

## **Old Chiswick Protection Society**

### **Autumn 2022 Newsletter**

Old Chiswick Protection Society exists to preserve and enhance the amenities of this riverside conservation area.

**Annual General Meeting**  
**George & Devonshire, 8 Burlington Lane**  
**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022**  
**Refreshments from 7.30pm, meeting at 8pm**

The following Executive Committee members are due for election or re-election this year:

Thérèse Bennett, Stephanie Camu, Patricia Langley, Eric Leung, Robert Stephenson-Padron OBE.

If you would like to stand or would like to nominate someone to serve on the Committee, please let the Secretary know.

Any questions, in advance please, by email to the Secretary: [patricialangley@me.com](mailto:patricialangley@me.com)

**Do come and join us. The AGM is a great opportunity to meet your neighbours.**

### **Message from the Chair**

The number and variety of activities reported on in this Newsletter is quite astonishing. None of this happens without the engagement of volunteers who in many cases commit significant time and effort to coordinating and communicating with a vast array of local council and government representatives, community and special interest groups, businesses, and residents, in order to ensure positive outcomes for the conservation area – outcomes that radiate far beyond the immediate area.

To all of you who generously give your time and energy to improving and preserving this incomparable little sliver of London, for everyone to enjoy, a heartfelt thank you.

Planning challenges, road-safety issues, removing illegal signs and litter-picking on Hogarth Roundabout, protecting Chiswick Eyot, planting trees, supporting the restoration of St Nicholas Church and reinstating the annual OCPS summer party are only a few of the activities that OCPS has been involved in recently.

If you would like to know more about the pursuits of OCPS, I encourage you to come to the Annual General Meeting, the first in-person meeting since 2019, at the George and Devonshire on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November.



*Sun over the willows*  
Photograph: Sir Alan Munro

### **Message from the President**

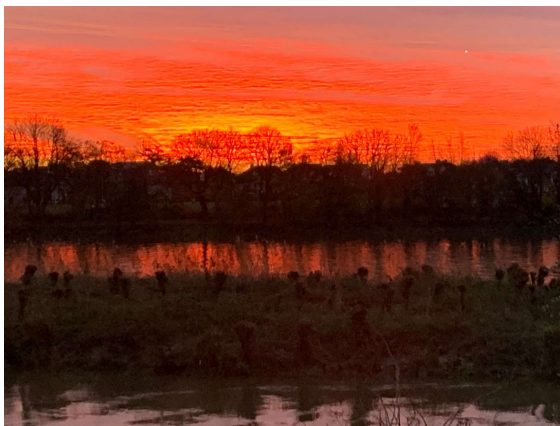
A pair of remarkably beautiful kingfishers has taken up residence at the eastern end of Chiswick Eyot. They join the almost always present heron, egret, geese and ducks that call it home. Great crested grebe are also now familiar but less frequent visitors. This enhancement of the Eyot's bird life is entirely consistent with its (little known) formal designation as a Local Wildlife Site. The sterling work of the OCPS River subcommittee and Thames21 to reduce erosion and the influence of alien invasive species such as the Chinese Mitten Crab and Himalayan Balsam is also part of this overall enhancement. The Eyot is now at its healthiest for years.

The Eyot is a hugely important component part of the significance, character and appearance of Old Chiswick Conservation Area. It gives the area its uniquely *rus in urbe* feel. It draws visitors, tourists, tour groups, walkers, pram pushers and cyclists to the area. Naturally, these visitors and we locals often use the usually quiet Mall itself as a vantage point to see and understand the remarkable architecture of the area alongside the bucolic atmosphere of the River and Eyot.

