

Wandsworth Society



Newsletter Autumn 2025

From pillar to post

Began writing this, but then paused, what to call them? On their website in *Services near you* Royal Mail now refer to these as Postboxes. In times past. O Best Beloved, we posted letters in what we would call a pillar box, what it resembled, or a letter box, what it was for ... another pause for the benefit of our younger readers - a letter was a piece of paper inscribed by hand with pen or pencil, then folded, placed in an envelope ...

What with letter writing being more archaic custom than current practice, and the price of a postage stamp becoming prohibitive, it's not difficult to believe that the pillar / letter / post box will soon be considered an anachronism on the kerbside, and condemned to the scrapheap.

Indeed the wrapped-up pillar (we're going with that) box on Swaffield Road with the sign reading 'Out of service Automated system coming soon' looked worryingly like that was the way things were going. A letter was immediately drafted to protest about this vandalism ... the immediate problem being where to start it on its journey.

And then, in the search for an operational letter-receiving

apparatus, we found on St Ann's Hill what is clearly no longer a pillar box but a Postbox; presumably a part of the automated system mentioned in the note on its Swaffield Road friend.

It's possible that the Automatic System powered by the photovoltaic panel on the inelegantly reconfigured top will open the letter, scan it, prepare an AI generated summary, determine who best to receive it, then send it on its way via whatever is the latest media transfer method - but probably unlikely. The post will still be collected, but no doubt increasingly less frequently.

And thank you, thank you to whoever it was who crocheted the beret (?) for the pillar box on Heathfield Road - that which provokes a smile will always be welcome.
pf



Swaffield Road



St Ann's Hill



Heathfield Road

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 2025

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Whither the Society?

As with many other voluntary organisations, the Executive of the Society have for some time been considering the direction of travel for the Society's future.

Some members of the Executive have held their respective posts for many years and despite asking for new names to come forward at the Annual General Meeting, no new nominees have appeared for some time.

As the current chairman, I am most grateful to the help and support which I have received after being 'parachuted in' following the withdrawal of the previously elected chair through ill health.

The main purpose of the Society is to represent those residents and businesses, who are in the area with which we concern ourselves, relatively close to the town centre of Wandsworth in matters of the amenity of the area which includes open spaces, the environment, buildings, roads, transport and other things which we have all benefited from during our time living or working in Wandsworth.

We are however aware that the societal mix has altered considerably in recent years with the explosion of new residents, most of whom seem to be incredibly busy and many of whom regard the area merely as a dormitory with little active participation in the coming and goings of the area.

The Executive is reaching out to you, our members, to tell us how we can improve our offering, to let us know what we can do to attract more and hopefully younger members and to tell us where we have gone wrong!

If the Society does not get more support, it will wither and die.

Front cover

See page 2

THE THAMES TIDEWAY TUNNEL NOW COMPLETE



We are sure that you are aware that the Thames Tideway Tunnel was 'officially' complete in February of this year after the testing of various parts of the scheme to provide a 'storage tank'! for the overflows from the combined sewer outlets which have served London so well since Bazalgette designed the system in Victorian times.

It is amazing to learn that the system has worked for so long, bearing in mind the enormous growth in the size and complexity of London as it is in 2025.

A few facts and figures-

- London's population in 1900 was between 5-6 million.
- London's current population is approximately 9 million
- the Greater London area is now approximately 1572sq km (607sq miles).
- the Tideway Tunnel runs for approximately 25 km from Acton to Abbey Mills which then connects to the Lee Tunnel to Beckton Sewerage works.

There have been 21 work sites on the route at surface level with much of the tunnelling works carried out at significant depths beneath the river and adjoining foreshores. The maximum below surface level depth is understood to be 36m (118ft).

The preparatory work started in about 2010 when the writer was contacted by Thames Water in respect of a land holding owned by a client of the practice. Little did we know then what would be involved in just the preliminary work. The land owners of each proposed site were asked to cooperate in the identification of any rights of way, wayleaves or other obstacles which could affect the project. As far as the writer is aware no compulsory purchase powers were required throughout the land assembly, a tribute to the advance planning.

After agreement was reached on access rights, the project planning continued with consultations on timing, methods of working and everything else involved with such a big project.

The planning consent was agreed to be dealt with by means of a Development Consent Order (DCO) which avoided a potential delay in approval, as the planning authority had been working closely with the Tideway team during all stages of the preparation of the project.

