

The Kew Society Newsletter • Winter 2015/16

Welcome...

to incipient Spring after not too hard a winter – so far. A warm welcome, too, for our new Membership Secretary, Michael Fletcher, to whom you will be directing all your neighbours who are not yet members of The Kew Society. Michael is taking over from Teresa Hartley after her years of invaluable service on our committee. We also

welcome guest contributor Paul Davies of the National Archives.

With the branches still bare, we see more of Kew and of the trees themselves; so let us start with them.

Trees

Several Kew Society members have raised the fate of the London plane tree outside 5 Station Approach. It seemed destined for removal because its angle of lean into the road meant it was struck on several occasions by vehicles. Richmond Council has completed a re-evaluation of the tree at our request. It will now be retained, with the angle monitored for movement over time. For added safety, a planned crown reduction will reduce mechanical stresses on the roots and damage to the pavement from those roots will be repaired periodically. The Council will liaise with shop owners over deliveries and will re-hang the warning sign for drivers.

Our thanks go to the Council for taking account of residents' concerns and for such a positive response. In particular, Craig Ruddick, Arboriculture Manager, Parks and Open Spaces at Richmond Council, was able to allay many concern when some 40 members came to an event we organised at the National Archives to discuss with him our concerns over the management of trees in Kew. Craig confirmed that trees were only felled where there was good reason and that all felled trees would be replaced. Craig is keen to stay in touch with us to inform the Council's tree strategy: we shall keep you posted on our website www.kewsociety.org.



Our treasured plane tree – saved!

London Forum Spotlight on the Kew Society

The London Forum of amenity and civic societies asked us to provide an article for their widely read Newsletter setting out our history and current activities. Our chair, Caroline Brock, provided the article now published which you can find on the Kew Society website and on the London Forum site. <http://www.londonforum.org.uk/>

Caroline emphasised the approach the Kew Society takes in influencing decision makers and getting things done, the challenges we face as well as the successes.

The same London Forum Newsletter edition also published an article from the Richmond Heathrow Campaign.

The National Archives



by Paul Davies

It was both a pleasure and a privilege to welcome so many members of The Kew Society to The National Archives on the evening of 14 October 2014 for the Society's Annual General Meeting.

As an Estates and Property man, I never cease to be astounded by the breadth of expertise amongst my colleagues at The National Archives, and I was as enthralled as the rest of the audience with the presentation given by William Spencer, our Principal Military Records Specialist, on Kew and the First World War – in which William linked serving men to various addresses in the surrounding streets we know so well.

It is always heartening to welcome local visitors to our building. We are proud to be part of the local community and in this guise we welcomed a smaller group of local residents to The Kew Society meeting on 9 November when the Tree Officer from Richmond Council gave an informative presentation which prompted lively debate.

I am always surprised, when hosting this type of event, when local people tell me that it's either their first visit to the archives or they haven't visited for many years. Of course I would encourage all local residents, and particularly members of The Kew Society, to visit The National Archives, whatever your interests.

You don't have to be a historian to enjoy your visit, whether it's to use our reading rooms to research your next book or find that long lost ancestor, attend one of our daytime talks or evening events – or just come in for a coffee and a cake and admire the architecture!

We are open to the public from 9 to 5 Tuesday to Saturday and the readings rooms are open till 7 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Our bookshop and Keeper's Gallery provide pleasant diversions, with the coffee bar close to hand for refreshment and our restaurant, which serves breakfast and lunch each day.

Our grounds, known as the Pocket Park, are a popular local amenity and our bio-diversity initiatives are helping to attract varied species of wildfowl, birds and insects.

So, if you haven't been through our gates, come along – I think you will be surprised at what's on offer.

For more details of our 'What's On' programme and our collection, please consult our website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

We are also planning a 'behind the scenes' tour specifically for The Kew Society in the spring, so watch out for details on that.

Planning and Environment Update

Heathrow

The Government's announcement of a delay in its decision on Heathrow until the summer, while more work is done on environmental concerns, met with a mixed response. Is it good news, demonstrating growing doubts on the ability to deliver expansion at Heathrow for many of the reasons we have argued, or quite simply a political juggling act around the London Mayoral election timetable? Whatever the reason for delay, we continue to assemble evidence and lobby against what we have demonstrated would be a wrong as well as an undeliverable decision.

The further review by the Government will need to take account of the November report by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on carbon emissions, air quality

and noise. The report refers to evidence from the Richmond Heathrow Campaign (with which we work closely) and makes a number of points we have also focussed on, including the need to adopt World Health Organisation guidelines on noise measurement.