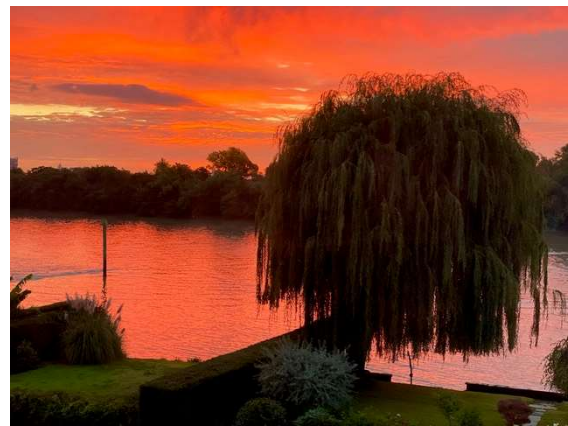
The fragility of this unique character has been disclosed by the way that the area has for the last few months been used as a rat-run for trunk-road traffic which feels it should divert through the area (assisted by traffic apps), rather than join a queue on the A4 itself. The effect of the long lines of traffic at busiest times, or of very much faster streams of traffic at other times, is severely harmful to the character of the area. It might be temporary, but it might not be, either. Scores of regular A4 users have discovered the rat-run. It is now always likely to be busier as a result.

It is also very dangerous, with many of the vehicles seeking to justify their choice of route by 'rushing' back to the A4, often through the no-entry sign and often at times when pedestrians and pram pushers are seeking to enjoy the area. Conflicts are frequent. Accidents inevitable. The OCPS Roads and Traffic subcommittee and many residents and local councillors have been pressing Hounslow Council daily to impose a traffic-calming measure to restore safety and character, but with limited success to date. I hope that it will not need a serious accident for the Hounslow Highways department to take this matter seriously. If you feel strongly about the impact of the rat-running, please speak up. Please write to or email Hounslow Highways using the form at [Hounslowhighways.org](http://Hounslowhighways.org).

We need both a short-term and a long-term solution which allows local access for residents and deliveries (and for the brewery), but which restrains the trunk-road traffic. Hounslow has such 'limited access areas' elsewhere, where damage caused by through traffic is much lower and from which we can learn. We need to consider whether and what type of restriction might work here. Please have your say: contact a member of the OCPS Committee.



Photograph: Patricia Langley



Photograph: Sir Alan Munro

## **Planning**

Overall, there has been very little planning activity in our Conservation Area. However, for two newsletters in a row, there is a single subject to report that has gone viral in the area: the application for gates to Griffin Brewery.

### ***Griffin Brewery***

At the time of the last newsletter, and having had a meeting with the brewery's representatives, we were hopeful that our strong planning and legal objections would have been heard and the application withdrawn, or at least amended. Despite Hounslow Council having received a barrage of objections from many residents, neither happened.

Councillor John Todd, who has been immensely supportive of OCPS and the Conservation Area for many years, requested that the application be called in. Following this request, it was confirmed on 26<sup>th</sup> May that the Council would be refusing the application.

Sadly, this was not the end of the story and a further application has been submitted. Again, there was no consultation by Asahi with any residents or with OCPS. The new proposals are a more 'watered-down' approach but suffer from the same fundamental principles that are totally against the nature and history of the Conservation Area and the unimpeded access through the brewery yard by the local residents.

The new application proposes a pavement gate, a retractable pole with a 'skirt' hanging under it and the associated mechanism that powers the operation, all with reflective tape. This gross intrusion into the Conservation Area and its character is both unnecessary and entirely contrary to the current open

aspect that has been preserved for centuries. A guard station, albeit recessed behind the step in the wall, may be acceptable in principle but not in terms of design, which is urban and clumsy.

Most important is that there are five houses whose residents rely on the ability to enter their properties through the brewery yard via historic rear gates. This is vital for emergency services, deliveries and general access when there is flooding in Chiswick Mall, which is frequent, as we all know. This is a health and safety issue. The unrestricted access is an amenity that these properties have enjoyed for centuries, and is covenanted to the owners of the properties – a fact that Asahi have not recognised in either of their applications.



