

The Bedside 2015

Deck the hall with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Fill the meadcup, drain the barrel,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Troul the ancient Yuletide carol,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
See the flowing bowl before us,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Strike the harp and join the chorus.
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Follow me in merry measure,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
While I sing of beauty's treasure,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Fast away the old year passes,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses!
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Laughing, quaffing all together,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa la la la la la la la la.
... sounds like a plan

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Contents

Society Events	4
A Note from the Chair	5
Wandsworth's Military Heritage	7
The Empress and the Gardener	8
Northcote Road Market – Past, Present and Future	9
Safe, Simple, Successful Streets	14
Celebrity Haunt	18
George Frederic Watts	23
Andrea Brown – Musical Director of the Festival Chorus	27
Nine Elms on the South Bank	28
Some of London's (almost)	
Hidden Gems	30
Patrick Keiller's "London"	32
The Royal Masonic Institution for Girls	33
By Jupiter's Beard: Houseleek in folk medicine	34
A Merchant of Wimbledon: The Original Robinson Crusoe	36
Tribes, urban and rural	38
Let Them Eat Cake	40
London's water and waste water	42
Bye Bye Butterfly	43
The Memorial Bridge	45
Gray's Eulogy	47
A Tomb, a Tomb – my Old Home Town for a Tomb!	48
Full Circle	51
Love your neighbourhood park?	55
Moving South of the River	56
Parks Development in Wandsworth	58
Llandegwning Church	60

Wandsworth Society events in early 2016

The Society is organising a rich and varied programme of events for 2016. *Latest details of all Society activities will be found at www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk. Non-members can also join the Society via our website – or, of course, join on the spot at one of our events.*

Meetings Venue is usually West Side Church, Melody Road, SW18 2QQ (the corner with Allfarthing Lane). Meetings are open to all at no charge. Refreshments are served beforehand.

Thursday 14 January, 7.45 for 8
The Wandle Valley Regional Park
 Talk and discussion with Sue Morgan, CEO

Thursday 11 February, 7.45 for 8
The Royal Victoria Patriotic Building and 'London Reception Centre' in World War Two – Illustrated talk by local historians Paul McCue and Simon McNeill-Ritchie

Thursday 10 March, from 7
Our Annual General Meeting and talk(s) – details tba.

April – date tba
 We hope to organise (probably not at West Side Church) a **London Election hustings.**

Thursday 12 May, 7.45 for 8
Elephant Complex – Travels in Sri Lanka
 Illustrated talk by prize-winning local travel writer John Gimlette.

Walks and visits:

Friday 22 January – *led by Caroline Pook**

Limehouse Basin, via Victoria Park, to Hackney, to visit Sutton House

Tuesday 16 February – *morning walk led by professional guide Angela Down; charge of £8*
Tour of 'Kensington village': 11am start at Kensington High Street Station. Advance booking required: call Valerie Taylor on 8767 3814 or e-mail her at vtaylor@davies@gmail.com.

Monday 22 February – *led by Caroline Pook**
Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens and Holland Park to Leighton House (visit)

Tuesday 22 March – *led by Caroline Pook**

Regent's Canal to Shoreditch, Geffrye Museum (Museum of the Home)

Walking Wandsworth Common: a look at its history, ecology and management *led by Charles Walton (Chairman of Wandsworth Common's Management Advisory Committee for six years).* Probably in May – early evening walk, date and time tba.

**Our group assembles at 9.30am by 'M&S Simply Food', Clapham Junction Station (no advance booking). Walks will be tailored to the day, dependent on weather, but will not exceed 4 miles on flat firm surfaces. We find a warm café for a sociable lunch, often at the house or museum we visit.*

THE POET AT BATTERSEA.



The beauty of the buttercup, the fragrance of the fields,
 The chirrup of the grasshopper, the playful pony's neigh,
 And at the solemn evening hour the donkey's dismal bray.

THERE'S brightness over Battersea, there's brilliance in the wave,
 That in a bath of liquid light its bosom seems to lave;
 But 'tis the merry sunshine that, in the summer time,
 Illumes the Thames, which otherwise were black as any slime.

And yet I love thee, Battersea; thy verdant valley yields

I've known thee in the winter time when cover'd o'er with snow;
 I've known thee in the summer, when green thy rushes grow;
 I've known thee in the autumn, when by thy margin float
 The civic barge, the steamer, and the ordinary boat.

But, oh! the time I loved thee most, the time which I would sing,
 Is when thy shores were danced upon by silver-footed Spring;
 When every gentle step she took open'd the early flowers,
 And to reflect her radiance linger'd the evening hours.

Yes; Battersea at springtime is Battersea indeed;
 Upon her verdant meadows the leaping lamblings feed;
 The hoary-headed waterman—the winter being past—
 Across the neighbouring ferry expects a fare at last.

The long-neglected hostelry, upon the weltering shore,
 Puts on a gay exterior, and opens wide its door;
 The pigeon, too, no longer now fills the ignoble pie,
 For by the hand of sportsmanship 'tis privileged to die.

Yes, travellers may sneer at thee, affecting to despise
 Thy level flats, O Battersea, thy reach, Red House, and rise;
 But often in my chamber, at eventime alone,
 I think of thee, my Battersea, my beautiful, my own!

Contributed by William Holland

From the Chair: news from another ‘global city’

In October I attended the annual convention in Bristol of Civic Voice – successor body to Civic Trust (whose significance for the ‘conservation’ movement was noted at our planning forum in September). Bristol is perhaps one of Britain’s first ‘global’ cities – through its early roles in ‘discovering’ America and Africa, through migration and trade, including slaves, and through innovative engineering. It is for me a multi-cultural, lively, and – to use a much abused term – “vibrant” city.

I saw fine examples of conservation and some impressive contemporary buildings. The Convention itself was held in a 12th century Grade 1-listed priory, now a Catholic church, beautifully converted in the 1990s to serve also as an excellent conference venue among other things.

I joined a ‘lecture walk’, led by an enthusiastic resident, through the delightful Georgian and Victorian streets of the ‘vertical suburb’, Kingsdown, much of which might have been swept away in the 1950s but for the efforts of conservationists and the benefits of increasing ‘gentrification’. On our walk up the steep hill, we also noted case histories of ‘redevelopment’ – compulsory purchases, demolitions, ugly tower blocks, some Brutalist, some better (the NHS has much to answer for!)...

In wonderful contrast, a tour with the ‘Bearpit Improvement Group’ followed. We were entertained by an eloquent woolly-hatted leftie, accompanied by the Vice-President of the ‘socialist republic’ (a former Council planner!). Their account of the area’s history and planning interactions with the Council was fascinating. The ‘bearpit’ is a large open space dominated by a surrounding 1970s roundabout above, lined with skyscrapers (former offices, now converted to flats and hotels). Still a rough area at night, the space now resembles a – more welcoming – hippy commune. The nearby Stokes Croft, a graffiti-decorated, rundown industrial suburb has been preserved (or even conserved) against corporate redevelopment. This is largely ‘Banksyland’, full of graffiti jokes, anti-corporate protest and imaginative urban art. One could understand how the ‘anti-Tesco Express’ riot of 2011 came about and how this ‘alternative neighbourhood’ is now tolerated.

I attended, too, a workshop about ‘making a difference in planning’. The quality and nature of ‘community engagement’ with planners clearly varies across the country. ‘Neighbourhood planning’ may work elsewhere – but perhaps not in Wandsworth, where the Council has a Local Plan with ‘site specific allocation documents’. However, understanding how that Plan really ‘works’ is a current challenge for our Society. Should we perhaps be seeking earlier discussion with planners and developers when a specific major project is in prospect? The second workshop I selected was about – guess what! – “growing your civic society”. Problems shared.... Like others, our Society does of course need to “grow”, to survive. I emerged from the exercise with food for thought and things to discuss at our next AGM...

Of course, Bristol is one of the few cities outside London to have its own directly elected mayor, George Ferguson (‘Independent’), a distinguished architect and entrepreneur. He gave a brilliant short speech to the Convention dinner about his and his city’s inclusive and liberal-minded aspirations. They do things a bit differently in Bristol.

I send my warmest greetings for the Christmas season and the New Year to all the Society’s members and readers of our Newsletter.

David Kirk



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Wandsworth's Military Heritage

Stuart Thom

Many of our readers will know of Corporal Ted Foster VC, the Tooting dustman who won his VC in the First World War. But Ted Foster was not the only brave son of Wandsworth, and after whom "Foster's Way" footpath, in King George's Park is named.

Last year, while Mayor of Wandsworth, I was privileged to take part in a very special ceremony. In the Mayor's Parlour I hosted the families of a number of the descendants of those who had won the supreme honour and who were connected with the borough, including those of Ted Foster. We were joined by Lord Ashcroft, the millionaire collector of Victoria Crosses and George Crosses who came to Wandsworth to unveil a plaque. (It is worth noting Lord Ashcroft has put his collection on show to the public at the Imperial War Museum). The plaque is situated in the garden in front of Wandsworth Town Hall, where it commemorates some twenty people who won VCs or GCs and were born in Wandsworth, lived or worked in the borough, or who died here. It is a tribute to those who died as heroes for their country, and reflects well on the courage of our citizens.


Recognizing the fine military tradition in Wandsworth, the Council has awarded the Freedom of the Borough to both the Royal Tank Regiment and to the London Regiment, whose precursors include the Clapham Tank Regiment (Units 42 RTR and 48 RTR) and the two "Battersea Boys" battalions, 13th (Wandsworth) Battalion, East Surrey Regiment and 10th (Battersea) Royal West Surrey Regiment.

We have continued the recognition of our military past through Councillors Guy Senior and Leslie McDonnell, who arrange each year for councillors of both parties and their wives or partners, to travel at their own expense, and see those places of significance where Wandsworth soldiers or the Clapham Tank Regiment fought. This year we visited Ieper (Ypres) which we know well, given its importance to troop movements in the Ypres Salient and the front line. Our Mayor, Councillor Nicola Nardelli, read the "Exhortation", which is accompanied by the bugles of the Belgian Volunteer Fire Brigade each evening at the Remembrance Ceremony at the Menin Gate. Over the last few years councillors have also gone to Tunisia, Bologna and Treviso in north Italy, Thessalonika and the most significant of all, Villers Plouich. The Wandsworth Battalion liberated Villiers Plouich and in recognition the French named a square, "Place Wandsworth". Councillors will be visiting Villiers Plouich again in 2017, to commemorate the

centenary of the liberation and the Victoria Cross to Ted Foster. During our recent trip, we also saw "La Coupole", a rocket site in northern France built by the Germans, to launch V1 and V2 rockets at London. Fortunately the RAF was able to disable it before it got into action. However, the use of mobile rocket launchers still inflicted severe damage on South London, with a particularly severe loss of life in Balham, recently remembered.

It is worth reflecting that during World War 1 the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building on Wandsworth Common was used as a hospital for those gravely injured at the Front. Many of the soldiers who came there did not survive, and there are over 400 hundred graves in the Magdalen Road cemetery, recognizing the sacrifice of Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and others who came to fight.

(Further information on the Wandsworth and Battersea Battalions in the Great War can be found in Paul McCue's book of that name published by Pen & Sword.)



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The Empress and the Gardener

2016 The year of the garden at Hampton Court Palace

Lancelot Brown was born in Northumberland and served an apprenticeship with Sir William Lorraine. A move to Buckinghamshire in 1739 led to employment by Lord Cobham at Stowe in 1741, where his job as head gardener was to last 10 years. He was a leader in the development of the 'natural', 'English' or 'serpentine' style of gardening.

In 1751, Brown became an independent landscape gardener, although he described himself as a 'place-maker' rather than a landscape gardener, and quickly became very fashionable and in great demand. Lancelot Brown became known as 'Capability' because of his fondness of speaking of a country estate having a great 'capability' for improvement. He rejected the very formal geometric French style of gardening, a perfect example being at Versailles, and concentrated on echoing the natural undulations of the English landscape.

Although the Great Vine which Brown planted in 1768 is a main visitor attraction at Hampton Court Palace, a new garden-focused exhibition will open there in 2016 in partnership with the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. Marking the tercentenary of the birth of

Lancelot "Capability" Brown, the Empress and the Gardener will allow visitors to follow in Brown's footsteps to discover the gardens, parks and palace exactly as they were during his tenure as Chief Gardener to King George III. Comprising of over 60 eighteenth-century watercolours from an extraordinary



hoard sold to Empress Catherine the Great of Russia to feed her passion for Anglomania, the drawings are the work of John Spyers, a little-known assistant to Brown and are together considered one of the most complete visual records of an historic landscape ever captured before the dawn of photography. The exhibition will see these

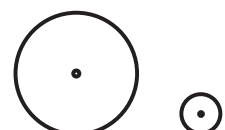
rare works on public display for the first time in the very setting that inspired their creation. The object-rich display will also feature contemporary portraits of Capability Brown, the Empress Catherine and King George III, previously unseen drawings of Catherine's English Palace at Peterhof and several pieces of the famous "Green Frog" dinner service, a triumph of British design created for the Empress by Wedgwood featuring images of some of the much admired landscapes Brown had created throughout England.

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Northcote Road Market – Past, Present and Future

Carol Rahn

In the bright sunshine of an autumn Sunday, the Northcote Road is filled with the usual complement of prams, dogs, shoppers and dawdlers. There is a queue outside Brew and a crowd at Franco Manca. But only 11 market stalls are trading; the other 11 are not being used. Will the 21st century be kind to our market?

Charles Booth's fieldwork for his famous studies of poverty in London took him to the street markets. He was captivated by what he found, writing of Brick Lane, "... it is in almost all its length a gay and crowded scene every evening of the week, unless persistent rain drives both buyers and sellers to seek shelter... (with) the flaring lights, the piles of cheap comestibles, and the urgent cries of the sellers." (Cited in *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum*," by Sarah Wise, page 168.)

According to Victoria Kelly of the University of the Creative Arts, in the north of England, markets came to be regulated and market halls were built to accommodate trading. Not so in London, where casual trade remained dominant. Purpose-built markets were generally confined to wholesale trade – Covent Garden, Spitalfields, Billingsgate – because retail traders preferred to be on the streets. Costermongers did shift from pushing their barrows through the neighbourhoods to gathering in a fixed spot for at least part of the day.

In 1893, data collected by London County Council indicate just under 5,000 stalls operating across 113 of these gathering spots, 13 of them large enough to be considered market centres. A 1901 study found 6,600 stalls while a 1932 tally recorded an increase to around 8,000 stalls. Nevertheless, authorities variously date the peak for market trading from as early as 1850 to as late as the early 1900s. Certainly markets continued to be a significant retail force in the early 20th century. Markets were typically in poorer, more congested areas of the city and the daily needs of the working population were on offer at cheap prices: fruit and vegetables, kitchen goods, old clothes. Retail shops such as haberdashers and new entries like Woolworths often took premises along streets with a market. Prime trading time was Saturday evening, blending shopping with socialising and offering a venue for street performers. Markets also operated on Sunday, a mighty irritation to the pious.

As most Wandsworth Society readers will know, our own Northcote Road market began life near Clapham Junction station in 1863, with a few stalls on Northcote Road. By 1910, however, traders were unwelcome near the station and were moved up to Northcote Road. In Mary Bennedetta's 1936 survey, "Street Markets of London," the market rates only a brief listing among the also-rans, "At the bottom of St. John's Road. Open week-days. Chiefly food, haberdashery and some junk stalls. No. 19 bus from Hyde Park Corner to St. John's Road Battersea is the best way to reach it." Sadly, it did not rate one of the magnificent Maholy-Nagy photographs that illustrate her book. Bennedetta records a conversation with local resident Mrs. Wells, who conveys an appealing image of the market's daily rhythm: "My boy comes to get the vegetables and fruit for me in the morning, and any of the odds and ends. But the meat and fish and that would be too difficult for a child so I have to choose those myself. Then the flowers my husband gets when he comes through the market on his way from work."



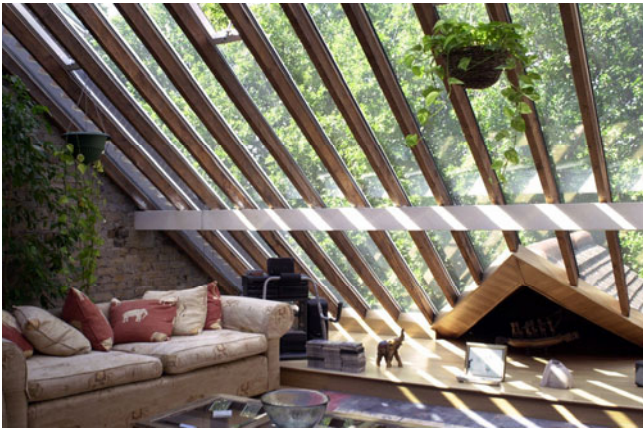
Busy Breadstall on a Saturday morning

Looking back, anyone with a long history in the neighbourhood will paint a virtually identical picture of the market: thronging; vibrant; and far more extensive than today's anaemic successor. France Chauvet, one of the current traders says, "When I first moved here, many years ago, there used to be an enormous market. It was just crammed packed and chock-a-block – fruit, veg, all sorts of stuff." But she acknowledges, "It was a different neighbourhood then." In its day, it was truly a six-day-a-week market where local people did their daily shopping.

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As long-time trader Ted Mills phrased it, "the market was more of the supermarket than the supermarket was" – Tesco opened one of its first supermarkets on the Northcote Road, but there was more fresh produce on offer in the market. The quality of some of that produce was questionable and some do remember that a fresh food market is messy, and not too fragrant at the end of a long summer day.

For the Summer 2012 issue of Battersea Matters, Sue Decsy recorded the recollection of one long-time resident : "The market stretched right up to Bennerley Road, and the smell from the rubbish at the end of the day was terrible." Another long-timer who spoke with Sue said, "I remember Northcote Road in the winter, when all the stalls had their lights on. It used to be thronging with people and at the end of the day you'd see little kids and old people looking through the fruit and veg that had been left by the side of the road." Sharon Wright, long-time administrator of trading licences recalls, "I remember there was a lot of just junk that was sold. And wild socks and things like that. And even though a lot of people say the market used to be much bigger, it never took up more of the street than it does now."

By the late 1990s, the market on Northcote Road was a sad affair and many who remember those days say that the Council wanted to see it closed down. In the end, the Council chose to signal its support for the market –the electrified bollards that provide power for stallholders probably date from that decision. But long-running debates about the market and its fragility persist.

Unlike the Northcote Road market, street markets more typically occupy a pedestrianized square or a street closed to traffic. On the Continent, the trend is toward quite substantial stalls, complete with power for lights, heat and even ovens. Attention is given to support infrastructure such as storage and access for traders' vehicles that supply the stalls. When the Council consulted on proposals a few years ago to move in that direction, the opposition was fierce.

