charles for his sensitive and sympathetic reading of the protagonists’ words.

We are now looking forward to further Soirée pleasures in 2015; hopefully we can prevail on Rose and Charles to offer us their programme: “Chopin’s Visit to Britain”!

**Wendy Cater**

# Once upon a time... and a very bad time it was

gathered by Roger Briggs

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s.

They used urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot and then once a day it was taken to the tannery... if you had to do this to survive you were "piss poor".

But worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford a pot... they "didn't have a pot to piss in" and were the lowest of the low.

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell... brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water".

Houses had thatched roofs – thick straw – piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would fall off the roof... hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs".

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, "dirt poor". The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way. Hence: "a thresh hold".

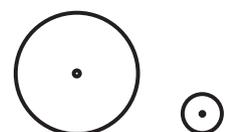
In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly

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vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start again the next day. Sometimes the stew had been in there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme: "Peas porridge hot, peas pudding cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old". Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show it off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "bring home the bacon". They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and "chew the fat".

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or "the upper crust".

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait to see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding "a wake".

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone house and reuse the grave. When opening these coffins, 1 out of 25 were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realised they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night ("the graveyard shift") to listen for the bell: thus someone could be "saved by the bell" or was considered to be "a dead ringer".



## Collectors' item

Red Kickers (circa 1972?)

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# Just what the doctor

I am writing this having just taken my family's winter coats down from the loft and stocked up on mincemeat and marzipan. It's hard to believe 2015 is just around the corner and we are nearing the end of the first full calendar year that Wandsworth GPs have been responsible for planning and designing many of the NHS services that Wandsworth residents use.

We have plenty to be proud of in our local NHS and, much as I would like to, I don't have room to list all the highlights. But I would like to pick up on a few issues that are close to my heart.

Whether you've talked about heart disease with one of our WHIZ team, raised an issue at one of our public board meetings, contributed to our health surveys, spoken to Colin, Emma-Jane or Dave on our Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) team, or taken part in one of the 60 plus events that we held this year, you have helped us to be better NHS commissioners. In the past year, we had roughly 1000 patients share their views with us on a range of issues. When we propose to make changes to health service, we want – and need – to hear what you have to say, because your views do affect our decision-making.

We can only improve NHS services with input from public, patients and carers, so my suggestion for a New Year's resolution is to take part in our consultations or join your GP practice's patient participation group. The best first port of call is to contact the PPI Team via [ppi@wandsworthccg.nhs.uk](mailto:ppi@wandsworthccg.nhs.uk) or 020 8812 6600.

One of Wandsworth CCG's key priority areas is dementia. We estimate there are 2212 people in Wandsworth living with dementia. We have worked closely with South West London and St

Georges Mental Health Trust, St George's Hospital, Wandsworth Council and with nursing and residential homes, and together have made real strides to improve care for people with dementia. For example, we have established the Wandsworth Memory Assessment Service. This is the service for people with suspected dementia. Your GP can refer you to the service and can get help in those critical first weeks and months of a diagnosis. Patients and carers are provided with information about other support available locally that can be accessed longer term.

We work with the Alzheimer's Society to provide dementia advisors, dementia support workers and "dementia cafés" around the borough and ensure that people with dementia, and their families, have the tools to manage the condition and maintain their independence. We are developing new dementia clinical nurse specialist roles to improve support to people with dementia in primary care. This step was taken as a result of listening to the views of people with dementia, their families and professional groups.

When Wandsworth's nursing and residential homes told us that more training, education and clinical expertise would be beneficial, we listened and we launched the Behaviour and Communication Support Service to care homes. This is an innovative approach to training and education which supports staff teams, residents and families to communicate more effectively, improving care for elderly residents, many of whom have dementia.

These are just some examples of our work and I know we have more to do to improve care for the growing number of people with dementia so that people in Wandsworth get the right care, no matter

# ordered

## Dr Nicola Jones

where in the borough they live, whether they are at home, in hospital or in a care home.

As it is holiday season, I can't stress enough how important it is to keep your medicine cabinet stocked up with the essentials (especially simple painkillers, cold and flu remedies, oral rehydration salts, indigestion remedies, plasters). Take the opportunity to dispose of any out of date medication too. And if you need repeat prescriptions for your regular medicines, it's best that these are ordered and collected earlier rather than in the days before the bank holidays. If, however, you do need a chemist, the list of Wandsworth pharmacies open during the bank holidays is available via <http://bit.ly/1EPiXcY> Your local pharmacist is an excellent source of help and information on many health care matters so always ask if you need advice.

And if you have not done so already, ask your GP about getting a flu jab. Free jabs are perfectly safe and cannot give you flu. If you had a jab last year, you will need another as the virus it fights changes every year. Older people over 65 are entitled to free flu jabs from their local doctor or pharmacist, as are pregnant women, those with certain health conditions including diabetes, heart disease, asthma and other lung conditions. Carers and those with weakened immunity are also advised to have the free jab. You can get a flu jab at your GP practice and at certain local pharmacies – you can find more information on our website [www.wandsworthccg.nhs.uk](http://www.wandsworthccg.nhs.uk)

Finally, while I hope your holidays are happy and healthy, if you have a health concern that isn't a life-threatening emergency, there's help via freephone NHS 111, which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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**G**uto's stuck at home now. He no longer has his tractor and, although he's been given a mobility scooter, he doesn't use it. When I call on him, he's sitting in his armchair in front of the television, a table laden with pills on one side and a walking frame on the other. Two ladies, home helps, come in twice a day to cook him a meal and clean. The carpet is hoovered, the kitchen is without a spot, the plastic bags are folded neatly and everything is in its place. The locals call regularly. Sometimes they take him shopping

'There' he pointed to a sward of meadowland nibbled down by the sheep. 'That was where I saw them. They were in a circle and they were dancing.' Guto Butcher threw back his head and laughed – It had been an exceptional summer and he was shirtless; burned brown as if Bardsay was the South of France. To him fairies and holiness were the same thing. Guto didn't mind. He was in a high old mood that day. He'd been clowning around; playing up to his audience; even delivering a cod sermon in Welsh from the pulpit of the little chapel up on the hill.

the Bardsay Sound that surge in between.

In mediaeval times Bardsay was considered sacred; the 'navel of the world'. Pilgrims would make their way down the peninsula to brave that perilous Sound. Many drowned on the way. But being half way between earth and heaven, those pilgrims believed that, even if they perished en route, the journey guaranteed them a seat alongside the chosen ones. In the tiny village of Aberdaron, at the end of the Peninsula, there's a twelfth century building. It's now a café serving

# Guto and the Holy Island

by Veronica Cecil

in Pwllheli or to the Lion in Tudweiliog for a meal. His mind has remained intact. But the old Guto, the innocent fool, has gone.

'Do you miss Bardsay?' I ask when I call.

'No' he says.

When we first came to Wales he seemed slightly touched. Every day his father Twm would stride past the front of our house as if he owned it, while Guto, head bowed, followed a pace or two behind carrying all the tools. They could have come from a fairy story; the archetypical peasant pair; bad father, idiot son. Except that Guto wasn't an idiot, even though he did claim to have seen the fairies.

He showed me the exact spot when we went together over to the holy island of Bardsay where he grew up. It was a perfect summer day. The mountain rose up behind us, and below, to our right, lay the ruins of the ancient sixth-century abbey. The rest of the island land was spread flat and green like a slab of pancake.

I'd been told by my friend Medwyn, who motored us over in his fishing boat, that Bardsay, reputedly the burial ground of 20,000 saints, was 'liminal'; half way between heaven and earth. And, whether or not it was in my imagination, there did seem to be something surreal about the lump of rock which rose perpendicular, threatening to engulf us, as we motored past it. At the landing place seals lay sprawled on the rocks like lazy tourists sunning themselves.

Although it's only a couple of miles from the mainland, geologically Bardsay doesn't belong to North Wales at all. Just over half a mile wide and a mile long, it was once part of Mid Wales, forty miles away. During one of the great global shifts when continents sloughed off bits of themselves, it moved sideways, situating itself off the end of the Llyn Peninsula. Like a fold in a piece of material, the trough between the island and the mainland is immensely deep. I imagine that accounts for the lethal currents of

cream teas but once, the plaque says, it gave the pilgrims a free bowl of soup to nourish them for the journey. They set off, we're told, from St. Mary's Well, a miraculous natural pool tucked into the rock face. While the waves beat against the rocks below, it still wells fresh spring water. The abbey, to which they were heading, was destroyed by Henry VIII. His henchmen must also have braved that Sound in order to vandalise the sacred building. And that, it seems to me, is the essence of Bardsay. It is a focal point for the contradiction of existence; the sacred and the profane.

Guto's house, which is called Nant, is right beside the ruins of the abbey. It's a stone cottage with a low stone wall round it and a vivid pink rose still growing in the garden and is one of a dozen or so houses scattered round the island. Most are built out of the stones from the destroyed monastery, and carved into one of them in Nant is what looks like a face. Neither good nor bad, it's tantalising in its ambiguity.

The inhabitants of this tiny community had to be survivors. Taking the force of the Atlantic Ocean and battered by storms, the island was and still is cut off from the mainland for weeks at a time. They not only rely on one another, they have to be self sufficient. In the 1950s the artist and poet Brenda Chamberlain moved to Bardsay to try and find an alternative way of living. Before she got her own house, she lodged, for a time, with Guto's family. I asked Guto what she was like. 'She had long hair yellow hair' he said, making a face 'and she was ugly.' Brenda Chamberlain didn't think too much of Guto either. She wrote a book while she was on the island called 'Tide race' in which he features. She's given him another name but it's unmistakably him.

When she first landed on the island she was met by the king of Bardsay. There was a tradition of

'kings' – this one was a large ox of a fellow with a long unkempt beard and a crown made of copper, who was permanently drunk – but the real ruler of the island was Guto's father Twm. He was also a big brute of a man. His monumental moods swung like the weather. He revelled in risk and would go out to sea in all conditions. He also terrorised the islanders who were mostly farmer fishermen. He strode through their property as if he owned the whole island, and raped or attempted to rape their women. Although on one occasion the men drove Twm into a corner and tried to beat him up, ultimately they couldn't control the tyrant. He wasn't only strong, he was wily and clever. He manipulated people.