The writer understands that this country has some of the best and most experienced tunnelling experts in the world, this proved to be the case here as it was reported that no deaths or serious injuries occurred during the construction period of the on site works and that the tunnel

was completed on time and on budget at approximately £4bn.

From the start of construction Tideway set up local panels of representative personnel (the writer being one) for the area directly affected by the works, in our case King George's Park and Dormay Street, who met regularly to hear of the progress of the works and to air any problems which the contractors could address. These meetings were most helpful.

King George's Park - this site has an interceptor chamber with a 25m deep shaft with a 12m diameter intercept to local sewerage overflows. This is then connected to the site at Dormay Street by a 1.1km connection tunnel at a depth of 25m with a 2.6m connection tunnel to the Carnwath Road site across the river in Fulham.

The King George's Park site is now finished with hard landscaping over the interceptor chamber and the control house/kiosk finished with artwork by Yemi Awosile. The images show the finished site.

During the time of construction Tideway claim to have avoided 701,230 lorry loads being carried

on the roads by using the river with barges for both delivery of materials and disposal of spoil.

The project has also created new wetlands at Barnes and has provided attractively finished dig sites mostly with hard surfaces which permits maintenance access in the future. Some of these sites have sculptures or other art works which will become placemaking for the future.

London has been provided with the most up to date solution for the capital's waste which has combined the Victorian system designed by Joseph Bazalgette with the technology available today.

We should be most grateful to all involved with this enormous project.

Philip Whyte

Burntwood Lane

Highway Improvement ?

Since January there have been major changes to the road layout in Burntwood Lane following a public consultation two years previously. The aim was to make the road safer for cyclists and pedestrians in accordance with the council's healthy streets policy. We had expressed our reservations on the planned changes. However, real issues have surfaced affecting the residents of Marham and Lyminge Gardens in particular, two side roads at the top end of Burntwood Lane before the Beechcroft Road roundabout, as conveniently placed central road reservations have been removed in favour of a light-controlled crossing 100 yards to the east just beyond the turning for Sandgate Lane. We were approached by members in each road to try and persuade the Council to make the crossing of Burntwood Lane safer for them.

Consequently, our Roads and Transport group has canvassed homes in Lyminge and Marham Gardens for their views, leading to a request to the council for - "an additional zebra crossing or the reinstatement of the recently removed central road reservations to the immediate west of the Beechcroft Road roundabout to serve the residents of Marham and Lyminge Garden, and adjoining streets".

We undertook this task because Cllr Jenny Yates, the Cabinet Member for Transport, asked for a petition to be presented to her in order that she could table it to show the concerns expressed by Lyminge and Marham Garden residents, to seek a remedy for the problem.

We obtained 32 signatures from a total of 34 properties. Two more from nearby streets were obtained on meeting people and two letters received from members encouraging our Society to approach the Council, a total of 36 expressions of concern.

The response to the petition was unanimously in favour of improvements to the current road works



Old and new roadmarkings on Burntwood Lane



about which everyone showed deep concern. Points raised included:

- 'over-engineering' of the current 'improvements' creating as many new concerns as those being addressed
- the inability to cross Burntwood Lane to access the south G1 bus stop, or conversely having alighted from a bus at that stop crossing the highway to the north side of Burntwood Lane, without lengthy walks to Sandgate Lane or El-lerton Road crossings. This point was raised by the elderly residents, in particular those going to St George's Hospital, who cannot now cross

the highway directly as they have no speed of foot to cross Burntwood Lane, and find the walks to the two crossings mentioned above as too inhibiting.

- parents of children attempting to cross BL are most concerned
- speed of traffic on Burntwood Lane, now with no physical inhibitions as these had been removed to create straight traffic lanes. It was noted that the new road markings widen at the roundabout to match the locations of the central reservations which have been removed!
- cyclists find new highway design dangerous for turning from the south side of Burntwood Lane into the northern side roads as now there are no central reservations to wait by in fast moving traffic. Likewise, turning out of the side roads to cross into the south traffic and cycle lanes to travel west.

While undertaking the petition a number of pedestrians, some with dogs or children, young runners to and from the common, were all to be seen dodging across the busy, dark Friday evening and the Sunday noontide Burntwood Lane traffic; just local pedestrians following the obviously direct and convenient routes to the side streets or to the common, but at significant risk.

The response to the survey demonstrates the strong local concerns about the current road works and that very serious consideration should be given to addressing them, before the road works are finally completed. We trust the council will agree to make further changes to their road works to address these concerns.