Some of you will have seen the letter from Peter Willan, Chair of the Richmond Heathrow Campaign, in the Evening Standard on 22 December arguing that expansion at Heathrow will do more harm than good on economic as well as environmental grounds. You can see the facts detailing our arguments at www.rhcfacts.org, Take a look and use the facts to support any lobbying you can do yourselves or through your own contacts. The battle is far from over.

Kew Village improvements

More positively, the traffic calming measures we asked Richmond Council to consider along Sandycombe Road are now underway, starting with the junction of Lichfield Road, High Park Road and Sandycombe Road. Details of the timetable for the work and effects on traffic are on our website www.kewsociety.org.

The work will include improvements to finding the way from the station to the Botanic Gardens for our many visitors, including some replanting to lower existing plant heights which obscure the line of sight from Station Parade towards the Victoria Gate entrance to the Gardens, changes to street furniture and better signage. The area in front of the Kew Greenhouse café will be temporarily black before final surfaces are laid. Other works for raised areas at 3 positions

along the road will follow this financial year and are less extensive.

Richmond Council is also considering ideas with us and with the Kew Gardens Station Manager for substantial further improvements to the station forecourt and routes to the Botanic Gardens. We are keeping the Botanic Gardens in the loop as well as the Kew Traders Association. We expect a public consultation on this by the Council in the Summer. It could mean an end to the infamous puddle as well as other improvements.

We have also instigated discussions with the Station Manager and the Botanic Gardens on ideas for the station platforms and hope to provide more news on this soon.

Kew Gardens Station

Separately and more urgently, we objected formally to the proposed closure of the Kew Gardens ticket office. Kew Gardens is no ordinary station. It serves both London Underground and Overground services and has a large number of visitors from national and international locations visiting the World Heritage site of the Royal Botanic Gardens and the National Archives.

Staff in the ticket office are invaluable in guiding visitors on the best ticket options for their journeys. This advice cannot be replicated by ticket machines and staff on the platforms giving advice may not be sufficient. We would like to see the ticket office kept open and, at the very least, manned over the hours that national and international visitors to these venues are likely to need advice. We hope many of our members will have objected too as the volume of objections will have an impact.



Kew Gardens ticket office staff performing a valuable function

Kew Society support Greater London National Park City

We have supported this initiative which aims to identify Greater London as a National Park. Though London would not have the same legal status as other National Parks, it would emphasise the value that we put on our natural heritage – our green and blue spaces and the air we breathe – as well as our built heritage. You can read all about it here: <http://www.nationalparkcity.london/>

To gain National Park status, two thirds of London's Wards

need to declare their support as well as London's Mayor. The main contenders for London Mayor have said they support the idea. We have asked our Councillors to support the idea and have approached other local groups to do so as well. The Friends of Kew Pond have done so. The Council have their own River Park scheme underway but in time we hope they will support this wider initiative too.

Planning news

The application to re-develop 275 Sandycombe Road – the iron church – was withdrawn by the applicant after comments from us and many residents. Details of all the applications we have been involved with are on our website.

We have objected to yet another application from Vodafone for a mast and equipment at the junction of West Hall Road and the Mortlake Road. We fully support the objective to improve telecoms reception in the area but there is a viable alternative for positioning the necessary equipment at the National Archives who have been in discussion with Vodafone for some time. Location on the Archives roof will, we understand, provide better reception than at the Mortlake Road site as well as being more acceptable to the local environment and residents. Vodafone have now made contact with us to discuss their requirements for the area.

We have commented on Richmond Council's approach to a revised Local Plan which will set the framework for its decision-making on planning. You can see the consultation and timetable for review on the Council's website: https://consultation.richmond.gov.uk/environment/local-plan/consult_view.

Brentford Football Club

The Public Inquiry closed in October 2015, so the Secretary of State's decision on Hounslow's Compulsory Purchase Order for the remaining land required by the football club is likely before too long. In the meantime the Kew Society, other residents' groups north and

south of the river, Historic England (the former English Heritage) and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Kew Gardens all made objections to Hounslow Council's Planning Committee in respect of the detailed application for the first phase of residential tower blocks. The objections included that Willmott Dixon's new proposals did not conform to the 'design code' incorporated in the original 2013 outline planning consent for the enabling development that is to fund the new football stadium. Discounting all the objections, Hounslow Council has now granted detailed planning permission for a first phase development of 648 flats.