Guto seldom talked about his father and he certainly never said anything bad about him. But he bears an insinuation to Twm's brutality in the

shape of a deformed arm. It's thinner than the other and the elbow sticks out at an odd angle. He caught it in a piece of farm machinery he says, though there's no knowing whether that's true. What is true is that, although it was perfectly possible to signal the coast guard on the mainland with a torch in morse code, Twm chose not to get help for his injured son because of the cost.

There were several children in Nant and by the time Guto, who was the second youngest, came along, his mother appears to have been drowning in despair. Although Meg, his older sister, spoke lovingly of her mother – 'she would polish the slate with milk' – Guto never spoke about her. He seems to have been left to bring himself up. There was a teacher on Bardsay for the eight children who lived there, but Guto didn't have much time for school. Meg, who was clever, was sent over to Pwllheli

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to stay with an aunt and go to the grammar school. But Guto stayed and roamed the island, climbing the mountain, which rises steeply on one side, and scrambling down the perpendicular cliffs in search of sea gulls' eggs. He garnered an intimate knowledge of the ways of the sea and the tides.

When Guto was in his teens his mother finally left her abusive husband and went back to the mainland with her oldest son. To begin with Guto and his little sister Brenda stayed behind with their father, but his uncle came and took them away too, and Twm was left alone to rage at the other inhabitants. Guto doesn't talk about this period of his life but I have heard that he was so homesick for the island he would get into a rowing boat and, with his sister Brenda, he would start to row across the potentially deadly sound to the island. Usually they were spotted by the lighthouse keeper, who would send a motor boat to rescue them.

Despite the abuse, Guto's mother came back to Bardsay. By this stage she had developed breast cancer and not long after her return she died. Brenda Chamberlain recounts, tellingly, of Guto's reaction. "I am so sorry about your mother" she says when she sees him. 'A radiant grin spread over his face. "Ay," he roared. "Funny, isn't it?" After a long pause he roared out again. "The old ram died last week, too. Funny, isn't it?" I know that roar well, only I would call it a bellow. Guto, a child of nature, was nurtured not by his parents but the island. Battered by storms, like the rock on which he lived, he survived. But he had no idea how to communicate.

Guto hadn't been on the mainland long when we first met him. The community had fallen apart and everyone on the island left because

of Twm's violence. Twm had, however, managed to stash away a small fortune which had enabled him to buy land. Although he strode past our house every day, I can't remember him ever addressing us. But we heard all about him. He'd been in court case involving one of his daughters. He even tried to molest our neighbour, Lizzie Maes, who was getting on pretty old by this stage and had heart trouble. No one had a good word to say for him.

When he died Twm left his land and money to the battered child; the only one who'd stood by him. Guto sold the house and, instead of farming the land, leased it out and worked on a nearby farm as a labourer. He never talked about his employer, but when the farmer died, Guto stayed on and ran the farm for his widow Jane. Although she cooked him all his meals, he stayed in his own house, driving round on his tractor visiting his friends the way he'd always done. When I was living in Wales he took to turning up every evening after his tea. We'd sit together on the veranda of the little log cabin I'd built, looking across the Irish Sea, as the sun sank beyond the horizon. Sometimes we saw the Wicklow Mountains.

Guto always had a soft spot for the women, but although some of the local girls were after his money, he was too wily to let them get their hands on it. None of them ever thought of marrying him. While the rest of the world moved on – his sister Meg married money and produced successful children – Guto stayed the same: essentially a peasant. And, despite a very minor stroke, and a bit of trouble with an arthritic hip he remained healthy. He scoffed at illness which he considered to be in the mind.

When Jane got sick, however, and had to go to hospital Guto moved into the house in her absence. I

called on him while she was away. She lived in a small stone cottage with a little garden overshadowed by large trees and enclosed by a low stone wall with flowers spilling over the top. Apart from the kitchen which had soulless '50s melamine cupboards and surfaces, little could have been done to it for the last hundred years. The parlour, which was tiny, was dominated by an ancient organ. It was a work of art. I pictured the family gathering round it in the evenings to sing together.

When Jane came back from hospital she needed looking after, so Guto stayed. Although he'd talked about her, I had no idea what she was like. If anything I saw her as a self-effacing little woman dressed permanently in a pinny. I couldn't have been more wrong. She was tiny but, despite being an invalid, she had a presence. Although she certainly didn't defer either to Guto or me, she had an easy intimacy with him, and I could feel her summing me up. She was clearly an intelligent woman, and when I came to leave and she said: 'You'll come again.' I felt flattered.

The next time I called, Guto was invalidated as well. They were sitting side by side in that cosy little parlour in almost identical wing chairs. It was almost as if he'd become disabled in sympathy. Like Mr and Mrs Noah they had silted down together, and it struck me that I'd never seen Guto so contented. But his moment of domestic harmony wasn't to last. Jane died soon after that and Guto moved back to his modernised house. Whenever I'm in Wales I visit him.

'What happened to Jane's organ?' I ask him on this occasion.

'Oh' he says indifferently. 'They took it outside and chopped it up for firewood.'

# The Follies and Features Grove House Estate, Roe

Gilly King

From 1622 until circa 1790 Roehampton Great House stood on the site of Grove House; no views of this house are known but, by 1674, it was the largest house in Surrey, apart from Lambeth Palace. In the eighteenth century fashions were changing and what the very rich wanted near London was a moderate-sized villa with pleasure grounds rather than a vast mansion and park. In 1770 Alexander Fordyce began the process of splitting up the park and somewhere between 1779 and 1793 the Great House was pulled down and an elegant villa, Grove House, designed by James Wyatt, for Joshua Vanneck, was built. William Wardell and William Burn are both attributed to working on alterations in the 1850s and extensive alterations were made in 1912 for Charles Fischer. In 1921 Dr Claude Montefiore purchased the freehold and nearly 34 acres of land on behalf of the Froebel Educational Institute.

Since 1921, the students of Froebel College, now a constituent College of the University of Roehampton, have been free to explore the follies and architectural features of this historic parkland.

## *The Mausoleum*



## The Mausoleum

In 1851 the estate passed to Stephens Lyne Stephens, on the death of his father Charles, he came to live at Grove House with his wife Yolande Duvernay, a Parisian ballet dancer. At this time the family were referred to as England's richest commoners but were socially ostracized as, prior to her marriage to Stephens, Yolande had been the mistress of the Marquis de La Vallette - amongst others. On Stephens death in 1860 Yolande commemorated her husband by building an Anglican mausoleum in the grounds; designed by William Burn (or his assistant), in the Romanesque style, it was consecrated by the Bishop of London in 1864. Yolande was buried there in 1894 and the enclosed grounds contain the graves of the Claremont family who cared for Yolande after Stephens death, Henry Claremont changed his name to Lyne Stephens after being the beneficiary of Yolande's will.

## Rooks Grotto & Ice House

This curious man-made grotto, within which is an icehouse, was probably constructed circa 1912. Known as 'Rooks Grotto' it includes pathways, caverns and cascading waterfalls. It was made by T B Harpham of London and is constructed of a variety of natural and artificial stones (possibly pulhamite), iron girders and concrete. It is believed that the grotto was built for Charles Louis Fischer, an American merchant of German/Swiss extraction who purchased the House in 1912 and immediately carried out extensive alterations. It is rumoured that the grotto was built against the boundary wall of the adjoining convent to deaden the noise of the chapel bells.

The icehouse was rediscovered in 1998 behind a bricked-up door. No date can

# of the hampton



*Tunnel to the Ice House, 1922*

be fixed to the construction of the icehouse but probably dates to the late 18th Century. Ice taken from the nearby lake would have been ground into powder which, when rammed into the shaft, sprinkled with water and salt would remain firm as a rock in the following summer and would have required a pickaxe to break it. The decline in the use of icehouses is directly attributable to the availability of refrigerators after 1880. The icehouse was probably bricked up as part of the grotto construction and, unlike many surviving icehouses; it has not been filled in. It now accommodates a thriving community of rare cave spiders.

## The Lake and Sham Bridge

Joshua Vanneck enlarged the lake with water supplied from an enclosed spring on Putney Common, which had brought water to Roehampton Great House more than a century earlier. The dummy or sham bridge, to the lake, is late 18th Century, contemporary with the house and attributed to James Wyatt - a stone balustrade with three vermiculated arches and Coade-stone urns at the two ends of the parapets.

The lake freezes hard in the winter and the Froebel College archive hold accounts of skating parties at the end of the 19th century and ice hockey matches played out between the Royal Flying Corps (who were stationed at Grove House in WWI) and numerous photographs of students taking to the ice.

## The Secret Garden

Between the grotto and the lake lie the walled kitchen gardens of the Great House; this is the oldest area of the estate and the walls are thought to be as old as the original 17th Century house. The area's seclusion, the high ancient walls and arched entrance have led to generations of students referring to it as The Secret Garden - as described in Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic children's novel. The illusion has been slightly marred by the building of two small residence blocks, in the 1960s, but the walls are listed and protected and still bear the ancient fixings for the espaliered fruit trees.

## A Diversion into the Elm Grove Estate

When the Roehampton Institute of Higher Education (now the University of Roehampton) was formed in 1975 access between the two neighbouring estates of Grove House (Froebel College) and Elm Grove (Digby Stuart College) was opened for the first time. Due to extensive bombing, during the blitz, nothing remains of the Georgian villa built for Benjamin Goldsmid in the late 18th Century but a tunnel,



*1804 depiction of the Lake and Sham Bridge by John Hassell*

built for Goldsmid to connect his estate on the East and West of Roehampton Lane, remains almost intact. It is worth diverting from the Grove House estate to visit the tunnel. Sir Richard Philipps (1767 – 1840) in his book called *A Mornings Walk from London to Kew* described the tunnel as; 'The object which most particularly called to mind the unbounded wealth of the former proprietor [Benjamin Goldsmid] is a subterraneous way to the lawns on the other side of the road. It is finished with gates resembling those of a fortified castle with recesses and various ornaments, all of Portland stone.' This crenelated entrance, described by Philipps, on the eastern side, survived until Roehampton lane was widened in 1957. The tunnel and the rusticated entrance on the western side are still accessible.

