

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter April / May 2019



The Society's Planning group at work on 6 March. Its members (from left to right) are: John Dawson*, Bruce St-Julian Bown*, Margaret Romanski*, Peter Farrow, Philip Whyte (Chair)*, Tony Taylor (Secretary), Andrew Hindle, David Kirk*, Cyril Richert and (not in picture) Heide Pirwitz. Picture taken by Diane Whyte. The Planning group is one of four sub-committees of our Executive Committee. The others are:

Roads & Transport group, whose members are Harry Waddingham (Chair)*, Philip Whyte*, John

Dawson*, Prue Raper, David Hole and Heide Pirwitz.

Open Spaces group, whose members are Bruce St-Julian-Bown* and Margaret Romanski*.

Events team, whose members are Wendy Cater, Gill Gray*, David Kirk*, Jenny Massey, Caroline Pook" (Team Leader) and Libby Spurrier.

*Contact details are on page 3 (with an invitation to attend an Executive or sub-committee meeting).

Love your Common a good title for our meeting on Valentine's Day

Co-chairs of the Friends of Wandsworth Common, Julia Bott and Richard Fox, gave us a lively and informative talk about their experience of setting up the Friends last year. Having lived by the Common for thirty years, they are really set on keeping it, nurturing it and making it thrive.

There is much evidence to show that parks and open spaces supported by a 'Friends' body fare better. Surprisingly for the 'brighter borough', Wandsworth's green spaces don't do as well as other boroughs in benchmarked ratings such as 'community Involvement',





photo : Aviva Walton

'support for nature' or 'Green Flag' open spaces. The Council is keen to improve.

A Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee (the 'MAC') was established in 1986 when the Council 'inherited' the Common from the GLC. Shirley Passmore, the Society's late President, helped to establish the MAC, remaining an active member for many years. The Friends grew out of the MAC's Enhancement sub-committee, established in 2013 by Society members, Charles and Aviva Walton, then MAC Chair and Secretary: it sought to raise funds for relatively small 'extra' projects ('enhancements') for the Common.

The Council's Parks and Leisure department had managed the Common for many years when the Council decided to privatise its services. An initial 4-year contract, however, was signed with a 'staff mutual', now 'Enable' which currently manages the Common and Wandsworth's other open spaces. Enable staff regularly attend MAC meetings, as does Parks Police representative. This year Enable will be bidding in the market place to win a new contract – in preparation for which a new Management and Maintenance Plan for the Common is being produced, with MAC assistance.

The Friends were formally launched last year. There are now some 300 members and 1100 'followers' on social media. The Friends engage with Common users and 'educate' through events and projects. The Friends and MAC work closely together, sharing a website and co-ordinating their activities. With the ending of Enable's contract, it is also important not to lose

the wealth of knowledge and history they have. There are important issues to be considered such as the proposed new junction at Bellevue and Trinity Roads, with the loss of a part of the Common, 'compensated' for by the incorporation of 'new' land into the Common - the Society is opposing this development). And the future of Neal's Lodge... And with only nine Parks Police covering all of Wandsworth's open spaces, all Common users should

report any suspicious or illegal activity. Contact details for the Police are on the Friends' website www.wandsworthcommon.org.

The main point of the Friends, Julia said, is to give local people something to belong to, creating a community of Common users. There have already been many activities, including Walks and Talks (on trees, bats, butterflies, Nordic walking, photographing nature ...). There is a map to buy; there are art classes, an app for a self-guided tree trail, qigong, litter picking groups, a Heritage group, a 'duck-food bag filling' group. (The duck food, sold in Skylark Cafe, has helped to provide 40% of the Friends' cash so far!) Future plans include reinvigorating the bowling green, outreach to schools, more user education and information boards (but not too many!), restoration of the drinking fountain, commemoration of the Craig telescope (see our recent Bedside edition), a possible oral history, and collaborative working with Skylark café and Naturescope.

All this while maintaining a balance between nature and sport - too many sports areas or paths could upset the balance of the Common's ecology. The loss of a small habitat for bugs can impact on plants, birds and small mammals and ultimately affect the whole food chain. We need to retain and manage the wild areas as well as looking after the 'facilities'.