*Flooding on Chiswick Mall prevents access to several houses  
Photograph: Sara Fabrizio*

The application will be heard by the full Council Planning Committee in the near future; the date is not yet fixed. OCPS will have 5 minutes to articulate their objections.

As representatives of OCPS, we are utterly committed to preserving our special area, access through it and the openness that every resident and our visitors enjoy. We will seek to build a working relationship with Asahi going forward, and to return to the same level of cooperation that we have enjoyed in the past.

### **Hogarth Triangle**

The royal procession to Windsor as part of the Queen's funeral has made us look back to the days when the triangle was full of wildflowers and Prince Charles (as he then was) actually wrote to congratulate the wildflower expert who, through our Society, was responsible for the display. It makes the Society feel that we must really try to improve the triangle. Sadly, the small hebes planted last year by TfL were not a success and died in the summer heat. The dreaded orache weed is growing again.

There is a proposition that we hope might interest TfL: we are in touch with a new gardening expert who is prepared to produce a drought-resistant planting scheme for the triangle. She recommends planting through a layer of landscape fleece with gravel on top. She would source the plants and materials, keeping the scheme as simple as possible. Prior to planting, the ground would have to be dug over and the fleece and gravel laid. For this we would need the help of TfL's contractors, who would also do the planting under the supervision of our expert.

We have put this to TfL and they are considering it. If the idea is of interest to them, we would come back with costings for the overall plan, materials and plants. We would hope to share these costs with TfL and also perhaps approach other outside sources of finance.

## Chiswick Eyot and the River

Work continues on and around Chiswick Eyot, to protect the island from erosion. We have 2 dates coming up this November: Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November and Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> – 11am - 2pm. You are very welcome to come and help – wear wellies and protective gloves.



*A crab on the foreshore of the Eyot  
Photograph: Lichena Bertinato*

We had a visit from the Harbour Master recently, when we reported a pleasure boat, the Connaught, navigating the narrow channel between the Eyot and the mainland. The Harbour Master undertook to deal with the matter. Should you see this narrow channel being used by a boat that is clearly too big, do try and film it and get the name of the boat and the time, and pass the information on to a member of the OCPS Committee.

## Old Burial Ground

The plan for the Arboretum planting season 2022 is now finalised, including which trees are going to be planted and where. The tree selection was completed and proposed in September by OCPS and St Nicholas Church. OCPS met the Borough Parks Project team on a MS Teams call on 6<sup>th</sup> October to agree any outstanding details.

The project plan includes creating a wild area which will be left un-mowed and a separate wildflower area to be planted by OCPS volunteers in spring 2023.

## Subways

OCPS has been in contact with TfL over the summer regarding the graffiti in the Netheravon Road underpass. This has now been removed by TfL's contract team.

## Pavement Repairs

Several pavement repairs have been reported on FixMyStreet recently – all with a prompt outcome. This is an effective way to capture the attention of the Borough's highway team and all residents should be encouraged to use this channel as soon as they see evidence of damaged lamp posts, paving or kerb stones.

## Roads and Traffic

As part of a regular dialogue, OCPS met TfL in September to provide local knowledge which may have some bearing on future proposals for the Hogarth Roundabout safety scheme.

### *A4 Roadworks*

The traffic problems resulting from the roadworks were addressed by a number of parties and several actions were taken by Hounslow Council to mitigate the rat-running by cars and vans. Part of the challenge was that the area falls into two Boroughs. Eyot Gardens in the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham was the entry point causing the most concern. Netheravon Road South in Hounslow could not prevent access to vehicles bound for Asahi as it is the only unrestricted entry point to the brewery site.

The good news is that the A4 westbound reopened fully on 6<sup>th</sup> November, which has eased the situation. There will be two weekends in December when the eastbound A4 is completely closed for all the works to be removed.

