

# Wandsworth Society

Newsletter February 2014

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## Planning Matters



On 7 January Minerva Wandsworth Ltd, a subsidiary of the Delancey group of companies, announced that it had sold the Ram Brewery site to Greenland Group, a company wholly owned by the Chinese government. Greenland recently made it clear that they intended to invest in UK property and were known to be interested in residential sites.

The Society has been monitoring the progress of the planning application and the Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and shortly before Christmas were advised that the Section 106 agreement was being concluded. The CIL will follow but will become payable in stages after the completion of various phases of the redevelopment. Planning consent has now been granted with 57 conditions (does this make a mockery of the system?), among which is the 'Grampian condition', by which part of the consented scheme cannot be occupied until the nearby gas-holders are decommissioned. We understand that this is scheduled no sooner than 2017 and, as we are aware, these time-scales have a tendency to slip.

Let us hope that some progress is made on the site soon.

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# Planning Matters

Another year has rushed by. Are we any the wiser? Certainly older, but can any of our endeavours be seen to be successful? I am really not sure. The planning process seems to have become one of 'if it looks as if you can get twice as much or more on a site than has been the case previously' then go for it!

The government's introduction of various new planning structures and guidelines over the last few years and the requirement to assist the economic recovery of the country by increased construction, particularly housing, means that the overall planning regime seems to have become relaxed to such an extent that policies can be circumvented without good reason.

This attitude does not bode well for the future. A building has a natural life-cycle which, although becoming shorter, is nevertheless still likely to be no less than 50 years. We understand that social and economic circumstances put pressure on available land, requiring us constantly to adapt, but without a co-ordinated and concisely implemented plan, past mistakes will be perpetuated and some new mistakes will undoubtedly result.

## Springfield NHS Trust

We have been advised since Christmas that the Trust has complied with the initial requirements of the Council in respect of the park area, as required by the outline consent, and that the Trust is now reviewing the programme and selection of a preferred partner for the development of the initial phase of the scheme. Not a lot of progress in the last 12 months.

## Thames Tunnel

The programme for the planning process continues and, despite further questions being raised as to the necessity of the scheme and the fundamental data upon which the proposal was founded, no significant advice to the contrary has been made public which could alter or delay the planning process. We have made a further comment to the Planning Inspectorate voicing our opposition to the scheme.

## Illuminated advertisement panels

In the autumn we were alerted to applications for new advertising panels to be provided in various locations in the Borough. These appeared to be promoted by the Council as they were the named applicant in a number of cases. We objected to a number of the proposals but much to our surprise some of these were consented to

by the Applications Committee in a very short time! One of concern to the writer is on the Trinity Road overbridges, both north- and southbound carriageways, a conservation area very close to the Common. The potential distraction to drivers and other road users in this location could be significant. We will await the first bang!

## Buckhold Road (part of the business village)

The application for the redevelopment of the former TA centre was submitted in the autumn and, in view of the height and massing, an objection was made by the Society. We await the outcome of the Council's decision.

## Winstanley Estate, Clapham

A consultation is currently underway to seek views in respect of the redevelopment of the estate as a whole. This was a post-war clearance area which contains a mix of both high- and low-rise buildings and a significant amount of open space. The Council are proposing various alternatives that are likely to increase the density to be provided. The consultation ends towards the end of February, anyone interested should go to the Council's website.

## Skydec

Those readers who have not yet shouted 'what has happened to Skydec' will not be disappointed, in that no real progress has been made in the last 12 months. Astonishing as it may seem, many consents have been granted and implemented but old chestnuts seem harder to crack. We live in hope that another new set of officers at the Council does not see fit to review the position again (only joking) and lets things stand as they are – which will not be a lot different to the last five years.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another plea for an infusion of new blood to the Planning Group: we meet monthly and continually consider proposals either before applications are made or on receipt by the Council.

An email was received recently from a Wandsworth resident asking how and why the Council seems to be able to disregard its own policies so easily. Answers please in an email to me, so that I can pass on any useful comment to the correspondent. We would love to know why ourselves.

Philip Whyte

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# Wandsworth Society

February 2014

## A Short Note from the Chair\*

A very happy New Year to all members and readers. I hope that the coming year will bring health and happiness and no more rain for the time being.

The Executive have planned an interesting series of talks for the forthcoming months and I hope that you will all come to the Annual General Meeting with the added incentive of the wine tasting following! Notice of the meeting is on page 8 of this newsletter. Any member who wishes to join any of the existing groups or put themselves forward for election to the Executive should advise the Secretary, preferably before the meeting.

