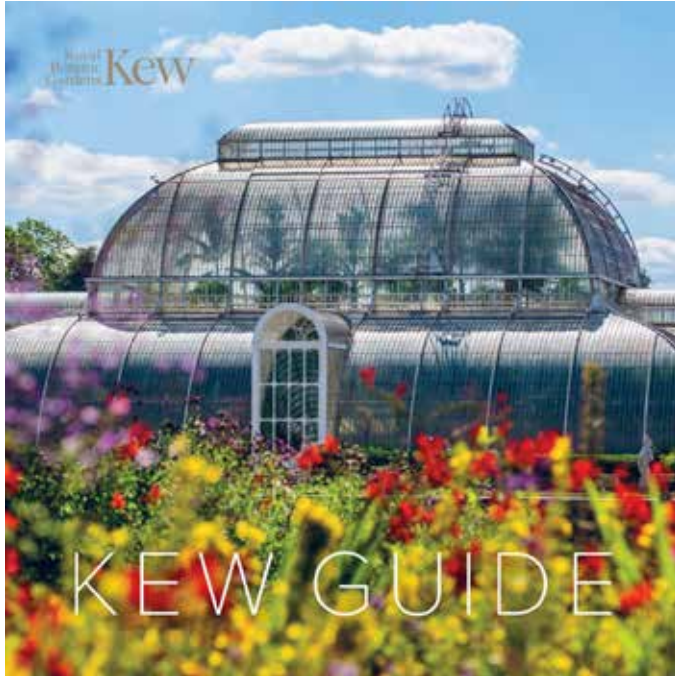


Wandsworth Society



Newsletter Autumn 2023

Kew Gardens



Due to a cancellation, for our June meeting, we had not one but two entertainments.

Firstly a presentation by Philip Whyte and John Dawson on current planning issues. It struck a number of us there that we should have short updates during the year to keep everyone aware of what is going on – after all, it is one of the main reasons for the Society's existence. More about that (perhaps!) at a later stage.

Secondly Jenny Underwood stepped in to talk about Kew Gardens. She has for some years led guided tours there. She had all the history of the buildings and their occupants over many years at her fingertips, as

well of course being able to relate how the world famous botanical gardens developed, what changes have been made and what the current plans are.

Kew has the largest and most diverse botanical and mycological collections in the world and since 2003 has been a World Heritage Site. It has over 300 acres of gardens and greenhouses to explore, listed buildings, the famous Palm House dating from the 1840s and now Grade 11 listed (which took 40 years to build), the Temperate House first commissioned in 1859 and covering 4880 square metres, the Princess of Wales Conservatory opened in 1987, the tree top canopy walkway, the Hive (a structure you go inside for a multi-sensory experience highlighting the life of bees), the Great Pagoda and many other attractions – including its own Police Force!

And of course there are shops and a number of places to find refreshment ... and even special areas for children to play and explore.

Thank you, Jenny, for stepping in to give us such an interesting talk.

As a visitor to Kew over many years - I first visited with my grandparents as a small child when I think the entry price was 2d (1p!) - I have loved the stunning displays at various times of year – the crocuses, the snowdrops, rhododendrons, orchids, cacti - the list goes on.

Jenny Massey

This is the Newsletter of **The Wandsworth Society**, a registered charity no 263737. The Society is concerned with the quality of life and the environment in Wandsworth town centre, Wandsworth Common and adjacent areas.