*Contemporary view of the Sham Bridge*



### The Terrace

Returning to Grove House, the formal gardens, a lily pond and limestone terrace were added in the nineteenth century by Mrs Stephens Lyne Stephens and feature marble statues of the Four Seasons by Aristide Fontana, circa 1880 and an extraordinary octagonal wellhead which is 16th or 17th Century Venetian provincial work or from the Venetian Empire, of either Istrian stone or Verona Marble on a modern marble plinth.

In conclusion, understanding of these hidden follies and architectural features is far from complete but this has not stopped generations of students enjoying their enchanting and historic campus.

*Crenelated East Entrance*





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Balham lies between me and Tooting, to say nothing of Earlsfield and Springfield, but in the most recent parliamentary boundaries changes I am deemed to live in Tooting.

As the next parliamentary election draws closer then those seeking my vote increasingly send out leaflets telling me what they have either done or hope to do for Tooting. Well, jolly good luck for Tooting but here, alongside Wandsworth Common, I don't feel much interested.

Tooting is a characterful place with lots of history and its own identity.

borough. We don't.

What does it matter? Someone called Edward T McMahon said

*"A sense of place is a unique collection of qualities and characteristics – visual, cultural, social, and environmental – that provide meaning to a location. Sense of place is what makes one city or town different from another, but sense of place is also what makes our physical surroundings worth caring about."*

And for members of the Wandsworth Society that is our *raison d'être*. We care about the town we live in. We care about our river

within a year, and has flourished ever since (although some younger active members are now needed).

In my lifetime, because of population change, the house I live in has been put in several different parliamentary divisions. Firstly Wandsworth Central. Well that was about right but of course it only recognized Wandsworth as the central area of the borough. Then we moved to Putney, not too bad either as it's just down the road and the boundary between the two towns is a bit blurred anyway (some folk started saying they lived in Putney because it

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# *I Don't Live in Tooting*

by Shirley Passmore

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The Tooting History group is doing much good work in giving it the recognition it deserves, but it's not Wandsworth, my home town. It is one of the five towns that make up our borough of Wandsworth... Putney, Battersea, Wandsworth, Balham and Tooting. It is also the one town in the borough where ordinary folk can still, just, afford a home.

Wandsworth of course lost much of its identity by giving its name to the borough, and to the outside world 'Wandsworth' is just the borough. Not just to the outside world either, not a few councillors still can't identify the town of Wandsworth, and new members of the Society often think we cover the whole

Wandle and our town centre and our wonderful common. Not just care, some of us are passionate about our surroundings and deeply regret what is being allowed by inappropriate development.

In 1970 no one seemed to recognize, or care for, the distinct town called Wandsworth. It didn't exist except as the centre of the borough, a place where the town hall was/is.

A group of local people, with the help of the Putney Society, got started on an amenity group for Wandsworth, to try to give it back its identity. We called it the Wandsworth Amenity Group of the Putney Society (WAG). It became the fully blown Wandsworth Society

sounded posher than Wandsworth). Then we became part of Battersea South (although 2/3rds of the area was in Wandsworth) but that was OK also; the boundary between Battersea and Wandsworth runs in front of my house. After that it was just Battersea. Somehow one could relate to all these changes but Tooting is just too far away. We have absolutely no connection to the town, except perhaps for visits to St George's Hospital!

So to me a sense of place is very important. I wish Tooting well but I love Wandsworth more. Please can someone think of a new name for the parliamentary division that is now called Tooting, or change the boundary.



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# The sounds of country

by Mark Haworth-Booth

As some readers may recall, my wife and I left Wandsworth – after 30 years of married life in the borough – in autumn 2009. We have just completed our fifth year in North Devon. We take the train back to the capital every now and then to see our daughters and friends, visit exhibitions, go to the theatre or join marches – the most heartening being the one in support of Gaza, when we demonstrated alongside Christians, Jews and Muslims. However, we are generally engrossed in our rural life.

The editor's request for another report on our country lives arrived the day I read a newspaper article by Mary Dejevsky on aircraft noise in London. Although we lived close to the dual carriage that cuts through Wandsworth Common on its way down to Wandsworth Bridge, Jessica Road was remarkably quiet and I don't recall aeroplanes being a problem. Some motorcyclists couldn't resist doing a burnup on the dual carriageway and there was always a low-level traffic hum, I suppose, but it was really rather tranquil. How does country life match up? Well, it can be pretty noisy: both of our immediate neighbours have livestock and tractors. Slightly more distant neighbours have ride-on mowers and occasionally use chainsaws. The vineyard nearby uses strimmers and bird-scaring wires which hum in the breeze. The quarry down the lane produces up to 800 tonnes of stone a year, mainly for 'heritage' building. This quite regularly

involves the clanking and clattering of heavy machinery loosening and lifting rock: think Gordon Ramsay hurling saucepans in a giant kitchen. We ourselves add to the din by using a ride-on mower and occasionally a strimmer. In autumn there's the sound of tractor-mounted flails as farmers cut back the hedges round their fields. One comes to recognize the putter of a neighbour's quad bike and the grinding sound when the recycling lorry stops by on Thursdays. There's the sound of shotguns aimed at rabbits, now more plentiful after a recent bout of myxomatosis, and from now until 1 February we shall hear twelve bores and the squawks of fleeing pheasants. When the racket becomes distracting, I say to myself 'That's country life.'

On the credit side, we are surrounded by un-mechanical sounds. Our valley is home to a thriving family of buzzards and their mewing is a daily pleasure. In early September I counted 70 swallows on our telephone line, chattering away in preparation for their annual migration to southern Africa. Their vocal presence around the garden and above our pond is a joy from spring to autumn, along with all of the usual English songbirds. In spring they sometimes put up a wall of sound. We also have black caps, chiffchaffs, goldcrests and willow warblers, plus the now common greater spotted woodpecker and the now rare green woodpecker, with its distinctive yelp: they visit our lawn to feast on ants. Seagulls are, as in Wandsworth, regular

visitors. One recent sunny afternoon, reading in the summerhouse, I heard the cry of a kingfisher as it swooped round the pond. It perched for a moment on an iris leaf and then flew off – it was surely looking for one of its family members. We have a permanent complement of 15 mallard ducks and it is good to hear them quacking, sometimes in the middle of the night. We now have seven hens and they have special quiet clucks when I shut them up on dark evenings – clucks which indicate they know something's afoot but they are pretty sure it's only me. A neighbour's two Hereford cows, and usually a calf or two, graze close to where we park the car. Often, when we get home in the dark and head indoors we hear a loud rasping sound. It takes a moment to recognize that this is the cows munching grass. Early in the year, the barrage of frogs' love calls from the pond can also sound quite industrial. Another neighbour's pigs squeal with anticipation at mealtimes. A third neighbour has braying donkeys. I've got to know a new sound this year. The alarm call of songbirds means a predator is about. I heard the shriek of a blackbird the other day and ran to the holly bush by our French windows in time to scare off our resident kestrel and save its prey. I've seen that same kestrel or its mate being driven away by an angry, if diminutive, swallow. It looked suitably shame-faced.

This year I've got to know the nearby River Taw much better. It appears

# life

in Henry Williamson's Tarka book although I've not yet seen an otter. However, one Sunday morning each month I count wading birds on a few miles of the Taw for the British Trust for Ornithology. I regularly see kingfishers, dippers, redshanks, curlews, common sandpipers, teal, wigeon and other lovely birds. The gift of second-hand but still good fly-fishing tackle has given me another excuse to haunt the banks of the Taw. The poet Ted Hughes fished the same river in its upper reaches near his home at North Tawton.

My wife Rosie has a sense of triumph from growing green peppers from the seeds of one she bought in the local

market in Barnstaple. She has also done well with cucumbers, sweet corn and tomatoes. We've also, like everyone else, enjoyed a plentiful crop of apples and pears. My wife is the gardener and I'm more the groundsman. My main focus has been to try to establish a wildflower meadow in the old paddock around our pond and up towards our vegetable patch and hen run. To this end, we lashed out on a state-of-the-art, four-wheel-drive Husqvarna lawn tractor. I cut the lush grass, docks and assorted tussocks several times in the late summer and early autumn, removing the grass to impoverish the soil, which suits wild flowers. Then I planted yellow rattle seeds plus a wild flower mixture.

The yellow rattle parasitizes grasses, thus making room for wild flowers to find their niches. That's the theory. However, I mentioned our 15 resident wild ducks. I watched with horror as they fanned out of an early evening to work methodically round the meadow – presumably savouring my generous offering of seeds. Although the ducks are endearing, they are a menace. For example, they ate their way through all our waterlilies and no doubt frogspawn is sushi to them. Our 'wildlife pond' is now really just a duck pond. Maybe ducks and wildflower meadows can't co-exist. Docks are almost as much a problem as ducks. A friend advises treating them Roundup but that's the last thing I would do. (Roundup works



its way up the foodchain and has been found in breast milk). It looks as if I'll have to dig out the roots one by one. Good exercise...

We played an active role in the Euro elections and our efforts, plus those of many other volunteers, resulted in the election of Molly Scott Cato as our first Green MEP in the South West. She scraped in by a handful of votes, which made our days of leafleting, etc., feel very worthwhile. Molly visited North Devon during her campaign and came to supper with us to meet other Green supporters. We went out with her to address the folk of Bideford and Barnstaple and I remember remarking that once you start using a loudhailer everything comes out sounding like 'The Day of the Lord is Nigh'. Molly, standing on a milk crate, immediately began her peroration in Barnstaple High Street by declaiming 'The Day

of the Lord is Nigh'. That's my idea of a candidate worth supporting. More seriously, the Green Party seems alone in Europe and in the UK in vigorously opposing the disastrous proposal for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This agreement, now under discussion (in secret) by the European Commission will subvert democracy by giving transnational corporations the right to sue governments for loss of markets if they are denied the right, for example, to market GMO seeds or bid for NHS services. Trenchant arguments against TTIP can be read at George Monbiot's website and elsewhere.

Vandana Shiva, the Indian activist described as one of the seven most influential women in the world, is another mighty opponent of 'free markets' that give corporations like Monsanto, purveyors of GMO

– Genetically Modified Organisms – the right to override the merely elected governments that stand in their way. We heard Shiva speak with great power on this subject in the Great Hall at Dartington in early October. This is, like Climate Change, one of the epic battles of our time.