Change sometimes takes a long time to be noticed but we appear to be in a period when change happens quickly. I refer particularly to a turnaround in the economic circumstances of the country, which thank goodness, is appearing after some years of stagnation. This change brings with it the need to accept a somewhat different outlook. The transformation of an area which historically had a mixed use of employment to a predominately residentially based economy, as has been the case in Wandsworth, may seem to some an unappealing change but things cannot stand still. The Borough has been very successful in attracting new younger residents who provide a vibrancy that is evident in our shops, parks, the use of the Commons, the rivers and in many other ways, but this should be balanced by the provision of new schools, adequate health facilities, transport links and all the other requirements of a growing and changed society. The big problem is that this will only happen in Utopia. Much that is desired cannot be funded locally, thus difficulties and differences will arise.

The Wandsworth Society may also need some change, many of the members of the Executive are long serving, and they have kept the Society going by their dedication and application to their various responsibilities. I am most grateful to them for their help while I have been in the chair but we do need more member participation, which should lead to different ideas. The Society cannot evolve to meet the changes required without the enthusiasm of new members – we are particularly keen to attract younger members, so please do spread the word.

Philip Whyte

\*still acting editor, should there be any volunteers out there, please get in touch.

# The Panorama of the Thames Project



In January 1830 the *Quarterly Literary Advertiser* announced that a 'Panorama of the Thames from London to Richmond' was 'just published' (the previous year), by Samuel Leigh, a bookseller and publisher based in the Strand. The price was £1 8s. 'plain' or £2 16s. 'beautifully coloured'. 'This work', the advertisement stated, 'is upwards of 60 feet in length, and on a scale of sufficient extent to exhibit every building on either shore of the River. It is accompanied by Descriptive Notices of the most remarkable Places . . .'

It was his discovery of a copy of the Leigh Panorama several years ago that inspired John Inglis, a professional film maker, with the brilliant idea of creating a 21st-century version, using new technology both to 'digitise' the Leigh work – which was, indeed, 'beautifully coloured' – and to film all current buildings, to compare new with old, along both banks of the Thames. However, John hopes to cover a rather longer stretch than Leigh – from the Tower of London to Hampton.

A comparison between the buildings on the river banks in 1829 and now is fascinating. Much that the late Georgians could see is no more; there has been substantial new building, particularly down river; some stretches of the Thames have changed remarkably little, but much of the skyline is now planned to change on a scale, and at a height, that would have been unimaginable in 1829.

Last year some Wandsworth Society members were lucky enough to attend a showing of the project's Panorama film, with accompanying commentary and music. Watching it was rather like sailing down the Thames, but seeing buildings of both past and present, and armed with a good guidebook that you could stop to read (a drop-down menu of information – a 2014 version of Leigh's Descriptive Notices) or just sail on. I would happily have watched the film again immediately.

Completing this project will require a lot more hard work by John Inglis and Jill Sanders, his partner, and their team of helpers – and substantial funding. The project has already won enthusiastic

endorsement by government ministers, the Mayor of London, local societies and others. Philip Whyte, our Chairman, has recorded that the Wandsworth Society would be 'delighted to see this impressive project successfully completed. It will enhance the Wandsworth community's appreciation and understanding of its local heritage, the changes that have occurred since the Leigh Panorama was created, and any plans for future development along the Wandsworth stretch of the River Thames.' We have also offered to help gather architectural and historical information on contemporary buildings. The Wandsworth Museum has expressed interest in the project's future uses, and members of the Wandsworth Historical Society have been advising on the history of buildings along the borough's foreshore.

Having concluded last year that the Heritage Lottery Fund, although keenly interested, could not offer a funding route appropriate to the project's needs, the project is seeking alternative sources of funds, and has already benefited from donations from a number of local societies and organisations. The current intention is to incorporate 70 new linear panoramas between Hampton and Tower Bridge, plus features on all the inhabited islands and 33 London bridges (all of which will eventually be housed on a project website). Whether the full coverage can be achieved will depend on available funding.

A number of showings of the film, together with a talk by the director, to introduce the project to invited audiences, are now being arranged. The Battersea Society is hosting such an event on 20 February – see p.8 for details. All members of the Wandsworth Society, and some other societies, have been invited. I hope that many will come along, to enjoy a 'taster' of this ambitious, impressive and very worthwhile project.

For more information on the project, visit [www.panoramaofthethames.com](http://www.panoramaofthethames.com).