If you are not already a member and would like to join please contact the Membership Secretary Gill Gray, details opposite. Please address, any comments, or, even better, contributions to newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter
Autumn 2023

Our Executive Committee

Chair Philip Whyte

49 West Side, SW18 2EE

020 8874 4745

Vice-Chair To be confirmed

Minutes Secretary Caroline Pook

15 St Ann's Crescent SW18 2ND

Treasurer Richard Pook

15 St Ann's Crescent SW18 2ND

richard.pook@virgin.net

Membership Secretary

Gill Gray

Studio 8, Royal Victoria Patriotic

Building, SW18 3SX

020 8870 4567

Iain Gray ('Bedside' editor)

contact details as for Gill Gray

Open Spaces

Bruce St Julian-Bown

020 8062 4903

Planning

Philip Whyte

Events Team

Jenny Massey

jennyafmassey@aol.com

Roads and Transport Group

John Dawson

210 Beechcroft Road, SW17 7DP

020 8772 4282

newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org

wandsworthsociety.org

Greetings

Have you walked or driven along Swandon Way, or Smugglers Way recently? Were you impressed by the transformation of the Homebase and B&Q sites? Do you agree that the first 'clear objective' of the masterplan for the B&Q site -

*To ensure the development is of the highest quality design and environmental standards, **appropriate in scale and setting to the local context***

has been achieved?

There's a good chance we agree with you.

There are three images on the back cover, the first and last taken from roughly the same viewpoint looking west along Swandon Way as the middle image, a CGI (computer generated image) submitted with the 2021 revision to the original planning application. The top in 2016 from Google Streetview, and the last a recent photograph.

We have lost a tree-lined road and open sky and been presented with a canyon. It was difficult to take a photograph to properly represent the enclosed effect of standing by the road with the Homebase development on the left and the B&Q site in front of you. Both sites are under construction, the Homebase site still wrapped up in scaffolding. It is possible that when complete the buildings lining Swandon Way and Smugglers way will be revealed to be of the highest quality design and appropriate in scale and setting to the local context.

It's possible ...

If you are a member and we don't have your email address and you would like to be kept more regularly up to date please get in touch

membership@wandsworthsociety.org

Cover

This image of the splendid new Springfield Park is by Bruce St Julian-Bown

The local environment - cleaning up our act

So now we have a Green Group, although 'group' is a tad OTT, 'Green Liaison' fits its operation better – but it is reporting! We have a relatively new council regime, and even after one takes into account their initial enthusiasm after decades of opposition, they clearly hit the ground running. Initially they have addressed two main issues: Air quality and consultation methodology. Apart from specific detailed issues on air quality we've raised with them, is how well they are getting their messages across to the community.

The AQAP - Air Quality Action Plan, - Report published.

Initiated under the old regime, it has been responded to vigorously by the new one, possibly accelerated by the recent conclusion that poor air quality contributes to the death of about 4000 Londoners annually. They place strong emphasis as did the first draft, on a detailed education network amongst schools, school streets, improved public transport and support for the expanded London ULEZ zone and of course active travel is promoted as are electric vehicles. Electric vehicles (EV's) scoffed at by some, do have a direct impact on improving air quality in the street compared to petrol and diesel. along with the electric buses and cabs gradually taking over and more precise, AQ measurements now showing a drop in PM2.5s and other toxins. Of course, taking out the impact of covid traffic reductions complicates things but air quality does seem to be improving.

I'm glad to report that the council have picked up a point we made in consultation, that many groups such as mothers with two or more young children, the partially mobile and many amongst the elderly, rely on cars for their daily routines as public transport is not always accessible nor a practical alternative. Also picked up was the alarmingly high pollution of PM2.5 particulates from road dust and wood burning stoves often in larger homes. So Yule Logs should

not be lit but just look homely, at Christmas! Overall, it was a step forward but with one key weakness, resulted in a Society red flag; low impact communications on green news, policy and advice to the community. A page in Brightside four times a year and 'low energy action' events will not increase borough-wide informed awareness, neither will a copy of the WBC official report placed in public libraries. We have even offered to help define (pro bono) how this key task might be approached but no response so far, although we heard a comment along the lines of: "Communications - we need to get more messaging out there". Of course, much of it can be found on the internet but there are many who don't or can't access a computer and the subject is so broad one needs to focus on very specific aspects. The internet might cover the substance but is not suited to motivating a community-wide response.