John Dawson
Convenor of Transport Group

Tall storeys

but not the finished story



This is the stair and lift core of Wandsworth Mills rising out of the hoardings at the junction of Wandsworth Plain and Armoury Way. In the not too distant future it will be at least twice the width and a bit more than twice the height than it is in this photograph, probably to the height of crane driver's cab.

Crane driving, not a job to suit everybody, a head for heights very much a prerequisite, and a long way down to the mess room ... you'd need to plan ahead.

More on the 36-storey tall building on the back cover.

The one-way system is going nowhere

The one-way traffic system in the centre of Wandsworth Town – known as the ‘Wandsworth Gyratory system’



The October ‘Brightside’ has just landed on our doormats! The first two pages highlight ‘Pride in our streets’. However, there is no mention of the most galling decision made in July affecting our streets. The decision made by TfL and the Treasury in discussion with our Council will have a momentous impact upon the town centre’s streets – the promised road improvements to the gyratory one-way road system have been cancelled. The proposals were to remove through traffic from East Hill, Fairfield Street and Wandsworth High Street and to group the bus services centrally between Southside and the Ram Brewery site for ease of use. The road improvements were to enable the regeneration of the town centre to benefit everyone - and promote healthy streets!

Plans were agreed in 2016 for a start to the works in 2017. But the works were then stalled. Now, eight years later, they are cancelled. Presumably residents, shoppers, and visitors will have to continue to put up with the air pollution, noise, dirt and filth generated by the gyratory’s through traffic, making the environment of the High Street in particular quite unpalatable.

Back to ‘Brightside’, turning to pages to 16 and 17, where the council asks Wandsworth residents for their views on how to make the town centre better! Again there is no explanation for the

cancellation of the promised improvement plans agreed in 2016, and no proposals for improvements to the traffic problem. Indeed, we have been expecting an explosion of despair from the Council to the cancellation and angry publicity flowing from a decision which damages the official council plans for the future of Wandsworth town centre. Clearly, as has been known for over 50 years, unless the traffic issues are addressed the gyratory system will govern the future environment of the town centre.

The Council has a large sum of money arising from redevelopments in the town centre, which was to part fund the road improvements. We are most concerned that a significant element of this fund could be fritted away on dressing up the high street and local roads whilst the ‘elephant-in-the-room’, the continuing impact of the traffic is not changed. Who will want to sit on benches under trees facing the 45-ton trucks on a congested High Street?

We will be asking the Council to put pressure on having the cancellation decision cancelled, and to explain clearly what has happened to the road improvement plans and the consequences of their abandonment.

John Dawson
Convenor of the Transport Group

THE
Esterhazy
SINGERS

**came to St Anne’s church
on Saturday 20 September
to give a concert showcasing choral
highlights from opera and stage songs.**

The church provided a perfect setting for Verdi’s Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, Triumphal March from Aida, the Humming Chorus from Puccini’s Madame Butterfly and the famous Habanera chorus from Bizet’s Carmen to name but a few of the sparkling and familiar opera extracts.

Virtuoso piano accompaniment was played by Jan Rautio with a brass ensemble, two trumpets and trombone, provided added texture. You might have thought you were in the Opera House. A large audience assembled in the pews. There was a buzz of anticipation before the concert and strong applause after each number when the listeners realised they were in for a real treat.

The voices of the soloists, many of whom are at the start of promising careers, echoed over the church with a selection of songs from West Side Story, the Wizard of Oz and one of Benjamin Britten’s Cabaret Songs, Johnny. In contrast, tenor Charlie Abbott sang Allez Regretz by a little known Flemish

composer from the Renaissance era, Hayne van Ghizeghem. Maria Kolpatchi’s warm mezzo voice resonated in the song, Habanera, from Carmen. Nessun Dorma was sung by lyric tenor Steve Davis who, with an opera background, now sings in St Anne’s church choir on a Sunday. Lingling Bao-Smith sang Dido’s Lament and Alex Hardy gave a warm rendition of Handel’s *Si, tra l Ceppi*. The choir rounded off the evening with the amusing Flanders and Swan’s Hippopotamus Song, Waterloo by ABBA, and an outstanding arrangement of Blow Gabriel Blow by accompanist, Jan Rautio.

The Wandsworth Society sold a lot of wine, more than anticipated, in the extended interval where the audience caught up with friends and discussed the merits of the first half. It was a memorable evening hosted by St Anne’s church and organised by the Wandsworth Society. We hope it was the first of many more concerts to come. Please look out for notice of the next concert, Beaufort Chorale singing Britten’s Ceremony of Carols with Harp on 13 December at St Anne’s.