2014 has been a most remarkable year: a fabulous spring, full of wild flowers, a gorgeous summer with more flowers and something approaching a heatwave, and then an autumn full of raspberries and blackberries plus an Indian Summer. As I write, the sun is out again but the air is chill as it should be. Last night we lit the woodburner for the first time since March. A winter with hard frosts and a few days of snow would be, as they say in these parts, ideal. Snow even manages to muffle the multitudinous sounds of country life.



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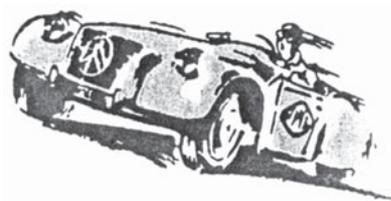
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# Walking with John Goodier

*This walk explores some of the parks in the Borough of Wandsworth.  
We start in Battersea with some small local parks and then move on to larger  
and better-known sites.*

Our start is at **York Gardens** created in 1972 when the surrounding social housing was built replacing run down properties. One fragment of the old landscape is St Peter's Church. The oldest part has a painted mural Battersea Puzzle (1981) by Christine Thomas on it. This is likely to go soon when the church is rebuilt. York Gardens has a central seating area amongst rose beds and some play equipment. It is also home to the library and community centre and the children centre which both open directly into the park. It is also home to Thames Waters Falconbrook Pumping Station. This marks the last stretch of one of London's lost rivers.

**Fred Wells Gardens** is a hidden gem in Orville Road off Battersea High Street. The site in the past has been a greyhound track, and was a railway station from 1863 to 1940 when it was bombed. The site eventually became small works yards. In 1982, it was made into a park in memory of Fred Wells, a local Councillor. An adjacent area in Orville Road had been prefab housing on a site of bombed houses and in the nineties this area was added to the park. The park has several mounds giving an interesting layout and there is good shrub and tree planting. There is an area of more recent formal planting along Orville Road and the park has a tennis court and two play areas. The one for older children exploits on of the mounds. The general impression is of greenness.

Our next stop is **Christchurch Gardens**. This an old garden converted from a churchyard by the

MPGA and the local vestry in 1885. The church was destroyed by bombing in the war and the current church is by Thomas Ford, with some of the murals by Hans Fiebarch, dates from 1959. Ford and Fiebarch collaborated on several churches in south London after the war. The garden has a pergola and shelter which is a civilian war memorial. The bronze plaque was stolen and has been replaced by a granite one provided by the Co-op Funeral Service.

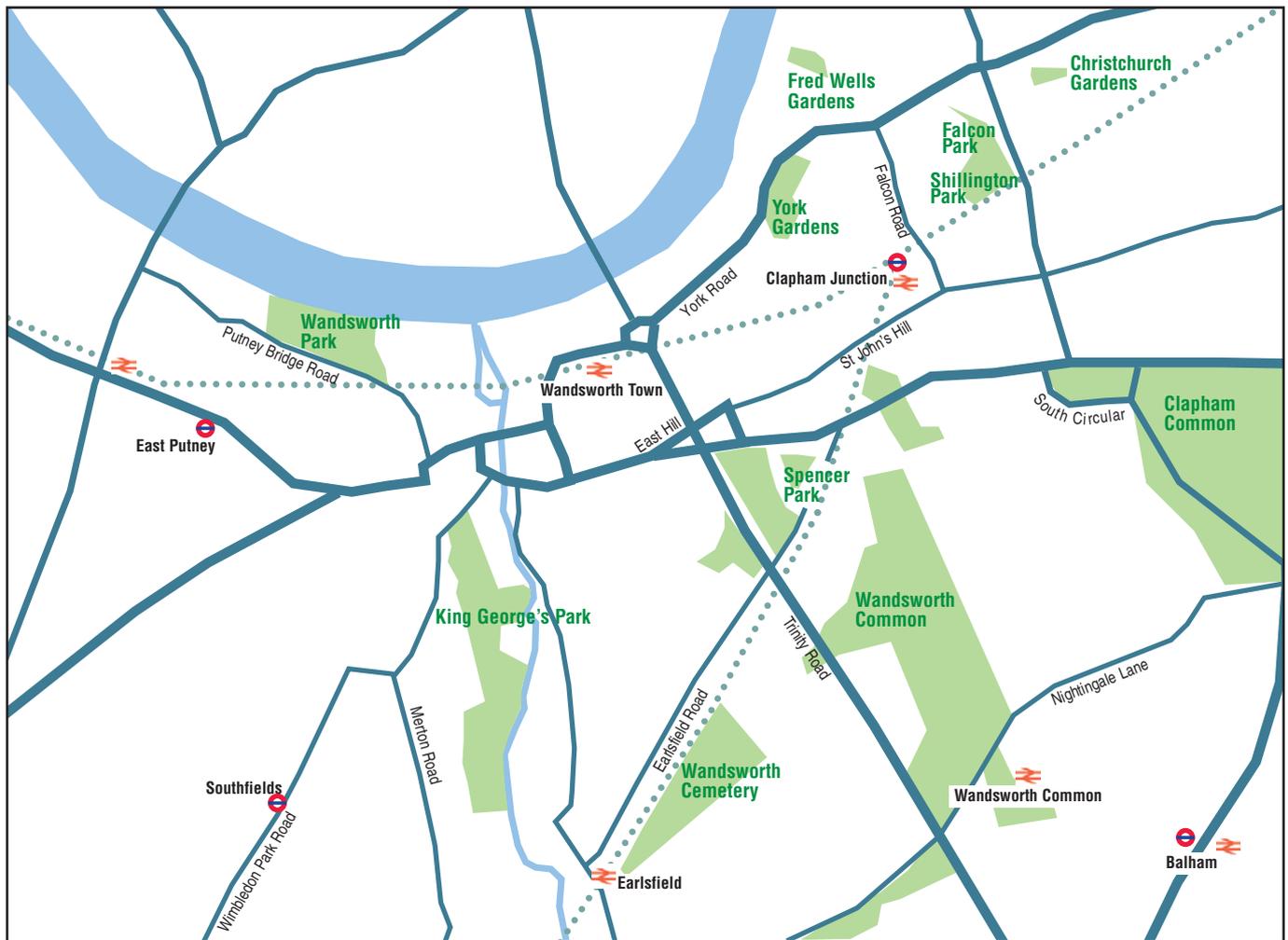
**Latchmere Gardens** is the next park. It was laid out in in 1906 as part of the Latchmere estate. The site was originally intended for private housing but was laid out as social housing in 1903. It is thus one of the earliest public housing schemes laid out by a local authority. Most of the properties are half houses. The park is now in three parts with a play area in the centre and a more formal area to the east with a small pergola. The park was the original home of the Brown Dog statue, and early anti-vivisection protest. The statue is now in Battersea Park.

The next two parks were created after the Second World War on bombed land. **Falcon Park** is reached by a narrow road that goes under the railway. The park is almost entirely surrounded by railways and must have been a noisy place to live. It is grass with perimeter trees and is marked out for football. It is well used by dog walkers. The arches on the railway have been converted into workshops. The blank back wall has a double X pattern in red brick that adds a bit of

interest. At either end of the park the railway arches are open so you can enter **Shillington Park**. This is more interesting with paths and trees in the northern part and a playing field and trim gym equipment to the south. You can also see the fronts of the rail arch workshops.

The next of open spaces are south of Clapham Junction. Follow Esste Road through the social housing and go down Falcon Road, which covers the Falcon Brook. The fine Falcon pub on the corner (a rebuild of 1887) gave its name to the brook back in the 18th century. The pub has a long continuous bar that winds its way through various designated area. Much of the 19th century decoration remains. Continue down St Johns Street, past Arding and Hobbs Department Store to Battersea Rise and turn west.

St Mark's church, by William White (1874) is a grand red brick landmark. It has some shrubs in the church garden. Adjacent to the church are two detached parts of Wandsworth Common. The one immediately by the church is set out with trees and has an undulating surface. It has a small play area for young children. The other section is flat and is most likely used for informal games. Opposite the church is St Mary's Cemetery, laid out in 1860 by Charles Lee. It has a pair of tiny gothic chapels. The gates have religious motifs and a relatively new lodge. The best and most elaborate of the graves are near the chapels. The graves are notable for the rhyming obituaries, the work of local poets. The



cemetery is fairly well looked after and has some fine avenues of trees.

This brings us to the main part of **Wandsworth Common**. This is not as wild as Wormwood Scrubs, nor as formally converted to park as Kennington. However, both roads and railways dissect it, which gives it a very urban feel. Wandsworth Common Station, originally of 1856 was moved to the present site in 1859 on a southern area of the common. It is in red brick with stone details. The main entrance opens directly on to the common and this adds to the urban – rural switching of the whole site. For those doing this as an actual walk I would suggest walking down by the railway on the east side where the common is given over to playing fields, and then crossing on the road

bridge and following the railway north past the ponds, which are an important wildlife habitat, and then heading out to Windmill Road. There are many feature of interest on the Common and I suggest you explore some of them. There is a café by the playing fields at the northeast where there is some of the small amount of formal planting on the common. The best gardens are around the bowling green where there is a fine collection of shrubs and bedding plants. The toilets beyond the tennis courts have what looks like the original 30s lettering. The grand gothic building is the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building, an asylum for female orphans of military officers, built in 1859 by Rhodes Hawkins. In 1987, it was converted to offices, studios, flats, a drama school and a restaurant bar.

It is worth having a wander round. Windmill Road has the remains of a smock mill built in the 1830s by the London and South Western Railway to pump water out of the cutting. Further north is the Memorial to those killed or affected by the Clapham Junction Rail Disaster of 12 December 1988. It is an accident that changed, forever, the practices of electrical and mechanical engineering. The memorial is a large piece of slate with a simple statement on one side, and the helping hand symbol on the other. When I visited, the area was being smartened-up for the attendance of Her Majesty the Queen for the 25th anniversary commemoration. Whilst in this part of the common it is worth mentioning Spencer Park. This is a private development of large villas from around 1870, plus some later

buildings. It contains a private park in the middle with access available only to residents, but looking well wooded in an aerial photograph. There are some more detached parts of the Common in the area. There is a small area just opposite the Memorial which is a flat area with trees. On the other side of **Spencer Park** are two sections of the Common mainly given over to grass but with some scrubby areas and trees. These two sections are divided by Trinity Road, a major part of the local transport infrastructure, which reinforces the urban-rural nature of the Common.