One area where communications are ample on green action is that far too much effort goes into letting us know how well the WBC's in house greening programme is reducing their CO2 footprint - about a quarter of one document. Of course, being seen to lead by example is essential and by all accounts WBC is making strident efforts but a report on a major environmental programme that places that degree of emphasis on inhouse response is missing the point that the essential message to get across persuasively is for the community to respond promptly.

Consultation process

There is a new and apparently very democratic consultation process which has been trialled on the AQAP. It comprises the Wandsworth Sustainability Partnership (WSP), and the Citizens Assembly comprising 49 randomly invited local residents. Both sets of consultation seemed so highly structured with the contractors hosting these events following tight formats that some folks with something to say may have missed their opportunity to voice their concerns. Time may tell if this is a better process – certainly much was learnt, and key points made by the Society were incorporated. My underlying concern is that this process obscures useful strands of experience-based feedback. Of course, only having the Battersea, Putney and Wandsworth Societies plus the usual suspects always spouting our pet concerns is not pure democracy and in theory can find expression in the WSP. But the input from these groups is

Public transport developments in Wandsworth

New passenger rail timetables came into operation nationally on 21/22 May. One of our local operators, South Western Railway, announced that its new timetable 'continues to match capacity with demand, with customer numbers at 78% of their total prior to the COVID-19 pandemic'; and (reflecting the shift to working at home) that peak time travel had now reached 61% of pre-pandemic levels, meaning that demand remains below the network's available capacity. Minor changes have been made to SWR's operations across its network in response.

Southern's approach for its Southern Metro sector, which includes Wandsworth Common area, is similar. The drop in passenger revenue nationally associated with the loss of peak-time passengers has contributed to a feeling of stasis in our rail services, with the notable exception of the Elizabeth Line, which fully opened on 21 May. The Evening Standard reported on 22 May that over 150 million passenger journeys have been made on the Elizabeth Line in the past year, underlining the new line's success; it now offers 24 trains per hour at peak times between Paddington and Whitechapel.

(For comparison, on late morning weekdays there are six trains per hour from Wandsworth Town to Waterloo; eight from Earlsfield to Waterloo; and four from Wandsworth Common to Victoria).



There is some good news to report on buses locally, with the change introduced on 25 March to route 485 to provide coverage for the growing community at Wandsworth Riverside. This improves daytime connections for Riverside Quarter residents and visitors - to central Wandsworth and to Putney, Barnes and Castlenau. Additionally, TfL has consulted on an extension of bus route 315 (West Norwood - Streatham - Balham) to extend southwestwards to the new development at Springfield University Hospital,

terminating close to Burntwood Lane. This would be a very useful connection, given the awkwardness of travel via public transport between Streatham and Burntwood Lane, and the desirability of 'building in' sustainable travel patterns for residents of new developments at the outset. TfL's consultation closed on 16 April and are currently reviewing the public contributions to the consultation.

More generally, developments in electric traction for London buses are proceeding at a rapid rate, with various trials under way. As of the end of October 2022, there were 850 all-electric buses in operation in London. (Source: Future Transport London newsletter 47 Jan 2023).

Susie Morrow

... cleaning up our act

often undertaken by expert professionals who apart from contributing objectively, value democratic principles. The inevitable post meeting evaluation showed only 24 of the 49 attendees offered a response, most thought it worthwhile. Only 14 (about a third of all participants) thought it might make a difference and such small numbers should never be used to extrapolate percentages. But we'll follow with interest. The new regime hit the ground

running and Cllr Judy Gasser seems to have a handle on the challenging task. We will continue to point out poor communication of policy, issues and advice, whilst our unpredictable weather's voice is making itself heard more loudly these days!

I close by concluding my own efforts in helping to mitigate climate change could have been better - how about yours?

Bruce St Julian-Bown

Planning news Autumn 2023

Be careful what you wish for!!!

The planning applications and decisions have continued to be at a very low level during the last few months, which is hardly surprising considering the tumult in the general financial state of the country.

Matters are not helped by politicians changing the 'rules of engagement!' as far as targets are concerned.