Julie Harrison

Our last talk before the summer break on Wednesday 25 June was Railways of southwest London

A railwayman for fifty-three years Micheal Woods proved more than well-qualified to talk on the railways of southwest London. He outlined the history of current rail services in the area from the pre-nationalisation railway companies to the present day, and described his journey to each of the nine remaining stations in Wandsworth, bar one - we hope he will someday be able to stop off at Earlsfield, a treat in store.

Among the host of absorbing information we learnt

- that back in the day the various rail companies were allocated their share of ticket sales by a team of clerks sampling ticket stubs collected at the barriers to establish how many people had been transported by each company.

- of the Kenny Belle, the nickname of a service from Clapham Junction to Kensington Olympia that didn’t feature on any timetable and was only available to season-ticket holders of employees of the Post Office (possibly) intercepting the mail of suspicious characters ... a mystery to be further explored
- for engineering purposes distance along the tracks are measured in miles and chains, helpfully a member of the audience (thank you Iain) told us a chain is the length of a cricket pitch, now if only we could remember what that is ...

Thank you Micheal for a fascinating talk.

Planning News Autumn 2025



We do hope that you have had a good summer and have gathered in all the produce which our gardens/allotments have produced.

There has not been much activity on the planning front in the past few months save a couple of major consents in the town centre.

In March **the Former Gasworks Swandon Way application No 2022/3954** was approved by the applications committee after a debate which in our view really did not consider the fundamental matters of emergency vehicle access, short-term delivery parking and access/egress to say nothing about the lack of an operator for the affordable housing element. As a 'hybrid' application consent should not have been given as this is contrary the Mayor's policy. The only concern of the Chairman of the committee seemed to be -lets get on with it, it has been hanging around for too long!!!

Do we really need such a cavalier approach to a planning system which with all its faults has taken a responsible and legal course?

The second major application No 2024/3497 was approved at the August committee for a significant student housing scheme on what is known as No2 Armoury Way. The site currently has a padel facility with temporary buildings, on a bright sunny day it is very well used. If only it could stay. Alas no, only to be replaced with 10/12 storey 'bland' buildings with very restricted amenity space at ground level. Quite where 400+students will be coming from or day to day going to remains to be seen. The transport

system of buses and overground trains will become more like sardine tins at peak hours.

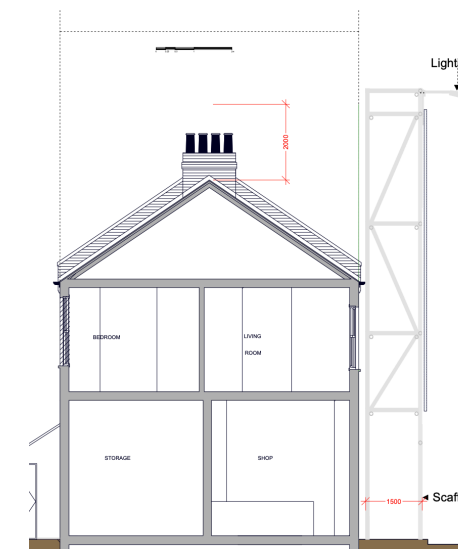
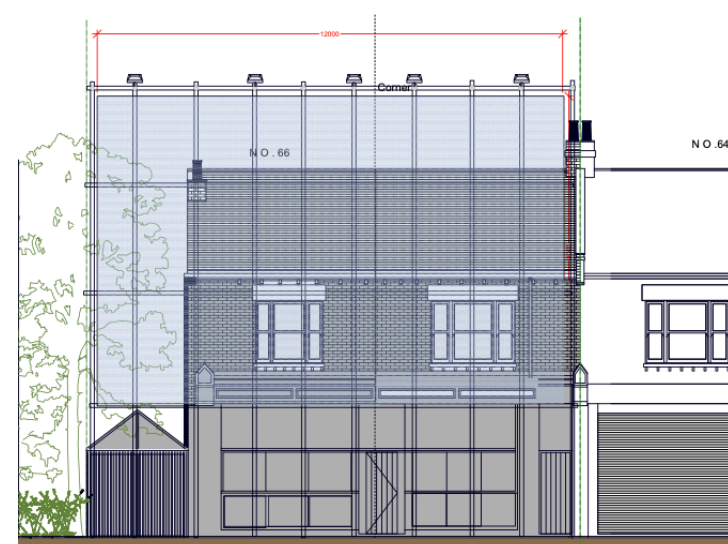
There have been few other applications of any consequence.