One reason for venturing onto these areas of the Common is that it brings us to **Huguenot Burial Ground** on West Hill. This was opened in 1687 and closed in 1854. It is now managed as a small park. Many of the graves still remain and there is a plaque erected in 1911 that recalls the origin of the site. The park was given new railings in 2003 but the style is of an earlier period. Ironically, the burial ground now finds itself next to a Catholic Church of 1887 onwards. At the other side is Book House of 1888, originally the Wandsworth District Board of Works. Having made this detour we can return to the main route.

Hidden behind Wandsworth Prison, of 1849 by D R Hall, is Croom Crescent, This has a large area of grass used as playing fields by schools and other groups. It is probably not worth visiting as a park, but if you do there are plenty of houses on the route that were the original Prison

Officers' Housing.

**Wandsworth Cemetery** in Magdalen Road is the next open space. The eastern part was the first section opened in 1878 but it now extends almost to Garratt Lane, and there is a pedestrian entrance in the far corner so it is possible to walk through the whole site. The gates are fine and the small chapels are by H W Young. They date from 1899 and were added when the cemetery was enlarged. The older and more elaborate monuments are at the east end of the cemetery. The cemetery has eight war memorials, many commemorating service men from the Dominions. Back in the 1980s the section of the cemetery by the railway was covered in soil to provide reusable space. This now is getting full.

The next open space can be found by walking down Penwith Road and Acuba Road to reach the southernmost point of **King George's Park**. Originally laid out in the 1920s by Percy Crane, it was opened by King George and later renamed after him. The southern parts are mainly sports fields with some trees and small wooded areas. The path is called Fosters Way, named after a local soldier awarded the Victoria Cross in 1917. There is a new skateboard and BMX trail by Kimber Road. The park now begins to get more formal. The path becomes a brick path and descends in to an area of pergolas, and flower beds. As we approach the main entrance, there is a pond with a lot of interesting planting. It was created from one of the many parts

of the River Wandle, which is the water course that we have glimpsed as we walked through the park. Even in the formal area there are sports facilities. The park has facilities for a wide variety of sports and ages. Although King George's Park does not appear to be a King George Memorial Playing Field, it well fulfils the function of one. About where we entered the formal part of the park there is a little alley that leads to the Wandle and is followable to Garratt Lane. If we were to follow this we could go further north to the Old Burial Ground opened in 1800 as an over flow from the parish church. The last burial was in the thirties. There is a modern entrance with seats and sculptural tall features. If, however we leave the park by the main gate we should make for Armoury Way and go to the east side of the bridge over the Wandle. The Wandle can now be followed down to the Thames. There us a lot of development works going on. A new stretch of Thames Path has been opened upstream through Riverside Quarter. There is planting of the usual modern development style, and it is a well laid out space. The path leads to **Wandsworth Park**. There are avenues of trees along the Thames. To the south of these, the grass area is given over to sport. The cricket square is being restored. Cricket pitches and practice nets seem to be getting rarer in public parks in London. Putt in the Park provides a café for parents and a crazy golf course for children. The best way to leave the park is go out the upstream gate and over the footbridge on Putney Railway Bridge.

# Going bananas in Battersea

Will Holland

This plant took a long time to get going and has been growing in our garden for about eight years and during that time it has been outside in all the kinds of weather that we are so lucky to have in SW London... Philippa (my Wife and Head Gardner) was told when the plant was given to her that it would reach ten feet in a year, but nobody told the banana plant that, and it has grown slowly these last eight years... yet a side shoot, which appeared a year ago, is fast catching mama up, and is ten feet tall already... In its early years Philippa would cover the plant with fleece, but of course this became impractical when it got to this size... and this year much to our amazement a flower (as shown) appeared, and above that a small bunch of bananas... we have watched as the petals began falling one by one... exposing more tightly-knit petals underneath ready to open and fall... an expert from Architectural Plants at Nuthurst told Philippa that after the flower and bananas appeared the plant would die... however, this is not all bad news, for as



I stated the baby is already catching mother up and thriving... and Philippa has another two three-foot offspring growing in pots...

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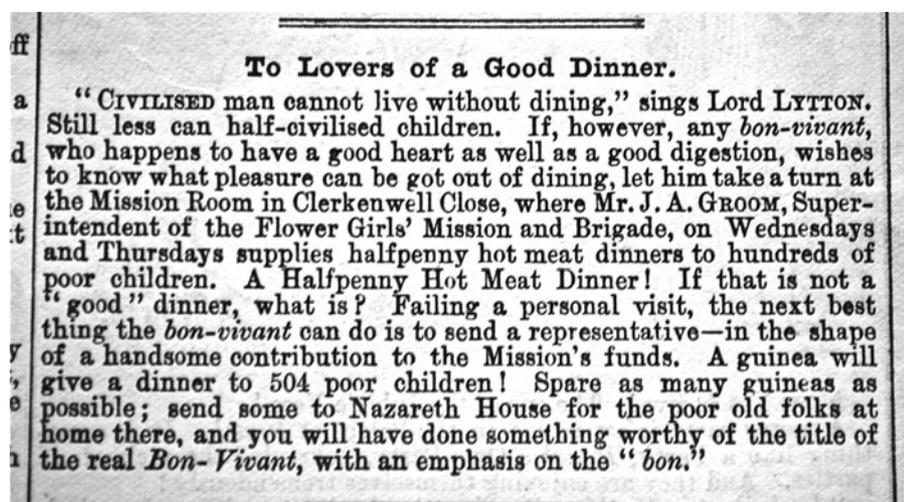
## To Lovers of a Good Dinner

This article (Circa 1850) comes at a Christmas Time when if you had enough money you could live like a King... and they did... and still do... of course we have upped the poor ante somewhat...

which means you are not likely to see anyone starving in the street at least not in this country... but there are plenty in Great Britain who while we are noshing our turkey and plum pud will be on

their soup and bread... and there will be plenty souls in the Capital on Christmas morning who will be without a roof over their heads and who will be standing in a line for some sort of meal being served by those wonderful compassionate volunteers... so then the readers of Wandsworth Society Journal... a donation to a church or mission that is actually spending the contributions on feeding the needy this Christmas and so help for one day to take the edge off a cold world...

Happy Christmas...



Will Holland

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Maria Horn

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# Mopsey's Memorials

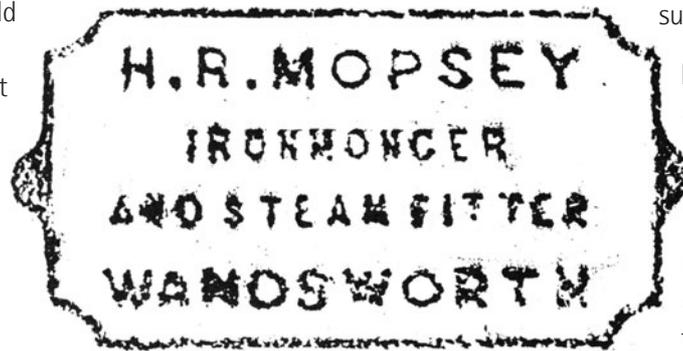
by Michael Bull & Tony Evans

One of the many personalities who has enhanced Wandsworth's past is Henry Robert Mopsey, a merchant in ironmongery who died in the town on 9 June 1887. Even down to the present day a memorial stone marking his grave can be seen in the Old Burial Ground in Garratt Lane whilst, before his death, he left other evidence of his name and descendants all over the parish of Wandsworth, notably on its actual boundaries.

Mopsey was born in London, the son of an ironmonger, though the surname does not appear in the Company of Ironmongers' records. He settled in Wandsworth at the age of 28 and opened his own ironmongery in 1863/64 at nos 26-28 Wandsworth High Street. He also lived on those premises with his wife (they had married in January 1864). The shop was on the north side of the High Street approximately opposite today's South Thames College. His business thrived and in the *Metallurgicon Local Directory for 1867* its description included Bathmakers & Fitters, Bellhangers & Locksmiths, Brass Finishers & Braziers, Cutlers, Gas Engineers & Fitters, Hot-Water Apparatus & Horticultural Builders, Ironmongers, Japanners & Bronzers, Lampmakers, Stove-, Range- & Kitchen-Makers, Tin Plate & Zinc Workers.

Although these all suggest an interest in a metal foundry it is almost certain that such an operation did not take place at his business premises. Most probably Mopsey stocked and sold cast-iron products, for example, which

had been manufactured elsewhere; such goods had his name affixed to them, which was a common practice. This presumably enabled him by the 1880s to take contracts



*A rubbing of the name-plate on a large range found in the basement of Jones's pharmacy shop on Putney Hill shortly before its demolition, c.2000. (Michael Bull)*

for specialised items of metal-work. Thus it was that when more substantial boundary markers than the old wooden ones were decided upon by the Wandsworth Board of Works, the order for these was placed with Mopsey and the cast-iron posts he supplied can be seen to have the inscription 'H. R. Mopsey, Wandsworth' on them. One cannot help but wonder whether a special deal was made in order to allow for such advertising.

These official inscriptions to the memory of Mopsey and his business still survive, although rusting is now beginning to take its toll on their clarity in many of the examples. Suggestive evidence for their source of manufacture was given when in 1989 the Wandsworth Parish boundary post bearing the Mopsey

name at Deodar Road, Putney was dug up to be moved to a new position. This disinterment revealed a very substantial base of the same design and size as that used for the bases of cast-iron street-lamp standards not supplied by Mopsey.

If the many builders active at the start of the surge in building in the area were buying their supplies from Mopsey he certainly should have been profitably busy over many years following the opening of his shop.

Unfortunately Henry Robert Mopsey died in 1887 when he was only 51 years old. In the funeral notice about him in the *Putney & Wandsworth Borough News* it was mentioned that he had been a vestry man and overseer, and also a churchwarden at St Anne's Church. This ties in with the fact that before Henry's death the family had moved from the shop accommodation in the High Street to a house on St Ann's Hill called 'Faringford'.

Henry's wife, Eliza Mary, was the daughter of a Cambridge ironmonger named Cooch and, with the help of a shop manager who lived at the shop, she was well able to run the Wandsworth business in the years following 1887. Her son, George Cooch Mopsey, who had been only 17 years old at the time of his father's death, entered the company a short while later. Eliza Mary lived until the age of 70, joining her husband in the Old Burial Ground in 1911.