## News from St Nicholas Church

### *Exhibition*

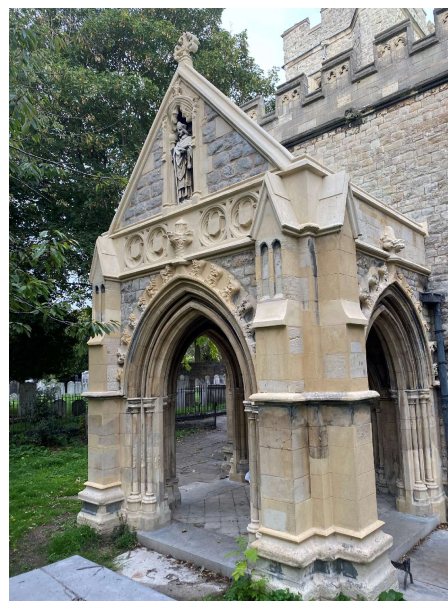
The church's Archives Group has recently mounted a new exhibition in the showcases in the south aisle of St Nicholas church. This is a display dedicated to 'some lesser-known graves in the Chiswick Old Burial Ground', to complement the typescript pamphlet of 'Some of the notable tombs in the Churchyard', issued by the Archives Group in 1998 but regrettably no longer available. It describes and illustrates the memorials to twelve interesting figures, including Thomas Bentley (1731-1780), the close friend and business partner of Josiah Wedgwood; William Murfin (1741-1813), Head Gardener at Chiswick House to the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire and Duchess Georgiana; Charles Whittingham (1767-1840), founder of the Chiswick Press in 1811 and a major benefactor of St Nicholas church, who gave his name to the parochial almshouses on Edensor Road; Admiral of the Fleet Sir Robert Smart KCB (1796-1874); and the extraordinary Mary Walters, Baroness Miske (1894-1980), an English WWII spy, who in the 1950s suffered extreme privations in Soviet gulags before returning to the UK and ending her days in St Mary's Convent. The church is now open all day every day, so this exhibition can be visited at almost any time in daylight hours.

### *Church restoration*

In the Society's Spring 2022 Newsletter it was briefly reported that 'The scaffolding [covering the north side of the church] is off and we can now see the results of several months' cleaning and reparation...'. Phase 1 of the church's development project concentrated on the cleaning and restoration of the external stonework on the north side of the church, and on the north and south porches, and the replacement of the most badly weathered areas with new stone. Contrasts between the old, 1880s stone and the new Bath stone blocks cut for buttresses, window tracery and other architectural features is in places somewhat stark, but as the new stone matures, these will be less evident. Perhaps the best results have been realised on the South Porch (work that was partly funded by OCPS). Here, however, it can be seen that the Kentish Rag stone has not responded as well as has the original Bath stone to the cleaning techniques thus far employed, and may require further treatment.



North porch showing old and new stonework  
Photograph: Francis Ames-Lewis



South porch after restoration  
Photograph: Francis Ames-Lewis

### *Sunday afternoon concerts*

Fundraising for Phase 2, covering the external stonework of the south side of the church and the east end, is now underway, and revised costings are under review. A series of 'third Sunday of the month' afternoon concerts, followed by tea and delicious cakes, is valuably contributing to the fundraising. These concerts are arranged by Heather Johnson, who has established excellent links with accomplished young musicians, often fresh from their studies at the Royal College of Music. Over recent months we have heard two recitals given by flautists, and others by a mellifluous counter-tenor, a brass quintet, a pianist, and a piano, clarinet and soprano trio.

