

Wandsworth Society Chair's Report to the AGM. Chair: Philip Whyte

I am pleased to see so many of you here this evening. Welcome to the 55th Annual General Meeting of the Society.

Once again, I hope that the Society has continued to provide you with interesting presentations which the events group consider relevant to the Society's aims. If you have suggestions for future meetings or other events with which the Society could be involved, please let us know.

We continue to bring the Society's affairs forward to encompass such technology which is now available and we do have many more members email addresses, which makes life much easier to communicate with you but if you have not provided your up to date information, could you please let Caroline Pook or Gill Gray have your details or email: membership@wandsworthsociety.org.

If you know of any member who has not provided their email address, could you try to persuade them to do the same. For those who have looked at my last year's opening remarks, you will recognise the same plea.

Copies of the Notice for this meeting and Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting are available here and on the Society's website. The Agenda for this meeting is available this evening.

The Certified Accounts are also available here this evening and I would like to thank Paul Henry, once again, for carrying out the scrutiny required to enable the accounts once approved by you, to be sent to the Charities Commission.

Thanks

I would like to thank all those who have been involved in the running of the Society during the past twelve months, I would also like to thank John Crossland once again for his work in recording our meetings here at West Side Church and providing the audio facilities each time. These recordings are available a couple of days after the meetings on YouTube and on the website.

Now to some detail:

The Executive have met 6 times during the year in April, June, September, November of last year, January and March of this year and I am pleased to say that most members of the Executive have attended each meeting.

The events group have put together a programme of talks which they thought would be of interest to the membership and I am pleased to say that attendance at these meetings has been consistent at between 30 to 40 members at each event. Talks have ranged from gypsies, medical risks in hospital, flood risk in London, Riverside Radio, RVPB during WW2, lost pubs and holy icons. Quite a mix. Thank you to the events group who ensure that no stone is unturned to keep us enlightened on Wednesday evenings.

We have not arranged any visits to venues in the past year, if you have any ideas please let the events group know. Jenny Massey has organised a walk to Roehampton University campus in June.

The Society did not sponsor this year's performance of Shakespeare in the Squares at St Anne's Church, the Taming of the Shrew which was enjoyed by many in July.

Summer Party

We were again very fortunate to have been invited to the garden of No 15 St Anne's Crescent, Richard and Caroline Pook's home in July, when we were able to relax and converse to the sound of Adam and Glen Glasser on guitar and harmonica and enjoy a wonderful range of food and drink on a warm summer evening. Thanks to the Pooks and all who helped to organise this gathering and to those who attended and enjoyed the evening.

Call for new members to help

As you will have seen on the recent flyer for this AGM the Executive and groups are really needing more support from members who either have some expertise or enthusiasm. The groups are Environment, Roads and Transport, Meetings, Planning. A particular need is for help with the website and any other "social media" which would help widen the appeal and knowledge of the Society's existence to new or old residents in the area. I have made this call in the past with little response.

Existing Teams/Groups

Groups that have carried forward the aims of the Society during the year include:

the **Green/Environmental Group**, represented primarily by Bruce St J Bown, who has monitored the progress of certain parts of this topic and has attended Council and other organised meetings. This topic covers air quality, traffic emissions, pedestrians and flooding, among others. This is an enormous range, if you think you can help, please let Bruce know.

As I said last year, I as Co-chair of the West London River Group, the comprehensive review of the Thames Strategy currently underway, funded by the Environment Agency, is seeking to establish a base line particularly in respect of increasing levels of flood risk which may affect the capital from Teddington to the sea. In addition the WLRG are assisting with character reviews of the River from Kew to Chelsea, on both banks. So much has changed since the first report published in 2002.

The Roads and Transport Group continues to be led by John Dawson who has continued to monitor proposals and actions mostly by the Council as the local highway authority.

Last year I spoke of the works being undertaken in Burntwood Lane following community involvement and consultation. The Group wrote to the Council expressing our concern. Much of the work has now been completed but we do not believe that what has been done is in any way satisfactory. One matter which we have taken forward is the possible provision of an additional zebra crossing at the eastern/northern (Trinity Road) end of the road to assist pedestrians crossing. The Council accepted a petition organised by John, but now have to reconsult before approving or rejecting this variation in the road layout. We have received quite helpful dialogue with both the Councillor and officers concerned during the past twelve months, a nice change.