Trading continued at 26-28 High Street under the title H. R. Mopsey &



*A tantalising glimpse of part of H. R. Mopsey's shop on the north side of Wandsworth High Street in 1897. (WHS Research Collection)*

Co. (the firm later becoming a limited company), with such modernities as 'Electric Light Installations' (1900) and 'Vacuum Cleaners' (1905) appearing in its advertisements, and it carried on operating there until 1934. This was the year when the section of the High Street between the site of the old Town Hall and Fairfield Street, including Mopsey's premises, was demolished for the creation of

Wandsworth's imposing Municipal Buildings.

However, this did not mean the end for the Mopsey business in Wandsworth; it moved to 5 Garratt



*A boundary post dated 1884, bearing Mopsey's name at the base, now situated right in the north-west corner of Wandsworth Park. (Neil Robson)*

Lane, on the same side as and a little north of the Court House (now Wandsworth Town Library). Mopsey's building, which belonged to the Spread Eagle public house and had

been Wandsworth's first cinema, survives today and until at least 2000 the Mopsey name was still displayed on its letterbox, though regrettably the object has since been stolen.

H. R. Mopsey Ltd carried on leasing these premises until the Second World War, when trading ceased. George Cooch Mopsey's residence continued to be at 54 North Side, Wandsworth Common until his death in 1949, at which point the living association of the Mopsey name with Wandsworth finally came to an end.



*A boundary post showing Mopsey's name situated on the southern edge of Routh Road, one of several to be seen to the rear of the 'toast-rack' on Wandsworth Common. (Neil Robson)*

This is a slightly revised version of an article which first appeared in 2001 in the *Wandsworth Historian*, the journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society. It is

reprinted with permission. Visit the WHS website at [www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk](http://www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk) for more information about the Society's activities.

# Going West

by Simon McNeill-Ritchie

Earlier this year I was umming and aahing about spending this Christmas with relatives in a log cabin deep in Canada. Perhaps it is because I am a Scot, but for a long time I have felt a particular affinity with this country and I have longed to make a visit. On the other hand, what would be an exacting journey under any circumstances threatened to be all the more arduous and expensive with two young children. Finally, after months of dithering, the recent shootings in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, made up my mind for me: we are going.



Part of the reason to go is a desire to acknowledge a century-old debt: one hundred years ago half a million Canadians and Newfoundlanders made the long journey in the opposite direction to answer Britain's call to arms in WW1. Their

subsequent sacrifices are forever enshrined in the rolls of honour for battles such as Neuve Chapelle, Ypres, The Somme, Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele. It was safely back in the trenches after losing a close friend among the 2,000 Canadians

killed in the Second Battle of Ypres that the Scottish-Canadian doctor John McCrae wrote the poem *In Flanders Fields*, which made the poppy thereafter the worldwide symbol of remembrance.

Phyliss Betts was a girl of five living in Magdalen Road when WW1 broke out:

*Our house in London was at about the middle of a long, very wide road lined with (then) young plane trees. The top of the road near the Common was the 'better' end, going down past our house and other houses like it and then more steeply downhill to a stretch not built on, a vague area of slightly messed-up open spaces, a Board school with its shrieking playground, and the cemetery. Down this road on winter afternoons came the military funerals. No doubt they came on summer mornings too, like the ordinary funerals – they came all the time, several a day – but it is the winter afternoons that I remember. These were the funerals of the soldiers who had died of wounds in the military hospital up the road and round the corner. Going down the hill where I stood on a chair by the window watching, they went at a measured pace, the hooves of the horses – ordinary brown horses, not black funeral ones – clopping soberly by. Behind the pairs of horses came the gun carriage with its coffin draped with the Union Jack. There were mounted soldiers,*

*khaki-clad, useful-looking riders without ceremonial trappings. Following the gun-carriage were usually some ordinary mourners, people as distinct from soldiers, in carriages drawn by undertakers' black horses. The number of following carriages and the amount of flowers varied. Some flag-draped coffins had no mourners following. Why?*

*The procession would go by, down the hill into the wintry afternoon with its faint foggy smell that gripped your throat if you were out in it. It was the smell of coal fires and winter. The sky, when the cortege had gone out of sight, would be smoky grey with red streaks over the low-lying ground beyond the cemetery. Those afternoons were very quiet. The road seemed scarcely used. I would wait. Then faintly the bugle would sound, final and sad, the lamenting never-coming-back notes of the Last Post. It seemed to me a dark, smoky, red slash of sound against the quiet grey of the London winter evening coming down.*

P Y Betts, "People Who Say Goodbye"

In all, a quarter of a million Canadians and Newfoundlanders were killed or wounded during WWI. Many of the latter made a second hazardous journey by hospital ship and train from Gallipoli or France back to England for treatment in our military hospitals. One of these was the 3rd London General, one of London's 'Big Four' Territorial Hospitals, which occupied the Royal Victoria Patriotic School on

wounded officers and men had been treated there. Most of them survived and many even lived to fight another day: on average two-thirds of the war-wounded returned to the Front. Sadly, a small number had 'Gone West', the direction of the setting sun providing a popular euphemism for the British Empire's own fallen sons. In the case of those succumbing to their wounds at the 3rd London General they

unveiling of a Commonwealth War Graves Commission interpretation board at the cemetery in July.

The recent tragedy in Ottawa brought home the brutal fact that the Front lines in today's conflicts are not drawn as clearly as the trenches were across northern France during WW1. Those who threaten our way of life no longer conveniently wear enemy uniforms by which to identify them. Far from fearing the long journey to Ottawa, however, I now relish the opportunity of sharing this centennial Christmas with my Canadian family.




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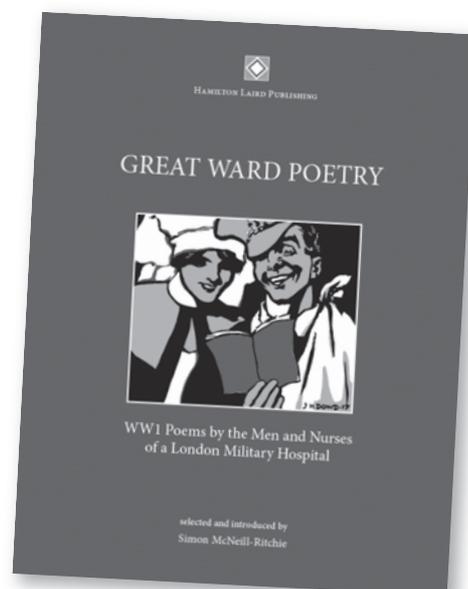
Simon McNeill-Ritchie has recently published a selection of poems written by patients and nurses at the 3rd London General during WW1, together with illustrations and background information about the Hospital. *Great Ward Poetry* is available from Amazon, or directly from the author at [hamiltonlairdpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:hamiltonlairdpublishing@gmail.com) for £9.99 including postage. 50% of the proceeds from the sale of the book go to SSAFA, the service families' welfare charity.

Wandsworth Common. In fact, following a decision taken shortly after they first arrived in England that their sick and wounded should all be sent to the same hospital, the Newfoundland Force was treated throughout the war in the wooden wards of the 3rd London General that stretched across the top of Wandsworth Common. Later, in appreciation of the care shown to their fathers, the children of Newfoundland sold picture postcards of the Hospital to raise funds for a new organ in the School Chapel.

By the time the 3rd London General closed in July 1919, some 52,000

literally went west, their remains borne across Trinity Road and down Magdalen Road to Wandsworth Cemetery.

About one-half of the 477 WW1 war graves that stand in the cemetery today belong to former patients at the 3rd London General. When Edith Holden, the Matron of the Hospital, died in August 1930, she too was buried there at her own request beside the Newfoundlanders she still regarded as her 'boys'. It was entirely fitting therefore that Wandsworth Borough Council launched its four-year programme of First World War commemorations with the official



# Wandsworth Museum Learning Update

Zoë McLain

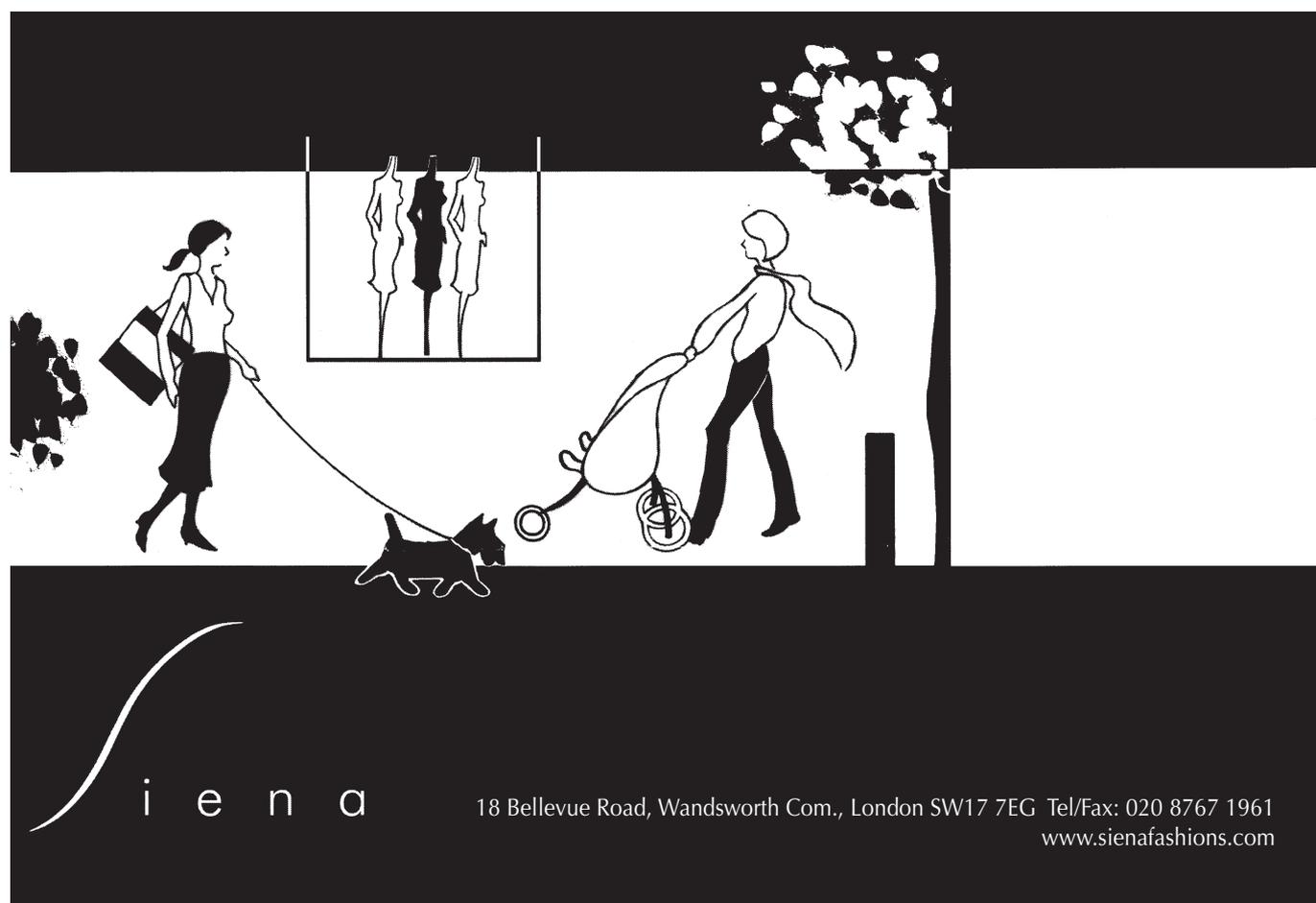
The Wandsworth Museum Learning Team has got off to a busy start with the new school year. So far, the Museum has run 41 school workshops with a further 53 expected between now and December 20th. These workshops range from People Who Help us Past and Present for children age 4-5 years, to a Suffragette drama performance and mock trial with a class of pupils aged 13-14 years. The Museum's new Life before the Romans workshop, which compares and contrasts the Neolithic period with the Bronze age and Iron age, is proving popular. This workshop meets demand from the new curriculum and has been developed with the generous support of Pamela Greenwood and the Wandsworth Historical Society.