All of us now have a way to belong to and promote our Common, especially important as London is set to become the first National Park City. Join the Friends of Wandsworth Common!

Jenny Massey

Wandsworth Society

April / May 2019

Our Executive Committee

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Change is in the air...?

A young Swedish student, Greta Thunberg, arrives here to spearhead an 'Extinction Rebellion' in central London. Britain's Environment Secretary acknowledges, as do many other senior political figures, that the UK 'has not done nearly enough' about global climate change. But all of us could have listened earlier to some older 'students' and 'experts' - David Attenborough (aged 92), speaking about the Rebellion, regrets his generation did not do enough in response to the 'greatest threat facing mankind in thousands of years'.

A Society member asked at our AGM what the Society was doing about air pollution. Philip Whyte reminded us that we had held several events to educate ourselves, and we are represented on the Council's Environment Forum (although we could find only one active 'Community Air Quality Champion'). Some Society members have asked me to sign a petition (available online), calling on our council to declare a 'climate emergency', as some councils have done. It may be that Wandsworth council will be willing to do so - it takes environmental issues seriously and has a better record than most London boroughs, but more needs to be done.

One 'weapon' against air pollution is ULEZ. The scheme now being implemented by Mayor Khan is a policy approved by Mayor Johnson. It follows a lot of research and consultation - if you don't know what it means and are a car user who expects frequently to travel north across the South Circular, you might be well advised to consider the financial implications of this unpleasant-sounding acronym. Perhaps a 'tutorial' meeting would be helpful for some members?

Shopping (so much more online now) is also changing rapidly. Debenhams on Southside will close next year and the Council Leader has expressed his regret. If not unexpected, it is a blow to the redevelopment of the town centre.

No change at our AGM, however, to the composition of the Society's 'Exec' - which is concerning. We need perhaps two or three new members. We could co-opt two or three new Exec members. Any Society member who would be interested in 'sampling' an Exec or sub-committee meeting (see cover page) is welcome to do so. But please contact the Chair or group leader in advance.

Website

www.wandsworthsociety.org

David Kirk

Planning News

It seems an age since my last Planning News. Has spring really now arrived? What has been happening on the planning front? The number of applications for major schemes in our area seems to have dropped significantly – perhaps because most of the large sites have been ‘processed’ and consented, or because the appetite for development has cooled with the pressure of market forces for more stringent financial considerations from both borrowers (developers) and lenders (banks) perspectives.

The residential sector, of most concern to us over recent years, has certainly ‘cooled’ in London. This will delay the start of schemes relying on significant take-up from first time buyers. The government has scored a bit of an ‘own goal’ with its policy of ‘Help to Buy’ that has artificially supported the overall market and led to criticism of major contractors. The Mayor of London has not helped with his policy of ‘affordable housing’, with content for new schemes rising from 35% to a proposed 50%, which has mostly proved uneconomic.

The number of smaller scale developments, including home extensions, ‘upwards’ and ‘outwards’, continues to grow, but not significantly ‘downwards’ (basements) in our area - such developments in conservation areas require consent and are not treated as ‘permitted development’, although this may change with new legislation.

The Planning Group has recently considered:

Ferrier Street (2018/5669). We objected principally to the height of Block D by Wandsworth station plaza, which, at ten storeys, we considered overbearing and out of context with Old York Road and the proposed extension of the conservation area (see below). We were surprised that the Council’s Design Review Panel advised the developer that an additional two floors would make more of a “statement of place”!

Jaggard Way (2018/5413) We objected to the revised scheme, although reduced in height and offering other modest improvements. This is a ‘mixed use’ development, retaining employment space sorely needed in the borough, but the changes do not make adequate provision for commercial space for loading, floor to ceiling heights and other amenities that employment space requires. There is almost no provision for on-site open amenity areas, the promoters claiming there’s no need, given the proximity to the Common!

190-194 St Ann's Hill (2019/0370) former Plowden and Smith and Post Office ‘sorting office’. An application for redevelopment as residential and ground floor commercial space. We were concerned about height and density - the development was too big, although it preserved the impressive ‘shop’ facade. Some local concerns were addressed by the developer. However, we regret that the scheme was approved.