Another matter which the group has been concerned with in the past few months is the Council's Town Centre consultation. You are probably aware that in the summer June/July of last year a very "discreet" announcement was made by TfL and the Council that work would no longer be proceeding with the Armoury Way/Swandon Way realignment and associated works.

The Society was most concerned as the Council made little play of this major reversal of policy of a project which had been planned for more than fifteen years. The ground given was principally cost, but we do not really believe this.

Following this announcement the Council started a public consultation asking the public what they would like to see by way of short/ medium and long term improvements to the Town centre. The Society and individuals gave views and attended presentations which were not very well staged or documented. We subsequently sought a meeting with Councillor Jenny Yates, which after months of delay finally took place in late autumn when members of the R&T group tabled ideas/ proposals for the Council to consider. The Consultation findings were published on the 10th March and are available on the Council's website. We will have to wait and see what the next steps are. After fifteen years and +/- £ 25m in the bank, difficult to accept that through traffic in the town centre could not be dealt with appropriately.

The planning group, which I chair, has, once again, not met in person this year, however we continue to monitor closely many applications in our area of the Borough which may be of interest or concern.

I am pleased to say that I have received the continued support from members of the group as we consider individual applications to get the right consensus for our response. We also cover some applications outside our immediate area, to name two, The AELTC application for Wimbledon Park and a massive new residential building proposed beside Battersea Bridge.

The AELTC. Various legal processes have taken place during this year in an endeavour by the club to establish their right to proceed with the plans as approved by L B Merton and endorsed by the Mayor of London. An amendment to legislation proposed in the House of Lords in the autumn was not proceeded with/failed. A Judicial Review in January of this year has found that the land is not subject to the test required to permit the land to be used for purposes other than public open space. An appeal by Save Wimbledon Park is under consideration. There is also a further proposed amendment in a new bill to achieve the same result before the House of Lords but this is currently in debate. The Save Wimbledon Park organisation keep me abreast of information by email.

The Glassmill, 1 Battersea Bridge Road. The public Inquiry against the Council's refusal started on the 17th March and runs until 27th. The Society is one of a consortium of Societies: Putney, Battersea, Chelsea, Friends of Battersea Park and the Cheyne Walk Trust who have joined together to object to the application for a 29 floor principally residential building next to Battersea Bridge. The Council refused the application which was not "called in" by the Mayor. The applicant then appealed the decision. The Battersea Society have led the production of information to support the objection which has taken Pater Farrow and I many hours of both thought and investigation of supporting evidence. It is hoped that the Inspector will support the Council's decision.

Pavement outside Southside. TfL have made an application recently for a large illuminated advertising panel on the pavement just beyond Southside's ownership. This would stand 8m above the pavement and would represent a significant visual obstruction and additional pavement clutter close to the Town Centre Conservation area. The Society has objected. Hopefully the Council will refuse the application.

Soirees. Arrangements were made for one soiree during the year. The Society is most grateful to our hosts on these occasions which cause disruption to the household.

Acquisition of part of the late Ron Elam's card collection. Images of the card collection are now available from Battersea Library. We hope that these images will be available to view on line in due course.

Digitisation of Past Newsletters. Peter Farrow has very cleverly and kindly arranged for the digitisation of much of the Society's past newsletter collection. We will advise you of arrangements for access to the collection.

I am sorry to have been advised of the deaths of members of the Society during the year.

Subscriptions. We are grateful to those members who have dealt with the new subscription rate by altering their standing order to the Society. If those who pay by this method could check with their bank that the revised payment of £15 has been or is made as soon as possible as **this rate is applicable from January 2026.**

Action

The Society needs more active participation from members and in particular we need expertise to assist with the web site, communications and all that goes with this. If you know of anyone who could help, please let me or anyone of the Executive know.

As I advised you last year, I am stepping down from the "high chair" and handing the batten or poisoned chalice to John Dawson who I am sure will take the Society forward. I have been asked to continue as a member of the Executive as Vice Chair (rather than chair of vice!) and to continue as leader of the planning group which I will leave in your hands when officers of the Society are up for election shortly.

Finally, thank you all for coming this evening and I would like to present a small gift to John Crossland and to Paul Henry for his checking that we are all "in order".

Philip.