Stallholders need a critical mass of shoppers and want active support from the Council to keep the street lively, with pitches filled by traders whose offers don't impinge on one another. Access for a supply vehicle and someplace to store the stall when it's not in use is provided only informally or not at all. Traders' work and business would be vastly improved by a stall sturdy enough to provide protection from the weather.

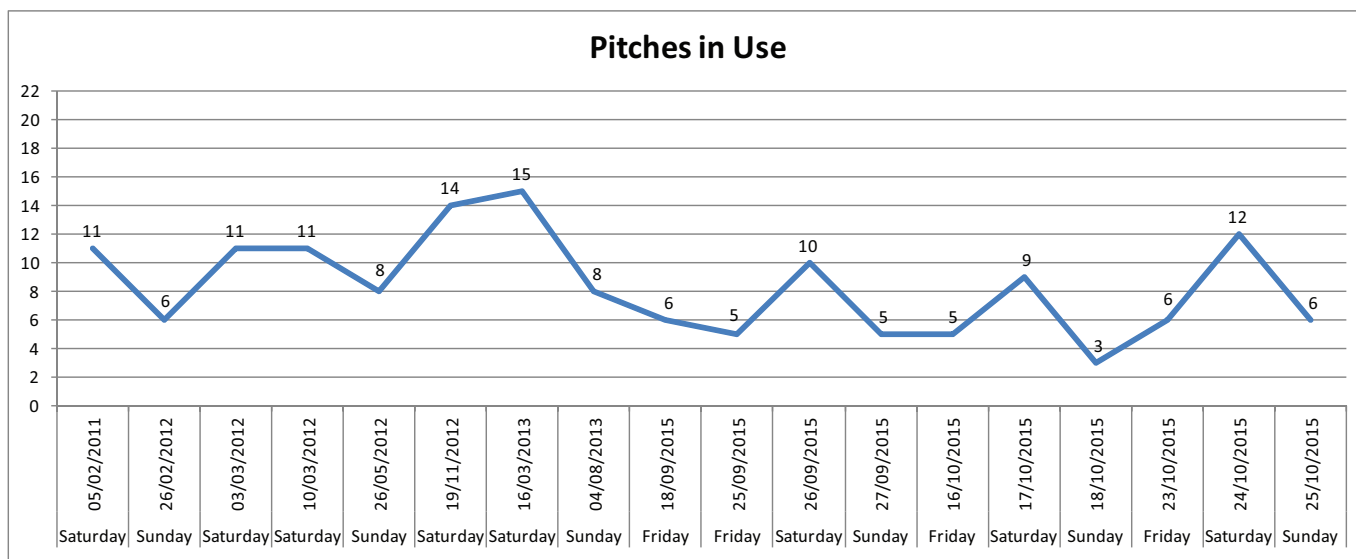
For shop owners with a market stall in front of their premises, the picture is quite different. They fear every incursion into precious parking space and most are adamantly opposed to anything that blocks the view of their shop. Paying extremely high rents plus business rates that are routinely well above £20,000 a year, they object to



Empty pitches

prime position for market traders who can trade on the weekend from about £300 per month. The obvious lack of creature comforts for stallholders or their part in increasing footfall on the street carries little or no weight. Some shop owners have carried on sustained campaigns to dislodge the stall in front of their shop, even if their staff and the stallholder may have a very cordial relationship.

When the Breadstall, nowadays one of the very few full-time stalls on the Northcote Road, first pulled up its caravan-sized accommodation, it kicked off a firestorm. Mark Anderson soon followed suit with a similar, if smaller, weekend-only set-up, re-igniting the tension. There had long been objections to the permanent flower stall at the Battersea Rise end of the street. Mark had begun promoting his photography business on the market in 2002, initially from a frame stall with canvas sheets that took about two hours to set up and an hour to take down. Sebastian Vince, owner of the Breadstall, finds it much easier now to hire and keep good people, "At one point, I felt as though I were hiring anybody strong enough to



stand the weather and set up and break down the stall." The Breadstall also pays business rates under an agreement reached with the Council.

But if there is a long history of tension between shop owners and stallholders, local residents love their market. As Jonathan Dyson, chair of Northcote Business Network and area sales director for Hamptons International says, "Stallholders generally feel positive about the shops and some get on very well with their near-neighbour shops. Residents like the shops, but they love the market. People want a market. Residents want a market. I want a market. It's just different."

Polling random pedestrians on a sunny Sunday afternoon elicits a similar response – they think the market is great. It gives the area more personality; something distinctive. But have they bought anything from the market today? Most of those I asked hadn't bought anything that day, but they had bought from one of the food stalls that weekend. This echoes the findings of a 2012 survey of households in the area sponsored by MP Jane Ellison. Two thirds of those responding reported that they bought from food-related stalls either weekly (38%) or monthly (31%) while less than half were regular customers of the non-food stalls, with 14% reporting monthly purchases and only 6% buying weekly. Somehow, though, more focus on food doesn't seem to suit the area today and efforts to make food a bigger part of the Northcote Road market have not worked.

Ted Mills stopped trading in September 2012 after his family had had a fruit and veg stall for 100 years. "I was helping my Nan on the stall when I was seven years old." He says he lost some of his regular customers to Waitrose who then came to him only when they couldn't find something. As he describes it, it's now as though those strolling along the Northcote Road are on holiday; they are not serious shoppers. It's an image that several traders use: cruising the coffee shops; looking, not buying.

Bunny Kimber is now the only one trading fruit and veg and one of the few who is there every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, whatever the weather. Born into the business, she has had the stall on her own for about 11 years. "All our produce is really fresh," she says, but despairs of educating people to the value of what's on offer.

Anchoring the north end of the street is Bob's flower stall. One of only three trading during the week as well as the weekend, he's been there for more than 20 years. He says his business hasn't changed, but the neighbourhood has. After years of insisting on cash only, he admits his takings have gone up now that he accepts credit cards.

Also at the north end of the market, France Chaulet has been offering women's clothing and accessories for 10 years while at the south end Marmalade Maids, owned by Clare Calverley, has been selling women's clothes in the market for 8 years. Marmalade Maids is also online. While the ranges offered by the two businesswomen are very different to each other, both offer distinctive clothing and memorable fabrics, much of it sourced from independent British designers. As Clare describes it, "What I have is unique but affordable." Like most stallholders, they have a core clientele of repeat customers that are essential to their business and they warn anyone planning to try their luck on the market that it takes time to build up that clientele.

If street markets are an affordable way to enter the market for most traders, for the fish stall it was the way to stay in the area when the shop they had been in since 1994 became too expensive. In about 2008 they moved out and into the permanent metal-sided stall that sits just at the corner of Northcote Road and dead-end Shelgate. Closed Sunday and Monday (like all good suppliers of fresh fish), but open every other day, about two-thirds of their weekly turnover comes on Saturday. "People buy from us because we offer good quality at the right price. Our fish is fresh every day." They, too, have a well-established clientele and

say only Waitrose offer any real competition. The owner stocks the stall from Billingsgate and also supplies some restaurants so is not completely dependent on trade from the stall.

Little Legs, selling eye-catching children's clothes from high quality, organic fabrics is now owned by Vicky Gillings. Why sell via a stall on the market? "Children; the Northcote Road. It goes together well," is her response and she, too, sells online as well as through the market. Her wares are a favourite for gifts and she says it helps to be positioned between two nurseries.

Dorset-born Laura Amos knew from a young age that she wanted to be in the food business and she learned her trade at the likes of Caprice and the Ivy. She first opened her Dessert Deli stall in 2008 at the Hildreth Street market. She had to learn to drive and finance the start-up on her credit card. She, too, says it takes time to build a clientele and more than anyone else in the market, Laura uses social media to drive her business every weekend. She is another trader who does not depend solely on the weekend stall. She takes orders online; supplies both Selfridge's and Fortnum & Mason; and nowadays her moreish cakes can be had seven days a week next to Platform 10 in Clapham Junction station.

The new kid on the block is Sammy Duder, whose eponymous shop has been on Webb's Road for 10 years. The first new stallholder in a long time, she had been waiting three years for a place to open up, having decided that the market was a great way to extend her presence to the pricey Northcote Road. As she says, "It's an affordable way to be part of that. We are part of the community and we are family-based so people are happy to see us down there." How was the first weekend? "Cold! But worth it." For her, it is a way to catch up with old customers and seeing the stall reminds them to come by the shop. For new customers, she says they are not necessarily buying on the spot, but it's a good way to make the initial connection.

How can it be that half the pitches are never used yet would-be stallholders are on the waiting list for three years? Wandsworth Council is responsible for licensing and assigning a pitch to anyone who wants to trade in one of the borough's three street markets. As long as a trader is paying the pitch rental, the Council may be unaware that they are rarely if ever trading and it is a tedious process to re-assign the pitch. When someone gets the call that a vacancy has opened up, they may have been waiting so long that their plans have changed or they are not ready to go. Despite all the cautions and warnings, novice traders have no idea how tough the work is. Many don't last very long and the licensing process starts all over again. So the market limps along with at least half the 22 pitches empty and one stretch unused for months.

It's fair to say that the Council appreciate the cachet that

Northcote Road market lends to the area, but they have many more pressing priorities. Responsibility for the markets is housed in the Waste Management service; the Street Markets administrator has many other duties of greater financial consequence to the Borough. Legally, street trading can only be managed on a breakeven basis (as opposed to revenue-generating). From 2007 to 2009 the markets in Wandsworth were loss-making but are forecast to generate a £28,000 surplus this year, which will be used to keep pitch fees at their current level. There is little incentive for active management of the market, especially given the shop owners' resistance.

Jonathan Dyson is sure there could be a transformational design that will keep both stallholders and shop owners happy. In the meantime, France Chaulet warns, "If you don't use us, you're going to lose us. And then the street's going to be coffee shops, estate agents and charity shops and then all the reasons why you moved into this area, because of the village feel, that's going to be gone."

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Safe, Simple, Successful Streets

John Dales

This article is the readable version of a talk I gave to the Society back in February. The latter – as those who were there might remember – was largely a collection of some of the saddest holiday slides you'll ever see; so I hope my attempt to paint pictures with words doesn't leave too much lost in translation.

By way of personal introduction, I'm someone who's been working in the field of transport and urban design for over 30 years. I have been both an officer at a London local authority and a consultant, and have run a small transport planning and street design practice – Urban Movement – since 2010. (If these words do indeed fail to grip, then our website contains loads of pictures of the things we have done; the kind of things my talk was all about.) In addition to my day job, I'm also a Trustee of Living Streets (the UK charity for everyday walking) and Chair of the Transport Planning Society

My marriage certificate states my profession as Traffic Engineer. When you consider I could have written Brain Surgeon or Astronaut – because nobody would have checked anyway – it tells you something you'd probably rather not know. What kind of person would, under no duress, willingly admit to being a traffic engineer? I recently read that, in the 1950s, a decade after he outlined the theory of the Big Bang and the expanding universe, the physicist Robert Herman started studying road traffic. But his peers warned him against it, saying it would be too hard!

The thing is: I am fascinated by towns and cities, and by why and how they work. In this, you may be surprised to learn, I am a kindred spirit of the poet William Wordsworth – yes: him of the Lake District and its daffodils. He once said, "I wish much to be in town. Cataracts and mountains are good occasional society, but they will not do for constant companions and, much as I love getting out in the country from time to time, it is urban life that gives me energy".

I'm especially fascinated by the busiest, most awkward, most challenging, yet most dynamic and, well, fascinating places that towns and cities have. Streets. And this is where, back in February, I showed a couple of consecutive slides setting out my conviction that:

*There should be no roads in London...
... just streets.*

The failure to understand the essential difference between a road and a street is, in my view, at the heart of why so many of the urban thoroughfares that we encounter are so dismal – from almost all perspectives. Difficult to walk along and across; unsafe to cycle in; frustrating to drive – or be driven – along; and unpleasant simple to be in. Roads are primarily, almost exclusively, about transit. Streets, by contrast, are not only about movement; they are places in themselves. Places we live in, shop in, work in, eat in, watch the world go by in, and simply hang around in.

I know of four quite different songs entitled Street Life. No songs are called Road Life; whereas road-kill is a well-known phrase. In the same way, we talk about street parties, but road rage; while we instinctively grasp the difference between a high street and a main road. In popular media – films and books as well as music, titles with featuring 'street' are always about something going on (not always pleasant, I grant you); while those featuring 'road', are always about travel and often have grim subject matter. Like 'The Road', for example.



A landmark document produced by the Department for Transport in 2007 was called the 'Manual for Streets'. The following quote from it should be tattooed on the back of every traffic and highway engineer's hand (if only it would fit):

"A clear distinction can be drawn between streets and roads. Roads are essentially highways whose main function is accommodating the movement of motor traffic. Streets are typically lined with buildings and public spaces, and while movement is still a key function, there are several others, of which the place function is the most important."



Venn Street, Clapham

There's an old 'road safety' cartoon (reproduced alongside) which states that 'Roads are for cars and lorries, not pedestrians'. In essence, this simply a statement of the truth; but the main lesson we should learn from the picture is perhaps the opposite of that conveyed by the caption. Instead of 'People: keep away from roads', we should be asserting 'Roads: keep them away from people'.

In summary: roads are for vehicles and streets are for people. The reason there should be no 'roads' in our towns and cities is because they're full of people. In 'Strap Hanger' (which I urge you to read), the American author Taras Grescoe says, "This book is, in part, the story of a bad idea: the notion that our cities should be shaped by the needs of cars, rather than people". Indeed. What spoils so many streets – and cities – is that the means have been prioritised over the ends.

Taking a more positive view about what urban streets are and could be, let me quote the American urbanist William H Whyte: "The street is the river of life for the city. We come to these places not to escape, but to participate."

There's so much that has and could be written about what makes for a good street. All I have space for here is to say that the most successful streets are places where people feel safe, and where the design is simple. The fact that 'simple' is by no means the same as 'easy' is something I'll come on to. First, I want to introduce a couple of 'litmus tests' for good streets: they should be places where walking is welcome and cycling is comfortable. If they're not, it's a sure sign that something's gone wrong.

Walking is the fundamental means of urban movement and urban experience. Nothing works without walking. Our streets should, first and foremost, do all they can to enable people to get around on foot (a phrase which, for me, must

cover those who need extra tools – from sticks to wheelchairs – to help them get around). To save space, I've summarised a few of the key issues about walking that should influence street design.

- When what should be streets are treated like roads, the walking environment is usually shocking.
- Key transport statistic: almost 100% of people walk
- Many studies have repeatedly shown that, walking is almost always the local high street's most valuable mode transport (despite most traders' belief that it's the car)
- Pedestrians are not water: we may almost always find a way, but we shouldn't have to
- Walking should be enabled as our first choice, not marginalised as a last resort – which it so often is

Cycling has become a sadly controversial topic in London of late; with far too many people choosing to view 'cyclists' as some hostile, threatening mass, rather than focusing on the city's need (in terms of basic transport and health mathematics) to enable more people to be able to choose to ride a bike as a cheap, safe and (for many shorter trips) quicker means of getting around. It's worth noting that, in cities where there is already mass cycling:

- Cycling is considered – by politicians, practitioners and the public – an ordinary, 'grown up' mode of transport, worthy of investment
- Growing cycle mode share is part of an integrated approach to decreasing car-mode share
- Improving cycle safety/convenience is not achieved at the expense of pedestrian safety/convenience
- Loss of traffic capacity or parking is not a veto on creating better conditions for cycling
- Designing for cycling isn't a 'specialist subject', it's just part of the job



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Clutter is another important street design issue to think about. As Boris Johnson once wrote, in his typically colourful way: "For those that try to walk, the pavements have become an obstacle course of pointless street furniture and sheep-dip-style railings, fencing and herding them and reducing their enjoyment of public space." The amazing thing is that my profession only recently started to properly study the actual effect of much of the paraphernalia that we've been merrily disfiguring our streets with for decades. And what we've learned, for example, is that almost all those pedestrian 'guard' railings that we thought made things safer for people on foot actually have no appreciable benefit. Indeed, they can often make things worse.

The truth of the matter is that, when it comes to all the stuff in our streets – from bollards to advertising boards – less is almost always more; in practical, safety and visual terms.

Complexity is, for me, at the heart of the Joy of Streets. Streets need to be as simply laid out as possible; but to do this well requires designers to embrace a wonderful world of complexity. Streets, by definition, are places where almost anyone can, if they choose, do almost anything. This is what is implied by the phrase 'public realm' – and it's something we need to deal with, not ignore. Indeed, the root of dysfunctionality in most urban streets can usually be traced to the fact that they're laid out with just one or two things in mind; usually one mode of transport or another. Just as streets are made hostile by an excessive focus on the through movement of motor vehicles, so they can be made threatening (especially after hours) if thoughtlessly 'pedestrianised'.

I spend quite a bit of my time training fellow professionals in street design, and often comment that, at one level, I won't really be making their jobs easier. However, I go on to say that, if we choose to keep our blinkers on when designing streets – 'Don't both me with your complexity, I'm doing a bus priority scheme here' – we'll continue to make big mistakes. The best streets are where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts; most add up to considerably less.

There's probably no better way of describing the challenge than the following. My local high street is Northfield Avenue, W13. It's far from perfect, but I'm very fond of it. The problem is that, what I get from the street depends on:

- if I'm shopping
- if I'm there for lunch, dinner or just a coffee
- if I'm on foot, on my bike or on a bus
- if I'm going to/from the street or through it
- if I'm in the car en route elsewhere
- if I'm on my own or with other adult(s)



Mare Street, Hackney – before and after



- if I'm with the kids (at what age/ages?)
- if I played football the night before (my knees don't work properly the day after!)
- if I'm in a hurry or not
- the time of day, day of week & week of year
- what the weather's like
- how much other traffic there is
- what side of the bed I got out of...

So, I can't really design a street for me, let alone you; or everyone else! But I have to try and strike the best balance I may between all the needs and aspirations that pertain to whichever street I'm working on. If I don't, well... same old same old.

Street design must embrace the inherent complexity, not wish it away. Put it another way, as Einstein did: "We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

And, while I'm quoting famous people from the past, let me conclude with these words from John Ruskin:

"We require from streets two kinds of goodness: first, the doing their practical duty well; then, that they be graceful and pleasing in doing it."

Celebrity Haunt

In 2017 Mark Justin celebrates 30 years as a restaurateur/patron of Wandsworth's longest-running restaurant, Le Gothique

When reading any of the national dailies or a copy of Hello! in the dentist's waiting room it always appears that a Z-list celebrity is dining at the Ivy or the Groucho Club in Central London. Or that all the young Royals frequent Boujis in Kensington, virtually every night. But here in Wandsworth we have our own celebrity calling. Perhaps due to its secluded location or maybe because they admire the food, Le Gothique has been a haven for people-spotting. But then, as with our "secret garden", this has been our little secret.