Other Hounslow development proposals

At a strategic level, Hounslow continues to pursue a public consultation on the further extension of their Great West Corridor Plan along Chiswick High Road. We expect to make representations regarding the adverse implications given the inadequate supporting infrastructure, adverse traffic consequences and pollution.

Specifically, a 32-storey skyscraper tower development – the tallest to date in West London and highly visible from Kew – has just been applied for at Chiswick roundabout on the site opposite the entrance to B&Q. This would contain up to 320 new apartments (some 'affordable') and an expected 800 new residents. There would also be 50,000 square feet of commercial space, including offices and restaurants, which it is anticipated will accommodate 400 staff. 110 basement parking spaces are proposed of which only 30% would be for residents.

Events

The National Archives proved to be a hugely successful venue for our October 2015 AGM. 90 members attended the evening and, on top of William Spencer's fascinating talk (see above), enjoyed an additional display covering archive photographs of the local area and a delicious buffet supper supplied by the superb in-house catering team. We extend our thanks to Paul Davies, Deputy Chief Operating Officer at The National Archives, who went out of his way to help our Events team offer such an excellent venue and ensure the evening ran seamlessly.

We ran two December events to end 2015 on a high note – a tour of The Poppy Factory and a tour of Richmond Theatre. Great feedback was received from attendees of both tours.



A beautiful wreath made to celebrate 90 years of the British Legion

There are some wonderful opportunities coming up in 2016 for you to get to know even more about the local area (details are on The Kew Society website). Additional events are firming up! They will be circulated to members and appear on our website. For starters, try

Monday 8th February 'Zoffany in Kew' 7.30pm, St. Anne's Church, Kew Green, where the artist Johan Zoffany is buried. Held jointly between the Richmond Local History Society and The Friends of St Anne's: £4 on the door

Tuesday 1st March 'Magic in the Air' at our Spring Party 7–9.30pm St. Anne's Church Hall. Join us in welcoming Spring and celebrating St. David with an evening of magical fun. Buffet and bar. Book tickets in advance please.

Monday 14th March 'Richmond's Parks – the frontier of park management' 7pm St. Anne's Church Hall. David Allister, Richmond Council's Head of Parks and Open Spaces for 11 years (during which satisfaction levels with park management in Richmond rose from 66% to a current high of 94%) will talk on his unique approach to park management which is setting the new standard to ensure Parks remain as important in the future as they have in the past.

And finally....

- Could you consider converting your annual subscription to a standing order? Standing Orders help reduce our administration costs. Please contact our Membership Secretary membership@kewsociety.org for a Standing Order Mandate or go to the 'Join Us' page of the website to download the form www.kewsociety.org.
- Visit the National Archive
- Volunteer for the Kew Neighbourhood Association
- Become a webmaster for the Society

Wednesday 4th May 'Richmond Gardens - Lancelot 'Capability' Brown at Kew' 7pm. St. Anne's Church Hall. Chris Sumner's talk marks the birth of Lancelot Brown 300 years ago. Brown was appointed Master Gardener to Hampton Court in 1764 and commissioned by George III to redesign Richmond Gardens to incorporate the village of West Sheen. Rhododendron Dell still has trees dating from Brown's planting.

Thursday 19th May sees a Guided visit to Syon House and Gardens.

Saturday 18th June is the Kew Summer Fayre on Kew Green. We will again present prizes to winners of our second annual photographic competition for local schools. Details to be announced shortly.

New Members

We are looking at a number of ways to attract new members. Some of those joining the Society are existing Kew residents who may not have heard of us before or had just not got round to joining. Others are new to Kew altogether and keen to get involved with the community. When people do join for the first time, we thought we should welcome them face-to-face so they can meet the Committee as well as one another, hear more about what we do and ask questions in an informal way. We held a very lively and enjoyable reception for new members at the home of our Chair in December and plan to repeat this for other new members. We hope this will help new members feel at home in the Kew Society and get involved in whatever way they can.

Webmaster appeal

One way might be as the new Webmaster on the committee. The role will involve posting periodic items onto our newly designed website and sending out email updates to our membership. An active ability in using computers is important but, as the background of the website is managed by a professional company, you don't need to be a computer 'expert'. If interested or merely curious, please contact website@kewsociety.org.

Contact us

Your Committee

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JOIN NOW by visiting our website:
www.kewsociety.org

You can write to us at:

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