### ***Jubilee tree***

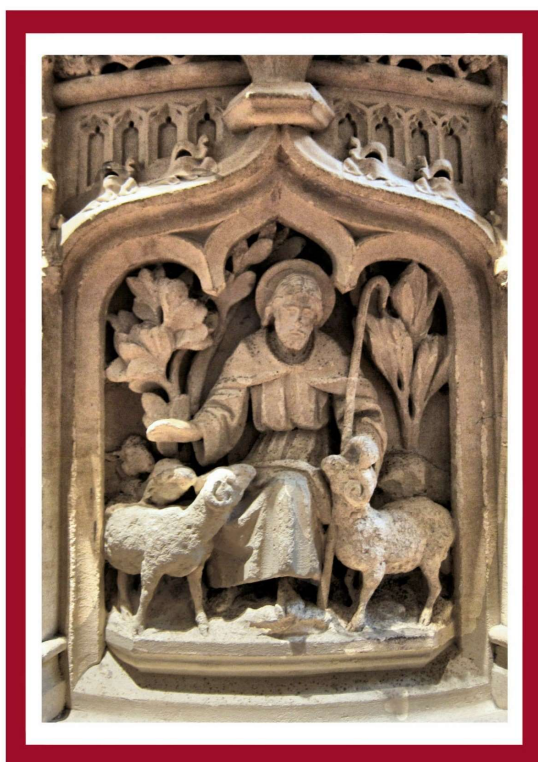
As the church's contribution to the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, the Vicar, Fr Simon Brandes, acquired and, at the end of May, planted a commemorative tree. He chose a *Prunus 'Shirotae'* or Mount Fuji cherry. This is a wide-spreading, flat-crowned cherry with, at blossom-time in April, fresh green young foliage that contrasts with an abundance of fragrant, pure white, semi-double flowers; and in the autumn, orange and red leaf colours. The position chosen for this planting is in the principal area of the churchyard, where the tree is seen best from the west door of the church, silhouetted against the deep green of a majestic yew tree, and from the eastern end of Powell's Walk, not far from the tomb of Philip James de Louthembourg.



*The Vicar's jubilee cherry tree*  
Photograph: Francis Ames-Lewis

### ***In Memory of James Stitt***

James Stitt, who died earlier this year and was for very many years OCPS's Honorary Treasurer, left a bequest of £10,000 to the Friends of St Nicholas Church. The Friends committee has not yet considered how best they might use his bequest, but they are likely to wish to earmark it for some particular part of the church stonework restoration project Phase 2. Meanwhile, in memory of James, his brother John and Neville Bass between them have donated £10,000 to the church, specifically to fund the restoration of the three sanctuary lamps that burn before the High Altar, of the four High Altar frontals, and of the shrine of Our Lady and its brocade curtain.



### ***Friends' Events***

The Friends of St Nicholas Church continue their programme of events in the church with a talk on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December at 7.00pm on the theme of the 'Adoration of the Magi' in Renaissance art, to be given by the well-known freelance art-history lecturer Clare Ford-Wille. On Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, at 7.00pm, Professor Judith Hawley (Royal Holloway University of London) will give a talk entitled "Sacred to the Muses": Pope, Burlington and the Arcadian Thames'. The Friends' annual Reception and AGM will be held in the church from 6.30pm on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

### ***Christmas card***

The Friends' Christmas card for 2022 (pictured) is now available. It shows the carving in stone of 'Christ as the Good Shepherd' from the font in St Nicholas Church. Packs of seven cards and envelopes costing £5.00 per pack may be ordered from Francis Ames-Lewis, at [f.ames-lewis@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:f.ames-lewis@bbk.ac.uk), or on 020 8748 1259.

## Thames Towpath

The Port of London Authority and the London Borough of Richmond have recently published a major document entitled *Wooded Towpath Plan 2022-2036*. This is a comprehensive tree survey and tree-management plan with ecological considerations; it covers the towpath from Hammersmith to Kew.

The OCPS recently attended a meeting of the Towpath Group (independent) to review this document. Though the policy is to plant up to 600 trees on the towpath over the next few years, and a Tree Planting officer is to be appointed, there are also plans to remove undergrowth, small trees and invasive species, to severely pollard several trees and to establish 'open-window viewpoints' from the towpath towards the opposite bank (that is, towards this bank).

In our opinion, very little emphasis is given to the views of the towpath from this side of the river and we must watch carefully to ensure that the 'Green Corridor' (a lung in west London) is not irretrievably changed by the plans.