Le Gothique first got its Royal patronage way back in 1988 when Prince Andrew and Edward strolled in for an 8pm booking. Looking quickly in our diary I could see no reservation in the name of "Windsor". But as further guests arrived I realised they were dining with their former commanding officer Major Benson in whose name the booking was made. In the restaurant business tables for one are very rare and often alert to the possibility of a restaurant food critic. On this occasion we had three tables for one. Unheard of. Sure enough, as the Princes left their table at the end of the meal, all three unitary tables upped and left their plates mid-course in order to accompany the Princes off the premises. Silver service? More like the secret service?... and there was an awful lot of "clicking" on the telephone line that night as well.

Some of Le Gothique's celebrity status back in the '80s was the result of no less than four pop stars of the era all living in the building at the same time. Duran Duran's Andy Taylor, The Thomson Twins (Tom and Allanah Bailey) and heart-throb Mark Shaw from Then Jericho gave a certain 1980s Glam to an otherwise entirely Goth setting.

Mark Shaw had his bills settled directly at the end of each month by EMI, his record label. He would rise most days at the crack of 2pm and phone down to the bar to order breakfast. After 6 months he told me that he thought the "room service" was really rather good but he hadn't seen the concierge and had been unable to get his dry cleaning done since his arrival. I had to inform him that Le Gothique was merely a bar and restaurant as he had been under the impression that the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building was a hotel!



Back in the day it was always myself who recognised the incoming famous names but latterly I have had to rely on the younger staff to point them out. On Mother's Day, Take That's Mark Owen dined not only with his wife and child but also his own mother. At the end of the meal he congratulated me upon making a fuss of his mother and not him. In reality, I simply didn't know who he was and it was, after all, Mother's Day.

Sometimes, just sometimes, it's me who is genuinely star struck. When Helen Mirren dined with us as a guest of a party for her school friend, I really wanted to speak to her. The staff were aware that I was a big fan. My manager tipped her off and before she left Dame Helen came to the bar and asked for me by name. She pulled up two bar stools and sat with me for more than 20 minutes and dutifully answered all my questions. One of the best days of my life. Unforgettable charm and real star quality, but also an ever so "mumsy" character dressed as she was in her favourite woollen cardigan. It also turned out that the love of my life owned and regularly resided in a flat in Prince of Wales Drive since the 1960s bought with the first real money she earned as a bolt-hole in case of hard times. With me living in Albert

Bridge Road we had been near neighbours all these years and not known it.

Some celebrities turn out to be nothing like their on-stage or real-life persona. One of the best dressed, quietest and most polite men I have ever met was former WBO middleweight champion boxer Chris Eubank. Mind you, during his career he had often been quoted: "I am not a pugilist". His model wife and super prim and proper children were dressed to the nines and were, most impressively of all... very very polite to me and the waiting staff. His children holding open doors for their father and very much only speaking when spoken to. A real gent with great manners.

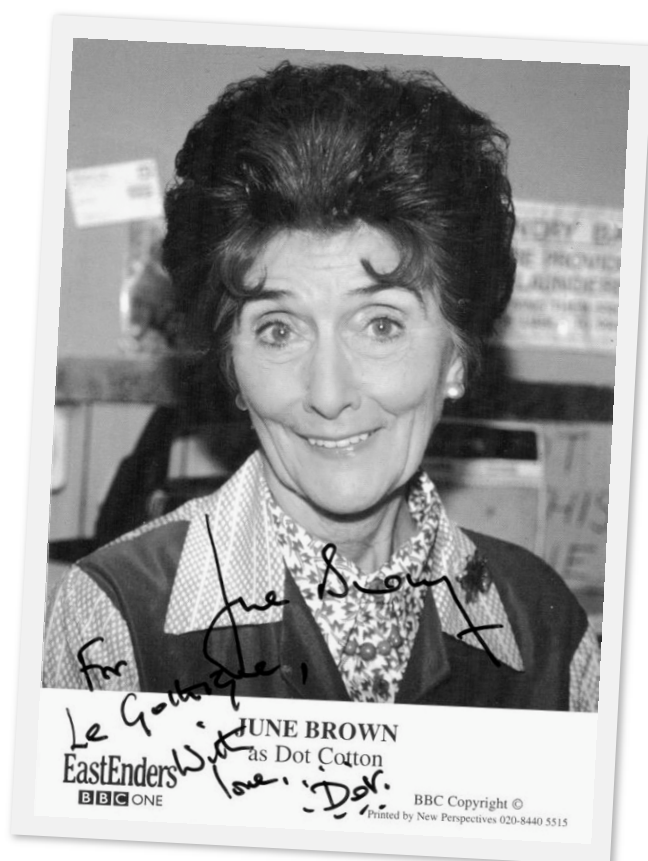
Another sporting celebrity has been Sir Alex Ferguson. He researched a venue for his daughter-in-law's first child's christening and chose Le Gothique. She lived in Wimbledon Village so we were quite surprised for Sir Alex to book the whole mezzanine floor for a Saturday afternoon. All became clear when I realised that Manchester United were playing away to Arsenal... on the Sunday! In his presence you are immediately aware of his gravitas and extreme self-belief. Even in the field of wine the man is a goliath. He perused our wine list for quite some time. Asked me about the 2001 Rioja then said, "We'll kick off with a case of that" That's my kind of wine order, a whole case. And to prove what a canny Scot he is he even pointed out an error on the bill before paying. Being a Spurs fan myself I asked Sir Alex when I might see the Premiership trophy at White Hart Lane. "When you employ a Scotsman in the dressing room and another as Chairman" was his reply. He then proceeded to give me the entire Spurs 1961 double winning side player by player. Captained of course by Scotsman Dave Mackay. Sir Alex, truly one of the footballing greats.

Having celebrity residents often meant that they brought their celebrity guests to dinner. The Thomson Twins always brought down Debbie Harry as she stayed with them in their huge apartment when in London. Andy Taylor dined with other members of Duran Duran but also a whole host of other musicians he was producing at the time. I remember one night him bringing in a ragbag of Welsh youths. Andy was producing a demo for their first album. He muttered under his breath, "a talentless bunch, all except for the singer... they'll never make it". The band? The soon-to-be, multi-million-selling, Manic Street Preachers.

Today, we still have our fair share of celebrity diners. But some, like the owner are getting older and older. I was delighted to greet Nicholas Parsons for lunch last month, dining with Gyles Brandreth both of whom were filming a link for the Celebrity Auction

Hunters series in our wonderful garden. At 92, he was still very much on the ball and we talked about the world's longest-running radio programme "Just a Minute" that he has hosted for nearly 50 years.

In fact, Le Gothique and the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building itself are celebrities in their own right being featured in everything from a Warner Brothers epic starring Omar Sharif (Mountains of the Moon) through to more modest productions with Emily Fox. This wonderful building and its award-winning internal "secret garden" have provided the backdrop to many a film over the past 30 years. Recently, I even saw the cloisters outside the bar being used by Fred Dineage in a story about the Kray Twins. Although I am not entirely sure what the connection was. What I do know is that the RVPB is an integral part of the Great Train Robbery. When Ronnie Biggs famously escaped from Wandsworth Prison, he climbed a rope ladder over the wall of the exercise yard falling into a high-sided removal lorry packed with mattresses to



break his fall. Removal lorries are not noted for their high speed-getaway-car capabilities so the lorry moved only to Fitzhugh Grove where a "villain's white Jag" parked in the rear courtyard of Le Gothique awaited, never to return.

A highlight? The best ever celeb diners? Well Dame Helen has to be up there. But one visit eclipses her. Prunella Scales and her Shakespearian actor husband Timothy West have dined with us many times. And,

but for work commitments would do so more often, as they tell me. But one night, one fantastic unforgettable night Prunella dined with... John Cleese. Instantly, Le Gothique was transformed for one night only, into Fawlty Towers. And I was Manuel. Prunella was at pains to point out that she had not seen John Cleese in over 25 years and that this was the first time ever that they had dined together since the last day of filming all those years ago.

When I wrote earlier that I often didn't recognise people the same goes for other diners. Famous guests often sit cheek by jowl with our Wandsworth residents never being spotted. But this was different. Every single diner whispered and pointed. John Cleese is instantly recognisable he is, after all, 6 foot 4 tall. The words on everyone's lips were... "Look, its Basil! And Mrs. Fawlty too! Duck's off! Manuel!"

John Cleese was accompanied by his American wife. The one who he has recently divorced at huge financial cost. It was a difficult night. From that day to this there has never been such a reaction from fellow diners. I suppose it was the double whammy or two much-loved television celebrities but also the restaurant location that made it all so much more palpable. It was at times embarrassing. But you simply cannot hold back other people's outpouring of emotion and genuine delight. They say Fawlty Towers is best sitcom ever made in the history of television. Well that night it was certainly the case that a lot of people got a lot of enjoyment from

seeing them together once more. And, for your information, the duck wasn't off.

We keep a guest book behind the bar which is discreetly placed near our more famous diners upon departure. Some, like Dot Cotton from Eastenders, oblige with a pre-printed stock photo. So we have collected quite a few autographs down the years. Everyone from Rolling Stones members to England test cricketers, Hollywood actresses to Buckingham Palace interns. 30 years is an awfully long time to be running one restaurant. As I am often heard to say, "You get less for murder", but something keeps me coming back for more. This building has been a delightful workplace and my staff have been fantastic throughout. To be honest the income derived from our more famous guests is negligible to that received from our wedding & party business. The secret to our longevity has in reality been down to our ability to run a reasonably-priced party for Wandsworth locals who want to let their hair down and not have to worry about clearing up!

In a world of Costa Coffee, Wetherspoons, Pizza Huts and hyped-up chain restaurants Le Gothique remains at the heart of the community and fiercely independent. Just as it should be.

If YOU haven't been to see us at Le Gothique then now is the time to book a table. You might not bump into a celebrity. But you are far more likely to see one of your neighbours. And if you ask nicely you can always take a peek at the Guest Book.



Mark Justin with the Guest Book

Three course set menus

Lunch £19.95 Dinner £24.95

Smoked chicken and mango salad

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

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

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

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

Moroccan tagine in filo pastry tart (V)

Fillet salmon, with lemon butter sauce

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

*Slow cooked Lamb shank, mash
and onion gravy*

Prime sirloin steak & chips

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

*Strawberry, lemon and mango sorbet
with raspberry coulis*

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

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

Buffet and Bowl Food

Some suggestions for canapés £15 per head

Shredded duck in filo with dipping sauce

Loch Fyne smoked salmon triangles

Mini fish cakes with tartare sauce

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

Roasted red onion and goats cheese

Tempura of prawns with a light dipping sauce

Ricotta and spinach filo

Rolled Parma ham "cigars" with cornichons and herbs

Creamed Roquefort on bellini

Chicken Satay with peanut dipping sauce



Le Gothique

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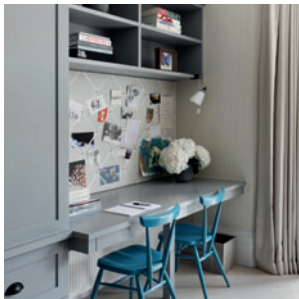
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George Frederic Watts

Perdita Hunt

G F Watts OM RA (1817-1904) was one of the most eminent Victorian artists. He gave to the founding collection of Tate and his great Hall of Fame series of portraits was given as part of the founding collection of the National Portrait Gallery. Watts was twice offered a baronetcy which he refused and finally was one of the first artists to receive the Order of Merit. He was the first living artist to have a retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and on his death there were obituaries across the world.



Limnerslease

So why did this famous artist, who was living in Holland Park, as a neighbour of Frederic Lord Leighton, establish an extraordinary campus of buildings in a hollow of the Surrey Hills?

At the end of the 1880s, with his second wife Mary Seton Watts (his first wife was the actress Ellen Terry), Watts visited his friends on the Hogs Back just south of Guildford. Escaping the fogs of London, Watts felt that the air was good and his health improved. His friends, the Hichens, who were aware of Watts's tendencies to overstay, recommended that the Wattses purchase a grassy knoll from the Loseley Estate to build their own autumn home and studio. Ernest George, the leading Arts & Crafts architect who mentored Lutyens, was commissioned to build Limnerslease. The name derived from the old word for artist, 'limner', and 'lease' which comes from the early English word 'leasen' meaning to glean. Limnerslease was

to be the home for harvesting the golden years of the artist's life. And so it proved to be.

In 1891 Mary and Watts took up residence. The creation of Limnerslease provided Mary with an opportunity to exercise her artistic ideas. The ceiling in the hall and the drawing room were created out of gesso panels depicting different world religions and the symbols for life and work. Mary also established weekly evening terracotta classes for the local community on Thursday evenings. This followed

the Wattses' belief in Art for all and continued their commitment as shown in the Toynbee Project in London where Mary Watts offered terracotta modelling classes to the shoe blacks.

Through this involvement Mary Watts then offered to build the cemetery chapel for the newly consecrated ground on Budburrow Hill. Her offer was welcomed and over 70 local people participated in creating the Watts chapel, which stands resplendent today, offering solace to mourners, a shining red glow from the terra cotta found in a seam of clay in Limnerslease and now a Grade 1-listed building. The chapel was opened in 1896.

Given the success of this community enterprise the Compton Potters' Arts Guild was formed and established the Compton pottery, a successful business which sold pots, some through Liberty's, and funerary monuments up until the 1950s. The last chapter of this evolution/revolution in the sleepy hollow of the Surrey Hills was the creation of a Picture Gallery and a hostel for apprentice potters. Watts laid the foundation stone in 1903, opened the Gallery on 1 April 1904 and then died on 1 July 1904.

A hundred years later, this unique campus of buildings was slowly slipping into oblivion. The Gallery was listed at risk, with water coming through the roof, the collection was in peril and the name of Watts was known to few. Trustees faced the challenge of saving or losing the Watts legacy. They chose the latter and the *Hope* Appeal was launched. The name was inspired by the famous painting of Hope by



Watts Gallery

Watts of a blindfold girl astride the globe who has an instrument with only one string, and yet who can make music. In 2011, after an £11m appeal, the restored Gallery was opened by HRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

The *Hope* project was not just about restoring a building and a collection. It was also about reviving a vision and an ethos. Art for All was an intrinsic part of Watts's belief that artists' have a duty to communicate, share and paint great truths; and that art can transform peoples' lives. Exploring the way in which this aspect could also be restored and revived it became clear that Surrey suffers pockets of real deprivation and that it is a county with the highest prison population in the UK. HMP Send, one of the largest women prisons, is just five miles from the Gallery. With this in mind, the *Big Issues* project was launched, with the support from the KPMG Foundation, Watts Gallery Trust engaged with prisoners through an artist taking in replicas of the collection, starting a conversation, providing art materials to encourage participants to express themselves, and then showing and selling the resulting work in an annual Big Issues exhibition. This project has proved to be lifesaving and transforming. Now the *Big Issues* project works with eight partners including groups with mental health difficulties, reformed drug users, homeless and young offenders and those at risk of offending. Thanks to generous donors, the Big Issues programme is now reaching 800 participants a year.

Following the opening of the restored Watts Gallery, Watts Gallery Trustees

took on the restoration of the Pottery Building which now houses an extended shop, offers a larger tea shop and contains the Watts Contemporary Gallery which shows work by contemporary artists which is for sale. The work of the annual Watts Gallery Artist in Residence is shown there as well as the annual Big Issues exhibition.

In 2014, the Watts Chapel was handed to the Watts Gallery Trust, by Compton Parish Council to manage on a 99-year lease.

At the time of saving the Gallery, another development occurred which offered an opportunity to complete

the revival of the full Watts campus. Limnerslease, which had been in private hands since Mary Watts's death in 1938, suddenly became available on the market in its entirety, having been divided among three separate owners for most of the previous sixty years. For the Trustees of Watts Gallery Trust this seemed like an opportunity too good to miss. The last remaining artist house and studio designed by Ernest George, and the only 19th century artist's studio with its collection still intact, Limnerslease completed the Watts story. It shows where Watts painted a number of the works in the Gallery. It is where Watts worked on his largest painting *The Court of Death*. Here Watts was visited by Gladstone, Josephine Butler, George Meredith and even Vanessa Bell had been a guest.

With intrepid faith and vision of four lenders, the building was held from private sale so that the Trustees could raise another £5m first to restore the Watts Studios wing and



then another £2m to purchase the house. With wonderful support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Watts Studios open to the public on 26 January 2016, taking the penultimate step in completing the Watts Artists' Village. In the Studios, visitors will be able to enjoy the Watts Studios as Watts left it, including the return of *The Court of Death*, his easels and paint brushes and even a smell of paint. In the Mary Watts Gallery, Mary Watts will at last receive the recognition for her talent through the display of a highly coloured altar piece that she designed for the Military Hospital Chapel at Aldershot and a full interpretation of the Watts Chapel. The Compton Gallery will tell the story of these two luminaries who created a



Interior of Watts Cemetery Chapel

revolution in the Surrey Hills. The Ground floor of the Studios, funded by the Clore Foundation will once again offer classes to the local community for making and the David Pike Conservation Studio will house a graduate from City & Guilds of London art school who will work on the conservation of the terracotta monuments at the Chapel.

Watts Gallery – Artists' Village – comprising a gallery, chapel, pottery and house and studio is unique. It's worth a visit.



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Coming later

Saturday 12 March Festival Chorus Beethoven *Choral Fantasy*; Brahms *A German Requiem*

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Andrea Brown – Musical Director of the Festival Chorus

Antony Lewis-Crosby

When Andrea Brown became the Musical Director of the Festival Chorus earlier this year, she was also Director of Music at Morley College, responsible for teaching, creating and leading curriculums for adults in a range of musical training. Now, Andrea is embarking on a sabbatical year to do research into conducting. And she will be leading the 40-year old Festival Chorus into an exciting musical future.

Antony Lewis-Crosby, one of the founders of the Festival Chorus, asked her about her life in music and her plans for the choir.

Andrea, this [Monteverdi Vespers, 28 November – details below] will be your third concert with the Festival Chorus as Musical Director. What is your impression so far of coming to south-west London and conducting a community choir?

I am enjoying it thoroughly. The people in the choir itself are very musical, fun to work with. Their ethos that anyone can join and their aspiration to do classical pieces in a formal setting with orchestra attracted and excited me.

You started your career as a professional singer?

Yes – a soprano, I trained at the Scottish Academy and the Guildhall, primarily in Early Music, then sang with the Academy of Ancient Music and similar choirs. But I realised I wanted to be more creative in my own music-making; to get on the other side of the podium

You became Director of Music at Morley College in 2009. Were you selected for that as a singer or as a conductor?

Both. I was teaching a range of voice classes and had started conducting: initially the wonderful Can't Sing Choir – and then later the Morley College Choir and Chamber Choirs. Conducting engagements followed, including founding Koruso! Community choir, conducting London Gay Men's Chorus and Diversity Choir and leading and conducting Voicelab ensembles at the Southbank Centre. I recently co-founded the Women

Conductors @ Morley programme which enables women to learn more and train in the art.

Do you think a choir like ours needs a conductor?