The Museum continues to run its weekly Suitcase of Songs and Stories sessions engaging very young children and their parents/carers with the history of the Borough. Over half term the Museum is running three WW1 Big Draw

workshops funded and supported by the National Army Museum as well as Hallowe'en workshops at Wandsworth Town Library. The Museum will also be open on November 21st and 22nd for a Christmas Sale, and on November 29th the Learning Team will be working in partnership with West Hill Primary to lead a lantern parade through Wandsworth's and provide Victorian Christmas decoration making workshops in Southside shopping centre.

In 2015 the Museum will continue to deliver exciting learning projects delivered and developed in partnership with a number of organisations including the Pump House Gallery. The Team are also looking forward to delivering new weekly early years sessions, Toddler Time Travel, which are supported by grants from Young's, Wandsworth Arts Grants and the Friends of Wandsworth Museum.

The Learning Team and Director look forward to updating you with our latest news in due course.



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# Gray's Eulogy

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

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

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

**E & A Wates:** 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:** Most of us need help to get through exams. Julie and Sheila provide that help.

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

**John Archers Executive**

**Drycleaners:** Just by the toastrack. Crumbs, could they be in a handier place for you to pop in to get your clobber spruced up?! Enquire about delivery and collection too!

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

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

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

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

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

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

**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. And don't forget the free valuations!

**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

# Emanuel School: Bletchley Park Connections

by Tony Jones and Daniel Kirmatzis

Dr Ronald Gray was an outstanding German scholar, academic, author and Bletchley Park translator who attended Emanuel School from 1931–38. Ronald remains a Life Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he still lives. For 33 years he lectured on German literature, thought and history until his official retirement in 1982, and has made a significant contribution to German studies, publishing widely in a variety of journals and national newspapers.

Ronald's early war experiences included time in an Anti-Aircraft Unit in Portsmouth but in 1944 his language skills were commandeered for translation work at the Government Communication HQ at Bletchley Park, where he translated decoded German messages. The work carried out at Bletchley Park during the Second World War remained a closely guarded secret until the early 1970s. Today it is a museum dedicated to the men and women who played a vital part in the Allied victory over Nazi Germany.

Ronald Gray's war and Bletchley Park recollections:

*I resigned from the school Officer Training Corps as I saw myself as a pacifist, but having been to Germany in 1938 I changed my mind and volunteered for the Army in September of 1939. I was called up in September 1940 and assigned to Anti-Aircraft Units of the Royal Artillery in Portsmouth, Bristol and Slough after being commissioned at Shrivenham near Swindon. There was little to do in the unit after Germany invaded Russia and I volunteered for Air Observation with the Field Artillery, but failed after some months to pass the flying test which required low flying over hedges and avoiding fighter aircraft. I would have been hopeless at that.*

*A year working at SE Command HQ Reigate was followed by a transfer to Government Communications HQ at Bletchley Park in July 1944. This was the one place where I felt I was doing something useful, translating a steady stream of decoded top secret German radio messages. I went back there a few months ago and was interested to hear that the UK had been reduced to six weeks' supply*

*of food at one point. Thanks to our decoding the future whereabouts of U-boats became known and they were sunk in large numbers. But for that the War would have been over, Hitler would have won in a few short weeks. For four years, I suspect, the 'Colossus' decoder had begun to turn out a huge number of messages and 'the powers that be' raked the lists for people who knew German, as I did, having been taught German at Emanuel by Mr Cyril Bond and Mr Camfield and read German and French at Cambridge University from 1938 to 1939.*

*I was in barracks at Bletchley at first, but later was billeted on various people. The first was an Irish lady whom I tried to entertain by reading her fortune in tea leaves. One night she said I had made it all up and reported me. I wrote to tell my wife how I was getting on and she dropped her job as a teacher in Croydon and found one in Leighton Buzzard. We were then billeted on a Salvation Army family, who had to accept us even though we were total strangers and before long they gave us the push. There must have been thousands of homes like that one, stuck with people they had never met before. Pat and I lived for a few months in a carbreaker's yard, using a broken down furniture van and the cabin of a lorry for our 'Elsan' toilet. It had to be emptied in a hole which I dug once a week. We were not entitled to any waste collection either as we didn't pay taxes.*

*Bletchley was in use 24 hours a day. My shifts were either: nine – four, nine – six, six – midnight (twice) and midnight – nine in the morning in rotation, with 48 hours off in between. A daft idea! There were army, navy and RAF people in uniform, along with ATS and civil servants, several hundred shipped in by bus twice a day from nearby villages and towns. I think we ate in the dining hall, part of the unique house still standing today. I took part in a play *The Late Christopher Bean*, and went to some concerts, but not many I think. There was no social life, I just got into my job and went home after work. I did no decoding and knew nobody who did. We were kept apart, no-one being allowed to know more than they had to and all sworn to secrecy under the Official Secrets Act. In my wooden hut*



# The Lion's World: a talk on CS Lewis

A recent guest speaker for the Literary Society was Lord Williams, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge and previously the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury. Lord Williams' topic was "The Lion's World" – a look at the writings of CS Lewis and, in particular, an examination of the Christian symbolism in the seven books in the Narnia series. This was a talk based on Dr Williams' own book with the same title which was published in 2012. Dr Williams gave us a summary of CS Lewis's life as an academic (Lewis was a specialist in medieval English literature) and as a writer of novels ranging from science fiction to children's books, a writer of books about Christianity ("Mere Christianity"; "The Problem of Pain" and "Surprised by Joy") and books with a strong autobiographical content ("A Grief Observed"). Many of his letters have also been published since his death in 1963. So we were left in no doubt that CS Lewis was a prolific writer

who left behind a huge body of work – and clearly those who have only read "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" have a lot of catching up to do! Dr Williams covered many themes during the lecture but, as promised, spent most of the time talking specifically about the Narnia books. The fact that CS Lewis had a powerful imagination has never been in doubt, but one of the reasons Dr Williams admires his writing so much is that he never shied away from tackling major theological issues, even in a book which was primarily written for children (so for example, in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe", Aslan chooses to lay down his life in atonement for Edmund's sins). Before we even meet Aslan, we hear rumours that, when he comes, the ice and snow will melt away and the world will change from black and white to glorious colour. This is, for some, an unusual view of how God (Aslan) works in our lives (someone who comes into

our lives and enriches us and gives us full expression) but that was clearly how CS Lewis saw God and it is part of the magic of his writing that he so often presents us with the unusual and the unexpected.



Dr Williams covered many themes during his lecture

# The Clapham Memorial Bridge



Work has started on the bridge with images of how the new road bridge will look when finished

As anyone visiting the School recently would not have failed to notice, after years in the planning and many hours of discussions and negotiations between the School and Network Rail, the practical reality of the new road

bridge is nearly upon us. The bridge will provide a new main entrance for the school onto Spencer Park Road. The project has two components: the construction of the bridge itself and then the demolition and replacement of the

existing retaining wall on the embankment to the right of the School as you enter. If all goes to plan the bridge will have been slid across the railway lines in November with the opening early 2015.

we sat at a table curved on one side, straight on the other, about nine or ten altogether, in the German section. When I first arrived I was in the Yugoslav section, still translating German. I later found out there was also a Japanese section somewhere.

You received messages in the form of old fashioned telegrams, or strips of paper with capital letters all the way. You translated, consulting the card-index dictionaries for technical terms because you only saw a small tranche which made little sense. Secrecy was maintained by never revealing that the message came via radio. The translations were vetted for accuracy by the head of the section who passed them to one or two evaluators, who would then decide who was most likely to be interested. Only the top brass were allowed to know if the messages were decoded from radio signals. That meant difficulties sometimes. I heard that we knew exactly which ships were loading in Italian ports to cross to Africa with supplies to Rommel. To have sunk them all would have been giving the game away so 'Top Brass No 1' would tell 'Top Brass No 2' who might just be 'in the know' and RAF planes would be sent out with one of them directed to a place where we knew he would find a ship and so the ships would assume they had been spotted. The pilot would report back and the ships would be sunk. Care was taken to sink only ships

carrying arms. Those with food were spared because we had our POWs to care about.

The only dramatic message I remember was at the end of the war when I had something from Goebbels or Himmler, I can't remember which, saying 'Our shield and fuehrer, Adolf Hitler is dead.' We danced all day in Leighton Buzzard Square when VE Day was announced. Well nearly all day. It was great. Then it was decided that I had lived a soft life for too long and so I was sent to Italy. There wasn't much to do, but I couldn't complain as some men had had a really tough time. I was back at Cambridge in December of 1945 and resumed my studies.

