



Old Chiswick Protection Society

Autumn 2014 Newsletter

OCPS AGM Monday 24th November 2014

in the Hock Cellar, Fuller's Brewery - 7.30pm for 8pm start

Come to hear about what OCPS has been doing this past year, elect members of the Committee and meet neighbours. A cask of ale from hops grown on Chiswick Mall has been specially brewed for the event and other drinks and nibbles will be available.

Chairman's message

On 23rd March 1895, readers of the Spectator were treated to a fine description of Old Chiswick and particularly its Eyot. As I read it, I was struck by how many of the issues which engage us as an OCPS committee are not new.

In 1895, readers were told of the polluted state of the river and its impact on the famous Eyot fisheries:

“The fishery around the eyot, and in the reaches below, has suffered far more from recent changes than the bird-population of the island. Until a few years ago there was always a little fleet of "Peter-boats" anchored between the eyot and the ferry, whose owners were fishermen, and some even lived aboard the ancient half-decked tubs. Their catch was mainly eels and dace, with a few flounders. Now there is only one genuine "Peter-boat" left, though a few professional fishermen own wherries, and may be seen casting their nets at high-water, or baiting their piles of eel-pots to set between Kew and Brentford.”

Fishing had not always been so poor. Indeed,

“in 1812, the entire rent of the fishery used to be paid in salmon, when it was worked by the good Cavalier merchant, Sir Nicholas Crispe.”

There was the hope of a great purification of the river which would once again allow residents to “throw a fly for a salmon off the Eyot.”

The hope of a great purification remains. Today, as I write, the Government has given the go-ahead for the Thames Tideway Tunnel which will have the effect of taking foul water in a huge tunnel under the Thames and stopping the periodic discharge of sewage into the River through the Chiswick Eyot outflow. The OCPS has been monitoring the project and its impact on Old Chiswick very carefully; it has formed an important part of our work over the last few years.

The eventual impacts of the project on the biodiversity of the River are claimed to be beneficial and significant. Salmon (and sea trout) WILL return we are told; though whether we are likely to see a return of the rather larger star of the 1895 article is not so certain.

“In the early part of 1894, a fine porpoise appeared above Chiswick Eyot. At half-past eight it swam down the river, having "proved" the stream for forty miles from its mouth, and being apparently well-pleased with its condition. At Putney it lingered, as might be expected of a Thames porpoise, opposite a public - house. Two sportsmen went out in a boat to shoot it; instead, they hit some spectators on the bank.”

Thames Tideway Tunnel

The Government has given the go-ahead for the “Super Sewer” project following the recommendation of the Planning Inspectorate. Thames Water has already commenced the process of selecting the contractors who will build the tunnel. So far the project is on time so it can be expected that construction will commence in 2016 with completion in 2023.

Planning

A planning application has been lodged for the addition of a 1m wide metal and glazed balcony running the length of the first floor of Riverside Lodge overlooking Chiswick Mall. OCPS is generally supportive as the balcony is in keeping with the design of the building and felt to be a beneficial addition.

Lamb House is under new ownership and has permission for a change of use from offices to residential under the Permitted Development Rights legislation. English Heritage is currently considering whether to list the building.

The solar panels installed to the facade of Heron House were installed without planning permission and the application for retrospective planning permission has subsequently been refused. An enforcement notice has been served which is being appealed by the owners. However they have withdrawn their appeal to the High Court.

Traffic and Roads

Resurfacing of Netheravon Rd South

The long-standing patchwork of pothole filling was removed and the new surface laid in July with its smart yellow and white line marking. The width of the parking bays has been increased and the specification is up to the weight of the articulators visiting Fullers Brewery. The repairs to the broken footpath paving are due for attention next year. Our request for a 20 mph road marking on the road at the A4 junction is under consideration.

Installation of Subway CCTV Cameras

We are told that funds are now available for cameras to be installed in the Netheravon Rd subway. Unfortunately this installation is delayed whilst a new member of staff is appointed at the LB of Hounslow (LBH). Our Cllr John Todd is following this up.

Replacement of the Hammersmith Flyover

The plans for replacement tunnels were announced last year and the OCPS was asked for its views on the extension of this ‘flyunder’ possibly as far as Sutton Court Rd. A committee of interested parties met to consider the implications including Mark Frost (Senior Traffic Planning Officer at LB of H). We now await the latest views of the Council before we can take this further.

Hogarth Subway

Subway improvement works will take place until the end of October, to repair the tiles, fix the handrails and resurface the footway. The subway will remain open during this period. Keep an eye out for the late October closure over three nights of one ramp each night. Alternative pedestrian routes will be signed.

Wildflower planting on the Hogarth Roundabout

Transport for London's (TfL) work on the Hogarth flyover affected the triangle which has been a wasteland for most of 2014, although in the early part of the year some very welcome wildflowers mysteriously appeared. TfL has now changed its mind – it had originally planned to treat the roundabout and triangle together with coordinated planting, but now wishes the OCPS to plant a wildflower meadow on the triangle for 2015 as we have done (in cooperation with them) for the past four years. Brita von Shoenaich, the wildflower expert who has generously given her services over this period, is agreeable to continue, and we will be meeting with Phil Hurst of TfL early in the autumn to plan the work.

Work on Chiswick Eyot

Pollarding

All the rain that fell in the early spring this year, causing severe flooding higher up the Thames, had to be run off during low tides, with the result that for many weeks there was too much water in the river to permit crossing to the Eyot. By the time the pollarding of the willows could be done, therefore, the vegetation on the island had already grown tall and lush: the cut withies couldn't be seen and it was difficult to move through the jungle. This made it impossible for us to organise a community bundling event. And because we have no fresh withies, we haven't been able to do any more work on the revetments. We are hoping to be able to get the pollarding done much earlier this year, before the spring rains. We will then organise a community bundling day, when we hope lots of you will come and join in the fun.