Yes, definitely. The conductor is the focal point to the music. A chorus the size of the Festival Chorus needs someone to focus where the music comes from. At the very least, for the singers to know how to listen and when to sing.

How are you shaping the Festival Chorus to take it forward?

I am excited working with the choir; they are listening more to the sound they are making, developing their musical expression through improving their own vocal technique and aural ability.

Our next concert will be Monteverdi Vespers. How important is this piece to developing the choir?

The Monteverdi Vespers is a vocal extravaganza, challenging singers rhythmically and harmonically and includes polyphony – at one point, ten parts. Through rehearsals our singers will develop their skills, achieving on 28 November the best performance we can – and with a period orchestra.

2016 is the 40th anniversary of the Festival Chorus and we have a really strong programme planned: Brahms Requiem with Beethoven's Choral Fantasia, then in the summer Carmina Burana and Jonathan Dove's The Passing of the Year. I'm delighted that Elspeth Wylie, our talented regular accompanist, will be playing in the latter too. Our autumn concert will feature a commission by Colin Matthews – one of Britain's leading composers – an exciting prospect for us all.



Nine Elms on the South Bank

Samantha Campbell

Nine Elms on the South Bank in figures:

- 561 acres (227 hectares)
- 35 development sites (so far!)
- £15 billion total investment
- 20,000 new homes
- 20,000 construction roles
- 25,000 new jobs (post construction)
- 6.5m sq ft commercial space
- 80 new community & leisure facilities, for everyone
- A new two-stop Northern line extension

Exciting things are happening at Nine Elms on the South Bank. The area is transforming, at a pace seldom seen in an established world city. From Chelsea Bridge to Lambeth Bridge, a swathe of post-industrial land is becoming a new mixed-use district of central London. Three icons set the area apart: a revitalised Battersea Power Station, New Covent Garden Market and the new US Embassy.

Key to the regeneration is how we create a meaningful sense of place; a thriving riverside community and business district for people to live, work and visit. Also key is how we deliver maximum benefit for the communities that already live here and in the surrounding areas.

One of the greatest local benefits is new housing supply. There are 20,000 new homes in the pipeline, up to 4,000 of which will be available through a range of low low-cost housing schemes. On the Wandsworth side of Nine Elms on the South Bank, every residential development includes affordable homes to buy or rent at well below market rates, with existing borough residents offered first refusal. The area's first 'batch' of 98 shared ownership homes was recently completed on the Embassy Gardens site and are

now all occupied. Another 116 will soon be ready at Riverlight and then many, many more will follow.

Wandsworth Council is adding to the home building total with 58 new social rent homes on the Patmore and Savona estates which will be offered to tenants living in the surrounding blocks who need more space or want to downsize.

Another key local benefit comes in the form of employment and training opportunities. There will be around 20,000 construction roles created during the building process and a further 25,000 permanent jobs in new shops, offices, restaurants, hotels and leisure venues which are now being built. Wandsworth Council ensures that local people have priority access to many of these opportunities via the Work Match local recruitment team. This jobs brokerage service also actively seeks out local applicants and offers free support and coaching to get candidates job-ready.

The council has also launched the Queenstown Quest initiative which provides young unemployed people living in Nine Elms with a range of intensive, one-to-one support. This aims is to help local youth take advantage of the career opportunities this long lasting development programme has brought to their door step.

Special efforts are also being made to give local firms access to the millions of pounds' worth of new contract opportunities that are borne out of the vast regeneration scheme. Wandsworth and Lambeth Councils are funding the Supply Nine Elms programme, which includes networking and 'meet the buyer' events, business development workshops and a package of one-to-one training and support to help small firms develop the capabilities needed. The last round of the Supply programme saw local firms secure new contracts worth a total of £1.2million. In the coming year there will be even more tender opportunities coming through the programme, including opportunities in building and construction related services, as well as catering, office support, facilities management and wider support services.

Also critical to the wider vision for the area is the creation of new public open space, much of which will be on previously inaccessible, private land. This includes a new 12-acre linear park which will link Battersea Power Station to Vauxhall, pocket parks, play areas, public squares, footpaths, cycle lanes and outdoor recreation spaces. New

stretches of the Thames River Path are opening to the public for the first time; the latest stretch opened last autumn by Riverlight on Nine Elms Lane.

Accessibility will be improved not least by the opening of the new two-stop, Northern line extension in 2020. The transport package also includes additional bus services, upgrades to existing train stations including Battersea Park, Queenstown Road and Vauxhall, and a Thames River Bus pier at Battersea Power Station. The railway viaducts, so long a barrier, are being brought to life with arches used to provide space for new business, community and cultural uses, as well as being opened up to allow for footpaths and cycleways. New Covent Garden Market is also being redeveloped: the UK's largest wholesale fruit, vegetable and flower market will have a public face for the first time, The Food Quarter, an exciting new retail market community.

The vision is for a 24-hour creative district, where culture integrates with business and commerce. Battersea's creative hub and Vauxhall's thriving galleries and nightlife bookend the area. We are growing an existing vibrant arts scene: joining Pump House Gallery, StudioRCA, Beaconsfield and Gasworks gallery are Damien Hirst's Newport St Gallery (which opened in October) and Cabinet Gallery (due to open early 2016). There is also a growing pop pop-up event and outdoor festival scene, and we commission creative projects and get involved in London-wide cultural events: to-date we have been regular participants in London Festival of Architecture, Chelsea Fringe, Totally Thames, The Big Draw and Open House London.

Instrumental to the creation of a vibrant, 24/7 neighbourhood is the establishment of a truly mixed-use district, where people work as well as live and play. 6.5m sq. ft. of new commercial space is being delivered, two-thirds by 2020.

More information:

Wandsworth job seekers should contact Wandsworth Work Match: visit www.wandsworthworkmatch.org to see the live vacancies; email wandsworthworkmatch@wandsworth.gov.uk or call 020 8871 5191.

For more information regarding the Supply Nine Elms on the South Bank programme, visit www.supplynineelms.co.uk, email Melanie.davies@be-group.co.uk or call 020 7697 1979.

For more information regarding the regeneration of Nine Elms on the South Bank, visit www.nineelmslondon.com or follow us on Twitter @nineelmsteam. For events taking place around the area, visit www.nineelmslondon.com/events.

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Some of London's (almost) Hidden Gems

Caroline Pook

Another year of leisurely, semi-rural, walks around the Capital by Society members has unearthed a few little-known spots, both ancient and modern to share with you. We stumbled across each of the following, none being the purpose of our venture at all. They are not well known beyond their locality, few have websites to inform us of their history and they are relegated to being of just passing interest in guidebooks and walking guides. In

the local area each has a body of supporters, looking after the feature with various degrees of success!

They are an eclectic mix spanning 500 years, all but one are free to explore, all can be admired from a nearby vantage point. So be inspired, find your Oyster Card (or for the lucky ones, Freedom Pass) and get out your walking shoes to see what the Society's walking group have stumbled upon in 2015!!



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St Mary's, Perivale

This is a lovely clapper board, 12th century church alongside the River Brent and just a stone's throw from the busy A40, Western Avenue.

It became redundant in 1972, was deconsecrated and then leased to the Friends of St Mary's for use as a tiny concert hall seating around 60. They have had 500 or so free concerts since 2004. Eat your heart out Wandsworth!

The churchyard – which was being vigorously gardened by volunteers on the day we stumbled on the church – has graves from 1660 and would be a peaceful country church yard if you could block your ears to the roar of 21st century traffic!



The Moated Manor House, Scadbury Park Woods, Chislehurst

Walking along the River Cray in woodland, somewhere between Chislehurst and Sidcup there are scrappy notices to the Moated Manor House. Divert from the path and find a Saxon manor, with Tudor and 18th century building with 19th Century landscape. Queen Elizabeth purportedly visited and the estate extended to 1,000 acres of farmland and hunting forest. It remained in private ownership until it was

acquired by Bromley Council in the early 1980s and the woods and farmland were opened to the public as Scadbury Nature Reserve.

Very little remains today of the Manor House except the attractive plant filled moat: the Manor House was finally demolished in the mid 18th century although some brick columns standing on the island date from the 1930s, when the then Lord of the Manor carried out some excavations and reconstruction.

The volunteers kindly allowed us to go inside and see the interesting interior with its asymmetric "weeping chancel", lepers window and stained glass windows – all the better for it being a sunny day. Sadly it is usually closed apart from when performances are taking place.

Severndroog Castle, Eltham

Severndroog Castle is just a tower and not as grand as it sounds. It was built as a memorial to Sir William James by his widow; she wanted to commemorate his destruction, when in command of his ship Protector, of occupying pirates on the island fortress of Survarnadurg in the Arabian Gulf (Severndroog), in 1755.



The tower is located on the edge of Oxleas Wood, just off Shooters Hill, and offers some of the most spectacular views across London. Reportedly you can see across seven counties if visibility is good (although we were not so lucky as the castle was closed on the day of our walk). Until a few years ago it lay abandoned but has been adopted by an enthusiastic campaign group, established in 2002 to halt the proposed sell-off of the building. The Severndroog Castle Building Preservation Trust was formed in 2003. Since then they have worked hard to open to the public in 2013; you can climb the tower on

Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays for £2.50.

Athlone House Gardens, Highgate

Caen Wood Towers, later called Athlone House, a mock Elizabethan mansion was built in 1872. In 1886 the gardens were described as in an advertisement for a YMCA fund raiser as "It is simply impossible to describe the beauty of Caen Wood Towers. Within the Grounds will be found a miniature lake, lovely walks and bowers, groves, grottoes, cool retreats..." Not much remains. The house became a nursing home in 1951 and remained in NHS ownership until 2003. During this time it provided publicly-accessible private open space abutting Hampstead Heath and Kenwood. In 2003 the house and grounds were sold to a house builder and, as part the development deal, around three acres of the grounds were handed over to the Corporation of London to add to Hampstead Heath, the first new land to be added to the Heath in more than 60 years.

All that remains is a tucked away garden and secluded woodland, visited by very few other than the intrepid Wandsworth Society walkers last winter, on their way to see the refurbished, much grander, Kenwood House. We had stumbled on one of London's secrets.

Myddleton House Garden, Enfield

This was never our intended destination: we set off to walk in the Enfield Country Park and to view Forty Hall but were thwarted by Council cuts which led to the closure of the house on the day of our visit. Ever resourceful, we studied the map and decided to visit instead Myddleton House Garden around the Georgian Headquarters building of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. The garden has recently been restored and reopened in spring 2011.

And what a delight! The garden was a riot of flowering bulbs and spring was springing up throughout the garden. This garden is the creation of E.A.Bowles, one of Britain's most famous self-taught gardeners, artists and expert botanists. He lived in Myddleton House from 1865 to 1954 and dedicated much of his life to transforming the 8 acres of gardens with unusual and exotic plants, a carp lake and glass houses. The garden is interspersed with retrieved stone artefacts including pieces from the original St Paul's Cathedral and the Enfield Market Cross.



Brent Lodge Park Millennium Maze, Hanwell

In 1976 The Brent River & Canal Society proposed a linear park along the River Brent linking key parks and open spaces mainly in the Borough of Ealing. Since its inception the park has been managed with a view to maximising its nature conservation and public enjoyment.

Midway along the linear open space is the established Brent Lodge Park in Hanwell which has seen a renaissance in the last 20 years as it has morphed from recreation ground to the well-used space it is today. At its centre is the Millennium Maze, created using 2,000 yews on the site of an old bowling green and opened in 2000. It is now mature: you will have to look at Google Earth to see how to get out!

Patrick Keiller's "London"

Iain Sinclair

Members of the British Film Institute who attend film shows, interviews and other events at the South Bank will be familiar with the programme notes which are nearly always well worth reading. This one is exceptionally good at catching the spirit of the film. Now read on.

Patrick Keiller's London is not your London, not the ersatz moon base ceded to you by the image merchandisers, not cinema as we have come to know it. His locations are pedestrian. Literally so. The metropolis, its shrines and suburbs, rivulets, parks, ceremonies and literary mementos are investigated by pilgrims bearing a second-hand Eclair Cameflex, that most nostalgic of instruments. Keiller's concentration is so steady, we sweat for it: the steadiness of the outpatient, the 'care in the community' psycho out-staring rush-hour headlights. The film is a quiet provocation – provoking reverie, honouring accidental survivals (like the London Stone) which we have never quite got around to visiting. Postcards so familiar we can choose to ignore their origins. His journal is as honest in its fictions as Defoe's, conjuring a voice out of silence, an interior monologue, ironic but insistent – a nail of clear water boring into the brain. We are guided backwards and forwards across the sacred diagonals of a city we have ceased to deserve. The film is the only evidence of its existence.

The documentary in its present debased form (not a journey of discovery, but the justification of a script-approved argument) is franchise fodder, a trade-off between consenting production companies: television. 'Steam on the glass,' as East London novelist Emanuel Litvinoff describes it. *Laissez-faire* accumulations of meaningless evidence or the personality-led essay. Print journalism with jump-cuts. The world is explained (censored) as it is revealed, with language reduced to the function of cement – holding together disparate elements. Keiller's method, in which text and picture are independent, posthumously 'married in the cutting room, is therefore a notable curiosity.

London as the meandering form of an epistolary novel, a fabulation backed by congeries of fact. The narrator, returning from a seven-year exile, takes a leisurely inventory of the city's consciousness, makes expeditions, bears witness to public events, the aftermath of violent political acts, fantasies of escape.

Paul Scofield, that most pared-down, Xanaxed of Lear, is the whisperer, the voice in the head, the syrup keeping authorial distemper in check. He is describing an absence, a necropolis of fretful ghosts, a labyrinth of quotations: not so much the ruin of a great city as the surgical removal of its soul. The casting of Scofield signals a

weary integrity; it is so clear that he is not the narrator. It's a performance – tired, slightly camp, detached. (The barber, out of the stage version of *Staircase*, a keeper of secrets, dispenser of healing unguents.) The man is too old for the adventures he is claiming, too careful; he uses English with such absurdist precision – a second language. 'Bezaar,' he says. And bizarre it is. Anecdotes rinsed, then swallowed.

The silence of things that can no longer be said, locations stripped of their resonance. ('I had lunch with Hitch in his office.' Michael Powell, *A Life in Movies*. "Silent movies are a dead duck, Micky.") The silence of Powell's film within a film, the diary, the snuff movie shot by the cameraman with the bayonet tripod. London as a labyrinth, a closed system. Keiller perceptively defines this silence, the absence of debate, as a conspiracy of the suburbs, an attack on metropolitan life and all its amenities by small-minded provincials, careerists distrustful of the liberties of the cafe-bar, the aimlessness of the *flâneur*. He quotes Alexander Herzen, his motivating source', who saw London life as a discipline of solitude. ('One who knows how to live alone has nothing to fear.') The city offers itself up to poets and exiles, men of silent watchfulness, visionaries (Rimbaud and Verlaine) wandering through the docks, opium smokers, dreamers, dowers of invisible energy patterns. A dystopia run by uniformed

enforcers, like the Victorian prisons, like Pentonville, on The Silent System. The soul of the place opposes cinema, the light. Its bureaucratic weather is against it. Skies like a hangman's hood. The scuttle of wife-killers in starched collars, eyes in the dirt. Backstreet chemists doling out paraquat.

Beyond the vast hangars of consumerism, the city gives up. Keiller can wait, crouching in fields, watching the calligraphy of wind on water. He has already told us so much. But he can never tell it all. The multitude of solitary lives lived within the circuits of the crowd. There is more history than any one man can bear. So the filmmakers pass through Mortlake without noticing the estate of Dr John Dee (his Angel Magick): the point of departure for Derek Jarman's punk deconstruction *jubilee*.

Keiller knows that London is finally an absence, a congregation of provincials. Having no culture of the centre, that is what we have become. Eliot's sleepwalkers commuting to a city of silence, a marketing device, the excuse for an anthology from some disgraced politician. The only cinema appropriate to this London is the cinema of surveillance. Unedited, mute, riverine; menacing in its boredom. Diaries kept by machines. The home movies of multi-storey car parks. Be noticed and you're dead. A cinema that requires no audience.

This article originally appeared in the BFI magazine Sight & Sound in June 1994 and is reproduced with the permission of the author and the BFI.

The Royal Masonic Institution for Girls

William Holland

The Royal Masonic Institution for Girls is not methinks the greatest name for a girls school... but it looks as though the architect took the name Institute to heart when he designed the building... I have lifted the picture and the following paragraph from a newspaper of 1875.

The site chosen for the school was a plot of three acres at St. Johns-hill. Battersea-rise, near the Clapham Junction railway station, and on the border of Wandsworth-common. A handsome building, designed by Mr. Philip Hardwick in the Elizabethan style, here overlooks the railway

I find it amazing that although it seemed quite an impressive building its life span 1852-1934 seems very short lived and after 82 years it was demolished and on that land the Peabody Trust built 341 flats for working class people at a very affordable rent ...

which also only existed for around 80 years...so now we have 278 Affordable? flats for rent so that's 63 down on the previous number... the other 278 flats are for sale... Price range £485,000 to £1,236,000... And as you turn over, Mr George Peabody, I wish you a Merry Christmas.



By Jupiter's Beard: Houseleek in folk medicine

Roy Vickery

Although houseleek (*Sempervivum tectorum*) is seldom grown in herb gardens it retains a high reputation as a healing plant. Indeed, in the traditional medicine of the British Isles it seems to have possessed many of the properties which have been ascribed to aloe vera in recent years.

Although included in wildflower books, houseleek is not a native species. It is known to have been cultivated in British gardens since 1200, and first recorded in the 'wild' in 1629. However, it is not believed to set seeds in the British Isles, so it rarely occurs in truly wild situations; although it can colonise shingle and old sand dunes, it is usually restricted to old buildings.

Books on plant folklore usually mention that houseleeks were grown on roofs to protect buildings from lightning, and more rarely fire. In some areas houseleek was known as thunder-plant or thunder-flower, and the unlikely name Jupiter's beard, which is said to have been used in Devon and Somerset, is said to relate to this belief. Jupiter, or Jove, king of the gods, being also the god of thunder. In some places houseleeks were believed to ensure general well-being and prosperity. For example, in Suffolk in the 1980s it was believed that if houseleeks grow on your roof 'you will never be entirely without money'.

However, it is probable that they were grown mainly for medicinal purposes. Writing of her home village of Norton Subcourse, Norfolk, in July 2003, the folklorist



From A. Masclef, *Atlas des Plantes de France*, 1891

Jennifer Westwood reported that although houseleeks were formerly believed to ward off lightning:

What is most often recalled is their use in staunching blood. The procedure was to slice a leaf in two and apply the cut side to the wound. (This was also said to cure warts).

Westwood believed that this was the main reason why houseleeks were commonly found on low-roofed sheds and outhouses. Similarly, in northern Spain houseleeks were planted on roofs and fed with cow dung to make them big and healthy, so that they could be used to treat cut fingers.