A copy of the report is available on application – please contact [jane@nissenw4.co.uk](mailto:jane@nissenw4.co.uk).

## Neighbourhood Watch

There have been increases in theft from motor vehicles and in thefts of bicycles, the latter usually from gardens or sheds.

As the evenings darken, we are reminded to take extra care to keep doors and windows locked and, when out, to keep lights on to discourage opportunistic would-be burglars. Also, as we near Christmas, there may be more door-to-door callers. Try to keep your front door closed, or don't engage with them. Do not encourage them by handing over money or any personal or banking details.

## Membership

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership by standing order in the spring. If you pay your subs by cheque, we'd like to encourage you to change to bank transfer or – even better – standing order. Cheques incur bank charges, which we'd prefer to avoid. Do please bear this in mind when you next renew your membership.

## Local Artists: Eric Ravilious

While ambling along Upper Mall, you may have noticed a blue plaque high on the wall of a house overlooking Weltje Road. The English Heritage plaque simply says: 'Eric Ravilious, 1903 - 1942, Artist, lived here, 1931 - 1935'.



If you didn't recognise his name or weren't familiar with his work, you wouldn't be alone. For after Ravilious's death in WWII, in which he served as an Official War Artist, he simply faded from memory. Much of his work was in private collections and it wasn't until the 1970s that a hoard of spectacular works was discovered under a bed belonging to Ravilious's close friend and fellow artist, Edward Bawden. They had been put there by Bawden for safekeeping and were only discovered after his death.

Fortunately, over the past decade, Ravilious's reputation in the art world has grown thanks to a series of important exhibitions, a highly praised feature-length documentary released this summer, and a new book published this autumn. Margy Kinmonth's documentary, *Eric Ravilious: Drawn to War*, was timed to coincide with the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the artist's death on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, when his plane went missing off the coast of Iceland while he was serving as a war artist. He was 39 years old. This engaging film tells the story of his brief life while referencing the works that he produced throughout his career.



So, who was Eric Ravilious? He was a painter, designer, illustrator and wood engraver, especially known for his modernist English landscapes and his book illustrations. He trained at the Royal College of Art under Paul Nash, himself a war artist in the First World War and whose influence is perceptible in Ravilious's work. Throughout his career, Ravilious undertook commercial work that often featured bold woodcuts for books and magazines, such as that which graced the cover of the *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* from 1938 until 2002.



Woodcut engraving for the *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*, 1938

Ravilious designed commemorative china for Wedgwood for Edward VIII, George VI and Queen Elizabeth II, and in 1938 he designed a Boat Race bowl depicting three views of the race. The view reproduced here depicts a steamship full of spectators following the race and, in the foreground, two swans and reeds, which would appear to be Chiswick Eyot. In the 1930s, Ravilious and his artist wife Tirzah were living between Essex and their flat in Weltje Road, which had a bay window overlooking the Thames, from where they watched the race during their regular Boat Race parties. These images are characteristic of the artist's joyous approach to everyday life, as is evidenced in an earlier painting featured in the Spring 2022 issue of the OCPS newsletter. In this 1933 painting entitled *River Thames, Chiswick Eyot* a jaunty car bumbles down the road while a toy-like boat steams upstream.



*The Stork at Hammersmith*, 1932

Another painting of the Thames the artist made during his few years in Upper Mall is entitled *The Stork at Hammersmith* from 1932. It depicts HMS *Stork*, a permanent fixture on the Thames at Hammersmith from 1913 until 1950, when she had to be broken up because of dry rot. The *Stork* was used as a training ship for the sons of dead or disabled ex-servicemen. Up to 60 cadets aged 11 to 14½ were accommodated on the ship. They were required to be of good character, be physically fit and be able to swim 50 yards in their clothes. Surprisingly, the view in *The Stork at Hammersmith* is almost identical today. If you stand to the right of the boat ramp outside the Corinthian Sailing Club and look towards Hammersmith, you will see the pontoon in the same position, the embankment that juts out and Hammersmith Bridge in the distance. Only HMS *Stork* is missing.