David Kirk

# Governing Wandsworth Prison

A talk by Kenny Brown, Governor of Wandsworth Prison, 10 October



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There was no doubt from our questions, comments and applause that the audience of over 60 people was impressed by the management challenge the Governor of Wandsworth Prison faces; his enthusiasm for making a difference to prisoners' lives; and his determination to improve the performance and reputation — 'not the best' for many years — of Britain's largest prison.

Kenny, a Scot, began with some reflections on his life's journey, from a Motherwell working-class upbringing, through Army service, to an H.M. Prison Service career. He is very aware that people who end up in prison deserve to be treated as individual human beings, many of them born in the 'wrong place' with the 'wrong parents'. Wandsworth holds some 1,700 male prisoners, from shop-lifters to recidivists (plus the odd former government minister). About 90% have some sort of mental-health problem and/or have been drug abusers (alcohol included). Significant numbers suffer from personality disorders. Half the men are not fluent in English, and many have limited education and life skills. The prisoners' racial, religious and social diversity adds to the complexity of their management.

Punishment is implicit in any prison sentence — press stories of prisoners' 'comfortable' existence are wildly exaggerated — but the scope the prison offers for rehabilitation and preparation for life outside is central to the prison officers' role. When length of prison sentences is discussed, we often forget that any

prison sentence can make it hard to find a job afterwards, a severe punishment in itself.

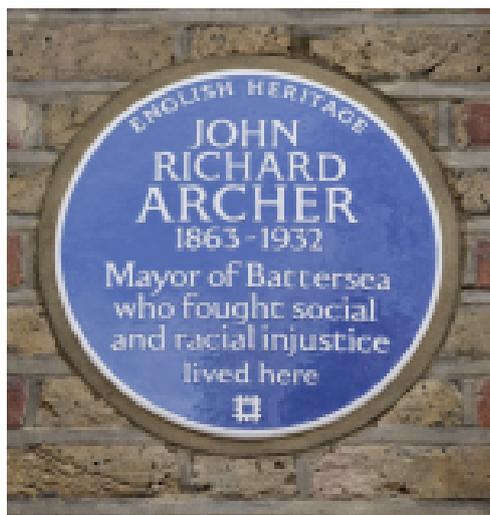
A major challenge for the Governor of Wandsworth Prison is to deliver successful 'prisoner outcomes' despite the need for recent budget cuts of over 25%. These cuts have involved substantial job losses, and have constrained the ability of the remaining staff — a wide range of professionals, including, as Kenny sees it, the many volunteer workers — to do all that they would wish. But it is a principal task for the Governor, as he accepts, to take the lead in finding ways to deliver results at a lower cost, and to keep his staff 'prisoner-focused' and forward-looking, not tied to traditional ways. Remarkably, the fine Victorian building remains fit for purpose, and indeed a new wing is planned.

As Kenny's excellent talk made clear, the quality of H.M. Prison Service's performance should concern all of us, not only as tax-payers but because mental-health problems, drug abuse and criminality know no social barriers. As Kenny reminds his officers, 'the prisoner could be your son'. It was therefore very good to learn that our local prison is now receiving 'best' rather than 'worst' official ratings and that the man in charge has a management approach he describes as 'humble'. It is clearly also humane and caring, and 'no nonsense'. Those of us familiar only with a rather forbidding exterior may now view Wandsworth Prison in a different light.

David Kirk

# The Green Plaques of Wandsworth

A Talk by Andrew Green, 14 November



Mr Green, Head of Libraries and Heritage for Wandsworth, began by outlining the background to the scheme. While the well-known blue plaque scheme is national and refers only to people, the Wandsworth scheme, one of many local schemes, has a wider remit: Wandsworth has a young and transient population so the aim is to increase public knowledge of people and places of importance within Wandsworth, as well as to engender pride in the Borough.

The scheme came into being in 2007, and because green is the corporate colour of the Council, it was chosen as the colour of the plaques. Initially 65 suggestions for possible sites were considered, but this was whittled down to 20. There was an attempt to spread plaques more or less evenly across the Borough – to ensure each councillor got one in their ward!

Installation of a plaque is more than merely screwing it to a wall. Finding the exact location is not always as straightforward as might be thought – streets have been renumbered and buildings demolished – furthermore, it is not always a simple job to determine the most appropriate place to site a plaque. In addition, an effort is made to make each unveiling into an event.

So far nine plaques have been installed and their stories were summarised by Mr Green:

The Biograph Cinema, Garratt Lane: The Biograph was the first licensed cinema in London and opened in 1908 in a building originally built in 1890 as the Spread Eagle Assembly Rooms. This plaque is today considered to be too 'wordy' and the general aim now is to use no more than 10–15 words.