Many other medicinal uses are still remembered, or used, today, and over the last 30 years many examples have been contributed to the Plant-lore Archive Project (see www.plant-lore.com).

Early in the twentieth century in the Lake District a gypsy on seeing a boy suffering from ringworm on his hands advised his mother to take houseleeks, boil them in water, and dab this on the effected area. Presumably this work, for his sister remembered it 80 years later.

In Norfolk a gypsy recommended breaking off pieces of houseleek and applying them to impetigo sores; 'the cure did work'. Similarly, in April 2009 a Harrogate woman recalled a treatment for warts, which she tried and found to 'worked wonderfully'. A broken leaf was placed on the wart and covered with a sticky plaster

overnight, and the treatment repeated until the wart vanished.

For about 30 years from the 1930s Jeanette-Anne Lewis grew houseleeks on the exterior windowsill of the first-floor window of her home in Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan. The plants were pulverised with a mortar and goose-grease was added to form a paste which was stored in jam-jars. This was applied directly to an ear or a tooth to treat earache or toothache. Alternatively 'an oily extract was heated and applied directly into the year with a pipette'.

An even more simple way to treat earache was to squeeze two or three drops directly into the ear. According to a West Yorkshire man, writing in April 2004:

I have used this remedy successfully with no side effects, on all three of my children, now adults. I particularly remember going out into the garden at 2 a.m. one winter's night to gather houseleeks, since my son was in earache agony... within two minutes he was pain-free and soon sound asleep.

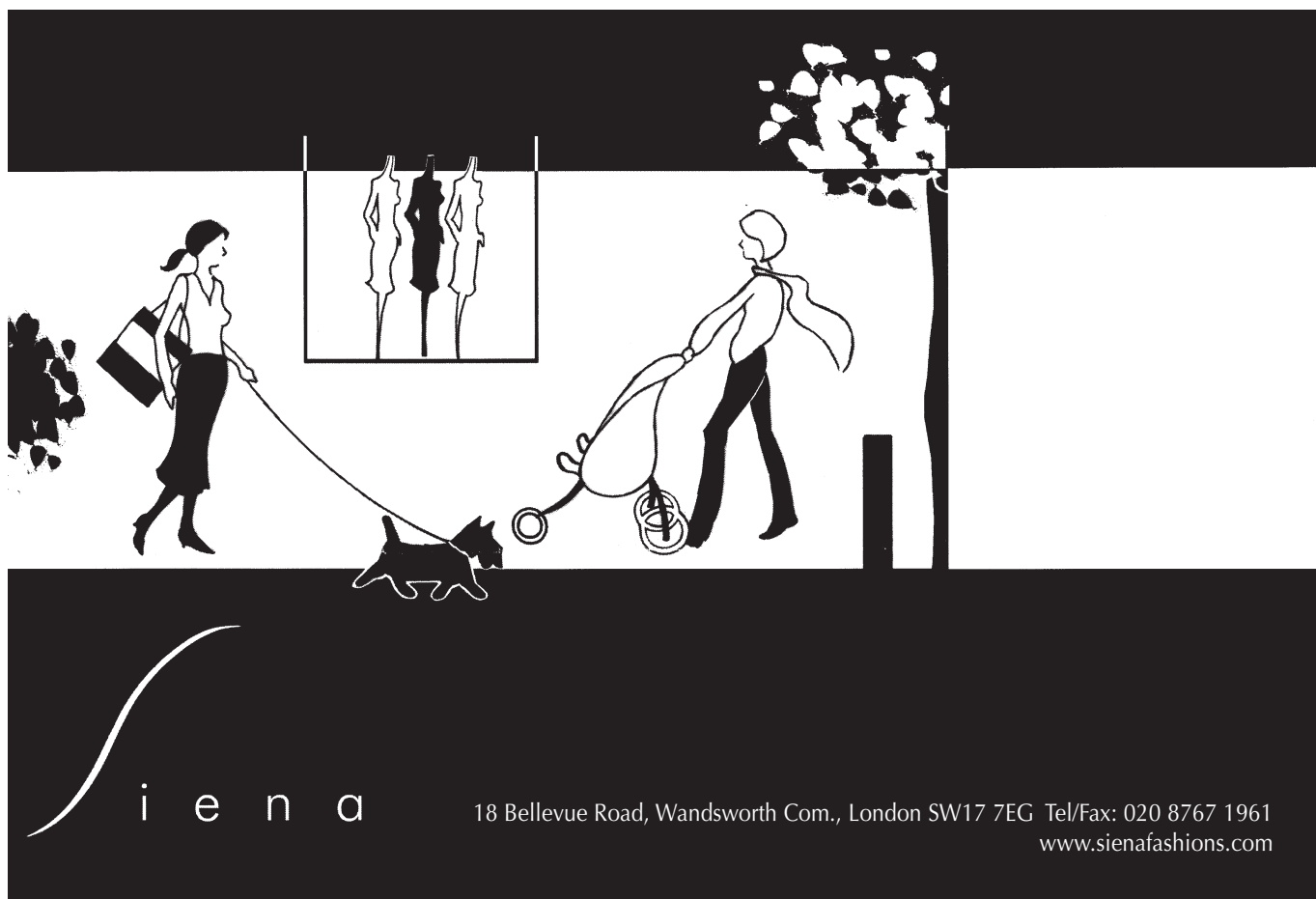
In the Newcastle-on-Clun area of Shropshire houseleeks were boiled to a pulp and the liquid used for the relief of shingles.

In County Mayo houseleeks, known as *Buachaill a' tige* (the warden of the house), could be used as an abortifacient:

If a young girl got into trouble (unwanted pregnancy, her mother would take some ... boil them, and give the water to her daughter to drink. Later on, she would tell the girl to climb up on a high wall and jump down, that would make the girl alright. Cows which retained afterbirth were drenched with the same brew.

David Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield in their *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition* (2004) regard houseleek and navelwort (*Umbilicus rupestris*) as interchangeable in British folk medicine. In western Britain, where navelwort thrived it was used; elsewhere houseleek was used instead. However, medicinal uses navelwort seem to be little remembered today. (An unexplained change in the recent distribution of British plants is the eastward spread of navelwort, which can now be found in London) .

As usual, it should stressed at all of the remedies mentioned here are given as they were collected. They have not been scientifically evaluated, and readers who might be tempted to try them do so at their own risk.



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A Merchant of Wimbledon: The Original Robinson Crusoe

During his three-month journey around Sri Lanka, JOHN GIMLETTE visited the old Dutch residence in Colombo. It was here that the governor had lived during the period of

Holland's rule. It was also here, on 2 November 1679, that a remarkable encounter had taken place, between the governor and a curious character from south-west London.

The Londoner was filthy and scratched, and had a beard down to his waist. Although he was barefoot, and dressed in the manner of the 'Cingulays' (or Sinhalese), he was clearly English. He told the governor that for almost twenty years he'd been held captive in the independent mountain kingdom of Kandy, and that he'd just escaped. His name was Robert Knox, a merchant of Wimbledon, and here is his story:

It all began with a storm on 19 November 1659. At the time, Robert and his father, old Captain Knox, were sailing the coast of India, hoping to make themselves splendidly rich. But their vessel, a 230-ton merchantman called *The Anne*, was no match for a tropical tantrum, and lost its mast. Hearing of good timber on the coast of 'Zelone', the Captain made for Kottiyar Bay, near Trincomalee. There, they repaired *The Anne*, and were preparing to leave, when a delegation arrived from the Kandyan king.

All went well at first. Although he was only nineteen, Robert led the talks, and the Kandyans seemed happy. There was an exchange of gifts and, from the Londoners, a twenty-one gun salute. But then, suddenly, events took an unexpected turn, and the Knoxes were seized, along with fourteen members of the crew. They were marched away up a narrow jungle path, which would bring them eventually to the mountain kingdom. *The Anne* waited for three weeks, and then set off without them.

For the captives, it was a hard walk, in seaboots and frock coats. Robert would remember the endless scrub, and 'rice fields some as large as a mile.' Eventually, after five days, they reached the inner kingdom. There, the king had his latest specimens dispersed, and billeted on



See Knox's Aspect here by White designed (like thou art last by Grace he Freedom Gained. Reverse his Back, thou'lt better see his Mind) Parting for Spails they Aegypt's Jewels took. Captive, like Jacobs Of spring long detain'd) He Ceylon's life set siting amongst they'r in his Back. Kn. 28 Nov. 1679.

villages. Although they weren't guarded, escape seemed impossible. The kingdom twittered with spies and informers, and the Great Road was viciously gated and constantly watched. At night, the state of vigilance was maintained with trumpets and drums. Anyone caught running away could expect an imaginative death; picked apart with pincers, perhaps, or trampled by elephants.

Most of the Englishmen accepted their fate, and settled down. Some married, and spent their time enriching the Kandyan gene pool. But not Robert Knox. Being of Puritan upbringing, he was appalled at the thought of coupling with heathen women and a life of pleasure. He was also an ugly man, and in matters of the human heart, he could be tetchy and dour. In later life, he commanded a slave ship without any thought for his cargo, and his crew so detested him they once mutinied, and left

him behind on St Helena. Resourceful and shrewd though Knox was, he'd have made a prickly companion. As his father lay dying of malaria in February 1661, he swore he'd 'avoid strong drink and lewd conduct and try to get back home'. Although the promise of escape may have been rash, the rest – for him – was easy.

It was another eighteen years before he saw his moment, and ran for the coast. In the meantime, his beard grew and his clothes rotted away. After a while, he adopted the manner of a Kandyan gent, eating off banana leaves; sleeping on a mat; using a talipot leaf as an umbrella; cooking spicy 'carees'; wearing a sarong and telling the time by the four o'clock flower. For decades he wouldn't see scissors or writing implements but he did have a copy of the King James Version, and became splendidly biblical. Once, when all his possessions were lost, he simply shrugged, 'Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I leave.' His captors were constantly moving him around, but – wherever he went – he built a new farm, and started trading all over again. He even taught himself to knit, and began a hat business, kitting out the villagers in Puritanical beanies.

It was never an easy relationship between him and his captors. Each regarded the other with unalloyed contempt. To the Kandyans, Knox was a foreigner and therefore belonged amongst the lowest and filthiest orders of society, a scavenger caste. Knox accepted all this with his usual phlegm. Europeans, he observed, 'eat beef and wash not after they have been at stool, which things are reckoned with these people an abomination.'

His captors, however, were no better, or so he thought. 'The Chingulays,' he'd recall, 'are naturally a people given to sloth and

laziness'. They were also 'crafty and treacherous', born liars, cruel and sex-mad. Men were always lending out their wives and daughters, and young women were encouraged to brag about their conquests. Adultery was only discouraged where caste was involved. Although a husband could take an inferior to his bed (as long as he didn't dine with her), if a wife did so, her friends would have to kill her. Surprisingly, prostitution was also taboo. Convicted whores would have all their hair hacked off, together with their ears.

Despite his sentiments – not unconventional for the time – Knox never forgot his time in the Highlands, and years later would look back on it with something like regret. When he got back to London he transferred to paper the book inside his head, and it was published in 1681. As a chronicle of the lives and habits of the Sinhalese, *A Historical Relation of Ceylon* has never been surpassed, and it still informs our understanding of Kandy. It was also wildly popular at home, with plaudits from Sir Christopher Wren, John Locke, and Dr Robert Hooke. Charles II invited Knox in, for 'an hour's discourse', and the book was translated into German, Dutch and French. But, equally important, it caught the eye of another writer, Daniel Defoe. Although his castaway, Robinson Crusoe, would end up alone, on the other side of the world, in tone and guile he is unmistakably Robert Knox.

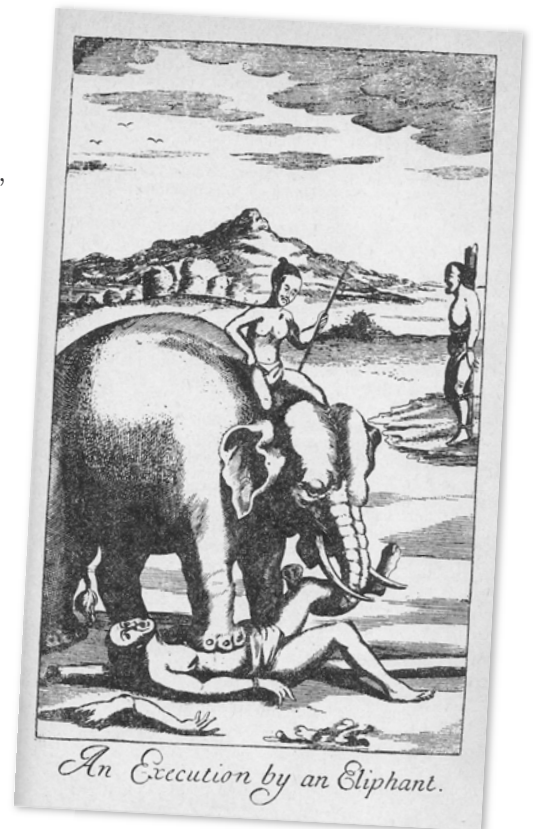
History doesn't relate what our hero made of his fictional self. He died a year after Defoe's book was published, in 1720, and

is buried, back where he began, in Wimbledon Church.

Knox's chance of escape finally came in September 1679. By then, he was a respected hatter and travelling salesman, and knew the country well. He and his assistant – another captive called Stephen Rutland – had been venturing further and further north. They knew it was hopeless to try the main path into the kingdom (known as 'The Great Road'), but they'd seen an exit, out through the dry zone. Loading their backpacks with garlic and combs, they set out on the sales trip of their life, and wandered out of the kingdom.

Even today, this would be an imprudent walk. Knox and Rutland spent a month over it, walking first in deerskin slippers and then barefoot. To begin with, they crossed the area of 'human-elephant conflict', which they described as a wilderness of 'elephants, tigers and bears'. Like me, they found the rivers 'exceedingly full of alligators', and the people living in trees. Then they got to *Anurodgburro*, or Anuradhapura, which was then controlled by the Tamils as vassals of Kandy. Tiptoeing through it, they were only vaguely aware of some 'ruins', still covered in forest. After that, they were in a wilderness now known as Wilpattu, their skin lashed by thorn, and 'all of a gore'.

Finally, at 4pm on 18 October 1679, they emerged at the VOC stronghold at Arippu. Originally, this was little Portuguese building (and it's still there, now inhabited



by cows). The fugitives must have made an unforgettable appearance. The Dutch had never seen anything so disgusting and hairy, and soon had them bundled onto a ship, bound for Colombo.

For Knox, it was the end of his captivity, after nineteen years and six months. During his absence, much had changed. His mother had died, and none of his family would know who he was. He'd also find England transformed; Cromwell had been hauled off to his grave (and out again), and a king was back on the throne. London too would be unrecognisable. Over 100,000 had died in the plague, and the whole place had been burnt down and rebuilt. It was no longer a grubby medieval town of 200,000 but a city, half a million strong.

But the Merchant of Wimbledon wasn't home yet. Ahead of him there was a 52-day voyage to Jakarta (then known as Batavia), followed by another of seven months to Erith in Kent. And before all that, of course, he'd have his long meeting with the governor, here at The Residence.

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



Dutch governor's residency. Now St Peter's Church

Tribes, urban and rural

Mark Haworth-Booth

As some readers may recall, my wife Rosie and I left Wandsworth – after 30 years of married life in the borough – in autumn 2009. We have just completed our sixth year in North Devon. It is good to keep in touch with our old friends via the Bedside Edition. This time I'd like to write about tribes.

I got the idea when I stayed with our daughters, who now live in Ladywell, SE London. I picked a paperback off the shelf: *Finding your element* by Ken Robinson. It's about finding one's *métier*, what one likes doing and can do well – so that one's occupation doesn't really feel like work at all. (I found that during my 34 years at the V&A I was in my element, apart from the proliferation of meetings). One chapter of the book is about finding one's tribe. I asked my daughters if they'd found theirs – they reckon they have, in their fields of the graphic novel and typography / graphic design.

I started musing on urban versus country tribes. In Wandsworth, I think I belonged to a Jessica Road tribe, a West Side Residents' Association one, a Wandsworth Society one, an Allfarthing School tribe, maybe a Sainsburys one (versus other supermarkets) and perhaps a 'Sarf Lunnun' one set against those posh folk north (sorry *norf*) of the river. I also had my V&A tribe and a more international one based on my curatorial speciality of photography. I belonged to the local Labour Party but never attended meetings so it wasn't that tribal. Rosie and I did work, however, with Martin Linton, the Labour MP for Wandsworth, on Heathrow /noise

pollution issues. Another tribe we belonged to, more actively, was the Campaign against Climate Change (CCC), a small but valiant London organisation we still support. In our last few years Rosie regularly met with both CCC and the local Friends of the Earth group. She was also a board member of Autograph ABP, a charity working internationally in photography, cultural identity, race, representation and human rights – she's given up that role now but at the time felt it was very much part of her identity. I was also a Chelsea season ticket holder. That was very tribal.



What about our country tribes? Well, we live in a hamlet (Hearson) which has seven houses, plus a vineyard and a quarry. We relate to the village of Swimbridge, a mile and a half north east, which has a much-appreciated post office (from where our daily newspaper is delivered along with the mail), as well as the Grade 1 listed church of St James, and the Jack Russell, a welcoming and well-run pub serving Otter Ale, good food and good coffee. We can pay in cheques to our Co-op Bank accounts at the post office and, yes, we do connect tribally with the Co-op, where we shop in Barnstaple, and we avoid all

Tescos for many reasons (including the former Dame Shirley Porter – disgraced but not forgotten). St James Church counts as a tribe as we like the congregation, the Gothic architecture and the furnishings including 'one of the most glorious of Devon rood screens' (Pevsner). A couple of years ago I started the Friends of St James, which raises money to help maintain the building and its lovely Streamside Garden.

An even more important tribe is the North Devon Green Party. You will remember this year's 'Green Surge'. It was dramatic: first our membership became so large that we could no longer meet in each others' houses and had to hire function rooms in pubs. Then we had to split into two groups, one ('Torrige side') based on Great Torrington and Bideford, the other ('North Devon' proper) centred on Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. Rosie and I canvassed for weeks on the general and local elections. The Green Party got a greatly enhanced share of the national vote – but we still only have one MP (albeit a brilliant one, we think, in Caroline Lucas), thanks to the UK's out-dated voting system. However, we did get lots of keen young people onto local town councils.

I mentioned shopping at the Co-op. We also buy from local shops – for example, the family-run butcher in Bishops Tawton which sells locally reared meats (labelled with the farmer's name and sometimes the name of the steer), local honey and nutritious laver (edible seaweed) from local seashores. Shopping locally brings what economists call

the 'Multiplier Effect' into play. These days we don't merely 'consume' – we 'support'! Luckily Barnstaple has shops worth supporting, like a marvellous cheese shop, a good fishmonger, a fine baker, fruit and veg stalls in the Pannier Market, plus a farm shop.