Balsam

The Himalayan Balsam seems to have changed its nature somewhat. Whereas two years ago there were very large clumps of tall thin plants, now they are multi-branched and the size of a tree, making them very hard to pull up or cut down. The plants are widely scattered, many of them close to the edge of the Eyot. The possible good news is that a pathogen has been discovered in the Himalayas which may be unique to balsam. Research is being done on its efficacy and safety – fingers crossed.

Panorama of the Thames

Some of you may remember that in the OCPS Autumn newsletter last year we reported on a project relating to Panoramas of The Thames. The original 1829 work covers about 15 miles of the Thames and is about 60ft in length. It was very popular in its day and since its publication this panorama has become a valuable record, showing how much the Thames landscape has changed. The Panorama of the Thames project has created an on-line version of Leigh's panorama accompanied by text that for the section on Old Chiswick was produced by OCPS members.

The Project also aimed to produce a modern version of this Panorama and the news is that this version went live on Monday 22nd September 2014. An innovative photographic technique was developed so that they have been able to film the whole length of the each bank of the Thames in a single 'take' and with great clarity. Again OCPS members and residents of the Mall have provided the text which accompanies each landmark/house that can be seen from the river. *Both Panoramas can now be seen at: www.panoramaofthethames.com*

We would be more than happy to receive emails with updates of the text if you have any comments. The Project is still looking for sources of funding so if you have any suggestions, do please email us.

Oral history

Here is another edited extract remembering life on Chiswick Mall in the middle of the 20th century.

Lord Crickhowell (Nick Edwards), Suffolk House, 1930s – 1960s

...Then we move on to the War and memories of the Blitz. When the War broke out, the French onion seller who had always come with his bicycle and delivered onions to my mother came and said goodbye, and jumping forwards, he was to return in 1945 and be greeted with an enormous hug by my mother, having survived the War. The Blitz was a vivid memory. We first moved into the coal cellar, which was propped up with supporting beams and we spent I suppose the first period of the Blitz there till we got one of those concrete shelters that were prefabricated and went into the study at the back of the house. I was also there sitting on that front garden wall on the Mall when the small boats came down on their way to Dunkirk – one after the other they hurried down the river. We didn't know why they were going; I don't think we heard until later about the rescue from Dunkirk...

...The geography [of the area] changed fundamentally when the A4 was constructed. It meant that the recreation ground, which during the War had temporary housing built on one side of it, was much much bigger, and so much bigger that I recall one occasion when a light aircraft with engine trouble actually succeeded in landing on it, which I don't think would be possible today...

Trees on the Barnes towpath

The OCPS has finally received the current Bartlett Tree Survey, updated from 2008 to 2012, along with a message from James Trimmer of the Port of London Authority, who commissioned the survey:

It is our intention to recommence tree works this winter following the completion of works to Olivers Ait... the view is that we will look at works across the entirety of the PLA owned towpath rather than greater efforts in a more local area...including the most urgent work and those trees identified by the Harbour Master as being an unacceptable obstruction to navigation. As you will imagine, work to those trees that tick both boxes will be the highest priority. As is usual, we would notify stakeholders of any intended work and undertake environmental surveys in advance.

The Society is comparing the two surveys, concentrating of course, on the stretch of towpath between Hammersmith and Barnes Bridges. We are also in touch with the West London River Group and the Towpath Group on this matter.

Neighbourhood Watch

Preventing theft from motor vehicles is still our biggest focus, so this is a timely reminder to make sure nothing is visible in your, and any visitors' cars. Even an empty plastic bag, an old jacket, or a few coins for the parking meter can be enough to tempt someone hoping to find more. Please phone 101 if you see someone behaving suspiciously by looking into every car on the street, and of course 999 if they are actually breaking into a vehicle.

As the nights draw in, would-be burglars will be looking for signs that people are away and seeking sheltered points of entry. As Christmas approaches, keep presents away from windows and doors where people can see them. If you have not already done so, and want to register for Neighbourhood Watch and receive regular e-mail updates, please contact Penny on pennybarltrop@aol.com, your Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator.

Points of Contact

Join the Old Chiswick Protection Society, a charitable Trust. Our Society is only as influential and effective as the friends and neighbours of Old Chiswick who belong to it. If you have an interest and haven't yet joined this year, for a modest £5 per member you can help us work towards making Old Chiswick the best it can be. We are always looking for new Committee members as well.

The subscription form can be found through our website <http://www.ocps.btck.co.uk/joinus> or at the AGM in November.

Books on Old Chiswick

The OCPS books on the history of Old Chiswick and the Thornycroft Works continue to make a steady sale to the benefit of the Society. Copies are on sale at Hogarth House locally as well as from Bookcase and Waterstones in Chiswick High Road. Alternatively, they can be obtained from Rosemarie Clifton at Brampton House in Church Street.

Dorothy Bartram, with the assistance of the local history group at Chiswick Library, has written a book about her memories of Chiswick Hospital, now Riverside Lodge. Dorothy worked for the Matron in the days of the Maternity Hospital, continued as the Warden of Chiswick Lodge home for the elderly, and was awarded the League of Mercy medal for her charity work. Copies are available for £10 from Dorothy. Please email possumdb1234@yahoo.co.uk

Names and addresses of OCPS officers

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Mr Russell Harris, Chairman, Morton House, Chiswick Mall
Mr James Stitt, Treasurer, 8 Eyot Green
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