The amendments/revisions to the planning system proposed by government do not appear to have made much progress but the essence of the amendments are to centralise much of the decision making process and to encourage officer led decisions, thereby bypassing the elected members for anything other than major significant applications- like a new Battersea Power Station, when will we have another one of these.

All England Lawn Tennis Club. On the 8 July the High Court considered an application for Judicial Review of planning approval for the redevelopment of Wimbledon Park by the AELTC which a few days later confirmed the decision of the Mayor to approve the application. However, this is not the end of the story! The next hurdle which will engage the lawyers is whether the sale by L B Merton in 1993 constituted a Trust for the benefit of the residents of the borough to enjoy the land in perpetuity.

It has been brought to my attention that in addition to the 'overall' views of the planning in central Wandsworth, our readers may want to know of the other 'thousands' (no I exaggerate slightly!!) of applications which we consider.

Many of the domestic applications are for either side, rear or upward extensions to houses and flats,



many of which are now covered by 'permitted development rights' where some restraints exist, however those in Conservation areas receive a greater scrutiny. Thankfully, we have not experienced or been notified of many applications for basement works recently.

Many decisions are now made by 'delegated authority' which means that officers make the decisions rather than the Planning Applications Committee. This is good and bad as the officers clearly have significant technical knowledge, but may not be aware of a special local interest. This is the thrust of the planning change to be implemented through new central government legislation where only or mostly 'strategic decisions' are made by the elected representatives (Councillors). I am not sure that this is, or will be, helpful.

To give an example of an application to which we recently objected Application No 2025/2999 No 66 Fairfield Street, see above. This application was for an enormous advertising hoarding by the traffic lights at the junction with Armoury Way. The hoarding was to be illuminated but as a 'freestanding' temporary scaffolding structure approximately 9m high it oversailed the roof ridge line by about 2m. It clearly overshadowed and detracted from the Conservation Area, may have caused danger to all users of the roads and pedestrians crossing at this very busy point. I am pleased to report that this application was refused on 22 October.

Another application which we considered and objected to was No 2025/0225 Moira Court Trinity

Crescent SW17. This was for a rooftop extension to an existing block of post war residential accommodation with a garden to the rear. The proposal for rooftop flats with a new stair and lift core at one end of the structure, appeared unbalanced and may not have complied with up to date fire and escape requirements. I am pleased to report that this application was refused on 17 September.

These are a couple of examples of applications which have been brought to our attention or we have been provided with details by the council.

We rely on being alerted by members to applications or other matters to enable the planning group to have sufficient time to properly consider the matter from purely a planning standpoint.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need help with a planning matter

Philip Whyte
Leader Planning Group.

The Society talks ...

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

Wednesday 26 November

Wartime at the RVPB

Paul McCue, a military historian, researcher and author, and past managing director of Enable Leisure, will speak about the World War 2 role of the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building. Paul is currently an Executive Trustee of Secret WW2, Learning Network, a UK based educational charity.

Friday 5 December

our Christmas Party

Same time (Christmas) same place, St Anne's Church Hall, delicious food and drink, wonderful entertainment from the magician, Ian Keable; a return visit by this popular entertainer

Supper and first drink. £15 We shall be taking booking soon

Coming to the town centre

On page 7 we had a view of the stair and lift core of the 36-storey tower at the junction of Wandsworth Plain and Armoury Way, and here illustrations from the 2014 planning approval to give an idea of the finished building to be called The Artisan Tower at Wandsworth Mills. It will be the most massive part of the last part of the Ram Brewery redevelopment and will be less than a minute's walk north of the Grade II* Church Row buildings on Wandsworth Plain, and no more than a stroll from Grade II* All Saints church, and to the east the Grade II former brewery stables..

But on the plus side, there are two items of good news relating to the redevelopment -

- an application has been submitted for

the buildings of 1-9 Church Row on Wandsworth Plain to be restored as houses, previously the proposal was to convert them to flats that would have involved a regrettable loss of much internal historic fabric, and

- another application relating to landscaping works around the former stables includes the construction of a section of Surrey Iron Railway track

If only the satisfaction of knowing that historic panelling, floors, ceilings, doors and the like were being retained was sufficient to offset the feeling that the tower is just too big and too close to our town centre's valued heritage.