What other tribes do I have? Over the past two years I have studied, part-time, at Exeter University for an MA in creative writing, so perhaps I have a university tribe. However, I rarely saw fellow-students from one termly module to the next so I don't have much sense of belonging to a cohort. However, I do know a number of the tutors and hope to return now and then for public lectures. The tutors overlap with a poetry tribe which meets monthly as Exeter Uncut Poets, usually at the Exeter Phoenix arts centre. Sessions sometimes coincide with Goths night, when heavy metal is played and darkly glamorous people – some in witches' hats – sit supping nonchalantly in the bars. I'm still part of the Chelsea FC tribe, if 'remotely', of course.

Other North Devon tribes I belong to involve groups which meet in Barnstaple regularly, such as the Exmoor Society, Devon Birds, the Devon Wildlife Trust and Coastwise, a group of experts on marine life. One such allegiance is the British Trust for Ornithology. As I think I've mentioned, I am part of a team which surveys wading birds on the River Taw and the estuary where it is joined by the River Torridge. Both rivers are associated

with Henry Williamson's *Tarka the Otter*. I have still not seen an otter in the wild but this year I saw something unusual from the cycle path beside the Taw. In fact, at first I thought it was an otter. Instead, it was a cormorant that had caught a salmon and was swimming downstream with the fish cross-wise in its bill. It made an odd profile. As I watched, the bird stopped, flipped the fish into a vertical position and slid it headfirst down its gullet. I deduced that the diver had been swimming with the fish in its bill to make sure its prey was sufficiently dazed, or even dead, so that there would be no struggle as it was flipped into position for swallowing. North Devon is wage-poor but wildlife rich. I spotted a dipper pacing busily on a bank of the river that runs through Swimbridge and a kingfisher regularly visited our pond



in late summer to feed on water beetles.

We've just bought a small wood, only half an acre, from friends who have moved down to Dartmoor. We'll maintain it as a little nature reserve and take some timber for the woodburner. Our departing

friends told us of an organization we might wish to join: the Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG). No doubt, we'll become swoggers – yet another tribe.

When we first came here we were frequently told that 'everybody knows everybody else'. I recently had a dramatic confirmation of North Devon's 'one degree of separation'. I went on a coach party up to Chatsworth to see a ceramic temple by the potter Sandy Brown, whose studio is in Appledore. This splendid temple had just been erected in the grounds of the great country house – part of an autumn sculpture show put together by Sotheby's. On the coach I met a lady who had, the previous day, visited friends of mine in West Putsford (north west Devon) to measure up a four-poster bed for curtains. I then heard that the same lady lives in a

house at Northam with excellent sea views and she is the person who gives another friend of mine the alert when good surf is on the way. The day after we got back from Chatsworth I was walking on Dartmoor with yet another friend and discovered that, at their wedding some 25 years ago, he and his wife had been given a handsome

teapot by Sandy. All these unexpected connections made me recognize afresh that North Devon is one large tribe. But then – isn't London too? I may never be accepted as a true Devonian but I'm glad that once a Londoner always a Londoner.

Let Them Eat Cake

Dr Nicola Jones

Chair, Wandsworth Clinical Commissioning Group

NHS Wandsworth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is now well into its second year as the organisation responsible for commissioning (buying) health care for people in Wandsworth. As Chair and Clinical Lead, I want to ensure that we do this in a way that involves local people, patients and our health care professionals. We have had good attendance at our Board meetings in public this year and our Annual General Meeting in September was a lively affair, with lots of local people who want to be more involved in their local NHS. We had stalls for care services and voluntary organisations manned by volunteers who explained what they do and how they can help and support people. We had lots of cake (and some fruit!) and some good questions from the audience. We filmed the event and streamed it live on the internet so people who could not attend got to see it and even ask questions online. They missed out on the cake though.

The NHS faces great challenges. Whilst the population in Wandsworth is relatively young, we do have an increasing

number of older people and many people who are living with several conditions. We have many people who are carers who need support. We have increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities and with complex care needs. Large numbers of people in Wandsworth experience mental health problems and many have poorer physical health in addition. We have unacceptable inequalities in health with a 9 year difference in life expectancy between people in the more deprived areas and those in affluent areas. In our hospitals we have set high standards for the quality of care people receive. Our hospitals are unable to meet some of these standards some of the time. The NHS generally faces significant financial challenges and our local hospitals are no exception.

To meet some of these challenges, Wandsworth CCG is developing its plans for new ways of working, bringing together GP practices and community nursing and therapy services to create better systems of care. We want to ensure that mental health services, social care and voluntary organisations are working together with our primary and community services. People should feel confident in the care they receive and have control over their own health and care. We want to ensure people are supported to manage their own conditions and are educated and knowledgeable about their health. We want to reduce variations in the care people receive so everyone has the right access to their GP services and can go to the right place for urgent care when it is needed.

Of course our most imminent challenge is winter! Along with the cold and wet weather, winter brings additional pressures to our health services so we are keen to help people stay healthy. Prevention being better than cure, the flu vaccine is an important way to achieve this.

Flu

The flu vaccine is still the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus which can, at its worst, cause severe illness or even death in some people. Those most at risk are older people, pregnant women and those with an existing health condition, even one that is well managed. Throughout the last decade there has generally been a good match between the strains of flu in the vaccine and those that subsequently circulate, so it's important that we do all we can to ensure people can be protected by getting the flu vaccination. As usual, anyone over the age of 65 or with an existing health problem should also make sure they



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get the flu jab as flu can make the effects of existing conditions worse and make complications like pneumonia more likely.

This year the flu vaccination programme is being extended to children. Last year there were several pilot programmes in primary schools. These pilots provided evidence that vaccinating children has a positive impact on transmission of flu in the wider community. Children in years one and two in primary schools in London are being offered the free flu nasal spray vaccination between October and December.

Parents of children aged two, three and four are being reminded that they can help protect their little ones from flu this winter with one simple free nasal spray from their GP. The nasal spray vaccination is a quick, painless and effective way for children to be protected without the need for injections.

Health Care in South West London

The six South West London Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) – Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth – are working in partnership with NHS England and have developed a five-year strategy for local health services, which was published in June 2014.

The strategy sets out the direction of travel for local health services and what they should achieve over the next five years. The next step is to agree the detail of how the strategy will be implemented, including the role of each local hospital and community provider trust in delivering it. This will be discussed with the Trusts themselves and with local councils.

In May 2015, the SWL CCGs published an **Issues Paper** summarising the challenges and emerging solutions set out in the strategy and putting forward questions for local people to respond to. You can read and respond to the Issues Paper online at <http://www.swlccgs.nhs.uk/issues-paper/>

Better Care and a Healthier Future for Wandsworth

As we continue to work towards better care and a healthier future for Wandsworth take care of yourself and your loved ones but, if you need help, make sure you are going to the right place for the care that you need. You can visit our Wandsworth Wellbeing Hub – <http://www.wandsworthccg.nhs.uk/localservices/Wandsworth%20Hub/Pages/default.aspx>

For information about local services and organisations and, if you need advice, try your local pharmacist or call NHS 111.

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London's water and waste water

Shirley Passmore

Just recently some Wandsworth Society members did a walk along the New River, an artificial waterway bringing clean water to London in 1613. The New River was just one of many attempts, from medieval times until the present, to supply London with enough pure water. The history of London's water supply is an interesting story of the problems and solutions over the past 600 odd years.

Here are a few snippets of that story..

Medieval London was small enough to rely on the limited resources at hand (its population in 1400 was about 50,000). Wells had been dug in Roman times to reach the plentiful supply in the subsoil, enough to meet the city's needs until the end of the 16th century but by this time the city had outgrown its walls and new water sources were needed. Early supply came from springs and wells north of London but it was always a struggle to get enough. The New River shows that even in the 1600s more was needed than was being supplied.

The New River, designed by Hugh Middleton, was to carry water from springs and wells in the north to discharge into a pond in Clerkenwell on a site later owned by the Metropolitan Water Board (of blessed memory). It was an open, meandering, trench some 39 miles long, later shortened to about 27 miles by straightening out the curves. Today large stretches are still an open waterway but other parts have been incorporated into public parks and gardens.

There was strong opposition from landowners along the New River route and Middleton had difficulty in raising enough money for the project. He asked the King, James 1, for cash. The King agreed to provide half the cost if he was paid half the profits (finding water for London was always about making money). However the New River was not a great financial success and later King Charles 1 gave up his right to profits in return for £500 a year in perpetuity. This was only redeemed as late as 1956 (from the then owner) by the MWB.

In 1582 a Dutchman, Peter Morrys, had been given permission to install a large waterwheel under the arch of the old London Bridge. This was able to pump water from the Thames up to the city by means of wooden conduits (hollowed out elm tree logs). It eventually supplied 4,000,000 gallons a day and more waterwheels came later. The Thames was relatively clean at this time. Lead pipes were made compulsory at the end of the 18th century as they could carry water to places unreachable by the wooden pipes, but like much of early water legislation it was largely ignored.

Eventually there were about 8 companies that had control of water supply and sewage disposal in different parts of London. There was fierce rivalry between them and the navvies laying pipes in one area often had fights with navvies from the adjacent area.

All London's sewage was washed into the Thames and although water companies were not allowed to draw water from below a certain point in the river to avoid contamination with sewage, flagrant disobedience of the law led to cholera becoming rife. Some outbreaks caused the death of thousands. Temporary tented hospitals were set up in available open space. There was one on Wandsworth Common opposite St Mark's church.

The trouble was people thought that disease came from the terrible smells and was spread by air not water. And the Thames certainly stank. It was called 'the big stink'. Punch Magazine realised that water was to blame and used poems, with illustrations, to draw attention to the situation...

"This is the Thames with its cento of stink that supplies the water that John drinks. These are the fish that float in the Thames that supplies the water that John drinks. This is the sewer, from cesspool and sink that feeds the fish that float in the inky stream of the Thames with its cento of sink that supplies the water that John drinks. These are the vested interests that feed to the brink the network of sewers from cesspool and sink that feed the fish that float in the inky stream of the Thames that supplies the water that John drinks. This is the price we pay to wink at the vested interests that fill to the brink the network of sewers from cesspool and sink that feed the fish that float in the inky stream of the Thames with its cento of stink that supplies the water that John drinks".

Sidney Smith said "He who drinks a tumbler of London Water has literally in his stomach more animated beings than there are Men, Women and Children on the face of the Globe."

It took a doctor called John Snow to prove that the water carried the diseases. He noticed that although he treated many cholera patients he did not catch the disease himself and deduced that it could not therefore be carried in the air. He also noted that men from a brewery in one outbreak area did not catch cholera because they drank beer. Snow removed the handle of a water pump in Broad Street in the city and an epidemic stopped almost immediately.

Only when the problem was literally forced up the noses of MPs at their new Houses of Parliament during the 'Great Stink' in the summer of 1858 did something get done

about it. Parliament gave £3 million to the Metropolitan Board of Works to sort things out. It gave the task to the chief engineer Joseph Bazalgette, who designed and constructed 82 miles of brick-lined sewers. These connected with existing sewers and pumping stations were built at strategic locations to keep the sewage flowing. The principle was simple: if the sewer filled too much it overflowed into the Thames. Capacity was such that it rarely overflowed.

So we come to the present. We have reservoirs to store water (which in themselves kill many bacteria), and sewage treatment works. Bazalgette's sewer system still functions, but increasing population and more hard standing around new build has led to much more surface water flowing into the sewers. Thus they overflow more frequently.

Thames Water is going to construct a storage tunnel under the river that will store the overflows until they can be treated at Beckton and Crossness sewage works. It is of course the wrong solution. Stopping the flow of surface water into the sewers is what should be done. More porous surfaces, green roofs, tree-lined streets watered by storage tanks below the surface, are some of the many ideas put forward to stop the flow. Germany is one country that has embraced this idea.

The Metropolitan Water Board was a public body. All its resources went to improving London's water and sewage systems. Thames Water is a private company with shareholders to satisfy.

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Bye Bye Butterfly



Photo taken in Norfolk, August 2013

A good few years ago I saw an animated film which showed a butterfly flying over the gardens in the inner city with plenty of small gardens and open spaces to settle in... then gradually the area below became less friendly as the area was gradually built upon and the space in which it could live in became less and less... the last shot of the film is a close-up of the butterfly and as the camera pulls away we see that it is mounted in a picture frame on a sitting room wall... the creator of the film was looking into the very near future...

Why do we now say with surprise... Look... there's a Butterfly... and then it's mostly the common Cabbage White we are seeing and even they are not as frequent as in previous years... the beautiful coloured varieties have all but deserted Wandsworth... and in future when the children ask mummy where the coloured ones in the picture are... she will reply... I'll take you to the country one day... and see if we can find one.

Will Holland



The Memorial Bridge officially opens



Chairman of the Governors Francis Abbott, Michael Portillo and Lady Emily Dacre

After years of planning and months of construction the Memorial Bridge had its official opening on Monday evening. Joining the party who gathered for the event was special guest, broadcaster and former Member of Parliament, Michael Portillo. More than 250 people assembled in the Hampden Hall for drinks and canapés, before watching Chairman of the Governors Francis Abbott and Lady Emily Dacre cut the yellow and blue ribbons out on the bridge. Then it was back inside where Mr Abbott

spoke briefly about the origins of the project. He talked poignantly about why the Memorial Bridge was given its name, referring to the 1988 Clapham Rail Disaster which claimed the lives of 35 people and injuring 500. Mr Abbott said that the disaster was a significant day in the school's history when three trains crashed into each other near where the bridge now stands. Staff and pupils from the school were among the first on the scene, helping the injured and setting up first aid facilities on the school

grounds. "The Memorial Bridge is not only a tribute to those people who died and their families, but to all those who were affected by that day's tragic events," said Mr Abbott. The Headmaster then took the stage to reiterate Mr Abbott's thanks to those who worked on the project before introducing Mr Portillo, who was Minister of State for Transport, at the time of the disaster. During a Q&A session with the Headmaster, Mr Portillo spoke about his experiences and impressions of the tragedy.

The history of philosophy in 42 minutes

Students and teachers were treated to a wonderful summary of the main milestones in the history of philosophical thought, starting with Aristotle and Plato and finishing with Karl Popper (who died in 1994). The speaker was Professor Anthony Grayling, the Master of the New College of the Humanities and Supernumerary Fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford. Professor Grayling is an eminent speaker in his field: he has written and edited over thirty books including "Ideas That Matter" and "To Set Prometheus Free". He is also a frequent contributor to the Literary Review, Observer, the Independent on Sunday, the Times Literary Supplement

and the New Statesman and is a frequent broadcaster on BBC Radio, and was the Chair of the Man Booker Prize in 2014. We were lucky to get him as our main speaker for this first Philosophy Society event of the school year. During his talk Professor Grayling expounded his view that the ideas of the Ancient Greek Philosophers had largely become forgotten by the Middle Ages, hindered (he argued) by the spread of Christianity which, he felt, had led to a less questioning approach at that time. The standard of questions, following his talk, were high – and the students present (and staff) were inspired by this excellent talk.



The Memorial Bridge

Mark Hanley-Browne, Headmaster of Emanuel School

As most of you will already know, the new bridge opened for use in February half term this year. Most of us who work or study at Emanuel have already become used to entering the School via Spencer Park rather than the traditional entrance on Battersea Rise. I am sure there are also a few locals who may not have seen the bridge, although many are certain to have noticed the construction of it from the train to or from Clapham Junction. There may even be a few Old Emanuels who read this and won't know, yet, that there is a new entrance into their old Alma Mater (and who may be reading this article with some surprise). Also I am sure that there are many people who don't know why we built a new entrance to the School in the first place. So allow me to explain why we built this bridge and why it is called the "Memorial Bridge".

I first visited Emanuel in 2003. Like many people before me, I had actually had trouble finding the School. I drove past the entrance on Battersea Rise several times, and then drove up and down Spencer Park, before realising that the Battersea Rise entrance was the only way in and out of the school. Once I had found the way in, I discovered that the School was a real oasis inside, and one that revealed its glories slowly as I walked along the drive (then, as now, the security man at the gate sent me back out again because all the car parking spaces were full – so not much has changed on that score!).

The fact that the School was hidden from view was, of

course, part of its charm. But there were also some worrying aspects about the narrow entrance – and at the top of the list was the fact that pedestrians had to walk in the road, with no separate pavement. At the time we had around 650 students and 70 teachers, plus another 50 support staff, all coming and going each day through this one narrow entrance and exit. This was in addition to the visiting sports teams, the daily deliveries and (whenever we wanted to build something) all those contractors vehicles as well. So this was a serious problem. And then what if Battersea Rise became blocked for some reason? How would we get in and out?

By 2004 I had been offered the job of Headmaster, and suddenly these problems were mine to solve. So I approached Network Rail, to see if they would support a planning application for a footbridge across the railway from Spencer Park. This would give pedestrians an alternative to walking along the driveway from Battersea Rise. The position of the footbridge would have been where the new bridge is now. To my surprise, Network Rail said that they thought it was a wonderful idea and offered their full support.

That immediately made me suspicious and, sure enough, it soon emerged that Network Rail also had a big favour to ask Emanuel School in return. They admitted that they wanted to rebuild the whole embankment from the existing bridge right up to our proposed footbridge. And they wanted to use the School grounds to access the embankment and set up a huge works compound on our land. Suffice to say that the original idea for a footbridge quickly gave way to the idea of a full road bridge, with two lanes for vehicles and pavements for pedestrians, or else (once the work started on the embankment) we would not be able to get in or out of the School at all.

To cut a long story short, this new bridge became a joint venture between Network Rail and the School. Furthermore, as part of the deal, when the old entrance onto Battersea Rise re-opens you should



Bridge very close to being finished

notice that the road is wider than before and with a brand new pavement for pedestrians. This will improve the safety of our students, visitors and many others who use the swimming pool facilities. This matters because, since 2004, the school has grown to over 775 students, 84 teachers and over 60 support staff, and so simply maintaining the status quo was not acceptable anyway. The new pavement along the drive was completed in September 2015 and the old entrance has become an 'exit only' for cars and pedestrians. So, in short, this has proved to be a real "win-win" scenario for both the School and for Network Rail. And it will not be long before people forget that there was only one, small narrow entrance to the School off Battersea Rise and all the problems that went with it. Incredibly the bridge construction only took a little over a year, construction started in June of 2014 and within a year it was in use. It took a further six months for Network Rail to finish the banking restructuring beside the train tracks. Since then grass and trees have been replanted and by Spring 2016 the School should be looking splendid and green again.

But why is it called the Memorial Bridge? In 1988 three trains collided right by the School on exactly that stretch of track. Thirty five people died and over 500 were injured. The staff and pupils from the School helped the injured from the train and set up first aid

facilities in the school grounds. For 25 years afterwards the pupils and staff of the School either held, or participated in, services in memory of those who died in the crash. Given the location of the new bridge, we wanted to mark this important event in the School's history. Although there was tragic loss of life on that day, it was also a day for heroism. And it was a day when all the major players, including the emergency services, British Rail and the School, worked together with a common aim to help all the injured and the distressed. The School's facilities were used as a temporary hospital and pupils and staff were commended for the help they provided.