Obviously the nature of the work in Bletchley Park went against friendships forming and old contacts being re-established. However, this was not the case in the Second World War as a whole. Old Emanuels fought with each other, crossed paths in far flung places, swapped school magazines, played sport together and even spent time together in Prisoner of War camps.

This article is an edit of a section of the book "Emanuel School at War: the Greatest Scrum That Ever Was" by Daniel Kirmatzis and Tony Jones. The book can be purchased via the Emanuel School website or other online retailers such as Amazon.

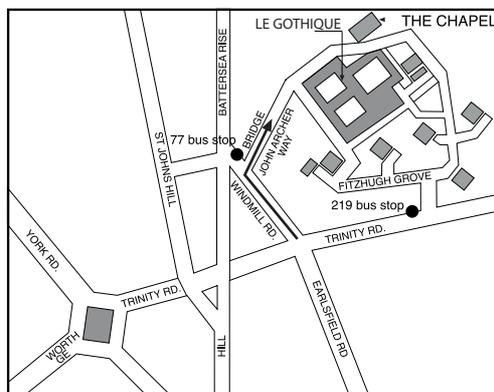
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## Hym and me

by Will Holland



**I**t's not like Christmas is it? ... I mean no snow ... how can you have Christmas without snow? ... and this year my dad has made me a sledge for a present ... useless ... watch it ... you got a bite then ... naw I'm waiting for a biggi ... what did you get in your stocking? ... oh yer the best thing I got was a penny whistle and, what happens? I'd only had it for half an hour and was playing a little tune on it for my sister when my dad took it away from me saying it was made for playing outdoors ... I ask you who's going to listen to it outdoors at this time of year? ... what did you have? ... well I had this lovely orange in my stocking ... and my mum peeled it for me and showed me how to break it into pieces and then handed it all around the family ... I ended up with two pieces... I mean it's not fair is it? ... it was my orange ... yeah know what yer mean ... but it would have been a lot fairer if you had saved me a bit ... my dad says the Wandle's sometimes frozen over in parts this time of the year ... he said it's not frozen this year because the sun's getting closer and closer to the earth, warming it up more and more ... he said if it carries on we will all end up baked ... go on ... very clever man my dad ... but he's not got much of an ear for music ...



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# A Sense of Duty

Prue Raper

My father was a dutiful man. As the fourth son and seventh child of an autocratic Victorian father, duty was something which had been instilled into him from an early age. His two eldest brothers had died young and the remaining one was destined for the family law firm. My father was thought to have weak lungs, so it was decided that he should be sent, in his late teens, to Colorado to work on a ranch belonging to his uncle and aunt.

The pure air of Colorado certainly agreed with him. The ranch was at Castle Rock, near Denver, where the air is supposed to be exceptionally good. He broke and rode horses, rounded up cattle, and generally lived a tough outdoor life.

Things on the other side of the Atlantic weren't doing as well, though. When war was declared in 1914, my father bid the ranch and his uncle and aunt farewell and came home to enlist in the army. With his knowledge of horses and ability to handle them, it was natural that he was chosen to use these skills on the horse lines – a far from pleasant job, given the terrible fate that so many of the animals suffered. My father never spoke about the war,

other than to say, "I looked after the horses". I think he must have done more than that, as he was mentioned twice in despatches.

His remaining brother, Robbie, was killed on the Somme, but my father survived and came home.

His Colorado aunt was highly relieved, of course. After all those years on the ranch, he was like a son to her. So her first thought was that at the age of thirty-five, as he then was, she must help to find him a bride, since he had so far shown no signs of finding one for himself. Fortunately, as she saw it, she had friends in Sussex, not far from my father's Battle home, who had two lovely daughters of the right age. Duly she wrote to the family and asked that my father should be invited to tea.

Dutifully my father accepted the invitation. The invitation was repeated, and he was a welcome guest. One of the sisters found him particularly charming and delightful, and decided he was to be hers. My father, dutiful and polite as ever, continued with his visits despite the torture of having to listen to this girl playing the violin excruciatingly badly. He had a good musical ear and found

this a terrible trial, but he bravely put up with it in order not to offend the family.

One afternoon, little miss cunning suggested that they take a walk in the woods. My father, preferring the outdoors to the stuffy house, agreed. Time passed, and the sun began to go down. My father suggested a return to the house, but little miss insisted that they should go further. Finally, as darkness began to fall, she agreed that they should turn back, and as they were approaching the house, began to get agitated: "Oh dear, Godfrey, my parents will be so worried that we are back so late. Promise me that as soon as we get in you will apologise to my father for keeping me out so late."

As soon as they entered the house she dashed in: "Oh father, Godfrey has something to say to you!" Replied father: "Say no more, my boy, say no more - we're absolutely delighted!"

My father was engaged to the bad violinist!

The poor man went home with a heavy heart. This was the last thing he expected, and he couldn't think what to do. He felt sure that his family would not

support him, and in those days you could be sued for breach of promise if you cast your bride-to-be aside. Eventually he decided to confide in one of his married elder sisters, Chrissie. She at once said, "Come and stay. We'll think of something."

Greatly relieved, he did as she said, but like a dutiful fiancé, he wrote to his not-beloved every week, and she wrote back. But Chrissie had a plan. My father was at the same time writing to another married sister who lived in California (she had met her husband on the boat when she went to visit my father on the ranch), pouring out his troubles to her. Clever Chrissie somehow contrived to switch the two letters, so that the fiancée got the letter meant for the sister in California, and vice versa. Shortly after this, my father received as stiff little letter from the unwanted violinist saying that she had been thinking things over, and decided that perhaps they were not suited after all.

What a relief!

Shortly afterwards he found his true love in my mother. Although she was tone deaf, she never attempted to play the violin.



*Godfrey Curzon Raper in WWI uniform aged about 30*

This story was told to me by the California aunt when I went to visit her in 1959, realising that as she was the last of that generation

alive, she must be the holder of a great deal of family lore that I hadn't known. True to form, she came up with the goods.

# Porchlight Smoker

by Iain K S Gray

Often described as the ‘real deal’, playing an exciting blend of roots, folk and Americana, every Porchlight Smoker show is different. Material is not over-rehearsed, with the idea is that no song is ever played quite the same way twice, thus ensuring there’s a spontaneity and ‘edge’ to every live show.

They play a varied and at times virtuoso repertoire that mixes self-penned works with covers made very much their own. A range of instruments, including banjo, guitar, lap-steel, stand-up bass, harmonica and mandolin, even clarinet,



Those of us who attended last year’s Society Christmas party will certainly recall the splendid musical entertainment provided by Hatful of Rain. Some of us also took advantage of privileged information

and attended a concert at the Cat’s Back pub earlier this year where Porchlight Smoker were performing. Lo and behold there was Fred Gregory, familiar from guitar-playing and singing with Hatful.



Porchlight Smoker is a term that probably didn’t exist before the full might of today’s wide-ranging smoking ban drove ciggies and their smokers out of doors, but only just. Well, by contrast I think we should be inviting this Porchlight Smoker back inside. They’re superb!

accompany the band’s trademark four-part vocal harmonies. Based in the South-east, Porchlight Smoker started out as a duo in 2006 and since have expanded into the four-piece band that today play across the UK.





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# Tennis at Woking Palace!

David Best

Lying on the northern bank of the River Wey about a mile east of the village of Old Woking are the remains of Woking Palace, which had facilities for jousting, bowling, archery, and it seems tennis.

Occupying some 27 acres, Woking Palace was built by Henry VII on the site of an earlier manor house owned by his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort. His works commenced in 1503 and recent excavations have revealed that there was an extensive number of buildings on the site, including a Great Hall, lodgings for the King, Queen and trusted courtiers, along with huge kitchens, stables and workshops, all accessed across a moat through a gate house. However, all that remains exposed is a stone storehouse, which has recently been restored with the addition of a roof, and two high red-brick walls of an adjacent structure that is now thought to have been a tennis court.

Two years ago it was believed that the walls were those of the Great Hall, but then excavations proved the Hall was in a different location leaving them unexplained. Despite there being no surviving documentary evidence to confirm the structure was a tennis court, the archaeological findings are compelling. The floor dimensions are similar to those of smaller tennis courts of the period. Up to the end of the fifteenth century tennis was played with the hand, often gloved, but then racquets were introduced into the game and tennis courts needed to be larger because the balls were being propelled further. This led for a short while to two types of court existing,

because many preferred to play in the old way, and that is probably the reason why Henry VIII built two large courts, and two small ones, at his principal residence Whitehall



Palace during the 1530s. Other factors that point to the structure at Woking being a tennis court are: The height and thickness of the walls, which are similar to those of the small courts at Whitehall and would have supported a roof; the lack of any ground floor windows; its north-south orientation, the preferred alignment for a tennis court; the fact that it is the second largest building on the site; and its location, at the back of the principal buildings where one would expect to find the sporting facilities of a palace.

Henry VII had been a keen tennis player since the mid-1490s and is known to have played in the courts at Windsor Castle and Richmond Palace, he built a court at Kenilworth and probably those at Woodstock, Wycombe and Westminster, and now it seems, Woking. When his son Henry VIII came to the throne, a typical royal progress from Richmond to Windsor would take in Hampton Court, Oatlands, Woking and Chobham, along with a few smaller hunting lodges. With no tennis court at Oatlands in Tudor times,

one at Woking would have been something for the enthusiastic tennis-playing king to look forward to as he progressed. His courtiers too would have enjoyed playing there, men such as the Duke of Norfolk and his son Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Cawarden, Sir Thomas Henage, Sir Anthony Knyvet and Sir Henry Courtenay all played tennis, and all had lodgings assigned to them at Woking. There is also evidence that another, Thomas Cromwell, the King's Chief Minister from 1532-1540, may have played, as he is known to have drawn up plans to erect a tennis court at his London residence at Austin Friars.

With English Heritage now believing the surviving brick walls at Woking Palace are those of a tennis court, this would seem to be the oldest surviving court in British Isles, of which anything remains.



David Best is the author of *The Royal Tennis Court: A History of Tennis at Hampton Court Palace*

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