Ravilious lived most of his life in the countryside, and it became one of his most frequent subjects. Having grown up in Sussex, he knew the South Downs intimately and they consistently featured in his work, as in this striking watercolour of the lighthouse at Beachy Head, painted before the outbreak of war in 1939, before barbed wire and other coastal defences were erected. His pared-down treatment of the shapes and the graphic quality of the brushwork in *Beachy Head* are also evident through the carriage window in *Train Landscape*, painted the following year.

The smooth rolling hills above the Wiltshire town of Westbury, with the white horse carved into the hillside, contrasts with the gaily patterned upholstery of the seats, transforming this third-class train compartment into a pleasant position for enjoying the scenery, enlivening an otherwise ordinary journey.



*Beachy Head*, 1939



*Train Landscape*, 1940

When war broke out in Europe, Kenneth Clark, who was then Director of the National Gallery, appointed artists to document the war from an eye-witness point of view. Artists commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee included Stanley Spencer, Henry Moore, Paul and John Nash, and Eric Ravilious. Initially assigned to the Admiralty, Ravilious painted ships, submarines and coastal defences. In 1940, he accompanied the battleship HMS *Glorious* to Norway and the Arctic Circle, where he revelled in painting the midnight sun and dazzling landscapes of icy sea and sky. Life as a war artist was not without its dangers: less than a day after Ravilious painted *Glorious in the Arctic*, the ship was sunk by German battleships. In the end, he too would lose his life.



*Glorious in the Arctic*, 1940



*RAF Hurricanes in Flight*, 1942

Ravilious was fascinated by flying and in 1942 requested a transfer to the Air Ministry, where he was assigned to a posting with the RAF in Iceland. It was there, days after arriving, that he went out on a

routine search-and-rescue mission. The flight never returned; he was declared missing, presumed dead.

By all accounts, Ravilious enjoyed his role as a war artist and created over a hundred works, many of which are in the collection of the Imperial War Museum.

Although neglected for some time after his death, Ravilious is today recognized as one of Britain's most important early 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape artists and designers. This recognition is reflected in the many exhibitions of his work in the past few years, such as *Ravilious* at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2015. This year alone, we have had *Extraordinary Everyday: The Art and Design of Eric Ravilious* at The Arc in Winchester; *Bawden, Ravilious and the Artists of Great Bardfield* at The Lightbox in Woking; and from 12<sup>th</sup> November, *Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water*, featuring works by Ravilious, at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester.

The Towner in Eastbourne has developed one of the largest collections of works by Ravilious and has a dedicated space presenting changing exhibitions in their Ravilious Gallery.

A new book, *Eric Ravilious, Artist and Designer* by Alan Powers, provides a comprehensive overview of the artist's work in all media, including watercolour, illustration, printmaking, graphic design, textiles and ceramics.

To watch Margy Kinmonth's documentary, *Eric Ravilious: Drawn to War*, click on the link below for further information and to see a trailer:

<https://www.dartmouthfilms.com/eric-ravilious-drawn-to-war>

### **Books on Old Chiswick**

In 1982, for the Silver Jubilee, OCPS published Humphrey Arthure's *Life and Work in Old Chiswick*, an excellent history of the conservation area, now in its third edition. This and his history of the Thornycroft Works (*Thornycroft – shipbuilding and motor works in Chiswick*) are available from Bookcase in Chiswick High Road and from Rosemarie Clifton, Brampton House, Church Street.

### **OCPS Officers**

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*Secretary*

Sir Alan Munro, Eynham House, Chiswick Mall

Mr Russell Harris KC, Morton House, Chiswick Mall

Mrs Stephanie Camu, Cedar House, Chiswick Mall

Mr Eric Leung, Concord Court, Chiswick Gate

Mrs Patricia Langley, Riverside House, Chiswick Mall

### **Contacts**

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