The official opening of the bridge was in October, this was perfect timing as Network Rail were dismantling their final building compounds and the School drive was ours again. The Memorial Bridge was officially opened by both Lady Dacre and Michael Portillo. Michael was an obvious choice because of his train themed TV shows and Lady Dacre's family has been connected to Emanuel for over 400 years. With the project now finished, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped to make this project possible, as with great patience and perseverance from the School's point of view, we went from a humble footbridge to the two lane road bridge we now have.



Bridge one year exactly after work began

Gray's Eulogy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Jacksons Estate Agents: Robert Trindle rides again! You can find him by Wandsworth Common. Look in for a happier Christmas.

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.

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

Oranges & Lemons: All the latest in sounds from the tiniest and subtlest to the loudest, pounding bass and, if like me you don't have the state of

the art, they'll apply all the necessary care and attention.

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

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

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 with Carter

Jonas: 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.

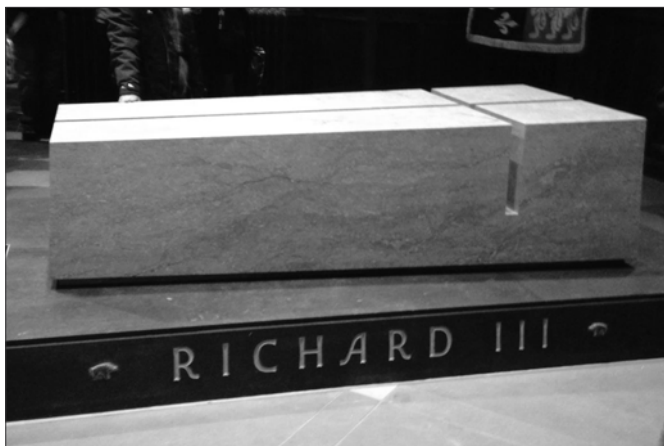
Iain K S Gray

A Tomb, a Tomb – my Old Home Town for a Tomb!

Wendy Cater

My mother for some years taught adult education classes (“night school” we called it then) at “King Dick’s”. And every day my bus to Wyggeston school (“Wyggy” we called it) passed down his road and over the Soar river bridge in the opposite direction to that he took on horseback on his way out of town after a comfy four-poster night at the Blue Boar (the Holiday Inn of its day – the Holiday Inn of now’s a spur’s throw away to the other side of the Soar.) As he passed over the bridge, as legend has it, his steed’s hoof struck the parapet, at which an old crone lurking by croaked something like “Aha, proud king, ‘twill not be thus you will return this way, mark my words!” As we all know, don’t we, she was not wrong. The pitiful trashed body slung naked upside down across a lesser mount, being hurried to a hasty burial, had lost all: horse, crown, kingdom and posterity. Was the crone there to witness his humiliated return and shake her bony head in satisfaction? That we shall never know.

Fast forward (a technique then unknown, and therefore not taught, at King Dick’s) a few centuries – and all the above came back to me, child’s vision restored. Because suddenly in the news, the international news indeed, there was actually talk of



Leicester – ignored by the media unless there should be topical mention of the Attenboroughs (Wyggy boys all – and I do mean all, there having been three of them – but that’s another story...) and of a car park. A car park? “The King in the Car park!” screamed the media from Ulan Bator to Timbuctoo. Unseemly indignity! We always knew it was Greyfriars – we had always known that drear stone-grey street in the heart of the legal area, featureless since the Reformation had done away with the priory where the bent bones had been further bent, crammed in panic by the devout brothers fearful of a usurper’s iconoclasm, into an inadequate trench before their altar. Well, the next bit of town talk was certainly wrong, as we all know now, don’t we? Bones dug up, further trashed, then flung into Soar? Rubbish! Drummed up to keep Leicester in the Stuart red-tops, or the reputation of credulous gossipy Aubrey riding high. It even got passed down in the history books.

What Henry VIII left of Greyfriars got robbed away to supplement the fabric of nearby St Martin’s Church; then three centuries of gracious bourgeois mansions concealed the holy rubble, until the fourth imposed the brutal democracy of the council car park. Which has disgracefully monopolised the

headlines, as you may have noticed. So, fast forward again, to September 2012: the Richard III Society had been beaver-ing away (not exactly burrowing – the burrowing was to come) and the indomitable glamorous Philippa had been at it with her twitching stick and pinpointed the insinuating “R” inscribed upon the car park – sorry, priory – floor, and by her magic indomitable willpower had prevailed upon sane archaeologists and genealogists to actually put their spades in – and the rest is Stop Press news.

My luck had it that I was very shortly afterwards visiting the Old Home Town for its musicfest when that first bone-revealing trench was opened to public gawping for a weekend. There, thrillingly, lay the impression of a scoliosis subject, plain to autumn sunshine after 450 years. Two and a half years, a High Court decision and a whopping investment later (the car park having turned into a touristic

020·8870·7595



golden egg for the council) the great Reinterment took place. A newly laid out green concourse became an enhanced setting for the Cathedral (conveniently upgraded some years before from mere St Martin's) and a grammar school opposite (conveniently recently removed to an outer suburb) became a gold-spinning visitor centre.

My luck had it again that I recovered in time from New Year's nasty virus to hang out in

the OHT and brave the cruel Leicester March wind (straight from the Urals, as my father used to complain) to witness over a multitude of bobbing heads the media-darling VIPs gathered around King Dick's statue, repositioned to a greatly more significant urban space in front of the cathedral, and much garlanded with white roses. There, gratifyingly, was the dignified but ever-glamorous Philippa (all triumphant smiles in wide navy hat, snappy navy coat, long black boots and long blonde hair), the sturdy archaeologist who brought his expertise and his spade to bear, the mild and charming genealogist who traced the bloodline and found the drop of DNA (if drops it has) lurking in transatlantic backwoods, and the quiet Canadian carrier of the aforesaid, conveniently an accomplished stonemason, who fashioned for his notorious antecedent the starkly simple beautiful Tomb. Impressive, calm, and appropriately – as Dick grew up in Middleham Castle – fashioned from Yorkshire stone.

I did not get into St Martin's for the Reinterment, of course, nor yet for the following day's almost equally exciting event of the Reveal of the Tomb, by then placed over the reburial site. But I did get in for the evening service thereafter (surely my birthright – there was I confirmed, after all) and I had ample viewing of the lovely Tomb, and of the sumptuous black velvet pall that had covered the coffin before its interment, and is richly decorated with embroidered stumpwork figures of Philippa et al. I came out to a gathering dusk glowing with hundreds of flares from terracotta bowls placed throughout the concourse, and a gloriously overwhelming two-hour pealing of cathedral bells.

And as I walked through the narrow street alongside the famous car park wall to get my train back to London, I glanced round to see a bright golden laser projection on the cathedral spire: R III. King Dick, the OHT did you proud. RIP RIII.



Things Rick Astley will never do...

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

AND NEITHER WILL WE!

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Jason — Buyer, Winsham Grove. August 2015



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JOHN THOROGOOD

Full Circle

James Clark

The Solstice has passed, the days are imperceptibly lengthening once more, and amidst the midwinter darkness the vibrant evergreens of holly and ivy remind us of the eternally circling year. Christmas is a time of contemplation as well as celebration.

There is magic in the air, and as we breathe it in it is easier than usual to entertain simultaneous thoughts of the fantastical and the everyday – and to slip effortlessly into a space in which those alternatives dissolve into one another. For the moment we can accept other realities without any troubling need to believe in them. We can allow ourselves to be bewitched, to relax into the spells woven around us, comfortable in the knowledge that afterwards we will awake unharmed. In such a state of mind we may recognise the handiwork of the Cosmic Joker.

The Cosmic Joker is the name given to ‘the source of bizarre incidents and strange coincidences in our lives, humorously implying that they are due to the acts of a supernatural prankster’¹. Our usual, prosaic interpretation of such events is that they can be explained by the natural tendency of human beings to find patterns and meaning in the world around us, but at certain times we seem instead to sense stranger tides lapping around our lives.

On the last day of August 2012 I set out to start walking the Capital Ring around London. The walk was something I’d wanted to do for some time and perhaps it was that post-Olympic glow of wanting to do something a little more outdoorsy than usual, or perhaps it was simply the fact that it was a pleasantly sunny day, but that day seemed like the right time to stretch my legs and finally put my plan into action.

The Capital Ring² is a signposted walking route that circles around London several miles out from the capital’s centre. It is 78 miles (or 126 kilometres) long – although that intimidating distance is divided into 15 bite-sized sections of a few miles each – and along the way it takes the walker through plenty of nature reserves, parks, commons, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and so on. Here and there the route leads through unnervingly deserted stretches where the presence of barbed wire, graffiti and discarded bottles encourages you, like Coleridge’s traveller on a lonely road, to ‘walk in fear and dread’, but on the whole it is an enjoyable journey that reminds you just how surprisingly green our city still is.

It was Charles Fort (1874-1932), the collector of anomalies and oddities whose philosophy underpins the wonderful ‘Fortean Times’ magazine, who coined the phrase ‘Cosmic Joker’ (or at least Fort is the person who gets the credit for it). It was also Fort who famously pointed out that ‘One measures a circle beginning anywhere’, and that dictum was uppermost in my mind that day when I decided to start walking the Capital Ring at the beginning of Section 6 rather than at Section 1 as might traditionally have been expected. My reason was simple: Section 6 – a walk of 7 miles out to Richmond Bridge – starts at Wimbledon Park, and Wimbledon Park was an easy place for me to get to on the District Line.

This was, as I have noted, in August 2012. I remember that day well because it was shortly after what



Inscribed bench on Tooting Bec Common, in memory of Christophe Collin (1965-2010)



Tooting Bec Common: the path that runs past The Priory (photograph taken in 2006)

would turn out to be my Dad's last birthday and I waved him goodbye as I set out to start the walk.

I only walked the one section that day, but in the three years that followed I returned to the Capital Ring route every now and then, on those increasingly rare occasions when decent weather coincided with the opportunity to go out for a few hours. Months would often elapse between sections, yet I was determined to finish and gradually I tramped my way around the circle, passing through Osterley Lock, Greenford, South Kenton, Hendon Park, Highgate and into Stoke Newington, before following the River Lea down into Hackney Wick and from there out towards Beckton District Park and on into Woolwich. There, the foot tunnel took me under the Thames and back into the proper half of London, from where I continued on through Falconwood and Grove Park to where the territory started to grow more familiar as I passed through Crystal Palace and on to Streatham Common.

Reaching Streatham left just one section for me to walk to close the circle. On a Saturday morning in late August 2015, just 2 days shy of the

third anniversary of setting off on this trek, I embarked upon Section 5, which would lead me away from Streatham Common and back to Wimbledon Park some 5-and-a-half miles away.

It was going to be a poignant walk, and not only because the coincidence in timing brought back such powerful memories of Dad. The route was about to become very personal.

This was, for me, truly haunted ground because I knew so many of the ghost stories and uncanny legends that this area of London has accumulated. Those stories swirled in my mind, mingling with family memories as I made my way out of Streatham (where many of my close relatives still live), heading towards Tooting Bec Common, a place where Dad had played as a boy. Walking across that common, I happened to glance at a bench and saw the inscription written there. It had been left in memory of (to me) a stranger named Christophe Collin (1965-2010) and it read:

'Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room I am waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well.'

Despite my love of strange stories I am actually pretty agnostic when it comes to the subject of an afterlife. I have no strong religious beliefs and as I explain on my website, 'I don't know whether or not ghosts (in the traditional sense of supernatural beings) exist [although] ghost stories most definitely do!'³ I had to admit, however, that that inscription lingered in my mind and as I continued on my way I began to experience a growing sense of unreality.

The route was taking me north, through the southern part of Tooting Bec Common and across Bedford Hill. Now I was passing The Priory, site of the eternally unsolved murder mystery of Charles Bravo who died here in 1876. That mystery underlies a number of ghost stories set around here, about which I have written in my book 'Haunted Wandsworth'⁴. In fact, right at the opening of that book's first chapter I wrote:

'My father grew up in this neighbourhood. He lived in nearby Oakmead Road and remembers the stories told by young boys around here in the years just after the Second World War. They knew The Priory as a "haunted house" and did their very best to avoid the place, but sometimes their journeys left them no choice but to take the footpath across Tooting Bec Common, and when they reached the section of fence beyond which the old building crouched among dark trees and overgrown bushes, they would run past just as quickly as they could.'

It was along that same footpath that the Capital Ring now took me and I was very aware of the stuccoed Gothic walls of the nineteenth-century Priory as they blazed white in the sunshine, even though they remained unseen to me behind the wooden fence to my left. The feeling of unreality was deepening.

Leaving the Common I continued on towards Balham. I had of course

looked at a map before starting that morning, and so had been forewarned that I would be passing places that would feel significant. I had missed one detail on that map though, and so the name on the road sign brought me up short when I reached it. There is no need to make that name public; the relevant detail is that Dad had been born in that very road, in a house that no longer stands because it was destroyed during the Blitz.

I was now walking through Dad's childhood, being guided through streets that had been his playground. The route took me further, emerging onto the high street where I was faced with the great slab of Art Deco known as Du Cane Court. That was another building with folklore I have previously written about⁵ and another building that had held a personal meaning for Dad because it had been home to one of his first girlfriends.

His presence was everywhere as I carried on, crossing Wandsworth Common, remembering stories he had told me on all those occasions we had passed through this area together. He'd also accompanied me on the last time I had come out this way to take photographs of the magnificent Royal Victoria Patriotic Building (again, a location with ghost stories I had written about in 'Haunted Wandsworth'); now the Capital Ring took me tantalisingly close to that building too. I could see its towers through the trees as the route skirted around behind it to strike out west, towards and past HMP Wandsworth.

References:

- 1 'Chambers Dictionary of the Unexplained', Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 2007, p. 128
- 2 For more about the Capital Ring see: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/walking/capital-ring>
- 3 URL: www.james-clark.co.uk
- 4 Clark, James, 'Haunted Wandsworth' (The History Press: Stroud, 2006)
- 5 URL: <http://james-clark.co.uk/blog201309.shtml#DUCANECOURT201309>



Du Cane Court, Balham

The prison was yet another location I had written about in 'Haunted Wandsworth' but I paid it little heed. My thoughts were drifting ahead, reaching out before me to the next stop, the one that had been preying on my mind the whole morning.

The route I was walking, a route designed by someone I had never met and which had held no particular significance for me when I'd first set out almost exactly three years earlier, was coming to an end by walking me through my father's life. It had taken me through his birth and childhood, and now it was leading me directly to his final resting place.

I spent quite some time in that cemetery on Magdalen Road in Wandsworth, reflecting on life, death and coincidence, and whether any of it actually means anything at all. I reached no conclusions.

Morning was becoming afternoon. The sun was still shining but in the blue sky clouds were showing signs of thickening and for once the weather forecasts were going to prove accurate with their prediction of imminent showers. I re-shouldered my backpack and struck out for the last time, walking the remainder of the route that would finally bring my long journey full circle.

My trek around the Capital Ring had, or so it felt, turned out to be a cosmic joke – one with a three-year punchline. As I walked to the end I did so with a smile.

About the Author:

James Clark (@James_C_Clark) is the author of 'Haunted London' (The History Press, 2007) and (with Shirley Hitchings) 'The Poltergeist Prince of London' (The History Press, 2013). His other published books include collections of strange tales from the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Lambeth, and from his home town on Mitcham. For full details see his website at www.james-clark.co.uk.



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Love your neighbourhood park?

The council's parks department wants to know what you think about your local small park

Lynne McNulty

King George's is my local park – the northern tip to be precise, which is bordered by Buckhold Road and Neville Gill Close. This small piece of leafy central Wandsworth is about to be "acquired or used" by Thames Water for their super sewer.

The area includes a number of mature trees, these are particularly important given the generally poor quality environment and will continue to be important as the area becomes increasingly residential. Buckhold Road is at times extremely busy and tailbacks occur with the result that there is a build-up of atmospheric pollution. This was acknowledged in a recent environmental statement submitted in association with a planning application for 3 tower blocks.

"Predicted nitrogen dioxide concentration levels were found to exceed the annual mean air quality objective at no more than the first five floors of the development."
(Amec 2013)

According to the Thames Tideway plans 21 trees and shrubs are to be cleared from the site bordering this road but a constraint identified in their design-and-access plan notes the "need to protect mature trees and associated roots, particularly the Black Poplars and the Red Oak." In response to my concerns however they said that:

"It will be necessary for some trees to be removed from the park as part of our works. Where tree loss occurs, we are committed to replacing these trees as part of wider plans for landscaping and reconfiguring the northern area of

the park covering our worksite and surrounding area. Our designs have sought to provide a net increase in trees over the project as a whole."

As part of this provision Thames Water have already planted a screen of trees which they claim will "help to screen the construction works from the southern part of the park." These are small ornamental trees, 18 in total, stretching along the lake edge. Each is 30 -35 cm in girth and therefore will not provide significant addition to the tree canopy infrastructure in the park. You would need double that or more to replace one mature tree.

What they have not made explicit is that the replacement trees will be largely small ornamentals as is indicated in their design and access statement. These trees won't grow as large as the trees lost and will not make up for the loss of ecosystem services to the local community. Neither have they stated here why it is necessary to reconfigure the surrounding area.

A diagram in the application for development consent (P8 of the plan) indicates the trees to be removed and this includes 5 tall mature trees with substantial canopies. One of these trees appears to be a black poplar of which there are 2.

The large black poplar is approximately 5.5m thick and at least 30m tall. The smaller poplar (which the plan suggests is to be removed) is 2m thick and 20 tall

There are other mature trees including:

- Beech – girth 1.75 height 17 m
- Lime – girth 2.1 m height 18m

- Lime – girth 2.4m height 23m

There are also sizeable Hornbeam and Hemlock.

As a local resident concerned about the lack of green infrastructure generally and the very poor air quality in the local environment I suggest that these plans should be robustly challenged. I only became aware of this development because of recent coverage of the project in the Financial Times and the Evening Standard. I have therefore made myself familiar with the various Thames Tideway plans affecting Wandsworth.

A brief search suggests that other councils have taken much more care in ensuring that trees are not lost – by making the effort to include 'requirements' within the consent orders that plans be changed in order that local residents do not lose their trees. Wandsworth Council do seem to have been complacent in this regard. Mature trees are a vital part of our green infrastructure. It is well known that trees store carbon and remove pollution and that they store rainwater allowing it to be re-evaporated by the sun and there is growing evidence that mature trees add value to houses and flats. Blocks recently completed opposite the park have been advertised as 'overlooking' the park.

If you love your neighbourhood park let the council know. If you don't you risk losing it. It is inevitable that space will be lost to development but mature trees are an absolutely vital part of the infrastructure across the city.