There have been no significant new applications received by the council which have been notified to us recently and very few decisions of consequence.

The Revised Local Plan which covers the period 2023 to 2038 has been approved by the Secretary of State and forms the basis of proposals for the borough in respect of all matters over which the Local Authority has direct control.

As members will be aware, many of the major sites in the borough have been built out during the past ten years with only one or two remaining.

Application No 2022/3954 : for the Gas Works site on Armoury Way has made little evident progress, although additional documentation was registered with the council's web site on the 24 August. The fundamentals remain unchanged: too high, too dense, insufficient thought to the impact on the River Wandle, no off site infrastructure of consequence such as provision for health care facilities, additional capacity of Wandsworth Town station or bus

services. The dialogue with TfL over the realignment of Swandon Way / Armoury Way seems to be never ending.

Ram Site/Wandsworth Mills : Following the acquisition of the remainder of the site left undeveloped by Greenland, the Berkeley Group under the St George banner have proceeded with the demolition of the studios part of the site. This will have been in accord with the consent granted for the scheme as a whole. The current web site shows the consented building of 36 storeys but hopefully a revised application will be made, more in keeping with current views of environmental and sustainability concerns. The fate of the Stables site and the artefacts which remain on site have yet to be disclosed. We have made enquiries recently of the 'sets'(old sleepers, I am not talking about people!!!) of the Surrey Iron Railway which were in an 'unruly' heap last time we inspected!!!

The All England Lawn Tennis Club

Application No 2021/3609 : This application which crosses the boroughs of both Wandsworth and Merton continues to remain unresolved. The application is a 'hybrid' application which means that it is partly in detail and partly outline. The principle elements have not changed since the initial application but significant controversy has arisen over the proposals for the Park which has received comment from both local and national press sources. We understand that legal experts are scrutinising a recent Court decision which may have relevance to the current application.

The Society was asked to comment on proposals prior to **Application No 2023/2384**
20 Spencer Park : This application is for the rebuilding of part of an existing structure, retaining the adjoining part which is in separate ownership. Following consultations with the applicants and their advisers, suggested amendments (thank you Peter Farrow) were incorporated in the application currently with the council.

Springfield Estate, Burntwood Lane : **The latest application No 2023/5288** is for the



This is an image of the proposed 36-storey to be built on the site of Capital Studios at the end of Wandsworth Plain

development for residential use on the sites of land known as sites X,Y and Z. The proposals are for blocks of flats providing approximately 400 additional units which would take the overall number of units, both houses and flats on the whole estate, to approximately 1200, close to the number originally sought but pulled back by the Inspectors decisions following the public enquiry, to approximately 850 units. This application is still being considered by the council.

Springfield Park : An announcement has been made recently that following notice given by the Springfield Trust to the council, as required by the planning conditions, the council have declined to take over the control and management of the park. We understand that the Trust have formulated a management strategy (possibly expecting this outcome?) and the control of the land will remain with the trust.

The Society have continued to support the aims of the Trust throughout the evolution of the redevelopment, we have not always agreed

with some of the decisions or detail but the outcome is a tribute to all concerned with the provision of new clinical facilities, the use of land for residential purposes, the shortly to be available limited retail facilities and some community space. The creation of the new park is one of the major achievements of which the Trust can be justifiably proud.

Just to finish, one refusal which caught the writer's eye recently was **application No 2023/1406 Trinity Fields Sports Ground**. The application was for the replacement of safety netting with supporting posts to boundaries. Perhaps there should have been a little more 'pre app' conversation on the type and colour of the fencing to be provided!!

Please let me know if we can help with any planning matters which may come to your notice.

Philip Whyte

SPRINGFIELD VILLAGE GUIDED VISIT

Thanks to hard work from John Dawson in mid-July the Society was fortunate enough, to be able to offer a tour of the Springfield site led by Ian Darlington (Integrated Programme Director, SW London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust) and Sam Wilson, the PR officer from Cascade Communications.