86-96 Garratt Lane (2017/0535) A revived application for land at the rear of Wandsworth Medical Centre and the residential units above. The site has very restricted access. We believed it totally unsuited for a 20-storey (!) residential building. We objected to the previous application (put on hold pending clarification from the Environment Agency about access to the river bank). We have objected again.



Burntwood Lane (2019/0691) An application for a high telecom mast and ground level cabinets. A previous application was approved on appeal for a somewhat lower mast and smaller cabinets. This request for ‘prior approval’ for a higher mast and associated equipment would restrict views

across Trinity Fields from Burntwood Lane and the Common. We objected. The Council has refused 'prior approval'. An appeal is possible.

Springfield NHS Trust We attended a recent community forum at which progress on site was discussed. Significant progress is being made. Ground clearance is under way and spoil from the more elevated parts of the site is being moved to lower areas to form ponds that will receive run-off water from the higher levels. The new Park is planned to open in 2022. A new vehicular access/egress route will be provided to the northwest corner of the site from Burntwood Lane.

Extensions to Conservation Areas

(Tonsleys and Wandsworth Common West Side CAs) We commented in response to the Council's consultation on the Tonsleys CA which proposed to increase the area covered. We agreed, but had hoped that the area could be further extended. As the Council recognises, much of the Tonsleys has been "spoilt" by development and much of the charm of the area lost. We did not comment on the 'West Side' CA, believing the proposals acceptable: they would bring the majority of buildings not covered by an existing 'Article 4 Direction' under CA control - consent will no longer be "deemed" for certain alterations (eg removal of front walls and hedges) and will have to be applied for before works start.



InLink/BT communications points Many will by now have noticed the proliferation of advertising/communication 'hubs'. A recent case brought by Westminster City Council challenged the "permitted rights" of the operators to

place these hubs wherever they choose - provided they do not obstruct traffic vision lines or could be a danger to road users. The Court ruled that the current form of these hubs is 'advertising' and requires planning consent. An appeal is expected. We

have written to the Council to ask what its policy is.

Thames Tideway Tunnel I represent the Society on the local consultative panel (chaired by Justine Greening, Putney's MP). Good progress is being made on both sites within our area, Dormay Street and King George's Park. The tunnel boring machine, 'Charlotte', will soon start from Dormay Street towards King George's Park, to finish in early July. Charlotte will then be brought back in two pieces to Dormay Street to start her journey to Fulham. Those who attended the Society's meeting on 11 April will have learned more about the project - and will, I think, have been impressed by the presentation.

The **West London River Group** (WLRG) comments on applications on "river matters" from Kew to Chelsea. The Environment Agency has undertaken an extensive tree survey recently and started work on revetments on the Surrey side. Necessary felling and reducing works will be undertaken later in the year, as will new planting. The WLRG actively encourages local 'clean up' strategies for litter, and "litter picking" days (particularly important at such times as the Boat Race). If you would like information about joining in, please contact me.

We have been told about a new proposal, not yet registered, for a site off Garratt Lane - the Trewint Street travellers' site. The proposal is for predominantly residential use in two buildings backing on a railway embankment. Access is limited: new bridges would have to be constructed for pedestrians and vehicles. Having had a look, I wonder whether such a scheme will prove practical. One problem to be settled is the provision of new travellers' accommodation (which the Council has to provide). It may prove difficult to find a suitable site in Wandsworth!

Philip Whyte

Copies of our submissions, which are available on the Council's Planning Applications pages, will soon be placed on the Society's website.

Ram Quarter Open – a local’s perspective?

There’s no question - the Ram Brewery provided Wandsworth town centre with a critically needed opportunity to become an attractive town centre. The Society fought hard to get an acceptable plan for the site. Our Planning group presented expert witnesses and forcefully challenged the developer’s barristers to good effect. Now that the Wandle east bank section is open, does it enhance our town centre? Is it a place we would like to frequent?