Clement Attlee, Portinscale Road, Putney: The house he lived in has been replaced by a social-housing scheme opposite a secondary school, so a celebrity launch was organised and was attended by the Mayor, Clement Attlee's grandson and 14 other family members as well as school pupils from year 9 who were studying the aftermath of the Second World War. This was a great success.

The Totterdown Estate, Tooting: This Arts and Crafts inspired estate was built between 1901 and 1910 and opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1903. The plaque is sited on the first house built on the estate, in Ruislip Street.

A. W. Roe, the aircraft pioneer: This plaque is opposite Wandsworth Museum on West Hill; Roe's family turned out in force for the unveiling – at some risk from the A3 traffic!

Reginald Albert Twyford: Twyford was born in Rohampton High Street in 1901 and volunteered in 1915. He was killed in France on 8 August 1916 and, at 15, is thought to be the youngest serving Borough casualty of the First World War. A talk was given at the unveiling by Paul McCue, who has researched the local battalion extensively. Local schoolchildren of Reggie's age, who attended the ceremony, were rendered speechless.

The Festival of Britain Pleasure Gardens, Battersea Park: While the exhibition on the South Bank received a lot of attention, some 8 million people visited the Pleasure Gardens during 1951.

Margaret Rutherford, actor, at 15 Dornton Road, SW12

The Clapham Sect, leading abolitionists of the early 19th century, 5 Canford Road, SW11.

John Archer: This, the most recent plaque, had been unveiled the day before Mr Green's talk to the Society. Archer was London's first black mayor and was Mayor of Battersea from 1913 to 1914, and the unveiling coincided with this centenary. There had been a long discussion as to whether he should have a green or blue plaque as his importance went far beyond the Borough. An English Heritage blue plaque won the day, and is now on 55 Brynmaer Road, SW11.

Margaret and Jim Bell

## The Society's 2013 Christmas Party

When the Alvering Library closed we had to find a new venue not only for our regular meetings but also for our party. We were grateful to have the National Opera Studio available, and as there is quite a following in the Society for classical music, including opera, for three years the talents of the NOS students who performed for us were very much enjoyed.

However, we became aware that there were among us those who also enjoyed, even preferred, other kinds of music, and so Hatful of Rain, described as 'contemporary folk with Appalchian roots' and already known to some, was invited to play. Since Folk demands a more informal atmosphere, we gave the St Anne's Church Hall a try.

The 'usual suspects', plus, thankfully, a number of new volunteers, turned up betimes, and with strings of lights, greenery and candles, converted the hall into a festive space fit for the 70 or so who came to enjoy the fun.

And fun it was. What shall we do next year? Do let us know your thoughts.

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# Wandsworth Society Talks and Events

Unless otherwise stated, events will take place a 7.45 for 8.00 at West Side Church, at the corner of Melody Road and Allfarthing Lane.

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Thursday, 13 February

## Edwardian Life in and around Wandsworth Common

an illustrated talk by Ron Elam

Members of the Society may remember Ron's Saturday stall on Bellevue Road, where for 20 years he provided enlarged sepia-toned prints from his collection of some 30,000 Edwardian picture postcards of Wandsworth and Lambeth.

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Thursday, 20 February, 7 for 7.30

Dyson Lecture Theatre, Dyson Building, Royal College of Art, 1 Hester Road, SW11 4AN

## Panorama of the Thames Project

An invitation from the Battersea Society to view a film introducing the 'Panorama of the Thames' and to hear John Inglis, the project's director, discuss his plans for the project's future. If you wish to attend please contact David Kirk, davidcameronkirk@hotmail.com, 020 8874 9167, by 17 February at the latest.

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## Wandsworth Society Soirée

Sunday, 23 February, 7 for 7.30  
14 Patten Road, SW18 3RH

### *Recital by Sarah-Jane Lucas (soprano)*

accompanied by

### *Maya Soltan (piano)*

Sarah-Jane studied at the Royal College of Music where she received the Richard Lewis Prize; Maya graduated with distinction from the Moscow State Conservatory. Both are now training at the National Opera Studio.

Book places (£10, first come, first served) with David Kirk, davidcameronkirk@hotmail.com

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Thursday, 13 March

## Wandsworth Society Annual General Meeting

7 pm prompt for annual reports, a review of the Society's work and the election of officers and Executive Committee.

To be followed by a presentation and wine tasting by Richard Sharp of the Urban Wine Company. Find out how to make the most of all those grapes on your ornamental vines!

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Thursday 10 April

## Council Election Hustings

Councillor Ravi Govindia, Leader of Wandsworth Council, will be among the participating candidates. Come and put your questions on local issues.