Unfortunately, we had to limit numbers to 20 but every one of us really appreciated the time given to better understand the evolving philosophy of patient care. This was obvious in our first stop, the impressive new Trinity Building, the out-patient departments, on Chapel Square. This is the first of the two key new hospital buildings, the other the Shaftesbury building being for acute patients which is located on the other side of the village square.

Chapel Square illustrates the integrated nature of the site: there will be a convenience store and a café, together with new flats, already sold and part occupied. The developers have found that the idea of an integrated community of clinical facilities, a care home, commercial users and flats for sale, all on the same site, has been widely accepted.

Our tour continued with a walk around the park (with the group having to cross builder's rubble), a glimpse into the historic 1840 hospital building and at some of the redundant hospital buildings (shortly to be demolished) and finally into a show home. This is an evolving development and every visit is a snapshot in time.

The attraction of the "village" for new home buyers is that there is a lot of open space, historic buildings have been retained and there is a 32 acre public park on the doorstep. There is currently consent for



Above the entrance to the 1840 asylum from the City and Country website, below the atrium of the new Trinity building from the South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust, opposite a view of the new park by BSJB and below that a part of the new housing by PW



some 840 homes on the site although developers have applied to increase this by 449 more homes, including 220 affordable homes.

We hope to offer an unguided amble around the open parts of the site on a Saturday morning in November; unfortunately, we will not have access to the buildings nor the insights of the professional team. The site is evolving all the time. For up-to-date news see <https://www.springfieldvillage.info/news-and-events>

Caroline Pook



... and an appreciation of the new Springfield Park

At last the fence is down - and how good it looks!

Brightside headlines that Wandsworth is home to the biggest new park since the Olympics.

In spite of several, sometimes frustrating years of the Society being consulted on the development of the Springfield Hospital site, here at last is something with a splendid silver lining. The park is finally open to Burntwood Lane, and in terms of landscape it is very green and pleasant, providing a huge additional open space to the borough, which will provide home to many species of wildlife.

Our correspondent has suggested only one caveat, that if the blocks not yet built around the perimeter of the park are too close, too high and too bulky, the buildings will detract from this remarkably rare and beneficial extension of the newly opened space.

The park has water, wildlife, mixed active-travel paths and superb seating arrangements! Let's hope that the original grand institutional buildings are given similar care in their new lives as homes to those who will enjoy the new parkland.

Bruce St Julian-Bown

Wandsworth Historian

The Journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society

Wandsworth Historian no. 116 Autumn 2023
Special 'WHS at 70' number



Lucy Pocock, a pioneer in women's rowing, watched by a large crowd as she passes Aylings' workshop in Putney in August 1912. (River and Rowing Museum, Henley)

Our latest issue celebrates the seventieth anniversary of the Wandsworth Historical Society with a look back at long-ago articles covering such topics as the history of Emanuel School in Battersea, archaeological activity in 1960s Putney, and the pitiful poverty that could still be found in 1930s Tooting.

Also in this number is a review of the achievements of Aylings, the world-famous oar-makers based on Putney Embankment, as well as a celebration of the centenary of King George's Park in central Wandsworth.

All this and much more can be found in the Autumn 2023 issue of the Wandsworth Historian (ISSN 1751-9225), the magazine that brings you the latest research into Wandsworth's past.

The Wandsworth Historian is published by the Wandsworth Historical Society, and copies are available price £3.00 plus £2.00 for postage and packing from WHS, 119 Heythorp Street, London SW18 5BT or by emailing 020neil119@gmail.com. Cheques payable to 'Wandsworth Historical Society', please, though on-line payment is preferred.

The website address of the
Wandsworth Historical Society is
www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk.

According to the date on the back of this postcard it very much looks like Wandsworth's infamous one-way system dates as far back at least to c1904



Except, although seemingly one-way, there is if you look closely a cart just visible heading east in the opposite direction to everyone else. With the exception of a bicycle the traffic is entirely horse-drawn. In no more than a few years the greater part of the congested traffic would be motor powered.