On my walkabout I found blight and blessings. The ‘blight’ is, as so often, excessive mass and height, and typically bland design, especially when seen from Armoury Way. With, so far, not a single café, nail bar nor Amazon pickup point opening its doors, the ‘public realm’, while substantial, is currently rather bleak.

Amongst the blessings, the view from the High Street towards the east bank offers a significant improvement in Wandsworth’s townscape, critical mass, public realm and general attractiveness - compared with the overweight proportions of previous proposals the Society helped to defeat.

Other clear blessings include the conservation of the brewery’s heritage buildings and, as promised, the world’s reputedly oldest intact beam engine. The development also opens up the Wandle river bank (nominally part of Wandle Valley Park), allowing access to a further section of the Wandle Trail. The Ram Street frontage, and one ‘piazza’, appropriately acknowledge the site’s industrial past, adding some genuine character to the place.

A further underlying benefit, not appreciated by everyone at the project’s planning stage, is that our beloved brewery effectively walled off a quarter of the town centre – an ‘elephant’ in the town centre, as it were! But this was never an ‘issue’ as the brewery gave the town centre most of its heritage, and, hey, they brewed beer – what’s not to like? But the ‘elephant’ did limit the options for growth, shut out our historic river and make crossing the High Street pointless, unless you shopped at Belton & Slade – part of



our heritage (and still worth a visit just to see inside and meet the shop’s keepers)..

Putting this in a historical context, I read that our Arndale Centre (now Southside) was, when opened in 1971, ‘Europe’s largest indoor shopping centre’. Architectural critics such as Pevsner might have been expected to mention it; or, before him, Ruskin might have commented on the older brewery buildings (after all, he grew up in the Wandle Valley). But, it seems, not a word. And current design gurus such as Deyan Sudjic may have voted for Burntwood School to win the Stirling Prize, but the commentators have yet to show even an interest in the more pleasantly styled buildings of the Ram Quarter. To quote Pevsner, their ‘architecture need not detain us long’.

Whether we grow fonder of our town centre will depend on the ease of access across the High Street, its attractiveness, and the 'retail offer'. We might, but it remains an open question, dependent also on the shadow of the imminent 'tower block'; the satisfactory completion of the Stables block, plus improved links to Old York Road. And a 'café quarter' might appeal?

The council deserves support in demanding that TfL get moving with the traffic scheme for the one-way system. Early plans looked encouraging. But getting folks across the High Street requires them to be motivated. That could

be encouraged by weekly markets and cultural attraction, public art and a gallery, for national and local artists. In short, the place needs heart – something neither Southside nor Hardwick Square have ever achieved.

With the loss of Wandsworth's Museum, the town centre's heart is that much harder to discern. The Ram Quarter will, on balance (and thanks, perhaps, to the moderating influence of the Society some years ago), be a 'leap in the right direction'.

Bruce St-Julian Bown

Society Soirée – a piano recital by Clifton Hughes

10 March at 14 Patten Road

David Kirk, chairing, welcomed Clifton on this "beautiful spring evening" (most of us having arrived in hail, sleet and driving wind).

Clifton began his recital with a lilting and spirited rendition of Chopin's Valse Brillante in Ab. Before launching into a sequence of well known and much loved Chopin, Clifton talked about pianos in Chopin's time - wood frames and therefore less robust than the iron frame piano. Had he lived longer, Chopin's works might have shown greater muscularity, using the advantages of a "stronger" piano.

Composed on pianos such as the Pleyel, Chopin's works require a light tone and delicacy of touch. By contrast, Liszt, born around the same time as Chopin, lived long enough to see the iron frame piano which gave him more compositional flexibility.

Then a delightful sequence of Chopin studies, starting with the Allegro "Harp" Study in Ab, which flowed smoothly into a Presto Study in F minor. These flamboyant pieces were contrasted with a slow melodic Nocturne in F Minor, whose poignant tune floats over Stride piano type chords. He then segued into another virtuosic Valse Brillante. Next, the Prelude in Db (the "Raindrop"), whose repeated crotchets (the raindrops), drive the piece on over portentous left hand chords. Clifton played the Minute Waltz, with its vivace tempo, adding in occasional rubato or "breathing space". It was

followed by an adeptly executed Nocturne for the Left Hand (and Right Pedal!) by Scriabin. The second half began with a less familiar eight minute Prokofiev Sonata. The main melodic motif is repeated throughout, juxtaposed with another more chromatic sliding motif.