Moving South of the River

Prue Raper

When I arrived in London in my late teens, in common with most of my friends I lived in a bed-sitter in South Kensington, graduating later to a shared flat in the same area. It wasn't until the death of my mother in 1958 and the sale of the family home in Somerset that I needed to find a place of my own with somewhere to put the furniture and family belongings, shortly to be shared out between my two elder brothers and me.

Even in those days, unfurnished flats in Kensington were very expensive. The answer came when one of my brothers, who had many friends in the theatre, took me to visit some actors living in a flat in Prince of Wales Drive – the very first time I'd ventured south of the river. Shortly after that I saw a flat advertised in the Evening Standard: "Overlooking park, south of Chelsea". This turned out to be in Park Mansions, across the road from the old Battersea General Hospital, on the corner of Albert Bridge Road. I arranged to go and see it, and as I got out of the taxi (how else did one cross the river?) I met a client from the advertising agency I was working for, who was living in that very block, and who told me what a splendid place it was.

In those days, the mansion flats in Prince of Wales Drive were occupied mainly by the said actors, medical students from St Thomas's, and retired Indian Army colonels. They were about to be discovered by people like me. We were living in "South Chelsea".

The flat I went to see was on the fourth floor – eighty-five stairs, no lift – with lovely views over the tree-tops, sitting-room, four bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom, a friendly Glaswegian caretaker called Jock – and an unfurnished rent of £300 a year, plus £100 council rates. I took it at once.

At that time there were still the remains of war damage: Jock proudly pointed out from the window "where the bomb fell" on the road below – roughly filled in and patched over. The whole

road was in very poor shape. It had been the object of some kind of surfacing experiment: wooden bricks, covered with a thin layer of tarmac or asphalt which was wearing through, exposing the bricks in places, probably caused by the juddering of lorries slamming their brakes on at the traffic lights on the corner. My window frames weren't in too good a state either, but that was the case all over London, I imagine.

I was mystified at the time by the number of BBC employees who seemed to be working in the local streets. It was some time before I realised that the letters stencilled on their donkey jackets stood for Battersea Borough Council.

The only form of heating in the flat was one open fireplace in the sitting room. Jock brought the coal up in a rickety hand-hauled service lift in the kitchen and transferred it to a cupboard in the corner. Apart from that, it was a case of electric fires or the much-used paraffin convectors. As far as I remember, a van used to come round with the fuel for these, depositing a five-gallon drum outside my flat door, up the eighty-five stairs.

My early days there were not helped by my brother presenting me, unasked, with a small white kitten. Hector was a terrific character, and used to receive Christmas cards from all over the world, but was not really suited to life in a fourth floor flat. I used to take him for walks on a collar and lead in Battersea Park, where he once found a cine-camera under a tree. I took this to the police, and eventually reclaimed it. It was pretty obsolete, and must have been abandoned there by an American tourist, wanting to claim on the insurance.

Shopping was done in Battersea Park Road – much the same now as it was then, with a mixture of small shops, our favourites of these being Hollis the greengrocer, Joe Mist the fishmonger and Lansbergs the hardware shop. My flatmates and I were the recipients of much banter and joking, particularly at Hollis's. When I left the area, I went to say goodbye to them, and was presented with a farewell gift of a packet of radish seeds. I planted

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these in my garden in Jessica Road, and one grew to an enormous size. I uprooted this and took it back to show to the boys in the shop, who looked at it with alarm and admiration. “Cor, must be a pound of greens on that,” said one. “Got much radiation up your way?” asked the other.

Great excitement was caused when a Polish (I think) husband and wife, Stan and Vera, opened the 555 restaurant, which was adopted by the celebs of the day, including, it was rumoured, Princess Margaret. In those days, an avocado pear was a rare delicacy, so it brought gourmet eating in the area to a new level.

To get to work north of the river it was necessary to queue at the bus stop in Battersea Bridge Road for a 19, 45 or 49. There was always a long queue and a long wait. If only we’d realised that a bus in the opposite direction to Clapham Junction would probably have reduced the journey by half, but that was unknown territory.

My memories of my years there were mostly happy ones: it was amazing to wake up on an early summer’s morning to the sound, almost deafening then, of the birds’ dawn chorus from the park, or the clip-clop of the King’s Troop on their early morning exercise, lights on their stirrups in the hour before sunrise.

All this came to an end when the company that owned the block – descendants, I was told, of the racing driver who had bought it after the war – sold it to a very dodgy firm of developers. I was – rightly as it turned out – suspicious of them, and realised that the time had come to move out. As I had more than six months left on my lease they were obliged to pay me to stop me from assigning it, so I had £1,000 to start me on my house-hunting quest. By then I had friends living in Wandsworth whom I had visited, and decided to look at this seemingly up-and-coming area.

So it came about that in 1972, for £9,000, I acquired my house in Jessica Road. I’ve never regretted it.



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Parks Development in Wandsworth

Valerie Selby (Principal Parks Officer)

Having kindly been asked to talk to the Society and write an article for the 2013 Bedside edition I have now been asked if I would write a further article. I thought you might be interested in an overview of the other aspect to my job which is my role as the manager of the Parks Development Team working for Enable Leisure & Culture, managing services for Wandsworth Council.

Whilst the Parks Service overall is responsible for 350Ha and 70,000 trees, only 32 locations are what we readily recognise as "parks, commons or greenspaces". These include sites as diverse as Wandsworth Common and Huguenot Burial Ground. We are a team of 5 supplemented by specific project delivery teams associated with larger streams of funding. We work under the 3 aims of the Parks Strategy to ensure that these 32 sites in particular are excellent and enjoyable places for people to visit:

To understand and manage the cultural asset that parks and greenspaces represent:

We have worked to gather a basic history of each of our sites so we can understand what led to their creation, key elements of the design and any designations that may apply to them. Obviously for somewhere like Wandsworth Common we are indebted to Shirley Passmore who has been kind enough to share her comprehensively researched history with us. For other sites our Strategy & Information

Officer has spent many hours in the local history library piecing things together. We also keep details of key features and facilities within our sites and an assessment of their state of repair and whether we need more or different to meet current needs. We have also assessed the wider landscape within which the parks themselves sit and how they relate to this setting. This has led us to create "character statements" for each site enabling us to test any new proposals against their impact (good or bad) on the unique mood each place has. On the more practical side of things we also keep a database of necessary improvements, be they changing the priority of things that are already programmed or capturing wishes and aspirations for new or replacement things as they become known to us.

To understand and enhance the visitor experience

We use a range of different methods to understand the patterns of use and the views of visitors to our parks. Automatic counters in the form of small grey metal boxes attached to posts at gates, are positioned at each site periodically throughout the year and register each entrance / exit made and the time of day / day of the week they occur. Obviously we've not yet found a workable way to deploy these on the Commons but we are still considering what our options might be in these two very specific cases. We also carry out surveys from time to time to capture views and opinions. This summer we ran one focussing on our smaller parks. We endeavour to allow people to contribute in a variety of ways to these surveys so for example they may be available on-line and we also visit sites to talk in person to visitors and put up notices so people can write in and receive a paper copy to fill out. Results from surveys such as this and the visitor counters are carefully analysed and then discussed in our team meetings so we can learn what we can do better (ie if we want to visit a site and talk to people, when do the visitor counters tell us that the site is at its busiest so we can time our visit to talk to a wider cross section of users) and we update our database with ideas and suggestions for further investigation and in some cases



reprioritise tasks as a direct result of feedback. In return, we are trying to get better at keeping you informed about what we are doing. We use temporary notices on site when something specific and local is happening that is different from the usually observed maintenance tasks. We also have an email newsletter for those that are interested to be in regular touch with us. We are always happy to respond to emails or phone calls if you have a very specific enquiry which isn't covered by the general information made available via the Council's website. The chance to write articles for publication such as this also helps us to give you more detail on what we are doing or in this case how we do it. Last, but by no means least, we are working with communities local to our parks and greenspaces to ensure we have an ongoing dialogue. Many of you will be familiar with the Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee (MAC) with whom we have worked closely for many years, but we now have a slow but steady growth of Friends groups each with an interest in a specific place who we can talk with regularly as ideas and plans evolve. Increasingly we are also meeting with other community groups where they wish to discuss a specific park issue with us.

To devise and implement a range of methods to maintain and improve standards in delivering excellent parks and greenspaces.

Once we have a good "baseline" understanding of our parks and we have gathered from users and visitors what they like to do there and how they feel about them, we can work to ensure that the spaces meet these expectations and are attractive, enjoyable places to visit. This can range from daily monitoring of the grounds maintenance and tree work contractors undertaken by the other two sections within the wider Parks Service to working with a Friends group to make a bid to an external funder for money to put in place something new to meet today's needs and demands. In some cases, Friends groups undertake practical tasks to look after existing planting within a park or to run small-scale activities such as bat walks to enhance the visitor experience in the ways we don't have the capacity to do ourselves. For other aspects such as cafés, and concessions we work to ensure that what is provided by third parties is appropriate in scale and in keeping with the character we have identified. As a staff team we also remain personally committed to constantly improving our skills and knowledge to ensure we can do all of this work to the best of our ability. We participate in London and national work groups on a range of topics from invasive non native species to allotment management to try to share with, and learn best practice from, others. Specialist skills within the team include playground development, horticultural and infrastructure expertise, funding and community collaboration knowledge, allotments,

biodiversity and strategic information and analytical skills.

In practical terms we are doing a little bit of everything every day but if we simplify the process of making an improvement to a park it would look something like this:

1. Understand where we are now (understand the place, what our users need and want improved and what current constraints or commitments are already in place)
2. Where do we want to be (define the improvement, consult and agree upon it, cost it and secure funding)
3. How do we get there (commission or directly deliver the improvement, keep people informed, keep the funder happy)
4. Deliver the improvement and monitor (deliver it, supervise and snag it, report back to the funder, celebrate with the local community and users, monitor ongoing effectiveness and review)

If you would like to find out more please get in touch with us by emailing parks@wandsworth.gov.uk or by phoning 020 8871 7530. Information is also available on the Wandsworth council website at www.wandsworth.gov.uk/parks



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Llandegwning Church

Veronica Cecil

It was Sister Serephena who broke the news. We'd been invited by the retired Cannon's wife for a genteel cup of coffee.

'They've put Llandegwning church up for sale' she said.

Serephena only makes rare appearances in our church as she is a Russian Orthodox nun, a hermit living near Botwynnog. Llandegwning belongs to her parish. Due to a dire shortage we share the vicar. He is English with just enough Welsh to qualify for the job. He's not only in charge of Botwynnog but my church Llangwnadl, as well as several others. It was he who put Llandegwning up for sale.

'But they can't.'

I'd spotted it once driving along a minor road awash with wild flowers, and had to stop in wonder. With its round tower topped by a witches cap, Landygwning was a miniature gem. There was even a sundial in front counting the seldom-sunny Welsh hours.

The coffee party agreed with me. We are a conservative lot in Llandgwadl and the vicar had a penchant towards fundamentalism. While the parishioners of Botwnnog were happy to clap and sway and chant 'Alleluia' we, particularly Paul who'd been told to change his ways because he lived with Toon Fong, were not. It had created a minischism in the Lley Peninsular; one of many which the Bishop of Bangor had, no doubt, to contend with.

Services were no longer held in the tiny church of Llandegwning, but the locals wanted to buy it in order to give their relatives a proper send off. They'd even formed a committee for the purpose. The other contender was a private buyer presumably looking for a second home. It was going cheap and the private buyer put in the higher offer. As the difference between them was only two thousand pounds I asked the vicar, when I next saw him, why the Church in Wales couldn't sell, or even give the church to the locals.

'There is something called the Charity Commission' he told me rather sniffily. But he gave me the name of a local historian as well as the

chairman of the committee.

The problem with Llandegwning I discovered when I rang up Cadw, the Welsh equivalent of National Heritage, was that it was only built in 1857. The Lley Peninsular, trodden for centuries by pilgrims on their way to Bardsay Island, has been endowed with a plethora of ancient twelfth-century churches. Llangywnning was, in comparison, a mere stripling. It was, however, unique.

I rang up the Sunday programme and pitched a piece about the intended sale. We agreed that I would interview a Mrs. Vever, the historian, Garaint the chairman of the local committee, and that I would do a two-way from Manchester with a representative from the Church in Wales in Cardiff. I would like to have talked to the Bishop of Bangor but he declined.

It was early summer when I met Mrs. Vever at the church; one of those ravishing days that Wales does sometimes manage. The hedgerows were burgeoning with Lady's lace and pink Campion and creamy Meadowsweet; the church glowed in the gentle sunshine, and there was no sound but the murmur of bees and the call of a lark high, high above. Mrs. Vever had brought with her a piece of paper on which she'd written all the facts which she proposed to read to me. I suggested we talk instead.

'Here we are' I started off 'in the peace and quiet of rural Wales...' A fighter jet roared overhead – there's a naval base at nearby Anglesey and, from time to time, usually when the sun comes out, they indulge in target practice.

That plane wasn't the first. It had family. They came at irregular intervals, interrupting poor Mrs. Vever's flow of conversation. 'It's alright' I kept reassuring her, 'I'll take you back to where we were.' Fortunately it didn't matter as she was a compulsive talker. When her husband, who'd since retired, was in charge, she told me, he'd held special evensong on summer evenings. 'The place was so full' she reminisced 'we had to put deck chairs outside for the overflow.' It was as if she felt the church was hers. Inside it had been neglected. She almost wept when she discovered that one of the marble plaques had fallen off a wall and broken. 'How could he do it?' she cried not of the Almighty

but the current vicar.

Owing to the planes and her talking it was getting on when we'd finished, and I was late for Garaint who lived in the lea of Rhiw Mountain.

'English is not my first language' he warned. He was a schoolmaster, young and bespectacled and, I suspected, a Welsh Nationalist.

But it wasn't the English. Garaint's voice not only stayed on the same note, he had next to nothing to say.

'Garaint' I asked after a fruitless hour and a half of recording, 'don't you care about Llandegwning?'

'Well I can't can I?' he answered. 'I'm the chairman.'

I couldn't see how that had anything to do with it, but I asked, as tactfully as I could, if there was anyone who did.

'Well there's Linda' he said.

By this time it was getting late. Linda lived in the council houses in the main road. Luckily hers was easy to identify because, as Garaint had told me, there was miniature house fixed above her front door. Mercifully the lights were still blazing. I rang the bell. There was no answer. I knocked. Still no

answer. Eventually a woman from one of the other houses appeared with a bag of rubbish to put out.

'Do you know Linda?' I asked desperately.

'Oh yes.'

'Could you ring her up and tell her that I'm not from the police or the social, I'm from the BBC. I want to talk to her about the Llandegwning church.'

In moments Linda had appeared at her front door. She had blond hair and a cigarette hanging from her mouth. She asked me in and insisted on pouring me a glass of whiskey.

'Well it's money isn't it' she began. This was followed by a stream of Welsh which, roughly translated, meant 'money is the root of all evil'. 'My nan and my grandpa are buried in that churchyard' she told me 'and all my... what do you call them?'

'Ancestors?'

'That's right. They're all there under the grass.'

I asked her if she ever went to church and she laughed.

'No. But I want to end up there all the same.'

Linda was a gift from heaven. Like Mrs. Vever she had plenty to say and I went home tired but satisfied. I had a whole day to sift through the stuff



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and pick the clips before driving to Manchester to make the programme.

I was listening to my tapes the next morning when the telephone rang. It was Mrs. Vever.

‘You can’t use my voice’ she said.

I panicked. Without her there was no programme. ‘Why not?’

‘I was too emotional...’

‘Trust me. I won’t use anything too emotional...’

‘It’s fair do’s’ she went on. ‘I said I would read you the facts but you insisted...’

‘Is it your husband?’

‘Oh no. He doesn’t mind.’ She laughed. It was clear who ruled that roost.

I don’t know what it was she said, but suddenly I cottoned on. Mrs. Vever didn’t like happy clappies and she’d probably opened her mouth too wide.

‘If I ring the vicar and he gives you permission’ I ventured.

Once again, God was on my side. I found the vicar’s number and he was in. I explained I was making a radio programme and asked if he would ring Mrs. Vever and give her his blessing. I suppose, being a good Christian, he felt he had no choice. Anyway, he complied and she was pacified. I was once more on track.

I had to get up early and drive all the way to Manchester to make that programme. The producer had set up the two-way with the Church in Wales Representative and I went straight into the studio. He was snooty and uncooperative, and I didn’t take to him.

‘Presumably you’ve seen the church’ I said.

‘No, but my representative has.’

‘Then he’ll have told you there are bodies buried under the aisle.’

There was silence. I knew I’d got him and something in me told me to ‘go for the jugular’.

‘As you know’ I went on, ‘we’ve already discussed plumbing problems...’

‘Are you sure you’re impartial?’ the producer asked me when it was over.

The Church in Wales was furious. The producer had to play wicketkeeper to the volley of balls aimed in my direction. ‘Who is this woman?’ I heard one of them shout. ‘You agreed to the interview’ he answered clearly used to that sort of thing.

The last in line was the Bishop of Bangor’s representative. ‘You’d better take this’ he said passing the phone over.

‘The bodies can always be deconsecrated’ this representative told me pompously.

‘Can I quote you on that?’

‘You’d better talk to the Bishop’ he said hurriedly.

By the time the Bishop rang he’d clearly thought about things. I asked him to go to the studio in Bangor. He said he didn’t have time. ‘But I have prepared a statement’ he said in a honeyed Welsh accent. In essence the statement said that although the Llandegwning Church was comparatively new it was built on very old and sacred foundations and that the parishioners of Llandegwning had his blessing.

I started the programme with Linda’s Welsh outburst on the evils of filthy lucre and finished with the Bishop’s blessing. Mrs. Vever became an overnight star. People rang her from as far away as South Wales.

By chance, I bumped into the vicar on the holy island of Bardsay a few weeks later. He’d been blessing the ‘illegal’ union of a divorced couple. The bride wore a cloud of virginal white, the groom an embroidered waistcoat. The vicar had on a T shirt. Again, quite by chance, I found myself strolling by his side down the main road – a swathe of mown grass, which made me think of the ‘primrose way’. The sun beat down on us and I wondered if he’d engineered it.

‘I see you’ve got something written on your T shirt’ I remarked trying to make small talk. ‘They never said it was going to be easy’ I read aloud. ‘What’s written on the back?’

‘But it was worth it at the end’ he pronounced. ‘That was the burden of my sermon.’

‘Oh’ I said, ‘you mean to say you wear your sermon on your stomach.’

‘Ha ha, very witty.’ His laugh was tinny. ‘I did my dissertation on gluttony.’

I didn’t mean... I wanted to say. But it would only have made things worse. He wasn’t particularly fat and at that moment I felt genuinely sorry for the vicar having to put up with people like me.

The people of Llandegwning got their church. I only discovered that much later. Garaint had claimed the credit they said. But then I am English.



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