This is possibly a photograph taken of an ordinary day on Wandsworth High Street in the early 1900s, possibly not. There's something about the people on the pavement that gives the impression they are watching a procession rather than observing the traffic of a typical day.

And below a contemporary photograph, no horses, but this time a cyclist, not a cart, travelling against the flow.



The Wandsworth Museum, living happily ever after?

The Wandsworth Museum Action Group (WMAG) is still alive and well but not, I fear, very happily.

My letter to you in the spring of this year found matters optimistic as we were supported by all the local organisations and had established a dialogue with Wandsworth Council. The request for volunteers to transcribe all the collection items to a database received a good response and some twenty-three of you are busy with this work. The task is considerable, and more help is needed so please, if you have basic IT skills, please join in. Contact Oliver.Lewis@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk for registering and all the help you need. Alternatively email me sheilamacallen@gmail.com. I will forward your details.

Cllr Rex Osborn was appointed the borough's Heritage Champion in July. His role is to communicate our ideas and ambitions to the council. Currently these are:- to be given display space in the borough libraries where we can present curated items from the collection, hold an annual exhibition in Battersea Arts Centre collaborating with the Director of Roehampton University's Heritage course engaging his students in this project, and, more ambitiously still, develop a Cluster Concept incorporating Museum/Environmental Centre/Art Gallery/Performance Space, some commercial venture - restaurant? shop? – as a financial backup. (if Brent can do it why not Wandsworth?), but above all to raise awareness. There are 327,000 people in this borough, few of whom know we had a museum, nor its story.

The WMAG ideas and projects need accommodation to succeed, and Rex and all WMAG members are looking around for a building which would fit the bill and indeed enhance Wandsworth's chances in its bid to become the London Borough of Culture 2025. The Council Arts Officer Sara O'Donnell has managed to obtain space in the new Town Centre Library, but, as you probably know it has not opened. The newly opened Northcote Library has no room for us, nor it seems have any others. The situation is discouraging. Contrary to our understanding that all but three London Boroughs had a museum, that figure has now risen to fifteen! Are we heading for the demise of the local museum?

There is no statutory obligation on councils to provide a museum with all their Heritage and Education Services which would provide a sense of place, be a focal centre for the community and enrich the social environment. It seems that these are aspirations currently beyond councils. We might be presiding over the loss of such invaluable assets for local communities unless things change and Wandsworth Council can find the way. Surely a council which aspires to be the London Borough of Culture 2025, and which is working hard to succeed in its bid cannot ignore the value of a museum and its enhancement of our chances.

WMAG will continue to do all it can to achieve the goals set out here. Please help by writing to your local councillor and MP. The battle is not lost and can still be won! Perhaps not before the set of sun, but with support, then soon.

Sheila Allen

The Society walks, talks and parties

Our meetings are held at West Side Church, at the corner of Melody Road and Alfarthing Lane and Heathfield Road SW18 2QQ unless indicated otherwise

Thursday 12 October 8:00 pm
The lost museums of Wandsworth
a talk by Philip Bradley in which we (virtually) visit the various sites in Wandsworth (and Battersea) where a local borough museum once existed.

Thursday 9 November 8:00 pm
The Fitzhugh Estate
An illustrated talk by Sharon O'Neill about living on the estate and its history.

Saturday 11 November 10:30am
An informal walk around the constantly evolving Springfield Hospital site to explore this large mixed-use development and public park. Meet in Chapel Square on Springfield Drive, SW17 0YF. Pedestrian/cycle access from Burntwood Lane; charged parking in Seacole Walk, which is accessed from Glenburnie Road. No booking needed.

Friday 8 December 8:00 pm
Our Christmas party, same time (Christmas) same place, St Anne's Church Hall, delicious food and drink, wonderful entertainment, make a note in your diary

Swandon Way pictures worth a thousand words July 2016



as proposed 2020



work in progress 2023