Clifton seemed to have a particular feel for the modern pieces he played. Debussy's Poissons d'or was a real treat and conjured up images that, as Clifton suggested, might make a good film. Trills reflecting the deft, smooth movements of the fish were interrupted by discordant harmonies as nasty fish come to disrupt the peaceful scene. There had, he said, been a television advert for 'Suregrip' where a pianist played part of the next piece, Liszt's Un Sospiro, wearing washing-up gloves. Clifton had of course his Marigold gloves to demonstrate!

The programme was topped off by Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso, a deceptively difficult piece. Clifton embellished its sparkling tune with ornaments and trills. The recital ended generously, with three encores, including the Rustle of Spring. A very entertaining recital was embellished with personal stories and musical history. He certainly played a lot of notes, clearly enjoying a free run on our host's magnificent Steinway. The audience's thanks go to Arjang and Stefan, our hosts, and to Paula and Peter Farrow for organising the programmes, box office and drinks.

Julie Harrison

Events

Thursday 9 May

7.45pm for 8pm
West Side Church

at the corner of Allfarthing Lane and
Melody Road Wandsworth SW18 2QQ

Wandsworth Society's Arts Fringe Meeting

WANDSWORTH ARTS
FRINGE

Music for Minds

This Society event, which is also part of the Wandsworth Arts Fringe Festival, will be led by the Music Director and Accompanist from Wigmore Hall's "Singing with Friends" initiative for people living with dementia and their families. It was launched in 2017 in partnership with Resonate Arts.

The participants come to the Wigmore Hall for weekly sessions to engage in choral singing and discover how much musical activity can enhance their lives. We invite you to participate in a workshop with the Wigmore professionals to experience that enrichment. Come along to learn, enjoy and join in the singing (no musical skills required!) or just to listen - it will be fun! During the evening a representative of the branch of the Alzheimer's Society for Wandsworth will also describe the work it does in the borough, including the use of music, and discuss the latest research outcomes.

<https://www.wandsworthfringe.com>

Tuesday 14 May

7.30pm at St Anne's Church
182 St Ann's Hill Wandsworth SW18 2RS

EU elections hustings

We are seeking to arrange, at short notice (it is challenging!), jointly with the Putney Society, a hustings for local voters who would like to hear what the (nationally represented) political parties standing for election in London would like to achieve as MEPs if elected. The parties being invited are Brexit, ChangeUK, Conservative, Green, Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP.

Once we know more, we shall send round an e-mail flyer. If you are not on our flyer list or on e-mail, but would wish to be informed, call David Kirk on 020 8874 9167.

Saturday 1 June

A SLICE OF WANDSWORTH TOWN'S HISTORY

As part of the Wandsworth Heritage Festival, David Kirk will lead a walk (about two hours) down and around East Hill to the High Street, discussing a variety of sites nearby of 'entertainment', the theme of this year's festival (its full programme now online and soon to be available in local libraries), 'recreation' of all sorts, some listed buildings, the Huguenot past and the changing character of the area.

Assemble by 10.30am at Huguenot Place in front of Book House, Wandsworth, SW18 2EN. Booking required on 020 8874 9167 or davidcameronkirk@hotmail.com. No fee, but there will be a collection for the Wandsworth Society.

Thursday 13 June

7.45pm for 8pm
West Side Church
at the corner of Allfarthing Lane and
Melody Road Wandsworth SW18 2QQ

THE RENOVATION OF FULHAM PALACE AND ITS GARDEN

An illustrated talk by Alexis Haslam, the Palace's Community Archaeologist, on the current restoration project and the discoveries that have been made.

Friday 5 July

Carshalton Lavender Fields

Rose Harley will lead an easy, flat, 6-mile walk around the Carshalton Lavender Fields and Oaks Park. The lavender is expected to be in bloom, with a wonderful smell. No booking required; meet outside M&S Simply Food in Clapham Junction Station at 9.30am.